

= 2008 Japanese Grand Prix =

The 2008 Japanese Grand Prix ( formally the XXXIV Fuji Television Japanese Grand Prix ) was a Formula One motor race held on 12 October 2008 , at the Fuji Speedway , Oyama , Japan . It was the 16th race of the 2008 Formula One season . The 67 @-@ lap race was won by Fernando Alonso for the Renault team from fourth position on the starting grid . Robert Kubica finished second for BMW Sauber , and Kimi Räikkönen third for Ferrari .

Lewis Hamilton , the eventual Drivers ' Champion , led the Championship going into the race , and started from pole position alongside Räikkönen . Hamilton 's McLaren teammate Heikki Kovalainen began from third , next to Alonso . At the first corner Hamilton braked late , forcing Räikkönen wide . Hamilton was later given a penalty , and was criticised by the British racing press for overaggressive driving . Ferrari driver Felipe Massa , Hamilton 's principal Championship rival , was penalised after an incident on lap two in which he touched Hamilton 's car , causing it to spin . The incident dropped Hamilton to the back of the field , from where he was unable to regain a points scoring position . Massa later collided with Sébastien Bourdais of Toro Rosso . Bourdais was penalised after the race , and demoted from sixth to tenth position . The penalty prompted widespread criticism from the racing media and ex @-@ drivers .

The victory was Alonso 's second consecutive win ; he started from 15th on the grid to win the Singapore Grand Prix two weeks prior . Kubica held off a determined attack from Räikkönen in the closing laps to take second place . Massa 's seventh place narrowed his gap to Hamilton in the Drivers ' Championship to five points . Ferrari established a seven @-@ point lead over the McLaren team in the Constructors ' Championship , with two races of the season remaining .

= = Report = =

= = = Background = = =

The Grand Prix was contested by 20 drivers , in ten teams of two . The teams , also known as " constructors " , were Ferrari , McLaren @-@ Mercedes , Renault , Honda , Force India , BMW Sauber , Toyota , Red Bull Racing , Williams and Toro Rosso .

Prior to the race , McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton led the Drivers ' Championship with 84 points , and Ferrari driver Felipe Massa was second with 77 points . Behind them in the Drivers ' Championship , Robert Kubica was third with 64 points in a BMW Sauber , and Massa 's Ferrari teammate Kimi Räikkönen was fourth with 57 points . Kubica 's teammate Nick Heidfeld was fifth with 56 points . In the Constructors ' Championship , McLaren ? Mercedes were leading with 135 points , one point ahead of their rivals Ferrari , whom they had overtaken at the previous race . BMW Sauber were third with 120 points . In the battle for fourth place , Renault had 51 points , five points ahead of Toyota .

A botched pit stop at the Singapore Grand Prix had demoted Massa from first position to the back of field . With three races remaining in the Championship and a seven @-@ point deficit , Massa remained confident about his title chances : " If you look at what happened to me in Singapore where my gap went from one point to seven so suddenly , then you have to consider it could easily go the other way as well . " Hamilton emphasised the value that a conservative racing strategy could hold for his title chances :

I actually think Singapore was a good learning experience : there was less pressure to achieve a victory because of the unusual circumstances , which meant I was actually able to start thinking of the world championship . I hate driving for points , but I think we can all see the benefit of that approach at the moment .

Fernando Alonso 's victory at the Singapore Grand Prix was his first Formula One win since rejoining the Renault team , after driving for McLaren in 2007 . After qualifying in 15th and making an early pit stop , Alonso had managed to jump to the front of the race when his teammate Nelson Piquet Jr. crashed . Left with no opportunity to pit , the frontrunners had to delay their stops until the

damage was cleared , allowing the heavily fuelled Alonso to move to the front once they did so . Though Alonso questioned whether his Renault team could match the pace of Ferrari and McLaren at Fuji , he said " We must remain focussed and try to repeat our level of performance from Singapore to fight at the front . " Renault 's technical director Bob Bell said that the team 's improvement from the start of the season was encouraging , but " we recognise that we 're not going to overhaul McLaren and Ferrari this season " . Bell said that the objective for the last races was to win more Grands Prix and , importantly , secure fourth position in the Constructors ' Championship from Toyota .

The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile ( FIA ) , the sport 's governing body , launched the Formula One component of their Make Cars Green campaign at the Japanese Grand Prix . For the weekend , the grooves in the tyres were painted green to promote environmentally friendly driving . FIA president Max Mosley said " The FIA is determined to ensure that future investment in motor sport will also help drive the development of technologies that will benefit the public at large . " As is normal for a Formula One race , Bridgestone brought two different tyre compounds to the race ; the softer of the two marked by a single white stripe down one of the grooves .

= = = Practice and qualifying = = =

Three practice sessions were held before the Sunday race ? two on Friday , and a third on Saturday . The Friday morning and afternoon sessions each lasted 90 minutes . The third session was held on Saturday morning and lasted an hour . The Friday sessions were held in dry and sunny conditions . Hamilton was quickest in the first session , with a time of 1 : 18 @. @ 910 that was less than two @-@ tenths of a second faster than Massa . McLaren driver Heikki Kovalainen was just off Massa 's pace ; Räikkönen , Alonso and Piquet rounded out the top six , still within a second of Hamilton 's time . In the second practice session , Timo Glock , of Toyota , was fastest with a time of 1 : 18 @. @ 383 , ahead of Alonso , Hamilton , Massa , Räikkönen and Red Bull driver Mark Webber . The top seventeen drivers set times within a second of Glock 's fastest lap , indicating a competitive field . The Saturday morning session was held on a damp track , where grip was poor and many drivers were forced to use the run @-@ off areas after sliding off the track . Kubica was quickest with his final lap of the session at 1 : 25 @. @ 087 ; Glock , Piquet , Nick Heidfeld of BMW , Kazuki Nakajima of Williams , Red Bull driver David Coulthard , and Massa rounded out the top seven positions . Hamilton managed only eleventh , but was ahead of Kovalainen and Räikkönen , in 16th and 17th positions , respectively . Both Adrian Sutil and Giancarlo Fisichella of Force India spent most of the session in their garage , suffering numerous mechanical problems .

The qualifying session on Saturday afternoon was split into three parts . The first part ran for 20 minutes , and cars that finished the session 16th or lower were eliminated from qualifying . The second part of qualifying lasted 15 minutes and eliminated cars that finished in positions 11 to 15 . The final part of qualifying determined the positions from first to tenth , and decided pole position . Cars which failed to make the final session could refuel before the race , so ran lighter in those sessions . Cars which competed in the final session of qualifying were not allowed to refuel before the race , and as such carried more fuel than in the previous sessions .

Hamilton clinched his sixth pole position of the season with a lap time of 1 : 18 @. @ 404 . He was joined on the front row by Räikkönen , who was fastest for most of the final session . Provisionally sitting in third as the session drew to a close , Massa was pushed back to fifth as Kovalainen and Alonso put in last @-@ minute laps to fill the second row of the grid . Kubica took sixth place , ahead of both Toyotas of Jarno Trulli and Glock and the Toro Rossos of Sebastian Vettel and Sébastien Bourdais . Coulthard bettered teammate Webber when he qualified 11th ; Piquet split the Red Bull drivers in 12th . The only Japanese driver in the field , Nakajima , managed 14th ahead of his Williams teammate Nico Rosberg . Heidfeld could only achieve 16th place , ten places behind his BMW teammate Kubica . Heidfeld spent the majority of the first session struggling with the set @-@ up of his car . The Hondas of Rubens Barrichello and Jenson Button filled the ninth row in front of the constructor 's home crowd . The Force Indias qualified last ; Sutil comfortably outqualified his teammate Fisichella by 0 @. @ 8 seconds , to sit in 19th place .

== Race ==

The conditions on the grid were dry before the race . The air temperature was 16 ° C ( 61 ° F ) and the track temperature was 21 ° C ( 70 ° F ) ; conditions were expected to remain consistent throughout the race . Most of the frontrunners began the race on the harder compound tyre ; only Massa was using the softer option . Räikkönen accelerated faster than Hamilton off the line , getting ahead of him down the first straight , but the McLaren driver pulled into the Ferrari 's slipstream , before swerving to overtake Räikkönen in the inside of the corner . Going into the first corner , Hamilton badly locked @-@ up his front wheels while braking and ran wide ; although there was no contact , Räikkönen was also forced wide in avoidance . This was then followed by contact with Kovalainen , which finally forced Räikkönen off the track . All three drivers dropped back down the field as a result of the incident . Kubica took the lead ahead of Alonso and Kovalainen after the corner , avoiding collisions as other cars locked their tyres on the cold track . Fisichella drove into the back of Barrichello , scattering carbon fibre over the track . Coulthard collided with Bourdais and then Piquet , sustaining suspension damage and sliding into the barriers after turn two . Nakajima left the track trying to avoid Coulthard , although he managed to rejoin after losing his front wing . The Japanese driver pitted at the end of the lap for a new wing .

At the end of the first lap , Kubica led from Alonso , Kovalainen , Trulli , Massa , Hamilton and Räikkönen . On lap two , Massa braked late into the chicane at turn 10 , briefly letting Hamilton past , before running over the kerbs on the exit from the corner and hitting the McLaren driver 's car . Hamilton was spun round by the contact and pitted at the end of the lap for new tyres and more fuel , which dropped him to 18th place . Massa continued in seventh place . On lap eight Räikkönen passed Trulli into turn 10 to take fourth position . In third place , more than a second ahead of the Ferrari driver , Kovalainen set a new fastest lap of 1 : 19 @.@ 258 on lap 12 to which Räikkönen responded with a 1 : 19 @.@ 193 four laps later . Two more drivers joined Coulthard in retirement before the first round of fuel stops : Glock pitted on lap five and again on lap six , before retiring because of handling difficulties resulting from a broken seat fixing ; Sutil retired on lap nine with a puncture caused by running over carbon fibre shards .

On lap 17 , Massa and Hamilton were given drive @-@ through penalties , Massa for colliding with Hamilton and Hamilton for forcing Räikkönen off the track into turn one . Hamilton took his penalty immediately . Massa pitted for fuel and tyres on the next lap , before coming into the pits again on lap 20 to serve his penalty , which dropped him to 14th place , one place ahead of Hamilton . Meanwhile , Kubica and Räikkönen pitted on lap 17 for tyres and fuel . On the same lap , Kovalainen pulled over to the side of the track with engine problems and retired from the race . Alonso pitted on lap 18 , emerging ahead of Kubica to take the provisional lead , with cars in front still to pit . Trulli , Vettel and Bourdais pitted over the following six laps . Fisichella retired from the race with gearbox problems on lap 21 . Piquet took his first pit stop on lap 28 , emerging ahead of Bourdais as Alonso opened the gap on Kubica to 7 @.@ 8 seconds . Massa overtook Button to take 12th position one lap later .

Alonso lapped consistently in the low 1 : 19 range , setting the new fastest lap of the race on lap 41 , a 1 : 19 @.@ 101 , to extend his lead over Kubica to more than 12 seconds . Räikkönen was five seconds behind Kubica in third . Alonso pitted for the second time on lap 43 and changed to the softer compound tyre . Kubica , complaining of understeer over the team radio , made his second stop on lap 46 , two laps ahead of Räikkönen . Trulli , Bourdais , Vettel and Piquet pitted over the next five laps , their teams giving them sufficient fuel to finish the race . As Bourdais exited the pit @-@ lane in seventh place on lap 51 , Massa , who was eighth , but yet to make his final pit stop , attempted to pass him and the two cars collided at the first corner . Massa spun , but rejoined the race behind Bourdais . Three laps later , the stewards announced that they were investigating the incident , and would make their decision after the race . On lap 52 , Räikkönen attempted to pass Kubica on the approach to turn one after drafting behind him up the straight , but Kubica drove right as a blocking manoeuvre , braked late , and defended his position . On the following lap Kubica attempted to replicate his block , but Räikkönen out @-@ braked him into turn one , and the two

drew alongside . Kubica held the inside line on the turn three left @-@ hander , and drove the racing line as Räikkönen left the track at the run @-@ off area . Räikkönen then rejoined behind the BMW driver . Kubica faced similar challenges from Räikkönen over the next two laps into turn one , but he successfully defended his position .

Massa pitted on lap 53 , and rejoined behind Heidfeld in tenth . He subsequently set the fastest lap of the race on lap 55 , a 1 : 18 @. @ 426 . Meanwhile , Piquet was able to close the gap on Räikkönen to under a second , before losing time by running wide at turn five on lap 60 . Massa passed Heidfeld for ninth on the same lap , and began closing in on Webber . On lap 65 , Massa drafted down the straight and attempted to pass Webber , who defended his position by driving to the right . Crossing the track boundary into the end of the pit @-@ lane , Massa managed to pass Webber , and out @-@ braked him into turn one , to take eighth place . Alonso crossed the finish line on lap 67 to take his second win of the season , five seconds ahead of Kubica . Räikkönen was third , ahead of Piquet , Trulli , Bourdais , Vettel and Massa . Webber took ninth on the line , ahead of Heidfeld , who struggled with a heavy car and failed to improve on a poor qualifying performance . Rosberg finished in front of Hamilton , in 11th . Barrichello and Button took the next two positions ; both drivers blamed their Hondas for their uncompetitive performance at the Fuji circuit . Nakajima finished last , in 15th , unable to recover after his forced pit @-@ stop early in the race .

= = = Post @-@ race = = =

The top three finishers appeared in the subsequent press conference where Alonso said that the decision to run a shorter second stint than Kubica ( between the first and second pit stops ) was his decision : " Sometimes you can do it , sometimes you can 't but today the car was perfect and I was able to do it . " Alonso added that he had confidence in the car to perform at the remaining Grands Prix : " The feeling I have now is that we can do anything " . Kubica said that his second @-@ placed finish was better than his win at the Canadian Grand Prix earlier in the season . He added that to finish on the podium after BMW Sauber 's failure to improve the car from the beginning of the season was a " great result for the team in , I think , a very difficult moment " . Räikkönen said that he was " a bit disappointed because being in first place in the first corner but then being pushed out didn 't help and being in the front could have given us a better result but anyhow , that 's racing " . He added that Kovalainen 's impact with him at the first corner had caused handling difficulties in his car , which left him unable to improve on his third @-@ placed finish .

Forty minutes after the race , Bourdais received a 25 @-@ second penalty from the stewards for his collision with Massa on lap 50 . This demoted him from sixth to tenth , and promoted Massa to seventh , giving him one more Championship point . Bourdais blamed Massa for the incident :

I did everything I could not to run into him and he just squeezed and turned and behaved like I didn 't exist , like I wasn 't there . What am I supposed to do ? ... It 's just a little bit of respect , you give each other room and then everything goes right , but if you don 't for sure it 's going to be an incident .

Massa denied responsibility , and agreed with the stewards ' decision : " I think there 's little to say : I had already entered the turn and he hit me from behind , spinning me round . " The penalty was largely criticized in the media . GrandPrix.com called the penalty " bizarre " , saying that Bourdais " could not just disappear " . James Allen of ITV said that in light of FIA race director Charlie Whiting 's announcement prior to the race , which indicated that cars exiting the pit @-@ lane would have right of way , the penalty was " ridiculous " . French sporting newspaper L 'Équipe criticized the stewards for their intervention , saying that both drivers held their lines and the collision was just a racing incident . Mark Blundell , who drove in Formula One for five years , called for former drivers to be part of the stewards meetings which award penalties : " You can examine pieces of paper , graphs , telemetry , but you don 't know what 's going on in a driver 's brain until you 've experienced it . " Blundell 's suggestion eventually became fact - the 2010 season introduced a system whereby a former F1 driver acted as a steward during each Grand Prix .

Lewis Hamilton was criticized for his aggressive drive into the first corner by much of the British press . Edward Gorman of The Times described Hamilton 's move as " impetuosity and untamed

aggression " , adding that Hamilton " gambled with a kamikaze attempt to get past Räikkönen " . The BBC 's Andrew Benson said that " Hamilton is still in a strong position but the Englishman will have to cut out the mistakes that have characterised his season if he is not to lose the championship for the second year in a row . " In Italy , La Gazzetta dello Sport said that Hamilton 's start suffered from " his usual excessive aggression " . Hamilton said " I made a mistake and I paid for it . "

Massa 's touch on Hamilton 's car on lap two was labelled by the McLaren driver " as deliberate as it could be " . Massa rejected the allegation , saying " I had two wheels on the gravel . I could not stop the car and I was on the gravel because he pushed me into the gravel . " Media coverage of the incident suggested that though the contact was Massa 's fault , it was unintentional . Simon Arron , writing for The Daily Telegraph , said Hamilton 's accusation of deliberate contact was " unworthy and unwise " , adding that the contact was simply a racing incident . The gap between the drivers in the Drivers ' Championship after the race stood at five points , in Hamilton 's favour , with two races remaining . In the Constructors ' Championship , McLaren 's failure to score points , combined with Ferrari 's third and seventh , moved Ferrari to a seven @-@ point lead .

= = Classification = =

= = = Qualifying = = =

= = = Race = = =

^ 1 Bourdais given a 25 @-@ second penalty for colliding with Massa .

= = Championship standings after the race = =

**Bold text indicates who still has a theoretical chance of becoming World Champion .**

**Note : Only the top five positions are included for both sets of standings .**