

= 2008 Chinese Grand Prix =

The 2008 Chinese Grand Prix (formally the V Sinopec Chinese Grand Prix) was a Formula One motor race held on 19 October 2008 at the Shanghai International Circuit , Shanghai , China . It was the 17th and penultimate race of the 2008 Formula One season . The 56 @-@ lap race was won by Lewis Hamilton for the McLaren team after starting from pole position . Ferrari driver Felipe Massa finished second , and Kimi Räikkönen was third in the other Ferrari .

Hamilton , the eventual Drivers ' Champion , led the Championship going into the race , and started from pole position alongside Räikkönen . Second in the Drivers ' Championship , Massa began from third , next to Fernando Alonso of Renault . The first three drivers retained their positions into the first corner , but Alonso was passed by Hamilton 's McLaren teammate Heikki Kovalainen . Alonso , however , was able to regain the place midway through the first lap . Over the course of the race , Hamilton extended a considerable lead over the two Ferraris . Massa passed Räikkönen with seven laps remaining , to improve his chances of surpassing Hamilton 's points tally at the final race in Brazil .

The result extended Ferrari 's lead over McLaren in the Constructors ' Championship from seven to 11 points . Third @-@ placed in the Drivers ' Championship , Robert Kubica 's sixth place at the Grand Prix eliminated his hopes of winning the Championship , and reduced his lead over fourth @-@ placed Räikkönen to six points . Nelson Piquet Jr. scored his last ever world championship points at this race .

= = 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 . 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 .

Prior to the race , McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton led the Drivers ' Championship with 84 points , and Ferrari driver Felipe Massa was second with 79 points . Behind them in the Drivers ' Championship , Robert Kubica was third with 72 points in a BMW Sauber , and Massa 's Ferrari teammate Kimi Räikkönen was fourth with 63 points . Kubica 's teammate Nick Heidfeld was fifth with 56 points . In the Constructors ' Championship , Ferrari were leading with 142 points , seven points ahead of their rivals McLaren ? Mercedes , whom they had overtaken at the previous race . BMW Sauber were third with 128 points . In the battle for fourth place , Renault had 66 points , now 16 points ahead of Toyota .

At the previous race in Japan , the gap between Hamilton and Massa had closed by two points . Hamilton had started from pole position ahead of Räikkönen , but had a poor start . At the first corner he braked late , and forced Räikkönen wide . He was later given a penalty , which dropped him down the field from where he was unable to recover to a points scoring position . Massa also received a penalty for a collision with Hamilton on the second lap , but was able to finish in seventh position . The British press described Hamilton 's move as " impetuosity and untamed aggression " , saying that the McLaren driver would have to adopt a more conservative race strategy in China . For his part , Hamilton said that he would be taking no risks :

We will approach it the same as always . We won 't be taking risks , but we will be attacking as much as we can to win the race . If I 'm in a position where we are looking to gain good points , and it 's an unnecessary risk to make a manoeuvre , then I won 't be doing that . It 's always important to be fast , but it 's not necessarily the fastest car that wins . Being fast is great for positioning , and maybe getting out in front , and then afterwards trying to stay calm .

With ten points on offer for the winner of the Grand Prix , it was possible that Hamilton would clinch

the Championship in Shanghai . Massa remained confident , saying that the race was just like any other : " You have a pressure but it is a different pressure , but you have always the pressure on your side . "

Renault driver and two @-@ time Championship winner Fernando Alonso created controversy when he said " if I can help , I will help Massa . " Alonso 's departure from McLaren after driving for the British team in 2007 had been acrimonious , and Alonso 's dislike for the rookie Hamilton was well documented . Talking about Hamilton 's penalty in Japan , Alonso said " I don 't know what he did , but it 's good he 's punished anyway . " Hamilton refused to be drawn into the controversy : " I don 't particularly have an opinion on it , " he said , adding that he was interested only in his own race .

== 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 . All three sessions were held on a dry track . Hamilton was fastest in the first session with a time of 1 : 35 @.@ 630 , 0 @.@ 39 of a second ahead of Massa , who was next quickest . Räikkönen , Heikki Kovalainen of McLaren , Kubica , Alonso and Heidfeld rounded out the top seven . Sébastien Bourdais of Toro Rosso was eighth , having been quickest early in the session . Renault driver Nelson Piquet drove into the gravel beside the pit @-@ lane entry , though managed to rejoin . Hamilton was again quickest in the second session ; his early time of 1 : 35 @.@ 750 was the fastest of the afternoon . The Renaults were next quickest , ahead of Jarno Trulli of Toyota , Red Bull driver Mark Webber , Massa , Bourdais and Räikkönen . Bourdais spun off at turn two late in the session and beached his car in the gravel . Heidfeld was fastest in the final session with a time of 1 : 36 @.@ 061 , ahead of Hamilton , Kubica and Kovalainen . Massa , Räikkönen and Alonso lacked pace , and failed to make the top ten . Webber stopped late in the session when his engine failed on the back straight , requiring an engine change before qualifying . This would give him a ten @-@ place penalty on the grid .

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 seventh pole position of the season with a time of 1 : 36 @.@ 303 . He was joined on the front row of the grid by Räikkönen , who qualified 0 @.@ 342 seconds behind Hamilton 's time . Massa took third place , needing a good result to retain the possibility of a Championship victory . Alonso qualified in fourth ahead of Kovalainen , who took fifth after struggling for tyre grip during the final session . Webber was sixth fastest in the final session , but was demoted to 16th on the grid as a result of his penalty . Heidfeld originally qualified sixth , but was penalised three positions for impeding Red Bull driver David Coulthard in the first session . As a result , Toro Rosso driver Sebastian Vettel inherited sixth position , ahead of Trulli and Bourdais . Piquet took tenth position . Kubica 's eleventh placing was his worst qualifying result to that point in the season , struggling with his car 's set @-@ up throughout his two sessions . Rubens Barrichello of Honda took 13th behind Timo Glock of Toyota , to reach the top 15 for the first time in ten races . Williams driver Nico Rosberg took 14th on the grid . Coulthard failed to move beyond the first session ; the Red Bull driver qualified in 15th and blamed Heidfeld for his poor performance . Kazuki Nakajima of Williams , Jenson Button of Honda and the Force Indias of Adrian Sutil and Giancarlo Fisichella would line up on the back two rows of the grid .

== Race ==

The conditions on the grid were dry before the race . The air temperature was 27 ° C (81 ° F) and the track temperature was 30 ° C (86 ° F) ; weather forecasts suggested a small possibility of rain . Hamilton and Alonso began the race on harder compound tyre ; both Ferraris opted for the softer compound . Hamilton accelerated faster than the Ferraris off the line , and retained his lead into the first corner . Kovalainen overtook Alonso to take fourth in the opening corners . However , Alonso pushed Kovalainen hard through the middle sector of the lap , and passed him at the turn 14 hairpin after drafting the McLaren along the back straight . At the end of the first lap , Hamilton led from Räikkönen , Massa , Alonso and Kovalainen . Heidfeld was able to move from ninth on the grid to take sixth , after Bourdais drove into the back of Trulli at the first corner . Bourdais dropped back to 18th ; Trulli pitted at the next opportunity as a result of the damage and retired after the second lap .

Webber was able to climb from 16th on the grid to take 12th behind Glock , and passed the Toyota on the second lap . Kubica , further up the field , improved on his grid position , moving from 11th to take eighth behind Vettel . However , Hamilton was the quickest on track , as he set new fastest laps on laps three , six and eight , to extend his lead over Räikkönen to more than four seconds . This trend continued until lap 10 when Räikkönen fought back and closed the gap . However , Hamilton extended his lead when he set the fastest lap of the race , a 1 : 36 @. @ 325 on lap 13 . In the other McLaren , Kovalainen was struggling , running two seconds a lap slower than Hamilton , and dropping back from Alonso to Heidfeld .

The Red Bull of Mark Webber was the first to pit , on lap 12 . Webber had passed Barrichello and Piquet in separate manoeuvres to take ninth , but his pit stop dropped him back down to 18th position . Massa and Alonso came in to pit on lap 14 , from third and fourth . Kovalainen took the lead of the Grand Prix when Hamilton and Räikkönen paused their battle to take harder tyres and fuel on lap 15 . By the time Kovalainen and Heidfeld had pitted on laps 17 and 18 , Hamilton had established a commanding lead : 6 @. @ 9 seconds over Räikkönen and 14 @. @ 1 seconds over Massa . Räikkönen began to pull back Hamilton 's lead over the next ten laps , before losing 1 @. @ 4 seconds on lap 30 .

At the back of the race , Bourdais began a slow climb back up the field . The Toro Rosso driver passed Sutil (who later spun out and retired with a gearbox problem) , Nakajima and Coulthard , to sit in 15th by lap 30 . Rosberg fought Glock for 12th , until he passed the Toyota at the turn 14 hairpin on lap 12 . Rosberg 's pit stop relegated him to 18th , dropping six places . Kubica pitted late , on lap 25 , dropping from third to ninth , one position outside of the points .

Kovalainen suffered a puncture on lap 35 . The McLaren limped around the track back to the pit lane on the disintegrating tyre , rejoining in 17th on a replacement . Alonso , Massa , Hamilton and Räikkönen all pitted for the final time over laps 36 to 38 . Coming out of the second round of pit stops , Hamilton led Räikkönen by 13 seconds , Räikkönen more than 2 @. @ 5 seconds ahead of Massa . The gap between the Ferraris began to close , and Massa eased past Räikkönen on the back straight on lap 49 , to take second place on the track . Meanwhile , Kovalainen parked his car in the McLaren garage and retired from the race , his team not taking any chances with a problem which had developed with the engine 's hydraulics .

Hamilton took his fifth win of the season when he crossed the line at the end of the 56th lap , almost 15 seconds ahead of the second @-@ placed Massa . Räikkönen took third ahead of Alonso . Heidfeld managed to jump from ninth on the grid to finish in fifth place , just ahead of his teammate Kubica , who climbed from eleventh on the grid . A one @-@ stop pit strategy worked well for Glock as he finished seventh ; Piquet took eighth . Vettel , Coulthard , Barrichello and Nakajima took the next four places ; Bourdais recovered from his early contact with Trulli to take 13th . Webber 's initial success with a two @-@ stop strategy faded as he finished 14th . Rosberg took 15th , ahead of Button and Fisichella . Trulli , Sutil and Kovalainen were the three retirements from the 56 lap race .

= = = Post @-@ race = = =

The top three finishers appeared on the podium and in the subsequent press conference , where Hamilton praised his team : " they have done a phenomenal job and the car is really a dream to drive . " Looking ahead to the next race in Brazil , where Hamilton would enter with a seven @-@

point advantage , the Championship leader seemed confident : " It will be tough and [Ferrari] will be pushing us hard but hopefully as a team we can pull through . " Massa admitted that McLaren had the stronger car on the day :

For us we were completely driving on the limit trying to reduce the gap but it was not possible . I was trying to push as Kimi was trying to push to get closer to Lewis but it was not possible . So today unfortunately Lewis had the better car for the whole weekend .

Asked about his pass on Räikkönen in the closing laps , Massa said that " it was the best time for me in the race , I was quite strong and then I caught him and I passed him . " Since the 2002 Austrian Grand Prix , where Barrichello ceded the lead to Michael Schumacher , team orders have been banned in Formula One . Räikkönen appeared unbothered when asked about Massa 's pass : " I mean we know what we want as a team and that 's what we did it . It is normal in these situations . " No investigation was undertaken by the stewards at the race . GrandPrix.com played down the incident , saying " Anyone who understands racing understood what was going on and only the silly people objected . "

Kovalainen 's car had apparently been fitted with mismatched tyres at the front of the car during the first stint , meaning that the tyres spun in the opposite direction to which they were designed , causing his understeer . At his first pit stop his team , not realising the cause of the problem , had adjusted his front wing to compensate for the understeer and replaced the tyres correctly . This caused further handling problems , and eventually led to his retirement .

Kovalainen 's failure to score , combined with the two Ferraris making the top three , meant that Ferrari extended their lead over McLaren in the Constructors ' Championship from seven to 11 points . Massa said Ferrari had succeeded in the race : " I think for the Drivers ' Championship it was not fantastic but for the Constructors ' it was very good . " Kubica 's sixth place at the Grand Prix ruled out any chance of claiming the Drivers ' Championship . The BMW driver said his focus would now be on getting as good a result as possible in Brazil , saying " There is now one race left , and I shall try hard to defend my third place . "

= = Classification = =

= = = Qualifying = = =

= = = Race = = =

= = 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 .