

GRAND PRIX OF JAPAN

BULLETIN N°4

RACE FACTS AND INCIDENTS

Before the start Alex Yoong heads for the Minardi pit to take the spare car. He has to start from the pitlane. Also in trouble is Enrique Bernoldi who is left sitting on the pre-grid when the field takes off for the final parade lap. He is pushed into the pits and starts from there.

* Lap 1: At the start Juan-Pablo Montoya makes a slightly faster start than Michael Schumacher. The Ferrari driver moves across to protect the inside line. This allows Ralf Schumacher to close on Montoya but the three men remain in station as they go into the first corner. Rubens Barrichello is fourth with a fast-starting Giancarlo Fisichella getting ahead of Mika Hakkinen. David Coulthard follows in seventh with Jarno Trulli and Jenson Button behind him. In the course of the first lap Barrichello overtook Ralf Schumacher to take third. Further back Kimi Raikkonen makes a good start and jumps from 12th to 10th, while his team mate Nick Heidfeld drops from 10th to 14th after a near-miss with Jacques Villeneuve. Also having a good first lap is Jos Verstappen who goes from 21st on the grid to 17th at the end of the first lap. At the end of the lap Michael Schumacher is 3.6secs in the lead.

* Lap 2: Schumacher increase his lead to 6.3secs as Barrichello tried to pass Montoya. At the end of the lap Rubens dives down the inside of the Colombian at the chicane and gets ahead. At the back Heinz-Harald Frentzen runs into the back of Pedro de la Rosa's Jaguar and removes his front wing.

* Lap 3: At the first corner Montoya retakes second place from Barrichello. Further around the lap Fisichella has a half-spin and drops from fifth place to 12th. Frentzen pits and drops to the back of the field. Michael Schumacher ends the lap with a lead of 8.2secs.

* Lap 4: Schumacher's lead is 8.9secs. Montoya is able to hold back Barrichello and the order begins to settle down. At the back of the field Olivier Panis overtakes Fernando Alonso for 17th.

* Lap 6: Schumacher's lead is up to 10secs while Montoya has pulled out a second over Barrichello. Raikkonen spins out of ninth place and Jean Alesi is not able to avoid him. The two cars hit the barriers at high-speed but both men emerge unscathed. As the other cars try to avoid the flying wreckage Fisichella passes Eddie Irvine for what has become ninth position.

* Lap 11: Fisichella passes Button to move to eighth place.

* Lap 14: Frentzen passes Yoong to take 19th place.

* Lap 15: After a period of stability during which the gap between Michael Schumacher and Montoya remains at around 10 seconds, Barrichello heads for the pits for his first pit stop. This indicates that he is on a three-stop strategy. Rubens drops from third place to seventh behind Ralf Schumacher the two McLarens and Fisichella. At the end of the lap Barrichello passes Fisichella at the chicane.

* Lap 16: Sixth-placed Trulli and eighth-placed Fisichella both pit. They drop back to 12th and 13th places. Also pitting is Panis who drops from 16th to 18th.

* Lap 17: Verstappen pits, dropping from 14th to 17th.

* Lap 18: Michael Schumacher comes in for his first pit stop and drops behind Montoya, Ralf Schumacher and Mika Hakkinen. He tries to pass the McLaren but cannot get ahead. At the tail of the field Yoong stops for the first time.

* Lap 19: The pit stops continue with ninth-placed Jacques Villeneuve and 10th-placed Heidfeld. Also pitting is Enrique Bernoldi who drops from 16th to 19th.

* Lap 20: Schumacher remains stuck behind Hakkinen - the two crossing the line side-by-side. Montoya charges in an effort to close the gap before his first pit stop. Seventh-placed Button stops and rejoins in 11th.

* Lap 21: Montoya pits. This puts Ralf Schumacher into the lead while Hakkinen and Michael Schumacher continue their battle. There are more stops in the midfield with Alonso and Enge stopping. Frenzen overtakes Verstappen to take 16th place. Enrique Bernoldi stops for a 10-second stop-go penalty for gaining a time advantage by going through a chicane. The Arrows team had previously been warned by e-mail about him jumping the chicane.

* Lap 22: Frenzen stops and falls back to 17th behind Alonso, Enge and Panis.

* Lap 23: Ralf Schumacher stops and Hakkinen goes into the lead. Ralf rejoins in fifth place. Coulthard also stops and falls from fourth to sixth. Eddie Irvine, who has climbed to seventh stops but the refuelling machine malfunctions and he rejoins without fuel.

* Lap 24: Hakkinen pits and so Michael Schumacher is back in the lead. His lead over Montoya is down to 5.3secs. Irvine stops again but the refuelling machine is still not working and he retires. Further back Villeneuve passes Button for 11th place.

* Lap 26: Seventh-placed de la Rosa pits and he falls back behind a lively battle between Trulli, Fisichella, Villeneuve, Button and Heidfeld. Ralf Schumacher is given a 10-second stop-go penalty for gaining a time advantage by going through a chicane. The Williams team had previously been warned by e-mail about Ralf jumping the chicane.

* Lap 29: Third-placed Barrichello pits for the second time. At the same time Ralf Schumacher comes in for his penalty. As both men leave the pits Barrichello is slow away and Schumacher caught by surprise passes him. He then touches the white line as he is leaving the pits and the FIA Stewards once again investigate. It is decided that he should not be penalised as Barrichello had not been going as fast as Ralf had expected. At the end of the lap Ralf overtakes Rubens for fifth place. At the tail of the field Frenzen passes Panis for 16th place.

* Lap 30: Frenzen passes Verstappen for 15th place.

* Lap 32: Panis stops for a second time but retains 17th place.

* Lap 33: Barrichello passes Ralf Schumacher to take fifth place. Trulli pits again and falls from ninth to 10th place. Heidfeld also stops and holds on to 11th place. Frenzen overtakes Enge for 14th while Verstappen has his second stop but remains 16th.

Lap 34: The gap between Michael Schumacher and Montoya at the front remains six and a half seconds and there is then a big gap back to Hakkinen and Coulthard. Barrichello is fifth with Ralf Schumacher sixth. Fisichella is seventh while eighth-placed Villeneuve pits again and drops behind Button and Fisichella.

* Lap 35: Fisichella stops and so Button moves to seventh place. Further back Enge stops for his second time.

* Lap 36: Michael Schumacher pits again and Montoya takes the lead. Once again Michael rejoins behind Hakkinen. At the tail of the field Enge pits again with a mechanical problem.

* Lap 38: Montoya and Hakkinen both pit and so Schumacher goes back into the lead. Button also stops and falls from seventh to eighth behind Fisichella again. Frenzen has his second stop and is overtaken by Alonso.

* Lap 39: Coulthard and Ralf Schumacher have their second stops. David drops from second place to fifth and Ralf from fourth to sixth.

- * Lap 41: Barrichello comes in for his third stop and falls back behind the two McLarens again. In the midfield de la Rosa has his second stop and remains 12th. Enge pits from a fourth time.
- * Lap 42: Enge retires after one further exploratory lap.
- * Lap 45: De la Rosa retires with a fuel pressure problem.
- * Lap 47: Fisichella retires with a mechanical problem.
- * Lap 48: Hakkinen pulls over and lets Coulthard take third place.
- * Lap 49: Villeneuve spins and Heidfeld moves to ninth.
- * Lap 53: Michael Schumacher wins a dominant victory although Montoya is only just over three seconds behind at the finish line. Coulthard is third and so secures second place in the Drivers' World Championship.