

GRAND PRIX OF FRANCE

BULLETIN No1

FRIDAY 27 JUNE 1997

FREE PRACTICE 11.00 TO 12.00

WEATHER CONDITIONS: Heavy rain

BARRICHELLO FASTEST FOR STEWART

Rubens Barrichello again demonstrated the potential of Bridgestone's wet weather rubber by setting fastest time in the first free practice session with his Stewart-Ford. After ten laps he stopped, admitting that there was nothing more to be learned from the conditions. Team-mate Jan Magnussen wound up eighth fastest after stopping out on the circuit with a possible gearbox problem.

HILL HAPPY IN THE WET

"I am doing my rain dance," grinned Damon Hill after setting second fastest time in the Arrows-Yamaha. "I would obviously like a wet race. Bridgestone's wet weather rubber is very good and also delivers a very consistent performance." Hill was using the D-spec Yamaha engine although he is not scheduled to use this latest version in Sunday's race. Pedro Diniz spent the session assessing different wet tyres, including a deep grooved cover for very heavy rain and was happy to wind up seventh fastest.

IRVINE THIRD FOR FERRARI

Eddie Irvine set third fastest time in this morning's session, but Michael Schumacher took things easily to wind up 13th. "The conditions were changing all the time," said Michael. "The session was worthless." Both cars were fitted with the latest Step 2 version of the V10 engine which the team is hoping to race, barring problems. The team has a new front wing design available for this race but it was not used this morning.

WURZ A CONFIDENT FOURTH

Alexander Wurz was a confident fourth fastest in the Benetton-Renault, preparing for his second consecutive race as Gerhard Berger's stand-in. He was very happy with the performance of his car, although he admitted it was not perfectly balanced in his first outing in the wet. Jean Alesi went out when the rain was at its heaviest, so was content with ninth fastest time. The team had the latest updated Renault RS9A engine available this morning.

MIXED FORTUNES AT JORDAN

Giancarlo Fisichella spent the morning experimenting with rollbars, springs and dampers, ending up fifth fastest in his Jordan-Peugeot. Team-mate Ralf Schumacher had a new chassis at his disposal following his Canadian GP accident, but he came into the pits with fuel pump failure after only a single lap.

WILLIAMS SIXTH AND 16TH

Heinz-Harald Frentzen set sixth fastest time in his Williams while Jacques Villeneuve ended up 16th. It was an inconclusive session during which both men concentrated on refining their wet weather chassis set-ups and assessing the 1996 and 97 specification Goodyear wet weather tyres.

BRIEFLY:

Norberto Fontana stopped his Sauber-Petronas after only seven laps as he did not want to risk the car further on his first F1 outing...Jarno Trulli wound up 11th after a spin on his first outing in the Prost-Mugen Honda...both McLarens did only a handful of laps to explore the conditions.

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