

The Chequered Flag



By Stephen English.....

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Epic F1 title fight nearing completion

WITH Formula 1 amidst its most thrilling season in years there are still five drivers in contention for the world championship with just two races remaining, Brazil this weekend and Abu Dhabi.

While Jenson Button and Sebastian Vettel's title chances were badly damaged by their failure to score points in Korea the pair can still play a major role in the destiny of this year's championship. Both drivers have stated that they are still looking to win the title and expect to have the support of their team. Button lies 42 points adrift of championship leader Fernando Alonso and while he will receive support from his McLaren team the main focus of their resources has undoubtedly moved to Lewis Hamilton's side of the garage.

It is quite a different situation at Red Bull with Vettel falling 25 points adrift after his engine failure in Korea. The team have publicly stated that they will support him until the title is no longer mathematically possible, this will hamper the team's chances of winning the title with Mark Webber.

It may seem unfair on Vettel that his title hopes are all almost extinguished after a mechanical failure but the young German must also rue his poor decision making over the course of the season that cost him points. His recent form has been of the highest calibre but it now seems that his mistake laden mid season races have cost him dearly.

Teams and drivers need to maximise their title chances in the coming weeks

Red Bull need to back Webber, just as McLaren must do with Hamilton, and give the team the best chance of winning the championship. Webber has been the more complete driver at Red Bull this season but after crashing out of Korea he will need to delve deep into his inner resolve to show that he deserves the sole support of his team.

Webber has never won a championship of any kind and he must be feeling anxious and nervous with time running out. Korea could be looked at as a microcosm of Webber's mentality. On the grid he was calling for the safety car to start the race as he looked to minimise the potential for any risk to his title lead. It was clear that the title was looming large in his mind as he complained about the dangerous conditions.

Racing drivers are incredibly competitive by their nature and their lives have been spent doing whatever is needed to win a world championship. When people are put in a position to finally achieve the goals of a lifetime it in trying to win the title the focus shifts to not losing it. Webber's radio contact with the team would point to this conflict.

Webber has as sharp a "racers instinct" as any other driver but in Korea his natural instinct to race was neutered by his fear of losing the title. With his mindset clearly on not making a mistake and losing the title his attention was not focused on the job at hand-winning the title. A mistake was all but inevitable for Webber in Korea and while it was only his second retirement of the season it could be exceptionally costly.

Alonso primed for title number three

With both Red Bulls retiring in Korea the path was cleared for Alonso to elevate himself back to the head of the championship. The season has been one of contrasts from the Spaniard. In the opening half of the year he made numerous uncharacteristic mistakes that cost him points, but since Canada he has been in superb form. He has only missed out on the podium once since the German Grand Prix.

Hockenheim will unquestionably be one of the talking points of 2010 throughout the winter but the decision for Ferrari to employ team orders to gift Alonso the victory was also the moment in which Alonso sprang to life. With the most illustrious team in motorsport effectively telling Alonso that he was their sole focus and their only hope of winning the title Alonso's confidence and performance sky rocketed. Having been handed the keys to the Ferrari team Alonso has been all but unstoppable and he now has the momentum to take the title this weekend in Brazil.

In the past the week former FIA president Max Mosley said that "if Alonso wins the title it will be devalued by team orders." After Germany many were outraged by the blatancy of the team orders. But to be truthful if Alonso wins the title, it will have vindicated Ferrari's decision to use team orders.

GREYHOUND/HORSE RACING DUNDALK STADIUM

Nuala could have another diamond in Esker

By Joe Carroll

There was a high standard in the opening round of the Friday Night 525, at Dundalk Stadium, and whichever one of the twelve still standing comes out on top in the decider will have earned the 950 prize.

The four heats were bookended by wins in 29.37 and 29.14, but in between there was a 28.88 and a best-of-the-night 28.86. Esker Diamond came in with the second-fastest time, raising trainer Nuala Lynch's hopes of taking another Dundalk title.

The Offaly handler sent out the fast but unlucky Ciara's Castle to win the €10,000-to-the-winner Junior Cup, which, sadly, no longer features on the Dowdallshill calendar, and must have high hopes of scoring in this competitive, if much less valuable, event.

Greenwell Club has the clock, and in her four-length win from Eagles View this youngster, tytrained in Clogherhead by Craig

Kelly, whose kennel is flying right now, couldn't have done the business with more authority.

An easy 29.20 winner on her initial outing a fortnight earlier, Pat and John Flaherty's daughter of Hondo Black and Greenwell Puma took up the running in the back, and showing real speed after turning in, got to the line four lengths in advance of Eagles View, who just held off the late challenge of Lime Kill Boy.

Regardless of how she fares in this competition, Greenwell Club looks a real prospect. She is also a March '09 whelp.

Monleek Leader shouldn't be discounted. Though not as good as either Greenwell Club or Esker Diamond on the clock, Rita Downey's Drogheda runner is capable of much better than the 29.14 he recorded here. The 2/7 shot was a ready enough winner, getting home four lengths clear of Double The Score, but had anything but a clear passage.

Night Orbit was the warm favourite for the opening heat but

had to be satisfied with third in a very tight finish. Victory went to Clough Lad who was ultra game in a race of fluctuating fortunes.

Declan Donaghy's Co Armagh racer was first away, but was quickly joined by Pascal Sage and Gavin

Gallagher's Windowtheskies. Before this pair crossed the line, divided by only a head, they swapped the lead a number of times.

The semi-finals take place this Friday night on a card that gets underway at the normal time. Racing on Saturday night, however, will have a late start, as the stadium is also housing a horse meeting.

Drawn to perfection, Dundee Dan won Saturday night's Sean Brady Engineering 600 final for Brian and Laurence Jones. The homebred had the rails, where he likes it best, and though kept up to his work throughout by Arthur Boyle's Dowdallshill challenger, Shikana, got home with two-and-a-half lengths to spare in a competition-best 33.02.

Horse racing news

MIDDLEHAM trainer Mark Johnston improved his strike-rate at Dundalk this year to better than 50 per cent when Take Ten landed the Crowne Plaza Race and Stay Package Handicap on the all-weather track on Friday night last.

Greg Fairley was smartly away on the three-year-old, who led all the way.

Take Ten (9-2) stretched away in the final two

furlongs to score by three lengths, with Noverre To Go holding Banna Boirche for second to make it a one-two for the raiders. It was Johnston's fourth winner at the track from seven runners.

Joe Eile ran poorly last time but put that well behind him by taking the Irish Stallion Farms EBF Maiden for the Ger Lyons team.

Keagan Latham swept down the outside to hit the front a furlong and a half out on the 7-2 shot, who just held the late lunge of

Dazzle Them by a short head.

Three times placed at Dundalk on previous visits, An Saighdiur returned to the track to break his duck in the Crowne Plaza Leading Jockey and Trainer Championship Maiden.

Declan McDonogh was never far away from front-running favourite Nidian and led well inside the final furlong on Andrew Slattery's 7-1 chance before holding Little Luxury's burst by a short head.

Johnny

Murtagh

travelled sweetly into the lead on the Eddie Lynam-trained favourite Arcadian Dream in the bookings@dundalkstadium.com Handicap, but Pdraig Beggy was going even better on stable companion Dahindar (5-1), who swept past to win by a length and three-quarters.

The lightly raced Blue Eyed Miss (8-1) won for the first time since her juvenile days over three years ago when she wore down Petit Chou in the straight in the Group Bookings At Dundalk Handicap.

Jim Malone remembered by Dundalk FC



Prior to Dundalk FC's final home game of the season, the Malone family presented a montage of photographs of their father Jim's involvement with Dundalk FC as a Director (1955-1994) and President (1994-1996). This was the work of Jim Murphy as part of the programme for the initial Malone Cup match with Drogheda. Pictured are Caoimhe and Deirdre Malone, Mary and Tara Moran, Jim Reilly Dundalk FC President, Paddy Malone and Pdraig McGowan, Dundalk FC Chairman. Seated in front Cillian Moran.

Gavin's Gamble

in association with **Boyle Boylesports**

Last week's bet won us €350.04, bringing our total for this season to €730.96 in aid of The Birches Alzheimer Centre. It's Premiership action again this week and our Boylesports €25 treble is:

**Blackburn 5/6
Birmingham - EVS
Fulham-Villa draw (21/10)**



Home	Draw	Away
Saturday, Nov 6 and Sunday, Nov 7 - Premiership		
21/10 Bolton	9/4 Spurs	13/10
EVS Birmingham	23/10 West Ham	29/10
5/6 Blackburn	5/2 Wigan Athletic	10/3
10/3 Blackpool	5/2 Everton	5/6
11/8 Fulham	21/10 Aston Villa	21/10
1/6 Man Utd	11/2 Wolverhampton	18/1
11/10 Sunderland	23/10 Stoke City	13/5
1/4 Arsenal	9/2 Newcastle	11/1
3/1 West Brom	12/5 Man City	10/11
14/5 Liverpool	9/4 Chelsea	EVS

THE DUNDALK DEMOCRAT



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