

Jenson Button – Good Guys Do Win!

Jenson Button, Britain's tenth Formula One World Champion cemented his position in the history books with a drive to fifth from a damp-qualifying fourteenth place on the starting grid at Sao Paulo. Unlike some previous Champions he won it with one race to spare, and for the first time in history an Englishman will hand the title to a fellow countryman.



With as many superbly crafted overtakes as one would normally be treated to in a whole season he carved his way into contention and was in a championship-winning sixth place with Rubens Barrichello, his only real rival for the crown, in third place.

This would have been enough but a hard-charging Lewis Hamilton sealed Jenson's and Ruben's fate when squeezing past Barrichello he clipped the McLaren's endplate against the front left tyre of the Brawn as he took a podium position having started from fifteenth on the grid. On any other day Lewis would have been 'driver of the day', but with Ruben's puncture requiring him to pit for a third time Jenson just needed to drive safely to the chequered flag to fulfil a lifetime's ambition and for the day and the season to be his.

What does an English sportsman need to do to win the full support of the British press? Since wiping the floor with his rivals by winning six of the first seven races and going on to continuously lead the championship the press still question and condemn. What sort of success would satisfy them for goodness sake? The armchair pundits mutter that in the Brawn car 'anyone could win' and Vettel and Hamilton made up more places than Jenson in the Brazilian race. Maybe so, but they weren't risking an ignominious exit and the dreadful repercussions that Jenson was grappling with, and still he made it look serene. It was the drive of a worthy world champion and should shut up the doubters once and for all, but it won't.

For many of us that love F1, Jenson has for years been acknowledged as the smoothest and safest pair of hands on the grid, and insiders know this from the telemetry that allows them to really assess who's quick and who's not. They've known for years even if the pundits don't. He made some duff decisions for sure, always seeming to be in the wrong team at the wrong time. But since his commitment to the Honda effort, and despite their wasted millions producing one poor car after another he has matured, kept his head down and his spirit up.

Honda's ill-judged exit from the scene at the end of last season, just as Ross Brawn was about to work his magic (surely the biggest business mistake in automotive history?) could have been the hammer blow to a lesser man, but he took the chance to fully commit to the team and by an extraordinary effort and some good luck the team were on the grid as Brawn GP at the first race of 2009 – the fairy tale began with a one – two finish for the rookie team and culminated in the tears of grown men as Jenson crossed the finish line in Brazil. Since being told it hasn't been done before he has now set his sights on being the first British driver to win back-to-back championships – don't bet against it, or that the doubters will continue to doubt it. Whatever, it'll be worth watching him try.

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