

F1 Preview: Korea – Di Resta Looking to Bounce Back



With a week to go until the Korean Grand Prix, the flyaway season is getting in full swing. It's the time of year when races come thick and fast, with Japan following the week after Korea and another back-to-back with India and Abu Dhabi taking place a fortnight later. For European fans, it means setting the alarm clocks for an early rise, and for the teams, it means preparing for a series of high downforce tracks and pushing for a strong finish towards the end of the season. The Korea International Circuit is a mixture of street circuit and traditional racetrack, with high levels of downforce and a variation of high-speed sections and slow corners. Fernando Alonso won the inaugural race in 2010, but Sebastian Vettel has taken the spoils in the last two years and looks to be the favourite to make it three in a row, having comfortably won the last three races.

Scotland's Paul di Resta will be hoping for a better result after the disappointment of Singapore, where he crashed into a barrier after 54 laps and lost the chance of a good points finish. Di Resta claimed after the race that the accident might have been a mechanical issue rather than a driver error, but the distinction will mean little in terms of the lost points, making it the fifth time in a row that the Scot has failed to score. Di Resta has struggled in the second half of the season, and Singapore marks the third time in three races he has had to end his race prematurely, although in Singapore he was at least classified as he had completed 90% of the laps. Force India have struggled with tyre changes that were introduced in Hungary, and now face a battle to wrestle 5th place in the Constructors Championship back from McLaren.

It's not ideal timing for the downturn in form, with potential seats available in the driver market. Although di Resta is contracted until 2014, Force India have said they wouldn't stop him moving elsewhere if the opportunity arose. Di Resta's name was mentioned some time ago in relation to the vacant Lotus seat after Kimi Raikkonen's move to Ferrari, but talk now seems more centred around Felipe Massa, Nico Hulkenberg and GP2 driver Felipe Nasr. McLaren are also yet to confirm Sergio Perez, whose season has perhaps been less impressive than team bosses would have hoped, which possibly leaves a chance of a seat alongside Jenson Button.

If one of the bigger teams are looking around the driver market for potential replacements, then di Resta will be hoping that his earlier season exploits have given him a chance. His recent form is not indicative of his ability as a driver, especially compared to the beginning of season, where he scored in seven out of the opening eight races. Particularly impressive drives were in Canada, where he climbed from 17th to 7th, and Silverstone, where he finished 9th despite being disqualified from qualifying and starting at the back of the grid. Despite the poor qualifying, it was ironically these races which showcased what di Resta can do, as he demonstrated great wheel-to-wheel racing and the ability to battle through the field to score points. Singapore was almost a similar scenario, where di Resta failed to get out of Q1 but was still on course to turn a bad qualifying position into points before his crash.

Korea may be the start of di Resta's last chance to impress teams looking for a 2014 driver. The quick succession of races towards the end of the season may be tough on the teams, but for the drivers it is an opportunity to string some good results together and make other teams sit up and take notice. After the disappointment of Singapore, it's up to di Resta to bounce back and make sure he puts in a performance worthy of taking note in Korea.

