

Bathurst - A day in front of the TV

Written by Jason (Neutral)

Sunday, 10 October 2010 00:00

Ok so it's race day at Bathurst and as usual I'm sitting in front of the tv. I've been relegated the bedroom as my son is watching play school on the big screen in the main lounge. No chance of winning that battle. I'll wait for his attention to move onto other things then I'll pounce.

As the coverage unfolds I'm sure the seven network will do regular race updates. I'm planing to do the same by writing this blog as the day unfolds. I'll include a few race updates but also track my day as I watch the race from home.

Lap 1, the race is underway and what started out to be an incident free first lap ended with Fabian Coulthard destroying in his Bundy Red Commodore at the end of con rod. Initial indications point to a left rear tyre failure. Fabian walked away and as his team mate indicated you can rebuild a car but not a driver so it's good to see he is OK.

With the safety car coming out the first round of commercials take over, I'm sure by the end of the day I will be able to recite the lines word for word. The first round of ads included; a network promo for "The Great South East", followed by ads for Coates Hire, Armor All, Shannons Car Insurance, Fujitsu Air, Home Hardware and Telstra. That's more ads than laps, to my surprise there was no Supercheap Auto.

As the safety car is out, seven cut to Mark Larkham in the pits to give a quick tour of a car with focus on the roll cage. There is no need for Larkham to worry about product mentions in his report as he is wearing a billboard and everything in the garage is high gloss brand stickers.

Guess what, safety car is still out so back to the ads, this time it's a network promo for Seven News, then ads for Pedders, XXXX Gold, Coates Hire, Crusty Demons, Watty! Solagard, Tyres & More, Fujitsu Air, Supercheap Auto and the X Factor.

I wonder if race control and the seven control room are in contact with each other, that way seven could ask for the safety car to remain out for one more lap so they can get some more ads in.

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If you watched the race and the commercials here is a little quiz for you. Can you provide the advertising slogans for each of the previously mentioned adds?

Lap 10, not much happening on track, most cars are now settling down into a rhythm, still a long way to go. I've also found that due to the fact that I was pausing the coverage to type, I've now got a nice little buffer on my PVR allowing me jump past the ads. Mind you the placement of advertising through the coverage makes sure I'm covered with the Zinger reply, Jim Beam Battle Pack, Coates Hire Leaderboard, Norton 360 Split Times and the Mother Highlights.

Lap 18, reports of rain on the top of the mountain, this will be an equaliser and I always love it when it rains as it makes for interesting racing.

Lap 24, sees a few driver changes and Craig Lowndes in for his first stint, we also see the splitter on Courtney's car replaces. I'm thinking of adding a Neutral sponsored section on my blog, I'll debut it later if the necessary event happens on track. It looks like the rain has fizzled out for now.

Lap 32, now the sun is out and Lowndes is on fire, working his way through the field. What is interesting is that due to the primary and secondary driver rule, most of the drivers on track are the secondary drivers. This poses the question is Lowndes super quick at the moment or is it the fact that he is currently racing secondary drivers making him look faster?

I've had my first pit stop and topped up the fuel with some BBQ chips, I should be right now to get through my next stint.

Lap 39, [Neutral Crash Update] Shane Price has contacted the wall on the top of the mountain, long slow run back down to the pits. As with most race fans we love great racing but we also love a great crash.

My race day is going well, my son is still leading the race for the big screen in the lounge room and I've just started lunch. Due to all my ad skipping I'm almost caught back up the the live broadcast and the traffic (commercials) again.

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Lap 47, the rain is back on the mountain and so are the kangaroos, Garth Tander passed a kangaroo round the outside at the cutting. What was amazing was the kangaroo was not crossing the track but it was hopping up the track on the racing line. He made it safely off the track but I'm guessing there are now a few more marbles in that turn.

I don't know if it's the light rain or just the mix of positions on track at the moment but the number of cars passing and providing entertaining racing is increasing.

Lap 48, car number 2 has just lost it's door, Tander's door fell off during a driver change. I've seen many delays during pit stops but normally due to fuel rig or wheel issues, but never a door. That's now 300km down 700 to go.

Also just watched a pad change on the coverage, it was done in under a minute. I'm expecting the same performance from my mechanic next time my car goes in for a service.

Lap 58, [Neutral Crash Update] 12 of Dean Fiore off at turn 10, bringing out the safety car. Looks like he had previous contact on the right front resulting in him spearing off into gravel trap.

I just noticed on the restart that the flag marshals on the top of the mountain are watching the oncoming traffic and not those heading away. Having been an official at a few events in my time I can tell you that you need to be looking past your flag point. Flags 101.

Safety cars obviously benefit some drivers and disadvantage others, but after watching this latest restart I can honestly say that the viewer is the real winner. The field is bunched up, drivers are all out of position and it's on, it's just like having the race start all over again.

Lap 71, [Neutral Crash Update] Luke Youlden has stepped out the back end of his Orrcon Steel FPR Falcon into the wall on the way into the cutting. Ouch.

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Neutral has had many mentions during today's broadcast, unfortunately they have mostly been radio communications between crews advising drivers to select Neutral when pitting.

Half race distance Lap 80 and the top 10 are Holdsworth/Besnard, Lowndes/Besnard, Ingall/Morris, Courtney/Luff, Davidson/Brabham, Reiner/Wall, Tander/McConville, Johnson/Marshall, Bargwanna/Seton and Richards/Moffat.

There is still a long way to go. Comfort as a viewer is starting to become an issue, I just had another pit stop and position change. I've rearranged the pillows on the bed and have been moving around every few laps. I've almost given up on moving to the lounge as my son has now setup camp in there with his trains.

The race has been underway for 3 and a half hours, and so far there have only been a few incidents and only two safety car periods. The rain moved in but left just as fast, leaving the race order pretty much unaffected. As the field is spreading out again the action is dwindling, but with Bathurst anything can happen and turn the race upside down.

Lap 96, traffic is now starting to play a part as the faster cars do battle. There has been some recent discussion in Formula 1 about the use of blue flags and lapped traffic. I've just watched a slower car yield for two faster cars.

I think that's another good question for the day, should slower drivers have to move off line to allow faster cars through? Should it not be "I'm racing you get round me" it could be advantageous. Imagine if two cars were battling and they came across a slower car. The leader could pass and put the slower car between him and his opponent, or the slower car could hold up the leader allowing a trailing car to catch up and challenge.

Lap 100, the race is on and currently Holdsworth/Besnard are leading. I'm now in a race of my own, my iPad battery is down to 37%, I started on full tanks and I'm now in fuel conservation mode. I don't have a crew chief monitoring this blog so I'm doing what I can. Screen brightness reduced, check, less twitter checking, check. I don't think it will hold on but I'll see how I go. I may need to go in for a pad change of my own.

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Lap 112, not much happening on track, well there maybe but with seven just covering the battle between Besnard and Lowndes you would never know what else is going on. However the battle between them is getting interesting, Lowndes is starting to apply some pressure and it's wheel to wheel racing in the fight for the lead.

300km to go and the top two are still going at it, Lowndes seems to be spending more time on the radio wingding about Besnard rather than sitting back and pressuring Besnard into a mistake.

Lap 117, there is a new leader, Besnard ended up making a mistake on the exit of turn one and Lowndes took advantage on the run up the mountain.

If resigned myself to the fact that I'll be doing the whole race in the bedroom, I'm now down to 30% on the iPad and hoping I'll make it to the end.

Lap 124, car number 33 of Holdsworth/Besnard serves a drive through for a pit speed violation. I'm confused how Garry Rogers can say I don't know which driver was responsible for the pit speed violation, but when asked if it was a violation for pit entry or pit exit he indicated that it couldn't be for the exit as their pit is only 5 feet from the end of the lane and you couldn't exceed the limit in that distance.

I'm no expert but if Besnard was driver on the way in and after the driver change it was Holdsworth exiting. It must have been Besnard speeding on pit entry. These guys own and run race teams, how?

There is so much debris and rubber (marbles) off the racing line now across the top of the mountain. Surly as the race goes on this is only further going to reduce overtaking opportunities and severely effect any slower car that moves off line to allow someone to pass. Maybe this is why we usually see a safety car towards the end of the race.

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Lap 127, sees the tables turned on car 33, not long ago Lowndes was on the radio complaining about car 33 being all over the place with Besnard behind the wheel, now Holdsworth (in car 33) is on the radio complaining that car 2 is all over the place.

Guys you're racing for position, just get on with it. The guy in front doesn't want to relinquish his position and will do everything to make his car as wide as possible.

Lap 135, I've finally caught up with the live broadcast and they have just sent out the safety car. Once again the comfortable lead that Lowndes had is gone and strategies thrown into chaos.

Crowd numbers have been announced at 182,000. Oh now that I'm watching the live feed the commercials that I started out with have greeted me again. Toilet break anyone?

With race restart you have to wonder was Whincup caught napping or has deliberately held the field back from Lowndes to give him some space. Lowndes has a 2second margin halfway through the lap. Looking back through the field everyone is bunched so why is Whincup so far back?

Now the race is on, three cars wide down across the start finish line. I'm now sitting up watching with more interest than in any other part of the race. Maybe it's because at the start of the race it's could be anyones race, now for those up the pointy end the finish is within reach.

As a race fan this is why races like Bathurst are on the must watch list. Five and a half hours of racing, (and commercials) not the occasional sprint race with nothing but waiting between races.

I know I bag the commercials but I guess its these sponsors that make the broadcast possible and if that's what's needed to keep these great events on free to air then, its every auto and much much more. I only ask that you not go to commercials inside the last ten laps.

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Lap 151, ten laps to go, fuelled to the end, in good position and running well and that's just me. Lowndes is holding a good lead, and the others are now just starting spread out. If its green flag all the way to the finish I can't see the result changing much from here.

Tander just proved me wrong by passing Courtney.

Lap 153, Will Davison has just hit the wall hard while in 3rd place bringing out the fourth safety car, this will take a bit to clear leaving us with a very exciting sprint to the flag.

This is it, I've spent the whole race in front of this tv some six hours. I'm not even backing a driver and I'm excited to see the result.

Lap 156, Race restart and it's exciting stuff, will we see another safety car due to a risky move or just great clean racing to the end.

Murphy moves into 6th. 5 to go. Bright moves to 4th past Courtney, 4 to go.

Whincup is close to Lowndes but with both driving for Team Vodafone will there be any change as a move could take them both out.

2 to go, holding station.

Last lap and one more time across the mountain, down the famous con rod straight and across the line.

It's a Vodafone one two with Lowndes/Skaife 1st, Whincup/Owen 2nd and Tander/McConville 3rd

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Well that's Bathurst for another year, I got through it and loved every minute, the Formula 1 race is on now so time for a channel change and another race.

For the record my iPad got through with 8% in the tank, must have been due to that last safety car period.