



7-2010:

Mark Webber: does he possess strong mental skills?

Two years ago I was asked to comment on the skills of Mark Webber for Autosport Magazine in England. Here is what I said: *"I see Mark as a driver who's taken himself out of a position to be successful too often. This has been reflected in both his choice of teams and incidents on track. He appears to have the principles of success a little backwards whereby he concentrates on the result, not the process. When this happens the soft touch that is so necessary for accurate technical feedback gets blurred which makes you try harder, which accelerates the downward cycle."*

I still stand by these comments and ironically this story came out the weekend of the British Grand Prix in 2008, when Mark qualified on the front row of the grid only to spin on the first lap. And therefore took himself out of a position to be successful yet again. I was there at Silverstone and watched it unfold and I believe I would regard most of Mark's on track "issues" as mental errors.

Fast Forward:

More recently however, Mark demonstrated that in certain environments, he does possess very strong mental skills. After the crash debacle in Turkey when he was clearly hit by his own team mate, Sebastian Vettel, and yet Mark was blamed by the team for the incident. He then went to Silverstone only to have the latest design of front wing, and presumably a faster wing, taken from him and given to his teammate. Vettel used that wing to good effect to beat Webber to the pole.

The world's press jumped all over the situation spouting the Webber was the number two driver and that Vettel was favored. He was bombarded with accusations and criticized in every way possible around the globe. Webber was not flustered in any visible way. He did NOT allow any outside distractions to dictate his behavior and his answer was to deliver one of his career best drives and beat everyone into the ground to win the British Grand Prix.... showing very strong mental skills. Similar form followed him to Hungary.

The personal attacks in the world of Formula One can be savage....and therefore the mental skill requirement can be considerable.. If you were in a similar situation, would you be equipped to handle the mental pressure and still perform at the highest levels? Are you sufficiently equipped today for what you want to do or win.

Derek Daly