

Budget Formula 1

Formula 1 car racing; how boring! Well if that's your view, then for many years I shared it with you and would rather have washed my own car or unblocked the drains than watch a bunch of cars processing around the same piece of road over and over

This was until I met my partner Kathy who is an F1 nut, so I started watching it with her on TV to keep her happy as you do when you are in a new relationship. Several years later, I now know the difference between prime and intermediate tyres; the balance required between down force and straight line speed and can recognise most cars and drivers. I have been well and truly won over

I guess motor racing is like any sport in that if you do not understand the rules and intricacies, then it is incomprehensible and yes, boring. I played rugby union for many years and still hold a cricket bat; sports that many people don't follow because the niceties are beyond them

Valencia Grand Prix

So three years ago when the European Grand Prix was awarded to Valencia, we just had to go as it is only two hours away. Off we went full of excitement and anticipation. We thought that we had struck it lucky when we saw a high rise building being constructed and people watching free from the roof. After climbing 17 floors, we settled in to watch, but not for long. Some spoil sport didn't want his party gate-crashed and we were escorted back down again; ah well, we tried

Tickets were 200 euros each and could only be bought for the three days, way beyond our budget, so we settled for second best and found a cafe next to the track where we could watch the event on TV and hear the roar as the cars screamed by a few metres away. Great fun, so we repeated the same exercise last year. A German driver won it and we then watched England vs. Germany in the Football World Cup. The Germans won that one too

Fired by the stories from Joanna Cruickshank, CBN's own English Girl in Spain, of the glamour and excitement, of rubbing shoulders with and talking to the drivers, we determined to go one better this year and get entry tickets. Booking early we managed to get good prices, but the grandstand was still out of reach. A very nice hostel on the edge of the city provided accommodation and had the extra advantage of being near to the metro station, so I didn't have to drive and could join in with a celebratory drink or two as seems customary at these events

Noisy- what do you expect?

So far, so good. Now you would think that sitting on your backside watching cars whiz by was fairly sedentary, but this didn't take into account the long trek that we had to make from the entrance to the viewing balcony, the searing heat wave and lack of shade. And the noise!! Oddly enough, I received a call from a customer whilst on the last leg of the metro trip and as soon as the automatic train doors opened, I had to

yell that I would call him back on Monday. Many fans carried ear defenders so I took the hint and bought some plug in ones which reduced the decibel count from fast jet at 10 paces to pneumatic drill outside the front door. By the third day, the penny had dropped regarding shade, so I dragged my very English looking broly from the car and lashed it to the railings

We tried to bring in drinks from outside the track where the prices were about 1000 percent lower. Cans were not allowed, so we had to drink or dump them. The tops were removed from all bottles in case they were used as missiles. Against whom? We overcame this one on race day by carrying spare tops in our pockets

National passion

Many nationalities were present; we even met that rare species in Spain of North Americans, but we foreigners were far outnumbered by the Spanish. Red was the predominant colour as Ferrari is not only the biggest name in F1, but has a Spanish driver. Every time he drove by on the track, the Spaniards rose and applauded. Quite what Fernando Alonso made of this I don't know as never once did he wave back! We seemed to be surrounded by people from the Canary Islands who had made the long trip to see their hero and whilst national passions were running high, everyone was friendly and welcoming, especially when they realised that we were English and not German. Naturally they asked whether we were supporters of Hamilton or Button. In keeping with the spirit, we answered both plus the outstanding new Scottish driver Paul Di Resta as they are all Brits, so there!

Helicopters were everywhere mostly taking aerial shots of the action and boy did we need them. In the cheap seats you can only see about 400 metres of track so gaining perspective would have been difficult without the large screens showing the same pictures that you see on TV, many shot from the choppers. When the commentary could be heard, which wasn't often, it was in both Spanish and English which helped.

Final result

So how did our budget F1 compare with Joanna's experiences? Well we got to see all of the drivers, admittedly whilst they were screaming by at about 150 MPH, got some good photos, but not quite in the same class as Joanna's shot of the post race interviews, missed out on the champagne and didn't see one top model or film star hunk, but hey we had a great time which beat watching on TV from a nearby café. We learned a lot and would be better prepared, so next year who knows, grandstand here we come?

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