



F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Ten

This is the Sidepodcast F1 Advent Calendar 2009, welcome. We're running an extended mini-series for each day of advent, taking a closer look at the story of 2009, one short show at a time. We've reached double figures now as we peer behind the door of Day Ten - So Long, Farewell.

In the last episode, we discussed the German Grand Prix, which debut winner Mark Webber took by storm - heading up a Red Bull 1-2. In their sister team, things were quite different and much less jubilant. Buemi did the best he could, finishing 16th, which was ahead of Trulli and Hamilton, although only one place up from where he started. Bourdais, though, finished last, retiring on Lap 18 with a hydraulics problem.

Of course, this mechanical failure was not his fault, but when he returned to the garages, stopping by the pitwall, the consolatory hugs he gave his engineers were tinged with a sadness more than just frustration about the retirement. These were goodbye hugs.

There was no mention of anything out of the ordinary in the post-race press quotes, but just four days after the race Toro Rosso confirmed that they were parting company with the Frenchman. Team boss Franz Tost said: "In Sebastien's second year with us, the partnership has not met our expectations and therefore we have decided to replace him as from the next round of the world championship, the Hungarian Grand Prix."

Up to that point, Bourdais had retired from three races, finished eighth in two, and finished 10th, 11th, 13th and 18th. It's not a great record, but Buemi wasn't exactly doing much better. He had a 7th and 8th finished, and just two retirements instead, with the other results down in the late teens.

It wasn't completely unexpected, then, when Bourdais came out and said Toro Rosso's decision was a complete surprise to him. He said: "I am very disappointed and shocked by the decision taken by STR of not allowing me to drive for the team until the end of the current season. I consider that, in doing so, Scuderia Toro Rosso has breached its contractual duties towards me; also I believe that nothing in my behaviour would legitimate a decision of the team to terminate the contract."

He got his lawyers involved, and Toro Rosso decided to settle, with the rumoured deal to be his salary plus damages of just over \$2 million.

Bourdais moved on to race in the Superleague Formula, winning a couple of races for the Sevilla FC team. His plans for next year are as yet unknown. Meanwhile, Toro Rosso brought in Jaime Alguersuari, but if they were expecting great things from the Spaniard, they were sorely disappointed. Of the eight races left, Alguersuari retired from five and finished 14th, 15th and 16th in the others.

It could be argued that Bourdais would have achieved results similar to that, but the team were clearly ready to move on, and they were willing to pay over the odds to make that happen.

That's all for this episode of our F1 Advent Calendar 2009. Thank you for listening and I hope you'll be back tomorrow when we look behind the door of Day Eleven.