



## F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Fifteen

---

Hello and welcome along, thank you for joining me for another episode of our F1 Advent Calendar 2009 mini series. We're about midway through December now, and moving on from the Hungarian Grand Prix - at last! What will we find behind the door of Day Fifteen - Take My Place.

Max Mosley had already confirmed that he would not be running for the FIA Presidency again, seemingly as part of the deal to halt the FOTA breakaway. He's said things like that before, though, and it wasn't until potential replacements began popping up, that I really thought it might happen. Jean Todt was the obvious candidate for the role, but it was Ari Vatanen who peaked our interest.

The Finn announced his intentions in late July, saying: "I think the time has come for a change. My main focus is to reconcile views within the FIA and bring transparency to its stakeholders. The duty of President is to defend a billion automobilists and the great sport of ours." As a former World Rally Champion, Ari certainly had the credentials on the sporting side, but it was the political side where he faced most of his opposition.

Ari said a lot of good things. He appealed to fans, and he was a fresh face in what has become an increasingly stale organisation. He talked the talk and he hit out at Mosley, which went down well in a sport that has been dominated by the man and his decisions.

His campaign started out well, but he began to run out of steam. When he announced his cabinet, most of the names were a bit of a mystery, and although he had some support, it seemed to be less vocal than the support for Todt. The lack of momentum put pressure on Vatanen, who responded in less than ideal ways.

Firstly, he criticised the FIA Foundation, suggesting that hiring a private jet to fly Jean Todt's girlfriend around the world might be showing a bit of favouritism. The Foundation rebuffed the claims instantly. Michelle Yeoh was an ambassador for the foundation, and an actress and name in her own right, not just Jean Todt's girlfriend. Whoever is right in that argument, it didn't reflect well on Mr Vatanen.

Next, he complained again about favouritism - this time suggesting that Mosley had told him he had already pledged allegiance to Jean Todt. The instant reaction to this is to wonder about whether the current president should be expressing such an opinion, but it was the circumstances that rebounded on to Ari. He revealed that in asking Mosley to favour him, Mosley had said he favoured Jean. Ah. That's slightly different.

Jean Todt and his cabinet capitalised on this, with a letter to member clubs saying: ""In our campaign, we have emphasised teamwork and the need for the mobility and motor sport pillars to work together. In contrast, the negative tone of our opponent's campaign risks undermining the unity of the FIA. Our team recognises that there is far more that unites than divides the clubs of the FIA."

Once again, it was not a surprise when October rolled around, the elections took place, and Jean Todt became the new FIA President. We had been backing Vatanen from the start, but Todt's campaign made more and more sense as the weeks passed, and it was clear that Vatanen wasn't quite right for the role. As yet, we don't know whether Todt is the right man either. We will have to wait and see... either way, no more Max.

That is all for this episode of our F1 Advent Calendar. I hope you're enjoying the series so far, feel free to email me your comments at christine at sidepodcast dot com. I will be back tomorrow with Day Sixteen.