



F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Sixteen

This is the F1 Advent Calendar 2009, brought to you by Sidepodcast. We are working our way through the 2009 season by means of peeking through a door for each day of advent, and recounting a key moment from the year. Yesterday we were looking at politics, and it's not quite time to get back to the racing yet. Here's Day Sixteen - Goodbye From Us.

At the end of July, BMW quit Formula 1. It was eerily similar to the way Honda had quit, in that rumours began a couple of days beforehand, and then it was confirmed by the team and the parent manufacturer. The BMW board held a press conference, with Mario Theissen present, and Dr. Norbert Reithofer used a lot of long words: "Premium will increasingly be defined in terms of sustainability and environmental compatibility. This is an area in which we want to remain in the lead. In line with our Strategy Number ONE, we are continually reviewing all projects and initiatives to check them for future viability and sustainability. Our Formula 1 campaign is thus less a key promoter for us."

Or... we haven't really been getting the results we want. BMW, the team, always had a plan, and had been sticking to it pretty well. They wanted to get points, then the next year they wanted to get a win, then the next year they wanted to win a championship. Ah. When things didn't go to plan, they weren't amused. Kubica has frequently admitted how impatient he got with the team when following their one win, they were happy to check that to-do off their list, and focus on the next year. Never mind the job in hand.

Anyway, having confirmed their intention to leave at the end of the year, BMW continued to race the rest of the season. Heidfeld kept on racking up the points, and Kubica kept on complaining about the car. Mario Theissen said they were looking at offers from interested buyers for the team, and in September, they announced they had been bought by the mysterious Qadbak Investments. To look into detail at the strange and unreliable nature of these investors would be a whole other mini series in itself, but suffice it to say, no one, bar Theissen, was really convinced.

Mario was confident they would be on the grid in 2010, despite the fact the team had declined to sign the Concorde Agreement in the summer, and that all the grid slots were filled, including the three new ones. He signed up Ferrari to supply them with engines. Kubica, though, was ready to move on, confirming his move to Renault for next year before the season was over. Nevertheless, the team wound up the rest of the season in continued unspectacular fashion.

In the middle of November, it became clear that the Qadbak deal was not going to happen. There were a few days of concern, but on November 27th there was good news. Original owner Peter Sauber was prepared to buy back the team from BMW, on the condition that they had a grid slot for 2010. It was clear that the announcement was a big relief for Sauber, who had been concerned about the future of the team, and had tried to come to a deal with BMW beforehand. With the team back under his control, he said: "Our staff here are highly competent and motivated, and I look forward to taking on this new challenge together with them. I would like to thank BMW for four shared years that have in the main been very successful."

With the post-season news that Toyota were leaving the sport, Sauber were granted that oh-so-important 13th grid slot, meaning they will still be around next year.

That's all for this episode. Thank you for listening to our F1 Advent Calendar 2009, and I hope you'll join me tomorrow to look through the door of Day Seventeen.