



F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Eight

Hello and welcome, this is our extended mini series - F1 Advent Calendar 2009. We're opening up a new door every day to find bite size snippets of the 2009 season. So far we've covered all the goings on up until the Monaco Grand Prix, and now we'll have a peek at Day Eight - Two Tribes.

The 2009 season had only been underway for a couple of months, and already attention had turned to the following year - and it was turning out to be a contentious issue. The FIA had opened up the grid to three new teams, and in trying to entice new entrants to the grid, had revised the regulations significantly. The idea was that teams signing up to a proposed budget cap had a lot more freedom when it came to engine and aerodynamic regulations. Those that didn't sign up to the budget cap could spend what they wanted but were seriously locked down when it came to what could be on their car.

From the outside, this seemed completely ridiculous - potentially allowing the unrestricted teams several seconds advantage. From the inside, it was also an unpopular decision. The existing teams - in a new group known as the Formula One Teams Association - announced the so-called two-tier championship was completely unacceptable, but they were willing to work with the FIA on ways to reduce costs and still keep things fair.

They refused to enter the 2010 season until they could sort the matter out but it was to be a lot harder than that. They met up on Flavio Briatore's boat during the Monaco Grand Prix weekend, to discuss the matter, and subsequently offered a combined conditional entry. So if one pulled out, they all pulled out. And the conditions were that the rules were basically the same as the 2009 season with maybe a few tweaks.

Williams and Force India both signed up independently of FOTA and were subsequently suspended from the association. Williams in particular defended themselves saying they owed it to their sponsors and employees to continue in Formula 1 regardless of how the regulations evolved.

Fast forward to June the 18th, and with no agreement forthcoming on the rules for 2010, FOTA announced they would be setting up their own breakaway series. At the time, a statement was issued saying: "These teams therefore have no alternative other than to commence the preparation for a new Championship which reflects the values of its participants and partners. This series will have transparent governance, one set of regulations, encourage more entrants and listen to the wishes of the fans, including offering lower prices for spectators worldwide, partners and other important stakeholders."

Sounds like heaven, doesn't it? Well, it was not to be.

The FIA considered launching legal action against FOTA, they re-entered talks with each other and the entire mess dominated and ruined the atmosphere during the British Grand Prix.

Just six days later, another statement from FOTA confirmed they wouldn't be breaking away after all. The regulations would continue as they were, with added cost cutting measures such as reduced personnel and less wind tunnel usage. Technical help was offered to the new teams who were signed up under the budget cap regulations. More crucially, though, Max Mosley was prepared to stand down from the presidency of the FIA, with FOTA urging for a fresh start come the elections in October.

That's all for today. I hope you're enjoying the F1 Advent Calendar 2009, and the chance to remember both the good and bad of the season. I'll be back tomorrow with Day Nine.