



Days that Shook the F1 World – Spanish Grand Prix, 1980

Hello, we're onto the fourth episode of this second series of Days that Shook the F1 World. Today we'll be moving onto another important era in Formula 1's history, when politics seemed to take over the racing action. We're looking at June 1st, 1980.

The Spanish Grand Prix in 1980 was a bit of a disaster all round. It was the seventh race on the calendar but was preceded by an awful lot of tension within the paddock. In one corner, we had the sporting arm of the FIA, then known as FISA, and in the other corner, some of the teams were represented by the F1 Constructor's Association, otherwise known as Bernie and Max.

Relationships between the two factions were not good heading into the 1980s and as the races went on, things were beginning to break down. One of the biggest arguments was that the proposed new regulations for the 1981 season weren't popular, but were being forced on the teams anyway. They tried to argue that they weren't being given enough warning of the changes, but FISA were having none of it.

To try and take a stand, Bernie told his teams not to turn up to the drivers briefing at the Belgian Grand Prix in May. There was a loophole in the rule book that meant he thought they could get away with it, and just Renault, Alfa Romeo and Ferrari showed up. However, FISA didn't let them get away with it and when the Spanish race rolled around, the drivers were facing some pretty stiff fines that they didn't intend to pay.

Bernie Ecclestone responded by suggesting they would boycott the race, and the King of Spain got involved to ensure his race didn't turn into a shambles. He suggested helping to pay off the fines, but the FIA wanted the drivers to admit they were in the wrong. To make sure some action unfolded, the King announced on the Friday that they would take on the responsibility for the race, meaning they would no longer be restricted by FISA's regulations.

Qualifying went ahead with 22 cars, the three FISA teams not taking part. This meant that all the entrants automatically made it through to the grid. The race itself was action packed, with just six of the 22 making it to the finish line, Alan Jones taking the victory.

The next day, FISA organised a hasty meeting, and decided that the Grand Prix would have to be a non-championship event, as the drivers were officially racing without a licence. No points were counted, and even more fines were handed out. And unfortunately, this was just the early days of the war between the Constructor's Association and FISA. There was plenty more to come.

That's all for today's Day that Shook the F1 World. I hope you're enjoying the series, please feel free to send me your feedback in the usual ways. I'll see you tomorrow with another important date.