



Days that Shook the F1 World – Ferrari Bargeboard Scandal

Hello and welcome to the penultimate episode of the second series of Days that Shook the F1 World. We've looked at big accidents, big fines and big changes, now it's time to look at another big day in F1's history. Today we're looking at 22nd October 1999.

In 1999, Michael Schumacher broke his leg and missed out on six races. It was obvious his championship chances were gone, but teammate Eddie Irvine kept the Ferrari flag flying in his absence. By the time Schumacher returned, at the Malaysian Grand Prix, the title battle was between Irvine and Hakkinen in the McLaren. It was a tough race for the Woking based team, with a couple of bad strategy calls, and Hakkinen ended up third, standing on the podium below two Ferrari drivers. Irvine took the win, with Schumacher doing everything he needed, but no more, to make it a 1-2.

It seemed as though the championship battle would go right down to the wire at the final race in Japan, that is until the FIA got involved. Upon checking the Ferrari cars for legality, some questionable bodywork was found. The team were called up for discussion, and before the evening was out, Irvine and Schumacher had been disqualified.

Ferrari weren't about to take this lying down and instantly appealed. The case would go before the International Court of Appeal. In the intervening period, both Irvine and Hakkinen spoke out against the penalty, despite the fact that Mika was provisionally World Champion. Even Bernie Ecclestone spoke out and said the rules were too strict, and the whole thing was bad for the sport.

Nevertheless, the ICA convened and heard all the evidence. There was speculation that McLaren had tipped off the FIA to look closer at Ferrari's bargeboard, as the cars were initially cleared, only to be recalled for a second glance. They strongly denied any such involvement, of course.

After mulling it over, the appeal process found in favour of Ferrari, and all points and positions from the Malaysian Grand Prix were reinstated. The FIA insisted that their measuring system was at fault, and admitted that the regulation was not clear enough. The FIA Technical Delegate admitted his mistake, and there was great debate amongst the drivers and teams.

Ferrari went on to change their bargeboard, causing Coulthard to question how it could be legal if they had to change it anyway. Jackie Stewart suggested that the faulty measuring system had governed all the races, and shouldn't be used as an exception for one. Opinions flowed in from all over the globe, and yet, the championship had to continue for one more round.

At the Japanese Grand Prix, Hakkinen won the race, with the Ferrari boys taking the other two steps on the podium. Mika got the championship he had been fighting so hard for, whilst Irvine missed out but Ferrari scored yet another constructor's title. So, it appears the FIA have been getting involved in championship battles for many years.

That's it for this episode of Days that Shook the F1 World. I'd love to hear your thoughts on this scandal, or any of the other days we have touched upon so far this series. If you've got any ideas, feedback or suggestions, please feel free to leave them in the comments at Sidepodcast.com.