



## Days that Shook the F1 World (Part 7) – Mosley Becomes President, 1991

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Welcome to Sidepodcast's series Days that Shook the F1 World. So far we've looked at the US Grand Prix in 2005, Ayrton Senna's death in 1994 and more. Today we're looking at a pivotal moment in Formula 1 history, and the date was 9th October 1991.

It's fair to say that Max Mosley is not the most popular person in F1 at the moment, and his tenure at the top of the FIA may soon be drawing to a close. However, when he first got the job back in 1991, he was definitely the preferred option.

It was the events of the 1989 Japanese Grand Prix and the subsequent fallout that first promoted Max to stand against the then president of the FISA Jean-Marie Balestre. The FISA was the sporting part of the FIA, and they were suffering from a case of bad reputations. Already we have discussed the lacklustre attempt at banning ground effects, which ultimately led to more accidents and deaths.

In Japan, an accident between Senna and Prost caused the Brazilian to be excluded from the race, handing the '89 World Championship to Prost. Further to that, an appeal by McLaren served to see Ayrton's super-license suspended and he was given a fine for \$100,000. Predictably Senna spoke out about the decision and his comments claimed championship manipulation by the FISA. This angered Balestre, so much so that Senna was called before the World Motorsport Council to explain himself. The courts decided to take away Senna's superlicence altogether, and he wasn't going to be allowed it back unless he apologised for his comments.

The following February, Senna was finally persuaded to make the apology and his licence was returned. Max Mosley started to solicit support to become the FIA President. Although this obviously had something to do with the incident with Senna, it may also have had origins in the history between Mosley and Balestre. A vicious war had been raging between the FISA and the FOCA.

The FOCA was headed up by Bernie Ecclestone with Max Mosley as his right hand man. They were working on the team's behalf to increase revenue share and make sure that everyone had their say. The FISA was fighting against them.

Eventually, the war drew to a somewhat amicable resolution, with Balestre taking over as President of the FIA and continuing to make the rules for Formula 1, whilst Ecclestone took over the commercial rights for the sport and divided up the cash.

In 1991, Balestre's FIA presidency was up for renewal, and Max Mosley stood against him. Mosley easily gained the presidency. For a while, teams were satisfied. Max was working with them instead of against them, rule changes began to happen and everything was hunky dory. Teams and drivers felt so comfortable that Senna was able to speak out against the former President without fear of losing his licence. He denied making any apologies about the manipulation claims.

Of course, the happiness couldn't last, and you'll find politics rearing up almost every day now. But it's safe to say that at the time, Mosley was the best thing that could have happened to the sport.



That's all for this episode of Days that Shook the F1 World, and all for this series. Please visit [Sidepodcast.com](http://Sidepodcast.com) to leave your comments about this and any of the other shows in the series. Thanks for listening.

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