



Days that Shook the F1 World – McLaren's \$100 Million Fine

Hello, and welcome to a new mini series from Sidepodcast. This is, in fact, the second series of Days that Shook the F1 World. Here we'll look at seven incidents from Formula 1's vast history and examine them in closer detail. These shows will be broadcast on consecutive nights for seven days, with an omnibus to follow. So, without further ado, let's get started. Our first important date is 13th September 2007.

The events leading up to McLaren's \$100 million fine can't really be sandwiched under the heading of a single day that shook the F1 World. Stepney-gate, the spying affair, the espionage saga, whatever name it went under, it dragged on for months. Every day there was a new snippet of news, a quote from one side or the other, accusing, defending, generally making headlines.

The basic story comprises of two rogue employees, one of Ferrari and one of McLaren, who traded information from the Italian team that may or may not have made it onto the Mercedes powered car. Once discovered, McLaren were investigated and the World Motorsport Council held a hearing to decide their fate.

After all the evidence had been presented, and the Motorsport Council had time to ponder their conclusions, they decided to take away all of McLaren's constructor points for that year, meaning they would effectively be last in the championship. The drivers were allowed to keep their points, but the team also had to fork out \$100 million. Technically, it was 100 million less the revenue lost from not being near the top of the constructors table, but the nice round figure made for better headlines.

The punishment is both harsh and perhaps a little too lenient. If you are going to take away championship points, then the full effects of that should be known. Losing revenue is part of the punishment, is it not? At the time, Ron Dennis estimated the actual cheque they would be writing would amount to about half the announced amount. But either way, \$100 or \$50 million is the biggest fine the sport has ever seen, and although not crippling for a team like McLaren, it would have made at least a dent in the budget. The previous largest fine was only \$4 million, given to organisers of the Turkish Grand Prix for botching podium ceremony etiquette.

For the drivers, it had very little effect. The World Motorsport Council knew they were robbing fans of a constructors battle, and essentially handing Ferrari the title, so it wouldn't be in anyone's interest to do the same with the driver's championship as well. Hamilton and Alonso were busy battling each other, and trying to keep the Ferrari duo at bay, and to have wiped the slate clean at that point of the season would have ruined the entire year.

Another element to the penalty McLaren received was the evaluation of the 2008 car, and the ongoing effect of being last in the championship. Each driver received a low number, the team started at the wrong end of the pitlane (aside from those races in which Bernie intervened), and the team had to wait until December of '07 to find out whether the new car would be allowed to race.

In the end, the event didn't do that much damage to the team as a whole. They won the championship in 2008, meaning Ron Dennis proved his point. The sum of money wasn't buckling for the company, and both drivers continued about their business as if nothing had happened. However, it could be that with cost cutting measures the name of the game in Formula 1 at the moment, that will stand as the highest fine handed out for a long time to come.



That's it for this first episode of the new miniseries. I'd love to hear your feedback on this subject or any suggestions for future episodes. You can comment on the site, or email me christine@sidepodcast.com. Join me tomorrow for the next Day that Shook the F1 World.

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