



Days that Shook the F1 World – Series 2 Omnibus

Welcome to the omnibus edition of Days that Shook the F1 World. This is the second series of the short shows that were originally broadcast over consecutive nights. Now the omnibus is here to gather them all together for easy listening. Enjoy.

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.

Days that Shook the F1 World – Traction Control Banned

Welcome to the third episode of Days that Shook the F1 World, a mini series brought to you by Sidepodcast. We've looked at crashes, and fines so far this series, now let's take a look at a technology that was banned.

The regulations for the 1994 F1 season were announced at the Canadian Grand Prix the year before. One of the most significant changes was that electronic aids were to be banned, which meant no traction control. The FIA were worried that electronic aids were making driving a little too easy for the guys out on track, and decided to put the emphasis back on skill rather than technological development.

Traction control is a simple device put in place to limit the possibility of wheel spin and therefore aid acceleration. Coming out of a corner, traction is the most important thing a driver needs to get grip out of the tyres and speed away from his opponents. According to F1 engineers, a tyre works best if it has only slight wheel spin. The computers are there to calculate the exact figures and put a stop to any extra flailing about. A driver could simply put his foot down, and the computer would do all the work for him, and process things a lot quicker than he ever could. But, where's the fun in that?

Banning traction control saw the art of cornering perfectly return to prominence. Other aids were also disallowed, with power brakes and active suspension all taken out of the rulebook. At the time, there was some consternation that the rules were being tailored to restrict Williams, who had invested heavily in active suspension and were about to make a huge step forward. We can, of course, only speculate on that. Nevertheless, the regulations changed and it was up to the FIA to police them.

It wasn't long into the 1994 season that things began to slip away from the regulators. During the Pacific Grand Prix in April, the Italian media found out that Ferrari test driver Nicola Larini had used traction control when he had driven in Jean Alesi's place earlier in the year. Both Ferrari and Larini denied the claims, but by then, suspicions had been roused. After that fateful weekend at Imola, the FIA asked three teams, Ferrari, McLaren and Benetton, to provide them with information regarding the engine systems, to detect whether traction control was in use. Benetton took three long weeks to provide their copy, whilst McLaren handed it over straight away.

Things got progressively worse for Benetton, with eyebrows raised at the French Grand Prix over Schumacher's impressive start (eerily similar to the TC days), a hefty fine for ignoring a penalty at the British GP, and a serious pit stop fire in Germany. However, nothing was done about the traction control ban until 2001. Midway through the season, the FIA decided that they couldn't police the regulations properly, and so revoked the ban. Traction control was allowed back on the cars and continued to be so until 2008.

When the TC ban came back into force in '08, nearly all of the drivers hailed it as a good thing. No one wants to sit back and let the cars do all the work, not even the guys behind the wheel, and some of the action we saw during that first year wouldn't have occurred if the computers were in charge. With a standard ECU, the regulation is much easier to police, and teams would be found out immediately if they were trying to circumvent the ban. But as we have seen, it doesn't look like they even want to.



Thanks for listening. If you've got any thoughts or feedback, please leave a comment on Sidepodcast.com, leave us a voicemail on 0121 28 87225, or email me christine at sidepodcast.com. I'll be back tomorrow with another Day that shook the F1 World.

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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.

Days that Shook the F1 World – Brabham Introduce Refuelling

Welcome to the second series of Days that Shook the F1 World, brought to you by Sidepodcast. We're halfway through now, and ready to look at another important date in Formula 1's history – 15th August 1982.

The date in question is the Austrian Grand Prix, which was the 13th round of the season. However, the story begins a few races beforehand. Up until this point, the pit lane was a place to stop if a car was struggling. Fixing punctures, sorting out broken wings, generally to be avoided.

In 1982, the Brabham team, under the expert guidance of one Bernie Ecclestone, decided to utilise the pit lane for their own benefit. The BT49 was using BMW engines, and needed a lot of fuel to get through an entire race distance. Chief Designer Gordon Murray worked out that if you purposefully stopped halfway through the race and filled up



with fuel, then you could run the two stints much lighter, and hopefully faster, than everybody else. It also meant that the tyre compounds could be softer, as they could be changed at the halfway point. It seemed like an obvious and easy solution, and the team tried it out at Brands Hatch.

It started out as it should, with Piquet in the Brabham leading nicely. His aim was to build up enough of a lead to allow time for a pit stop, before rejoining in first place. Unfortunately, after only nine laps, there was a problem with the fuel injection and Piquet retired from the race. His teammate Patrese was involved in a collision and also retired.

They tried again at the next Grand Prix in France. On the second lap, the Brabham's shot past the leading Renault to pull out a nice gap. Once again, Patrese retired from the race with his car in flames, whilst Piquet continued. He didn't quite make the halfway point, though, as the team suffered their second engine failure of the race.

Brabham moved swiftly on to the German Grand Prix. Things were looking good, with Piquet once again taking a nice, early lead and stretching out a gap. Patrese had to pit early due to a mechanical problem, which ruined his strategy. Piquet was getting ready to come in for his pit stop, until a collision knocked him out of the race.

Would they ever make it work? Roll on the Austrian GP. The Brabham boys qualified on the front row of the grid, which allowed them to sprint off into the distance. Piquet's tyres were ruined, but Patrese managed to get to the pit lane as planned. It took 14 seconds for a tyre change and for the Brabham to be pumped half full of fuel. Success. Almost. Patrese's engine couldn't last the entire race distance and they faced a double retirement once more.

Nevertheless, the strategy had proved successful and by the next season, planned pit stops were the way forward. Of course, these days, the cars couldn't do a full race distance if they tried, and pit stops provide the basis for a successful race strategy. The FIA have proposed regulations for 2010 that include banning refueling, which has caused great debate amongst fans and teams alike.

That's all for this fifth episode of the second series. As suggested, refueling is a subject that comes up for debate on Sidepodcast over and over again, so if you have any opinions on the subject, feel free to share them in the comments, or even better, leave us a voicemail on 0121 28 87225. See you tomorrow.

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.

Days that Shook the F1 World – 1955 Le Mans Disaster

Hello, we have reached the end of our second foray into Formula 1 history, picking out the days that have shaped the sport we know and love today. This last edition picks out a specific date from the 1950s – June 11th 1955.

Although not strictly a Formula 1 race, the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1955 had an enormous impact on all categories of motorsport, for the worst possible reason. June 11th is known as one of the blackest days in racing history due to the terrible crash that took place.

In those days, most current F1 drivers would be taking part in the endurance event, and the battle at the front was between Hawthorn, Fangio and Pierre Levegh. Levegh was driving for Mercedes, along with Stirling Moss and Fangio.

The race started well, but after about two hours, the accident happened. Levegh's Mercedes came into contact with the Austin-Healey of Lance Macklin, and due to the ramp-shaped rear of the car, was launched into the air. The Mercedes hit the mound of earth designed to protect the spectators, and was somersaulted over the top and directly into the crowd.

The car had a high magnesium content, and as the fuel tank split and ignited, the entire thing burst into intense flames. Levegh had already been thrown from the car and killed, and many, many spectators suffered the same fate. When rescuers attempted to put the flames out with their water extinguishers, it made things worse as it met the magnesium fuelled flames. By the time the fire was out – two hours later – over 80 people had died. It was a horrific accident.

Organisers decided to let the race continue to prevent a rush of panic in trying to leave the circuit. They wanted the roads as clear as possible for the ambulance traffic. Mercedes had let their other two cars continue in the race, and



were now holding a comfortable lead. After word of the death toll reached head office in Stuttgart, however, the order filtered through to the track for the cars to be withdrawn. Mike Hawthorn went on to win the race, but there was no celebrating to be done.

Although it was eventually classed as a racing incident, the effects of the accident were far reaching. France, Switzerland and Germany immediately placed temporary bans on racing, meaning the French Grand Prix was cancelled. Switzerland went on to make the ban permanent, allowing drivers to only participate in time trials, and not side by side combat. This restriction was only recently lifted in 2007.

The Formula 1 season continued just a week after the accident. Although there were many complaints about this decision, the Dutch Grand Prix organisers felt they had to continue as planned. Mercedes won the remaining three rounds of the season, and afterwards announced their intention to withdraw from circuit racing. They didn't return for another three decades.

The only thing the accident doesn't seem to have affected is safety. It clearly highlighted a series of weaknesses for spectators, which were mildly addressed by increasing the gap between the viewing areas and the track. However, driver safety, fire precautions, and better track facilities were all left for the next generation to deal with.

That's all for this episode, and this series, of Days that Shook the F1 World. I hope you've enjoyed visiting the history of Formula 1 with me. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or feedback, please feel free to let me know at Sidepodcast.com. Thanks for listening.

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