



Racing Families – The Fittipaldis

Hello, welcome along, you are listening to Racing Families, a mini series brought to you by Sidepodcast. We are looking at the families that have motorsport running through their bloodline, where several members of the clan have taken up a sport with a wheel of some sort. Yesterday we looked at one F1 champion's legacy, and today we've got another one.

Although Brazilian F1 Champion Emerson Fittipaldi is the star of our family tree adventure today, you could actually take it one step further back. His father, Wilson Fittipaldi, was a well-respected motorsport journalist, and Wilson and his Polish wife Jozefa were both keen racers, having driven production cars. Wilson also set up the Brazilian equivalent of the Mille Miglia way back in 1956.

It's only natural that their passion for motorsports passed on to the children, being Wilson Fittipaldi Jr, and of course Emerson. The pair of them, just three years apart, began karting together, and moved up to the low-cost Formula Vee. Emerson won the title in his second year, and his success saw him move up through Formula Ford and Formula Three. In 1970, Colin Chapman signed him up for the Lotus F1 team, having been impressed by his performances in the junior series'.

That first year, Lotus driver Jochen Rindt was killed, and after withdrawing from two races out of respect, the team returned to action at the US Grand Prix. Emerson had only raced in F1 three times, but he took a win for the team that day. He didn't get to the chequered flag at the next event, but it didn't matter. He had already impressed.

With a strong Lotus car underneath him, Emerson took the championship in 1972. In '73, he came second and the following year he moved on to McLaren. Another championship under his belt, and another subsequent year ending in second place. By the end of 1975, Emerson was at the top of his game.

Let us turn our attention to Wilson Jr for a moment. Whilst his brother had made the leap up to F1, Wilson was still working his way through the lower formulae, including Formula Three and Formula Two. Just like his brother, his results granted him an entry into F1 in 1972, albeit with the far less competitive Brabham team. He scored zero championship points in his first year, and just three in his second.

Wilson spent 1974 setting up his own F1 team, Fittipaldi Automotive. He drove for himself in 1975, with limited results. In 1976, Emerson made the surprising decision to leave his super competitive McLaren team to take up arms with his brother. Wilson did not drive in F1 again, but with Emerson on board, Fittipaldi Automotive gradually improved. They never scored higher than 7th in the driver's championship, though.

In 1980, Emerson retired from racing for a few years. The team continued on until 1982, when they eventually ran out of money. Emerson returned to action in the CART series from 1984 until 1996, where he recorded many strong finishes, and took the title in 1989. He took part in a Grand Prix Masters event, and also entered the Brazilian GT3 series with his brother. Aside from that, Wilson made a few more racing appearances, but nothing of major note.

Wilson did have a son, with his wife Suzy, though, and that son - Christian Fittipaldi - also found a career in motorsport. Aged 42 now, he has experience of CART and NASCAR, plus a three year stint in F1 with the smaller Minardi and Footwork teams. His more recent racing includes A1GP, and the American Le Mans series, although he only got four races in to the 2008 season before being ousted from the car. He may not have a lot of results to his name, but Wilson and Christian Fittipaldi were the first father and son duo to both score points in Formula 1. Many others have followed suit, but they were the first.



That's all for this episode, thank you for listening. Do you remember the Fittipaldi brothers trying to make a name for themselves in F1? Let me know your thoughts on Sidepodcast.com, and join me tomorrow for our next famous racing family.

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