



Forgotten F1 Teams – Spyker F1

Welcome to Forgotten F1 Teams – a miniseries brought to you by Sidepodcast. We’re looking at those teams who deserve a place in the history books, whether it is for greatness, or mediocrity. Today we’re getting right up to date with our fifth team – Spyker F1.

The roots of current Formula One team Force India F1 start way back in 1991 with Jordan Grand Prix. They have been through several iterations in recent times, and today we’re going to talk about just one of them. Jordan was bought by Midland F1 who were bought by Spyker.

Spyker Cars are a relatively new Dutch automotive company, although the name dates back to the early 1900s. This new, modern version of Spyker was founded in 1999, and they build high performance sports cars. They did have a little motorsport experience, building and running GT cars. The key to their entrance into Formula 1 seems to be with Michiel Mol, a wealthy internet entrepreneur. He had previously sponsored Jos Verstappen, and wanted to further his involvement with the sport. His new deal saw him invest in Spyker Cars, to help them invest in F1, to the tune of over \$100 million. He became their Director of F1 Racing.

The deal with Midland was completed mid-way through the 2006 season. Current drivers Christijan Albers and Tiedo Monteiro were kept on, whilst the team set about trying to change their name. The regulations frowned upon mid-season name changes, though, so Spyker stuck to being a title sponsor – Spyker MF1 Racing. Midland boss Colin Kolles was retained as team principal.

At the end of the year, the changes started to happen. The car became orange – the national colour of the Netherlands. Mike Gascoyne was brought in as Chief Technology Officer, and the team became officially known as Etihad Aldar Spyker F1 Team. That’s Spyker to you and me. They also switched to customer Ferrari engines rather than Toyota.

Albers retained his seat with the team, whilst Adrian Sutil was brought in to replace Monteiro. They signed up four test drivers – four! Adrian Valles, Mohamed Fairuz Fauzy, Giedo van der Garde and Markus Winkelhock. That’s a lot of test drivers. Van der Garde’s confirmation as test driver came out of the blue for everyone concerned, including Super Aguri who said they had a contract with him to be their test driver. The case went before the Contracts Recognition Board and van der Garde remained with Spyker. He was going to be their official reserve driver but did not get his superlicence through in time.

Results weren’t great, with the drivers average finishing position about 14th. There were plenty of retirements along the way as well. Midway through the year, Albers was let go, as his sponsorship money failed to come through in time. Christian Klien was tested for the seat, but Spyker decided to let Markus Winkelhock behind the wheel for his home race at the Nurburgring, the European Grand Prix. It was a rather wet race, and thanks to some lucky tyre choices, and a timely safety car, Winkelhock managed to lead the race for a couple of laps. Thanks to some unlucky tyre decisions, Winkelhock didn’t lead for long, and he later retired from the race.

Although some great publicity for the team, this wasn’t enough to secure Winkelhock the seat, and Sakon Yamamoto was drafted in for the remainder of the season. The team were developing a new car, which initially failed its crash test, before passing it after modifications. The extra work, however, delayed the introduction of the car until Italy. It wasn’t until Japan that Spyker saw a turn in fortunes. It was another wet race, and half the field retired, but Sutil managed to finish a credible 9th. This was even better for the team when a round of post-race investigations saw Liuzzi given a 25 second time penalty, promoting Sutil into 8th place. Their first championship point!



By this time, Spyker Cars were already in the process of selling the team. Michiel Mol teamed up with Vijay Mallya to form a consortium called “Orange India” to buy the team from Spyker, and they were successful. Mallya turned up at the Chinese race as a proud new team owner. They were renamed Force India for 2008.

That’s all for this episode of Forgotten F1 Teams. Don’t forget if you have thoughts about the teams we’ve talked about or suggestions for future topics, you can leave them on the site sidepodcast.com or email me Christine@sidepodcast.com. I’ll be back tomorrow with our penultimate Forgotten team.

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