



## Forgotten F1 Teams – Forti

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Welcome to Forgotten F1 Teams, a miniseries from Sidepodcast focusing on those teams that didn't make headlines, at least not for reasons they would have hoped for. We've looked at Simtek and Pacific, and now it's time for Forti.

If you heard yesterday's show about Pacific, you'll know that when they re-entered in 1995, they were guaranteed a place on the grid. That's because two teams had dropped and there was only one new team on their way in – that was Forti.

The team was created by Guido Forti at the tail end of the 1970s, and had run in Formula Ford, South American F3, then successfully in the Italian F3 series – taking three consecutive championships. By the early 1990s, the team had moved on to F3000 and were taking wins and aiming for the title. In 1993, two new drivers appeared in the Forti car, Olivier Beretta and Brazilian Pedro Diniz. The latter brought plenty of money with him, and a connection with Carlo Gancia, who was the driving force to the team's entry to Formula 1. With Diniz money, plus plenty of Brazilian sponsors on board, the team entered the sport in 1995 with a pretty good starting budget.

The team sourced designers and engineers from many different teams, including Fondmetal, Osella and Brabham. Forti got use of the Aerotek wind-tunnel in South Africa, although it appeared that the FG01-95 was just a reworking of a previous Fondmetal design. They were slightly behind the times as well, boasting the only manual gearbox on the grid, and starting life without an airbox. It wasn't unusual to see the team qualifying about 10 seconds off the pace, and finishing races sometimes 7 laps down. The car seemed to have good reliability, but being at the lower end of the grid made crashes almost inevitable. Both drivers finished just over half the race distance available in 1995.

In 1996, Diniz decided to move to the slightly more successful Ligier team. Moreno also left, so the team now comprised of Luca Badoer, and Andrea Montermini. The problem was, of course, that Diniz also took his money with him, and so Forti had to use their old cars for the new season. The new qualifying rules meant drivers had to be within 107% of the pole time, and this made things slightly more difficult for Forti. Only one car qualified in Australia, but the next few races saw both -drivers make it to the back of the grid. In Argentina, Badoer had an incident with his predecessor Diniz, where the Ligier flipped the Forti upside down. Badoer was fine, but it was just another notch on the DNF tally.

A new car was in the works, just the one, and when it was introduced, Badoer found himself almost 4 seconds faster than his team mate in the old chassis. The first result in the new car saw Badoer finish 10<sup>th</sup>. That was quite a result. When both drivers were given the new car at Monaco, they both qualified for the race. Unfortunately, Montermini didn't make it out of the tunnel in one piece, following a wet practice session, and Badoer scored himself a ban for bashing into Villeneuve.

Whilst the drivers had better equipment, and now just had to control themselves, there was some corporate work happening behind the scenes. A group called the Shannon organisation were interested in taking over Forti, as they were already running well in F3 and F3000. It all gets a little bit political, as the boss of Belco Avia announced the deal. They had done some work on the car, and rumours were that they were owed money by Forti. Shannon were reported to now own 51% of the team, but according to Forti, he had not seen any money, and so this was simply not true.

Out on track, the team were still struggling to qualify, and when they did, they barely made the finish line. In France, both cars got onto the grid, but had to be withdrawn because their engines had reached the end of their useful life.



Money was owed to Cosworth, it appeared, and without Shannon coughing up, things were going downhill rapidly. Forti took the problem to the courts, trying to regain control of his ailing team from Shannon, but unfortunately things went Shannon's way. The announcement was made in September, and Shannon folded soon afterwards, meaning the end of the team.

That's all for Forgotten F1 Teams today. Leave your thoughts about what we've discussed at Sidepodcast.com or via the Voicemail, 0121 28 87225. I will be back tomorrow to discuss another F1 team.

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