



History of F1 – 1980s

Welcome to Sidepodcast's History of F1. After the safety concerns of the '70s, the '80s saw many more steps forward in developmental terms.

The 1980s saw the introduction of turbocharging, which is another banned technology that took the forefront of a lot of the team's attention. The Lotus team were concentrating on the ground-effect principle, whilst Renault re-entered F1 in with the first ever turbo. The technology was new, quick and exciting, but there were reliability problems, and the Renault did not finish an entire race distance until a year after the introduction.

1980 saw the first big disagreement between the two main F1 governing bodies, FISA and FOCA. The power struggle resulted in the Spanish Grand Prix being boycotted, and to avoid such situations in the future, the first ever Concorde Agreement was drafted up in 1981.

1980 also saw Team Williams dominating with their driver Alan Jones, whilst Ferrari were struggling with their own turbocharged car.

Despite the emergence of the turbo technology, Cosworth engines still dominated the grid, with 11 teams under their power in 1982. Turbos continued to improve, but Ferrari suffered more problems, this time with their drivers. Didier Pironi and Gilles Villeneuve were under team orders that Villeneuve should be given preference. Pironi overtook him at the San Marino GP, and Villeneuve decreed he would never speak to his team mate again. This turned out to be tragically true, when Villeneuve was killed whilst qualifying for the Belgian GP. The accident was terrifying, with the Ferrari skidding across the track and throwing the driver from the car, into the sand.

More accidents occurred this year, with Ricardo Paletti, a little known driver in a little known team Osella, killed at the start of the Canadian Grand Prix. He was coming through from the back of the grid, unaware that Pironi, in the Ferrari, had stalled at the front. Pironi also suffered from leg injuries in practice later that year, which put an early end to his racing career.

McLaren brought out a turbo powered car, steered by Alain Prost and Niki Lauda, and in 1984, the team won 12 out of 16 races, and took a record number of points to win the title. Lauda actually pipped Prost to the driver's title, by only half a point. Hang on, half a point? This was due to the Monaco GP that year being stopped because of a massive thunderstorm. Half points were awarded to teams and drivers.

Ayrton Senna joined McLaren in 1988 and took the championship in Japan, despite a deciding race that saw him stalling on the grid. 1989 saw Senna and Prost in-fighting after a broken agreement about not challenging each other on the track. Senna overtook Prost and the pair fell out, and later in the season, the pair collided and went off track. Prost took the championship, whilst Senna's superlicense was revoked, causing him to comment on the manipulation that may have been happening behind the scenes.

Turbo charged engines were banned in 1989, but a couple of years earlier, another major piece of technology was beginning to take shape. 1987 saw the one year that Williams took the crown from seven McLaren titles. But it was Team Lotus that introduced the new "active suspension", that was computer controlled. This technology was the turning point of the sport - from normal-ish cars into more technologically complex machines.



That's all for this episode of Sidepodcast's History of F1. Next time we'll take a look at the 1990s, where it was all about two very different but brilliant drivers.

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