



History of F1 – 2000 and Beyond

Welcome to Sidepodcast's History of F1. We've covered the entire history of Formula 1 from the early beginnings in the 1900s, through the inaugural championship in the 1950s, and the safety fears of later decades. Now we're catching up with modern F1, the 21st century, and where it might be headed in the future.

We left 1999 with a new championship winning pairing of Michael Schumacher and Ferrari. Between 1999 and 2004, they won 5 consecutive driver and 6 consecutive constructor championships. Michael Schumacher could not be stopped. He made records and broke them, overtaking many famous names to grab most Grand Prix wins, most driver championships, most wins in a single season, and many other titles.

It wasn't until 2005 that it looked like Ferrari's dominance might be under threat.

The rules of the championship kept being changed. The FIA couldn't settle on a way forward to improve the racing and make it more of a show. They wanted to cut costs but keep the fans happy, and they could not decide how to do it. So, instead of picking a course of action and sticking with it, they tried any number of things. One of the changes for 2005 was that the teams could only use one set of tyres through an entire race.

Ferrari struggled with this new ruling, and it allowed Renault to dominate the season, and Fernando Alonso to become the youngest champion. They repeated the feat in 2006, although it was a much tighter contest.

Other rule changes include constant revamps of the qualifying format. It started as an hour long session where everyone bundled out on track to get the best time they could. Except they didn't bundle on track until the very end, and viewers were left bored. They switched to a one lap format, where each driver took his turn, and this allowed for very interesting grids, but the action was slow. The current format of three knockout sessions seems to be a compromise between action and strategy, but there are still complaints floating around.

Team orders were banned in 2002. There were several incidents that were questionable in terms of race manipulation, but the one that turned most people off was the Austrian Grand Prix of that year. Barrichello led the race and was a clear winner, until he was asked to let Michael Schumacher through for championship reasons. Needless to say the negative impact this had on the sport rustled the FIA into action.

The grid these days consists of many manufacturer teams. Road-car makers such as Honda, Toyota, BMW and Renault are firm favourites on the grid. Independent teams such as Williams are struggling to keep up with the ever-changing and ever-expensive world of F1. Red Bull Racing are an independent team but backed by a fortune of money, so it will be interesting to see how long Williams can hold off the giant companies taking over the sport.

The FIA are determined that we should go green, so the future of F1 looks set to include many more regulation changes to try and save both the planet and money at the same time. Making F1 technology more relevant to road cars is something they're going to be pushing for.

In terms of the drivers, they continue to get younger and younger, fitter and stronger, but there is still room for old favourites like Coulthard and Barrichello, who could still be successful if only they had the right car beneath them. But then, they all say that, don't they?



That's all for this series. I hope you've enjoyed Sidepodcast's History of F1, I've certainly learnt a lot about where it all started, and tried to share the important points with you. Don't forget to leave your feedback, opinions and comments over at Sidepodcast.com, and check out our other audio and video podcasts while you are there.

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