



History of F1 – Series Omnibus

This is Sidepodcast's mini series – History of F1. The following seven shows were originally released over seven consecutive days, covering the history of the sport from the 1900s all the way up to the present day. This omnibus now gathers all the shows up together in one, for easy listening. Enjoy.

History of F1 – 1900s to 1940s

Welcome to Sidepodcast's History of F1. This series will take us back to the beginning of the 20th century, when Formula 1 was all about honour, it was a gentleman's sport, and it mostly involved getting to the end of the road without falling in a pothole. We'll travel through time (not literally, of course), to see how Formula 1 became the corporate and money-orientated sport that it is today.

The F1 championship, and all the official records, date back to the 1950s, but the essence of F1 can be traced all the way back to the early 1900s. Back then it involved heavy cars. Drivers would be accompanied by a mechanic because reliability was such a problem, and the track was just a simple road in France. I say simple, but actually, the races were long and tough. The first proper motor race was called the Paris-Bordeaux because... well, it went from Paris to Bordeaux. It was 1200km, and the winner achieved it in 48 hours. Average speeds were a rocketing 29.9 miles per hour. 1901 saw the first race with Grand Prix in the title, the French Grand Prix, taking place at Le Mans. This time they covered the 700 miles at a much speedier 63 miles per hour.

Our first important milestone occurs in 1908. Previously the cars had wheels and spokes that were permanently attached and often breaking. Now, detachable tyre rims were introduced so that mechanics could play around with them and keep their cars in the race. Shallow bunkers were built at the side of the roads, at pre-arranged places, so the drivers could pull over and allow the tyres to be changed. These were called pits. Ah... the first pit stops were now taking place. The ability to change tyres didn't make the cars any easier on the rubber though, as the winning Mercedes of the 1908 French Grand Prix went through ten sets of tyres. Perhaps not impressive by today's standards, but he would have been changing tyres because he *had* to.

During World War 1, racing was stopped in Europe, so a lot of the drivers went to the States to participate in the Indy 500. After the war, Grand Prix began to take place in both Le Mans and Lyons, with France being the main hosts for motorsport. The racing bug spread though, with Monaco and Belgium both hosting their own GPs. Notable winners were Ferrari, Mercedes, and Bugatti, all ahead of their compatriots in engineering terms.

Just before the Second World War, interest in Grand Prix racing fell to an all time low, due to the Depression and the impending war. However, the instigator of the fighting, Adolf Hitler, actually funded quite a lot of the technological development in racing, with both Audi and Mercedes benefiting from government support. Germans began to take the power of racing away from the French and the Italians, and introduced new techniques, including aerodynamic research, and special mixtures of fuel.

A legendary driver, Tazio Nuvolari from Italy, began to shine as he won everything he entered. He won the first race to feature a qualifying format – the Monaco Grand Prix in 1933 - but his greatest achievement was at the German Nurburgring in 1935, where he beat nine up to date cars with a four year old Alfa Romeo. The first Formula 1 racing superstar was born.

That's all for our first episode of Sidepodcast's History of F1. In the next show, we'll have a look at the 1950s, when the official F1 championships began to take place.



History of F1 – 1950s

Welcome to Sidepodcast's History of F1. On the last episode, we looked at the years leading up to the beginning of the Formula 1 World Championship, including French road races, and participation in the Indy 500. Now we can move on to the 1950s, when the official Championship began and records started to be kept, and broken.

After the Second World War, the FIA initiated the World Championship. The new sport was called Formula A, but would change to Formula 1 pretty soon afterwards. The minimum race distance was changed, having been 500km originally, but reduced to 300km. This meant that more tracks were eligible to host GP events and in 1950, the first championship race took place at Silverstone. The first race of the new F1 World Championship was the British Grand Prix and was won by Giuseppe Farina. He went on to add Belgian, Italian and Swiss races to his list and beat Juan Manuel Fangio to take the World Championship title.

The driving style of most championship contenders was to be hunched up behind the wheel, ultimately uncomfortable, and struggling to keep control of the car. The new Champion Farina brought about a new style, with outstretched arms, so that he looked very cool and relaxed as he took his crown. This driving position took off and soon everyone had relaxed their driving style to match Farina's.

Although Juan Manuel Fangio lost out on his first attempt at the World Championship, he didn't give up and soon became the most successful driver of the 50s. He won five titles with five different manufacturers, which is a mighty achievement. One of his moves came after a horrific accident at Le Mans. The 24 hour race, that continues to be popular to this day, took place in 1955 as it always did. But it ended with an awful crash that left upwards of 80 people dead. Fangio was lucky to escape, and his team thought it best to call it a day. That team was Mercedes, and they obviously changed their minds at some point through the years.

One of Fangio's biggest rival was Sir Stirling Moss, a driver who always seemed to finish behind his nemesis. In fact, Moss is renowned as the best driver who never managed to win a championship. He is also loved for being a British driver in a British car, especially when he won the British Grand Prix in 1955. Accidents plagued his career though, and the early 60s saw him break both his legs. Moss retired after a few more years of struggling, and no championship title.

Moss was held off the title in 1958 by another British driver Mike Hawthorn. Driving a Ferrari, Hawthorn managed to beat his fellow countryman who was struggling in his Vanwall. The politics within Formula 1 and within Ferrari itself made Hawthorn very uncomfortable though, and he was upset enough to retire at the end of the year. Tragically, only a few months after his departure from the racetrack, Hawthorn was killed in a road accident.

Britain really was seen as the home of motorsport, despite the early origins in mid Europe. More and more British drivers entered the races, with more and more British engineers helping them along the way. By the 1960s, British Racing Green, was soon "adopted" as the Official colour of Formula 1, due to the number of teams racing under the dark green colour.

That's all for the second episode of Sidepodcast's History of F1. On the next show we'll zip forward to the 1960s, where drivers competitiveness really began to take hold.

History of F1 – 1960s

Welcome to Sidepodcast's History of F1. The last episode focused on the early years of the World Championship, and the emergence of some new champions. Now we're going to have a look at the 1960s, a decade that began to see the drivers taking attention away from the cars.

The 1960s in Formula 1 saw great changes afoot, both in developmental technologies and the teams that gained the benefits from them. Team Lotus was the dominating force of the decade, and Jim Clark was the driver of the early 1960s who really could get the most out of the car. Lotus were the first team to demonstrate the monocoque, which is the idea of the car being made up of one singular chassis, with the driver perched in the middle. When rear engines made their debut in the 60s, it was clear that F1 was a step ahead of other motorsports.

Jim Clark was not short on controversy, being involved in a fatal accident at Monza in 1961, that claimed the life of Wolfgang von Trips. The championship was handed to American Phil Hill, who was racing in the Ferrari. In 1962, Clark instigated a fierce battle with Graham Hill, but he eventually lost the championship, just barely, due to an oil leak early exit from the lead of the final race. Clark won the championship in 1963 and 1965, after taking maximum points throughout the championship for both seasons. He would quite often take the entire month of May off, and therefore miss the Monaco Grand Prix, preferring to head to the States and compete in the Indy 500. It was a good choice though, as he became the first British driver to win it.

In 1965, he led every lap of every race he completed – a stunning achievement – and he broke all manner of other records, including most career victories from Fangio. He took the record during the early races of the 1968 season, but his career was short-lived. A couple of months later, Clark took part in an F2 race at Hockenheim, and died after crashing into the trees. The accident is still rather mysterious and unexplained.

Graham Hill was more than happy to continue the British dominance after Clark's death, and he took the 1968 title in a Lotus, fitted with the new Ford-Cosworth engine. The car was also notable for having the first sponsorship and logos appear on the exterior – how different F1 would be without those!

But Hill himself was soon surpassed by Scotsman Jackie Stewart. He was something of a protégé of Jim Clark's, as it was he who arranged for Stewart's very first test drive. Jackie Stewart went on to break his mentor's career victories record and took three World Championships between 1969 and 1973.

Jackie Stewart's most memorable win was at Nurburgring, for the German Grand Prix. There was awful rain that day but Stewart kept his head and outpaced the second place driver by over four minutes. That's an incredible lead and you wouldn't find anything like that in modern F1.

That's it for the 1960s, in the next show we'll move on to the 1970s, a decade where safety concerns became paramount.

History of F1 – 1970s

Welcome to Sidepodcast's History of F1. So far we've travelled from the 1900s through to the end of the 1960s, and seen the Formula 1 World Championship begin to take shape, and some of the legendary drivers stamp their mark on it. Now we take a look at the 70s where safety concerns and car development were top of everyone's priority list.

In 1970, the revolution of aerodynamic engineering began to take place. It started with the creation of wings, which meant more downforce for the cars. Essentially this meant they had more grip and could coast round corners much faster than previously. In the early days, the wings were not fastened particularly securely, and it wasn't unheard of for them to fall off at unexpected moments. After a few too many accidents, wings were banned for a short time.

The early 70s saw the rise of a new star for Lotus, Emerson Fittipaldi, a young man from Brazil who won his first race in 1972. The rivalry between he and Jackie Stewart meant that the next four championships were alternated between the two of them, until Stewart retired in 1973. Stewart almost made it to the 100 Grand Prix mark, but gave up one short of the feat. Why would you do that?

In 1975, Ferrari began to make their comeback – despite the fact that the season was littered with protests about driver safety. In the Spanish race, a car came off the track and actually hit the crowd, killing four people, and causing some drivers to refuse to continue to participate.

Ferrari driver Niki Lauda won five races and had nine pole starts to take his first championship. He went on to win two more. The next year, 1976, Lauda was involved in a horrific accident at the Nurburgring, which saw his car burst into flames. Lauda suffered facial burns and inhaled toxic gases, so much that he was not expected to survive. However, Lauda did manage to pull through and was miraculously driving again only six weeks later. The Nurburgring track was taken off the calendar, but returned in a dramatically altered and much shorter state.

Niki Lauda's main competition came in the form of James Hunt, a British driver for McLaren. He won the 1976 championship, but only just. Lauda was leading the championship by 3 points in the last race, but had to retire after torrential rain. That handed the championship to Hunt, who finished the race in the terrible weather, without knowing where he had placed or if he had clinched the title.

Lauda reclaimed the crown the next year in 1977, despite quitting the team with two races to go. The team calculated the position he needed to finish in to claim the title – 4th – at the US Grand Prix, and Lauda delivered and then joined Bernie Ecclestone's Parmalat Brabham team.

In development terms, the cars began to sport air boxes above their heads to increase flows around the engines. Engineers changed their titles to designers, and began to increase their knowledge of aerodynamics. The cars began to take shape, using a streamlined body and undertray developments to the downforce and speed things up. These developments were called "ground effects" and impressed a lot of the drivers.

They were not without their problems though, because the new developments meant the setup of the car was incredibly important. One tiny degree the wrong way would mean the cars were unstable and ultimately not race worthy. F1 became a highly sophisticated balancing act. Eventually, the effects were banned in 1983, to make F1 more about driver skill and less about car setup.

That's all for this episode of Sidepodcast's History of F1, join me for the next instalment where we look at the 1980s.

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.

History of F1 – 1990s

Welcome to Sidepodcast's History of F1. So far, the development of the Formula 1 World Championships has been pretty much about the cars, with a few squabbles between drivers along the way. The 1990s saw some real star talent emerging, with personalities both loveable and not so much.

The 1990s were a year of change, innovation, tragedy and triumph. Team Williams introduced the first car, designed by Patrick Head, to have a semi-automatic gearbox and traction control, but reliability was still a major problem. Eventually, Williams managed to conquer their mechanical troubles, and added more computer-control to the car, leading to success in the next couple of years. Williams took the championship in '92 and '93, with Nigel Mansell and then Alain Prost, who had just returned from a season off.

Michael Schumacher joined the Formula 1 circuit in 1991, qualifying 7th on his debut for Team Jordan, although he didn't get past the first lap. Just one race later, he defected to Benetton. With the major players of previous seasons now retired, Schumacher was the main rival for Ayrton Senna, but it was not going to be easy.

The points system changed in 1990 so that all Formula 1 races were included in the championship and a win would gain you 10 points rather than 9 points. The FIA also declared that the driver aids, such as traction control, were having a negative impact on the impression of F1. Where was the driver skill? So, the aids were banned, despite Formula 1 getting more and more exciting. With the rule changes having a huge impact on car specifications, it was always going to be a risky few years.



Ayrton Senna was in fine form in 1993, when he won the European GP at Donington Park, making up five places in the first lap, in the rain. But, the 1990's are not dominated by Ayrton Senna for his victories, but for his tragic death. The San Marino GP, 1994, saw too many accidents. First Roland Ratzenberger was killed - the first death for 12 years in the sport - and then Rubens Barrichello was hospitalised. Senna sat at Barrichello's bedside and decided to withdraw from qualifying. He did not want to race. But a racing driver lives to be out on the track, and Senna changed his mind. He took pole position and raced for seven laps, before his car missed the corner and struck the wall at more than 180mph. He was pulled from the wreckage, taken to hospital by helicopter, and later died from massive head injuries.

The accident shook the entire F1 community, but the racing did not stop. The FIA passed immediate rules to step up safety, including pit speed limits, and easier access to the cars. Damon Hill replaced Senna at Williams, but Michael Schumacher took his role as champion.

Nigel Mansell returned to McLaren after retiring and perhaps gaining a little weight. The car was redesigned so that he could fit, but it didn't make the impact they had hoped for. Jacques Villeneuve joined Williams, and hoped to continue the legacy of his father, Gilles. Schumacher transferred to Ferrari for the largest paycheck of the time and the team was rewarded with victory after victory.

Schumacher was not without controversy, being shown a black flag at Silverstone in 1994 for ignoring a penalty for overtaking on the parade lap. He also ignored the flag and gaining a two race ban. He was disqualified later in the season for an illegal car floor, but in all races he showed the twinkle of genius that would gain him many more driver titles.

The later seasons of the '90s were dominated by rivalries from a new David Coulthard, Villeneuve, Eddie Irvine and Mika Hakkinen. But really, it was all about Michael Schumacher, as he took win after win to lead him into the new century as one of the most successful drivers to ever race.

That's all for this episode of Sidepodcast's History of F1, and really that's all of the history. The next and last episode will be about the first few years of the 21st century and what can be expected in the future.

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.