

Note 102



The 1993 Technical Rule changes

The Williams team failed to send their 1993 entry paperwork to FISA until 2 days after the November 1992 closure date for the next season. Despite some other team's objections the President of FISA (Max Mosley*) accepted the entry nevertheless on his own authority in February 1993. He took this unilateral decision in the interests of good competition and made this the same reason at the same time for deciding on a group of major technical changes to take effect in 1994.

This was actually a breach of the then-current "Concorde Agreement" between the FIA and the Formula One Constructors' Association (FOCA) which laid down that such changes had to be agreed with all signatories and promulgated with not less than a full season's lead time, *unless* covered by the over-riding clause which allowed unilateral shorter-lead-time changes for *safety* reasons.

The Mosley proposals, banning active (or "reactive") suspension, traction control, automatic gear-changing and anti-lock brake systems (ABS), did *not* have this cover.

The FISA President was reported as admitting that this *could* be seen as a *legal* breach but also saying that he did not regard it as a "*moral*" breach (998).

He is said to have accepted that road cars should benefit in safety from the "driver aids" to be banned from racing cars but to have argued that racing was suffering from them. *If* correctly reported this could only lead to the deduction that racing cars had been made too safe so that they no longer skidded round the track and thereby the spectacle for the paying public of Formula 1 was reduced. It *could* be concluded further that direct profit had become more important to FISA than technical progress – a turning point for Grand Prix racing.

FISA action against active suspension in 1993

The Williams and McLaren teams, having made a success of their large investments in the things to be banned, had most to lose. This was deliberate, on the theory that their less-advanced rivals could catch up and also improve the paying spectacle.

When these teams did not accept these unilateral proposals for 1994 immediately, the FISA Technical delegate in mid-1993-season then ruled that active suspension and traction control were illegal anyway under the existing rules – something which had escaped his notice in the preceding 22 races!

Williams and McLaren protested against this decision and were over-ruled.

Under this threat of immediate banishment of several teams, they all agreed the February rules in August 1993 – 8 months before the 1st 1994 race.

In-race refuelling re-introduced for 1994

Also at that date in-race refuelling was re-introduced for 1994. It has to be presumed that this was also to increase the spectacle, adding more pit-stops and the possibility of place changes, since overtaking on the road with aero-downforce cars was so difficult.

This re-introduction was after a 10 year ban (1984 – 1993 inclusive) on *safety* grounds.

Technical advances using aircraft refuelling equipment to provide fuel loading without spillage and possibility of fire (theoretically**) were in *this* case acceptable to FISA.

Fund diversion

It can be argued that the restrictions on chassis technology simply diverted more money to engine improvements.

*Max Mosley was elected as President of FISA in October 1991, displacing Jean-Marie Balestre. He became President of the parent body, FIA, when Balestre stood down from that post in October 1993. Mosley then abolished FISA and reorganised the sporting regulation side to come directly under the FIA via a new World Motorsports Council (WMSC).

**But not in practice. At the 9th race in 1994 (Hockenheim) there was a fuel leakage and fire at a Benetton pit-stop in which the driver (Verstappen) and several mechanics were burned, fortunately not badly.
