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# Mika Hakkinen



Two-times Formula One Champion Mika Hakkinen scored world titles in 1998 and 1999 for the all-conquering McLaren-Mercedes Benz team. With 20 Formula One race victories and 51 top-three podium finishes to his credit, he ranks among the most successful drivers of all time and is widely regarded as one of the fastest drivers of the modern era.

From his very first Formula One drive in an uncompetitive Lotus in Phoenix in March 1991, it was clear that Hakkinen possessed the talent to reach the top. The blond Finn was a graduate of karting, winning the British Formula 3 Championship in 1990.

At the end of 1992, Hakkinen was signed as test driver for the 1993 season by McLaren, supporting Ayrton Senna and Michael Andretti. When Andretti left the team in September of that year, Hakkinen took his seat and celebrated his F1 debut by out-qualifying the great Senna in Portugal.

He spent 1994 and 1995 developing his skills, taking over as team leader when Senna left for Williams. His life was threatened by a serious accident at the 1995 Australian Grand Prix in Adelaide but the quick actions of medical crews led to a full recovery.

Mika won his first Grand Prix in Jerez, Spain, in 1997 and never looked back, collecting his first World Championship in style in 1998. He won eight of the 16 races. Although 1999 was a tougher year, he came back strongly, scoring a further five Grands Prix victories en route to retaining his crown at the final race of the season.

By then he was well established as the only man capable of out-racing Michael Schumacher and the German star publicly recognised this. Mika's confidence in racing Schumacher wheel-to-wheel was most famously illustrated by a 300kph overtaking manoeuvre during the Belgian Grand Prix in 2000. Today it is regarded as one of the greatest overtaking manoeuvres in F1 history.

In 2000, however, Ferrari produced a very strong car and although Hakkinen won a further four Grands Prix, the World Championship went to Schumacher. Further victories in the British and United States Grands Prix in 2001 demonstrated that Mika's performances remained at their peak, however he retired from Formula 1 racing at the end of that year.

Mika subsequently competed in the German Touring Car Championship until 2007. Since then he has remained closely involved in Formula 1 through brand ambassadorships and business interests including driver management. In 2022 he has joined the Viaplay F1 broadcast team in the nordic region, providing expert insight.

He continues to be a familiar presence at Grands Prix and one of the most popular personalities in Formula 1.