

Money Matters

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I have never put an F1 team together, let alone kept it together.

Look at the history of F1 and it is punctuated with small teams started and then sold out and sold on ... and then lost forever.

Aguri-san had a vision, a dream. A Japanese team to rival the best. Fate intervened when BAR took Taku's seat away and Aguri-san was asked to bring forward his plans by two years. Raising money very quickly, he was able to take one of the fallen teams (Arrows) and breath life into it again.

Starting with four year old cars, half a factory and a skeleton staff, his dream made it to the start line of Bahrain - against the odds, and against the predictions of many F1 know-alls. Along with Taku, the team began to show that hard work and skill will still make racing exciting. They were being accused of trying too hard! Drivers accused them of not knowing their place. It was obvious some drivers had forgotten what racing was about - but not SAF1.

So the first season was coming to an end, and at Brazil a small miracle was about to happen ... Taku would finish 10th.

So you would think that 2007 sponsorship would be lining up in a smart queue, yes? Well, perhaps not.

Aguri-san has a determined personality, before now, he has been known to spend Friday night in the garage sorting out technical problems, whilst other team owners attend star-studded dinners. He is a racer.

He has strong demands of his team, his drivers, and his sponsors. A Japanese team needs to be in Japanese hands - so any potential sponsor has to know that.

Many small teams find themselves selling equity and integrity ... Aguri-san is trying his very hardest not to do either. I have not had the honour of sitting down to talk to him, so all of this is what I have heard from here and there - I don't know his mind, but I know his type. He has been talking to Honda because he knows that they don't want to take full control of the team. He needs support without full-blown dictatorship. Sure, Honda will have influence, but it will still be Super Aguri.

So when we read about Spice and others, we have to understand what they want for their money ... a driver change, a name change, a management change, even an ownership change.

2007 saw points and moments of brilliance - the Giant Killers were proving to be serious about racing.

A failed deal with a Chinese oil company meant that money had been spent which was not going to be available. Debts mounted and spending was curtailed. From mid 2007 testing and development stalled. At a time that the team should be growing organically, it began to have to down-size.

Fans are writing of their disappointment about the lack of sponsorship, and I have to say I am very nervous, but this is Aguri-san's team, and we have to believe in him. We have to understand that he will be doing absolutely every thing he can to secure sponsorship that he can. But not at any cost. He wants to retain ownership and full control.

He shouldn't sell out. We have lost too many good teams to sponsorship pressures.

Times are difficult - but Aguri-san is an impressive man.

Let's have faith, let's trust that he knows best.

Step forward anyone who has run a successful F1 team if you would like to let us know how it's done!