



Nelson Piquet's helmet of the Benetton-Ford years (acrylics with aerograph on paper).

4- Nelson Piquet

I remember being impressed with how the young Nelson Piquet imposed himself in his first full season in the Formula 1 in 1979, playing the main role with his illustrious team-mate in Brabham-Alfa Romeo, the, at the time, two times World champion, Niki Lauda. It is true that the Austrian was giving increasingly clear signs of demotivation that led him to withdraw from the competition at the end of the season, but his young teammate did not fail to deserve the trust placed in him by team boss, and Formula 1, Bernie Ecclestone.

Its entry in the main category of motorsport, in the previous year, he made it in a impossible way to happen in nowadays, having rented, first one Ensign N177-Ford to participate in the German GP, in Hockenheim and aligning with a McLaren M23-Ford, also rented, in the next three GP. What he could show was enough to convince Bernie Ecclestone and he was invited to replace John Watson, in the Brabham-Alfa Romeo for the final round of the Championship. A year later and after the abandonment of Niki Lauda, he took the lead of the team.

Drivers – Nelson Piquet

From his Austrian colleague he learned the intelligent and rational management of the available resources and of the evolution of the races, which allow him to make the difference to his colleagues and enhanced his natural talent.

Nelson Piquet wasted no time showing his talent and, if in 1980 he lost the Championship to Alan Jones, in the following year he would be World Champion for the first time at the wheel of the Brabham BT49-Ford, done that repeated in 1983, to become the first champion of the turbo era at the wheel of the Brabham BT51 equipped with the brutal BMW engine that reached the power of 1,400 CV!

These successes, and his irreverent character, contributed to cement his friendship with the technical director of the team, the genial Gordon Murray, with whom he had, early on a complicity which proved very fruitful.

With the progressive decline of the Brabham team, he accepted, at the end of 1985, the invitation of Frank Williams to drive his cars. He won his third title at the wheel of the Williams FW11B-Honda in 1987, after a fratricidal struggle with the British Nigel Mansell, which caused a huge wear on Piquet relationship with the rest of the team.

At the end of the season he moved then to Lotus, in which he was unable to fight the double of drivers of rival McLaren, who dominated almost completely the following championships.

After two disappointing seasons at Lotus, he accepted the invitation of Flavio Briatore to drive for emerging Benetton. It was at the wheel of the multicolored Enstone team cars that he won the last three Grands Prix of his career, two in 1990 and one the following season.

The arrival of Michael Schumacher at Benetton, late in the 1991 Championship, led the Brazilian triple champion to realize that it was time to move away from Formula 1.



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Drivers – Nelson Piquet



Brabham BT49-Ford, the car of the World Championship title in 1981 (acrylic with aerograph on paper).



Brabham BT51-BMW, the car of the World Championship title in 1983 (acrylic with aerograph on paper).



Williams FW11B-Honda, the car of the World Championship title in 1987 (acrylic with aerograph on paper).