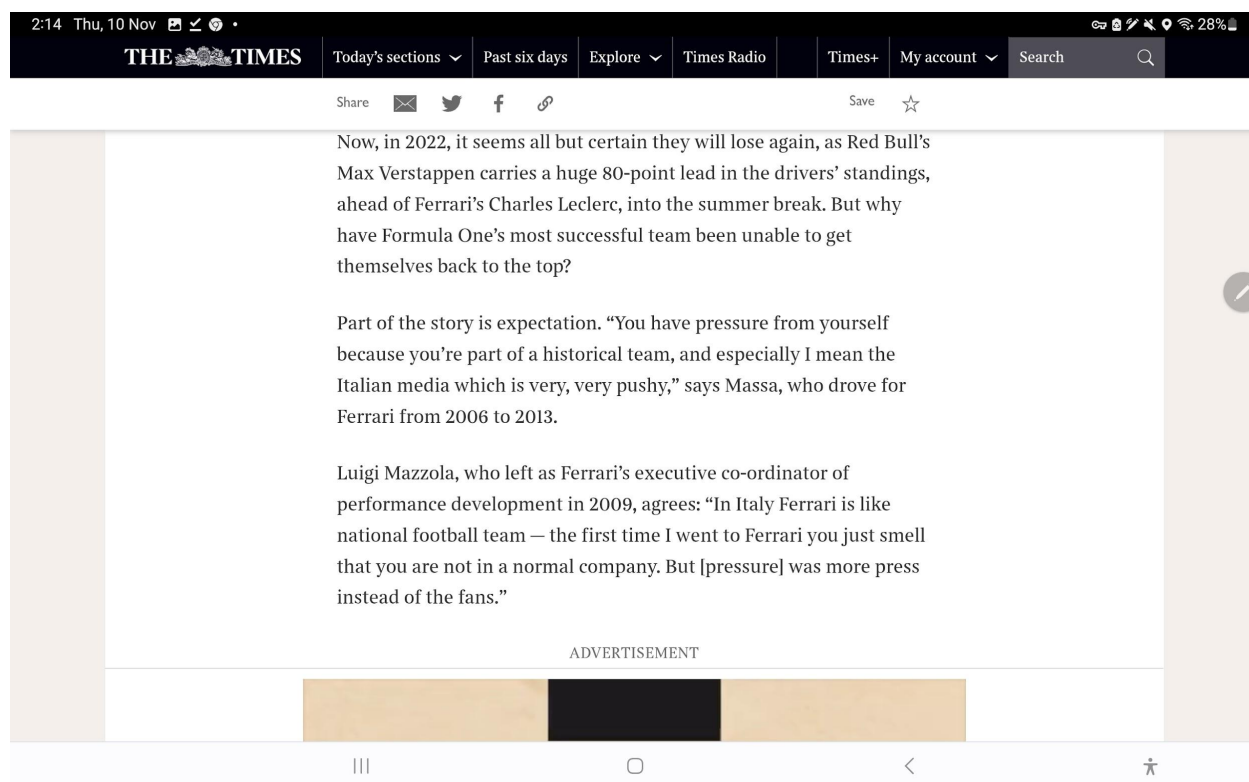
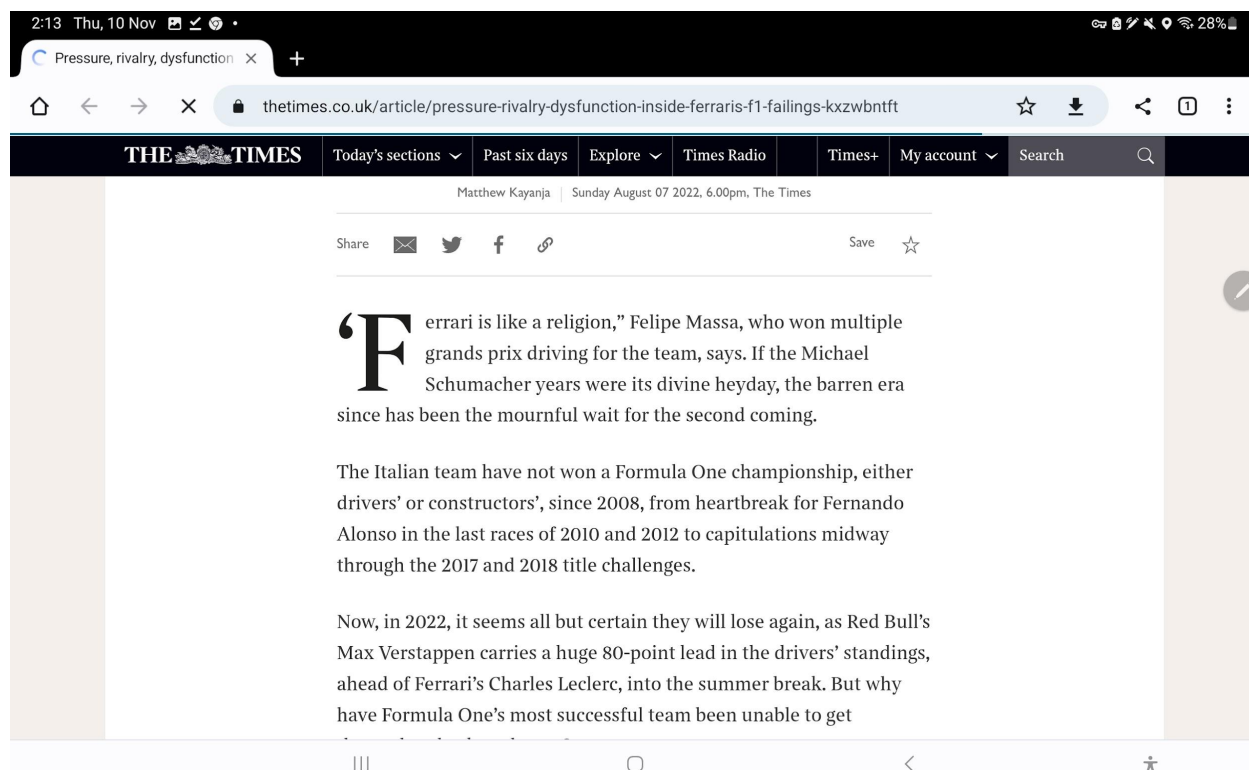


FORMULA ONE

# Pressure, rivalry, dysfunction – inside Ferrari's F1 failings

Matthew Kayanja asks why the Italian team have not won a title since 2008 and are set to lose out again this season

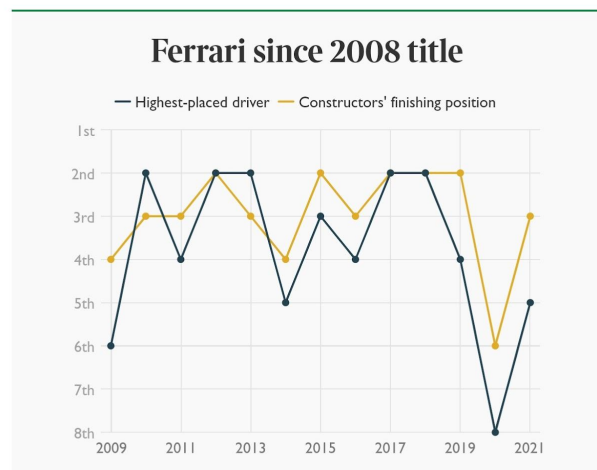




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But Daniele Sparisci, a motorsport journalist with the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, has a different perspective. “Sometimes we put pressure, but if you are called Ferrari you are used to pressure,” he says.



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One of the main consequences of that has been quick demands for change after each significant failure, Massa says. “After 2008 everything changed, we started to feel a lot more the pressure mentally. Pressure gives some wrong direction to change people that it was not right to change. Some examples are Aldo Costa, also [Stefano] Domenicali.”

Costa, the visionary technical director, was shuffled out after Ferrari’s bad start to 2011, only to become Mercedes’ engineering director and propel them to multiple world championships until 2018; Domenicali was fired as team principal halfway through the terrible 2014 season. The demand for heads to roll led Nikolas Tombazis, one of many Ferrari engineers fired at the end of the 2014 season, to say that working in the team was like having a “gun to the head”, in a 2015 interview with *Corriere della Sella*.

For Mazzola, Ferrari’s inability to sustain a title challenge comes down to the quality of their staff, with many of the those present during the Schumacher era — such as the technical director Ross Brawn, the team principal Jean Todt and Costa — leaving or being

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down to the quality of their staff, with many of the those present during the Schumacher era — such as the technical director Ross Brawn, the team principal Jean Todt and Costa — leaving or being fired, with the exception of the present team principal, Mattia Binotto. “At the moment I see [Binotto] as sort of alone,” Mazzola says.

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Perhaps it's no wonder, then, that Binotto said “there was no reason to change” after last month's Hungarian Grand Prix, despite a terrible strategy call to put Leclerc on hard tyres, ruining his race: having seen the effect of a ruthless demand for firings, the mild-mannered Italian prefers an alternative route.

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Some of the team's personnel woes come from them being one of the few teams not based in England, Sparisci says: “They tried to convince Adrian Newey [Red Bull's chief technical officer] to join Maranello [Ferrari headquarters], but it's so difficult because many English people prefer to live in England — it's easy for them to find a job, there are like 17 in 30 miles. During the pandemic year it was even more difficult to recruit people from UK.”

Englishman James Allison, now chief technical officer for Mercedes, was another who dealt Ferrari a blow after saying he wanted to leave to be closer to his family after his wife's death in 2016.

The constant departures have ironically left Formula One's oldest team suffering from a lack of experience, which, combined with monumental pressure, could play a factor in the poor strategy calls and inconsistent development that hindered their title bids.

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"It is true that we are a young team, and we are probably missing an 'old hand', an experienced person capable of reading situations correctly and quickly," Maurizio Arrivabene, then team principal, said after a poor tyre choice at the 2018 Japanese Grand Prix ruined both Ferrari drivers' qualifying sessions.

### Letting it slip

Biggest lead for a Ferrari driver at top of standings since 2008

2010 (Fernando Alonso)	11pts
2012 (Alonso)	40pts
2017 (Sebastian Vettel)	25pts
2018 (Vettel)	17pts
2022 (Charles Leclerc)	46pts

Chart: The Times and The Sunday Times

Team divisions also hampered the Maranello team's title bids.

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Team divisions also hampered the Maranello team's title bids.

"Alonso was an amazing driver, a top driver, but he had that mentality that wants to put everything on his side and maybe split the team a little bit in the middle," Massa says of his former team-mate from 2010 to 2013, who infamously won the 2010 German Grand Prix after a Ferrari team order told Massa to let him through as "Fernando is faster than you". "I'm not saying I was penalised," the Brazilian continues. "I'm just saying that in some moments the team had a very professional way of working, some moments maybe not so professional."

While such tensions may be less intense this season, with the Ferrari drivers airing few complaints, it is hard to imagine that there is not some resentment over the frequent poor calls that have wrecked Leclerc and Carlos Sainz's races, with the latter snapping at the team to "stop inventing" after they suggested he back off from his team-mate during the British Grand Prix.

The drivers could still be suffering from a legacy of Ferrari's inability to adapt to one of the most significant cost-saving regulation changes

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The drivers could still be suffering from a legacy of Ferrari's inability to adapt to one of the most significant cost-saving regulation changes in Formula One history: the cap on testing in 2009. Mazzola, who ran Ferrari's test programme during the Schumacher years, said that more than any other team Ferrari had been dependent on testing to work out their strategy and car development.

"We were doing almost 200 days of travelling and 140 days of testing on different tracks," he says. "But you can see more and more demand has moved to computers, simulations and less people with experience. And this is a problem because if something happens on the track that is outside of the boundary of your software that you made, you will have wrong results.

"They don't even know when to put on intermediate tyres, the wet tyres or the slick tyres. But if you could do the test you would start to see what's going on. Ferrari had the most changing situation since 2008 to now — they lose people, methodology, no more testing, it's difficult."

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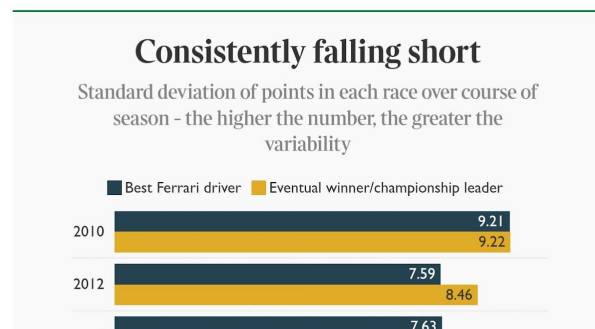
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However, Ferrari's team failures have also been accompanied by string of driver errors, from Sebastian Vettel's Singapore collision with his team-mate Kimi Raikkonen in 2017 and crash from the lead in the 2018 German Grand Prix, to Leclerc's spin while in the lead at this season's French Grand Prix. But data analysis of the main criticism of Ferrari and its leading drivers — their inconsistency — shows that they tend not to have a greater spread of results than their main rivals.



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main rivals.

## Consistently falling short

Standard deviation of points in each race over course of season - the higher the number, the greater the variability

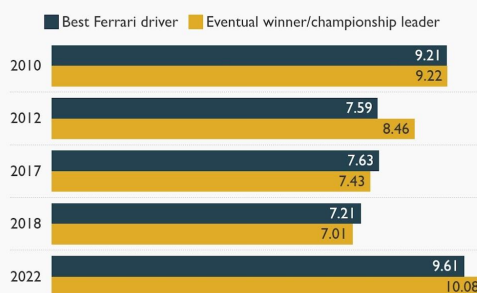


Chart: The Times and The Sunday Times

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The wild 2010 season, with six challengers to the title, understandably had a greater points spread than other seasons, but in 2012 it was arguably Alonso's consistency — in a much worse car compared with Vettel's Red Bull — that got him in with a chance. But for 2017, 2018 and even 2022, leading Ferrari drivers have had a similar, if not a slightly smaller, spread of points than their main rivals.

The awkward fact is that the team and drivers have simply been consistently worse than their rivals — Verstappen's standard this season is so high that his two zero-point finishes early in the season have had a huge effect on his spread of results. But for Leclerc, low-points finishes are more line with his and Ferrari's performance level, a standard unlikely to be accepted at home.

"For me, Ferrari has no excuse, they have one of the most iconic brands of the world, they have a company that is in solid growth, they make a profit of billions and they must win," Sparisci says. But with the chances of Ferrari success this season looking bleak, the *tifosi* may have to accept that the long wait will continue.