

Bernie Ecclestone

– F1 Supremo¹



Fasten your seat belts² for a high-speed ride with the richest man in motorsport³, who's not averse to⁴ cutting a few corners⁵ to get what he wants. Hold on tight⁶ as George Sandford goes for a spin⁷ with the little big man.

A Wheeler Dealer⁸ from the Word Go⁹

Whatever you say about Bernie Ecclestone; and many of the things said about him are less than polite, it's hard to deny¹⁰ that he's made a remarkable¹¹ financial journey¹². Born in 1930 as the son of a fisherman in the sleepy county¹³ of Suffolk in East Anglia, a brief¹⁴ apprenticeship¹⁵ as chemical laboratory assistant was soon replaced¹⁶ by his passion for motorsport. At the age of just 17, he was already trading motorbike¹⁷ spare¹⁸ parts and by 1951, he had formed Compton and Ecclestone, a dealership¹⁹ partnership.

During the 1950s, he participated in motor racing as a driver in Formula 3 and then Formula 1, enjoying some modest²⁰ successes, but he was rattled²¹ by a number of accidents, which led to his early retirement²². This gave him the opportunity to put his money-making²³ talents to good use²⁴ through real estate²⁵ investments. He then got back into racing, firstly managing²⁶ drivers and, in 1971, as the owner of the Brabham team. At this stage, the sport was still quite low-key²⁷ and underexploited²⁸, but all that would change once Ecclestone got his hands on²⁹ the financial steering wheel³⁰.

From Also-ran³¹ to Ringmaster³²

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Ecclestone's Brabham team enjoyed varying³³ levels of success, depending on³⁴ whether it was using Ford Cosworth, Alfa-Romeo or BMW Turbo engines³⁵. Their most notable³⁶ drivers at the time included Austrian Nicky Lauda and exciting³⁷ young talent, Nelson Piquet, but the real action occurred off the track³⁸. In possibly one of his shrewdest³⁹ and most game-changing⁴⁰ moves, he formed the Formula One Constructors' Association, (FOCA) with other team owners such as Ken Tyrrell, Colin Chapman,

¹ **supremo** su:'pri:məo mistrz, maestro

² **to fasten seat belts** tə 'fə:sn si:t belts zapiąć pasy

³ **motorsport** 'məʊtəspɔ:t wyścigi aut/motorów (UK)

⁴ **to be averse to doing sth** tə bi ə'vɜ:s tə 'du:ɪŋ 'sʌmθɪŋ mieć coś przeciwko czemuś

⁵ **to cut corners** tə kʌt 'kɔ:nəz iść na skróty

⁶ **hold on tight...** həʊld ɒn taɪt przygotuj(cie) się...

⁷ **to go for a spin** tə ɡəʊ fə(r) ə spɪn wybrać się na przejażdżkę

⁸ **wheeler-dealer** 'wi:lə 'di:lə(r) kombinator, zręczny negocjator/manipulator

⁹ **from the word go** frəm ðə wɜ:d ɡəʊ od samego początku

¹⁰ **to deny** tə di'naɪ zaprzeczyć

¹¹ **remarkable** rɪ'mɑ:kəblɪ niezwykły

¹² **journey** 'dʒɜ:nɪ podróż, tu: droga

¹³ **county** 'kaʊnti hrabstwo (UK)

¹⁴ **brief** brɪ:f krótki, krótkotrwały

¹⁵ **apprenticeship** ə'prentɪʃɪp staż, praktyka zawodowa

¹⁶ **to replace** tə rɪ'pleɪs zastąpić

¹⁷ **motorbike** 'məʊtəbaɪk motor

¹⁸ **spare** speə(r) zamienny (np. o częściach)

¹⁹ **dealership** 'di:ləʃɪp przedstawicielstwo handlowe (jakiejś firmy, marki itp.)

²⁰ **modest** 'mɒdɪst skromny

²¹ **to rattle** tə 'rætl przestraszyć, wystraszyć

²² **retirement** rɪ'taɪəmənt emerytura, odejście na emeryturę

²³ **money-making** 'manɪmeɪkɪŋ tu: do zarabiania pieniędzy (np. talent, zdolność) (tylko przed rzeczownikiem)

²⁴ **to put sth to good use** tə pʊt 'sʌmθɪŋ tə ɡʊd ju:s dobrze coś spożytkować

²⁵ **real estate** rɪəl 'ri:stet nieruchomości

²⁶ **to manage sb** tə 'mænɪdʒ 'sʌmbədi tu: być czymś menadżerem

²⁷ **low-key** ləʊ ki: skromny, niezbyt znany/popularny

²⁸ **underexploited** ʌndə'eksplɔɪtɪd

niewykorzystany (o potencjale, możliwości)

²⁹ **to get one's hands on sth** tə ɡet wʌnz hændz ɒn 'sʌmθɪŋ dorwać coś w swoje ręce

³⁰ **steering wheel** 'stiəriŋ wi:l kierownica

³¹ **also-ran** 'ɔ:lso ræn gracz drugoplanowy, sportowiec średniej klasy

³² **ringmaster** 'rɪŋmɑ:stə(r) konferansjer cyrkowy

³³ **varying** 'veəri zmienny

³⁴ **depending on sth** dɪ'pend ɒn 'sʌmθɪŋ w zależności od czegoś

³⁵ **engine** 'endʒɪn silnik

³⁶ **notable** 'nəʊtəblɪ godny uwagi

³⁷ **exciting** ɪk'saɪtɪŋ fascynujący

³⁸ **off the track** ɒf ðə træk poza torem (wyścigowym)

³⁹ **shrewd** 'ʃru:d mądry, trafny

⁴⁰ **game-changing** ɡeɪm tʃeɪndʒɪŋ odmieniający całą sytuację, kompletnie zmieniający reguły gry

Frank Williams and Max Mosley, son of British Fascist Party leader, Oswald Mosley. It wasn't long before Ecclestone manoeuvred⁴¹ himself into pole position⁴², to become CEO⁴³ and chief negotiator, alongside⁴⁴ his friend and legal adviser⁴⁵, Max Mosley. Remarkably, in 1978, they managed to wrest control from⁴⁶ the sport's governing body⁴⁷ for the negotiation of television rights. FOCA did a deal for a three-way split⁴⁸ of TV money, with 47 percent going to the race teams, 30 percent to the FIA and the balance⁴⁹ of 23 percent going into Ecclestone's newly formed Formula One Promotions Association, that would divvy up⁵⁰ the prize⁵¹ money while holding on to⁵² a generous⁵³ slice⁵⁴ to go into Bernie's own coffers⁵⁵. Perhaps having more foresight⁵⁶ than his peers⁵⁷ and negotiation counterparts⁵⁸, it was a deal that would set him on the road to becoming a billionaire. »

⁴¹ to manoeuvre tə mə'nu:və(r) zręcznie się przebić/przepchnąć (gdzieś/dokądś)

⁴² pole position pəʊl pə'zɪʃn najdogodniejsza pozycja startowa, pole position

⁴³ CEO (Chief Executive Officer) ,si: k: 'əʊ tʃi:f ɪg'zekjətɪv 'ɒfɪsə(r) dyrektor naczelny

⁴⁴ alongside ə,lɒŋ'saɪd obok

⁴⁵ adviser əd'vaɪzə(r) doradca

⁴⁶ to wrest sth from sb tə rest 'sʌmθɪŋ frəm 'sʌmbədɪ przejąć coś od kogoś, wyrwać coś komuś z rąk

⁴⁷ governing body 'gʌvənɪŋ 'bɒdi ciało zarządzające

⁴⁸ three-way split θri: weɪ splɪt podział na trzech (np. zarobku)

⁴⁹ balance 'bæləns pozostałość, różnica (reszta sumy)

⁵⁰ to divvy sth up tə 'dɪvɪ 'sʌmθɪŋ ʌp podzielić coś, rozdzielić coś (między kogoś) (pot., UK)

⁵¹ prize praɪz nagroda

⁵² to hold on to sth tə həʊld ɒn tə 'sʌmθɪŋ zachować coś, mieć coś

⁵³ generous 'dʒenərəs hojny, szczodry

⁵⁴ slice slaɪs kawałek, dola

⁵⁵ coffers 'kɒfəz skarbiec, kiesa

⁵⁶ foresight 'fɔ:sait dalekowzroczność

⁵⁷ peer piə(r) równy, osoba o tej samej pozycji/statusie

⁵⁸ counterpart 'kaʊntəpaʊt odpowiednik

For nearly 50 years, Ecclestone has been a ubiquitous and immediately recognisable figure around the Formula One circuit.



As the popularity of the sport grew, so did Ecclestone's influence⁵⁹, power share⁶⁰ and bank balance⁶¹. There have been a number of significant⁶² renegotiations⁶³ over the years, including the Concorde Agreement which reaffirmed⁶⁴ his TV revenue⁶⁵ negotiating rights, but each time he has come out of it stronger and richer than before; the expansion⁶⁶ into new markets, such as Dubai, Malaysia and China, has also done him no harm⁶⁷. Forbes estimate⁶⁸ his wealth to be in excess of⁶⁹ USD 4 bln, which is not bad for a boy who left school at sixteen and started off flogging⁷⁰ spare parts. So that is how the fortune was made, but what do we know about the man himself?

Trouble and Strife⁷¹

For nearly 50 years, Ecclestone has been a ubiquitous⁷² and immediately⁷³ recognisable⁷⁴ figure around the Formula One circuit⁷⁵. He is very much a hands-on⁷⁶ person, always carrying around his

omnipresent⁷⁷ briefcase, from which he runs his empire⁷⁸. He is a blustering⁷⁹, direct and energetic person with a shock of grey hair⁸⁰, and a diminutive⁸¹, some might say, vertically challenged⁸², stature⁸³. This has not diminished⁸⁴ his penchant for⁸⁵ tall, leggy⁸⁶ women, most notably with the six-foot Croatian⁸⁷ model, Slavica Malic. They met inauspiciously⁸⁸ at Monza, when Ecclestone shouted⁸⁹ at her to get out of the pit⁹⁰, imposing⁹¹ his 'no women in the pit' rule. Defiantly⁹², she refused⁹³ to budge⁹⁴ and, impressed by her spiritedness⁹⁵, Bernie sent her flowers and invited her out to dinner. In time, he would dump⁹⁶ his Brazilian partner of 17 years, Tuana Tan, to marry Slavica in 1983. She gave birth to⁹⁷ daughters Tamara in 1984 and Petra in 1988, but the Ecclestone household⁹⁸ was far from one of domestic bliss⁹⁹ and harmony. Slavica had a fiery, plate-throwing reputation, a taste for designer clothes, luxury pads and exotic holidays. It is said that Bernie did everything to indulge¹⁰⁰ and appease¹⁰¹ her, that she was the only

person in the world who could tell him what to do. Despite this, and Ecclestone's aim to stick together¹⁰² for the sake¹⁰³ of the children, Slavica filed for divorce¹⁰⁴ in 2008 and an undisclosed¹⁰⁵ settlement¹⁰⁶ figure¹⁰⁷ was agreed, which is thought to be the biggest in British history, at over USD 1 bln. Undeterred¹⁰⁸, Ecclestone got married again in 2012 to Fabiana Flosi.

Courting Controversy¹⁰⁹

Perhaps it is a privilege¹¹⁰ of the superrich¹¹¹, but Ecclestone has always been one to speak his mind, possibly at times without thinking. Some people have labelled¹¹² him a sexist and racist. Here are some of his more controversial statements¹¹³.

• In reference to¹¹⁴ female Indycar driver, Danica Patrick, he said, "You know, I've got one of those wonderful ideas; women should be dressed in white, like all other domestic appliances¹¹⁵."

⁵⁹ influence 'ɪnfluəns wplyw

⁶⁰ power share 'paʊə(r) ʃeə(r) udział we władzy

⁶¹ bank balance bæŋk 'bæləns stan konta

⁶² significant sig'nɪfɪkənt znaczący, istotny

⁶³ renegotiation ri:ni'geɪʃn ponowna negocjacja, renegocjacja

⁶⁴ to reaffirm sth tə ri'æ'fɜ:m 'sæmθɪŋ (ponownie) potwierdzić coś

⁶⁵ revenue 'revənju: przychody, wpływy

⁶⁶ expansion ɪk'spæʃn ekspansja, rozszerzenie działalności

⁶⁷ to do sb no harm tə du 'sæmbədi nəʊ ho:m nie zaszkodzić komuś (ani trochę)

⁶⁸ to estimate tə 'estɪmeɪt szacować

⁶⁹ in excess of X ɪn ɪk'ses əv powyżej X

⁷⁰ to flog sth tə flog 'sæmθɪŋ opychać coś, spylać (pot.)

⁷¹ trouble and strife 'trʌbl ənd straɪf stara, kula u nogi (pot./iron. o żonie)

⁷² ubiquitous ju:'bɪkwɪtəs wszechobecny

⁷³ immediately ɪ'mɪdiətli natychmiastowo, od razu

⁷⁴ recognisable 'rekəgnaɪzəbl rozpoznawalny

⁷⁵ circuit 'sɜ:kɪt trasa, tor

⁷⁶ hands-on hændz ɒn praktyczny, który nie boi się ubrudzić rąk

⁷⁷ omnipresent ɒmni'preznt wszechobecny

⁷⁸ empire 'empaɪə(r) imperium

⁷⁹ blustering 'blæstərɪŋ chełpliwy

⁸⁰ a shock of hair ə 'ʃɒk əv heə(r) grzywa, gęsta czupryna

⁸¹ diminutive dɪ'mɪnjətɪv mały, drobny

⁸² vertically challenged 'vɜ:tɪkəlɪ 'tʃælɪndʒd wysoki inaczej

⁸³ stature 'stætʃə(r) postura

⁸⁴ to diminish sth tə dɪ'mɪnɪʃ 'sæmθɪŋ umniejszyć coś, pomniejszyć

⁸⁵ penchant for sb 'pɒʃəŋ fə(r) 'sæmbədi zamiłowanie do kogoś, upodobanie sobie kogoś

⁸⁶ leggy 'legɪ długonogi

⁸⁷ Croatian k'rəʊ'etʃn chorwacki

⁸⁸ inauspiciously ɪnɔ:'spɪʃəsli niefortunnie

⁸⁹ to shout tə ʃaʊt krzyknąć, krzyczeć

⁹⁰ pit pɪt boks (na wyścigach)

⁹¹ to impose sth tə ɪm'pəʊz 'sæmθɪŋ narzucić, wymusić coś

⁹² defiantly dɪ'faiənt wyzywająco, niepokornie

⁹³ to refuse to do sth tə rɪ'fju:z tə du 'sæmθɪŋ nie zrobić czegoś, odmówić zrobienia czegoś

⁹⁴ to budge tə bʌdʒ ustąpić

⁹⁵ spiritedness 'spɪrɪtɪdnəs werwa, ikra

⁹⁶ to dump sb tə dʌmp 'sæmbədi rzucić kogoś

⁹⁷ to give birth to sb tə gɪv bɜ:θ tə 'sæmbədi urodzić kogoś

⁹⁸ household 'haʊshəʊld domostwo, rodzina

⁹⁹ domestic bliss də'mestɪk blɪs sielanka rodzinna

¹⁰⁰ to indulge sb tə ɪn'dʌldʒ 'sæmbədi dogodzić komuś, spełnić czyjeś zachcianki

¹⁰¹ to appease sb tə ə'pi:z 'sæmbədi ugłaskać kogoś

¹⁰² to stick together tə stɪk tə'geðə(r) trzymać się razem

¹⁰³ for sb's sake fə(r) 'sæmbədɪz seɪk dla czyjegoś dobra

¹⁰⁴ to file for divorce tə faɪl fə(r) dɪ'vɔ:s wnieść sprawę o rozwód

¹⁰⁵ undisclosed ʌndɪs'kləʊdɪd nieujawniony, tajny

¹⁰⁶ settlement 'setlment ugoda

¹⁰⁷ figure 'fɪɡə(r) suma

¹⁰⁸ undeterred ʌndɪ'tɜ:d niezrażony

¹⁰⁹ to court controversy tə kɔ:t 'kɒntrəvɜ:sɪ stac się źródłem kontrowersji

¹¹⁰ privilege 'prɪvəlɪdʒ przywilej

¹¹¹ superrich 'su:pərɪtʃ najbogatsi

¹¹² to label sb (as) sth tə leɪbl 'sæmbədɪ əz 'sæmθɪŋ zaszukliadkować kogoś do jakiejś kategorii, uznać kogoś za jakiegoś

¹¹³ statement 'steɪtmənt wypowiedź

¹¹⁴ in reference to sb ɪn 'refrəns tə 'sæmbədɪ w odniesieniu do kogoś

¹¹⁵ appliance ə'plɑ:ns urządzenie, sprzęt (gospodarstwa domowego)

- About Hitler, he commented, "He was able to get things done."
- Regarding Max Mosley, the son of former¹¹⁶ Fascist Party leader, he remarked¹¹⁷ that if he were Prime Minister¹¹⁸, "His background¹¹⁹ would not be a problem."
- On Putin's anti-gay stance¹²⁰, he concurred¹²¹, "I completely agree with those sentiments¹²²."
- Regarding his insistence¹²³ that all contracts be written in English, he said, "If they can't speak English, they aren't worth knowing."

Despite upsetting¹²⁴ or offending¹²⁵ some people, such remarks seem to have caused little or no damage to his reputation or fortunes¹²⁶, but on the final lap¹²⁷ of his career, he now faces a challenge¹²⁸ that could seriously affect¹²⁹ his chances of finishing on the winner's podium.

The Chickens Come Home to Roost¹³⁰

The seeds¹³¹ of his current troubles lie in the sale of his stake¹³² in Formula One back in 2006. It's a rather convoluted¹³³ tale involving a group of companies, an



In reference to female Indycar driver, Danica Patrick, he said, "You know, I've got one of those wonderful ideas; women should be dressed in white, like all other domestic appliances."

Ecclestone family nest egg¹³⁴ called the Bambino Trust, Bayern Landesbank and CVC Capital Partners, to whom the stake was sold. It's alleged that¹³⁵ Ecclestone undervalued¹³⁶ the stake and rigged¹³⁷ the sale to CVC, (ensuring¹³⁸ that he retained¹³⁹ control) by bribing¹⁴⁰ board member Gerhard Gribkowsky USD 26 mln to look the other way¹⁴¹ and keep mum about¹⁴² his tax affairs. The former board member is already doing time¹⁴³, and threatens¹⁴⁴ to bring down¹⁴⁵ Ecclestone with him by putting him

in the frame¹⁴⁶. Ecclestone denies the accusations¹⁴⁷ but if found guilty¹⁴⁸, could find himself sharing a cell with Gribkowsky and serve¹⁴⁹ up to 10 years of German porridge¹⁵⁰. It is not the peaceful retirement that most octogenarians¹⁵¹ would wish for, but then Ecclestone has always ploughed his own furrow¹⁵². Will he crash out¹⁵³ agonisingly close¹⁵⁴ to the finishing line¹⁵⁵? Somehow you sense¹⁵⁶ that he has one last get out of jail card¹⁵⁷ up his sleeve¹⁵⁸, before he retires from the race. ■

¹¹⁶ former 'fɔ:mə(r) dawny

¹¹⁷ to remark tə rɪ'mɑ:k czynić uwagę

¹¹⁸ prime minister praɪm 'mɪnɪstə(r) premier

¹¹⁹ background 'bækgraʊnd pochodzenie, powiązania

¹²⁰ stance stæns stanowisko, pogląd

¹²¹ to concur tə kən'kɜ:(r) zgodzić się, podzielić (pogląd)

¹²² sentiment 'sentɪmənt odczucie, pogląd

¹²³ insistence ɪn'sɪstəns naleganie

¹²⁴ to upset sb tu ʌp'set 'sambədi zdenerwować kogoś

¹²⁵ to offend sb tu ə'fend 'sambədi obrazić kogoś

¹²⁶ fortunes 'fɔ:tju:nz losy, dzieje

¹²⁷ final lap 'faɪnl læp ostatnie okrążenie

¹²⁸ to face a challenge tə feɪs ə 'tʃælɪndʒ musieć sprostać wyzwaniu

¹²⁹ to affect sth tu ə'fekt 'sambədi wywrzeć na coś wpływ

¹³⁰ one's chickens have come home to roost wʌnz 'tʃɪkɪnz hæv kʌm həʊm tə ru:st trzeba wypić piwo, którego się (sobie) nawarzyło

¹³¹ seeds si:dz załążki, początki

¹³² stake steɪk udział

¹³³ convoluted 'kɒnvəlʊtɪd pogmatwany

¹³⁴ nest egg nest eg sumka na czarną godzinę

¹³⁵ it's alleged that... ɪts ə'ledʒd ðæt utrzymuje się, że..., według domniemań, ...

¹³⁶ to undervalue sth tu ʌndə'vælju: 'sambədi niedoszacować wartość czegoś, zaniżyć wartość

¹³⁷ to rig sth tə rɪɡ 'sambədi ukartować, sfingować coś

¹³⁸ to ensure tu ɪn'ʃʊə(r) zapewnić

¹³⁹ to retain tə rɪ'teɪn zachować

¹⁴⁰ to bribe tə braɪb dać łapówkę

¹⁴¹ to look the other way tə lʊk ðə 'ʌðə(r) weɪ przyknać na coś oczy

¹⁴² to keep mum about sth tə ki:p mʌm ə'baʊt 'sambədi nie puścić o czymś pary z ust

¹⁴³ to do time tə du taɪm odsiadywać wyrok

¹⁴⁴ to threaten tə 'θreɪn grozić

¹⁴⁵ to bring sb down tə brɪŋ 'sambədi daʊn pogrążyć kogoś

¹⁴⁶ to put sb in the frame tə put 'sambədi ɪn ðə freɪm wrobić kogoś

¹⁴⁷ accusation ˌækju'zeɪʃn oskarżenie

¹⁴⁸ to find sb guilty tə faɪnd 'sambədi 'ɡɪlti uznać kogoś za winnego

¹⁴⁹ to serve tə sɜ:v odsiedzieć

¹⁵⁰ porridge 'pɒrɪdʒ ciupa, paka

¹⁵¹ octogenarian ˌɒktədʒə'neəriən osiemdziesięciolatek

¹⁵² to plough one's own furrow tə pləʊ wʌnz əʊn 'fʌrəʊ działać po swojemu, być unikatem

¹⁵³ to crash out tə kræʃ ʌʊt odpaść z rywalizacji (po przegraniu w danej grze, turnieju itp.)

¹⁵⁴ agonisingly close ˌæɡənəɪzɪŋli kləʊz tak blisko, o krok

¹⁵⁵ finishing line 'fɪnɪʃɪŋ laɪn linia mety

¹⁵⁶ to sense tə sens odczuwać, mieć wrażenie

¹⁵⁷ get out of jail (free) card get ʌʊt əv dʒeɪl fri: kɑ:rd tu: as w rękawie, atut (użyty aby uniknąć przegrania gry)

¹⁵⁸ to have sth up one's sleeve tə hæv 'sambədi ʌp wʌnz sli:v mieć coś w zanadru