Driven by Data:
Inside the Fast Lane with Sorin Cheran

Podcast Transcript

Dragos: Welcome to the podcast. Atlassian Williams Racing is one of the most iconic teams in Formula 1, built on heritage, speed, adaptability, and intelligent innovation to win races. As the sport transforms, so must the systems and teams behind the scenes. Today, we are thrilled to be joined by Sorin Cheran.

Sorin is the Chief Information and Analytics Officer at Atlassian Williams Racing. He is leading a quiet revolution within the team — fusing legacy with innovation, tradition with transformation, and helping shape a new era of intelligent racing where every insight, every system, and every second counts.

With a distinguished career spanning high-performance computing, AI, and data architecture, Sorin has held global leadership roles at HP where he shaped enterprise-wide AI strategy and innovation. He holds a PhD in artificial intelligence and robotics, along with degrees in computer and information science and engineering. Now, at Atlassian Williams Racing, he is transforming how the team leverages data and technology to gain a competitive edge on and off the track.

Sorin, thank you for joining us today — let's dive right in.

Sorin: Thank you for inviting me, Dragos. It's a pleasure to be here.

Dragos: Williams Racing is a team with deep history. How do you balance heritage with innovation?

Sorin: Well, it's funny you say "balance." Innovation has been part of our DNA for decades, since the team was created in the '50s. We've always pushed boundaries in motorsports, in F1, and in the industry. So rather than balancing, it's more about honouring that legacy by continuing to innovate so we aren't left behind.

In the past decades, we did fall behind a bit. But today, we are building a new chapter with fresh ideas, partnerships, and tools — all to honour the innovation that shaped us from the beginning under Frank Williams.

Dragos: And being one of the top teams in F1 — that must bring heavy pressure.

Sorin: I actually thrive under pressure. When I'm stressed, it sparks brainstorming — with myself and my teams — to find new solutions and new ways of thinking. It's not negative stress; it's productive pressure that pushes us forward to honour our legacy. So yes — pressure, but the good kind.

Dragos: In this heritage-meets-innovation ecosystem, what role does digital transformation play?

Sorin: Digital transformation has meant different things over the decades. Early on, even adding sensors was transformation because you could see data. Today, it's about data, cloud, speed of connectivity — between systems, people, and the data that ties them together.

Digital transformation has become the cornerstone of building a modern Formula 1 team. It drives innovation vertically — cloud, data, AI, enterprise systems, tools — and horizontally across operations, from factory to track. Some teams started earlier, so we now understand how critical it is to get this right.

Dragos: So it's a race on the track and a race in digital transformation.

Sorin: Exactly — we keep racing on both fronts.

Dragos: In this race, how are you rethinking performance analytics with support from Brillio?

Sorin: Whether you call it ML, deep learning, AI, or performance analytics — the data that goes in matters most. Before analytics, you need a standardized, connected data foundation. That's what we're building with Brillio — a digital thread and data platform that empowers engineers to build better dashboards, models, and predictive analytics so they can anticipate — see where the puck is going.

It starts with data → then analytics → then empowering engineers at the pit wall, garage, and factory. Brillio helps us think differently through data standardization, ecosystem building, and scalable analytics.

Dragos: Why is user experience such an important focus area?

Sorin: In the garage, you have many roles — performance engineers, race engineers, tyre specialists, aero specialists, chief mechanics, engineering coordination and more. They are all people with different data-consumption preferences: graphs, tables, overlays, etc.

If we build systems with great UX, they don't think about the tool — they think about the decision. In racing, a decision like "box, box" can save or lose points. UX removes friction. Seconds matter — literally.

Dragos: We've seen how a small decision can change the race outcome.

Sorin: Absolutely. Sometimes it's the difference between ten points, one point, or zero.

Dragos: What is your long-term vision for Atlassian Williams Racing, and how does Brillio contribute?

Sorin: I want this to be a technology-driven team. If I do my job right, engineers — even the drivers — won't realise the technology exists. It will be seamless.

We need integrated enterprise systems, modern data platforms, analytics, and AI models feeding the right insights to the right screens at the right time. Today, we are not fully there — we must become more intelligent and agile.

We can't do it alone. Technology strategy is a puzzle. Brillio is a key puzzle piece — you've done this before, have the right engineering skills, and accelerate our journey. You are helping us build the digital muscle that matches our racing ambition: not only to win, but to stay there for a decade.

Dragos: That creates a revolution in racing.

Sorin: I hope so. I've been a Williams fan since childhood — this is a dream job. Being able to apply what I've learned and push this team forward with partners like Brillio is incredible.

Dragos: Thank you, Sorin. To conclude: it's not about replacing the past — it's about building on it with purpose.

Sorin: 100%. We honour our heritage by innovating, staying relevant, and partnering with the right people. It's not about replacing the past — it's about taking it into the future while staying open to what's next.

Dragos: Thank you. Until next time — transformation isn't a phase, it's a mindset.

Sorin: Thank you, Dragos — very true. Everyone, keep pushing and keep building.

Dragos: Thank you.