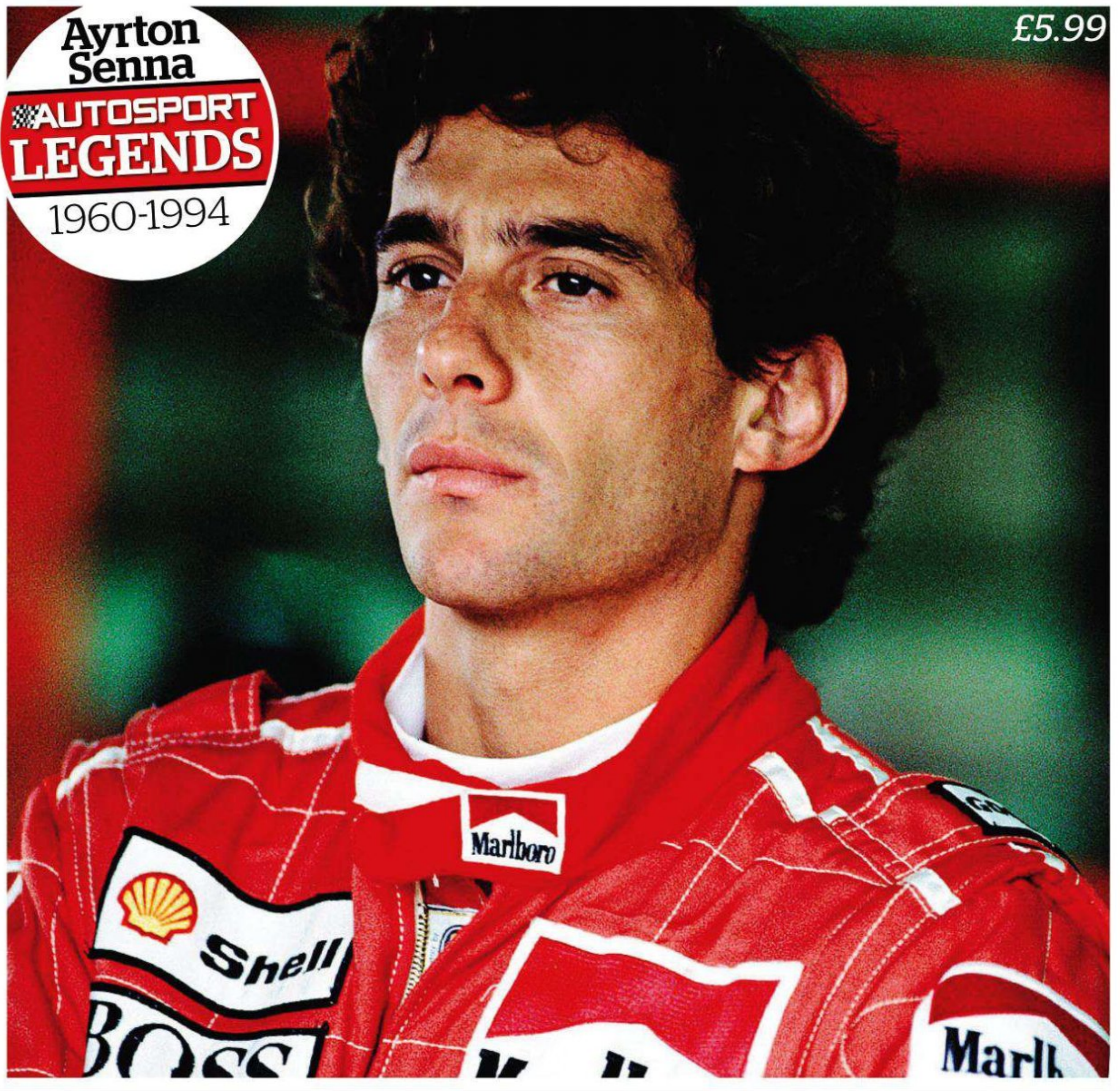


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Contents

Seventeen years after his fatal accident at Imola, Ayrton Senna still means many different things to different people - and this is especially true now that a recent documentary film has introduced the Brazilian and his era to a new generation of fans.

In the pages that follow, we've captured all aspects of Senna's extraordinary life. We've dipped into AUTOSPORT's archives to bring you the most revealing interviews Senna gave during his career. We've also taken advantage of the passage to time to re-examine Senna's career with the enhanced clarity of hindsight. Leading Formula 1 journalist Mark Hughes offers an extensive analysis of Senna's ability and legacy, and you'll also find technical dossiers of the cars that delivered him his three world titles.

If Ayrton Senna were a one-in-a-lifetime driver, we'd be lucky. The reality is that we might never again have a world champion made up of such a precise blend of brilliance and contradiction.

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Printed by Wyndeham Heron Ltd
Distributed by Frontline Ltd

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PARMA CHAMELEON

The 1981 season was Senna's first in cars, but he also competed in the Formula K World Karting Championship at Parma in Italy. Aboard a DAP kart, the Brazilian finished fourth in an event won by Englishman Mike Wilson. While Senna became legendary in cars, Wilson held the same status in karts





F1 FLEDGLING

The Toleman-Hart team gave Senna his F1 break in 1984. Here he is pictured during the Dutch Grand Prix weekend at Zandvoort – the exact point at which a storm blew up surrounding his departure for Lotus in '85. The Toleman team would become Benetton in '86, then Renault from 2002



Snapshot



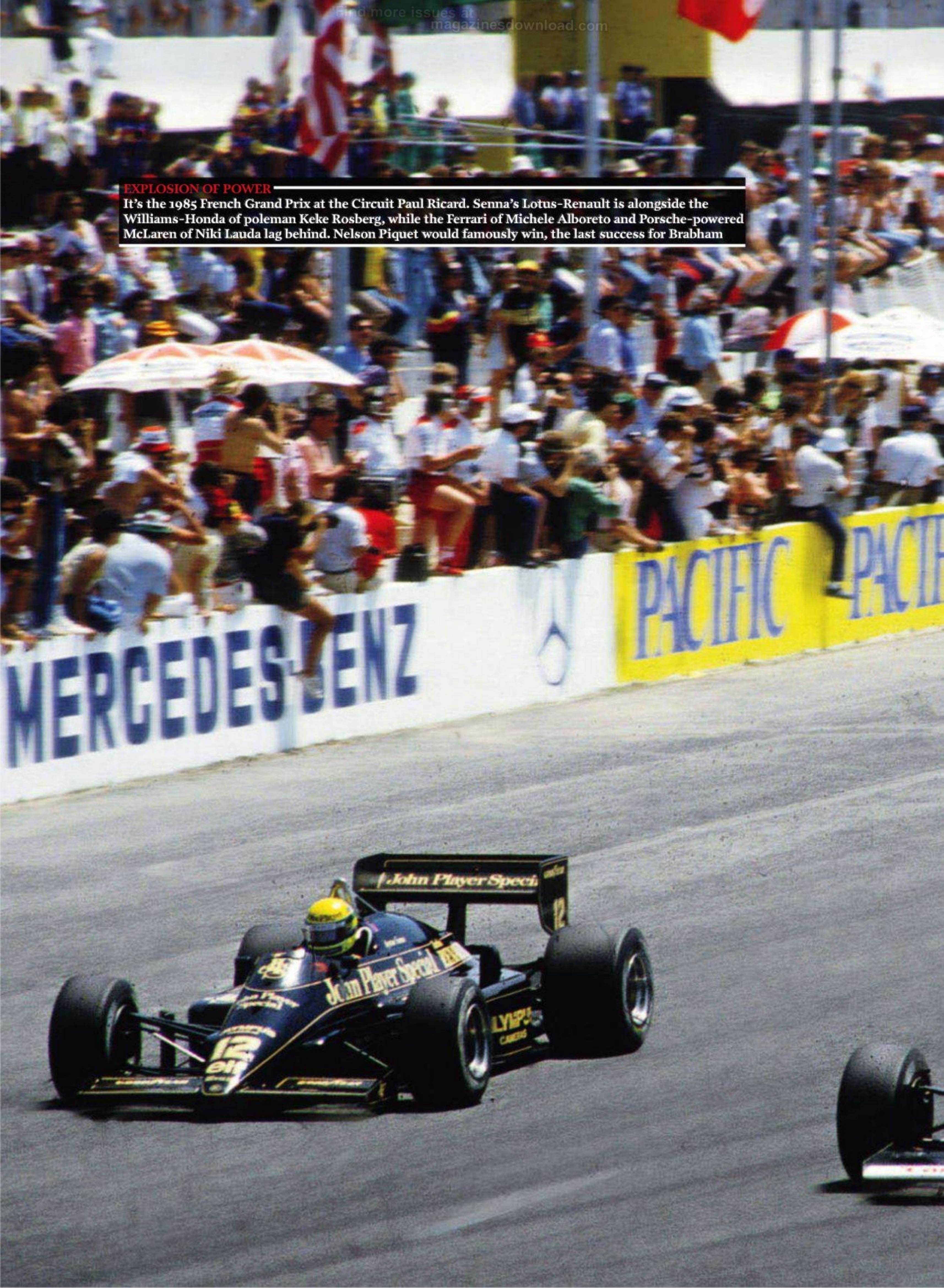


SURFIN' USA

Senna was the universally acknowledged master of wet conditions, but even his skills were no match for the unexpected downpour during qualifying for the 1990 US Grand Prix at Phoenix, Arizona. His time from Friday was good enough for only fifth on the grid, but he still won on Sunday

EXPLOSION OF POWER

It's the 1985 French Grand Prix at the Circuit Paul Ricard. Senna's Lotus-Renault is alongside the Williams-Honda of poleman Keke Rosberg, while the Ferrari of Michele Alboreto and Porsche-powered McLaren of Niki Lauda lag behind. Nelson Piquet would famously win, the last success for Brabham







Obsession & artistry

Whether you loved him or hated him, Ayrton Senna was special. And not just on the track. He was charismatic, charming, ruthless and obsessive. Lovable, and yet often difficult to like

By Mark Hughes

1981, the young da Silva – as he was known then – making a name for himself in Formula Ford 1600, at Snetterton and Thruxton (below), car seven



Ayrton Senna blew into this sport as a hurricane of contradictions. Did he take it hostage or was he – as the recent *Senna* film suggests – the victim of its establishment? Almost certainly both

Even the passage of time has not mellowed the intensity of his legacy. He's revered even more now than in his lifetime and the charisma and immense talent overlaid with a spiritual wash means that objectivity about him is difficult to come by. It would not be surprising if there were soon to be a campaign for his beatification but no saint could dominate this sport as he did. He was not all-good, neither was he all-bad but when he was bad he was very bad and when he was good, in the car or out, he was sublime. It's almost as if he did not do the bits between the polar extremes, the mediocrity, the averages.

Even trying to write a balanced assessment of him can draw you into a trough of either eulogy or dyslogy, love or hate; it's near-impossible to balance on the fence – the force-field of his persona lasers through the years to push you one side or the other.

The Angel

He drove with an angel's touch. Whether that was borne of a prodigious natural talent or his insanely-driven need to always be better is a moot point, but by the time he arrived in the UK to race Formula Ford, he was already a colossus, something that had been established in his karting career. "Just wait until 'Fast Man' gets here," Chico Serra used to tell Van Diemen's Ralph Firman every year of this phenomenon from Brazil, an F1 driver raving about a guy not yet out of karts. But for a few years Fast Man never made the journey. When he did he was just as Chico had described, a stunning blend of car control and commitment.

Through FF1600 in '81, FF2000 in '82 and British F3 in '83 the races and titles surrendered themselves to him. A snapshot: British F3, Silverstone Club circuit. In the previous event a few minutes earlier oil had been dropped right on the line into Woodcote at the end of Club straight, a cement dust trail all down the braking area and through the corner. First lap and Senna headed the crazy jostling pack. He braked like the oil wasn't even there as everyone behind treated it with caution. His car slid a little but was corrected almost before it did so – and he was gone. The gap he established in that one bit of audacity was just maintained to the flag; total commitment bordering on arrogance, like chance would not dare to inconvenience him. It was as if in his own mind he was already convinced of his greatness. Increasingly, the racing world began to agree with this self-assessment.

A Williams test at Donington – faster than the incumbent world champion Keke Rosberg had ever gone around there in the same car. The infamous McLaren test at Silverstone; no quicker than Martin Brundle or Stefan Bellof after each had completed a run apiece, but keeping the throttle nailed to the floor even as the engine was detonating as he completed the lap. Yet despite the anger this generated in Ron Dennis, he negotiated a second run with a fresh engine – and duly went quickest. A Brabham test at Brands, in serious contention for a race seat there – until Nelson Piquet nixed the idea, insecure already about a guy that had yet to even contest a grand prix. The buzz was building.

That he settled upon Toleman probably just added to the perception. Any rookie under-performance on a given weekend would be put down to the car, any transcending of its level would be strikingly obvious. The wonder-drive of Monaco in the rain, victory apparently snatched from him, qualifying the car third for the final race at Estoril; these just confirmed what the junior racing world already knew: that he was more than just another fast young driver. He was somehow beyond. It was as if pre-ordained that when walking



Forever thoughtful but more than most, Ayrton would literally get himself into a trance-like state before qualifying. He achieved 65 pole positions this way

Senna: the legacy

into Lotus for his first season in a competitive car he would comfortably eclipse such a recognised talent as Elio de Angelis, using the sheer force of his personality and speed to become the team's main focus. This had been the Italian's fortress for six years yet within half a season Senna had knocked it down into ruins.

History unfolded as it did, with him recognising the limitations of Lotus, the meeting of ambitions that was his partnership with Ron Dennis, the scale of challenge represented by McLaren team-mate Alain Prost and the worrying commitment this induced in Senna both on and off track. He'd step up his game to whatever level was required, taking him to places that Prost refused to go. It was war and Senna always prevailed in a war. Because he was obsessed.

Obsession and artistry was a heady combination and it made him an irresistible force. Rainy days brought out the artistry – Monaco '84, Estoril '85 and, most famously of all, Donington '93 – when his flowing, effortless car control allowed him to commit to a momentum impossible for the others. His obsession drove him not only to whatever risk was necessary but also to investigate any and every detail of technique. "He would think about it more than any other driver I've seen," says Jo Ramirez, McLaren's team manager at the time. "Sometimes even if he'd arrived back at the hotel and maybe when he was taking a shower he thought of something else, he'd think nothing of going back to the track and talking some more."

At McLaren he would work closely with Honda's Takeo Kiuchi as his engine engineer. "When we did our simulations," he recalled, "usually the actual time a driver set was slightly slower than the theoretical best lap from simulation. But Ayrton was always slightly quicker – and it was because we could not model what he was doing with the engine/tyre in combination. He had a way of jabbing at the throttle that people thought was all about keeping up the boost pressure of the turbo engines. Maybe it started that way, but he was still using it even with the normally-aspirated engines.



Above: with Ron Dennis at the first McLaren test in 1983 where he impressed, despite killing the engine. Right: early days at McLaren, with Ramirez and Prost

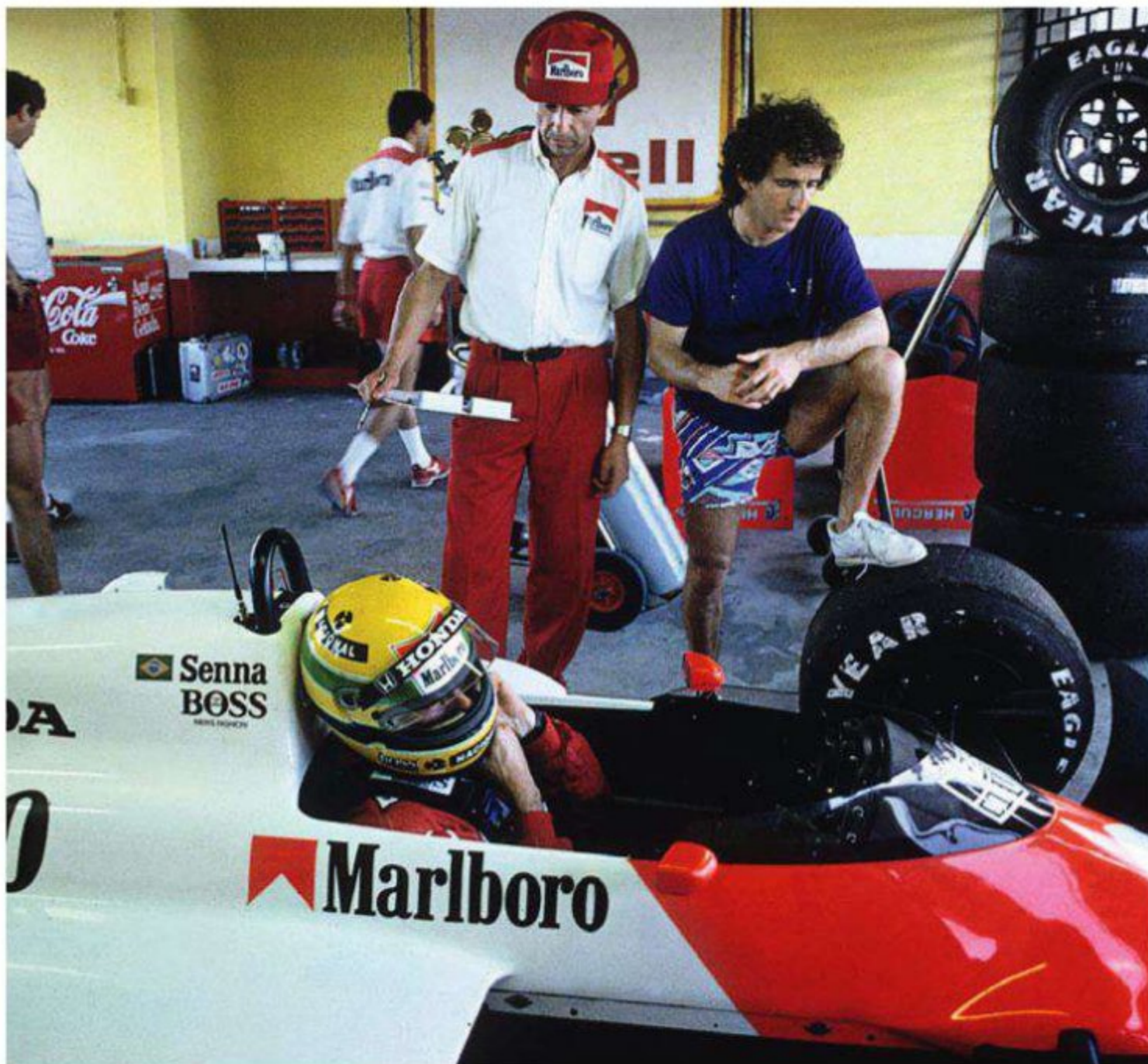


An artist at work; Senna in the wet qualifying for the 1990 season-opener at Phoenix

He would use the throttle to put more torque through the tyre and change the yaw, a little bit each time, before the tyre stalled and slid. This way he could get a better trajectory before the apex without as much steering. He was the only driver I ever saw doing this.

"He would think very deeply about details that would allow him to drive faster," says Ramirez, "but in terms of getting the car to do the work, Alain was the master. He was better at set up than Ayrton and when he got the car perfect Alain was just incredible – faster even than Ayrton. But how many times do you get perfection in racing? One time in 10 if you are lucky and in the other nine times when the car was not perfect Ayrton could get more from himself, more than anyone I ever saw."

Being paired with Prost did seem to induce him to yet-greater heights. Prost was perceived as the world's best driver when Senna had joined him at McLaren for the '88 season. Senna was obviously on a mission to make it apparent that the perception was incorrect. Coming into the Monaco weekend – just their third race together as team-mates – there were stories that he was intent on *lapping* Prost on this circuit where the driver played a greater role than anywhere else. It was here that he says he had his great mystical experience in qualifying, where he found himself lapping two seconds or more faster than Prost – with the tantalising prospect of more to come if he was prepared to walk through the next door of perception. At this moment, he said, he became afraid because he did not understand what was happening – and he came in. "I was doing it in an almost unconscious way. I could not really cope with that in a manner I could find easy." Asked if he ever experienced it again, he replied: "Not to that



intensity, no. But in a lower level... There's no need to go there any more. I know some of the reasons I went to that limit... the desire to go further was so big." So the legend of Senna the shaman driver took shape from the bubbling brine of his intense emotion and ethereal talent. The motivation was to prevail – and he'd go to whatever level was necessary to do that.

Those emotions, derived from the power of his will, absolutely drove Senna. "He was completely unique in the sense of how much of an adrenalin rush he used to get not just from winning races, but fantastic qualifying laps and of course world championships," says Ron Dennis, "and it was always an emotional roller coaster for him. He was never comfortable with wherever he was."

"He approached qualifying like it was a religious experience," adds Ramirez. "I'd never seen concentration like it before. He got into a trance." He mined the power of his mind or soul, believed there was real power within to be tapped, that when you somehow tuned this to a universal frequency, you could achieve things that ordinarily would be out of your reach. He probably extracted more from himself than any driver before or since.

Knowing all these things – his belief that he could transcend normal limits if he delved deep enough within, his skewed sense of outrage if he believed he was a victim of unfairness, his war-like commitment to prevailing, his mystical Monaco experience – the circumstances of early 1994 are a horribly perfect storm. Completely convinced that Michael Schumacher's Benetton was running the banned traction control, he arrived at Imola yet to even score a point as Schumacher had won both races so far, despite



*In the McLaren at Imola, 1993.
The team was struggling to meet
Senna's wage demands while
remaining competitive*

“Ayrton has a problem and it is that he believes God will look after him in the car”

Alain Prost



Senna was adamant that he'd use the race at Monaco to prove he was better than Prost, but it didn't quite work out that way...

Senna having pulled out some unreal performances to put the badly flawed early-season Williams on pole each time. “I know some of the reasons I went to that limit,” he'd said of his commitment at Monaco in '88 when he was out to prove, once and for all, with equal cars, just who the world's best driver was. “The desire to go further was so big.” Think of those words as you picture him in the Williams in the early laps of Imola, leading the race despite everything stacked against him, Schumacher just behind stalking him in the faster car, the bumpy approach of Tamburello that was the faster, but in the stall-prone Williams more dangerous, line. Just too much emotion, too much turmoil and in that horrible instant he left the track. Moments later he left us too and though F1 has flourished enormously since, it's never been quite the same.

The Devil

Mid-feud, Alain Prost famously said: “Ayrton has a problem and it's that he believes God will look after him in the car.” Senna almost certainly did *not* believe that, was all too aware of the personal dangers involved, but the really interesting thing about Prost's theory is whether Senna happily allowed that perception to take hold, as something which could then be used as a weapon; it would be very difficult racing wheel-to-wheel with someone whom you believed felt a Divine protection.

He would utilise anything he believed would help attain what he saw as a natural justice in which he, as the fastest driver, would be the most successful – even things that were not naturally just. Imola 1989 was a classic example. He and Prost had an agreement

that they would not fight out the first corner, that whichever of them made the better start would be free to take up the line into Tosa, thereby allowing the McLarens to put some distance on the rest – and only then would they begin competing with each other. All went well at the start; Senna was off the line better, Prost tucked in behind. But then Gerhard Berger's fiery accident caused the race to be red-flagged and on the restart it was Prost who got away faster. Now the agreement was horribly inconvenient for Senna who simply dived down the inside at Tosa against the defenceless Prost. To use the excuse that the agreement was only for the first start was fatuous – and he knew it. When Prost later took up the matter with him at a test in Pembrey, Senna was in tears; the logical truth of Prost's point conflicted with Senna's superiority complex.

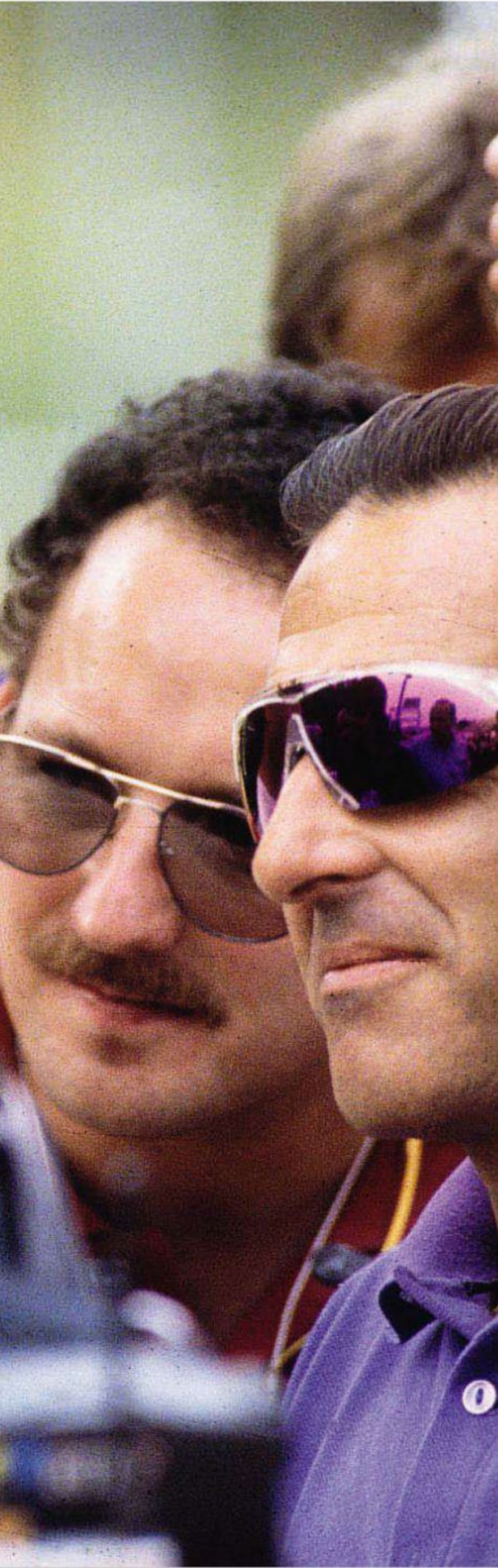
On track, the ends definitely justified the means in his world. A little mid-corner brake (such as that Nigel Mansell believes he gave him at Suzuka in 1991) or a barging aside of a driver ahead (see Alessandro Nannini, Hungary 1990) were inconsequential in his mind as acts against inferiors who had no right to be challenging him. Ultimately even as great a driver as Prost was cast in Senna's mind in this inferior role. Which was both his strength and the core of his weakness as those contradictions just layered themselves upon him. Whenever an 'inferior' beat him, he could lose all rationality and was prone to short-circuit.

Senna was the first who acted upon the improved safety of cars and circuits to use tactics that in previous eras would have been unthinkable. In doing so he was changing the terms of combat unilaterally – and not



Senna: the legacy

Such was his stature, he rarely had a moment's peace on a GP weekend. The fact that he did not always get a fair press would only have added to that pressure



Being flat-out in top gear didn't stop Senna from squeezing Prost into the pitwall at Portugal in 1988; by now their fiery relationship was becoming much more than a team-mate rivalry

everyone was prepared to fight under his terms. What he was also inadvertently doing was laying down an example to be followed by impressionable younger racers and thereby polluting the sport with dangerously sub-standard racing etiquette.

Senna had initiated hostilities with Prost at Estoril towards the end of their first season together, easing him towards the pitwall while they were flat-out in top gear in a move rather like that which Michael Schumacher inflicted upon Rubens Barrichello at Hungary last year. It built and built from there until Suzuka 1990 – when, by his own later admission, he deliberately kept his right foot flat to the floor at the first corner, ensuring he hit his rival's car hard enough to take them both out of the race, thereby sealing the championship for himself. It should however be recalled just how badly he had been treated by the FIA that weekend and in the events of the same race in 1989, and how real the cosy relationship between Prost and FIA President Jean-Marie Balestre was. It's hard not to agree that Senna was the victim of a conspiracy that weekend – the moving of pole to the less advantageous side of the grid after Senna had set it – but the solution Senna's fundamentalist outlook took him to was beyond the pale. "I spoke with him much later about it," said Ron Dennis, "and the conversation that took place was not inconsistent with our common view that we do not win at all costs... it was not one of his finest moments and he was not proud of it."

Senna had a skewed sense of entitlement, as listening to his various diatribes in the recent film will confirm. His rant about Prost preventing him from getting into the '93 Williams makes the creeping sense of spoilt brattishness quite evident. Yes, he was the best driver of his era but he often behaved as if this in itself should bring him unique rights. Headstrong son of a very wealthy man, nothing had ever been out of his reach. It's to his credit that he had the intensity of will not for this to have made him the classic rich boy racer, very fast one day less so the next, unable to summon the required grit. That was never Ayrton, someone with an inner rage always to be the best, the fastest and with a complete commitment to that task. But that's likely where the skew came from.

Another freeze-frame, from the post-race press conference Donington '93 after he had just driven one of the greatest races any driver has conjured in the sport's history. He was fascinating in recounting his



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NACIONAL

The simplicity of an empty pitwall in testing, perfect for reflection. Right: many were not impressed by the moodiness and rudeness aimed at Prost during this press conference

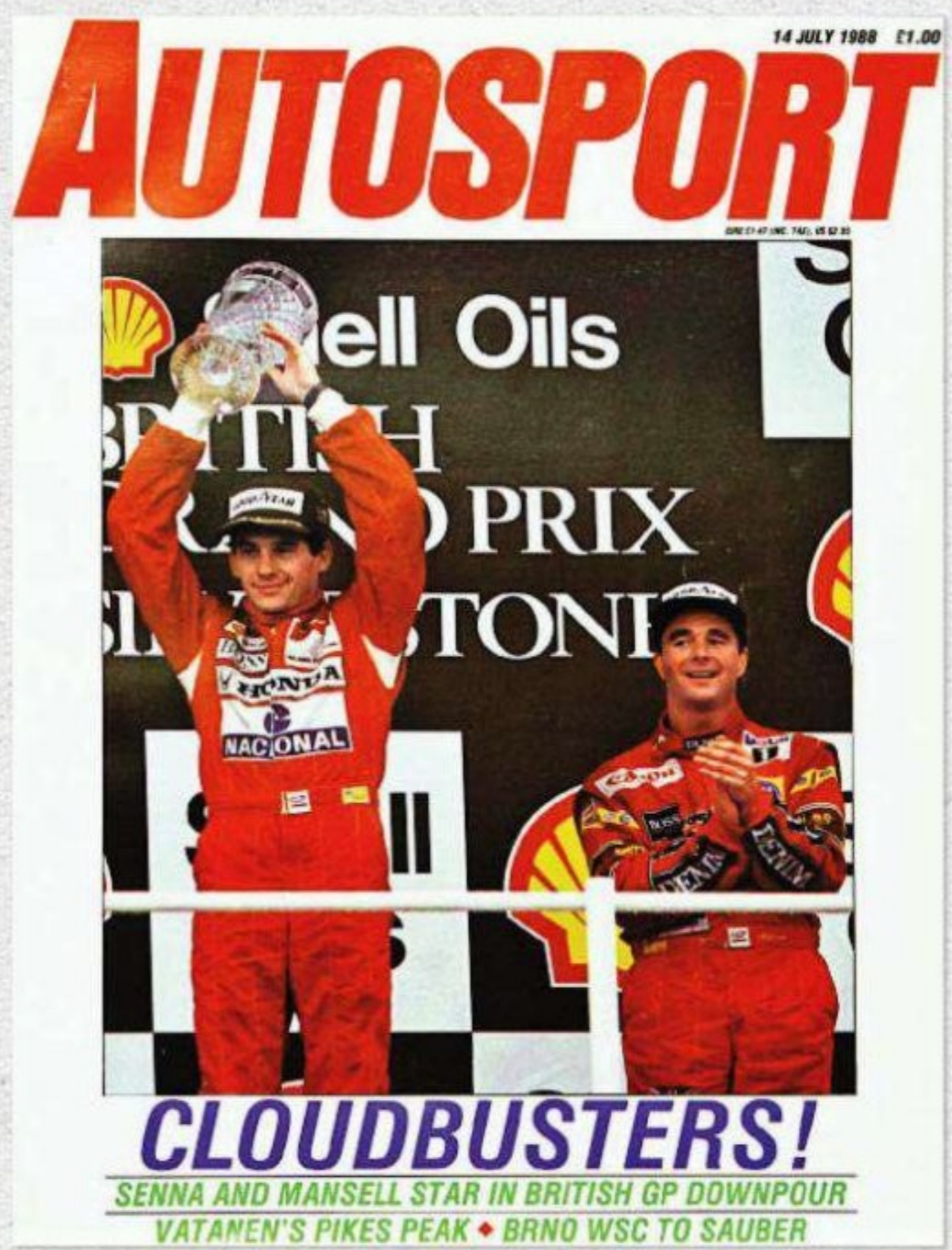
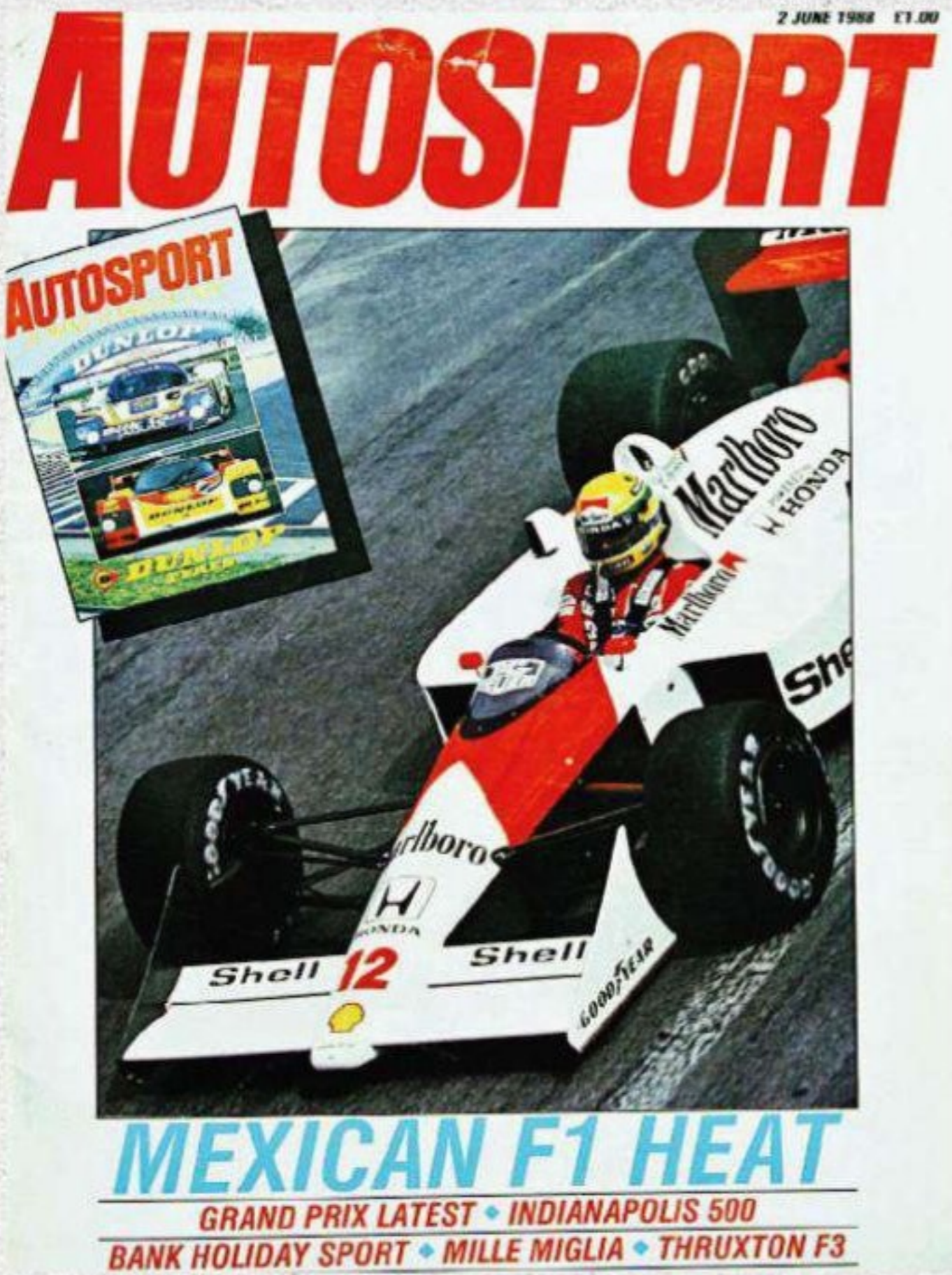
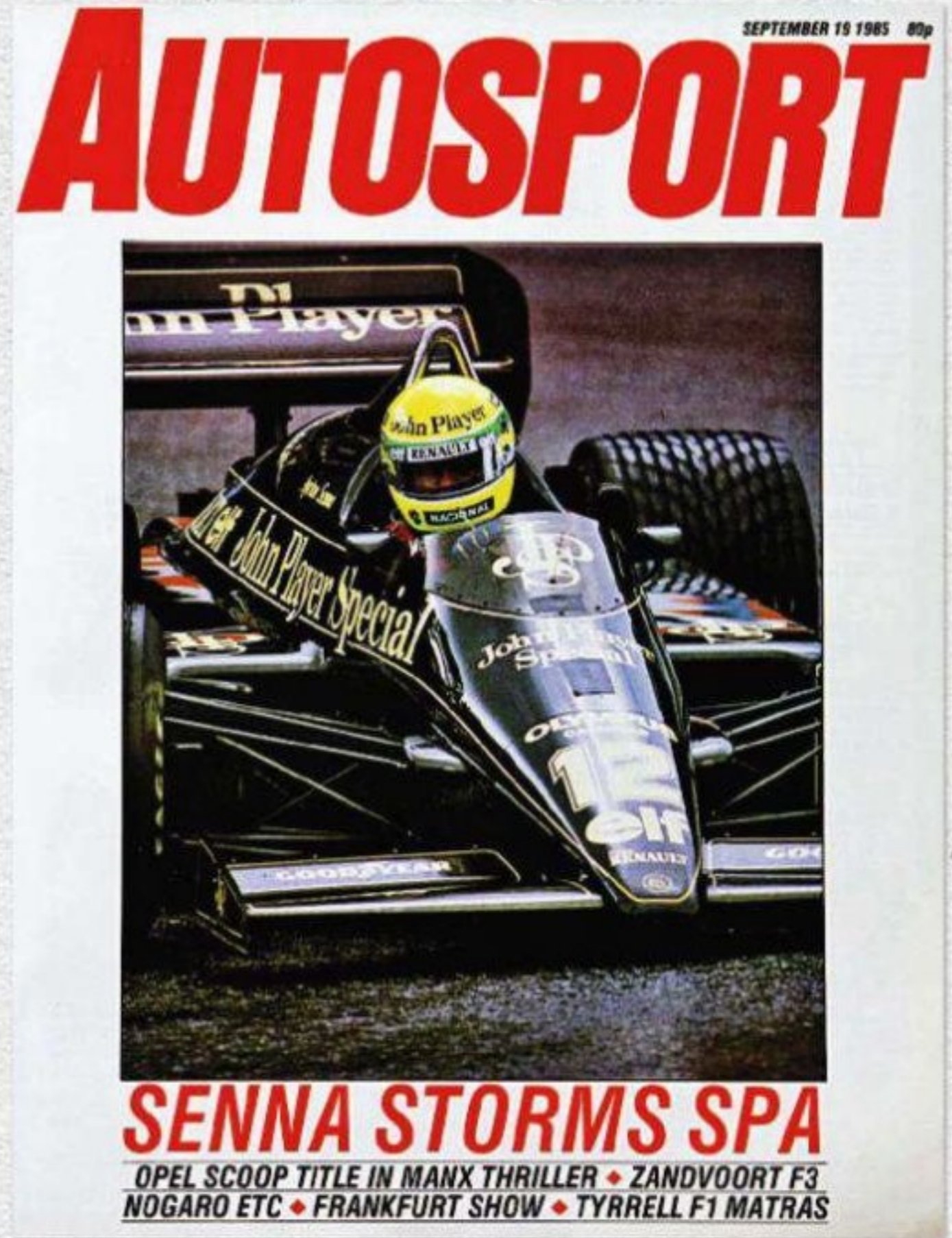


experiences of that wet afternoon, but totally graceless as Prost then gave his account. As Alain was explaining various details – how he had committed to what in hindsight was the wrong wing level for a wet race, his excessively high overrun that made the rears lock under braking into the slow corners – Senna sat to his right, back and out of Prost’s line of sight, making his boredom very obvious, even rolling his eyes at one point. Finally, he interrupted Prost with the cheap comment of, “you wanna swap cars with me?” It got him some cheap laughs from the more sycophantic element of the press corps but it was a nastily graceless flourish on this day of all days when he could afford to be the opposite. Just one more contradiction among many.

His racing demands on his teams were part of what made him great. But the huge financial demands he made of McLaren once he’d achieved the title-winning successes contributed to the decreasing competitiveness of the McLarens beneath him in subsequent seasons. “His retainer took a lot of the free cashflow of the company and we definitely suffered in respect to not having the money to develop the car,” explained Dennis, “whereas running in parallel to that Williams had lower-paid drivers and effectively concentrated on the car, so some of me – maybe unfairly – felt, ‘we just spent two years trying to meet your fiscal demands to the detriment of the development of the team and then you pop into a car that has had the benefit of that investment for your own ends.’”

Which was he?

There can be no resolution in this. He was both. A gentle man out of the car, of great compassion and intelligence, his charity work for his country was absolutely his own initiative and is his finest legacy of all. Thousands of poor Brazilian kids are still benefitting from the phenomenon that was Ayrton. Charismatic, articulate and revered, he was an irresistible power – which was used for the good in the larger scale of things, but which was sometimes ill-used in the career that made him famous. One of the greatest drivers the world has ever seen, he was also a great man. But great men are not always good. It boggles the mind to think of what he might have achieved once he’d stopped being a racing driver, but that was the one privilege that was to be denied him.



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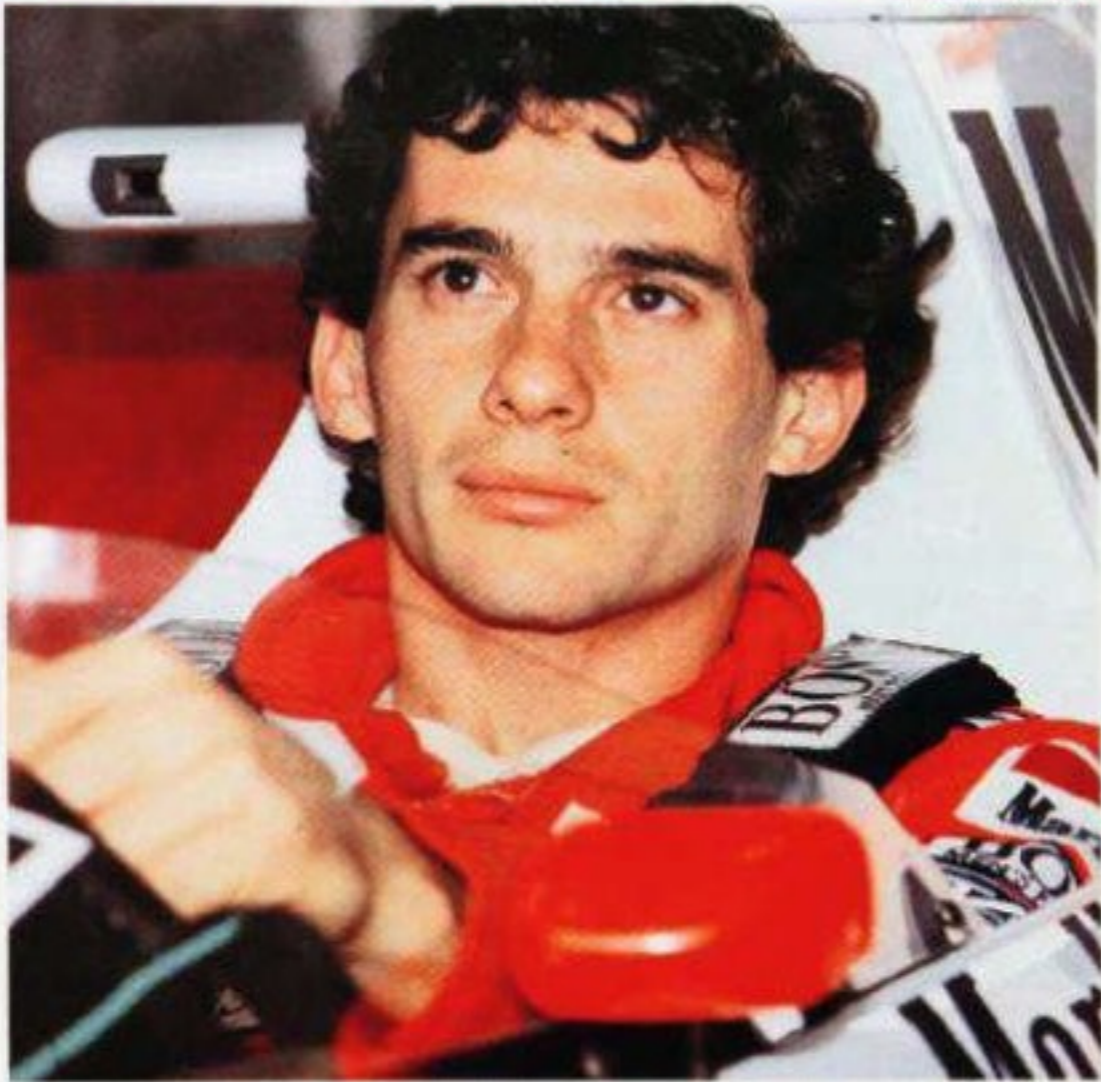
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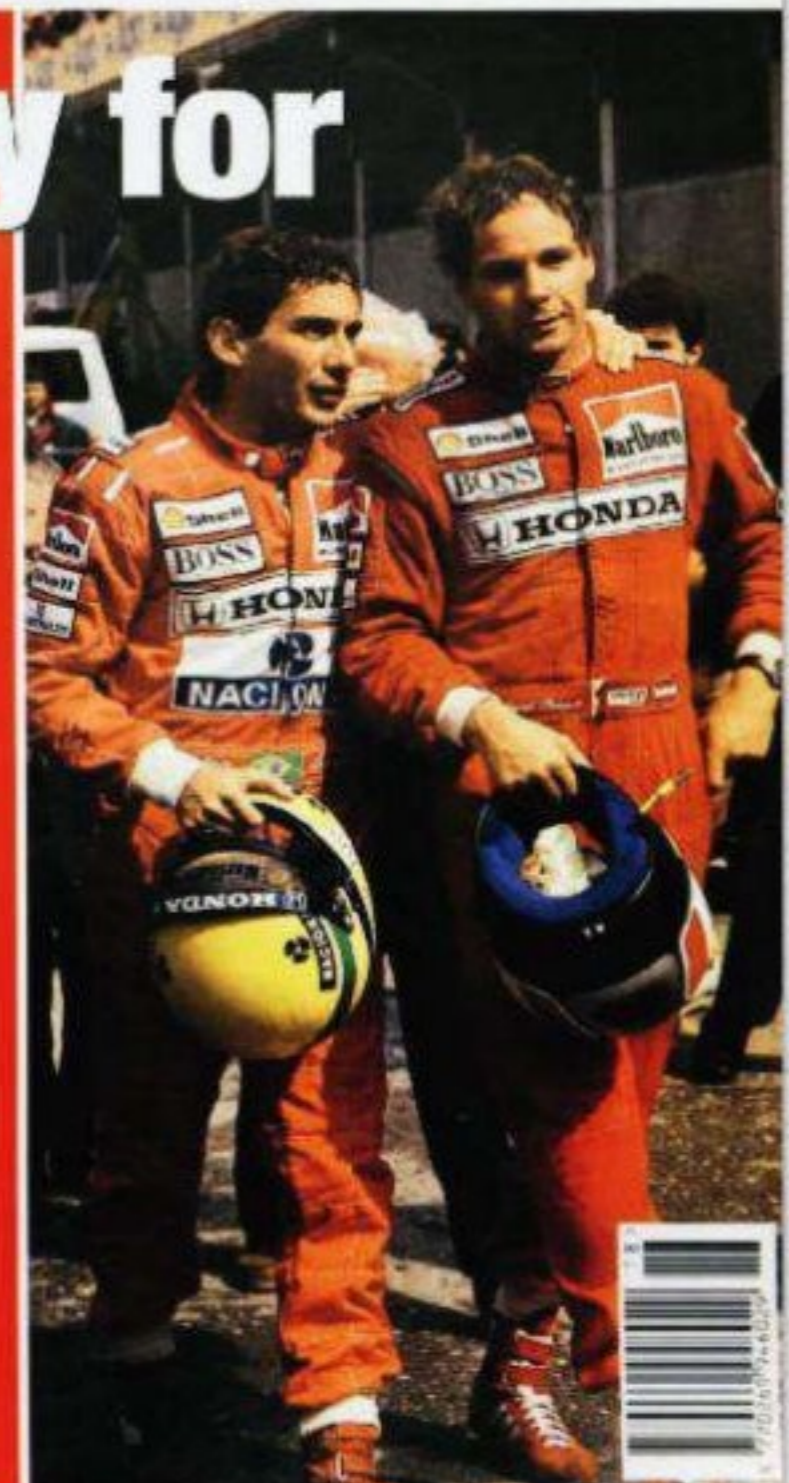
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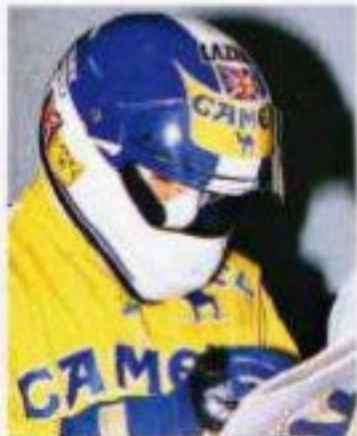


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1982

EARLY DAYS IN BRITAIN

Ayrton Senna da Silva was the dominant force in Formula Ford 1600 in 1981, then he retired. But he returned to sweep all before him in FF2000 in '82. This is an interview carried out during that season

Time has passed very quickly since the name of Ayrton Senna da Silva first appeared at a British race meeting in March last year. The 21 year-old from Sao Paulo, like many fellow Brazilians before him, had arrived for a season of Formula Ford 1600 racing with the works Van Diemen team. It was the start of an extraordinarily successful year.

He finished fifth in that first race at Brands Hatch, but returned two weeks later to score a maiden victory. Thus began a remarkable sequence that saw him beaten only four times in the next 16 outings. It became clear almost immediately that here was a young man with tremendous potential.

Yet even before the end of the season, with a brace of championship titles already tucked under his belt, da Silva returned home to Brazil. Not for him, it was said, were the pressures of the sport, where, even with his achievements, he had found it impossible to find a sponsor to enable him to move into Formula 3. He would rather 'retire' immediately. Or so the rumour went. As is often the case, especially when a foreign driver's lack of command of the English language can lead to misunderstandings, there was rather more to da Silva's return to his homeland than was apparent.

"When I left here," explains Ayrton, in his rapidly improving English, "I was unhappy for a number of reasons. I was very disappointed. One of the main reasons was that, as you know, in order to find a sponsor you need good publicity. This is especially

By Jeremy Shaw



Senna was part of an all-Latin American (and very talented) line-up in Van Diemen's Formula Ford 1600 team in 1981. The Brazilian is pictured with his team-mates, Mexican Alfonso Toledano (left) and Argentinian Enrique Mansilla

important in Brazil because it's so far away. Of all the Brazilians who have come to England, I was the first to win two championships in the first year: the RAC and the TT (Townsend Thoresen). I won 12 races; I qualified on pole position 14 or 15 times – in 18 races, these were very good results. But I couldn't get good press in Brazil and without that I couldn't find a sponsor. I knew that I needed a sponsor before I could move into Formula 3 and I tried very, very hard."

It seems incredible that his impressive arrival on the British scene should have gone virtually unnoticed in his homeland. "No, not really," he goes on, "because I was competing for space in the newspapers with [Roberto] Moreno and [Raul] Boesel, who were winning

"I couldn't get good press in Brazil. I was competing for space with Moreno and Boesel, and Piquet was winning in Formula 1"

in Formula 3. And also, Nelson Piquet was winning the World Championship. After all that there was no room for FF1600."

There was another reason for the despondency that led to his retreat to the Southern Hemisphere: karting. Before he switched to Formula Ford, da Silva had proved similarly successful, even dominant, in karts. He had driven throughout the past two seasons for the Italian DAP team and had twice finished runner-up in the World 100cc Championships. Ayrton desperately wanted to win that elusive title in 1981.

"I was one of the favourites," he remembers, "and I was in a good position to win. But then the material I got was no good; the engine and the frame. Last year they changed the regulations to allow 135cc engines and my frame was not strong enough for the engine. I could finish only fourth. I was very upset."





Senna at speed out of Mallory Park's Devil's Elbow in his Van Diemen FF1600 car, 1981



Senna's maiden F3 test would come later in 1982, in the Ralt of Eddie Jordan (wearing hat, left)

Senna in Formula Ford 2000

He had looked upon the World Championships as an excellent opportunity to give his career the springboard it needed. Poor equipment had let him down. At that point, he was resigned to being unable to move, as he had hoped, into the Marlboro British F3 Championship. Contrary to popular opinion, though, he had not turned his back on motorsport.

"No, definitely not," he confirms. "All the time I was looking for money and around Christmas time I decided definitely to come back. Murray Taylor [one of

"I knew I couldn't stay in Brazil for a whole year without racing. I rang Ralph Firman at Van Diemen to see about FF2000"

the F3 team bosses] contacted me but I could not find the sponsorship, not until 1983. This was in January. By the end of the month I was getting very excited, especially as I read in AUTOSPORT and all the papers that the season was soon to start. I knew that I couldn't stay in Brazil for a whole year without racing. I decided immediately to try for this year and I rang Ralph Firman at Van Diemen to see if I could do FF2000."

By this time the new season was no more than a

Senna on the way to one of his many FF2000 wins in 1982, this time in a Euroseries race at Zandvoort

PICS: LATARCHIVE



week away and a deal was swiftly arranged, through Firman, for da Silva to drive one of the Rushen Green Van Diemen RF82s in the Pace British 2000 and Euroseries Championships. He arrived back in England a matter of days before the first race – again at Brands Hatch – and his very first test session underlined the fact that he would be the man to beat, da Silva being easily fastest. This form was duplicated in the race, to the effect that he won by just under 10 seconds.

“The car was quite good,” he says, smiling, “but now it is even better!” To date, after six rounds of the Pace series, he is still unbeaten and remains well clear of his rivals. He looks to be in a class of his own. The fact that he is establishing new lap records with virtually every outing further confirms this.

So, to what does he attribute his ability to be so fast, despite possessing a minimum of experience. “For sure it is the karting,” he replies instantly. “It is much, much easier than FF1600 where, apart from the basic car control, you cannot use the experience you get from a go-kart because they [FF1600] are so slow; there’s no grip. Two-litre is different. There is more grip, more power and you can make more changes to the car to suit the circuits. It’s much nicer.”

Many people involved in the sport have suggested

“A Swiss man contacted me and said Maurer was interested in me for F2, but I knew that there would be no real security”

that da Silva may be wasting his time in FF2000. Should he not try and move up into F3 as soon as possible? Ayrton thinks not: “Last year I won many races in FF1600. If I am lucky I can do the same this year in 2-litre. Then I don’t need to do F3 this year. If I was to do F3 then I must win to get good publicity, because people will be looking to next year and I must keep the sponsors happy. To win in F3 you must do



Lining up on pole position for an FF2000 race at Oulton in Rushen Green Van Diemen...



1982 Dutch GP support: Senna leads Jaap van Silfhout, Calvin Fish, Cor Euser and Ron Kluit en route to FF2000 victory

many miles of testing in the car – that’s for sure – but really there is not enough time.”

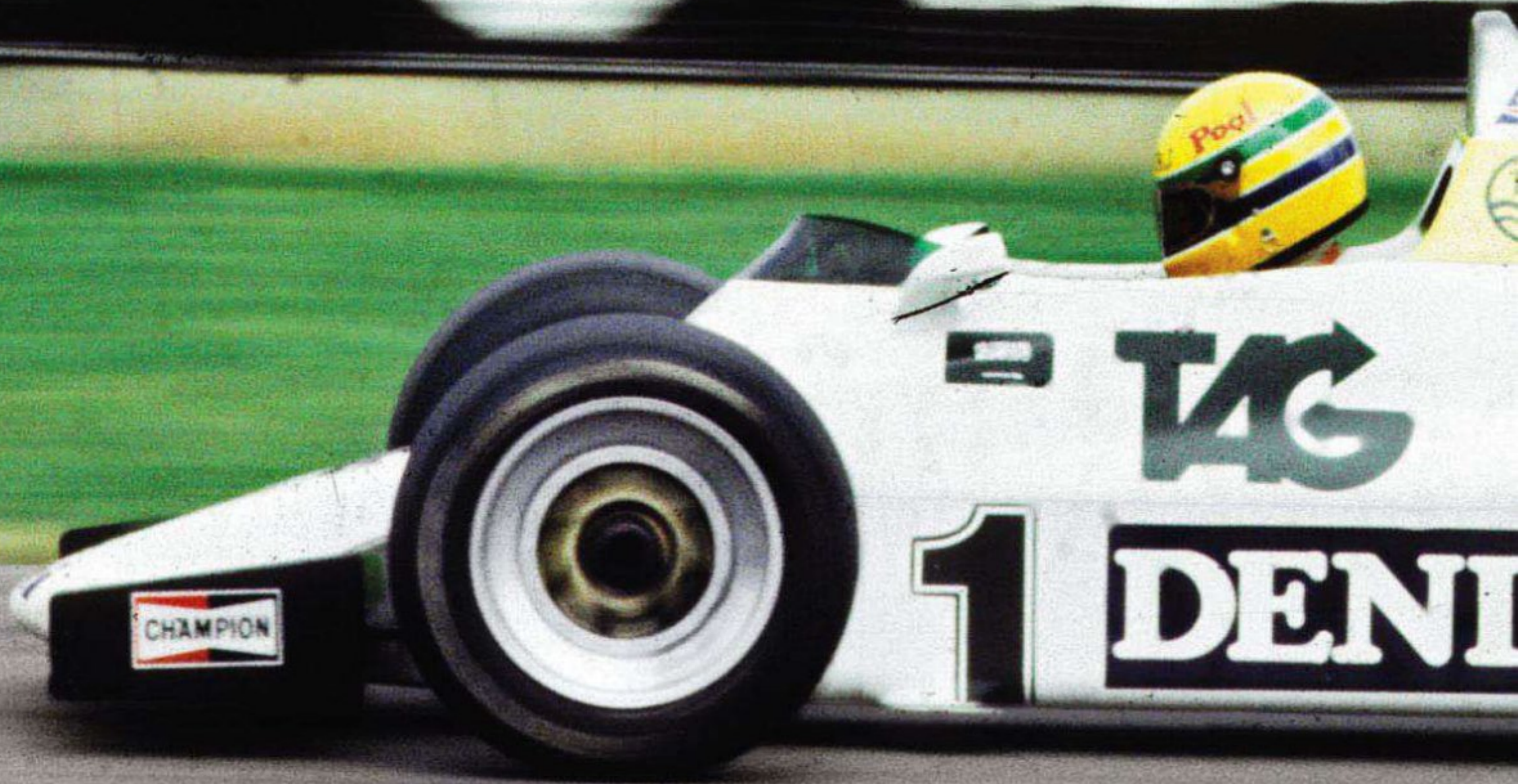
Ayrton intends to do some F3 testing towards the end of this year prior to, he hopes, a full season in 1983. In the meantime though, he is concentrating on FF2000 as well as looking forward to another crack at that karting World Championship: “I have already been to Italy this year and DAP have built a brand-new frame. It’s completely different. The engine is still not good yet but we know where the problem is and the new parts will be ready soon. Then we will test.” September, in Sweden, will be an important time for him as he strives to claim that elusive title.

It is in cars, though, that his future lies and da Silva, as he has said, intends to move to F3 next year. He has no intentions of stepping up into Formula 2, despite reports last season that he was considering a move to the Maurer team: “It is true that a Swiss man contacted me by ’phone and he said that Maurer was interested in me for F2. He said that he had a sponsor and that there would be no problem with the money, but he changed his tune by the second time that we spoke and I knew then that there was no security, no real chance.

“I don’t really want to do F2, anyhow, because I think to do well depends too much on what tyres, or what engine, or what chassis you have. I think that in F3 it’s much more even. There are only little differences between the cars and the engines; the tyres are the same. It’s much more up to the driver. I hope that, if I can go well and win races in F3, then I will be able to jump straight into Formula 1 – like Raul Boesel. I think that if you can be competitive in Formula Ford and 2-litre, and maybe F3, then why not in F1?”

*...and enjoying the spoils
of (another) victory at the
Cheshire parkland venue*





NUMBER 1 STRAIGHT AWAY

In July 1983, Frank Williams gave Ayrton Senna da Silva – then the British F3 Championship leader – his maiden F1 test at Donington. The Brazilian completed 83 laps, and impressed the team. Williams said: “I wasn’t acting philanthropically, but I hope in the future he’ll remember we treated him fairly...”



The making of Senna the movie

At one point, the entire seven-year project was jeopardised by a faulty aeroplane and a broken laptop. As it turned out, a presentation to Ayrton's tearful sister and 17 minutes with Bernie Ecclestone paved the way for the greatest F1 film of all time...

Hollywood heart-throb Antonio Banderas has lent his suave skills to many an on-screen hero. He's swashed his buckle as a rapier-quick Zorro and the pistol-toting *Desperado*, and he's starred as Puss in Boots in the *Shrek* franchise and a scimitar-wielding fighter in *The 13th Warrior*. He even popped up in a Woody Allen film earlier this year. Surprisingly, had events worked out differently, the Spaniard could also have the name of Ayrton Senna on his CV.

Banderas was the star taken to the driver's family by Warner Brothers in the wake of *Imola* 1994, when the Hollywood studio sought to produce a high-octane racing biopic centred around the Brazilian legend's meteoric rise and premature death. Unsurprisingly, the movie did not get made. The Senna family are fiercely protective of Ayrton's legacy and do not want his memory tarnished – even if the film was to come with added Banderas.

And yet a movie of Senna's life has now been made, and was released in UK cinemas early this summer.

Simply titled *Senna*, it is a small-budget documentary rather than a fiction-laced Hollywood blockbuster, but it's so exquisitely crafted that it holds audiences spellbound whether they're F1 fans or not. This explains its much-vaunted theatrical release, an honour reserved for only the most accomplished journalistic films. It has already scooped the World Cinema Documentary Audience Award at this year's Sundance Film Festival, a victory made all the more impressive by the fact that this showcase for independent cinema is held in the US, and leans towards American stories. F1, as we know, is not so popular in the US. Then again, the story of Ayrton Senna is a remarkable one.

"During one of the Sundance screenings, I was watching a woman who looked as if she came from the Upper East Side of New York, perfect hair, with a scarf," says the film's screenwriter, Manish Pandey. "She was watching the last lap and that is when she realised what was going to happen. When the accident happened, she covered her face with both hands and looked down. She didn't jump: it was an emotional shock and she was just crying. It dawned on me then that some people

By Will Lawrence

Photograph © Terry O'Neil

WINNER
WORLD CINEMA AUDIENCE AWARD
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**"HE WAS
THE BEST
DRIVER WHO
EVER LIVED"**
NIKI LAUDA

SENNA

NO FEAR. NO LIMITS. NO EQUAL.

UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH STUDIOCANAL A WORKING TITLE PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH MIDFIELD FILMS "SENNA" MUSIC BY ANTONIO PINTO
EDITORS GREGERS SALL CHRIS KING EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KEVIN MACDONALD MANISH PANDEY DEBRA HAYWARD LIZA CHASIN WRITTEN BY MANISH PANDEY
PRODUCED BY JAMES GAY-REES TIM BEVAN ERIC FELLNER DIRECTED BY ASIF KAPADIA

WORKING TITLE A UNIVERSAL PICTURE

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Credit for ensuring that the well-received film was even made goes to (left to right) Manish Pandey, Asif Kapadia and James Gay-Rees

around the world, especially in America, don't know the ending of this story."

The film's creators are three Englishmen – Pandey, director Asif Kapadia and producer James Gay-Rees – and their battle to have got the film made is itself a triumph against the odds. One suspects that Senna himself would understand and appreciate their efforts, and would almost certainly approve of their tenacity, guile and, importantly, their technical excellence. The movie's success arrives courtesy not only of Senna's story (well known to most, if not to some Americans), but also through the filmmakers' creative choices.

Unusually for a documentary, Senna incorporates no 'talking heads' intercut with the footage: the interviews, which include insightful new contributions from a host of commentators, play as audio-only. It is just footage run on screen, and much of it has never been seen before; within one month of the Senna family giving the movie the green light, Bernie Ecclestone agreed to open up the F1 archives at Biggin Hill, offering the filmmakers unprecedented access.

The resulting film is not centred exclusively on Senna's greatest races, nor is it focused only on those three days at Imola, his private life, nor even his ferocious rivalry with four-time world champion Alain Prost. Instead, it recounts Senna's story using a classic three-act structure: his rise to the top and his battles with Prost; his struggle with the politics when at the pinnacle of his sport; and then his death by machine. It plays as neither eulogy nor lament. Senna's spiritual connection to his sport shines through and yet, as with any engaging hero, he is vulnerable, an outsider, and no shining paragon of virtue. The documentary, for all its reverence, casts him in shades of grey. The Senna family, however, were impressed with the filmmakers' approach.

"They came with such a good proposal for the movie, and a storyline of what the movie would be," concedes Bruno Senna, Ayrton's nephew and Renault Formula One driver, "so from the beginning there was a good

connection. And then, as the movie was coming together, Bianca [Bruno's sister, Ayrton's niece], and our mum [Ayrton's sister, Viviane] could see what they were doing and really fell in love with the movie. I think these guys succeeded because they have the right personality. I could see that they were really good people, and they had love for both Ayrton and the sport. It shows in the movie. You can see their passion."

Ayrton Senna's passion was palpable, too. His tenacity and will to win, whatever the cost, have been much discussed and they kick out the key beats in the film. Right from the outset, audiences are thrust into those early days in his F1 career. At Monaco in 1984, a watershed moment in more ways than one, Senna, in his rookie season and driving an unfancied Toleman, chases down Alain Prost's McLaren amid a near-tropical deluge. That race earned Senna his move to Lotus for the 1985 season, an important stepping stone in his bid to challenge Prost for the world championship.

That move to Lotus also proved telling for the then 16-year-old James Gay-Rees, who would go on to forge a career in the film industry, producing works such as the recent directorial debut from graffiti artist Banksy, *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, as well as *Senna*. At the time, Gay-Rees's father was working as an account representative for John Player Special, whose iconic black and gold livery adorned the Lotus.

"My dad got to know Senna well as he did his duties for the sponsors, and always had these great stories," begins Gay-Rees, now 43. "Once they were in Imola and they were standing literally in the middle of the straight with this huge camera on a tripod and there was this black dot at the other end of the track. Suddenly he'd

"As the movie came together, my mum really fell in love with it. These guys showed their love for Ayrton and the sport"

Bruno Senna



Senna was already starting to question his life in F1. With the terrible accidents already that weekend, what was going through his mind on that grid at Imola?

Senna, the movie

shoot past them, peeling away at the last moment at 180mph. My dad said it was one of the most unnerving experiences he has ever had because they had to do it 15 times.”

Thoroughly beguiled, even though he had no prior interest in F1, Gay-Rees often pressed his dad for fresh chapters in Senna’s story, and says his father always stressed that the Brazilian was different from the other drivers. He enjoyed an active social life, of course, and was always popular with women, but Senna was more focused and yet, strangely, also more ethereal.

Gay-Rees explains: “My father always used to say that Ayrton had something extra special about him, skillwise, but what really lodged with him was that Ayrton had this spiritual side. He was a very intense, very focused, somewhat other, and he seemed much older than his years. All the other young drivers were getting their leg over as much as possible while Ayrton was happiest to be on his path, getting to where he really wanted to go to as quickly as possible. That struck my dad. Ayrton was only 24, 25, which then was very young for an F1 driver.”

As Gay-Rees’s career in film took off, his father’s stories slipped from his mind, although the memories remained firmly entrenched. In 2004, on the 10-year anniversary of Senna’s death, they bubbled forth once more. During that week, *The Times* published a series of retrospectives, many of them by chief sports writer Simon Barnes. “He wrote a piece in which he alluded to the fact that Senna was very ‘other,’” continues Gay-Rees, “and said that he had been waiting to interview Senna in Australia for three hours and then Ayrton suddenly came out and locked onto him and, from that moment, Simon was overcome. He said he lost all sense of time and space and he completely fell under Senna’s spell. I was producing movies when I read this and I just thought, ‘Bloody hell!’ It triggered all these memories.”

Gay-Rees telephoned Eric Fellner, the co-chairman of Britain’s most successful film production company,

Working Title, creators of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* – and almost anything with Hugh Grant in it. Working Title had never produced a documentary but were receptive to the project and put Gay-Rees in touch with Manish Pandey, a doctor with a film-producer wife, a screenwriter’s aspirations and a self-confessed obsession with F1 in general – and Ayrton Senna in particular. Gay-Rees and Pandey met in October 2004 and the Senna film project took root.

“The key thing, obviously, was getting the Senna family onboard,” says Gay-Rees. And, as Antonio Banderas and a host of Hollywood producers know only too well, securing the consent of the Senna family is not an easy task.

It is early March 2006 and Manish Pandey and James Gay-Rees are gearing up for the most important meeting of their lives. They’re off to Brazil to meet Viviane Senna, the ultimate arbiter on any decision involving her brother’s legacy. Pandey has previously had lunch with her daughter, Bianca, and the head of the Sennas’ business affairs, Celso Lemos, in late 2005, but this is the big one. They are to make their full pitch and the logistical arrangements need to be perfect.

On 1 March, however, things start to go wrong. The duo are onboard their plane when they’re told to disembark. “Engine trouble,” explains Pandey, 43. They get off the plane and rearrange their meeting, apologetically. A day later than planned, they finally arrive. “But then when I start the presentation, all that comes up on screen is a picture of my wife’s parents’ home in the Caribbean. I quickly press ‘play’ but nothing happens. No picture, no sound. Nothing.”

Disaster looms, hands are getting clammy and Pandey makes a snap decision. He breaks out his iPod speakers, plugs them into his computer, “and then Viviane just sits at my shoulder and watches me do the presentation on my laptop”. The technical glitches actually count in the filmmakers’ favour, encouraging a

What are your earliest memories of Ayrton?

I think it was in the late 1980s, when he was just joining McLaren. He used to bring quite a few bits and pieces back from Japan for us, when we were about seven or eight. He was involved with Honda at the time, so he could go to Japan and bring us stuff back. Getting presents from abroad was unusual back then, so we’d look forward to those visits.

Where did you first see the movie?

I first saw the film in Brazil, where they had a premiere in Sao Paulo. That’s where I got the first taste of the movie, which was a little later than the rest of my family.

How did you feel when you watched it?

The movie brought back so many memories and, in general, the memories were good ones because I had a pretty good idea of what Ayrton’s life was like. And I knew the movie was quite strong, because my mum [Viviane Senna] and my sister Bianca had told me. So I came prepared for the impact. But, in fairness, there is nothing that can prepare you for this movie. You go there, you watch it and it strikes you so hard. I learned a lot of things that I didn’t know and it made me really happy to see some parts of Ayrton that I didn’t know very well, because I was so young. And also it made me sad to see how some things go with the world of sport – that sometimes things are not really hidden, as you see in the footage in the movie.



“Nothing can prepare you for this movie, it strikes you so hard”

Seeing the film about his uncle for the first time was an intense experience for Bruno Senna

What did you learn from watching the movie?

I learned a lot about the family itself. How close he was to members of the family, and how hard it was for them, and for Ayrton himself, when he was away. It was quite a revelation for me to see how close he was to my grandfather and grandmother. Also, outside of the family environment, it was interesting to see him just trying to do the right thing in F1, to see his battle with the business and how much he liked racing but didn’t really like the politics of the whole sport. All these things are very evident in the movie and it was interesting to see how he fights against these powerful forces.

What are your personal favourite moments from the film?

Being a racing driver, I wish there was more footage of the racing moments because what you see in the movie you can’t really see elsewhere; I was always rooting for someone racing, looking through their onboard camera, stuff like that. But I think the things that struck me the most were when you see him and Balestre discussing some of the regulations during the drivers’ briefing, and also the interview with Jackie Stewart where Ayrton was getting a bit angry because Jackie is questioning him about his antics on track. It is quite interesting to see the two of them discussing it.

Earpiece

The film captures moments of thoughtfulness not seen by the public during Senna's life



Earpiece

*The early days at Tolman.
His performances instantly
caught the eye of the
front-running teams*



level of intimacy not originally conceived. "The pictures are tiny, but the sound is big, and there are 50 or so slides that I talk over with the music playing... his wins, his losses, the injustice of his disqualification, his revenge, the beats you see in the film. It's a hypnotic story and he's the star. She cried for the full 40 minutes."

While directors as high-profile as Renny Harlin and Michael Mann, both of whom are keen motorsport enthusiasts, and even Sir Ridley Scott, have all been linked with a Senna feature film over the years, it was the Senna team and their documentary pitch that emerged victorious. Indeed, during the process, Pandey and Gay-Rees also found themselves competing with another documentary bid fronted by one of the producers behind the acclaimed Muhammad Ali boxing picture *When We Were Kings*. "It simply came down to trust," says Pandey. "They really trusted our knowledge and they knew we weren't going to exploit the story." Gay-Rees agrees. "It's all about trust with the Sennas and they liked the idea of the documentary and, really, Ayrton telling his own story. That, I think, was key."

There's a passage in the film where Viviane recalls her brother's actions on the day of his fatal crash; it's a goosebump moment and the emotional heart of the movie. "She told us that story in the meeting, which she'd never told anyone outside the family," continues Pandey, "and I think we knew then that we might well have a chance with this."

While a full eight months lapsed between Pandey's first meeting with Bianca Senna and the second meeting with Viviane, once the latter had tearfully okayed the film, the filmmakers were sitting down with Bernie Ecclestone within four weeks. Or, rather, they were sitting while he was standing. "Bernie came in, didn't even sit for the meeting," says the screenwriter. "We had a 17-minute chat, he told us what he thought, we shook hands and then his lawyer beat us up for 40 minutes. Bernie was brilliant though, and needn't have done all that he did for us."

Bernie Ecclestone was close to Ayrton, and if the Senna family were satisfied with the filmmakers' intentions, then so was he. Apparently, Ecclestone has only one photo of a driver at home. It's on his piano. It's Ayrton Senna. For all the positive feeling, however, only when the Sennas and Ecclestone signed the project off, at the turn of 2009, did the filmmakers finally enter the Formula 1 archive.

Of all the unseen footage that the filmmakers watched, one of the most enthralling pieces plays in the aftermath of the decision not to invite Senna into the Williams team in 1993. It's shot in the wake of a driver's briefing and Senna is sitting with Nigel Mansell and Gerhard Berger. "Senna's going, 'Prost has a veto, Prost has a veto, it's like me wearing lead shoes and he gets a rocket - I don't understand this, it's not fair,'" beams Pandey. "And Mansell is grinning and making funny hand gestures, and then when that cuts off you hear a voice off-camera go, 'What a c***!' It was Gerhard Berger talking about Prost! It was a brilliant moment, but it couldn't go in the film."

Sifting through the footage at Biggin Hill involved four to five people watching screens for eight hours a day, and footage playing at three or four times normal speed in a room with no natural light. "We'd go back to London each night cross-eyed and with thumping headaches," says Pandey. "While I was hot on the story, Asif Kapadia, the director, could make snap decisions about whether things would work or not."

Kapadia, 39, announced his arrival in the world of filmmaking in 2001 with an impressive debut feature, *The Warrior*, a beautifully shot story about a swordsman's return from the desert to the mountains

"I wouldn't have wanted to sit next to Prost in the cinema..."

We asked those in F1 what they thought of the film. Their responses were overwhelming



"The story is an emotional one and I'm sure that the vast majority of viewers will be touched by the film."

But the most important question is this: is the movie a faithful and fitting tribute to the man? In my opinion, the answer is yes."

Ron Dennis, McLaren chief executive



"I loved it, but I wouldn't have wanted to sit next to Alain Prost! The film is about heroes and villains, Senna most

definitely being the hero and Prost the villain. It gave me goosebumps and the final 20 minutes just had my heart racing. Hard to watch in places."

David Croft, BBC Radio 5 Live



"I was blown away. It left me wanting another hour of footage. There is an incredible amount of unseen material

and even though you know what's coming, they handled it tastefully. For me, it was particularly special to be able to ring up Bruno, my former team-mate, and talk to a member of the Senna family straight after."

Karun Chandhok, Team Lotus test driver



"It is a terrific documentary and a fitting tribute to one of the greatest drivers the sport has ever seen. It's great

that F1 is reaching out to people via the cinema and fans love the amount of footage that's been made available. Personally I would have liked to have seen more of when he first arrived in England, racing in FF2000 and F3, but it doesn't detract from the film."

John Booth, Virgin Racing team boss

of northern India. Like Senna, the hero is an outsider. "Senna was a warrior, so there were lots of relevant ideas contained in Asif's first film," says Gay-Rees. "It is so strong visually and has such a vast amount of archive that we needed someone who could quickly identify a great image."

Hence when it comes to the footage, F1 fans are still in for a treat, not least with the scenes showing Ron Dennis's furious presentation at the Adelaide Hilton in the aftermath of Senna's disqualification in Japan 1989, where McLaren screened footage of other drivers heading through chicanes and suffering no penalty. There is also a truly touching moment from immediately after Senna's win at the 1991 Brazilian GP, in which his broken body can just about accept a gentle hug from his father.

"There's some great footage, but just because people have written books and highlighted the major incidents, I didn't want to feel as though they had to go in the film," says Kapadia. Senna's famous lap at Donington 1993 is a case in point. "It's awful weather and nobody is there; the shots are really bad and we have to consider the story. At that point, we were trying to withhold the driving so that when you get to Imola you haven't been in the car for a while."

Arguably the bravest decision Kapadia made, encouraged by the film's editor Gregers Sall, was to dispense with talking-head interviews and so fly in the face of documentary convention. "Before I came on board there was a deal in place that was about 45 minutes of archive, 45 of interviews," says Kapadia. "But when we started to cut the film we realised we didn't need filmed interviews; we could just play footage." One of the film's executive producers is Kevin Macdonald, an acclaimed documentary filmmaker and the man behind *The Last King of Scotland*. Both Macdonald and Eric Fellner, two cinematic heavyweights, encouraged Kapadia to persist with 'talking heads'.

"When we got down to three hours of film, I stuck to my guns and everyone agreed in the end," says Kapadia. "But they were still nervous because a guy in an interview can say in 20 seconds something that takes ages to show visually. We collected dozens of new interviews, but in the end we wanted Senna to tell his own story as much as possible."

Many F1 figures contributed interviews and the filmmakers made good use of time granted by Ron Dennis and Frank Williams. Prost, too, gave generously, even though he is not cast in a particularly favourable light (although it is former FIA president Jean-Marie Balestre who comes across as the true moustache-twirling villain). The only person who declined a fresh interview was Sir Jackie Stewart, whose on-camera conversation with Senna, in which the former highlights the latter's propensity to collide with his opponents, reveals something of the Brazilian's darker side.

"That's why I like Senna. I come from a religious background," says Kapadia, who was raised a Muslim, "but that doesn't mean that you don't do things that are a bit iffy. Life is complicated and balancing those two things - the spiritual side and the demands of his sport - was what Senna was all about. Then there's the tragedy of how he died, as an act of God. He could have walked away from that accident."

But for all its joy and reverence, *Senna* does play as a heart-rending tragedy. In the film, F1 doctor Sid Watkins recalls how he urged Senna to quit in the wake of Roland Ratzenberger's fatal accident during qualifying at Imola. "At the end Ayrton looks so unhappy, so out of love with his sport, and he is surrounded by corruption," Kapadia concludes. "Sadly he's not able to walk away. He just can't quit. Maybe that's the greatest tragedy of all."



AYRTON WALKS ON WATER

In only his second race for Lotus, Senna outshone the entire field in atrocious conditions to claim his first grand prix victory. It was a race full of incidents, witnessed by few, and stands out as an exquisite glimpse into the future of what Senna would be capable of

To cast yourself onto a wet race track, along which grand prix cars are proceeding, is not truly the action of a thinking man. But if you were a Lotus mechanic at half past four last Sunday afternoon, you were not a thinking man. Your cars had won only once since the days of Mario and Ronnie, and that was out of the blue. Since then, they had often taken pole, often led, but this race – this meeting – had been dominated by a Lotus, first to last. Ayrton Senna's victory on Sunday will be remembered as a classic. From the start he was in a race of his own, and made no mistake worthy of the name in conditions so appalling as to catch out a man of Alain Prost's quality. The Brazilian gave the impression that he could have gone on like that indefinitely. And he probably could have. It was a mesmeric performance.

He faced no challenge, as such. His team-mate Elio de Angelis ran second for much of the way, falling back to fourth with a deflating tyre after going briefly off the road. Immediately before, the increasingly confident Michele Alboreto had taken the Ferrari past into the runner-up spot, and Patrick Tambay's better-than-expected Renault finished third. After starting from the pitlane, a legacy of a mistake on the warm-up lap, Nigel Mansell scored the first Williams point of the year with a courageous drive to fifth, and Stefan Bellof delighted Ken Tyrrell with an unexpected sixth.

There were but three other classified finishers, Derek Warwick's Renault and Stefan Johansson's Ferrari, both delayed by pitstops, and Piercarlo Ghinzani's Osella. There were no points for McLaren and none for Brabham. In Sunday's conditions, the phrase 'tyre war' was redundant. You were on Goodyears, or you were not racing. If you were on Pirellis – even if you were Nelson Piquet in a Brabham-BMW – you were pitifully off the pace and wasting your time. In the circumstances Ghinzani, ninth, deserves some kind of award for valour.

Not since the wet race at Zandvoort in 1971, when it was Goodyear's turn to be humbled by Firestone, have we seen a grand prix so completely split into two classes. Or maybe there were three – Pirelli, Goodyear and Senna.

QUALIFYING

The talk – inevitably – was of Ferrari. On Friday morning all conversation seemed caught up with the firing of Rene Arnoux and the hiring of Johansson. A lot of people went to shake Stefan's hand to wish him well, for he is a popular fellow at last presented with a car worthy of him. Better than that, he was presented with tyres on which to drive it.

"It should give heart to all the young guys with their sights on Formula 1," commented Keke Rosberg, another who had to wait too long. "Because here is

By Nigel Roebuck



someone who has got a top drive on merit. Nothing to do with money – nothing to do with anything but talent. So it can still be done.”

At the same time there was general agreement that Arnoux’s dismissal could have been handled somewhat better. There were suddenly expressions of sympathy for ‘poor old Rene,’ some of them from mouths never previously heard to utter a word in Arnoux’s favour. Opportunities to slag off the ruthless Commendatore are rarely passed up.

There were others too, friends of Arnoux’s in some cases, who expressed a certain relief. The Frenchman has been through a confused time, off-form for the last six months, perhaps stale from too much testing, who knows? Unable to match Alboreto, he might have put too much call on sheer bravery. At least he had not hurt himself.

A week in politics, they say, is a long time. How about this business? While Arnoux decided to go to ground and take a couple of months off to consider his future, Johansson took yet another incredulous look at the prancing horse patch on his overalls. “I have to keep doing it,” he grinned. “It still hasn’t really sunk in.” A week earlier he had been a Toleman driver with no opportunity to race.

What a time, we all said, to be joining Ferrari with the car a front-runner again. Alboreto is firm in the belief that he could – should – have won in Rio, and

before practice began many considered the Italian to be the favourite for Estoril. Wrong. We left Zolder last year believing that the C4 was a genuine challenge to McLaren, and we were wrong that time, too. “The new car was fantastic in Brazil,” Alboreto mused. “But here, it feels like a different car. The traction is poor out of the corners, and it’s difficult to balance it properly – understeer in, oversteer out. It feels nervous. We are short of downforce.”

As in Rio a Lotus was quickest on the opening day, but this time the advantage was maintained through the second. Senna, stunning in the Toleman here last October, was the clear pace-setter in both timed sessions.

His team-mate de Angelis was fastest on Friday morning, but thereafter Senna was in control, the 97T visibly more stable than anything else through the fourth gear right-hander at the end of the pit straight. Through the startline speed trap, Senna’s 192.434mph was beaten only by the inevitable Brabham-BMW of Piquet – but Nelson’s best lap was 2.5s away. The Lotus, in short, was strong in all departments, its driver more than capable of going with it.

Senna’s first pole position, then, on only his second weekend with Lotus. On Friday the elements helped a bit, occasional splashes of rain, then a brief but fierce downpour ensuring that the Brazilian’s time was

Senna pulled out an early lead in the rain-soaked conditions, which was simply not threatened

beyond reach, but on Saturday his first flying lap settled the issue. Later in the session he did one more, and that would also have been good for the front row. Times were generally slower than expected, the Lotus only 0.7s inside Piquet's pole time of 1984. True, those ugly rear winglets have been banned, but against that, the whole of the previously bumpy pit straight has been resurfaced. Senna was not much inside the time he set during post-race Toleman testing last Autumn.

By general consensus, the track was slippery throughout the qualifying. "It's very dirty off the line," Piquet remarked. "And it doesn't seem to have gained much grip this time – not like last year. Then again, maybe it's something to do with my tyres." Nelson's Pirelli qualifiers did not please him. Warwick felt the same way: "In the race we really should get some

rubber down. And it wouldn't surprise me if the last part of the race is run at close to qualifying speed." To some extent though, the track obviously did improve. By Saturday morning Senna found he could run quicker on race tyres than he had managed on qualifiers 24 hours earlier. And one man very much happier on the second day was the ever-present Prost, who put his McLaren on the front row, 0.4s slower than the poleman. Friday, by Prost's standards, had been a dead loss. After a misfiring morning his engine died after a couple of slow laps in the timed session.

Out he went in the spare McLaren, only fifth, and then came the rain. His second set of tyres went unused. Saturday was much better. In the morning, back in his own car once more, he found that the

While Senna set his first pole, Jonathan Palmer was unable to set a final qualifying time in what was a respectable first F1 race for the Zakspeed team



“All I know is that suddenly I was in the air, then nosediving into the barrier”

Nigel Mansell



misfire had all but vanquished, and in the afternoon smoothly trimmed away two seconds and more. “I feel happy about the race now,” he smiled. “I was not running with a lot of boost – not much more than we use in the race, actually – so I was not too good in the straight. But now I have the handling exactly as I like it, and for sure we have a good race set-up.”

Through the trap Prost was eight miles per hour from Senna, around the lap only 0.4s away. Yes, Sunday did look promising. Their team-mates, though both in with a strong shout, fared less well, the de Angelis Lotus qualifying fourth and Niki Lauda’s McLaren seventh.

The presence of Senna has done much to sharpen Elio’s resolve, and he was delighted to pip him for best time on Friday morning. But their positions were reversed in the afternoon, when it mattered, and the Italian improved only slightly on Saturday – primarily because a turbo expired as he approached the line on his best lap. His first set of qualifiers, he said, had been wasted in traffic.

“Just watch Niki ease the car in,” said Jackie Stewart, watching at the first corner. “You can compare him with anyone else, and he’s much smoother. You notice that he turns in earlier, he doesn’t throw it into the corner. If you’re rough with a car, you’re hurting the tyre temperatures. I don’t care what anyone says.” Lauda was indeed fluid into the turn in a manner only approached by Prost. But Saturday was not good to him. In the morning he stopped out on the circuit with Bosch Motronic problems, as in the race at Rio. And in the afternoon gearbox troubles put him into a spare with handling not up to snuff. In the horsepower race, he suggested, the TAG V6 was not keeping pace. After the first day, with its dry-wet timed session, the name of Rosberg was at the foot of the list, for the Finn most untypically spun and tapped a guardrail while trying to get past Gerhard Berger’s Arrows. His earlier run had been ruined by turbo failure and drizzle was coming down as he went out for his second. “It was my fault,” Rosberg related. “I knew the conditions were going to get worse, so I went for the gap inside Berger, got off the line, and that was it.” The following day he vaulted from 26th to third, but at the same time volunteered a degree of mea culpa: “I didn’t get the best out of my qualifiers – went for it before they were really up to temperature.” For all that, there were no Honda engine failures during the qualifying days, and Rosberg said he had a good feeling about the race. He just wished he had made it to the front row.

His team-mate Nigel Mansell was ninth, 1.5s slower. “My first run was good,” he reported on Saturday afternoon. “But I only did one quick lap, and I should’ve done two, like Keke. For the second we lowered the ride height, figuring that should give us more grip. But it worked the other way – I was getting wheelspin in fourth!” All in all though, Nigel was happy to get through the session with car and self unscathed, for on Friday, Williams-Honda number five had been savaged by the warring Alfa Romeos of Eddie Cheever and Riccardo Patrese.

It was starting to rain and Mansell was quietly returning to the pits after a lurid slide. In his mirrors were the two green cars, and he wisely gave them room. Not enough, apparently. Cheever and Patrese are not exactly crazy about each other, and haven’t been since the first lap at Brands last year when Patrese’s mistake caused the multiple shunt on the opening lap – which involved Cheever. “I went to pass Nigel,” Cheever fumed. “And Riccardo makes a mistake under braking, slams into me and the next thing is that I’m going over the Williams.” How does

your team-mate explain it? he was asked.

“What team-mate are we talking about?” came the response. Patrese claimed that Cheever closed the door on him. Mansell didn’t really care too much how it started: “All I know is that suddenly I was in the air, then nosediving into the barrier.” At first there were fears for the monocoque – no spare FW10 yet, remember – but all was well for Saturday morning. “We are getting a little short of spares for the front of the cars,” Patrick Head admitted. “I’m just glad that no-one can blame me for this,” Mansell concluded. “Eddie came and apologised to Frank and to me.

He said it wasn’t his fault, and he knew it wasn’t mine, I appreciated that.” Ferrari, as we have said, had their troubles. Amid the euphoria of Johansson’s arrival, there was no getting away from the fact that the 156s were, to put it mildly, lively whenever the road turned. During Fiorano testing Alboreto had tried Lotus-style sidepod-mounted winglets, but they weren’t seen at Estoril. “I couldn’t feel any difference in the grip,” Alboreto reported. “And we lost a bit of straightline speed.” As it was, the Ferraris were very disappointing through the trap, beaten by TAG, Honda and Renault – and 11mph away from Piquet’s BMW. Johansson was nonetheless highly impressed with the Italian V6. “There’s a lot of power, believe me. The torque is amazing, and the response. And the whole thing’s so smooth.” Most of all, like all drivers new to Ferrari, Stefan raved about the gearbox: “It’s faultless. I’ve never come across anything like it.” His two days of baptism were not easy. For most of the Friday morning he sat in the garage while the mechanics changed springs and bars.

This was his first experience of a 156, and he began qualifying with little practice in it. To make matters worse, a rotor arm failure halted Johansson out on the circuit during his first flying lap. Back to the pits, out in the spare – which was set up for Alboreto, and which he hadn’t sat in before. The following morning he had a spin when the transmission broke, leaving him without drive in the middle of a corner. That meant the T-car again for the final session, and he did well to qualify 11th, 1s slower than his team-mate. “At the moment it feels very nervous, but I’m sure we’ll make progress in the Imola test next week,” he said. Warwick put the Renault RE60 into sixth place on the grid, a marked improvement on the car’s form in Rio, but still he was less than thrilled. “It’s getting a bit like 1982 all over again,” he agreed when speaking about downforce. “Basically, it counts for much more than anything else – and that’s what we’re short of. The car just doesn’t seem to have much grip. I’m quite surprised to be as high as sixth, because on my quickest lap I didn’t feel as though I was driving very well – not making mistakes exactly, but not flowing. And the car is bloody nervous and twitchy, jumping all over the place.” It was Warwick’s turn to run the older EF4 engine this weekend, Tambay having the questionable pleasure of the EF15. Both drivers reckon the new V6 is fundamentally better, but also currently less reliable. Patrick used the spare car for final qualifying, leaving the EF15 in his race chassis for Sunday. He qualified 12th. Renault had revised suspension geometry for Estoril, rather curiously choosing to run the new front end on Tambay’s car, the rear on Warwick’s. If you think back to the Lotus/Pirelli saga of 1983 you will recall that the 94Ts of the day invariably qualified superbly, then fell away in the race. After a long winter of testing with Brabham, Pirelli now seems to have a fine race tyre – but the qualifiers are hopeless. Consider this: through the trap Piquet’s BT54 was timed at better than 194mph, Bellof’s Goodyear-shod Tyrrell-Cosworth at 155. Yet



**“I bet that the telex between Chessington and Italy will be glowing red-hot on Monday”
Brabham mechanic**

Nelson’s best lap was less than 4s faster than Stefan’s. The Brazilian was 2s away from his (Michelin) pole time of last October. After his Rio shunt, a legacy of the diff locking solid, Nelson needed a new monocoque for Portugal, and he qualified 10th. Pirelli problems apart, he reckoned he should have been a little higher than that. “I did my first run right at the start of the session,” he said on Saturday. “The track was clear, but we weren’t on full boost.

“On my second set I did have full boost – and traffic.” When he thought of the race though, Piquet perked up. Francois Hesnault looks far less confident in a Brabham than he did in last year’s Ligier. Like Piquet, he was hampered by a misfire in the first timed session, but on Saturday morning he missed his braking point at the first corner, locked up and slid off into the gravel. Damage was confined to a punctured tyre and wing endplate, but Hesnault never looked at ease in the car. There were other spins, too.

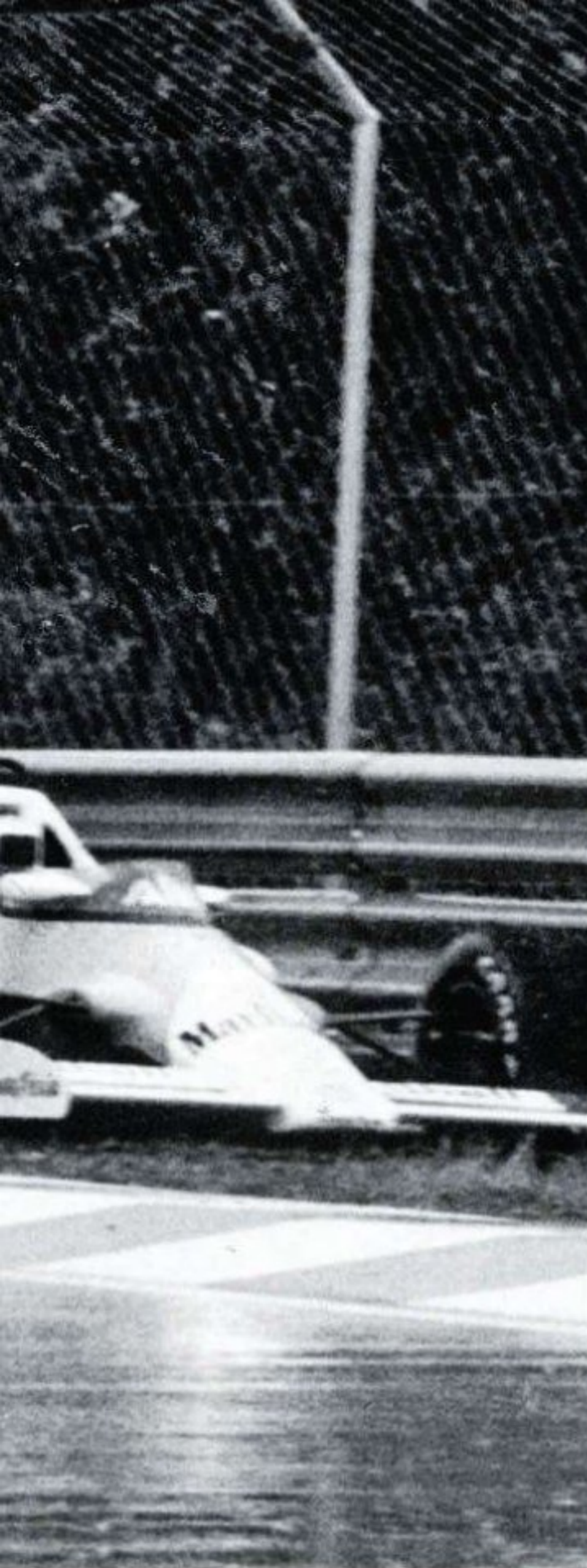
He qualified only 19th, 2s from Piquet. And the Alfas. We seem to have spoken already of them at some length in connection with the Mansell incident. In truth, it seems a curious way to go racing, for progress will surely be speedier if a team’s two drivers are actually speaking to each other. Before Friday afternoon’s little festival, Cheever was quite a happy man, saying: “We’re in much better shape than in Rio. The car actually feels quite good here, but we’ve a problem with the new front suspension, which John Gentry did before he left. In fast corners the steering

goes very stiff. On the plus side we have no temperature problems any more – but a new one has replaced it!

“The outlets for the radiators are now so high that the rear wing is in shadow. We’re very low on downforce – we had much more when we tested here in January. And, of course, we’re 40 kilos overweight.” Those trifles apart, Cheever thought things were looking up. After a final practice, though, he was despondent. The race car’s engine had blown, and in the spare he was only fractionally quicker than before: “I know I would have been in the 22s.” Cheever had been 10th in the first session, but now fell to 14th, Patrese dropping from sixth to 13th. During Saturday morning the two Alfa men topped the lists for a while, but on qualifying boost were off the straightline pace. Both felt the set-up was good for the race, but Gianpaolo Pavanello must have shivered a little when he realised his cars were on the same row.

Manfred Winkelhock’s RAM-Hart blew up early in the first timed session, but came back well in the second, qualifying 15th with his team-mate Philippe Alliot five places further back, electrical troubles keeping him from most of the last session. Some idea of Pirelli’s Q-tyre confusion may be gained from the fact that RAM found the Italian race tyres quicker on Friday. One man truly down after practice was Thierry Boutsen, ninth on the first day, when the Arrows-BMW was actually fastest of all through the trap, at over 191mph.

The A8s had new wider-track rear suspension



Senna was completely untouchable, even by Prost in the McLaren who was caught out by the treacherous conditions and aquaplaned off

for this race, and the Belgian enthused about it. On Saturday afternoon he was expecting to go really well with a fresh engine for the last session. Alas, it blew up before he could improve, and that dropped him to 16th just one place ahead of Berger's sister car. Immediately behind Jack Oliver's sheaf was Jacques Laffite's Ligier-Renault, kept from a good time on Saturday by a broken clutch. The citizen of Stoke Poges had been only marginally slower than team-mate Andrea de Cesaris in the first session, and was highly disappointed. De Cesaris, by contrast, progressed to eighth, fighting the JS25 all the way.

His time, incidentally, made him Pirelli's fastest qualifier, 0.3s quicker than Piquet. Good also on straightline speed, the Ligiers – now sponsored by Candy – attracted favourable comments from drivers watching their behaviour out on the circuit. Is this car the sleeper of 1985? The Tyrrell-Cosworths of Bellof and Martin Brundle duly qualified within 0.1s or so of each other, the latter reporting that his car felt nervous over the bumps but was otherwise fine.

Behind him in 23rd was the new Zakspeed of Jonathan Palmer. Since the car was last seen in testing, it has acquired the livery of West, an American cigarette company which will sponsor the team throughout 1985. And for Portugal the car's wheelbase had been lengthened by means of a spacer between engine and gearbox. After a first morning spent attending to fundamentals like gear ratios and springs (much too stiff to begin with), Palmer was 19th in the opening session and sure there was a lot more to come.

Unfortunately we were never to know, for the master switch short-circuited within a few seconds of the car leaving the pits for its opening run. Palmer could only park and curse. It must be said, however, that the team made a very favourable impression at this, its first F1 race. Mauro Baldi's venerable Spirit-Hart was next up, the Italian complaining of poor traction, and the back row comprised Pierluigi Martini's Cosworth-powered Minardi (which may have Carlo Chiti's new turbo V6 at Imola in two weeks), and Ghinzani's Osella-Alfa, which actually set 21st time on Saturday, but was disqualified from the session when its rear wing was found to be a few millimetres too high. In the paddock was John Watson, and down the road somewhere was the Toleman transporter. Their sad absence from the track meant that, as in Rio, nobody missed the cut.

RACE

April in Portugal. There was a tune of that name in my childhood 1950s, a light and airy melody, I seem to recall, suggestive of summer's approach. It would not have been appropriate for the Estoril paddock on Sunday morning. Through practice we had learned to live with murky skies and odd drops of rain, but soon afternoon on race day grey was going black. The Red Arrows could give us only their secondary programme, and everyone dug out wet weather gear, mildewing since Monaco – another temple of Mediterranean sunshine. In the grandstand the spectator pondered. Had he spent his week's wages sensibly? And if so, why had nobody joined him? In the paddock drivers and engineers glanced and grimaced repeatedly at the sky. Crazy when you thought about it, wasn't it? All this testing round the calendar – yet nobody ever tested in the wet. How would Goodyear and Pirelli compare? After two days of dry practice, settings for the race would probably be guesswork. The Renault mechanics had work of a more immediate kind on their hands. Following the warm-up they set upon the spare RE60, transplanting

its rear end to Tambay's car (rear suspension failure) and its rear underbody to Warwick's, the Briton having spun into a high kerb. The warm-up, run before the rain arrived, had – surprise – featured Prost's McLaren fastest followed by the Lotus of de Angelis. Third and fourth, though, were the Ferraris of Johansson and Alboreto. As both had said, the cars were indeed excellent on full tanks. Noteworthy, too, after the disappointment of Saturday, was the ninth position of Palmer's Zakspeed. "Who's using what?" asked a Goodyear man in response to the question. "We don't know yet – there's a lot of psyching going on, as usual." But all that was swept away by the rain. It became a clear-cut matter of companies rather than compounds. Everyone was going to be on wets. Would the start be delayed? No way.

Time and TV slots wait for no man. But the drivers were given a few minutes for acclimatisation, during which there were sundry incidents. Mansell had an off, and arrived back at the start-finish area in need of a new nose, now too late to take his place on the grid. He, like Martini, would start from the pitlane, as would Cheever, whose car was pushed off the grid, the American sprinting to the Alfa pit to board the 184 T-car. The spectator looked down at the black Lotus before him. This was Senna's first pole position, and in these conditions a good start – and a clear road – was more than usually important. Only the leader would be seeing much in the early laps. Ayrton did the job, smoothly away without too much wheelspin, but into the first corner there was black and gold rather than the expected red and white, in his mirrors.

De Angelis had beaten Prost away, and that was going to be important. On the grid Rosberg – third – had stalled, allowing de Angelis – fourth – some room with which to work. Although Alboreto, directly behind the stranded Williams, lost little time in going round it, de Angelis momentarily had a clear path down in the middle and made the most of it. In the spray Palmer clipped the back of Rosberg's car, which punctured his right-front tyre. When he came in, the mechanics also discovered a damaged wishbone. Sadly, the Zakspeed's grand prix debut was short. Mansell, Cheever and Martini duly departed from the pits to begin their race, and Mansell really got his head down. Beginning a splendid drive, which would see him eventually in the points. Keke, too, finally got on his way, only to spin on his first lap.

A disastrous start for Williams then, but a perfect one for Lotus. At the end of lap one Senna and de Angelis came through 1-2, followed by Prost, Alboreto Warwick, Lauda, de Cesaris, Tambay, Piquet and Johansson. Senna was treading warily, at the same time doing it faster than everyone else. Making the most of his clear view, he was already lapping at a speed beyond his team-mate. After two laps there was a 3s gap between the Lotuses, and Prost's McLaren was a similar distance behind de Angelis.

If one Brazilian looked on course already for victory, the other faced the most dispiriting afternoon of his racing life. For the first three laps Piquet somehow resisted Johansson's Ferrari, but a queue was forming up behind the Brabham. De Cesaris's Ligier was also falling away. The Pirelli wets, it was clear, were embarrassingly bad. And as conditions worsened, so also did they. "I would bet," mused one Brabham man afterwards, "that the telex between Chessington and Italy will be glowing red-hot on Monday morning." Hesnault was at least spared the task of trying to keep his BT54 on the road for two hours, pulling off on lap three with a dead engine. Nelson, quickly passed now by Johansson,



Patrese and Boutsen, must have envied him. Johansson's efforts had been wasted, however.

On lap five Patrese took a late lunge at the Ferrari and hit the back of it. The move was never vaguely on, and both spun, Johansson rejoining in 17th place, his assailant retiring on the spot. A minute or so earlier Alliot's RAM had also spun off for good. Further back in the field Bellof had predictably been making excellent progress, reviving memories of his brilliant display at Monaco last year. From a grid position of 21st, he had come past 14th at the end of the opening lap, and had Winkelhock's RAM against the ropes.

Getting by though, was a different matter, for the German could always pull out several lengths down the pit straight. On lap five they touched and spun, both managing to continue, but Stefan's right front wing was gone. He opted to stay out with what he had, and proceeded to charge for the rest of the afternoon. Far and away the most imperturbable man on the circuit appeared to be the leader, who revived memories of Pedro Rodriguez as he made his smooth way round. Once or twice the Lotus jinked under braking for the first corner, but never once did it look like escaping Senna's control. Just occasionally comes a race when one driver makes the rest look ordinary, and this was one such. After 10 laps Senna had nearly 12s over his team-mate, who was coming under repeated pressure from Prost, the McLaren in turn being caught by Alboreto's Ferrari. Without Senna, I thought, we'd have quite a race here. Fifteen laps

on the Pirellis were quite enough for Laffite, who brought in the Ligier, reporting that it was: a) dangerous, and b) pointless to continue.

By now the rain was coming down very hard, and the speed differential between Goodyear and Pirelli runners was almost beyond belief. At what looked like walking pace de Cesaris was having to fight his JS25, and in the end Gerard Larrousse wisely called him in for the day. "We tried two other sets first," de Cesaris muttered. "But they didn't make any difference." Piquet, for his part, never did retire. But the Brabham was frequently in the pits. "It was like a test session, really," said Gordon Murray later. "No point in getting upset — it was far too bad for that! He came in to chat and change his overalls, things like that." Eventually Piquet said he'd like them to know he was driving as hard as he could, but reckoned he was a serious danger to other drivers. At that they called it a day. His best lap in the race was 0.1s quicker than Ghinzani's Osella — and 7.5s from Senna's best. In the confusion of spins and spray it was all too easy to overlook Mansell's progress.

Remarkably — considering his delayed start — he had the Williams-Honda up in ninth place after 10 laps. He had gained one place at the expense of Johansson, whose Ferrari debut was proving fraught. After being punted off by Patrese, the Swede came back superbly to 10th, at that point lapping as quickly as team-mate Alboreto, but on lap 12 he was a victim once more. "Winkelhock spun right in front of me, and I couldn't miss him," he said. "The nose was damaged,

Soaking wet and shattered, but a very happy Senna is joined on the podium by Alboreto and Tambay



“The road was waterlogged by then and the power chimed in at the wrong moment”

Derek Warwick

but I thought I'd stay out for a bit. Eventually I had to have it replaced, and then it was just a matter of keeping going till the end.” He rejoined in 16th place. Then Rosberg crashed. Coming through the long right-hander onto the main straight, the car snapped out of control, hit the guardrail and bounced back in the middle of the road, where it came to rest. With the rain really beating down now, there were some anxious moments as drivers swerved around the beached Williams. Rosberg was quickly out and away, but had bashed his hand on something in the cockpit, the wound requiring several stitches. “He said the engine was all or nothing,” reported one of the mechanics afterwards.

“The road was really waterlogged at that point, and the power chimed in at the wrong moment.” Warwick too, hit a barrier. On lap 13 he had lost sixth place to his team-mate Tambay, but both the Renaults were closing on Lauda, who was smooth as ever but clearly not enjoying himself. Lauda let them through without much of a fight, but two laps later, Warwick was into the pits. “I really hit the guardrail hard. My helmet hit the roll-over bar, and gave me a headache.” he related.

“When I came in, they changed the tyres, and I was really hoping they'd check the car over! But I went back out, and absolutely nothing was damaged. I still can't believe that.” At the front there was no change. As the 30-lap mark approached Senna led by more than 30s and Prost continued to crowd de Angelis for second place, with Alboreto's beautifully-driven Ferrari ever present in their mirrors. “For sure,” Prost ruefully said after the race, “I make a big mistake at the start letting Elio beat me away.” As the two of them pounded down the pit straight to begin lap 31, the McLaren suddenly began to weave, veering first left, then right, then breaking into a spin. Prost could do nothing to keep it from hitting the wall. Out he stepped, race run. “It was raining very 'ard just then, with deep puddles, and in the spray it's impossible to see where they are. Once you start aquaplaning at that speed, you are finished.” With Lauda apparently out of contention, McLaren were going to lose a race for the first time since Dallas last July.

Conditions had now gone from bad to appalling – worse by far, according to Senna, than those at Monaco. At this point he was waving vigorously as he passed the pits, indicating that the race should be stopped. All around the circuit were abandoned cars. Martini's Minardi, after countless spins, was finally out, as was Berger's Arrows. The young Austrian had driven a fine and forceful race, getting ahead of his team-mate Boutsen for a while. Baldi's Spirit gave the guardrail a very sizeable thump, and Brundle's Tyrrell, running 10th despite gearbox problems, also spun into retirement. There were, however, no mistakes from the leader, despite the fact that he was lapping faster than anyone else. An hour into the race he was 40s clear, and interest centred on the battle for second, for Alboreto very definitely had his sights set on de Angelis.

On lap 43 the Ferrari had emerged from the spray and flicked inside the Lotus as they approached the first turn. De Angelis made no real attempt to close the door, and it looked as if he had been caught unawares. Immediately he made a rather futile attempt to get back at Michele, but only two corners later left his breaking too late and slid wide. On the gravel and slippery grass he did a fine job in keeping control of the Lotus, but while off-course punctured a front tyre, which deflated slowly thereafter but did not keep him from reaching the finish.

One of the best drives of the race came from Cheever, always excellent in the wet. From his pitlane

start he had taken the old Alfa 184 up to eighth in only nine laps. A plug change after half an hour had dropped him down the field, but he then clawed himself back to eighth and looked set to improve further on that. Alas, the car eventually stopped with a dead engine. Electrics somewhere, they said.

Lauda's disappointing race also ended in the late stages. The world champion had been passed successively by Tambay, Mansell and Bellof, and on lap 49 crept into the pits with piston failure. Conditions, he said, were ludicrously dangerous, and he felt the race should have been stopped much earlier. No points for McLaren. Lap 59 featured a new third place man, Tambay, who had driven an excellent race. De Angelis, struggling with his soft front tyre, could offer no resistance – indeed he was lapped by team-mate Senna before the end.

“Come in, number 12, your two hours are up.” After 67 laps of the originally scheduled 69, the chequered flag went out to Senna – and his moment of triumph could easily have been soured by tragedy. In the manner pioneered by Colin Chapman, some of the Lotus mechanics jumped over the barrier and onto the track to greet their man. Seeing them, Senna slowed and moved to the right immediately after crossing the line. Thundering up beside him was Mansell's Williams, suddenly with nowhere left to go, Nigel lifted off and swerved left, behind the Lotus, then surviving a wild moment on the grass. It was good that Prost's abandoned McLaren was further on down the road.

Before reaching the first turn Ayrton had flung off his belts, and was waving both arms wildly. The Latin at last. This was his 17th grand prix, only his second for Lotus, and he had won it. More than that, he had been in a different class right from the green light. Fastest in both sessions, fastest lap of the race, leader all the way. Full House. Victories like that deserve more than nine points. “The big danger,” he said later, outward exuberance now gone, “was that conditions changed all the time. Sometimes the rain was very heavy, sometimes not. I couldn't see anything at all behind me. It was difficult even to keep the car in a straight line sometimes, and for sure the race should have been stopped. It was much worse than Monaco last year. Once I nearly spun in front of the pits, like Prost, and I was lucky to stay on the road.” And the car? “Fantastic. I had an engine and gearbox change after the warm-up, and there were no problems at all.”

Others were happy, too. Alboreto's superb drive to second gives him the lead of the World Championship, and Tambay was amazed by third – “I had no spins or anything, but I don't know how. I think I saw the Devil about a million times today. I could have been third or 13th.”

De Angelis could have hoped for better than fourth, but also drove a fine race. Had not Senna been in the other Lotus, indeed, he might have thought it a very fine race. It will be interesting to see how he responds at Imola and beyond. A finish in the points will have done wonders for Mansell's morale. After his gaff immediately before the start, he drove an excellent and gutsy race to finish fifth, ahead of the irrepressible Bellof, who scored what must be the last World Championship point for a Cosworth-powered car! Surely.

The spectator looked on and considered his afternoon. Had it been worth all the money? On balance, yes, he decided. He was soaked and chilled through, but a Portuguese-speaking driver had won. And one day he would be able to say that he had been there, that day when Ayrton Senna won his first grand prix.

SENNA'S HELMET

Senna's famous helmet design reflected his patriotic love of Brazil, incorporating the national colours of yellow, green and blue. The shade of yellow deepened to complement the Camel livery during his final season at Lotus, but sponsor decals aside, the design remained the same for the rest of his career





I never came up against anyone like him before or after... He was naturally gifted at everything... I don't think there's been anyone like him since

Terry Fullerton is the man Ayrton Senna named as the rival he most enjoyed racing against. Here, Fullerton, 1973 World Karting Champion, shares his memories of the late triple F1 World Champion



This is the man Senna most relished competing against

Asweaty late-spring afternoon in northern Italy. The Jesolo kart circuit, not far from Venice. It's May 1980 and the A-list of karting is assembled for the Champions Cup – the sport's second most important prize after the world championship title. Ayrton Senna is here, aged 20, stringy in black leathers, and in his third season of top-flight pro karting. He wants to win. Since blasting into Europe three seasons earlier with the DAP team, as the latest hot-shot Latin from a wealthy family, he has established himself as a staggering talent – speed, ability and future stardom oozing from every pore. But he is not The Man. The Man is team-mate Terry Fullerton. Seven years Senna's senior, the established ace of the sport. Imperious, aggressive,

By Tony Thomas

Senna's greatest rival



Senna could never quite get the better of Fullerton, and at the time it really rankled

Senna's greatest rival

a master stylist, the karters' karter. Cock. Of. The. Walk. Showdown.

“I caught him on the very last lap on the main straight. There's a passing opportunity up the inside, past the start-finish into the first corner, but he blocked to the inside, so I went to the outside and we crossed over past the apex of the next fast corner. I went down the inside into the next hairpin, very late. He went in very late and we touched, he went on two wheels and I went past. I looked back and I had an eight-to-10-yard gap and I knew that all I had to do was be neat and tidy and I'd won the race. It was a very good feeling. I didn't know then who he was going to become, but we knew he was good, and looking back that's a good race to have won. I'm glad I won it.”

This is Terry Fullerton, now 58, reclining in a padded-leather office chair in his Norfolk home, thinking back to one of many days in a three-year summer when Senna couldn't – quite – get the better of him. Their rivalry was every bit as intense as that which, less than a decade later, would come to define the careers of Senna and Alain Prost. It drove both men to new heights of excellence. It showed, on Senna's side, uncanny early strains of a 'wronged by the world' mentality that would later prove so explosive when he raced Prost. It would be remembered by Senna, when he spoke about it in a press conference at the 1993 Australian Grand Prix, as the best period of his racing life.

But right after Jesolo '80, he was just deeply pissed off. A race report from an Italian sports paper later that week quotes him thus: "I think I am the moral winner. Fullerton played dirty. If he hadn't caused an accident I would have won. I preferred to let him go even though the way he overtook me was against the rules."

Fullerton saw it differently, of course, but he already knew all about Senna's anger. The morning after the race, he was standing by his hotel pool, shooting an easy breeze with his mechanic. Life, today, was good. He'd just won a race he now thinks of as "probably his best ever", a result that also denied Senna becoming champion that year. Senna was nearby, in sight, but in the shade. Watching them. Brooding.

"He was sitting on some chairs by the pool," says Fullerton, "and he was obviously waiting, biding his time... And when he had me lined up nicely he just launched out of the chair and threw me into the pool, for whatever reason, just to get his own back. I thought, 'What the fuck did you do that for?' I had my clothes on, yeah, and then he just laughed and walked off, with a kind of 'fuck you' attitude. I laughed as well, but it just showed how beaten up he was inside at what had happened. I'd have been pissed off, but I wouldn't have done that."

If it's nothing new to hear that Senna took losing hard, it's a surprise to learn how young and how strongly he felt the inevitable slights of a fickle sport. Fully aware of his gifts and already able to deploy them to devastating effect, he was not yet mature. And in Fullerton he had encountered a rival every bit as skilled, but with seven years' extra experience to counter this impatient young rival. A contest to savour. In the words of Angelo Parrilla, boss of the DAP team, after Jesolo '80: "Fullerton and Senna da Silva are the two best drivers in the world. All the others are capable of good races, good third places – but nothing more."

It's very easy, now, to view Senna through a sepia-tint lens and become intoxicated on a heady brew of Latin passion and screen-idol charisma, laced with the powerful juice of some of the most ruthless racecraft F1 ever saw. This year's *Senna* movie serves only to assist this comfortable reverie: wonderful and heartfelt though it is, it's far from impartial. So it's as



Senna's need to be fastest, and his uncommon intensity, were immediately apparent in his rivalry with Fullerton

“It was a very good feeling. I didn't know then who he was going to become, but we knew he was good. I'm glad I won that race”

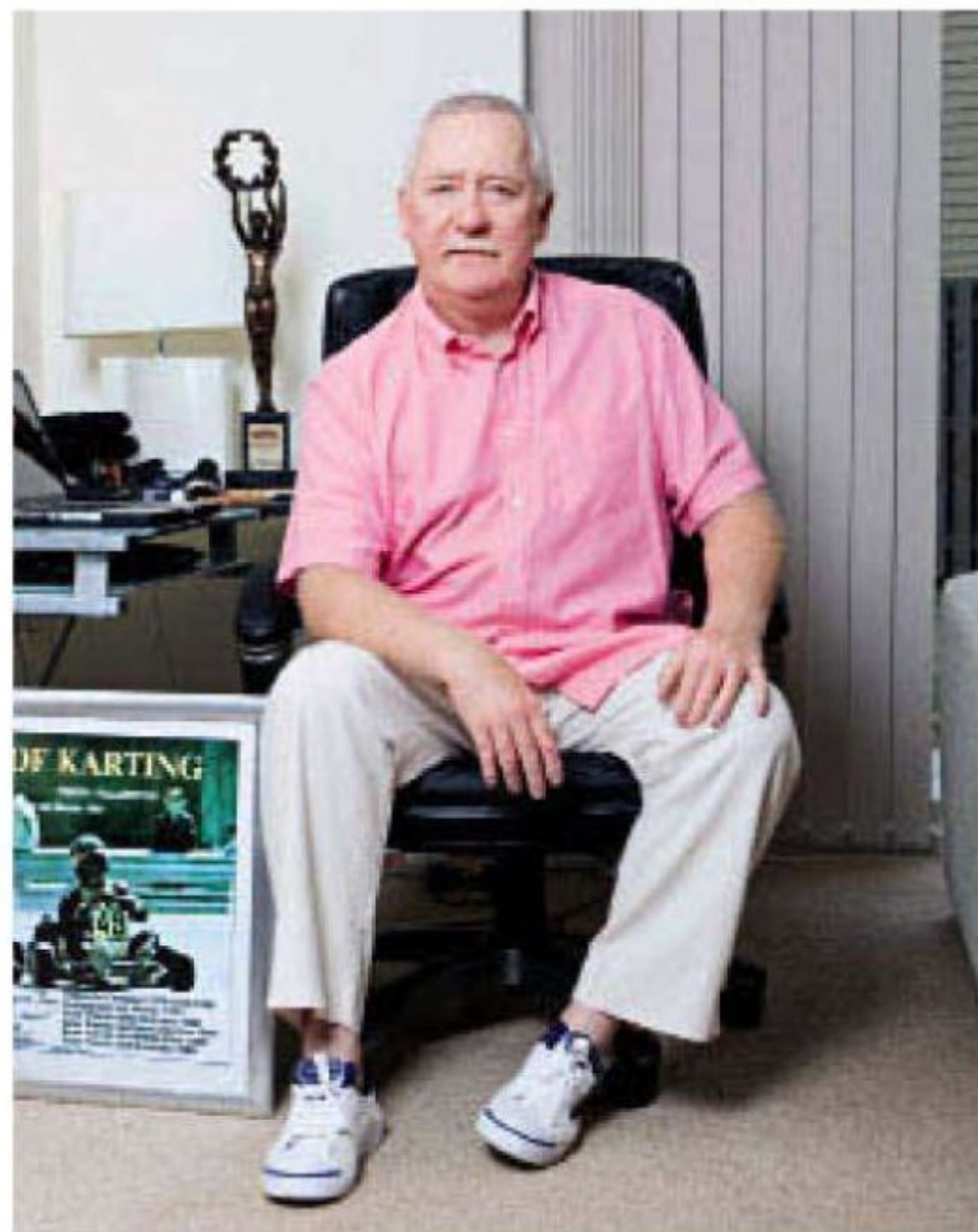
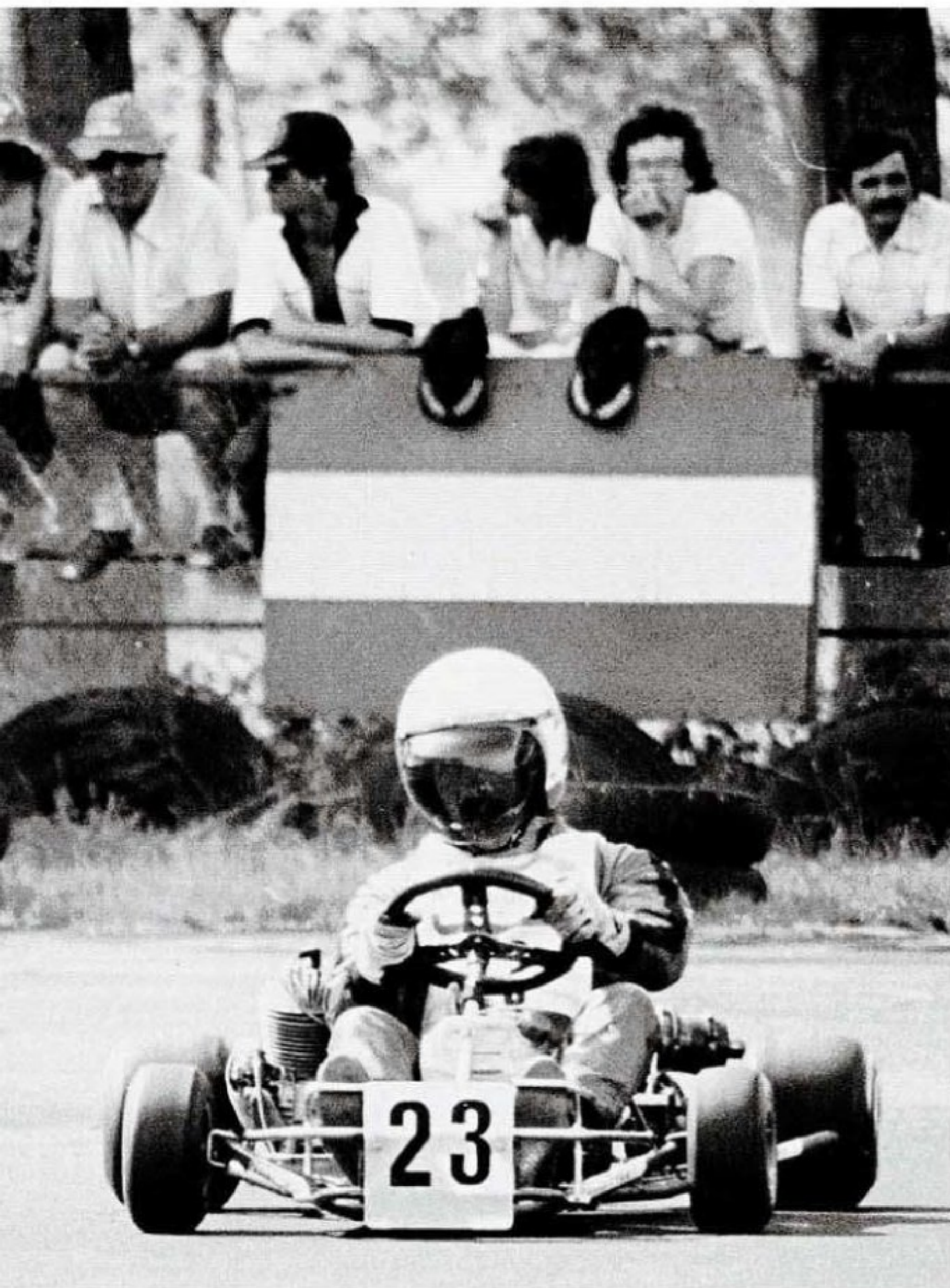
Terry Fullerton

refreshing as it is surprising to listen to Fullerton speak of his former sparring partner in starkly unsentimental terms. "He came over with quite a reputation," he says, "but I was very confident of my abilities then, so if you'd said to me, 'On the first day do you think someone could turn up and go faster than you or be better than you?', I'd have said 'no'. I was completely confident that wasn't possible, because I was a very complete driver. It wasn't based on bullshit. It was based on years of beating everybody else in the world. So I was very confident that wasn't going to happen."

What Senna did do, though, was get Fullerton's attention right away – and that of any attendant media. They first met at a test in Parma, Italy, and the records show that on the day, Senna's time was faster than Fullerton's, by a couple of tenths. This fact, or, more accurately, the reporting of it, still rankles somewhat: "He was very, very quick from the first test, no question, and he was desperate to go as fast as he could. He did go a couple of tenths quicker, but he was running 10kg lighter... so [there's a smile in Fullerton's voice here] he wasn't really quicker than me. But he was very happy that he'd done a faster time."

That Senna need to be best, or fastest, was, says Fullerton, one of his most defining characteristics, as was his uncommon intensity – both traits that would remain strongly in evidence throughout Senna's later

PICS: THOMAS BUTLER



Fullerton reckons that in different circumstances he and Senna could have been friends. Mutual respect remained long after karting days

career. "He would spend hours with his mechanics, helping them build up wheels and working on his kart," Fullerton recalls, before relating a trip to Japan in 1978, where, as guests of Yamaha, he and Senna were invited to a company-owned trials course and given a couple of bikes to fool around on. "It was a beautiful little course," he remembers, "with logs and perfect jumps and I was having a really good time as I'd ridden a lot of bikes when I was younger. So I get up on this log and ride along to the five-foot drop at the end, give it a little squirt, took off, landed on the back wheel, nice and safe, then finish with a little spinny-turn. Done.

"Senna comes along and he obviously hadn't ridden that much, but he was young and wanted to be flamboyant and take risks and he wasn't going to be outdone at all. He went along the log, gave it a proper big squirt, came off too fast, landed hard on the back wheel, virtually went over the wrong way, but just about held it and dropped it down. It was brilliant, I have to say – but he obviously wasn't going to be out-done by anything I could do. That was the significance of it."

This intense approach to off-

track downtime was merely an extension of Senna's racetrack modus operandi. He would, Fullerton recalls, strive to be fastest in any and every session, thinking nothing of bolting together the best engine-chassis-tyre combo in practice and using them hard throughout, only to find Fullerton going faster on less abused machinery when it came to the final qualifying runs. "I did that for quite a few years before he twigged," grins Fullerton. "That was his Latin temperament – he had to see the times. When you're more secure and confident, you know the time will be there when you need it."

There was, though, far more to Senna than naked competitiveness. He was smart enough to ask Terry after their first test in Parma: "What do you think of my driving?" Fullerton replied that Senna's aggressive style was provoking too much oversteer at corner exits, costing him revs, power and speed. "He took that on pretty fast," says Fullerton, "tuned into it straight away." And Senna's sheer ability was never, ever, in question. "He was naturally gifted at everything you needed to be a great driver and you had to be his equal in all those departments if you wanted to race with the kid. He was quick in the wet, great car control, great in quick corners, fast round slow corners, he had a gift for overtaking, was great at seeing the opportunity, or creating the opportunity to overtake. When you drove with him, he didn't make mistakes, and it felt almost like had eyes in the back of his head – he knew where you were on the track." The complete package? In terms of outright driving ability, "no question".

"It was obvious," Fullerton continues, "that he'd pushed all the limits when he was young, which meant he could always find a little bit more by pushing to the limit and driving with the back of the car out. He could be in a 130mph corner and if the back stepped out he didn't panic. That was why he could be so fast on the opening laps of races: he would go bang! straight on the

Poster celebrates the Senna/Fullerton world title rivalry



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limit. Same in the wet. It's about feel, about how fast you can feel the grip of the car around the corner."

Although these two were ferocious rivals, there's a warmth to Fullerton's recollections and an enthusiastic response to questions that can only be the result of a deep-held respect for the other man's capabilities. "I wouldn't say he was better than me," he offers, "but he matched me and he did wake me up a little bit and make me think, 'Fuck me, he is good, this kid.' Certainly I never came up against anyone like him before or after and I don't think there's been anyone like him since." Generously Fullerton adds that Senna was still improving when they went wheel-to-wheel and that with a couple more seasons' experience he'd have been an even tougher competitor: "That would have been the right time to measure him against me."

What's left, instead, is a record of a future superstar coming up against the established benchmark and falling slightly short, before going on to greater things. Which begs the inevitable: why did Fullerton stay in karts?

"You have to remember," he says, no bitterness evident, "that I was living what felt like a very, very complete life that fulfilled everything I wanted at the time. I was certainly the number-one professional kart driver, without a doubt. I was getting paid more than anybody and I loved the karting. I had girlfriends, I was travelling all over the world, winning big races, had a little bit of fame, a little bit of acclaim, just a brilliant time. And in those days it wasn't like, 'I'm a top karter, sign me up McLaren' – that wasn't an option. It was Formula Ford at Snetterton in February and paying to do it."

There was also the danger. Fullerton was karting world champion in 1973, aged 20, and that was the moment, if any, to move on up. But his elder brother, Alec, had been killed aged 21 in a motorbike race at Mallory Park in 1964 and with circuit racing going through its most perilous era, a move to cars seemed impossibly selfish. "I just couldn't put my parents through it," he says.

Senna, of course, felt no such limitations seven years later and with private cash filling his sails, breezed from

karts, to Formula Ford, FF2000 and British F3 before that three-podiums-and-a-Monaco-nearly-win first F1 season with Toleman, in 1984. He and Fullerton had drifted out of touch by then, although an F3 Silverstone paddock chat in 1983 was friendly, Fullerton recalls. "I didn't follow him actively after he left karting," he adds, "but you couldn't really help seeing what he was doing. And when he was successful I was very pleased for him. In a strange sort of way I was pleased for myself as well, because when he was with me I used to beat him, so I used to measure myself; 'I could have done that.' It felt a bit like that."

They were never close, these two one-time small-wheel combatants – the intensity of competition between them saw to that ("The fact that he wasn't faster than me made it impossible for him.") Fullerton's blunt, too, about the 'James Dean' factor attached to Senna since his death. "You obtain a different status when you die at the top of your game, and he was in the lead of a Formula 1 race..."

But that sentence of Senna's which once baffled a press corps and which today sets the lyrical tone for the best racing biopic ever shot, shows the exceptional regard in which Senna held Fullerton – a regard that's entirely reciprocal. "Although we lost touch from about '83 till he died," says Fullerton, "he obviously hadn't forgotten me, because of what he said in Adelaide, and I obviously hadn't forgotten him. I liked him and respected him and I think he felt the same about me – in fact I know he did and it was nice to hear it coming out of his mouth on screen. In different circumstances I think we'd have been good friends."


And there, of course, lies the silent sadness behind the joy of talking to Fullerton about maybe the greatest motorsport rivalry you never saw: what a bitter, crying shame it is that Ayrton couldn't have been sat next to Terry to join in the banter, remember some highlights, share some racing romance, before, inevitably, reaching a point of violent disagreement, slamming down his mineral water (or maybe hurling it into Terry's face), storming out with an almighty BANG of the door behind him and striding away, with just a trace of an enigmatic smile on his lips.

Karting king Fullerton (above, left) was the man Senna had to beat. The two drivers held rather different views on the Jesolo '80 race (below)

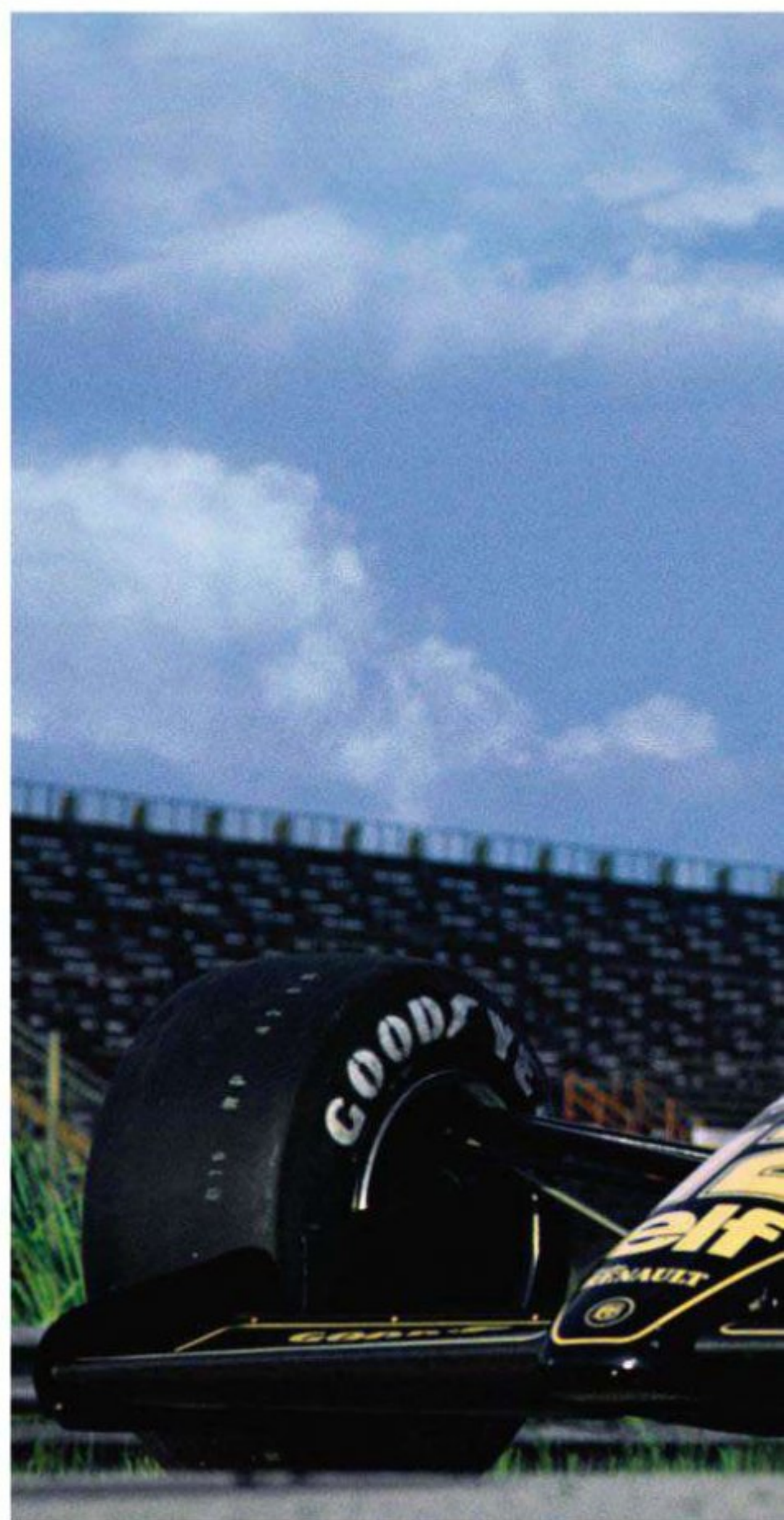


"He didn't make mistakes. It felt like Senna had eyes in the back of his head – he knew where you were on the track"

1985

The man who would be  King

In February 1985 Senna had ditched his contract with Toleman and was raring to go with Lotus. Many were sceptical about his ruthless manner but he was adamant that the sacrifices being made would shape his F1 career



A winter virus actually left half of Senna's face paralysed, which also affected his sight

You have to admire Ayrton Senna. Love him or hate him, 1984 provided a set of results that made this 24-year-old Brazilian the most outstanding newcomer to Formula 1 since Emerson Fittipaldi, his fellow countryman, in 1970. Another lap – or even another 10 feet – and he would have won Monaco. Armed with the rapidly improving new Toleman under more equal conditions, he hung on to finish third at Brands Hatch, and at Estoril – on similar Michelin rubber to the McLarens – he almost cost Niki Lauda the second place he needed to be World Champion. Already there are those who forecast a world title for Senna himself. Suffice to say that Lotus, his new team, will be disappointed if he hasn't tucked a couple of victories under his belt by the end of this year.

The Ayrton Senna most people know is the Brazilian automaton who won all those FF1600 and FF2000 races in 1981 and 1982, before he switched to F3 in 1983. Formula 3 revealed some foibles – remember a few over-eager jousts with Martin Brundle? – but led directly to his first F1 season with Toleman, and some remarkable results by any standard. He is remote, cool, perhaps unfriendly. Could he ever be forgiven for walking out on Toleman and the three-year contract which he had signed?

The real Ayrton Senna is the Brazilian with his heart

in Sao Paulo. There live his father, his mother, his elder sister and his younger brother. A comfortable suburban home, sunshine, dogs and a swimming pool. A garage where he can tinker, friends to call for a trip to the beach.

In England, he shares a modest house on an estate in Reading with his friend Mauricio Gugelmin and Mauricio's wife. It's easy to forget that, although Senna speaks excellent English, even giving up your own language is a sacrifice.

Physically, he is slight, with a stoop that reminds one of James Hunt. He is not very muscular, although he is getting into a body-building programme. The eyes are the most impressive feature: brown, flashing and constantly flicking around the room. You get the feeling that those eyes will miss nothing.

The cheekbones are high and the nose aristocratic, while the well-defined lips look as though they belong on a statue of a young Caesar. Currently, though, this noble face is not everything that it should be. The trouble is that only the left side is working properly: he scrabbles at the paralysed right side with a finger, as though coaxing it back into activity. "I caught this virus at the beginning of December, and for a couple of weeks it was quite bad," he says. "I was having to take some strong medication, and with one side of my face paralysed the eye would not focus. For that reason it was not until after Christmas that

By Mike Doodson



I was allowed to drive again.”

Back in a racing car for the first time since Estoril, Senna was setting some remarkable times in Rio leading with the new Lotus 97T. Fascinated by that immobile half of his face, Brazilian press and TV men pursued him wherever they could, and it may have been pressures like that which led to the subsequent, widely reported wheel-banging clash with Nigel Mansell – the man he has replaced at Lotus – that halted the good progress being made by the team with their new car. Nevertheless, Senna is evidently back on the road to a full recovery. He would also appear to have established himself above de Angelis in the estimation of some members of the team, creating a situation that could require more diplomacy from manager Peter Warr than was evident last year.

Senna's relations with his previous team started with mutual admiration, degenerated into threats of legal moves when he announced his move to Lotus, and ended amicably enough with his readmission for the last two races. He had signed with Toleman for three years, only to take advantage of a clause which allowed him to withdraw from his responsibilities provided that Toleman was compensated. At Zandvoort, thunderstruck Toleman management first learned from a Lotus press release that their prodigy was leaving. Their reaction was legally correct, no doubt, and certainly understandable in the circumstances.

It was a bewildering time for Senna, though. “I don't like to talk about it,” he admits. “What I can say is that I decided to speak [about the Lotus contract] as soon as possible, to give Toleman an opportunity to find a replacement for me. That was my intention.”

During 1983 he had tested cars provided by Williams, McLaren and Brabham as well as by Toleman. Having rejected serious F1 approaches from McLaren and others, he looked safe at Toleman. Perhaps lulled into a sense of security with Derek Warwick, who had stuck by Toleman through three years of thick and thin, the management had not considered the possibility of his defection. Having learned some useful lessons from the fracas, it looks as though both sides have dropped their legal arguments.

Certainly, Senna looks back on the 1984 season with pleasure, even if the physical effort of driving a Formula 1 car was to give him some trouble. In Brazil he had an early retirement with engine woes, but in South Africa he had to be lifted from his car after struggling home in sixth place for his first World Championship point.

“I was still not 100 per cent fit and I hadn't expected the effort to be that much,” he confesses, “but I am sure that the conditions were unusual because we had the '84 generation Pirelli tyres and we were still using the '83 chassis. The car was heavy to drive: it was especially bad in South Africa, where I lost the nose at the beginning of the race, making it even worse to drive.



Top: with his new Lotus 97T testing in Rio. Above: seventh on the grid but a lap 22 accident put him out of the race, 1984 Detroit Grand Prix

"Ever since we got the new car at the third race, everything got much easier. The chassis worked better with the Michelin tyres, the team made progress, and I was better too, because of all the testing and driving I was doing, as well as exercises. All these things together enabled me to go the full Grand Prix distance – and still finish in the top three."

The impression that Senna was something of a wimp, however, was erased spectacularly by his achievement in the pouring rain at Monaco, the race that was stopped by Jacky Ickx, the Clerk of the Course, just as Senna was about to go past a slowing Alain Prost into the lead. Indeed, judging from his arm-waving, it seemed that the Brazilian imagined for a moment that he had in fact won his first-ever Monaco GP. "I knew I hadn't won the race," he reveals, "but it had been good for me and for the team. I was happy about it – and that's why I was waving."

Should that race have been stopped, however? The question is one that has sparked off a libel case between Ickx and FISA President Jean-Marie Balestre. Like several other drivers, however, Senna believes that, while Ickx should never have started it, the race was probably safe to have continued. "The visibility was at its worst at the beginning, when there were more cars and they were all running together. When they stopped it, the cars were more spread out and therefore there was a lot better visibility than at the beginning, even if the rain was falling again. No, Ickx should not have stopped it, especially not at that particular moment when the top three positions were about to change."

Perhaps surprisingly, he much prefers to talk about his third place at Brands Hatch: "Conditions at Brands were normal. We started well and for the first time I was able to fight for positions. We got there."



The controversial signing of the Lotus contract for 1985 with team manager Peter Warr; Senna was still driving for Toleman at the time

At the end of 1983, with Warwick, Toleman had finished five consecutive races in the points. Now, using the Michelin tyres which they had adopted after an ugly scene at Imola with former supplier Pirelli, they looked capable of matching anyone except perhaps McLaren. A second important factor was the progress that Brian Hart had made with his electronically-managed engine: "The first time we had the electronic engine was at Monte Carlo, just to try it, and we were going to race it for the first time at Detroit, except that I had to race the spare car after the startline accident. I also had an accident at Dallas, so Brands was the first real race that I did it with."

For Toleman, however, the British GP was clouded by the nasty accident that befell Johnny Cecotto at the beginning of the first untimed practice session. As soon as

Johnny's car was retrieved, with most of its front end wrecked, Senna had a good look at the damage – and resumed practice so effectively that he was fastest in that first session. It all looked very steely stuff, but Senna says there was nothing emotional involved.

"If anything, I was inclined to be more careful. In fact, we changed the car around quite a lot in the session because it wasn't suitable for the conditions. I think the tyres we had at that race were different from what we had before then, so the car was reacting differently. I believe that was one of the things that caught Johnny. At the beginning of the session I didn't take any risks, in fact only when the car was well balanced and safe did I start to push, I was quick because I had a good car in my hands: good chassis, engine and tyres."

He refuses even now to talk about the nature of the improvements which Brian Hart and his electronic engine wizards achieved in mid-season. "Better fuel consumption, better response and maybe some other things I can't mention," he says. "Our biggest problem was always qualifying, because for that side we didn't have much money."

The sense of achievement at Brands was to be followed with the misunderstandings at Zandvoort and a one-race 'ban' at Monza. At the Nurburgring, there was a first lap accident involving Senna and half a dozen others including Keke Rosberg, who wanted to blame the Brazilian. But the last race of the year vindicated him with another third place, behind the McLarens, in the course of which Niki Lauda had to wind up every ounce of TAG Turbo boost pressure to drag past the flying Toleman en route to his vital second place.

Summing up his year, Senna is succinct about the low points: "Imola, where I didn't qualify. Dallas, where I believe we had a good chance of finishing in the top three and I first hit the wall then had some problems with the seatbelts. And Monza, where I didn't race." Good moments? Brands Hatch, and Estoril, of course. "But I especially remember the day after the Estoril race, when I think I did my best driving of the whole year. The team was testing several other drivers and they asked me to do a few laps, to see if the track was consistent."

"There was no responsibility, no pressure like there is on a race weekend. I got into the car – it was the spare – and it was very good, including the engine and the tyres. So I drove it, ermmm... over the limit. It was one of the few times that I drove it over the limit, and for several laps very consistent and very quick. It was really enjoyable looking at the board every time through, with a quick lap time, getting quicker and quicker, and ending up with the fastest lap time overall in Estoril. That was a very special day for me, and also because it was my last day driving with Toleman."

After everything that Toleman had done for Senna, it is hardly surprising that team boss Alex Hawkridge should have interpreted his departure announcement as downright ingratitude. It may be a couple of years before the details are fully revealed, but it would seem that the Brazilian was sorely tempted to be ungrateful by the blandishments of rival teams. His eventual choice of Lotus intrigued me: despite some excellent cars in recent years, backed up since 1981 by generous John Player budgets, the men from Hethel have got only one victory to their credit in the whole of the past six years.

"Let's say that a contact was made in the middle of the '84 season, as with other teams," responds Senna, cautiously. "It looked to me that conditions at Lotus offered the best possibility, the best choice. Other teams had been talking to me, of course, as they probably had with most of the good drivers. The job of





Senna discusses all things financial at home with manager Armando Teixeira



Senna, here ahead of team-mate Johnny Cecotto, struggled to sixth at the 1984 South African GP



Third placed Senna congratulates winner Niki Lauda on the Brands Hatch podium in 1984

a team manager is to find out what's going on around." But, I insisted, why Lotus, with its recent poor record?

He laughed. "I saw a crystal ball with a light inside it – which told me that 1985 was going to be a Lotus year!"

In several ways, the decision is typical of Senna. Ever since his karting days, he has hesitated before making decisions that would have looked logical to others. His loyalty to a fading kart maker almost certainly cost him the karting World Championship that he would have loved so dearly. This is the man who turned down Ron Dennis's offer (in 1982) of a paid-for F3 season and a guaranteed place at McLaren. It has even been suggested that he jumped ship to Lotus because he had been tipped off about Michelin's impending retirement (a month before most others knew) and had anticipated Toleman's resulting discomfiture.

What he does admit, however, makes good sense: "Through 1984, as one of the drivers, I got to know Formula 1 better. At each race, each test, I learned a lot at Toleman. We had three good results together in the top three, and we could have done other races equally well. As the season went on, I realised that there is nothing, er, magic about a Formula 1 car. It is all a matter of being in the right team in the right year. A winning team this year can be in trouble next year. As things went on, through the season, the possibility came for a change, and I decided to take

"I saw a crystal ball with a light inside it which told me that 1985 was going to be a Lotus year! I thought it would be better for me"

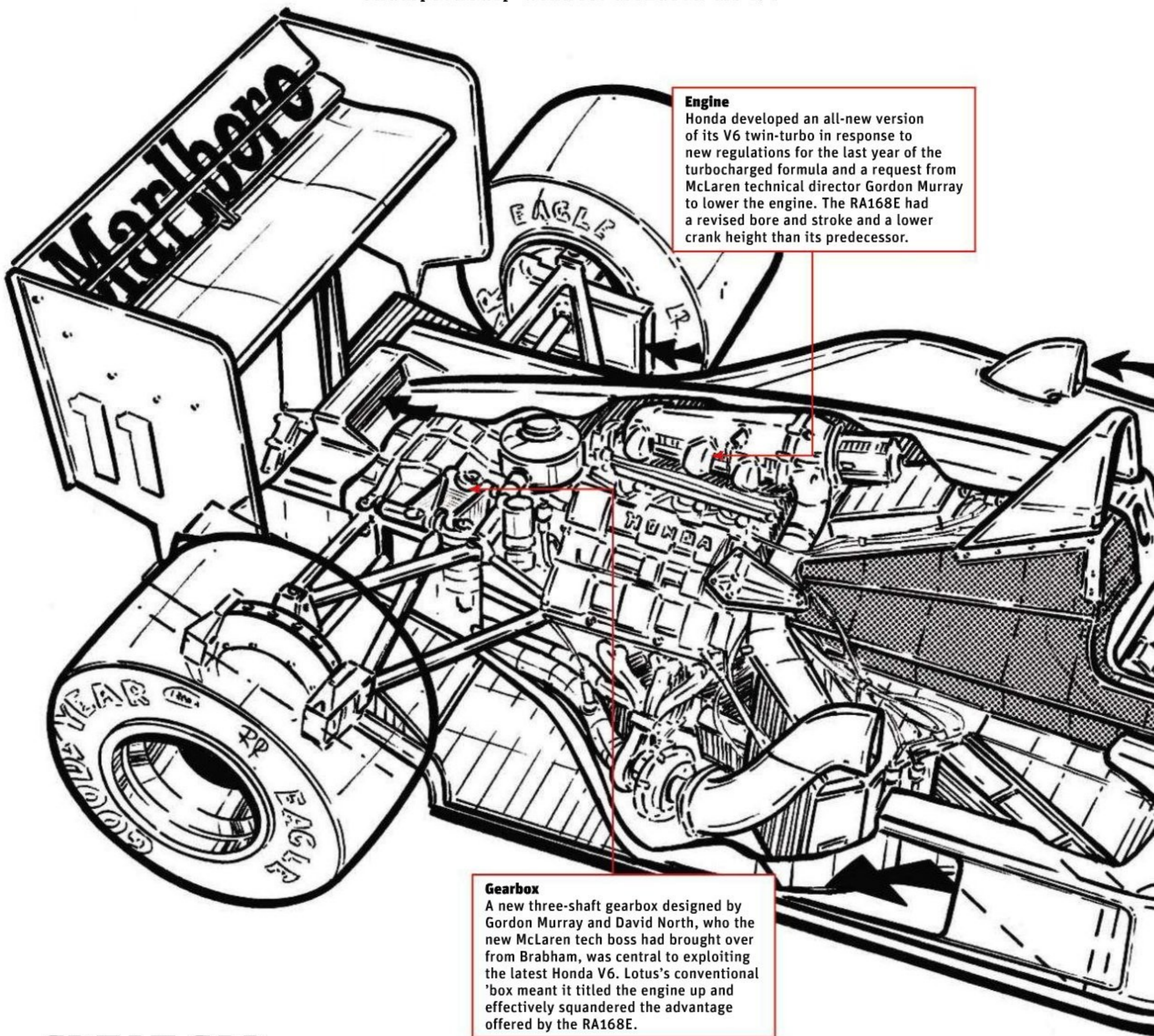
it. I thought in the long term that it would be better for my career."

This is the ruthless, headstrong side that makes Ayrton Senna less than attractive to some people. When you have dealt with someone as straightforward and honest as his predecessor, Derek Warwick, for example, it comes as a nasty shock to find that your driver does not share his secrets with you, even when you are building the foundations of his career at considerable expense, as Toleman did. For better or for worse, the fact is that there are very few drivers with the Warwick attitude. If you accuse Senna of being ruthless, it leaves him slightly bemused that any driver should place his team's prospects above his own.

"I don't really care about suggestions that I am remote," he says. "What I really care about is my career. When I go to the track, I am there to be with my team, with my mechanics, and to concentrate on my work. So there is not a lot of time to make friends. As for being ruthless, I concentrate as much as I can on my racing side. But I don't think that I have done anything outside the rules to achieve any object. I go for it inside the rules, and I dedicate all my time to it. I live in England, outside Brazil, away from my family and my friends. So I can work hard for my career.

"As for having a big head, it is not for me to make that judgement. I am what I am: what can I say? I sacrifice a lot of things that I like for my career. If some people think I am bigheaded, it is up to them, there is nothing that I can do. I am sure that I haven't changed my attitude or my lifestyle for several years. So if I was bigheaded 10 years ago, then I am still now."

He laughs, suggesting that he doesn't care. In my opinion, he does care, but not enough yet to be seriously worried about it. The time will come when his public image needs a bit of polishing. For the moment, though, he is a young achiever, a supremely gifted driver who could be about to become a legend in his own lifetime.



Engine
Honda developed an all-new version of its V6 twin-turbo in response to new regulations for the last year of the turbocharged formula and a request from McLaren technical director Gordon Murray to lower the engine. The RA168E had a revised bore and stroke and a lower crank height than its predecessor.

Gearbox
A new three-shaft gearbox designed by Gordon Murray and David North, who the new McLaren tech boss had brought over from Brabham, was central to exploiting the latest Honda V6. Lotus's conventional 'box meant it tilted the engine up and effectively squandered the advantage offered by the RA168E.

GREAT CAR

MP4/4

This car had it all. And in the hands of Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost, it won every race of the 1988 season, except Monza. Put simply, it could not be bettered. Yet in August 1987, its engine was undecided and the clean-sheet design was not even started...

Chassis

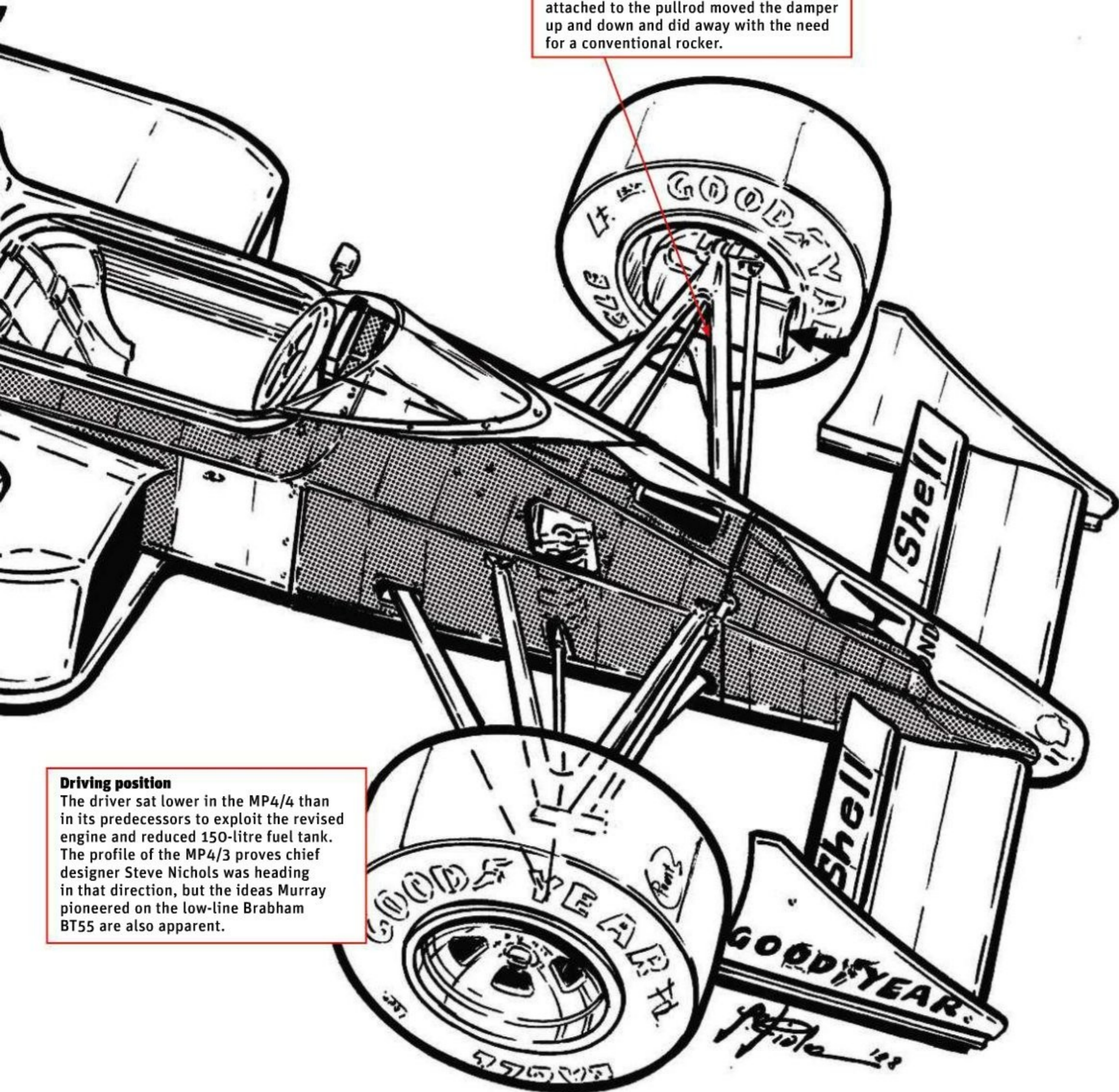
The MP4/4 was the first all-new McLaren design since John Barnard's original MP4, which hit the track in 1981. New foot box rules for 1988, which moved the driver's feet back, and a desire to increase stiffness called for a fresh approach to the monocoque.

Front suspension

The slender tub meant moving the dampers backwards and the use of a trick activation system previously used on Murray's Brabham BT49. A trolley arrangement attached to the pullrod moved the damper up and down and did away with the need for a conventional rocker.

Driving position

The driver sat lower in the MP4/4 than in its predecessors to exploit the revised engine and reduced 150-litre fuel tank. The profile of the MP4/3 proves chief designer Steve Nichols was heading in that direction, but the ideas Murray pioneered on the low-line Brabham BT55 are also apparent.





Late to testing but blew rest of field away

The McLaren MP4/4 was late, so late that it arrived in time for the final day of the Imola test. And the pressure was on everyone at McLaren.

This was partly due to, according to Steve Nichols, "Ron [Dennis] telling everyone at Honda that we would have this fantastic car".

"I remember being in the hotel late the night before we were due to test and running into one of the big wheels at Honda," recalls Nichols. "He said to me, 'So tomorrow we will find out about the wonder car'. I remember saying to myself, 'What has Ron been loading up on us?'"

"We sent Prost out for one installation lap and then a four or five-lap run to make sure pullrods weren't pulling out of the monocoque and things like that. Then I told him to really have a go. On his first run, he was quicker than anything else had gone all week."

Prost had already been fastest in the 1987 test car by half a second and then lopped nearly another second off that mark over the course of the morning. "Prost famously told Ron to tell Senna to take it easy because we didn't want to show our hand," says Nichols. "After a few laps, Ayrton came in and sat there shaking his head.

"Eventually he said: 'This car is fucking good'."

The greatest grand prix car ever? That's a bold claim to make for any racing machine, yet McLaren's Honda-engined MP4/4 has to be a contender by any measure. There's the sheer weight of statistics for a start: 15 wins from 16 starts, 15 poles, 10 fastest laps and 1003 laps led from a total of 1031. What's more, it's a thing of beauty, a step apart from the cars that can nominally be called its rivals.

And, just as importantly, it was the duelling weapon in which two all-time Formula 1 greats, Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost, began the most intense period of their long rivalry. The MP4/4 has it all, the numbers, the looks and the mystique. The Formula 1 car that gave Senna his first world title is all the more remarkable because it was designed from a clean sheet of paper in little more than six months.

Chief designer Steve Nichols insists he didn't know for sure what engine the 1988 car would have until late summer 1987. "We didn't know if we'd have a Porsche or a Honda, a turbocharged or a normally-aspirated," says the American, who didn't stop engineering Stefan Johansson's car until mid-season to concentrate on the design of the MP4/4. "That's why so much design didn't start until August. That was a mistake. I should have designed it around what we had and modified it later."

That was only one reason why the car was late and only ran right at the end of the final pre-season test at Imola. The other was the arrival of Senna. "I lacked confidence and we knew we had Ayrton coming to drive the car," he says. "That was part of the reason it was late. I would check and double-check, and leave no stone unturned. I believe, in an odd way, that a lot of the



Senna clinched the title here in Japan but by now the attention was all on the rivalry with Prost, rather than the car



success of the car was down to my lack of confidence.”

Nichols’ initial inclination had been to further refine the John Barnard monocoque design that had been the basis of every previous MP4 McLaren. New foot box regulations that pulled the driver’s feet back forced Nichols and his team into producing a new monocoque. Aerodynamically, however, the car is an evolution of what went before. Or at least it is according to Nichols and many of his colleagues in the McLaren design office back in the late 1980s.

Gordon Murray, who succeeded Barnard as technical director at the end of 1987, has a different view. He insists that the MP4/4 was an ultimately successful attempt to perfect the low-line principles he employed on the Brabham BT55 in 1986.

Nichols and Murray were clearly heading in the same

direction and both admit that they were inspired by Colin Chapman’s Lotus 25. Nichols insists that the move towards a slimmer, lower profile was an evolutionary one, and that much can be seen in the line of McLarens from the MP4/2 of 1985-86 through the 4/3 to the 4/4.

Yet Murray has to be given credit for taking it one step further and persuading Honda to produce an all-new low-line engine. He also brought in an old friend, the late David North, to design a revolutionary three-shaft gearbox that could exploit the latest Honda. Nichols and his cohorts insist Murray was remote from the design process and undertook a largely organisational role. The evidence suggests he did what technical directors do: look at the big picture and help set a tone for the design. No matter who gets credit for MP4/4, the fact remains that it is arguably the greatest grand prix car of all time.

Quite simply, the best grand prix car of all time. It led 97 percent of 1988’s racing laps and took Senna to his first world title



Clockwise from top left: where Senna worked his craft so well; the men’s fashionwear sponsor was just a coincidence, but this car most definitely was; the immense Honda V6 turbo that powered this car to its 15 victories; the sleek aerodynamic lines of the MP4/4, also perfect





Marlboro British Grand Prix

Da Silvastone

After all the talk of Senna's debut... (text continues)



March 6 1983: Senna takes debut 'championship' F3 race victory at Silverstone, despite being outqualified by Scot David Leslie's Magnum

(text continues)



THRUXTON

Champion style

(text continues)



CROIX-EN-TERNOIS

Martini is ...

(text continues)



Spa


Black to front

(text continues)



September 15 '85: A second victory of the season for Lotus comes in the delayed Belgian GP at Spa - a circuit at which Senna would, unsurprisingly, excel

(text continues)



DETROIT

Ayrton's polished art

(text continues)



June 22 1986: Senna's final grand prix win in the black-and-gold colours of JPS came on the narrow streets of Motor City in Detroit

(text continues)

DETROIT GP

REPORT: NIGEL ROEBUCK - PHOTOGRAPHY: IPA

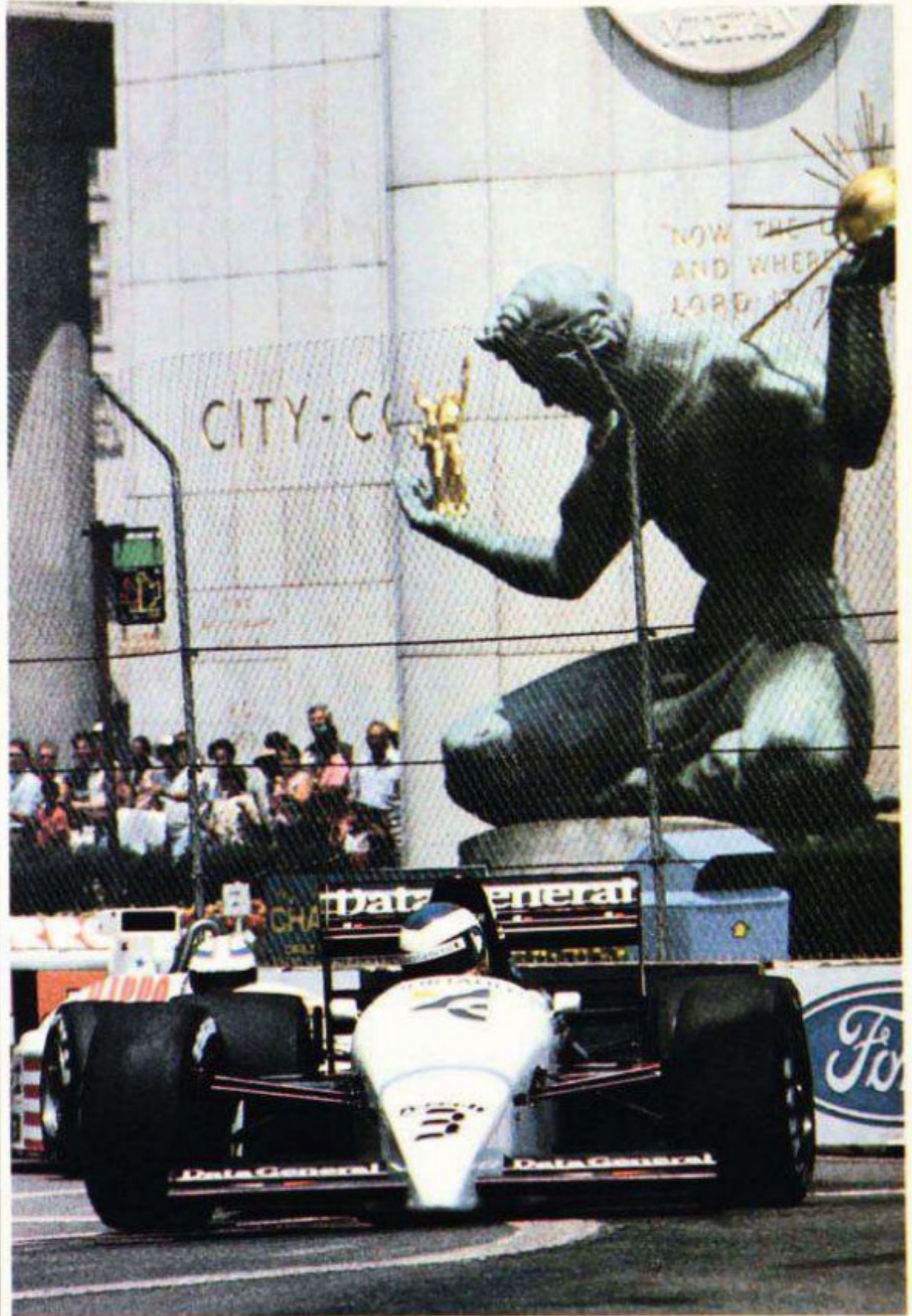


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AUTOSPORT, JUNE 25, 1987

AUTOSPORT, JUNE 25, 1987



Left: Ayrton Senna followed up his Monaco victory with another win through the streets. Above: Jonathan Palmer was aiming for a top six finish, but settled for winning the normally aspirated category.

City slicker

The temporary absence of Montreal from this year's World Championship schedule meant that Formula 1's customary North American tour was halved. And for most people in Formula 1, it was the wrong half that survived. Whatever flannel may be served up about the importance of a race here in Detroit, the fact remains that the streets through this city hardly constitute a great theatre of motor racing. Not that this unduly bothered Ayrton Senna who, as in 1986, found himself very much at centre stage...

▲ June 21 1987: Same team, same result, different colours. Second Detroit GP win came in yellow Camel-liveried Lotus

MONACO GP

REPORT: NIGEL ROEBUCK. QUALIFYING: JOE SAWARD - PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFF BLOXHAM

FIA FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



The boy is back in town

Senna did not put a foot wrong at Monaco. In the early stages, team mate Prost applied the pressure, but the Brazilian made the break in the traffic - at which there was much...

This time there were no mistakes. Last year Ayrton Senna missed away the Monaco Grand Prix in the late stages, but this time he was flawless, taking the lead immediately and holding it throughout. Initially Alain Prost gave stern chase, but René Arnoux interrupted that. And later the Frenchman lost time on half a minute in a traffic jam at the Loews hairpin which virtually blocked the track. It wasn't totally straightforward for Ayrton, but it wasn't far off.

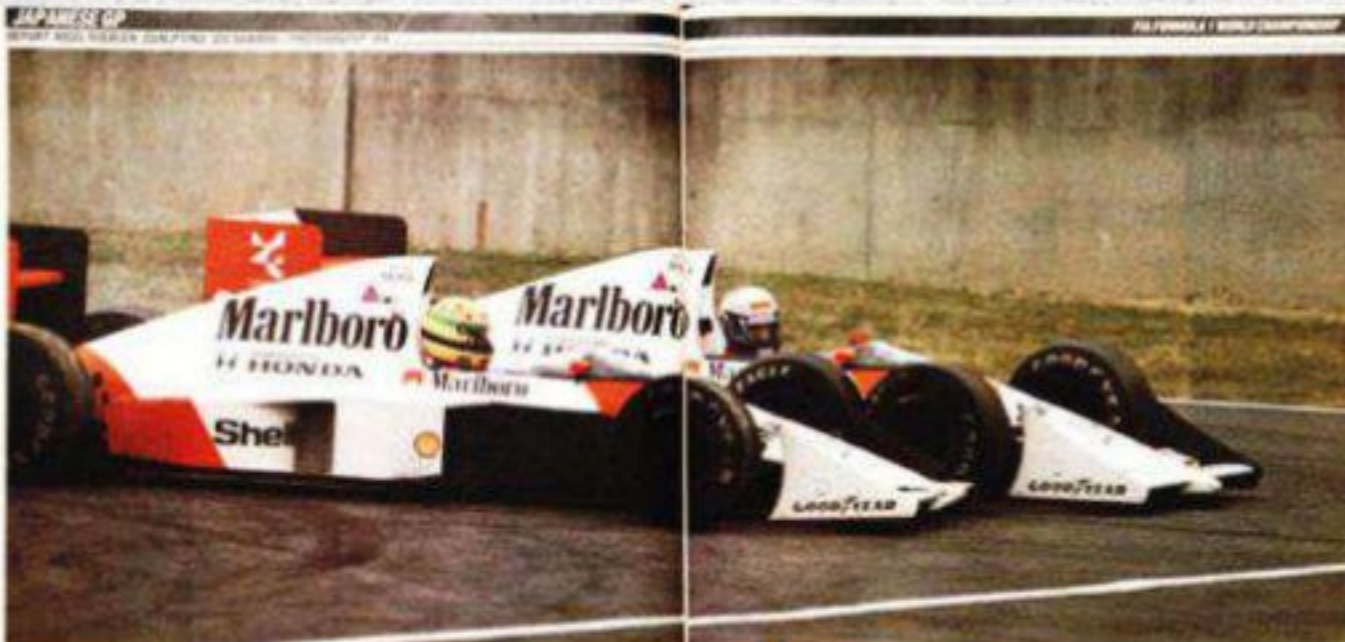
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Autosport, May 11, 1989

Autosport, May 11, 1989

27

▲ May 7 1989: Senna shrugged off memories of his '88 shunt for his second Monaco win. He'd win the next four, too...



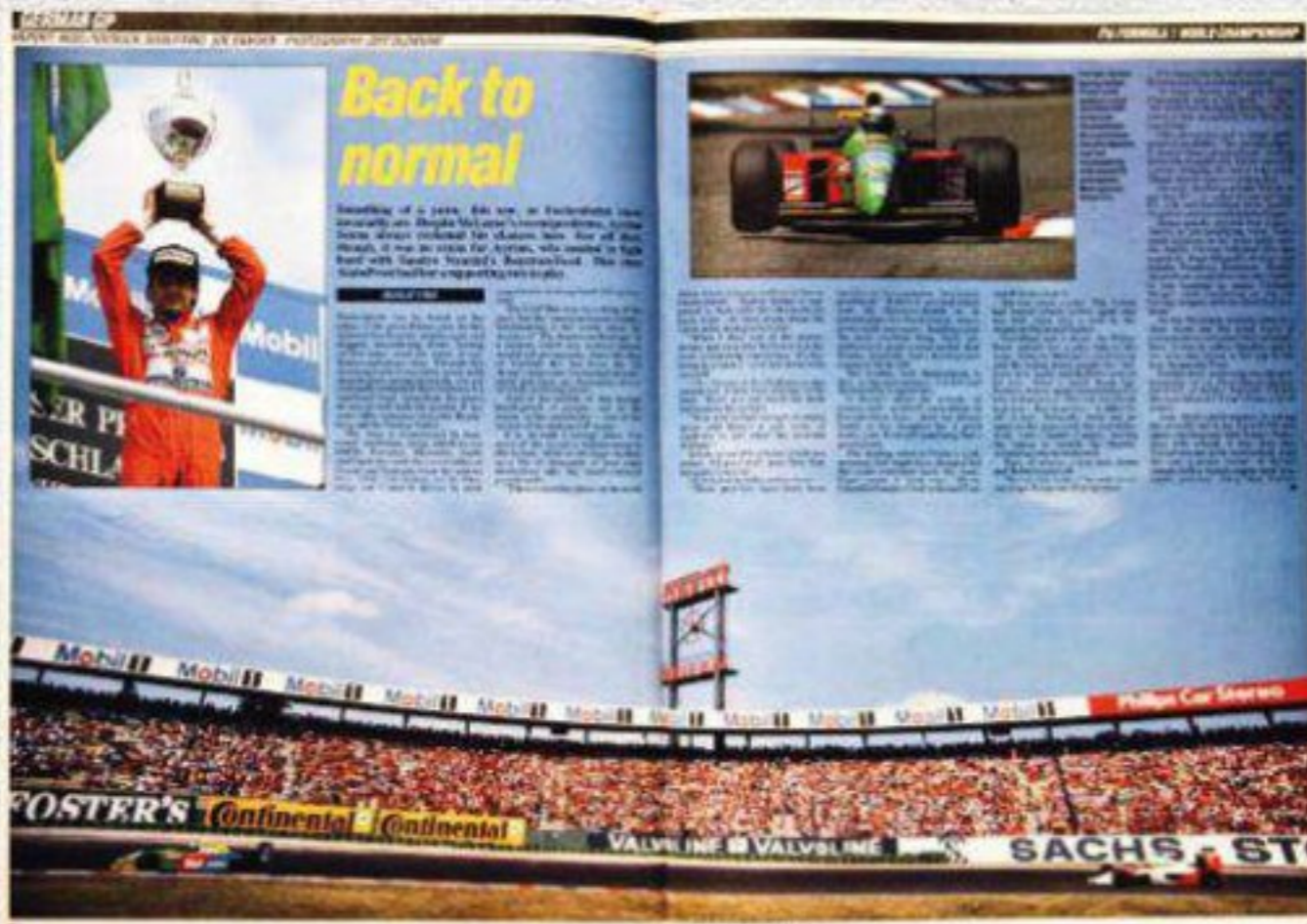
Malice in Hondaland

Senna's victory in the 1989 Japanese Grand Prix was a triumph of nerve over speed. In his pole position car he made a mistake in the first corner, but a second lap later he was back in the lead. He was quick, but he was also a great driver. He was quick, but he was also a great driver. He was quick, but he was also a great driver.



▲ October 22 1989: The infamous Suzuka clash with Alain Prost. Senna got going again - and won - but was later excluded

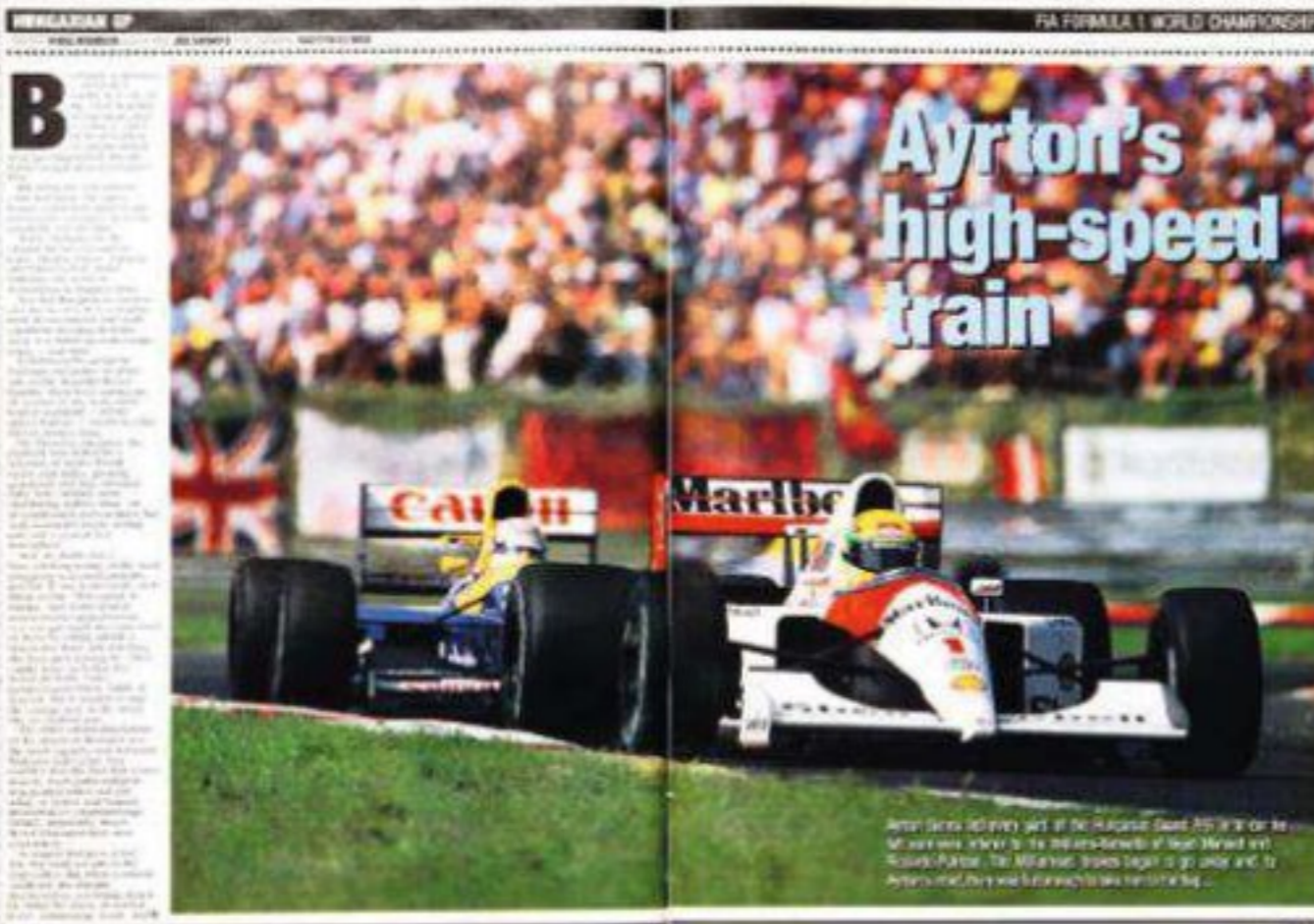
SCRAPBOOK SENNA REPORTS



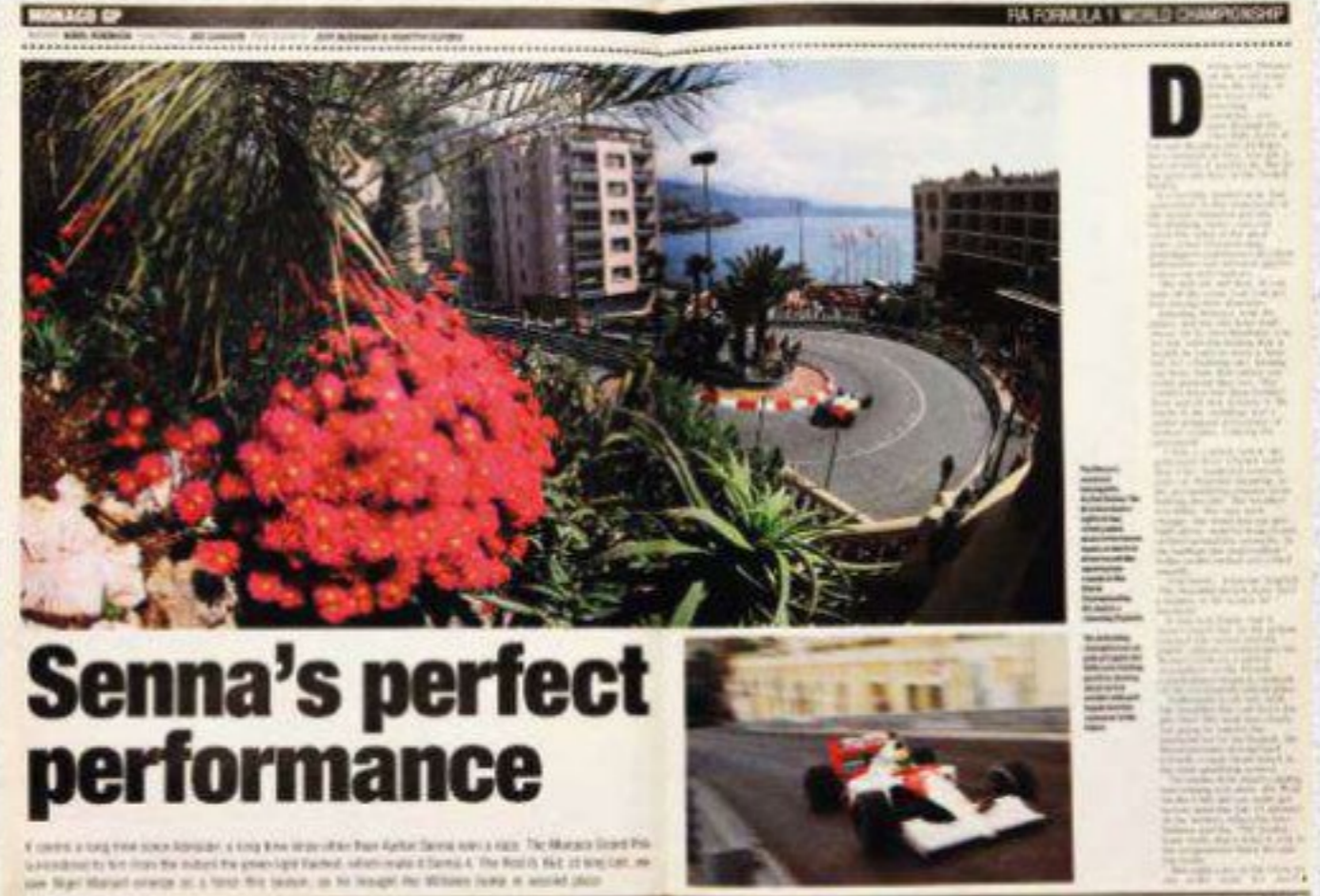
▲ July 29 1990: Senna chased, caught and passed Alessandro Nannini's Benetton to score his third straight German GP win at Hockenheim



▲ October 21 1990: More controversy at Suzuka after Senna and Prost collided at the start. The Brazilian faced a media barrage after the incident



▲ August 11 1991: Victory at the Hungaroring for the second time after holding off the Williams-Renaults of Nigel Mansell and Riccardo Patrese



▲ May 12 1991: Senna's Monaco GP hat-trick – and his fourth in the Principality – made it four out of four for the season. A third title seemed a formality

JAPANESE GP

REPORT: NIGEL ROSEBUCK QUALIFYING: JOE SAWARD PHOTOGRAPHS: MARTYN ELFORD

Showdown at last! This is Senna, whose in 1991 years the World Championship is traditionally settled on one car heading into another followed by an evening of the world's greatest drivers abusing each other in the darkness. For some reason, things went a little wrong on Thursday evening, there was an overpowering sense of foreboding. Perhaps it was the horrible weather — it had all the sparkle of Southampton on a wet Tuesday in November — or perhaps it was the knowledge that when top cars collide your average press man has a heavy-breathing editor demanding impossible things down the telephone lines. Whatever the cause, pursuing the flooded paddock fields from one of the world's most expensive taxis, there was a profound sense that, perhaps, this would not be a fun weekend.



As at San Marino, the next day, unaccustomed by jet-lag, some pulled back the curtains and saw the sun was shining. It was a blessing. Our coach also saw the traffic jam. Now, total at dawn and this a couple of miles from the track. We thought the locals were joking when they said one should start early. The traffic would be bad. An hour later the traffic jams tumbled back for miles and miles and miles. It was unbelievable stuff, being a European has its advantages. You see the car down the yellow line in the middle of the road and you drive on the European side. It's probably highly illegal, but it is very effective.

It didn't hold out much hope for excitement, but actually it was an interesting session. Particularly if you happened to be Mark Blundell. His Red Bull-Yamaha was quick early on, but as everyone began belting out the qualifiers, it sprung an oil leak. Mark leapt to his spare car, but it was handling horribly. As the session ticked quietly away, all eyes were on Mark. Was he going to make it? In the end he failed, being left behind by team mate Martin Brundle, the two four-wheelers and Gabriele Tarquini's fundamental. I was doing fine, and a disappointing start, and then just as the track became spicier, I had the oil leak. I hopped into the T-car, but the setup was not right and I had the frustration of not improving. That's pre-qualifying, 'not a'.

Ayrton Senna acknowledged Gerhard Berger's season-long help by making sure at the last corner to give his team mate his first win in just under two years at McLaren. Right: Qualifier last year, the start to the crucial title race went without mishap. Berger and Senna stuffing in ahead of the Williams pair Mansell and Patrese.

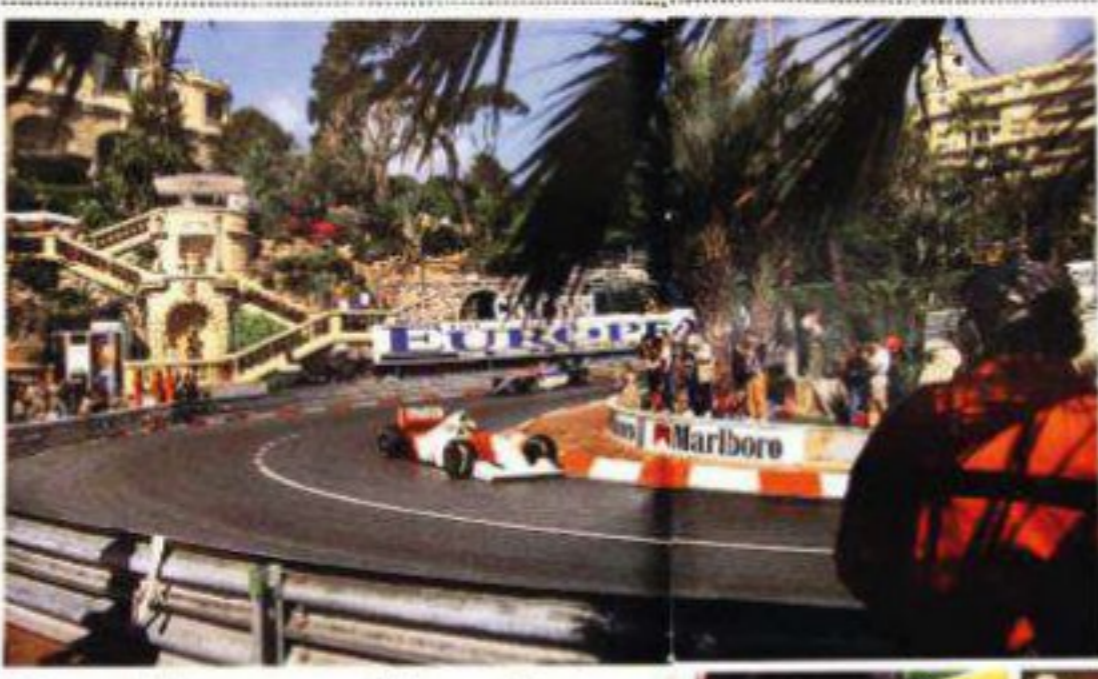


Ayrton's triple crown

Last year it was a crashing bore. This year it was just a bore. As early as lap 10 the World Championship had been over, with Senna taking his third title. Mansell's Williams ended in the sand-trap at Turn 1 and Senna and Berger disappeared in a devastating show of McLaren superiority.

▲ October 20 1991: Senna and McLaren team-mate Gerhard Berger dominated the Japanese GP. So much so that Senna, whose third title was assured, handed Berger a 'thank-you' victory at the end

MONACO GP



Prost's penalty gives Senna six of the best

Ayrton Senna's second victory (Senna has won six of eight after Alain Prost) earned the title and Michael Schumacher's debut race (Schumacher had a spin at the start) and a surprise victory for the young French driver.

▲ May 23 1993: A jumped-start penalty for Alain Prost and car failure for Michael Schumacher handed Senna a record sixth Monaco GP win

AUSTRALIAN GP

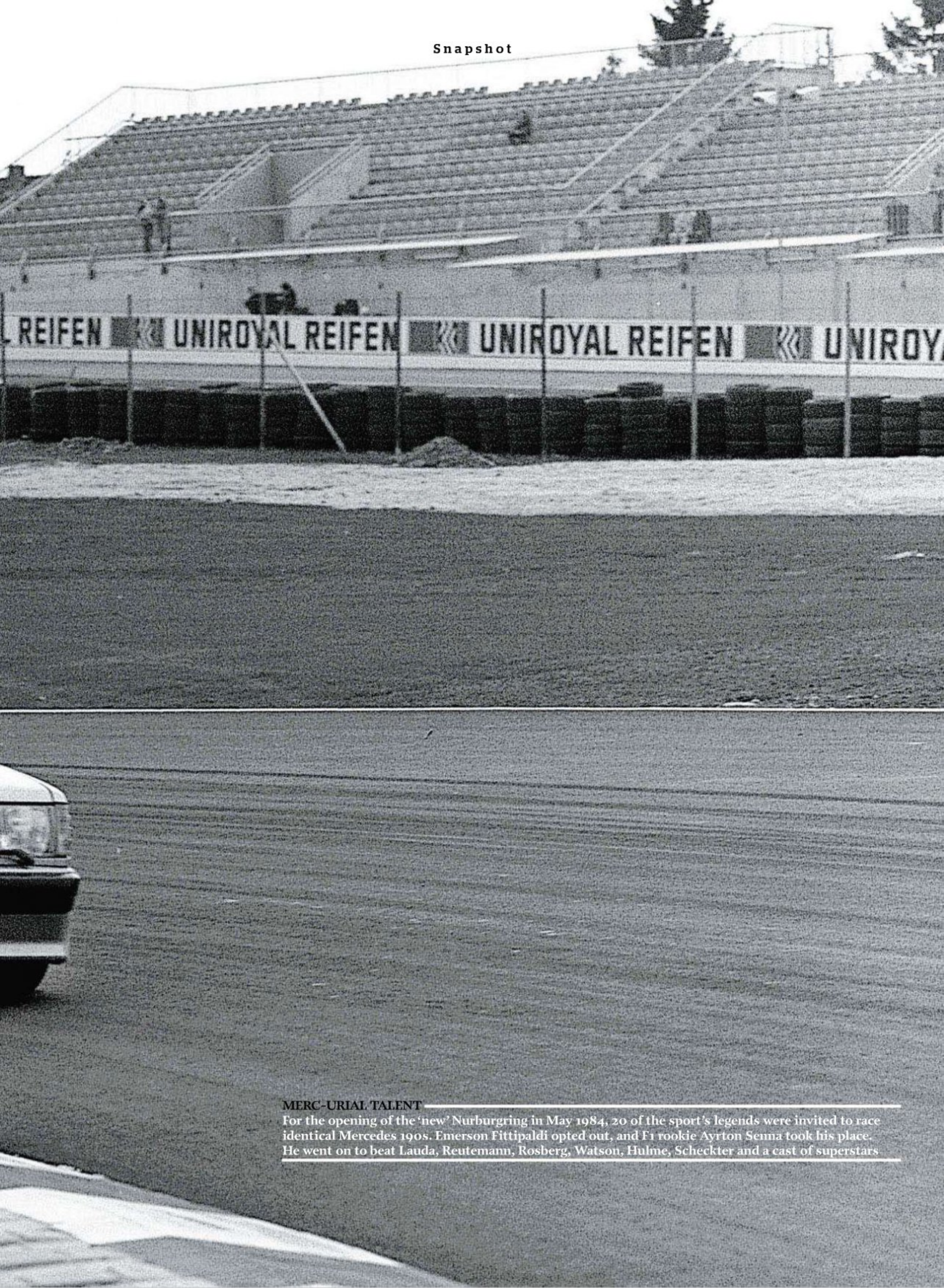


Senna's farewell gift to McLaren

McLaren's most successful driver, Senna, was in his last race for the team when he won the Australian GP. He was in his last race for the team when he won the Australian GP.

▲ November 7 1993: The 41st and final victory in Formula 1 came on the streets of Adelaide, where he defeated Alain Prost one last time...





MERC-URIAL TALENT

For the opening of the 'new' Nurburgring in May 1984, 20 of the sport's legends were invited to race identical Mercedes 190s. Emerson Fittipaldi opted out, and F1 rookie Ayrton Senna took his place. He went on to beat Lauda, Reutemann, Rosberg, Watson, Hulme, Scheckter and a cast of superstars



Caring for over 40 years of motor racing history

Duncan Hamilton & Co.Ltd has recently assembled a unique collection of Gulf Team racing cars for a special client, 14 in total. Has there ever been a more iconic brand in racing? From the distinctive blue and orange livery, to the 1960s Le Mans winning Ford GT40s right up to the current Aston Martin Le Mans entry.

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Sir Stirling Moss enjoys the exchanges between Murray Walker and Senna; the entire audience at the Grosvenor House Hotel was captivated

A powerful presence

Celebrities have the amazing power to turn things around. But nobody could have predicted the manner with which Senna dominated the 1991 AUTOSPORT Awards

These days the AUTOSPORT Awards are an integral part of the motorsport calendar. A place where the great and the good get together to celebrate their successes and to applaud the achievements of others.

Back in 1991, it was just starting out. What had previously been an informal gathering was coalescing into something much grander. All it needed was a star attraction. Peter Foubister was AUTOSPORT's publisher at the time, and he takes up the story...

"At that time we were just establishing ourselves in the Great Room at the Grosvenor House Hotel and walking that balancing act of what you want to do and what you can afford to spend. My position was that if we didn't establish a world-class event no one would come. Those sort of events are all about the people and to have Ayrton Senna there was the ultimate objective.

"Ron Dennis was prepared to invest in the Awards so long as we invested in improving the event. And at the end of the day we both wanted the same thing and he said 'I'll get you Senna if you do x, y and z'."

Senna, who arrived via Gerhard Berger's private jet fashionably late, was very clearly the main draw.

"He was the most charming guest you can imagine. That evening still sends a tingle down people's spines. Murray Walker was on stage talking to him and Murray just put him at ease, and they spoke for about 10 minutes. Senna told stories, including about how he'd

"Senna was the most charming guest, the whole of the Grosvenor was hanging on his every word"

Peter Foubister

presented Jean-Marie Balestre with a crash helmet the night before at the FISA/FIA prize-giving – and, as everyone knew, the relationship between them was pretty extraordinary at the time. Everyone in the room was sort of in shock but he said, 'No, I meant it sincerely!'

"After Murray finished and thanked him, Ayrton took the mic and spoke for another four or five minutes about how he'd learned his trade in the UK and how he didn't always get the best press, but he went on to thank everyone in the room and at the end, instead of just getting up and leaving, he sat at the table and signed autographs until everybody was happy.

"He had the whole of the audience in the Grosvenor just hanging on his every word. It was quite extraordinary. Having Murray Walker and Ayrton Senna on the stage at the AUTOSPORT Awards – you just can't get better than that can you?"

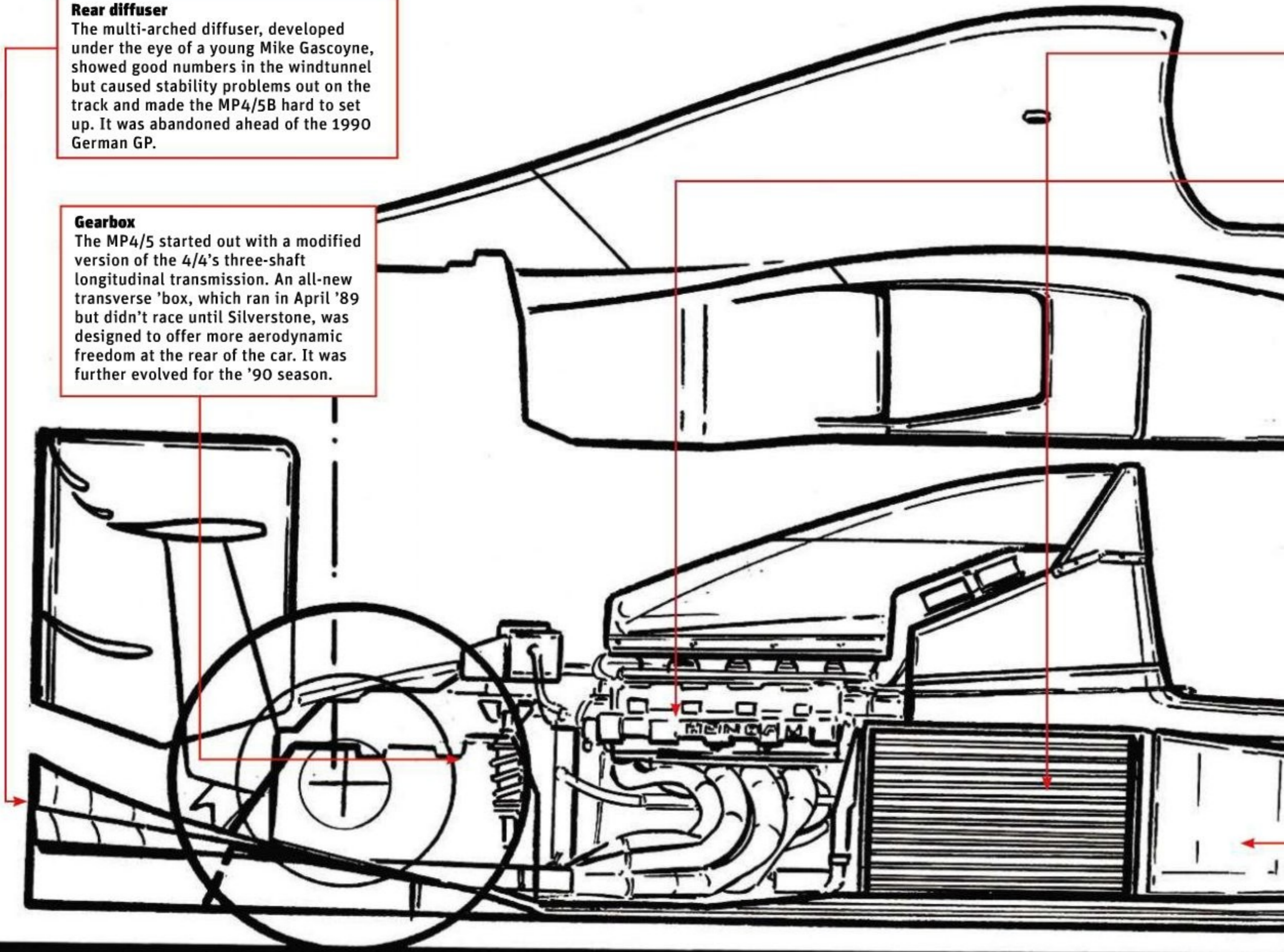
AUTOSPORT.COM SENNA AWARDS VIDEO

Rear diffuser

The multi-arched diffuser, developed under the eye of a young Mike Gascoyne, showed good numbers in the windtunnel but caused stability problems out on the track and made the MP4/5B hard to set up. It was abandoned ahead of the 1990 German GP.

Gearbox

The MP4/5 started out with a modified version of the 4/4's three-shaft longitudinal transmission. An all-new transverse 'box, which ran in April '89 but didn't race until Silverstone, was designed to offer more aerodynamic freedom at the rear of the car. It was further evolved for the '90 season.



GREAT CAR

MP4/5B

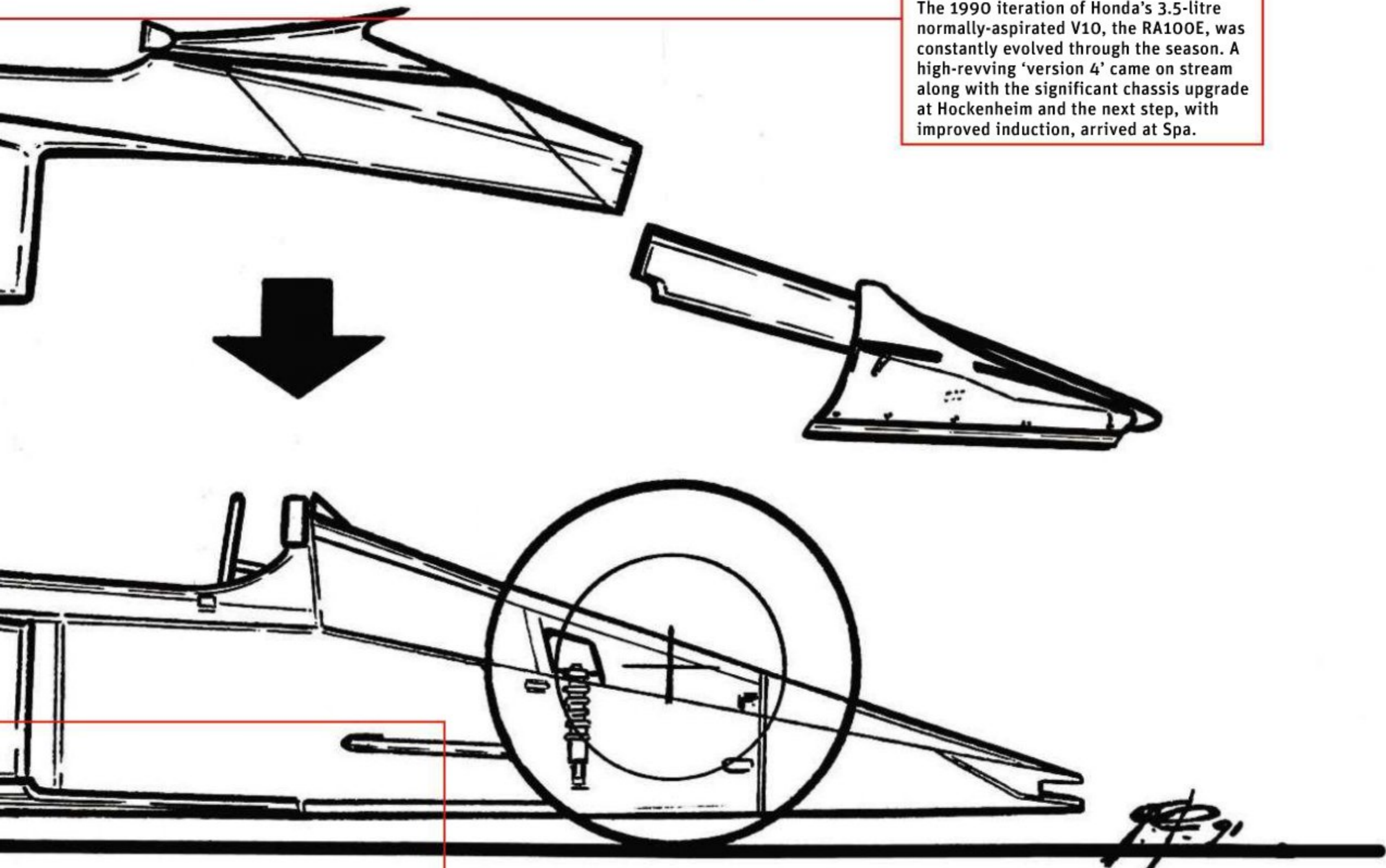
This car started as an evolution, had aerodynamic issues, was revamped completely mid-season - but still won six races in Senna's hands. It also won McLaren the 1990 constructors' title and Senna his second world crown, but it will never be heralded as one of McLaren's greatest grand prix machines

Fuel capacity

The more bulbous shape of the MP4/5 cars resulted from the fuel cell being pushed upwards and outwards from the 4/4 as capacity went from 150 litres to over 220. This was increased again for the 4/5B, because the 1989 car had been marginal on fuel.

Engine

The 1990 iteration of Honda's 3.5-litre normally-aspirated V10, the RA100E, was constantly evolved through the season. A high-revving 'version 4' came on stream along with the significant chassis upgrade at Hockenheim and the next step, with improved induction, arrived at Spa.



Sidepods

The major change between the MP4/5 and the 5B to untrained eyes are revisions to the sidepod profile and radiator ducting. These were designed to yield more downforce in conjunction with the new diffuser.

Chassis

The family origins of the MP4/5B are clear to see, but the '90 car was made of a different composite material to its predecessors by McLaren supplier Hercules Aerospace. The switch was made from a high-modulus to an intermediate-modulus carbon that offered greater impact resistance.



Timed to perfection: the mid-season revamp of the McLaren MP4/5B could not have waited any longer

A major mid-season upgrade from McLaren doesn't sound like anything out of the ordinary today. In more humble times 21 years ago, it was a big undertaking, yet that's what was required for the team to complete a hat-trick of world championships and Ayrton Senna to claim a second title in the face of a resurgent Ferrari.

McLaren didn't see reason to change a winning formula for the 1990 season. Its first normally-aspirated Honda-powered car had won 10 of the 16 races in 1989, and so the MP4/5 morphed into the MP4/5B. "We didn't consider anything else," says Neil Oatley, who led the design of both cars. "The basic chassis and layout were good, so we effectively fitted a different aero package to what we had."

There were two problems facing McLaren in 1990. Ferrari, now with Alain Prost on its driving strength, was getting ever stronger and McLaren got those

aerodynamics revisions wrong. A new multi-arched rear diffuser had shown promise in the windtunnel that wasn't always replicated out on the track. Senna and new team-mate Gerhard Berger reported a car that was both nervous and inconsistent.

"The arched diffuser looked like the bee's knees in the windtunnel," explains Tim Wright, Berger's race engineer in 1990. "The problem was that it was very sensitive in yaw [a sideways movement]."

"The car would get halfway through a quick corner and become unstable at the rear. We could get the thing to work on a qualifying lap, but over a race distance the performance would deteriorate because we would struggle on the tyres."

Things came to a head in mid-summer, resulting in a poor run of results at the French and British grands prix. Prost won both races and Senna could finish no better than third on each occasion.





Left: Estoril 1990, Senna was second to Mansell, with Berger fourth

"In the test prior to Silverstone, we weren't particularly competitive and in the race we struggled again," says Oatley. "We felt that to keep Ferrari at bay we needed to do something significant."

That's significant, stresses Oatley, by the standards of the time.

"The developments were nothing like we would do today," he says. "It was based on parts that we had to hand or stuff already in the process."

The arched diffuser had gone by the time the Formula 1 circus arrived at Hockenheim for the German Grand Prix and Senna returned to the top step of the podium and set Oatley's MP4/5 concept on course for a second title.

Oatley almost didn't get to design the V10-powered McLaren-Honda. The initial plan had been for chief designer Steve Nichols to take charge of a project that started almost at the same time as the 1988 MP4/4.

Sizeable issues

When new McLaren signing Gerhard Berger didn't quite fit the MP4/5, it wasn't a problem. The team in the field simply moved the pedals to make him comfortable for the winter testing programme. There was one problem, however: no one told the design office.

Matthew Jeffreys, who was largely responsible for the design of the monocoque, explains: "The pedals had been moved into what would have been an illegal position in front of the axle line. When the '90 car was already designed, we realised we had an issue."

That resulted in modifications to the steering bulkhead to give Berger's legs more room (illustrated right). Without these changes, he would have failed the extraction test that demanded the driver can retract his knees without fouling the bulkhead.

It wasn't Berger's height that was the problem, but the length of one key body dimension: "Gerhard has very long femurs," explains Jeffreys.

The cramped cockpit conditions and an uncomfortable driving position were at least partly to blame for Berger hitting the barriers after qualifying on pole on his McLaren debut at the US GP at Phoenix. He had accidentally snagged the brake pedal while running second.

A series of minor adjustments to the cockpit and his seating position made Berger much happier by mid-season, though Jeffreys suspects there was another reason for his disquiet.

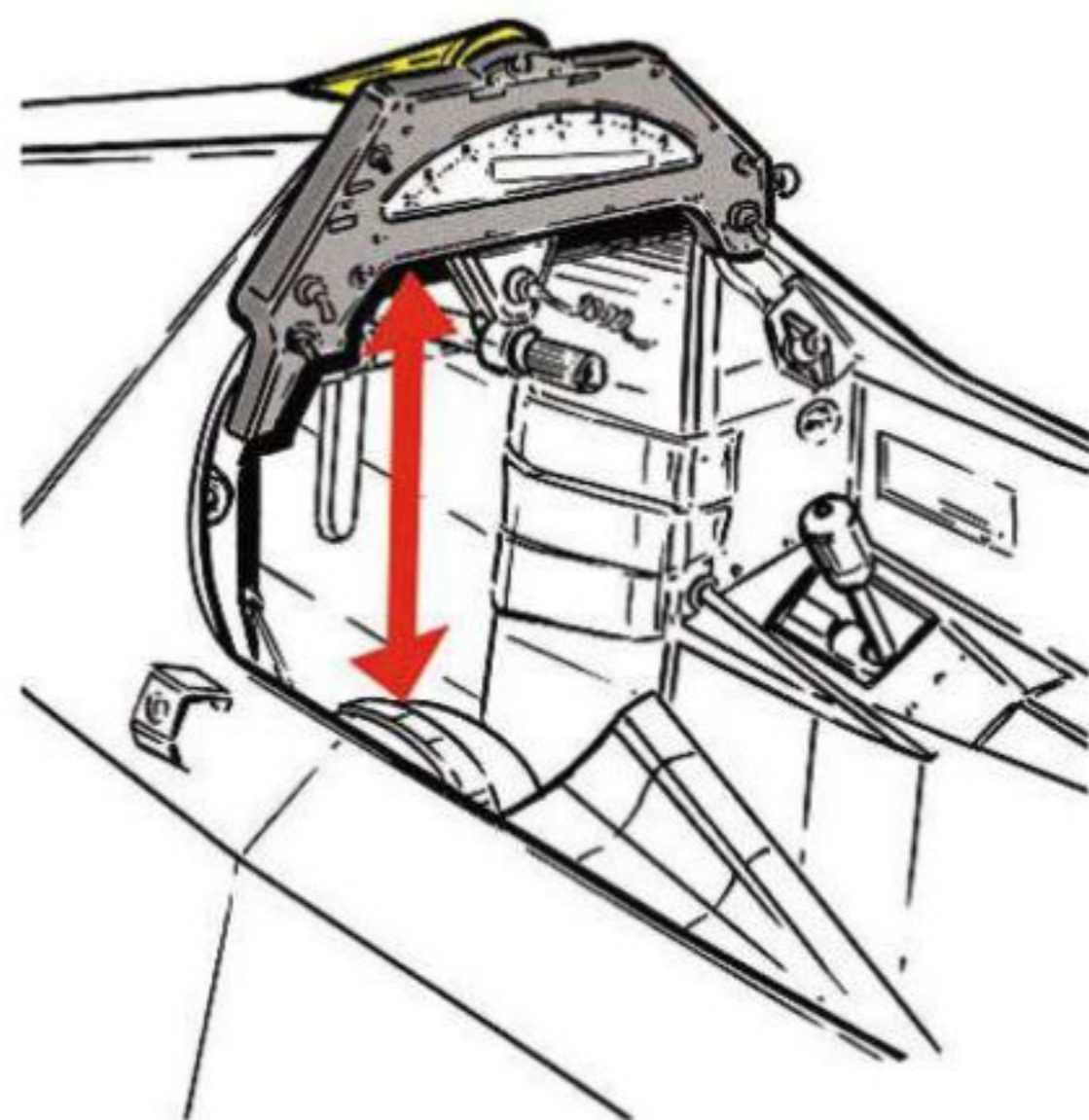
"Most of all," he says, "Gerhard was probably unhappy with the pace of Ayrton Senna."

"Ron Dennis wanted to divide everything into two teams, one to do the '88 car and one the '89 car," says Nichols, who departed McLaren for Ferrari at the end of 1989. "I said to Ron that I'd do the '89 car because that was the future. He came back to me after a couple of days and explained that, since we only had six months, I should do the MP4/4 because I'd been at the team longer and knew the people and the systems."

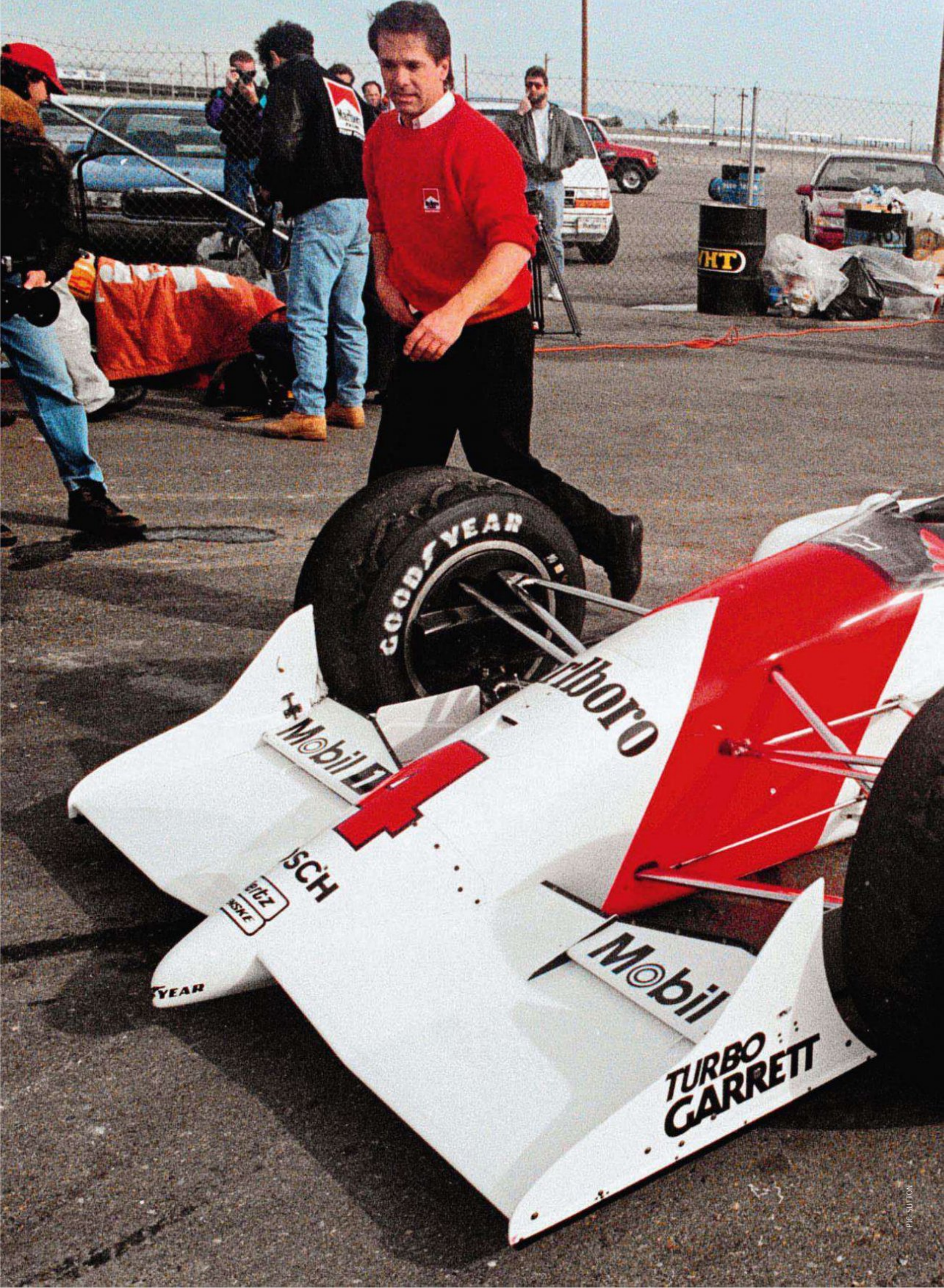
The plan was to have a V10-engined mule car up and running by the summer of 1988. McLaren achieved that target with the MP4/4B, a better car than the MP4/5 according to some at the team at the time.

The MP4/5B probably doesn't sit up there with its two predecessors in the pantheon of great McLarens, but that doesn't concern Oatley.

"The MP4/5B was never as dominant as the 4/4 or even the 4/5 in '89," he says, "but it achieved its aim and won the championship."



McLaren MP4/5B's steering bulkhead needed this modification to allow Berger's lanky frame to fit





INDYCAR FLIRTATION

Senna tested with Team Penske in December 1992 at the Firebird track in Arizona. He was sensationally fast. Engineering chief Nigel Beresford is reported as saying: "He came into the pits and said, 'Thank you very much, I've learned what I need to know.' Then he got out of the car and that was that"



HOMETOWN HERO

Ayrton Senna was an idol for all of Brazil, but his status reached that of deity in his birthplace of Sao Paulo. Nothing less than pole position followed by victory would be acceptable to him or his fans in the 1991 grand prix. But he had to fight hard for his 28th win



Ah, Brazil! Everyone's favourite Formula 1 venue, a peek through the net curtains at the Third World. After the horrendous annual night flight south, the plane landed on time at dawn – but it didn't land at the right airport. Sao Paulo was closed because of mist or smog or... Who knew? So it was off on a bus tour through the glorious Brazilian countryside in the morning sunlight; 100km of rolling, wooded hills before the smell in the air changed and we knew that Sao Paulo was not far away.

Sao Paulo is not the kind of place where they set Mills and Boon novels. It is as romantic as a dead dog. The river was browner than ever and you didn't look too closely to see what was floating by. The shanty towns were singing with Latin life and the transvestites hunted out paying perverts on their pavements downtown. The traffic was horrendous, the traffic lights solely for decoration. There are a few wealthy folk who sit in their plush houses,

surrounded by BMWs and large men with sunglasses and fashion accessories by Smith and Wesson.

On the streets they were selling newspapers with just one word screaming out from the cover: 'Caos!' You didn't need to be a linguist to work that one out. What chaos? Who knew? In Brazil there is always something. What excitements awaited this year? Twelve months ago there was a financial crisis. This year the chaos was more varied: floods, strikes. Power cuts.

"Democracy no ees good," said my cabbie as we sat in a jam in streaming rain. "Militaro government ees better."

On the way to Interlagos, there was evidence of the flooding. This, so they said, was bad. In the Zona Norte they were swimming in the streets. It was amazing, therefore, to fight through the traffic to get to pre-qualifying to find it dry.

Still damp, but not wet there was nothing really

Senna leads from pole, chased by Williams's Mansell and Patrese

By Joe Seward



Mansell harried Senna until the Briton's gearbox cried enough

surprising to report: two Jordans, two Dallaras and heartache for the rest.

Drama was pretty thin on the ground. Olivier Grouillard had a wheel seizure and spun out into the mud, bringing out a red flag.

As soon as the unsuccessful pre-qualifiers started to pack up, it began to spit with rain.

"How long has it been raining?" asked a late arrival.

"Three days," came the resigned reply. The drivers went out, but there was much pussy-footing. Jean Alesi was nine seconds quicker than everyone else, but then there are times when Jean lacks imagination.

Nigel Mansell went spinning off at high speed.

"I was flat out and I just hit a river," he explained. "The car became a submarine with so much mud. I thought, 'Please don't flip over on me.' I don't mind it being wet but not when there are torrents."

The drivers reported three separate rivers.

With six minutes to go in the session Ayrton Senna went quickest, two minutes later Gerhard Berger bumped him. Ayrton merely drove out again and improved by 0.8s. This was his home town. No Austrian was going to take away what was his.

It all meant very little, of course, for the serious business does not start until one o'clock. The rain had stopped, but looked likely to return. The track was damp. This was going to be a lottery in the final stages. Everyone potted about on wet tyres, drying the track and the times began to come down. They started in the 1m27s and gradually chipped away. Alesi was the first to break the 1m20s barrier. After 40 minutes, with a dry line visible, Ayrton bolted on the Q tyres, but he was just taking a look, he never put his foot down.



“I was flat out and I hit a river. The car became a submarine. I thought, ‘Please don’t flip on me’”

Nigel Mansell



Senna’s focus was otherworldly, but pace was all too real for rivals

Now we had a pause. There was no one on the track. With five minutes to go the action started. Berger came close to Alesi’s time and then Senna destroyed it: 1m18.711s. Stefano Modena, who had been second quickest in the morning, spun wildly off. Ivan Capelli’s Leyton House was an encouraging seventh, but team-mate Mauricio Gugelmin was way back, the side of his Ilmor V10 having disappeared. The team called it a ‘small hiccup’, the undertray was full of bite-sized pieces of shrapnel.

Emanuele Pirro impressed again in his Dallara, ninth quickest on only his second lap in the spare car.

The boys at 7Up Jordan were going great guns too: Bert Gachot was 10th, Andrea de Cesaris 12th.

Elsewhere Lotus was in a mess again with no spare car and engine troubles. We will not dwell on Footwork-Porsche for such tales are beyond sad.

And Gianni Morbidelli? He had the kind of day which would make a grown man suck his thumb and sob. He was 30th and last.

Still, if Friday was bad for Gianni, Saturday morning was frightful. He had two spins and a face longer than the Great Wall of China. Down at Williams there were big smiles. Nigel Mansell and Riccardo Patrese were fastest, knocking on the door of the 1m16s. The two Jordans were eighth and ninth.

It was warm but overcast and as lunchtime idled by the sun came out and the heat rose. A brisk wind rattled the rickety grandstands, which were filling up with Senna-mad Paulistas, wearing Nacional hats and waving banners. The final session was going to be the only one which counted.

The Williams team did not wait long to signal its intentions. After five minutes, Mansell took pole at

Classic race: Brazil '91

Stuck in sixth, Senna wrestled his car to the finish, leaving him in agony



1m17.356s. A moment or two later Riccardo Patrese went second quickest. We waited for the Ferraris, which had been subdued throughout practice. Prost was into the 1m17s but was two tenths behind Patrese's best. Jean Alesi, blinkers on, went for his first flier. It was good for fourth place. Two Williams-Renaults, two Ferraris.

Up in the McLaren pits Gerhard and Ayrton strapped themselves leisurely into their cars. The Austrian went first but was only fifth and then out came Senna and you guessed it, the son of Sao Paulo swept the Williamses aside to take pole by a few hundredths.

Mansell was immediately back into his car and, with 35 minutes of the session gone, out he came. Senna sat in his car and watched on a television screen. This was Mansell at his finest, bristling with aggression and commitment. The result was a spectacular leap forward. Pole was his at 1m16.844s.

"It's very good," said Nigel. "We had a few hiccoughs but I'm very pleased for the team. With everything right and a good strong donkey in the back we should have gone quicker, but it is very encouraging."

But in F1 you should be always expect the unexpected.

Everyone was waiting for Ayrton to respond, so Patrese's final flying lap was barely noticed. It should have been. It was a cracker. 1m16.775s. A tenth quicker than his team leader.

"It was a good lap in a good car," said Riccardo. "It was the best I could achieve."

All weekend sections of the press had been trying to play up the fact that Nigel and Riccardo were about to fall out. Nigel is number one and Riccardo was quicker in Phoenix. Now he was quicker in Brazil, it was fuel to fire. Were there any problems between the drivers?

Down in the pits it was all sweetness and light.

"Nigel will go back to his hotel and kick his teddy bear," muttered a cynic.

Still, pole was not certain yet for the Williams boys. Jean Alesi's final run had produced fourth fastest, but he was out of the battle. "It was a clear lap," said Jean. "Our car is difficult in qualifying. We cannot do a lot."

There were 20 minutes still to go and Ayrton, Alain and Gerhard all had a second set of qualifiers to try.

With 12 minutes to go, Gerhard went for it, moving up to fourth. "I am satisfied," he said. "It's not been easy recently. I am taking a step back and rebuilding. There is no point in going crazy."

Then we waited again. Alain and Ayrton sat it out like a pair of gun slingers, waiting for the other to twitch a finger. With five minutes to go Alain fired up his Ferrari. Two minutes later Ayrton followed him. Alain's lap was only good for sixth. He was baulked by Morbidelli but, he reckoned, it had made little difference.

So, now it was left to Senna to deal with the Williams-Renaults. "I was under control," explained Ayrton. "I was cool but my heart was going. The fact the Williams has demonstrated to be so fast really got me going. I don't think under normal conditions we would have beaten them."

"This morning when they did a low 17, I realised that we were in for a major challenge. It was just that — a major challenge. In my first run I got ahead of them and they suddenly improve by over half a second, I knew it was going to take two things — one was to change the car technically and secondly to drive to a higher level.

"On my first run the car was not too bad, but my final lap was very good. It was not easy to put together, but we had to try something. I changed the car aerodynamically and mechanically, two things,

to get a better balance and to reduce the drag.

"When you are going out of the pits there are a million things going through your mind and body, at a speed that you cannot explain. It's an amazingly fast process, all geared to one goal, all focused to one minor point, further, further ahead. It's something so far away that your eyes cannot see. It's really in your mind." Philosophical stuff, but the execution of the theory was as beautiful as any lap Ayrton has ever done. It was another great pole position, a mixture of coolness and calm, momentary risks slicing through traffic. "I have had great, great pole positions in the past," he explained. "And this one is a great one."

And what did McLaren boss Ron Dennis make of it? "The set-up is still not right," he said. "We still have a lot of work to do."

Such is the reason for success at McLaren. Ron is never satisfied. But the Paulistas were delighted. They sang, they chanted, they waved flags and hats.

In the pitlane Ayrton was buried under piles of Brazilian reporters, sticking microphones up his nostrils. Looking down on this mayhem, and across at the crowd, only one thought came to mind: the traffic on Sunday morning was going to be terrible...

Looking back down the grid sheet, the eyes came to rest on eighth place: Mauricio Gugelmin in the Leyton House-Ilmor. "It was a reasonable day," he understated happily.

Bertrand Gachot's Jordan was 10th despite a wild sideways moment while trying his first set of qualifiers for a second time. He was all smiles.

Mightily impressive was Eric Bernard in the Lola in 11th place with an old Cosworth V8 engine. For a team without enough money to buy a round of drinks at the Hilton, it was an incredible performance.

There were disappointments too. Roberto Moreno was 14th, having missed his last qualifying run when the flag came out. Lotus had managed to get Mika Hakkinen into 22nd position, but Julian Bailey had missed out again. His car never ran in the afternoon session and, when he took over Mika's and the necessary changes were made, he had just eight minutes left. He set off for a flying lap but found a sensor box rattling around the footwell. He had to pit. Then it was a mad rush to get out before the flag in an unsorted car. Poor Julian never had a chance.

Also missing out were the two Footwork-Porsches and Stefan Johansson's AGS, while the Brabhams sneaked in on the final row of the grid: "I had to drive the car as hard as possible," explained Martin Brundle. "That was all the car would do."

On Saturday night every Brazilian in town wanted to know if Ayrton was going to win on Sunday. It was a good question. Well, it depended a bit on the weather... How do you say that in Portuguese?

THE RACE

Looking out of the hotel window as dawn was breaking, it was hard to know what the weather was going to do. There was bright sunshine but evil-looking clouds were scudding about.

Everyone was sat in rowdy traffic jams and abused the policemen (very quietly — they carry guns you know). This was seven o'clock in the morning and already tens of thousands of excited Brazilians were crammed into the grandstands.

On the way to the track the Ferrari mechanics found their minibus engulfed in the crowd and were somewhat rattled when the locals began to rock the bus and make unpleasant suggestions. How dare Ferrari try to beat Senna.

After the United States Grand Prix in Phoenix Alain Prost warned that we had yet to see what Ferrari could really do.

"I want to wait until Brazil to have a good idea

"I've had great, great pole positions in the past. And this one is a great one"
Ayrton Senna

about the true performance of my car," he said at the time. "I think it will be a bit different."

Having struggled in qualifying, everyone was watching the warm-up to see what Alain could do in race trim.

It was pretty impressive. Alain was second quickest, but ahead was Nigel Mansell – and he was confident.

"If we don't have any reliability problems," he explained, "we can finish in the top three." Riccardo Patrese was third quickest.

Despite the Williams threat Alain was confident.

"I think Patrese's time is the real time for Williams in race trim," he explained. "So I am hoping we will be quickest in the race."

Being sixth on the grid, however, was a bit of a worry. From pole position Senna might get away and Alain might be stuck in traffic. Alain was going to have to go for it.

Senna was fourth in the warm-up and pondering using his spare in the race. It was building up to an interesting battle.

Of course, so much depended on the weather and the early sun faded quickly, giving way to a miserable morning of occasional showers. No one knew what to do.

Sadly Mauricio Gugelmin's day started badly when his fire extinguisher was triggered when he went over a bump. Mauricio suffered nasty chemical burns to his legs. Having qualified so well he wanted to make the most of it and, after a quick visit to the F1 doctor, Professor Sid Watkins, Mauricio was passed fit to race, but it was not going to be easy.

Nor would it be easy for Aguri Suzuki. His car refused to fire up on the pre-grid and was pushed away as the field set off on the parade lap. Fuel pump failure.

On the grid it was Berger's turn for misfortune.

"I just couldn't believe it," he said. "I saw the red light, and suddenly my car was burning at the back. There were flames. I started, and it was worse."

Smoking horribly Gerhard set off with the field, Senna getting the jump from Mansell and Patrese. Into the first corner Berger was already contemplating retirement. "I was thinking that I would have to stop," he explained, "and then it just stopped. I don't know what happened."

Behind Gerhard there were other troubles. Emanuele Pirro was on the grass at the bottom

of the hill after the first corner. At the end of the back straight we lost Tarquini, who locked a rear brake, went sideways and ended up in the wall. His race was over.

Out in front Senna was pulling away: 0.8s on the first lap, 1.4 on the second. Behind him Mansell was hanging on, and leaving Patrese. Then came Alesi, Berger, Piquet and Prost.

Very quickly Senna and Mansell took off. Patrese could not hang on. "I didn't find a very good balance," he explained. "I could not really stay on the same speed as Nigel and Ayrton with my car. I had a big problem with oversteer."

Behind Riccardo, Jean Alesi gave chase, while Berger was running into more trouble.

"I had a bit of a handling problem," explained the Austrian. "I think the tyre pressures went up at the rear and I had a big oversteer." Behind Berger, Prost was already sizing up Piquet while Stefano Modena tagged along in his Tyrrell.

Further back Gugelmin was also in trouble. "Even the slightest jolt was giving me severe pain," he explained. "I was beginning to lose concentration and started to go wide on some of the corners. I decided it wasn't safe to carry on." Mauricio retired on lap nine, by which time Mansell was starting to harry Senna.

"It was a tremendous pace early in the race," said Senna, "with Mansell pushing so hard that I had to go fast. I didn't want to go that hard early on, but I had to, in order to keep a couple of seconds ahead of him."

Up front things were stable, but Nigel was getting closer to Ayrton now as they began to lap the backmarkers. Prost was clearly in trouble, being unable to pass Piquet and, after just 17 laps, he came in for fresh tyres. Goodyear reported that his tyres had no wear. Clearly the Ferraris were not going to be a challenge, the handling being unpredictable. Alain rejoined in 11th behind a misfiring Bertrand Gachot.

In the early laps the two Jordans had been running well in ninth and 10th, but both were in trouble. Gachot with a strange misfire which caused him to drop away and de Cesaris with an engine cutting out. This caused him to spin out of the race on lap 21. The troubles at Jordan helped Prost on his charge back up the field, but he was already a long way from the leaders.

Mansell's challenge began to fade on lap 22 and four laps later he pitted. The stop was a disaster, the Englishman lost for gears and at rest for 14 long seconds. It gave Senna a break from the pressure. He immediately pitted, rejoining still in the lead.

A lap later in came Patrese, Berger and Alesi. This elevated the charging Mansell back to second place, with Piquet third, although Patrese was soon closing in again and behind him Prost too was moving up.

Mansell was now the man to watch again as he hounded Senna. Behind the two principle players Patrese overhauled Piquet, while Prost and Alesi dropped further from the picture as they each pitted again for new rubber on laps 38 and 42 respectively. Berger, running better now on his second set of tyres, was closing in on Piquet for fourth place.

Nelson had not changed tyres but his challenge was fast fading he would have to stop. "I think that I stopped too late," he admitted afterwards. By now the field was seriously depleted as one car after another retired and only seven drivers remained on the same lap: Senna, Mansell, Patrese, Berger, Piquet, Prost and Alesi. A lap down was Moreno in clutch trouble and behind him came the misfiring Gachot and the stragglers.

There were still 25 laps to go and Mansell hounded Senna. "He started to push unbelievably hard," explained Senna, "and I had to cope with it, not overdoing it and not taking it easy either. Then just as I started to get away a bit, I had the gearbox



Fanatical Paulistas wanted only one result – and Senna delivered



“I kept thinking, ‘It’s gonna be OK. It’s gonna be all right. Keep going.’ I tried everything I know.”

Ayrton Senna

problem. Fourth gear started to jump, and then it went. I was losing time. To cope with this I had to put in so much effort. I almost spun a couple of times.”

It could not keep on like this. The pace was too hot. On lap 50 Mansell suddenly arrived in the pits with a puncture. He rejoined, but the gap to Senna was now 30 seconds. But Nigel tried, he carved 10 seconds off Senna’s lead and then, suddenly, he was spinning.

“The gearbox went from fourth to first and I spun,” he explained. “I got going again but then there were no gears.” The fight was over. Nigel had driven a tremendous race, but once again there was no reward.

“Finally I had some relief,” said Ayrton, “but only for three or four laps, and then the gearbox went completely crazy. That was seven laps from the end. I couldn’t believe it. I thought about it for one lap and I decided to leave it in sixth, and drive around the circuit completely differently. In the high-speed corners it was not so bad, but in medium- and low-speed sections it was a disaster. I was doing 1m27s or 1m28s at first, then I changed my way of driving and came down to 1m24s. I was just trying to calculate how much I had to do to still stay with Riccardo.”

We were into the closing laps now and the skies were darkening again. Patrese realised that Ayrton had a problem. “I tried to go quicker,” said Patrese, “but at the same time I started to have some problems with my gearbox. Changing down, the gearbox was missing gears. I was debating, especially the last four or five laps, when I got close to Ayrton, what to do.”

Berger too was in trouble. “The throttle started sticking at the end of the straight. It was very dangerous. I tried to catch Riccardo.”

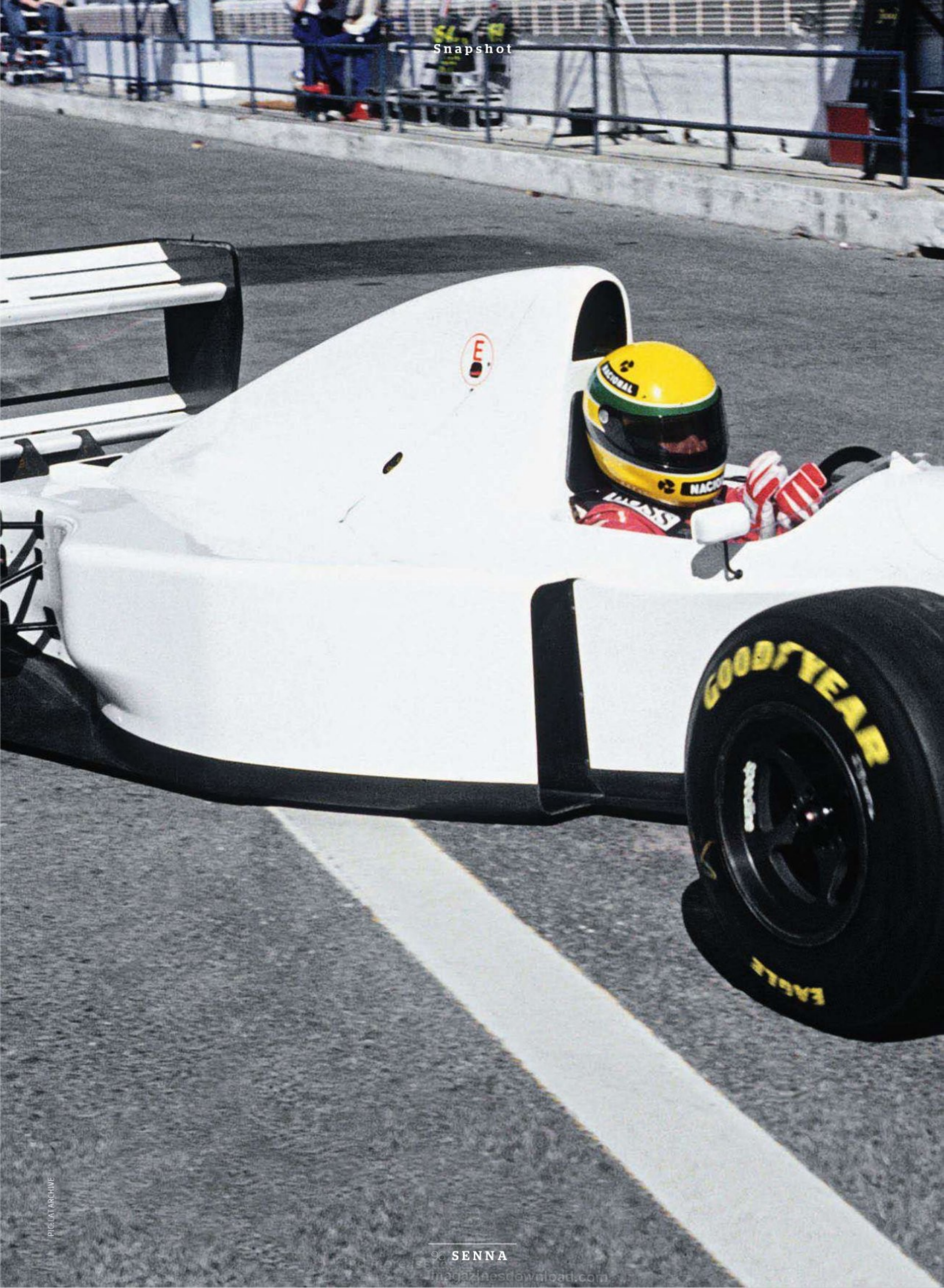
There was high drama now for it was raining. The leading three were in trouble and Prost was closing in, with Piquet on his tail. The conditions changed from corner to corner and Senna was getting desperate.

“At the end of the straight, I almost went straight, because it was really damp there,” he said. “I kept looking in my mirrors to see where Riccardo was. I couldn’t see him. I kept thinking, ‘It’s gonna be OK. It’s gonna be all right. Keep going.’ I tried everything I know.”

This was racing at its finest. The field was closing right up, conditions were getting worse. The Brazilian fans were going berserk. When Ayrton crossed the line – just 2.9s ahead of Riccardo – Interlagos erupted with joy, but Senna was beyond the adulation.

“After the chequered flag, I lost the engine completely. I couldn’t restart. And then the pain was unbelievable. I tried to relax just a little bit, I had such a huge pain in my shoulders, in my side. And I didn’t know whether to shout, to cry or to smile. I just did not know what was going on. I just wanted to go back to the podium.”

Ayrton was helped from his car and driven to the podium where he stood, shakily, holding a Brazilian flag aloft. He seemed to be in another world. He barely had the strength to lift the trophy and the champagne. The top six were covered by just 23 seconds at the end, but the day belonged to Ayrton. It was a great triumph. Perhaps the greatest of his 28 victories... but it was also the day when Prost found out exactly what the current Ferrari can do. It cannot have been encouraging.





TASTY CUT OF LAMBO

What might have been: in the autumn of 1993, Senna tested an unliveried McLaren powered by Lamborghini's V12 engine at Silverstone and Estoril (pictured). He was highly impressed, as was teammate Mika Hakkinen. Then McLaren opted for Peugeot power for '94, and Senna left for Williams...



1991

WHEN DRIVER MEETS MODEL...

Senna's third world title is regarded by many as his best, he'd been hounded by Mansell in the clearly better Williams. A more relaxed, mature man was found in Adelaide. And, he met Elle MacPherson...



If there was anyone in Adelaide this year who upstaged Ayrton Senna, it was a long-legged photographic model called Elle MacPherson. Some genius in the PR office at BMW (Australia) had arranged for this perfectly formed creature to be one of the drivers in the celebrity race, and Elle looked only slightly less gorgeous in her specially tailored Nomex than she did in a bikini on the cover of Sports Illustrated. While the other celebrities tried to knock chunks off the concrete walls with their 325s, Elle got twice as much TV time by cruising around harmlessly at the back.

Ayrton, being the personable, caring human being that he is, generously took it upon himself to ensure that Elle did not get too nervous in the first motor race of her career. Before the start, he was on the grid to



Senna was more than happy to offer guest driver Elle MacPherson tips on driving before her race in Adelaide, and some suspect it didn't end there...

Senna was in control in 1991 with eight poles and seven wins

By Mike Doodson

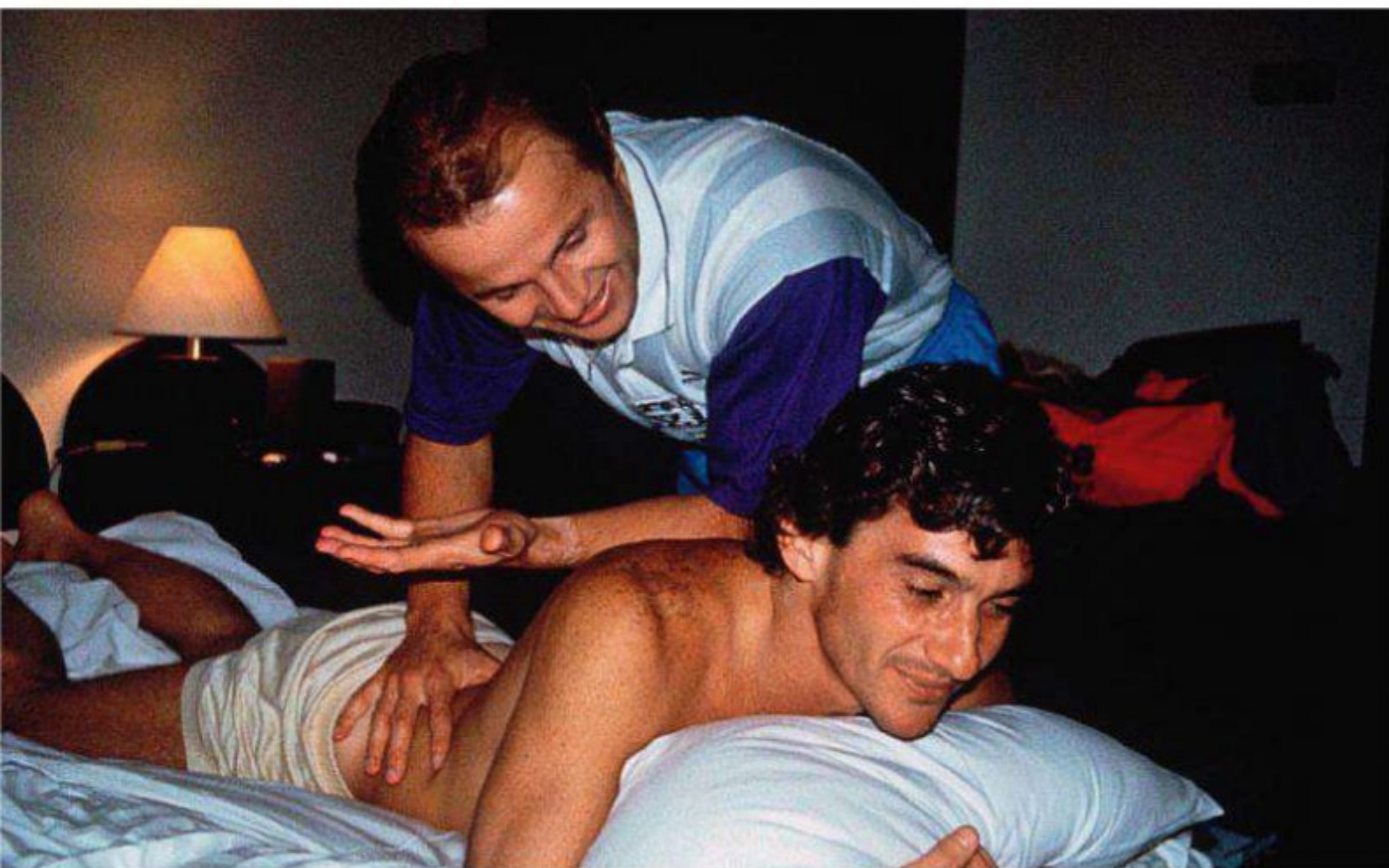
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Absolute attention and complete understanding of the MP4/6, it took him to victory for his fourth win at Monaco in 1991



The 1991 McLaren team line-up. Senna understood the responsibility of performing well for the benefit of everyone involved



Physiotherapist Josef Leberer and Senna also became friends, his massages becoming an important part of a race weekend



offer her good luck. Then, afterwards — despite the drenching rain — he was chatting through the window of her car in the pitlane, presumably the prelude to a more extensive debrief.

Later, at the very end of the press conference after the Grand Prix, we were treated to the rare sight of Senna blushing. Unknown to him, all his tender moments with Elle had been captured by the merciless gaze of Channel Nine television. It was when Gerhard Berger made a wicked suggestion about how Senna's intentions towards the lady might be that he went beetroot red.

It's the only thing that Senna needs to blush about this year. If there were any doubts 12 months ago about his worthiness as World Champion, in 1991 there could be none at all. Valuable as those first four victories



“It may seem this is just a boys’ game. But it is not. You feel the pressure, you’re part of such a big structure. A heavy responsibility”

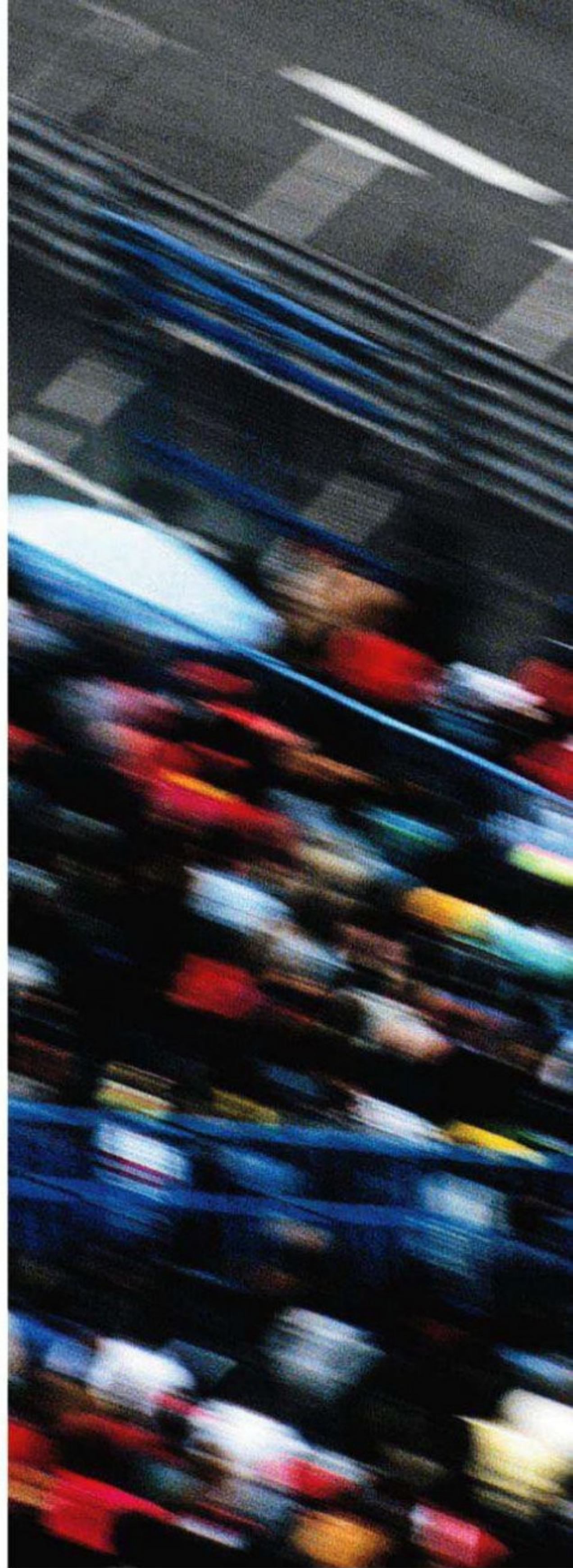
were to him, when Williams threatened to overwhelm McLaren, he brilliantly fought off the challenge of a determined opponent in a superior car. The points table shows that even if Nigel Mansell hadn’t thrown away his Canadian win, or made that silly mistake in Japan, Senna would have triumphed.

Sitting cross-legged in an easy chair in his hotel suite after qualifying at Adelaide, Senna had every reason to be satisfied about his season. Though relaxed,

it had been a gruelling week, and he spoke almost despairingly of the day before practice began, when it had taken him three hours to chat to the fans, satisfy the demands of the sponsors and eventually fight his way through to the garage to meet his engineers.

“It may seem sometimes that this sport is just a boys’ game. Like kids playing around, with big egos involved,” said Senna. “But it is not, you know, because, if you’re really into it, you feel the pressure, not only to achieve your own dreams and your own goals, but because you are part of such a big structure. You’ve got to do it right. Today I race for a team that has an engine manufacturer that has thousands of people, just behind the F1 programme alone. Then there is the whole structure which finances the F1 programme. It’s a heavy responsibility.”

Leading from pole at Monza 1991. Mansell took the lead on lap 34 and stayed there; now with only four races left, he was still adrift of Senna by 18 points



A very hectic schedule leaves little time to relax... so chances must be grabbed

Just as he talks of the satisfaction and relief of winning, he does not hesitate to mention how much a driver like him must suffer to win races and earn his fabulous salary.

“You don’t win in Brazil with one single gear working for the last seven laps in a normal, easy manner,” he says with a wince.

“The price you pay is either pain – and a lot of it – or tremendous stress and tension. At Monte Carlo I finished a race also with many problems. Although I struggled all the way, on the whole, everything looked nice and under control. But part of (making it look) nice and under control was my job, to make it look like that, so that everyone who was competing against me would not identify that I had difficulties and would therefore push harder.



“Reading the Bible, He talks to you. It’s even stronger than if someone is standing in front of you talking to you. It’s happened many times”

“Year after year it gets harder to maintain the balance, and the enjoyment, in what you are doing, because the responsibilities are growing more and more. It’s hard enough to be number one, and even harder to stay at number one. You win a championship, and then the pressure goes even more. Because it’s no good being second...”

It is more than two years since Senna told Brazilian *Playboy* about the vision of Jesus Christ which appeared

to him as he rounded the Spoon Curve at Suzuka, after he had just won his first title. “The difference between a few years ago and now is that I have Him, like I said before, all around me,” he reported.

He told also how he communicates with God through the Bible which he carries with him everywhere. “Reading the Bible, He talks to you. It’s even stronger than if someone is standing in front of you and talking to you. That has happened not once but many times with me.”

He talks much less about the subject now, saying that he has been ‘misunderstood’. The world of Formula 1 is too hard-bitten to accept such beliefs without a nudge and a wink. When Prost equated his beliefs not so much with religion as with a dangerous sense of invulnerability, those professions

Another fantastic victory at Monaco in 1991. Senna’s fourth win in four races put him 29 points ahead

1991 interview

of faith actually rebounded on him.

These days, he emphasises the importance of family and friends to him. "I wouldn't be here as a racing driver, with so much success, if I didn't have those special people around me throughout my life. They are the ones who share with me not only the very good moments, but also the very bad moments. For them, I was not Senna or anyone, I was just somebody that they cared a lot about. And that means a lot to me."

Just as important is the break which he takes back home in Brazil during the southern summer. He has taken advantage of it now for three years, and he will try to do the same again in 1991/92. This time, though, he may not be able to count entirely on Gerhard Berger

Milton and Ayrton – beloved father and son



to do the work for him. Berger has mentioned that the constant round of testing last winter left him with a false sense of competitiveness. And when Senna got into the new V12 car 10 days before Phoenix, his lap times were instantly better than the Austrian's. Berger took three or four races to get 'race sharp' again.

"I have driven a lot in my life, and I know that with a very short time after a long break, I can drive just as well as ever," says Senna without any boastfulness. "In fact, I know that I get even more motivation if I stay away from it for a period of time."

In his press conferences and interviews, Senna's honesty and willingness to answer even the most banal of question makes him a journalist's gift. But he is also unforgiving, perhaps even merciless, towards those who have criticised him. Perhaps for this reason, no



"If Prost jumps the start and beats me off the line, at the first corner, I'm going to go for it. And he'd better not turn in ahead of me..."

one has yet dared to suggest to him in public that his actions in Japan last year were potentially murderous. But Senna said it in Suzuka last month when he vividly remembered the thoughts going through his head before the start of that disgraceful race.

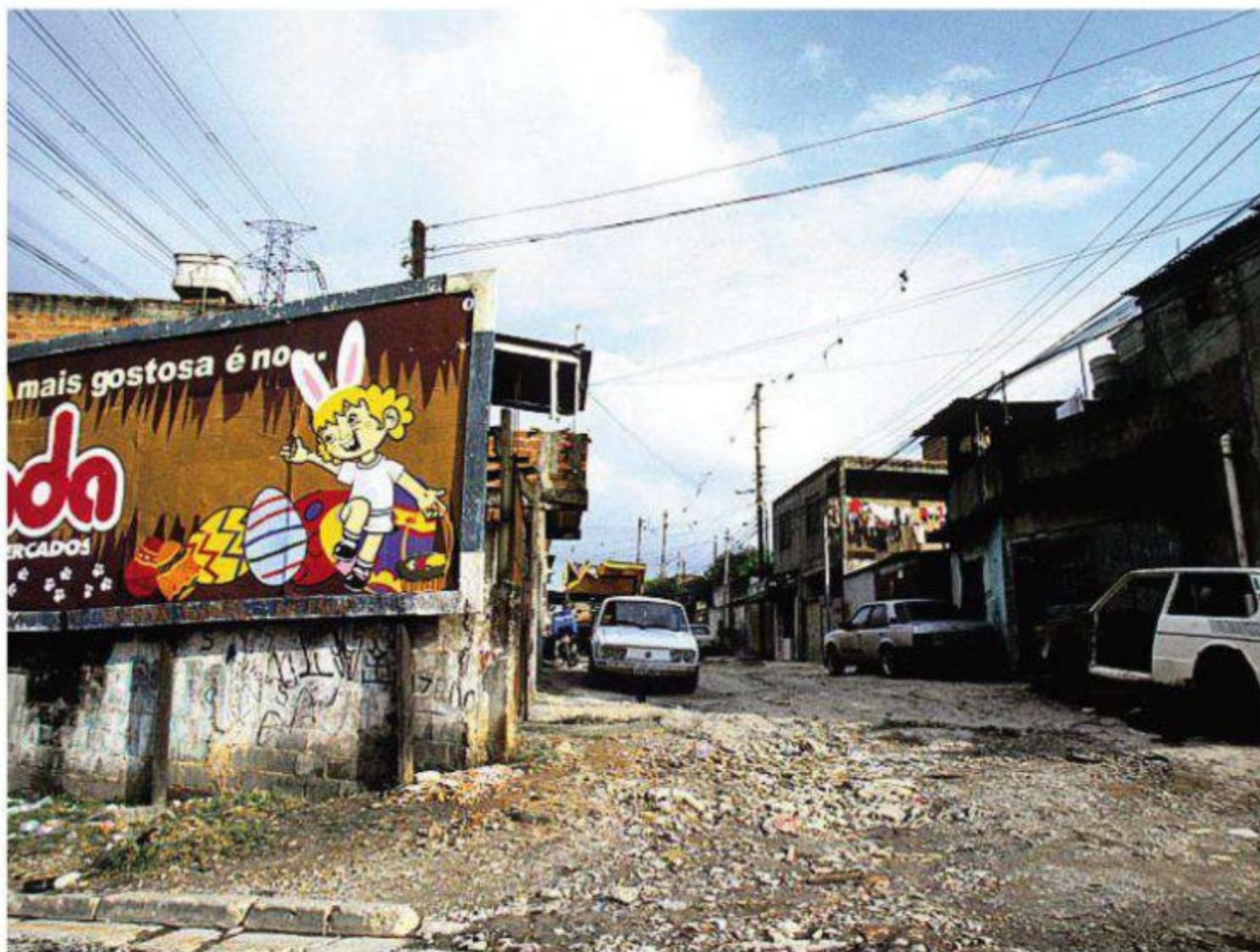
One year later, the memories remained so vivid that he spoke of his plans in the present tense "if ... Prost jumps the start, and he beats me off the line, at the first corner I'm going for it," he told the world. "And he had

better not turn in ahead of me, because he is not going to make it..."

Senna needed to show Prost that he was about to be punished for having pushed him off, neatly but blatantly, in the famous chicane incident at Suzuka in 1989. No one dares to pin any accusations on Senna in public, but this was revenge at its most blatant. The principle of an eye for an eye fits in well with Senna's simplistic religious convictions and his old-fashioned sense of justice and honour.

One year later, those values are as strong as ever. This year, Nigel Mansell was the man who stood in his way, and the man he singled out for the most veiled threats. "He's creating situations that could lead to an incident or an accident," warned Senna in Japan. Having started well from the clean side of the road, on the next

Continually hounded for the real reasons behind the incident with Prost at the 1990 Japanese Grand Prix. A year on and he can finally talk about it



The tragic state of the poor in his beloved home town of Sao Paulo worried Senna, so he used his position and wealth to help



Conditions at the Adelaide race were so appalling that the race was stopped after only 16 laps of 81 had been completed. Senna took the win (right)

day Senna played for 10 laps with a demoralised Mansell, until the Englishman spun off. Senna says that he had the pleasure of seeing the incident in his rearview mirror. And on the following lap he turned in a new record, two seconds faster than he had been going when Mansell was trying to find a way through.

It is at moments like these that a journalist feels he is getting under the shell around the champion, getting a better perception of his motivation and pleasures. Was it true, asked one hack, that a moment like that, or a fast lap, was like having sex? "That's all bullshit," said Senna. But although he grinned, he would go no further.

It was when he was quizzed on matters outside racing that he became animated, almost urgent. "There are many things we could talk about," said the Marlboro-sponsored driver, "for example, drugs, a



"When you see children abandoned on the road, basically starving, it hurts. Formula 1 is nothing compared with this"

major concern of the whole world. I don't need drugs to go fast, I don't need drugs to have emotions, feelings or happiness.

"Starvation is also a great concern to a lot of the world. I face those things [at home in Brazil] day by day. I feel those things. When you see children abandoned on the road, walking around and basically surviving, it hurts. But let me say one thing. I am richer today than I was one year ago, or 10 years ago. And believe me,



without any demagogy, I got where I got, where I am today, because I was even richer as a person, because of my family. And that is fundamentally what most of the key issues we talk about are missing. They are all the result of a fundamental lack of love which people have in their lives.”

The plight of Brazil’s street children, which is acute in Senna’s home town of Sao Paulo, is one of Brazil’s most distressing problems. Asked if he helped the street kids, he just darkened. “I do. Don’t ask any more.” And no one did.

“Getting back to Formula 1,” said a journalist, steering into calmer waters, but Senna interrupted.

“Formula 1 is nothing, *nothing* compared with these things.”

The Senna we know from the triumphant gestures

and the champagne showers suddenly seemed a long way away. Contradictory and calculating, concise and now compassionate, he had given another two hours of thoughtful time to the press before moving on to yet another sponsor’s function. And the following day he drove through a downpour to claim another win, mastering track conditions which caught out all his major rivals.

The story with Elle, meanwhile, remains unresolved. Apparently, in order to have a more convenient flight home to Brazil, Ayrton found it necessary to extend his stay in Adelaide for another day or two. There were unconfirmed sightings, too, of the lovely model.

Whether they got together again, though, remains a mystery almost as deep as the astonishing Senna himself.



MacPherson: rumoured to have spent time with Senna after the race in Adelaide

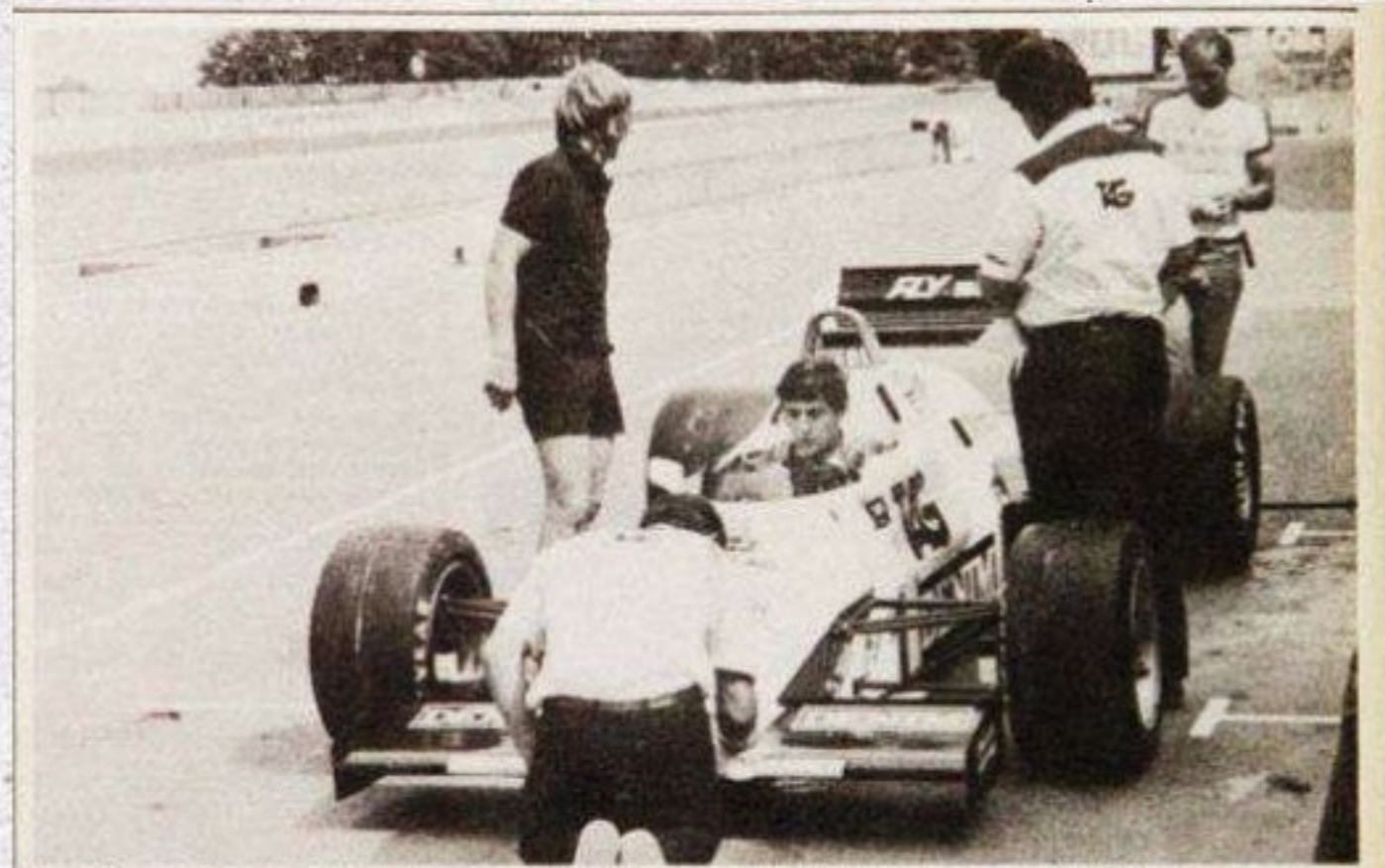


Senna's record

Ayrton Senna da Silva scored his sixth Marlboro F3 Championship victory of the year at Silverstone last Sunday, and his seventh consecutive win for Dick Bennetts's West Surrey Racing team, counting his non-championship success at Thruxton last November. The Brazilian therefore equals the modern-day record of seven consecutive F3 wins established by his fellow-countryman Nelson Piquet during his very successful 1978 season.

◀ During 1983 he was gunning for the British F3 title — and trying to beat a Piquet feat

▶ Senna at Williams in 1983. The team would finally get its man a decade later



Ayrton Senna da Silva impressed the entire Williams team with his sensible yet quick adaption to the power of an F1 machine.

Da Silva impresses Frank Williams

"Senna was very impressive. I must say," was the comment of Frank Williams following the Brazilian Formula 3 star's Donington test in an FW08C last week. "What impressed me most," Frank went on, "was that he got into the rhythm very quickly, and quickly got down to a good time. It didn't seem too difficult for him."

Ayrton used the Silverstone spare car for his test, and was on 'B' compound Goodyears throughout. "His best time was 60.90s," said Frank, "and he did it several times. There were no spins in the

course of 83 laps — I saw him get up on the kerb once, and that was it.

"Another thing is that he was very uncomfortable in the car — he was using Jacques Laffite's seat, and he's quite a bit bigger than Jacques. He'd never driven anything as quick as an F1 car, but you would never have thought so."

Frank was quick to stress, however, that this did not indicate the imminent arrival of Senna in the Williams team. "No, I'm looking upon it as a kind of longterm investment in the future.

There's no way we can handle him next year because of our current situation. And I think Bernie Ecclestone's going to offer him a deal. But he came to see me a while ago, asking for advice, saying that everyone was offering him 400-year deals and so on, the usual stuff. I told him that I couldn't really advise him, but that if it would help him to get the feel of the thing, he could have a run in one of our cars whenever it suited him.

"Now, I wasn't acting philanthropically, but I hope in the future that he'll remember we treated him fairly."

AUTOSPORT, JULY 28, 1983

PIT & PADDOCK

Toleman suspend Senna: Johansson leads team

Senna suspended after breaking contract — Johansson and Martini to drive Candy sponsored cars at Monza

▲ Drama in '84, as Pierluigi Martini plays an unlikely part in the Senna story

▼ Linked with Brabham for '86. And despite our doubt de Cesaris did join, in 1987!

Senna in move to Brabham?

Although Williams have yet to confirm the signing of Nelson Piquet, the deal is done. Bernie Ecclestone therefore needs to find himself two new drivers for 1986, and there appear to be a great many candidates.

The rumour of the weekend was that both Ayrton Senna and Gerard Ducarouge could be on the receiving end of a Brabham offer, with 'Duca' acting as race engineer, leaving Gordon Murray to adopt a sort of 'Postlethwaite role', being responsible for design but not attending all the races.

This rumour takes no account of contracts existing between Ayrton and Gerard and their present employer, Team Lotus. We find it difficult to

believe that they will leave for Brabham, but in Formula 1 nothing — beyond the fact that Ferraris will always be red — can be considered certain.

Discussed more commonly are other names. Elso de Angelis told our Italian correspondent at Zandvoort that he had not yet signed a Brabham contract, but that the deal was done, and he expected to very shortly.

Another Italian making similar noises is Riccardo Patrese, who drove for the team in 1982/83. One reliable source, indeed, tells us that Patrese has already signed.

Then there is Andrea de Cesaris. Last week, on learning that his Ligier days were about to end, de Cesaris informed

Guy that he had, in any case, arranged a drive with Brabham for the balance of this season, and would be replacing Marc Surer from Monza on. This, we hear, did not go down well with BMW. And we cannot see Andrea at Brabham, frankly.

Italians apart, Derek Warwick is believed to be under serious consideration. Renault's withdrawal (see separate story) has nothing to do with this suggestion, for Derek in any case had no intention of staying with the French team. It is known that certain key members of the Brabham team would be delighted to see him there, but Warwick himself would not comment at the weekend.

Senna signs for Lotus

The Sunday Herald's headline official Ayrton Senna will drive for Lotus in 1985. This, the paper says, is confirmed by Peter War, team manager of John Player Special Team Lotus. Not surprisingly, the news was greeted with anger by the Toleman team, which indicated that it had a three-year option on with the Brazilian.

Throughout the rumour and speculation of a hypothetical contract between both parties have occasionally denied any such thing. Indeed, we understood that Senna has informed casually with Alex Hawkridge, boss of the Toleman team. And on Sunday Hawkridge told AUTOSPORT in no doubt that he will be claiming very substantial damages in the next month.

Senna's contract with Toleman contains a 'buy-out' clause which means that the Brazilian has paid a considerable sum on the basis he may well eventually sign with another team.

Hawkridge told us on Sunday — the day of the Lotus announcement — that he already had been told by Senna, therefore, the Toleman deal was signed. Ayrton was in clear breach of his contract.

"I have received the necessary assurances," said War. "Some Ayrton Senna that he will be able to fulfill the obligations and undertakings he has given us in the



Peter War (left) with Ayrton Senna at the contract signing in London.

contract he has agreed with us. And he will be free to drive for us in 1985 and 1986.

Had War any reason to believe that Senna would not fulfil his contractual obligations — in light of what is currently happening to Toleman?

"Yes, I have. I don't think the cars

◀ Step up to the big league for 1985 was met with anger by the Toleman team

Johansson at McLaren – or is Ayrton on the move?

For some weeks now we have been awaiting confirmation that Stefan Johansson would partner World Champion Alain Prost in the McLaren team next year, but on Monday the Swede told us that nothing was settled as yet.

"I speak to them often," Stefan said, "but they don't seem to be in any hurry to finalise their plans, so all I can do is wait. I'm talking to another team as well..."

Although a usually reliable source tells us that the Johansson/McLaren is already firmly done, rumours persist

that Ron Dennis – assuredly in no hurry, now that the December tyre tests at Estoril are cancelled – is hanging on in case another driver should unexpectedly become available: Ayrton Senna.

This stems from the suggestion that Team Lotus and John Player have yet to reach agreement on sponsorship for 1987. Lotus are thought to be pitching various other companies as well.

Earlier this year Senna re-signed with Lotus for two further seasons, this immediately after Peter Warr had concluded a deal with Honda.

It will be remembered that, shortly before, when Ron Dennis was negotiating with Honda for an engine deal, there were strong rumours that Senna would join Prost in a McLaren-Honda team for 1987. This, of course, came to nought.

We tried unsuccessfully to contact Peter Warr at the beginning of the week, but we seriously doubt that Senna will drive anything other than a Lotus-Honda next year – or that anyone but Johansson will join Prost at McLaren. We're just keeping you up with the gossip...

▼ One of those stories that proved spot-on – apart from Williams keeping Honda

▲ Johansson would finally get confirmed for '87 at McLaren, but Senna would replace him

Senna: you're nicked son!

At around 4am on Monday outside the legendary Tip Top Club in Monte Carlo, race winner Ayrton Senna was briefly taken into custody by the local gendarmerie!

The Brazilian arrived on the back of a friend's motorcycle, sans helmet, causing five members of the local constabulary to leap into action. Our reporter on the scene (!) reveals that, as Ayrton was being marched off – to the jeers of the assembled *glitterati* outside the famed watering hole – he explained to the boys in blue that he was actually Ayrton Senna the famous racing driver. Several minutes later Ayrton was released having given the red-faced constables his autograph...

◀ Proper old-school racer behaviour, cruising around Monaco bars at 4am!

Prost and Senna in Marlboro McLaren-Hondas – part two

An extremely good source told us at Hockenheim that he believed there would be three Honda-powered teams in 1988 and beyond: Williams, Lotus and McLaren. And he threw in the suggestion that Alain Prost's McLaren team mate next year might well be Ayrton Senna.

Both projects have, of course, been discussed before. Ron Dennis came extremely close to reaching agreement with Honda 12 months ago, and it is believed that the Japanese company's admiration for Prost is such that it is prepared to supply engines for whichever car he drives. Ten days ago, of

course, Alain confirmed that he would be staying with McLaren for two further seasons and in Germany he said he was "extremely optimistic about the future".

At the same time, we understand that there are no plans for further testing of the TAG V6 with the 2.5 bar boost limit which becomes mandatory next year...

"Honda," said our source, "want to dominate Formula 1. And it knows that it can never do that if it doesn't have Prost. It has managed to supply Williams and Lotus this year, without any fall-off in performance, and I don't

see why it shouldn't make it three." We believe that a mock-up of Honda's forthcoming normally-aspirated V10 engine has been at the Williams factory in Didcot for some time.

As for Senna, rumours continue to circulate that the Brazilian may be looking to move at the end of 1987, despite the fact that his existing Lotus contract does not expire until the end of the next season. And before this one began, remember, he was involved in serious talks with Ron Dennis.

Having said that, we ran an almost identical story in this issue last year...

▼ Celebrating his first F1 title – with a little help from Thierry Boutsen

► The deal is announced for 1988, and at this point Senna even speaks highly of Prost...

Senna confirms McLaren!

Ayrton Senna, as we have speculated, will drive for the McLaren team next season. In an interview in the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Globo* last week, the Brazilian is quoted as saying that he will be joining the Marlboro-backed organisation.

"It is the best team at the moment," he is reported to have said. "It has won three titles in the last three seasons and the team wants to win, as I do."

Ayrton went on to say that he will have equal number one status with Alain Prost. "It is fantastic to be the team mate of a double World Champion like Prost," continued Senna. "I am sure we will win a lot of races."

Ayrton continued to say that both Lotus and McLaren would be continuing with turbocharged engines next season, although he did not specify which engines these would be.

In the course of the interview, Senna also pointed out that he felt that many of the senior F1 drivers were jealous of the quality of the new generation of young drivers, and that, when he finally decided to quit racing, he would write a book about it all! Naming names...



Ayrton's first title

Ayrton Senna became the third Brazilian to claim the Formula 1 World Championship when he finally quashed any hopes Alain Prost had of a third title with his eighth win of the year, at Suzuka (full report p26). In the course of this record breaking year, Ayrton has now broken Jim Clark's record of seven wins in a season and has started from the pole 12 times in 15 races. His score of 87 points is also a record. With Adelaide on Nov 13 there is a likelihood of more to come.



Prost - disgruntled at Imola.

◀ Imola 1989 - and it becomes apparent that all is not well with Prost and Senna

McLaren disharmony?

Alain Prost was clearly annoyed after the San Marino Grand Prix, refusing to attend the post-race press conference and leaving the circuit as soon as he could, after discussions with McLaren team boss Ron Dennis.

Prost would not reveal exactly what had annoyed him, but he indicated that he felt an agreement had been broken.

Dennis has made a specific point of highlighting that McLaren does not have team orders, while Ayrton Senna declined to comment on the matter.

Whatever the reasons behind his anger, Prost refuses to give more details. It will be interesting to see how the two McLaren team mates and their boss get on as the summer progresses. Certainly, all is not entirely happy between them.

Senna slammed by FISA

The World Championship remains undecided. The FIA Court of Appeal announced in Paris last Friday that it reached a conclusion on Ayrton Senna's exclusion from the Japanese Grand Prix. Controversial evidence presented by FISA, suggesting that the Brazilian should face a one-year suspension from grand prix racing, was dismissed. The final outcome may be with a civil court.

The appeal court was presented with a FISA report on the Japanese GP which stated that the sanctions imposed on Senna were not strong enough. The report introduced other evidence against Senna based on incidents both this year and last, and suggested that the Brazilian's violation of the regulations and sporting code in Japan are serious enough to justify his Japanese sanctions being supplemented by a very heavy fine and a suspended suspension of his licence for one year.

Dennis alleges that FISA appeared to be "shifting the grounds for exclusion".

The facts are that according to the decision of the Japanese stewards, it is alleged that Senna "avoided the obstacle at Suzuka, thus infringing Article 25 of the F1 World Championship regulations, thereby..."

"Should a driver's car stop, it must be removed from the track as quickly as possible so that it does not constitute a danger or hinder the race or practice. If the driver cannot leave his car from a dangerous position, it is the duty of the marshals to help him. In this case, if the driver remains in his car and remains the race without committing an infringement, he will not be excluded."



Ron Dennis accused FISA of inconsistency and double standards.

FISA's Report

"FISA considers not only that the international stewards of the meeting were justified in imposing the sanctions which they did, but that they were extraordinarily lenient in comparison with the sanctions imposed in recent years."

"Indeed, the events which have occurred in the last few months during several Grand Prix prove that even if Ayrton is a talented driver, he is also a driver who endangers the safety of other drivers."

"The FISA report then lists a number of alleged violations committed by Senna at Suzuka which largely mirror the views already expressed in the stewards' report."

The Stewards Report

- 1) He ordered his car pushed back which brought the car not out of danger, but to a more dangerous position.
 - 2) When he again was completely on the track he ordered his car not to the side of the track into the chicane but back into the escape road.
 - 3) When he came back into the escape road he ordered his car not to the side to a non-dangerous position but kept going straight on to use the pushing to restart his car.
 - 4) When he had restarted his car he did not turn the car around in the escape road to report the race official who he had left it but went in the escape road making a short cut and in doing so avoided the chicane completely.
- The report then listed further transgressions:
- a) "The Stewards further were of the opinion that driver Ayrton Senna had clearly gained an advantage from his preceding movements which is not permitted under Chapter IV, Code of driving conduct in circuits."
 - b) "Considering that driver Ayrton Senna had not used the track alone during the race as stipulated under 3 of the chapter 'free taking' of chapter IV appendix L."
 - c) "Furthermore it is the stewards' opinion that the crossing of the chicane by the word 'by' seems to be confused here with car No 1 was in no case 'enter the chicane' and therefore not allowed and absolutely incorrect (chapter IV, appendix L, paragraph 2, sub-paragraph 2)."
 - d) "That the overtaking manoeuvre of car No 1 to overtake car No 2 was dangerous and incorrect."
 - e) "That it was dangerous to continue the race when car No 1 was in such a dangerous condition that while driving the car lost part of the front wing of the track."
 - f) "That the overtaking manoeuvre of car No 1 to overtake car No 19 near the end of the race was absolutely incorrect."

▲ FISA goes to war with Senna after 1989 Japanese GP. There'd be repercussions...

Ayrton to retire?

Ron Dennis was curiously vague when asked if he expected Ayrton Senna to stay with McLaren after his contract runs out at the end of next season.

There is some conjecture that Senna is planning 'early retirement' because he is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the pressures of life in Formula 1.

When tackled on the possibility, Dennis was unusually subdued.

"I'm a reasonably good visionary, but I think that's too much to expect one to commit to," he said. "I think that we'll always have the best two drivers that are currently driving in our two cars, and I won't be any more specific than that."

Dennis left room for speculation about his 1991 driver pairing by confirming that Gerhard Berger's contract with McLaren is for at least two years.

"It is longer than one year. We believe in commitment from a driver and we give reciprocal value."

Link Berger's deal with Dennis's less-than-subtle suggestion at Ricard that Alain Prost plans to rejoin McLaren in 1991, and Senna's departure is not at all an outrageous scenario.

◀ Senna would finally commit to 'reasonably good visionary' Ron Dennis for 1991



Ayrton paid tribute to the late Jim Clark (seen right, in the Lotus-BRM) on taking his record.



Senna claims Clark's record

Ayrton Senna smashed Jim Clark's 21-year old record for career pole positions when his number one spot for last weekend's inaugural Phoenix Grand Prix brought his career total to 34.

Clark's record was one that experts predicted might well stand for all time.

The late double World Champion from Dunlop widely accepted as the fastest man of his era. Some, indeed, feel that the Scot was the fastest of all time.

Senna, of course, has benefitted from McLaren's super-competitive cars, and achieved his 34th pole in his

83rd GP as against Clark's 33 from 72. "I feel rather light-headed," said Ayrton.

"I take the record from Jim Clark, a man I never saw race, but who by his results was obviously a very special driver. It's a big moment for me."

▲ Becoming the grand prix pole-position king at the 1989 United States GP in Phoenix

McLaren set to fight on

Ron Dennis, managing director of McLaren International, looks set to launch a legal action against FISA. Speaking at a press conference, he said that the Australian Grand Prix, which started on 11th April, would be the last race of the season if the FISA decision is upheld.

"I am not going to say that we are going to fight," he said. "I am not going to say that we are going to fight." He said that he was not going to say that he was not going to fight.



Ayrton Senna and Nigel Mansell at McLaren's press conference in Adelaide.

"I am not going to say that we are going to fight," he said. "I am not going to say that we are going to fight." He said that he was not going to say that he was not going to fight.

Senna vents his anger

Ayrton Senna has expressed his anger at the decision to suspend him from the 1989 F1 World Championship Grand Prix at Suzuka.

"I am not going to say that we are going to fight," he said. "I am not going to say that we are going to fight." He said that he was not going to say that he was not going to fight.

"I am not going to say that we are going to fight," he said. "I am not going to say that we are going to fight." He said that he was not going to say that he was not going to fight.

Prost's title in the balance

Alain Prost is the 1989 Formula 1 World Champion - but only provisionally.

Just weeks after the controversy surrounding the incident between Ayrton Senna and Nigel Mansell in Estoril, the Brazilian was involved in a similar incident with team mate Prost on lap 47 of the Japanese Grand Prix.

Prost and Senna had been fighting it out for the lead - and the World Championship - from the start of the race, and with seven laps to go Senna was on Prost's tail. As they entered the chicane, Senna dove inside, crossing the pitlane entry markings as he did so. Prost tried to turn-in and claim the corner and the pair collided, sliding straight on and failing to negotiate the chicane.

To separate the cars, which were interlocked, the marshals pushed Senna's McLaren backwards onto the track. Prost, in the meantime, had climbed out and his chassis was pushed to a safe place on the grass at the left-hand side of the escape road.

Marshals then pushed Senna, who steered down the escape road. His car bump-started and the Brazilian rejoined the track after the chicane. He completed a lap and pitted to have the damaged nose of his McLaren replaced.

By this stage Alessandro Nannini's Benetton had taken the lead but, in the closing laps, Senna drove frantically to catch and pass the Italian.

Prost went directly to race control to discuss the incident with FISA President Jean-Marie Balestre and other race officials. Senna crossed the line at around 2.35pm, but it was not until 31 minutes later that Nannini stepped onto the podium with Williams-Renault drivers Riccardo Patrese and Thierry Boutsen. Senna had been disqualified.

The Stewards of the Meeting, John Corsmit (NL), Burdette Martin (USA) and Shantaro Takii (J) decided

that Senna "avoided the chicane", and therefore committed an infringement of the FIA F1 World Championship regulations. The penalty was exclusion of the car and driver from the event.

The Honda Marlboro McLaren Team immediately appealed against the decision of the stewards. The team went on to ask that, in order to save time at this critical point in the World Championship, the appeal should go straight to the FIA International Court of Appeal in Paris. This is possible with the permission of the national federation of the country in which the event happened (in this case the JAF) and the approval of the aggrieved competitors (McLaren's) licensor (the RAC MSA).

Permission was forthcoming from both quarters with the RAC MSA's Neil Eason-Gibson confirming on Monday that he had submitted an appeal to FISA on McLaren's behalf.

A date for the hearing has been set for tomorrow, October 27. Should Senna's case go unheeded, Prost is confirmed as World Champion, but if it is upheld, the championship battle goes down to the wire in Adelaide on November 6.



Ayrton points to the spot at which his crown was surrendered. This week's FISA appeal court will consider a reprieve.

Senna goes to court

Ayrton Senna was reticent to talk after the Japanese Grand Prix, but hours later he issued a statement.

"That was the only place where I could overtake," it read. "And somebody who should not have been there just closed the door and that was that."

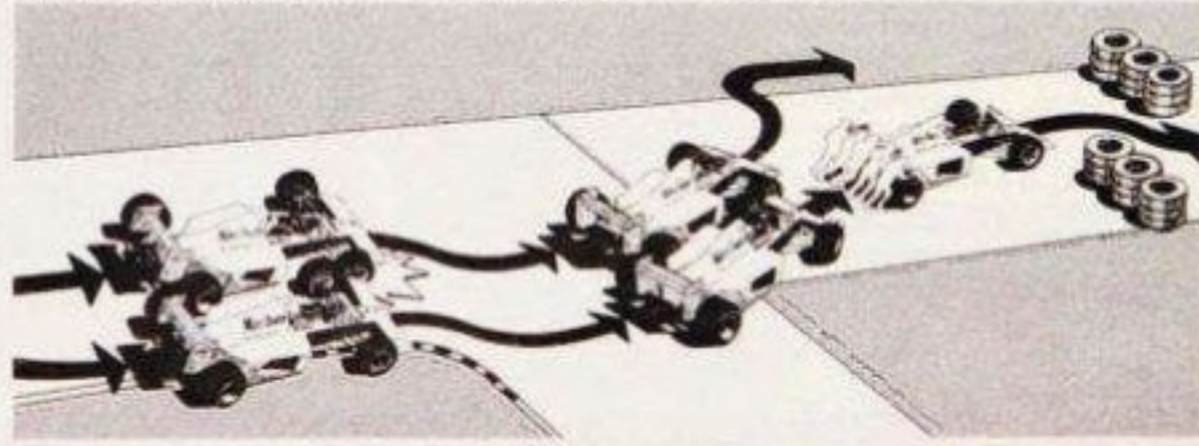
"The results as they stand provisionally do not reflect the truth of the race in either the sporting sense or in the sense of the regulations. I see this result as temporary. It's a pity that we had to appeal in

abnormal situations like this. We must fight with all our available resources.

"Now the matter is out of my hands. What I have done is done and is correct. From now this matter will be in the hands of lawyers, people who understand the theoretical side. As for the practical side, it was obvious that I won on the track.

"As to our defence (the appeal), I do not want to comment as it will be prepared very carefully on the basis of the regulations and on fact."

The contentious issue following the Senna-Prost clash is Ayrton's "avoidance of the chicane".



Senna fined in new flag rumpus

Ayrton Senna was fined US\$20,000 for failing to react to several black flags in the wake of Gregor Foitek's accident during Friday qualifying for the Spanish GP. The Brazilian was on a flying lap, the fastest recorded up to that point, although his time was taken away soon afterwards.

Given the dispute surrounding Nigel Mansell missing three black flags at Estoril, Ayrton's ignoring seven or eight and only being fined US\$20,000 (compared to Mansell's US\$50,000) and a one race ban did seem rather inconsistent.

FISA handed out a number of other fines last weekend, bringing the total collected at Estoril and Jerez to US\$143,000.

It has yet to be explained why the governing body has suddenly begun to use its fine system with such enthusiasm.

Estoril's total was US\$78,000, including US\$1,000 for race winner Gerhard Berger who took off his helmet on his slowing down lap after the race.

The collection started early at Jerez, with the organisers being fined US\$40,000 on Friday morning when the safety helicopter failed to show up on time and, in addition to Senna's fine, Satoru Nakajima has to fork out US\$5,000 for a rear wing infringement.



Ironically, Ayrton Senna was fined in Spain for failing to obey black flags. The Brazilian had to pay out \$20,000.

▲ Governing body FISA was clearly on a funding drive. Senna was one driver nobbled

▼ Ferrari rumour for 1991: no doubt Prost followed this one with some trepidation



Ayrton - eyeing Maranello?

Senna to Ferrari?

There was a brief furore last week when there were suggestions in the Italian press that Ayrton Senna was keen to join Ferrari in 1991. The Brazilian's contract with McLaren is up for renewal at the end of the season. The reality is that Ayrton told pressmen that he would definitely continue to race next year.

The news caused Alain Prost to tell other pressmen that if Ayrton joined Ferrari he would be leaving.

What is clear is that the rumours have enabled Cesare Fiorio to put some pressure on Ron Dennis as he renegotiates a McLaren contract with Senna.

Senna/Balestre - the war goes on

Ayrton Senna has been granted a reprieve by the FIA, but the fight between the Brazilian and Jean-Marie Balestre continues.

After the weekend the FIA President threatened to withdraw Senna's licence for failing to react to several black flags. Senna had made it clear that he would not accept the decision.

At the same time, FISA withdrew a carefully worded letter from Senna. During the meeting of the FIA World Council which took place on 12 December 1989, Senna said: "I believe in respect and tolerance. I believe in dialogue and in compromise. I believe in the need to find solutions that are acceptable to all."

It is not only surprising, it is also surprising, that Senna had made a better start and had a better car and had been charged to race. He had not even been asked to sign a statement of apology. I am not prepared to fight against irresponsible people who are not afraid of the law.

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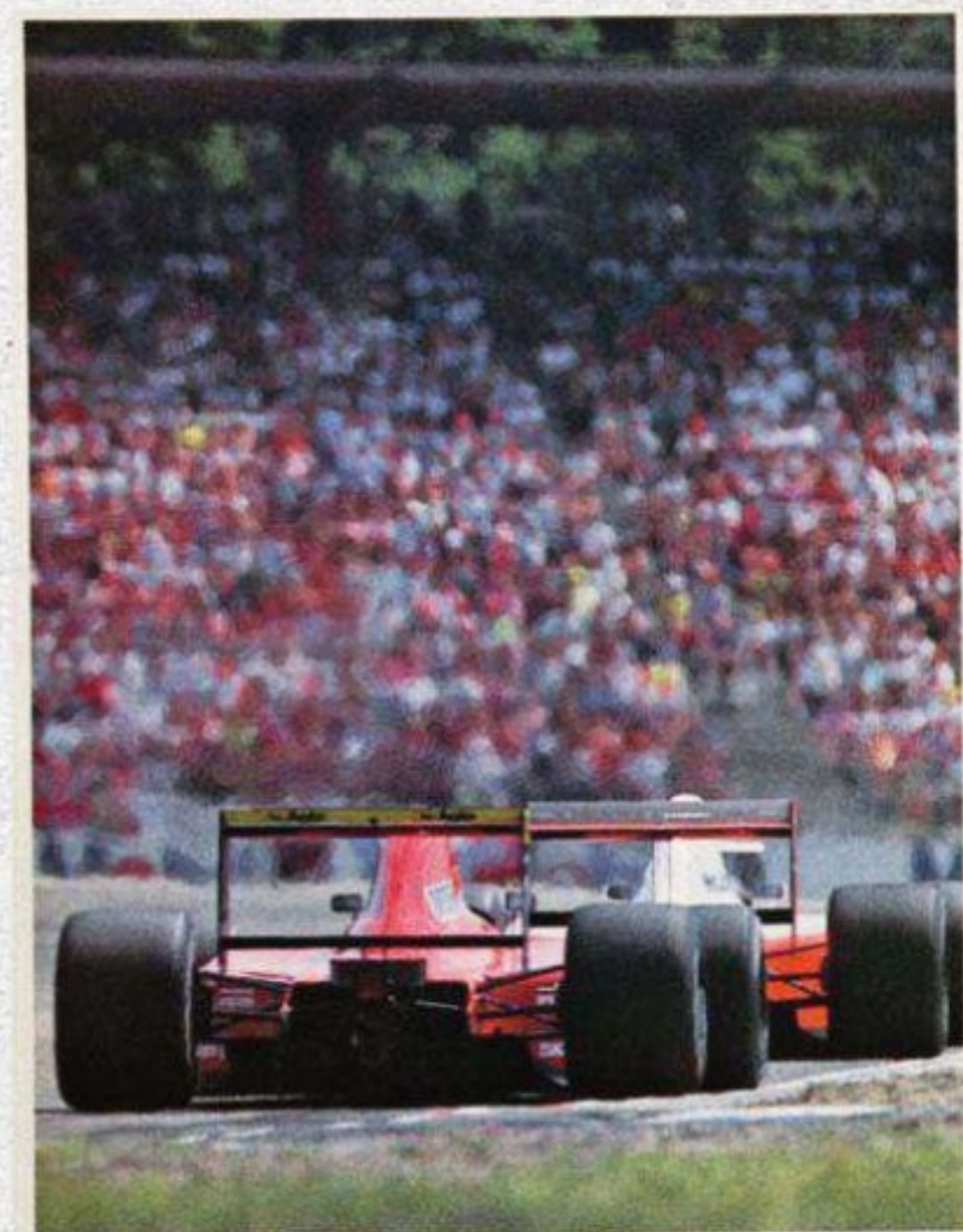
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Alain Prost hounded Ayrton Senna at Hockenheim but his efforts to pass the Brazilian were destined to end in retirement. Photo: W&P

Prost and Senna: feuding again

Alain Prost has threatened to knock his arch-rival World Champion Ayrton Senna off race tracks. The Brazilian gets in his way again.

"He did everything to stop me passing him," complained Prost on his return to the pits. "He weaved, he braked early and then he drove across me."

Prost's outburst came at the end of a successful weekend. Earlier Alain had a run-in with the Italian press over claims that Ferrari's top management does not want to retain him for 1992.

"I shall have no problems starting with him in Hungary, but if he gets in my way again I'll just have to push him off."

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▲ Suzuka part two: Senna causes outrage with his manoeuvre on Prost that wins him the title

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NEW MAN IN A PORSCHE

In July 1984, Senna joined Henri Pescarolo and Stefan Johansson in a Joest Racing Porsche 956B for the Nurburgring 1000km. The Brazilian's only mileage before the race was in the damp, and the trio took eighth after a clutch problem. But it gave Senna crucial laps on the new 'Ring in a pukka racing car





Classic race: European GP '93

SENNA SHINES ON RAINY DAY

In soaking conditions that could have been made for him, Ayrton Senna ruled the European Grand Prix at Donington Park. At the flag only second-placed Damon Hill was on the same lap as the Brazilian



Classic race: European GP '93

This was Ayrton Senna as his most majestic.

Before the race, he had said that, as at Interlagos a fortnight ago, only a wet race would give him a prayer against the Williams-Renaults.

As in Brazil, a wet race was what he got. All the way through this time. And after qualifying only fourth, he drove a quite mesmeric opening lap, dispensing first Michael Schumacher, then Karl Wendlinger, then Damon Hill, then Alain Prost, to lead over the line.

It was an afternoon of extraordinary weather, with endless small showers, occasional momentary cloudburst. And while the Williams drivers never got the dry conditions in which to assert their car's superiority, their cause was scarcely aided by a run of tyre stops which proved uncannily out of sync with what the weather gods had in mind. Prost, indeed, was to come in no fewer than seven times.

Still, in all their tribulation, Hill and Prost finished

*By Nigel Roebuck
and Joe Seward*



Classic race: European GP '93

second and third, with Johnny Herbert fourth for Lotus, Riccardo Patrese salvaging something for Benetton after Schumacher had spun, and Fabrizio Barbazza taking a most unexpected point in the Minardi.

Senna apart, if the European Grand Prix had a real hero, it was surely his countryman, Rubens Barrichello, who was magnificent in the Jordan-Hart, fourth on the opening lap, and third within five of the finish. Then the fuel pressure died, and with it the points Rubens and his team so much deserved.

There was nothing for Ferrari at Donington, nor for the luckless Derek Warwick, who had the latest Footwork into the points in the late stages. And Michael Andretti's nightmare, sadly, for the moment continues. After qualifying sixth, yet again he failed to appear at the end of the opening lap, this time after tangling with Karl Wendlinger, the man largely

responsible for his exit at Interlagos.

Unpalatable as Senna's behaviour may sometimes be, there is no doubting his authentic genius as a racing driver. Prior to last Sunday, Tazio Nuvolari was the last man to win a grand prix here; it is appropriate that beneath his name Ayrton's should sit.

QUALIFYING

The glamorous world of F1 had trekked from Johannesburg in South Africa to Sao Paulo in Brazil and, slightly bemused, it arrived in Leicestershire.

Yes, welcome to England where the hotel rooms have do-it-yourself instant coffee and Corby trouser-presses; where there are fish-and-chip shops on the corners. Although it's ringed by huge cooling towers on the horizon, Castle Donington is actually rather a nice small town. Once this area was deep in the heart of British industry in the Midlands, but the stresses



“[Badoer] didn't know I was there because of the spray. He suddenly saw me, braked, and I hit him”
Martin Brundle

Peerless Senna breezes past the front-row-starting Williams FW15Cs of Alain Prost (2) and Damon Hill



of recession have caused cardiac arrest. The town is now dotted with empty industrial units and boarded-up businesses.

But it is still a small town. An example: late on Friday night the phone at the hotel rang. It was an old girlfriend from the real world outside F1. She was, she said, just down the road for the weekend. How about having dinner?

But how did she find me? It had been some years and we'd both moved house, and... "Oh," she said gleefully, "it was easy. I heard there was an F1 thingy on at Donington and figured you'd be around somewhere. I rang up one hotel and they said, 'No, he'll be at such-and-such hotel.'" Small town.

It might be hard for us partisan British to accept, but much of the F1 circus doesn't like coming to England's green and pleasant land. To the average homme in the rue or the uomo on the Milano omnibus England is a place where it always rains. The girls are pale and lumpy – like most of the food – and they drink warm beer!

"What's the local speciality?" we asked in a restaurant on Thursday night. "Pork pies," came the bluff reply. The nicest thing about Donington – and on this, in a most un-European display of unity, everyone agreed – was that you could wander around without fear of being robbed, knifed, shot or bombed. After dangerous downtown Johannesburg and evil Sao Paulo, the most dangerous thing in and around Donington was probably the steak and kidney pie.

In general, however, the F1 visitors came with the preconceived notion that they were not going to have a good time. There were many and varied fears over the safety of the track and the un-F1 facilities.

There is no question that things were rudimentary. The pits were far too small and so the F1 teams had put up their awnings and the cars were being worked on under canvas. It was from another era, but actually rather nice to remember more friendly days.

It was, lest we forget, a last-minute race, brought in to replace the Asian Grand Prix at Autopolis in Japan.

And there was a good human interest story: Tom Wheatcroft, who had fought for 22 years to get grand prix racing back to Donington. Tom had to pay through the nose for his dream, but he did it anyway. The safety work done since December was impressive: The Redgate run-off had doubled and there were bigger gravel traps everywhere.

Donington is a super little racing track, although perhaps a bit small for F1 cars. It has silly bits but is generally regarded as challenging by the drivers. It was particularly challenging on Thursday when it was drizzly and horrid. The two Williams-Renaults dominated, without any undue dramas.

Good Friday's weather forecast was as follows: 'Rain, some heavy. Drier later with some heavy showers.' It all sounded pretty dismal.

And so it was. There was nothing good about Friday. It was a miserable bloody day with the sort of weather which makes even Dracula stay home with a nice warm cup of O positive. But out there in the drizzle were thousands of racing fans camped in the mud, happy to wallow in Donington's nostalgia and enjoy the ghosts of Edgar Jessop and other great heroes of yesteryear.

The warmest thing in the F1 paddock was Ron Dennis's smile. The McLaren boss was beaming like a lighthouse as he pondered the predicament into which he and his driver Senna have dumped the Benetton team, by outperforming the Ford works outfit with their customer engines.

This weekend would see the introduction of Benetton's all-singing, all-dancing 1993 challenger – which would, so went the theory, stop the embarrassing run of McLaren success. Judging by

the unshaven faces under the Benetton awning, the mechanics had been bearing the brunt of the team's unfulfilled ambitions. They were dead on their feet, having worked more all-nighters than there were nights available to get the new cars ready.

Benetton was the wild card, but the general opinion was that if it was wet Senna would fly in the McLaren, if it was dry no one would see the Williams-Renaults.

Everyone wanted to see how the Benettons would fit into the pattern. Certainly, in terms of straight-line speed the B193Bs were a lot quicker than the other Ford-powered cars – and they weren't running any less wing.

Rain is the great equaliser in F1, of course, and so Bad Friday's left everyone guessing as to the real levels of competitiveness. It was a day when more or less everyone fell off at some point, notable hits being registered by the two Lotus drivers. Herbert did the back of his 107B and Alessandro Zanardi gave the mechanics a bit of rebuild variety by stuffing the front end of his car.

Later on Andrea de Cesaris had the mummy and daddy of shunts at McLeans, turning the monocoque of his Tyrrell into a colander with holes where the suspension mountings had been ripped out. It was one dead car, but Andrea was unharmed.

Of the rest there were spins for Andretti (an impressive high-speed double 360 in the Craner Curves), Hill, Schumacher, Wendlinger, Thierry Boutsen and so on. Even Prost went off.

At the end of the morning session Senna was ahead of Schumacher, Prost, Gerhard Berger (the Ferraris were better in the wet), Andretti, Warwick in the new Footwork FA14 and Herbert.

The nasty conditions continued in the afternoon with the rains coming and going and conditions changing all the time. If you picked a good moment, you could get a good time. Initially, there was a battle between Alesi and Schumacher and then Andretti joined the fight. In the next minutes Schumacher made a mess of it and shunted, while Senna blithely took a whole second off Andretti's best. And then Barbazza went third quickest.

The times were up in the 1m24s but gradually they came down. Senna and Prost contrived to get in one another's way and there were various other excitements. By the half-hour mark Senna had just one lap of his 12 available left. His bolt was shot.

So too was Riccardo Patrese's, who had to hurry through his laps to give his car to Schumacher.

When it comes to weather forecasting Ayrton and McLaren are rather more reliable than the London Weather Centre, and on cue the rains increased – as did those departing the track at unusual angles. With 15 minutes to go, a further obstacle was added when Martin Brundle's Ligier ran into the back of Luca Badoer's Lola at Coppice.

"He didn't know I was there because of the spray," said Martin. "He suddenly saw me and braked and I hit him." Martin was very cool in the circumstances because a wheel-over-wheel shunt would probably have had him into the Donington Collection.

There were only a few drivers now with qualifying laps remaining and with the rain coming and going it was tough. Hill did a good job to take second to Senna, while Schumacher bravely skated to seventh.

At the end of the session, Prost came out and Senna departed the pits. He could not complete a full lap but neither did he get in Prost's way as some feared he might after their earlier adventures. In fact Senna pulled off with a hydraulic failure. "I'm glad it happened when it did and not earlier when I was at full speed," he mused.

And so with a few last-minute spinners, the

Classic race: European GP '93

session dragged itself to a miserable close, leaving Senna a tenth ahead of Hill, but not confident he would stay there without rain on Saturday. Prost was third followed by JJ Lehto's Sauber, Berger, Schumacher, the impressive Jordan of Barrichello and Brundle's Ligier.

The paddock cleared quickly as everyone rushed off looking for somewhere warm and dry.

The weathermen had said that Saturday would be better and they must have been tipped off by McLaren because they were right. It was a lovely clear, crisp day with a blue sky and a chill in the air.

Friday's times were, of course, completely meaningless as the front-runners worked their way through the 1m14s into the 1m13s and the 1m12s. Towards the end of the session Prost left everyone speechless with a lap of 1m10.716s. Hill chipped down to 1m11.175s, and Senna beat Schumacher to third in the 'Formula Ford' fight.

The afternoon session was going to be all or bust and the heroes were quick to go out and get laps in the bank. At first it was Lehto leading the way, but then Schumacher carved the mark down to the low 1m12s.

After 15 minutes Senna could do no better than a 1m12.661s and quickly went back in for a think. Then it was Prost's turn and very quickly pole became a dream for all but the Frenchman and his team-mate Hill. Alain's best was a 1m10.458s.

Senna tried again but a 1m12.385s was not encouraging. Then it was Hill's turn. Damon chipped down to 1m11.315s. Elsewhere on track Jean Alesi went off, flew briefly and gave himself a thrill by landing on two wheels in the gravel.

Patrese was also in trouble, his Benetton breaking down with gearbox problems.

Hill's second run was better and Damon did a good job to post a 1m10.762s lap with about eight minutes to go. As Damon went in, so Alain, Ayrton and Schumacher came out for the final blasts.

The Fordsters put on a thrilling duel, swapping times as they quibbled over third on the grid: Michael took it, then Ayrton snatched it back. Next time round Schumacher won it again and Ayrton could do nothing about it – a slide at the final corner left him a hundredth short. But to put it into perspective, we should not forget that they were battling some 1.5s off Prost's pole time.

Alain's final run was not spectacular: "I didn't want to make a competition against Damon," he explained, "and I knew he was the only one who could catch me. It is important to be on pole and I am pleased to have Damon alongside me because our main competition is on the second row."

Next up were Schumacher and Senna, split by a smidgeon, Michael giving Benetton something to brighten up the horizon: "We've reached the position we wanted," the German said, "ahead of the McLarens. We haven't done much testing and the set-up is nowhere near perfect yet, but we are now in good shape all things considered."

But Dennis put Benetton's speed down to a McLaren mistake: "We got it wrong," he said. "Ayrton should have been able to get into the low 1m11s."

Row three was a bit of a worry, an accident in search of a corner to happen at, with Karl Wendlinger and Michael Andretti having something of a history after the shunt in Brazil a fortnight ago.

Behind's Karl's Sauber one second covered 12 cars so we knew that even if the race up front was dull, we were guaranteed a right old knees-up in the midfield.

It would depend on the weather, of course, and the weathermen were walking around with black clouds over their heads...

THE RACE

It was April 1973, 20 years ago to the month, that Ronnie Peterson spun away the lead to Jackie Stewart in the International Trophy at Silverstone. He had been caught out by a snow storm.

England's early-season non-championship F1 races, a thing of the far past now, were traditionally beset by lousy weather, because lousy weather is what you get in England at this time of year. Hence, when they announced a grand prix at Donington in early April, it seemed a reasonable bet that Senna, wherever he was, would be rubbing his hands. On the face of it, this was made for him.

Certainly he felt that way last Friday, for the weather was awful, and he was duly fastest. But Saturday gave us a glimpse of what spring can be, and in these circumstances Prost and Hill were unapproachable – indeed, Schumacher was able to pip Senna for third on the grid. Ayrton was cheered, however, by forecasts that Sunday would be wet.

And it was so. In the warm-up, though, it was Hill





“The whole race was like a nightmare. Whatever we did was the wrong thing at the wrong time”

Damon Hill

who set the fastest time, followed by an impressive Lehto, and the McLarens of Senna and Andretti, their times as good as identical.

The best guess was that there would be a deluge at around lunchtime, with drying conditions through the afternoon. The best guess was awry. At midday it was possible to unfurl umbrellas; and it never did dry through the afternoon.

“If it’s dry tomorrow,” a Goodyear man had said on Saturday evening, “we don’t expect it to be a pitstop race. Most believe they can make it without a change.”

That would have been a first in the era of the new, narrower tyres, but in the event it wasn’t dry, and the European Grand Prix proved to be more of a pitstop race than anyone could remember. Although it wasn’t actually raining at two o’clock, there was no question of going to the grid on anything other than wets.

Poor Lehto, second in the warm-up, had an ignition switch failure on his Sauber, and he had no alternative but to start his race from the pitlane in the T-car – which had been set up for the lanky Wendlinger, and did not fit him. To complete the picture, JJ opted to begin on slicks figuring that there was nothing to be lost. Even that decision was wrong.

Traction control was obviously going to be of

paramount importance at the green light, those with it more likely to step off rather more smartly than those without. In that context, row two looked interesting, for Senna had it, and Schumacher did not.

To put it mildly, these two do not constitute a mutual admiration society, and away from the grid Michael swerved left, trying to block Ayrton. Momentarily, it worked. Into Redgate, Prost and Hill were smoothly first and second, with Wendlinger third, Schumacher fourth, Senna fifth, Andretti sixth.

Senna dealt with Schumacher out of the corner, and then, in a move of astonishing confidence and audacity, proceeded to go by Wendlinger through the Craner Curves – on the outside! It took a bit of believing, but into the Old Hairpin Senna was third, and gaining on Hill, whom he duly passed at McLeans.

That left only Prost with whom to deal. Half-way round the lap Alain looked relatively secure in the lead, but his gearbox was playing up, he said, and twice he found himself in neutral rather than the next gear up. Down to the hairpin at Melbourne, Senna was right up with him, outbraking neatly down the inside. The opening minute had been breathtaking, but somehow you felt that the race was already over.

Top: Senna laps fifth-placed Patrese’s Benetton and Barbazza’s point-scoring Minardi. Left: dry qualifying left Senna battling against Schumacher for third as the Williams pair dominated



Classic race: European GP '93

Senna waves the Brazilian flag, which would later slip from his hand, on his victorious slow-down lap

For Andretti and Wendlinger, sadly it was. Michael is of the American school of racing drivers, of course, which means he is prepared to admit his mistakes. And he did so now: "I tried to take him, but I guess he hadn't seen me – I braked hard, but couldn't avoid him..."

"Overtaking is impossible at the place he tried," commented Wendlinger. "Michael apologised for his mistake, but this doesn't change much for me. I'm totally frustrated about what happened."

The early pattern of the race was set on the opening lap, as expected, for overtaking at Donington is not easy. On the greasy surface, Senna briefly motored away, pulling out a lead of seven seconds after only four laps. After that, it stabilised, then began to reduce a little; the track, clearly, was beginning to dry.

Not quite enough for Brundle, however. After only six laps, Martin was in for slicks, and after nine laps he was facing backwards, stalled. "It was the right decision, changing to slicks," he said, "but maybe I made it a lap or two too early." Yes. It was altogether a bad day for Ligier, for not long afterwards Blundell spun into a sandtrap, after an over-ambitious stab at outbraking Christian Fittipaldi's Minardi. Lap 10 was when Herbert came in for slicks, and he was to stay on them to the finish, which was some feat in light of how conditions would fluctuate through the day. He deserved those three points.

The really startling performance, though, was coming from Rubens Barrichello, who had run a convincing fourth from the first lap on, headed only by Senna, Prost and Hill. Behind him were various luminaries, including Alesi, Schumacher, Berger and Patrese. A remarkable ninth at this point was the brave Barbazza, ahead of Philippe Alliot, Zanardi and Warwick.

Although the Ferraris had gone far better than expected, neither was to make the finish, each car losing hydraulic fluid, Berger's from the active suspension system, Alesi's from its semi-automatic transmission system.

"My car became more and more difficult to drive," said Gerhard, "because there was a fault in the left front actuator. I thought it was better to stop." Jean was to get as high as second at one point, and was highly disappointed. The car had otherwise, he said, gone extremely well.

The important pitstops began on lap 18, when Senna came in for slicks, remaining stationary for 8.3s, and losing the lead to Prost for only a single lap, Alain himself coming in next time round. Hill and Schumacher had stopped at the same time as Senna, and after everything had settled down again, it was Senna in the lead, five seconds clear of Prost, with Hill a couple more behind.

Now it began to rain again. After only three laps on his slicks, Prost was in once more for more wets, and on lap 24 Hill followed suit. Senna came in on lap 28, but did not lose the lead in the process.

The rain stopped almost immediately, but gone from the proceedings was Schumacher, who had spun into a sandtrap and was highly apologetic to his team: "I'm sure they feel I've let them down, and all I can do is try to make up for it at Imola..."

Now the situation in the pits became almost farcical. Lap 33 saw Prost back in again, for slicks, and next time around Senna and Hill did the same. This time, however, there was a disruption in the flow of smooth stops, a problem with the left rear wheel keeping Senna immobile for 20 seconds. By the time he rejoined, Prost had gone through, and now led by almost seven seconds.

More rain. Unbelievable, perhaps, but true. Williams brought Prost in on lap 38 and Hill on

lap 41, each going back out on wets once more.

Crucially, McLaren did not call Senna in at this point, and soon the policy proved correct, for the Williams-Renaults, on wets, were able to make no impression on the slick-shod McLaren – indeed, little by little, Senna began to extend his lead. The track was drying again...

Lap 48: Prost in again, for the fifth time, this time for slicks. The stop was disastrous, Alain stalling as he tried to leave. The clutch, he said, was "becoming difficult".

With the car jammed in gear, it was an eternity before the mechanics were able to free it, then fire up the engine once more. By the time he went back out, the pole position man had been lapped by Senna.

Lap 50: Hill also in for slicks. Now he too, was a lap back, the only man as yet unlapped by the astonishing Barrichello.

"The whole race," Damon said, "was like a nightmare. An awful race – the worst you'd ever want to be in, because you had no idea what was going to happen next. It seemed that whatever we did was the wrong thing at the wrong time."

Nor were the Williams pit crew through for the day. Not by some way. Lap 53 saw Prost in yet again, for he felt sure he had a puncture. And now the situation was this: Senna had at least one lap on everybody, and led Hill, Barrichello, Prost, Herbert and Warwick. All on slicks.

It began to rain again. Truly it did. And hard this time.

Barrichello, who had changed to slicks on lap 55, was back a lap later for more wets, and on lap 57 even Senna thought he might like some. Into the pitlane he came, but the crew was not ready for him, so he continued on through – and this, given the lap distance saved by Donington's pit entry road, was to prove the fastest lap of the race! Officially, anyway. Most folk saw that as a complete nonsense.

A lap later the rain had eased, and now Senna decided wets weren't necessary after all. With more than a lap's lead, however, he felt he could back off a little, and Hill, charging along in second place, unlapped himself on lap 63. "I thought if I could get by Ayrton, it might help protect my second place from Alain," he said. Given the personalities involved, it was smart thinking.

The rain returned in the closing laps. Really. On lap 66 Senna stopped for wets, and on 68 and 69 Hill and Prost did the same. By now the Williams mechanics were obliged to fit used sets...

There were two lots of heartbreak in the late stages. Warwick had driven a typically valiant race in the Footwork, and looked sure to collect at least one point, but with nine laps left he pulled off with gearbox failure. There were the usual sympathetic cheers, of course, but Derek has been used to those for most of his career.

No one could quite believe it, though, when Barrichello stopped, on lap 71. "Everything had been great from the beginning – the way the car was working, the pitstops, all my overtaking moves. Then the low fuel pressure light came on, and soon afterwards the engine stopped." This was more than cruel for the young fellow and his team, but Jordan and Hart are progressing well, you can say that. To say nothing of Barrichello.

Senna, of course, won consummately, with Hill a fine second again, Prost a disappointing third.

On his slowing down lap, Ayrton stopped, waving for someone to bring him a Brazilian flag. Eventually someone did, and when he set off again, it slipped from his hand. It was the only thing he did wrong all weekend.

GREAT CAR

MP4/6

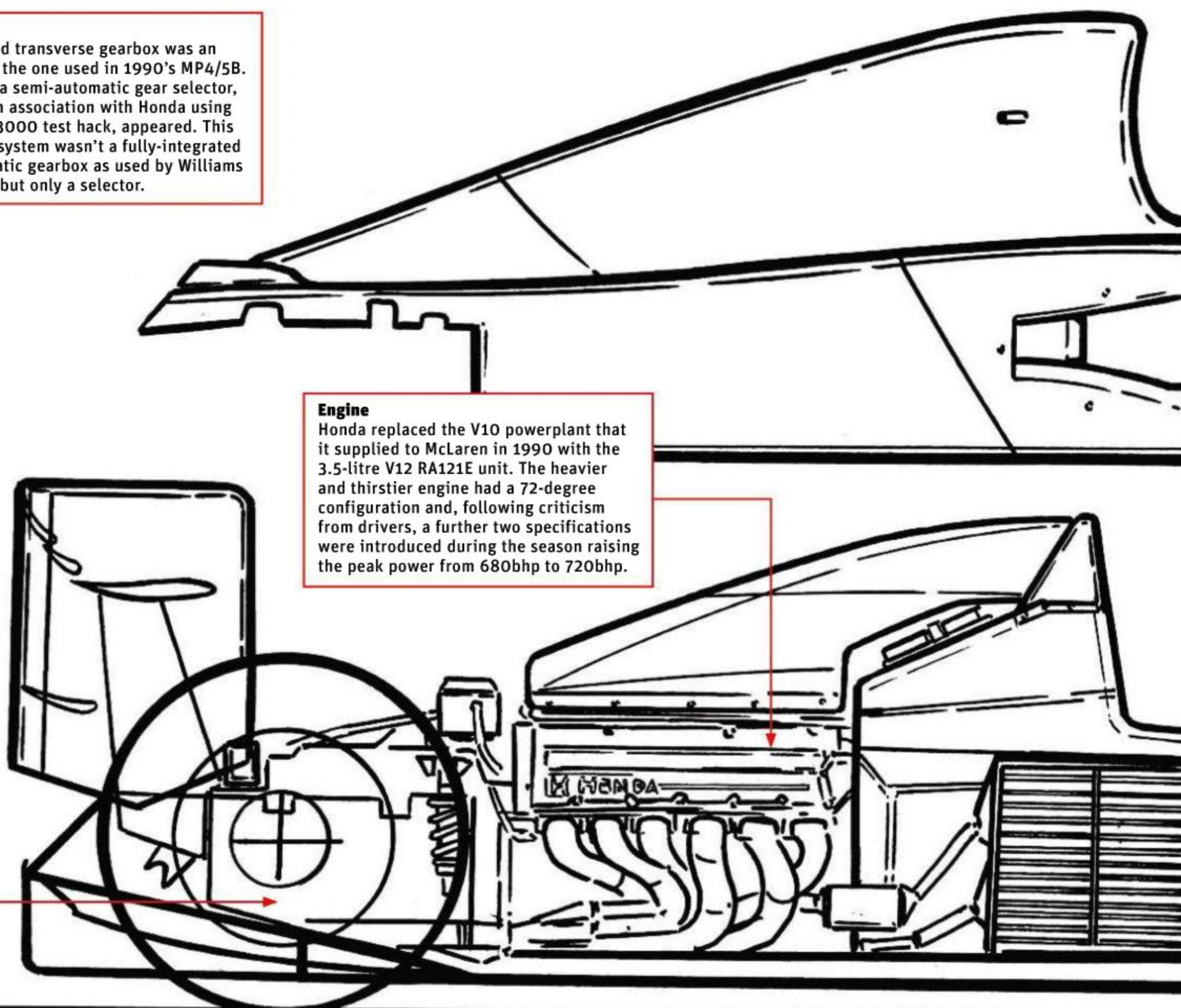
From a distance, the McLaren-Honda MP4/6 that Ayrton Senna took to his final world championship in 1991 doesn't look significantly different from its predecessor. But the switch from a Honda V10 to a V12 powerplant, along with an aerodynamic overhaul influenced by the 1990 Ferrari, made for a very different car

Gearbox

The six-speed transverse gearbox was an evolution of the one used in 1990's MP4/5B. In Hungary, a semi-automatic gear selector, developed in association with Honda using a Reynard F3000 test hack, appeared. This paddleshift system wasn't a fully-integrated semi-automatic gearbox as used by Williams and Ferrari, but only a selector.

Engine

Honda replaced the V10 powerplant that it supplied to McLaren in 1990 with the 3.5-litre V12 RA121E unit. The heavier and thirstier engine had a 72-degree configuration and, following criticism from drivers, a further two specifications were introduced during the season raising the peak power from 680bhp to 720bhp.



Ferrari-influenced aerodynamics

The 1990 Ferrari was reckoned to have the edge over the McLaren when it came to aerodynamics. The MP4/6 therefore featured a longer nose, raised sidepods and front wing endplates that were very similar to the Ferrari 641, partly thanks to the influence of aerodynamicist Henri Durand, who was recruited from the Scuderia.

Weight

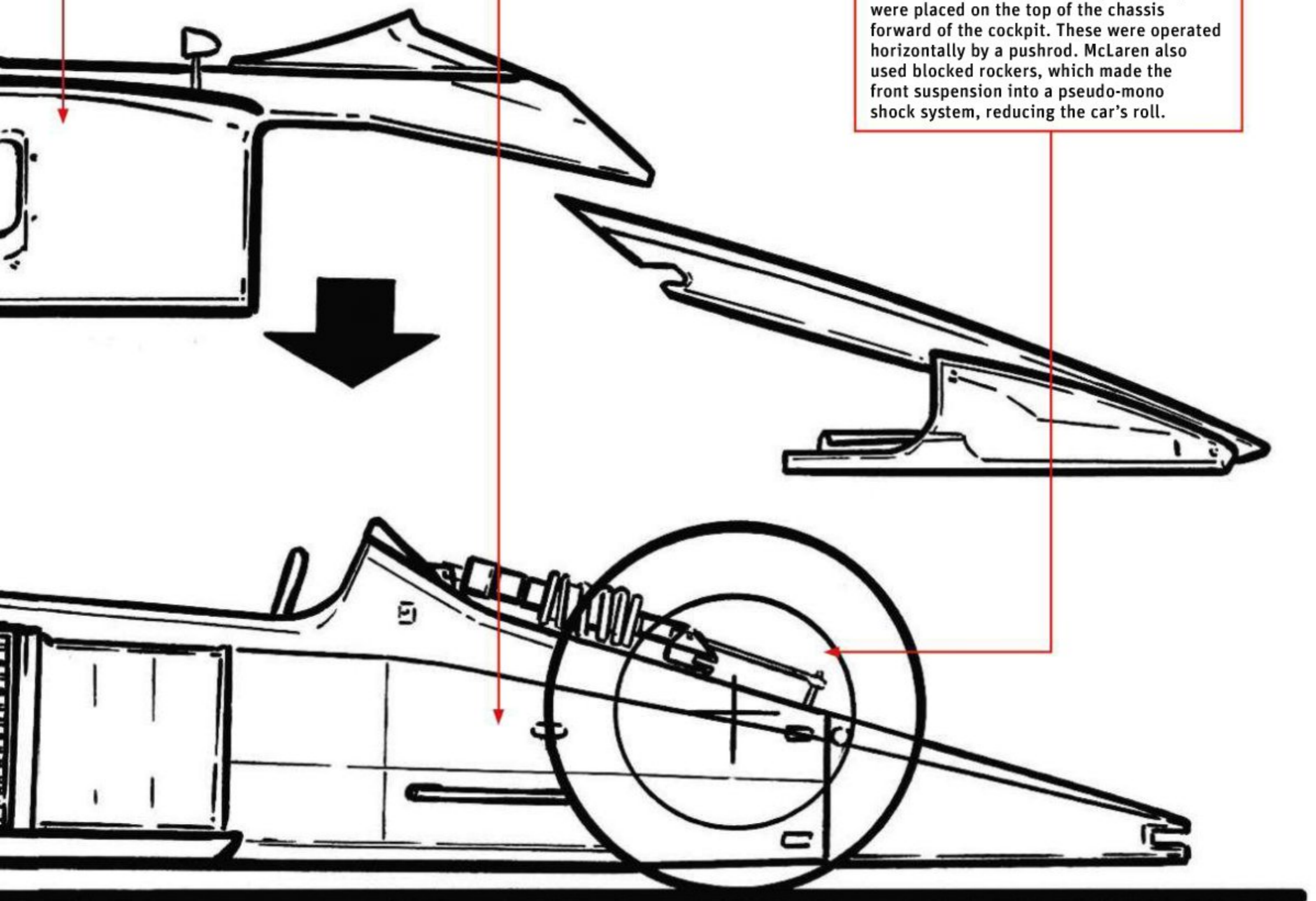
Despite huge efforts in the design phase to make the car lighter, the MP4/6 started out as much as 25kg over the weight limit. This was a consequence of the size of the V12 engine. McLaren shaved just under 18kg off in steps made between the Hungarian Grand Prix in August and the Suzuka race in October.

Chassis

The monocoque, manufactured by Hercules Aerospace using ultra-high-modulus carbon fibre, was similar to that used in 1990, but was made from more complex materials in order to increase stiffness and torsional rigidity. Components in the chassis were minimised to accommodate the larger fuel cell demanded by the thirsty V12 engine.

Front suspension

The front suspension was a big change from the 1990 car. The coil-spring/dampers were placed on the top of the chassis forward of the cockpit. These were operated horizontally by a pushrod. McLaren also used blocked rockers, which made the front suspension into a pseudo-mono shock system, reducing the car's roll.



Championship winner: McLaren MP4/6



The beautiful MP4/6 had a longer nose than its predecessor, with raised sidepods and front wing endplates. It was highly influenced by the successful Ferrari 641 of 1990 which won six races

At the first test of the McLaren MP4/6 Ayrton Senna joked: "I can't drive a Ferrari, so McLaren has built me one." The new red and white machine resembled the Ferrari 641 in which Alain Prost had fought the Brazilian for the 1990 world championship. Add to that Honda's switch from a V10 powerplant to the new V12 and you have a package similar to that of the previous year's Ferrari.

Henri Durand was recruited from the Scuderia as chief aerodynamicist in the summer of 1990. When the McLaren rolled out of the garage for the first time a couple of weeks before the start of the 1991 season, it was clear that the same thinking that influenced his work at Ferrari had been applied at McLaren.

"I came in pretty late in the project," recalls Durand. "Neil Oatley [McLaren's chief designer] had progressed with production and the chassis itself was fully designed, so there was nothing we could do with that. But we made a conscious decision to go away from the previous year's aerodynamic project. While the chassis itself wasn't necessarily completely in tune with the final project, the final result was successful.

"It was a departure from the 1990 car. The biggest things were the sidepods and the treatment of the rear, which was more in line with what I was familiar with at

Ferrari than the previous McLaren."

While the 1990 McLaren had won both world championships, it was aerodynamically inconsistent. At some ride heights, it worked perfectly, at others, it didn't, making it inconsistent to drive and difficult to set up. The MP4/6 aerodynamic package solved this, creating a car that was far less sensitive. The drivers noticed this immediately, but they also noticed a lack of engine performance.

The V12 engine was larger than its predecessor, necessitating the wheelbase being extended by 40mm. There was also the need to carry more fuel, while cooling problems struck at the season-opening United States Grand Prix at Phoenix, forcing tweaks that stole more of the downforce-producing external airflow.

Despite Senna winning in Phoenix, it was the Williams-Renault FW14 that was potentially the faster car. An aggressive engine development programme quickly led to the introduction of the specification two Honda V12, which produced better mid-range torque, for the San Marino Grand Prix. At Silverstone, specification three came online, with a shorter stroke designed to cut internal friction and therefore boost power. This, along with aero tweaks, led to McLaren taking five complete cars to the British Grand Prix!

Senna's initial reservations about this car were unfounded when he won the first four races of the season. By Monza, though, Mansell and Williams had a better package. Senna set pole and was still second in this race





Below left: the cockpit and steering wheel of this remarkable car was far less complicated than those of today's cars. Below: adjustments to the wings and endplates helped make the car far less aerodynamically sensitive. Bottom: wheels and brakes were unchanged for 1991

Although the change to a V12 is often reckoned to be at the root of any weaknesses the MP4/6 had compared to the Williams, Durand disagrees.

"I wouldn't call it a weakness," he says. "By the Japanese Grand Prix [where a new front and rear wing were also introduced], it was by far the best engine. It more than compensated for the extra weight, extra fuel required and extra packaging challenges. In Japan, it won from first and second on the grid. I wouldn't say that the car had any weaknesses and in the end as a car and driver combination, the results show it was better than the Williams."

Oatley is less convinced, suggesting that the change to the V12 was at the root of the team struggling to match Williams in 1991 and being beaten in 1992. It should, however, be noted that Durand suspects that it was more to do with Williams having the technological edge with its active suspension system.

"The V10 was a pretty good engine," says Oatley. "Our error was going to a V12. We would have been more competitive if we had continued to develop the V10. The V12 was heavier, for not much more performance."

Nonetheless, the car's strong start, winning the first four races, and reliability that was the best in the field, added up to another world championship for Senna.

A bad start that turned good...

When Ayrton Senna and Gerhard Berger tested the new McLaren MP4/6 for the first time at Estoril at the start of March 1991, they were far from impressed. Although the new Honda V12 unit had been running around in the back of an MP4/5B since the previous season had ended, insufficient progress had been made.

Senna had last driven the V12 test car the previous October, and when he jumped into the MP4/6 he was underwhelmed. "It seemed to be going well then," he said. "I don't know what they have been doing since, but there is not enough progress and not enough power."

Berger admitted that "we don't have any more power than with the V10. I'm afraid that the power will be a problem in the first races." But he did add the caveat that the car itself had more downforce and the handling was "not as critical as the old car's".

Still, few expected a McLaren win in the season-opener at Phoenix on March 10. It was not an easy weekend. The Honda didn't have the power or the torque, and also hit overheating problems. By Senna's own admission, the whole team had to work flat out to troubleshoot. He rewarded them with pole position and a win and repeated that feat in the next three races while Williams sorted its superior FW14. After that run, Senna won only three times in 12 races, making that early-season slog key to Senna and McLaren's victories in the drivers' and constructors' championships.





THE PRIVATE SIDE OF SENNA

Ayrton Senna's racing career is legendary. But the man himself remains something of a mystery. Talking to AUTOSPORT in 1993, he lets his guard down to reveal something of the real Ayrton

Some call him arrogant, ruthless and cunning; others say he is shy, gentle and compassionate. Ayrton Senna doesn't seem to care, but deep down he probably does.

"Perhaps I should have taken my profession in a more relaxed way," he muses, "but I cannot. I have tried many times. Either I do the maximum, which is stressful and not always pleasant, or I don't do it. I have to feel that I am fulfilling my goals and exploiting my full potential. To feel at peace with myself I have to give the maximum, not only for me, but also for all the people with whom I am working. Sometimes I get great results, sometimes it goes wrong but I always know I have tried my best and I couldn't do better."

That determination must make Ayrton a difficult person to live with. "Am I a difficult person?" he asks, but only to himself. "That depends. The key factor in any relationship is the feeling that you are talking the same language and that you have some basic values. There is respect, trust, professionalism, competence and so on. If I feel that some of those things are missing – particularly respect, fairness and honesty – I am a difficult guy and I immediately become a difficult person."

And he trusts his feelings to that extent? "Yes I do." He won't give examples: "I don't see anything positive coming from that because I have to name people." Years of controversy have taught Senna to be careful what he says and his conversation is punctuated with long, thoughtful pauses. When he speaks he has an awesome ability to explain things in a language which is not his native tongue. Sometimes the dry cynical humour of the risk-taker is apparent and the Latin fury, wild when unleashed, is never far below the calm yet intense exterior.

Brought up in comfortable surroundings in Sao Paulo, his wealth today is beyond one's wildest dreams. When it comes to money Ayrton is uncompromising. If you want the best, you have to pay through the nose. He doesn't need the money, winning negotiations is just part of the Formula 1 game. He has beach houses in Angra dos Reis, Brazil and Faro, Portugal; there is

the farm at Tatui, near Sao Paulo, with its own karting track and a lake big enough for jet- and water-skiing; there are expensive apartments in the exclusive Sao Paulo suburb Jardims and Monaco. He flies the world not in a small jet, but in a small airliner all of his own. He has every toy money can buy, but it has cost him a lot.

To understand Senna, so they say, you have to realise that he has sacrificed everything to be a winner. There is a remoteness and a melancholy about him, which has become part of his character. Listen to him talk and you quickly realise that you are dealing with an intelligent and sensitive soul, and somehow this is hard to equate with the determined and aggressive Senna you see behind the wheel.

Determination and aggression are words one associates with Senna, who made enemies from the moment he entered F1 in 1984, scoring championship points in his second race. He walked away from a three-year contract with Toleman to join Lotus, and then won his 16th grand prix. A year later he refused to have Derek Warwick as his Lotus team-mate. He was uncompromising. Nigel Mansell was so incensed that he once physically attacked Senna. Nelson Piquet did the same, but his attack was verbal – and more damaging. And then Senna moved to McLaren and so began the bitter rivalry with Alain Prost.

He doesn't like controversy, but "the fact is that if you are not yourself and do not stick by the values you have, you are no one. I think I have good values. I try hard to do things right and sometimes I screw it up, but I don't do it deliberately. It is no one's fault but my own."

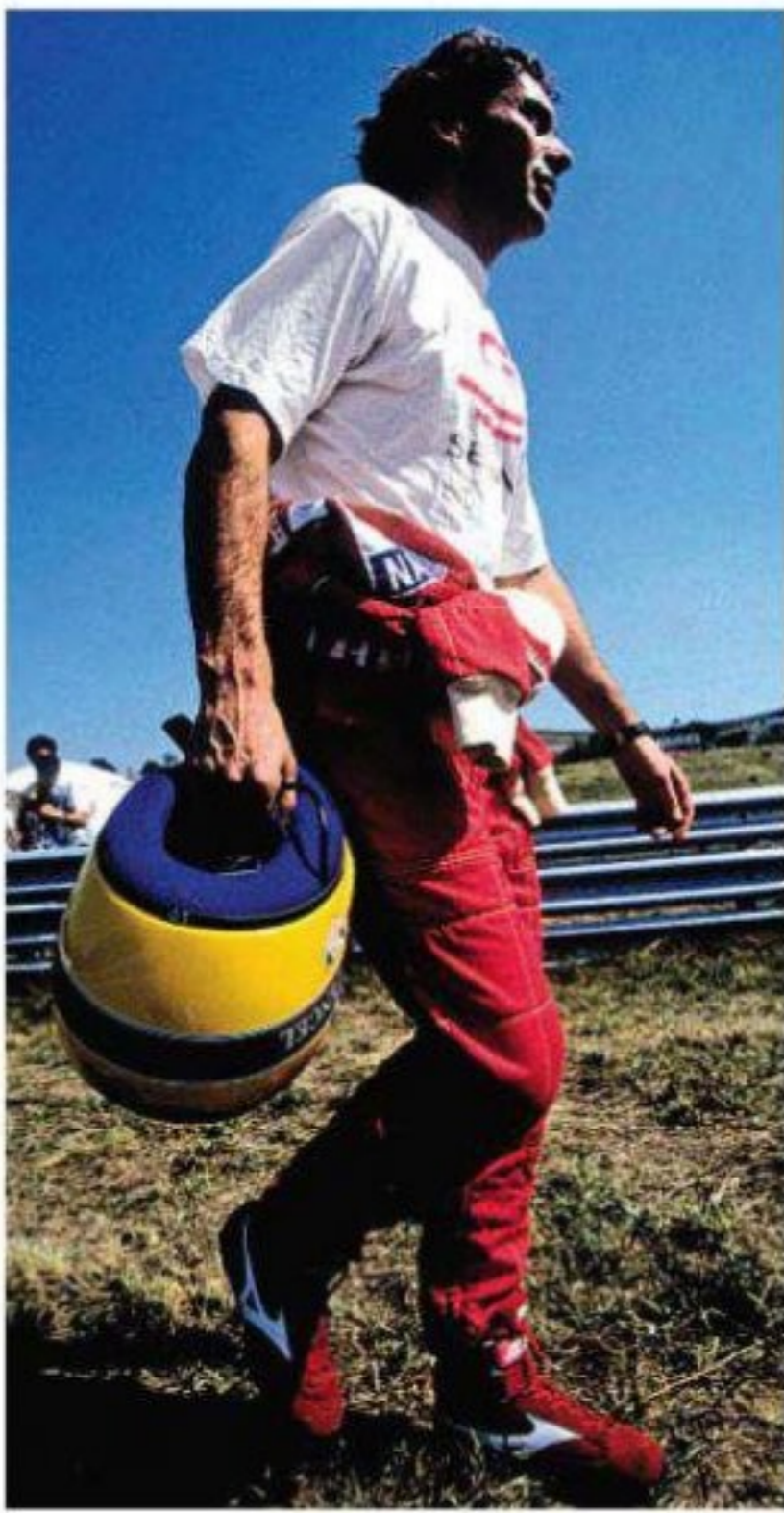
"Sometimes I am induced into situations and I screw up. That is the atmosphere we are in and that is when I go mad. It screws my head. It is a stressful thing to cope with when you know that some of the people are just not worth it. All you want to do is to be away from them. I prefer not to talk to people like that and yet, even if you make life hard for them, they go round and round and round and come back and you have to face them again. It is tough. I do not have the ability to really be 100 per cent sure when to give up on them. My nature tells me to try again. You say 'people can change, why not?' and the moment you think

By Joe Seward



Senna: a very deep man. Strong beliefs, strong virtues and the ultimate desire to be the best

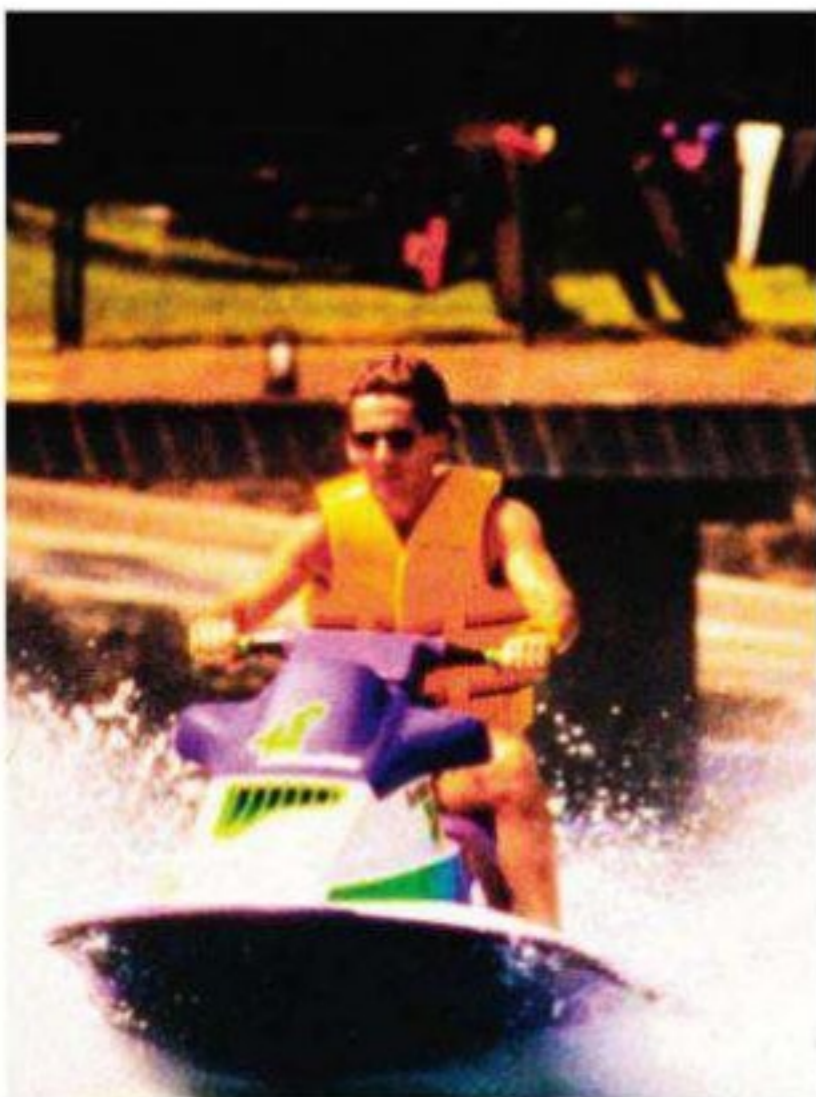
1993 interview



Frustrated and enjoying racing "a lot less than I used to", Senna retires in Hungary with throttle problems



It might have been a rollercoaster relationship with Mansell at times, but respect was shown when felt



He loved his toys, but Senna's wealth was neither bragged about nor spent all on himself

it's okay, you get a knife in the back.

"In this environment you have to be yourself, stick to your own mind and your own principles. Sometimes you are going to get it wrong, but in the long-term you are bound to be a lot better off. The worst thing is to be undecided because then you are vulnerable." Even Senna has been vulnerable.

At Monaco in 1988 he was shaken in qualifying to find himself driving at a level which was almost unconscious. In the race he crashed while leading and disappeared to his apartment without returning to the pits. There was talk of a religious experience and when he won his first world title that year in Suzuka, amid the tears and the joy, he spoke of his beliefs and was ridiculed.

"I have had many questions about religion," he says, "and often I was misquoted or misinterpreted. Sometimes it was by accident, sometimes to do me damage, but I think it is worth talking about it because in this godless world there are lots and lots of people looking for religion. They are desperate for it. I am only being truthful. I am saying what I believe and what I feel. You offer religion to those who want it. If you don't do that they will not have the opportunity to look and see. Some people may not understand you and do not have a clear opinion, some will understand because they are open enough to understand what you are talking about and it is for them that it is worth it.

"You can have it if you want. It is a question of believing it and having faith, of wanting it and being open to the experience."

Like all religion, of course, it defies logic. Senna says he is logical and religious. "I think there is an area where logic applies and another where it does not," he explains. "No matter how far down the road you are in understanding and experiencing religion there are certain things which we cannot logically explain. We tend always to understand only what we can see: the colours, the touch and the smell. If it is outside that, is it crazy? I had the great opportunity to experience something beyond that. Once you have experienced it, you know it is there and that is why you have to tell people."

But how does it happen? "You have to need it and you have to want it and you have to be open to it. It is tough, but life isn't easy. Anyone can achieve easy things, the tough ones are things that some achieve and some do not. But... I am still at the beginning, I am like a baby in this respect. You have to work on it. It is a difficult thing and it is much more difficult alone."

Ayrton has warmed to the subject. It clearly means a lot to him. "You can be logical or stupid," he adds, "but you are not in control of everything that is happening with your life."

He knows that well. In 1989 his mentor Armando Botelho Teixeira died suddenly and Ayrton seemed to go a little out of control. He lost the world title after Prost drove into him at Suzuka and spent the winter months fighting the governing body of the sport. A year later, he became world champion for a second time by driving Prost off the road. But revenge wasn't sweet.

A third title followed in 1991 and even the great Juan-Manuel Fangio spoke in awe of Senna. Since those heady days Senna seems more tranquil, the emotional intensity remains and the ambition still burns, frustrated for the last two seasons by the success of Williams-Renault, but the restless soul seems to be searching for more balance in his life.

But that is looking in from the outside. How does Senna see himself?

Immediately he is suspicious, on the defensive: "Why do you want to know?" he asks. Just curious. Ayrton thinks about it for a moment and then begins to talk: "Most people, whoever they are and whatever they do, try to do it well," he says. "This is



satisfying and stimulating. In F1 there is always discussion about what we do. Some people say we do good things; some say we do awful things. We are great. We are terrible. It builds up interest in us as human beings, but also as images.

"We go into millions of homes by way of television and people feel close to us. But at the same time they are far, far away. They have no idea what we are really like. They dream of watching a race live or getting to see one of us and perhaps if they had the opportunity they would see that we are just people, that there is nothing magic.

"I am not exactly as I am seen, but that is how it is. I cannot change it, as hard as I try. You can improve how people see you, but inevitably there will always be a distance between us and the people, so all you can do is say what you think. Some people will take it right, some will take it wrong, all you can do is to be yourself and be consistent. Time will show what you are really like and people will slowly get to see your good and bad points."

How does Ayrton see his good and bad points? Again he pauses to think for a moment.

"In many ways the qualities and the flaws are linked. They are the extremes of each other. One of my qualities is determination to pursue something I believe. That is also my weakness because I never give up and I never give in. Sometimes you should give in and change direction. In this the 'plus' is much higher than the 'minus' and that is a fact measured by results."

He pauses again. The talk is of pluses and minuses. Life, he says, has been good to him. He is fortunate. But



When Senna threw away the lead at Monaco in 1988, he was furious with himself and sought an explanation of a more spiritual nature. This was misunderstood and led to ridicule. How he dealt with this was testimony to his strength of character

“One of my qualities is determination to pursue something I believe. But it’s also a weakness because I never give up”

at home in Brazil he is faced with a poor country. It must be hard for a man of his sensitivity to be rich and be surrounded by poverty.

“It cannot go on like this,” he says. “The wealthy can no longer continue to live on an island in a sea of poverty. We are all breathing the same air. People have to have a chance, a basic chance at least. A chance of education, nutrition, medical care. If this does not begin to happen then there is little hope for the future and little wonder that the problems become greater and that sometimes violence arises.”

But he admits that there is only so much that one man can do. “I am not a politician. Unfortunately I am not blessed with the powers to solve the problems. All I can see is that conditions for the vast majority of Brazilian people are getting worse and that it is virtually impossible to work against this trend. It touches me deeply and worries me considerably.”

Ayrton doesn’t talk about his charity work. It is private. The subject changes. What is Ayrton searching for? “To get the best out of me,” he says, “to extend my own qualities and be a better person. If I am a better man it will reflect in everything I do.”

After experiencing such highs and lows in racing, does Ayrton think he might find something to give him the same kick in life? “No, I don’t think so,” he admits, “but I could be wrong. Only time will tell. As you get older and more mature, you tend to see things differently. Other things will come along which will motivate and interest me. There will be things I love and things to which I will dedicate my time.

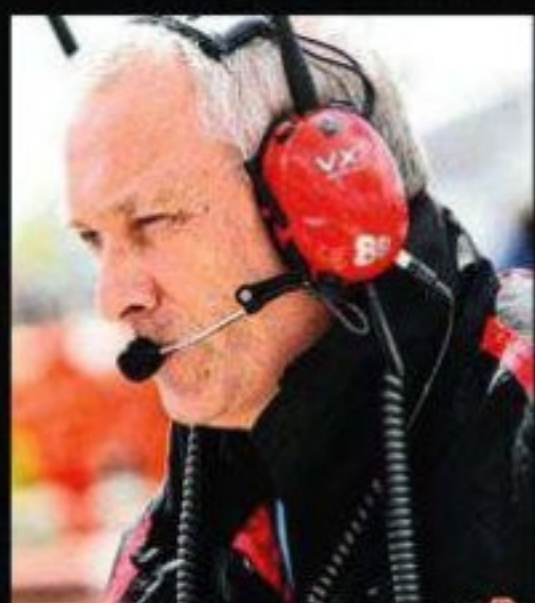
“One will be the extension of my family with a wife

and children. It happens in everyone’s life – very few people don’t get married – and I am sure that I am going to get married again, because I have been married once, and I am going to have kids. That will happen when I have the right girl and we feel it is the right moment for us. I will experience that when it happens. It has to be really special, but I don’t think anyone can describe in words what it means.”

As a racer Senna has always had a unique ability to put his feelings behind the wheel into words. Is it still the same for him every time he gets into a racing car? Is he still enjoying it? “A lot less than I used to,” he says. “Some of it is because of the responsibility the top drivers have. Everything is focused on you, the mechanics, the engineers, the sponsors, everyone works for the team first, but ultimately for you. You get the car and you express yourself in it. You can make it happen or you can make a fool of yourself and of all the people who put in the effort. That is a tremendous responsibility, and it creates stress and takes away a lot of the pleasure.

“By the same token when you go through hard times and you succeed, the pleasure is greater. It comes in a surge and goes away pretty fast. But the pressure is constant. Right now I am frustrated but what can I do? I can only keep trying. If you are able to judge where you are, you can get through the hard times without thinking, ‘I am getting old.’ I didn’t win three world championships by chance. I haven’t forgotten how to drive a racing car. I have to be patient, which is something that I am not, but I am learning.”

I was called into a little room by this Italian lawyer. He told me that Ayrton had died in hospital. They treated it as a road traffic accident in Italy.. and as team manager I was the one responsible in the eyes of the law

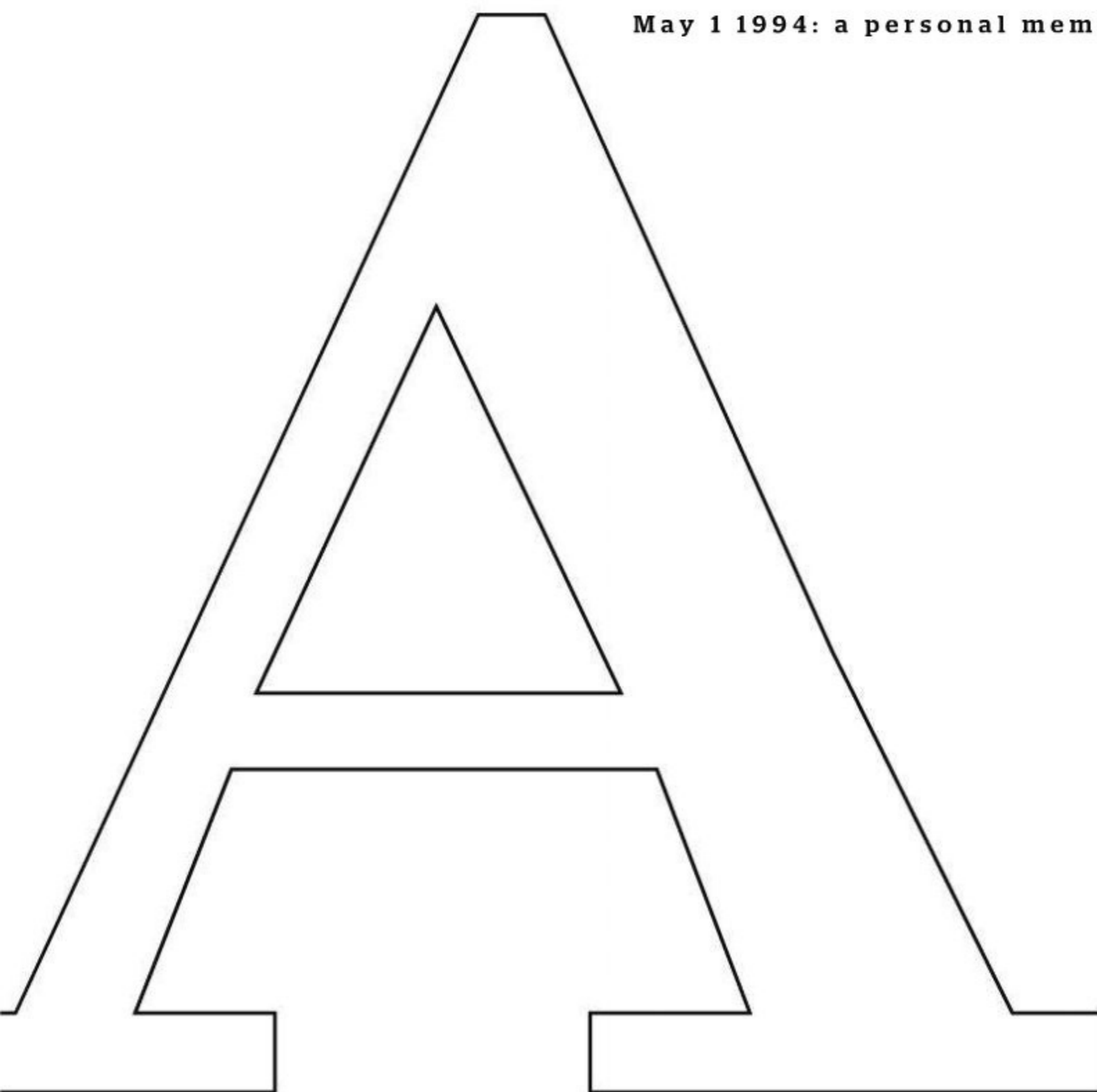


May 1 1994 remains the most sombre day in Formula 1 history, yet one man still remembers it with unmistakable clarity. Seventeen years on, former Williams man Ian Harrison recalls that crushing weekend

By Matt James

Earpiece





yrton Senna is joining Williams...' I have to say that even though I was the team manager at the time, I had a certain feeling of trepidation when I heard this news. It was pretty daunting, because he was Ayrton Senna... he was coming with a little bit of a reputation. I suppose we thought he might be difficult to work with – all of the top drivers were demanding, but it was something we'd got used to. We'd had Nigel Mansell and Alain Prost at the team, but nobody quite knew what Ayrton would be like. Still, we were professional and we knew what we were doing.

I first met him at Williams' factory over the winter, probably at the start of 1994. He popped in for five minutes to say hello and he was quite quiet and extremely polite. That was the thing that immediately struck me about him. He was very calm. He was direct

Senna was taken out of the Pacific GP at Aida and watched the rest of it with Harrison on the pitwall



and matter-of-fact. You could see he was trying to weigh the place up because we were different to McLaren, where he'd been for six years. McLaren had been moulded around him and he had to start that process all over again with us, but we were determined to make him feel as welcome as possible.

The relationship was very new at the first race and, after first practice, we were in the debrief room looking at the time sheets. Ayrton's race engineer, David Brown, said something like, "Bloody Senna is always there or thereabouts isn't he?" to no one in particular. Ayrton, who was sitting next to him, just looked sideways with an enquiring look. David turned the colour of a beetroot. "Sorry mate, force of habit," he said. There was a good atmosphere about the place.

Although things hadn't been going well over the start of the season, there was no panic from Ayrton himself. He was calm and determined to help the team get to the root of any problems we had with the car. He got his head down, worked with the team and was pulling us in the right direction. He was prepared to work – and to work hard. He wasn't jumping up and down when things weren't going right. After he spun off in Interlagos chasing Schumacher, he came back into the garage where I was with David Brown. He apologised for going off and said that it wouldn't happen again. I think that really summed up the bloke.

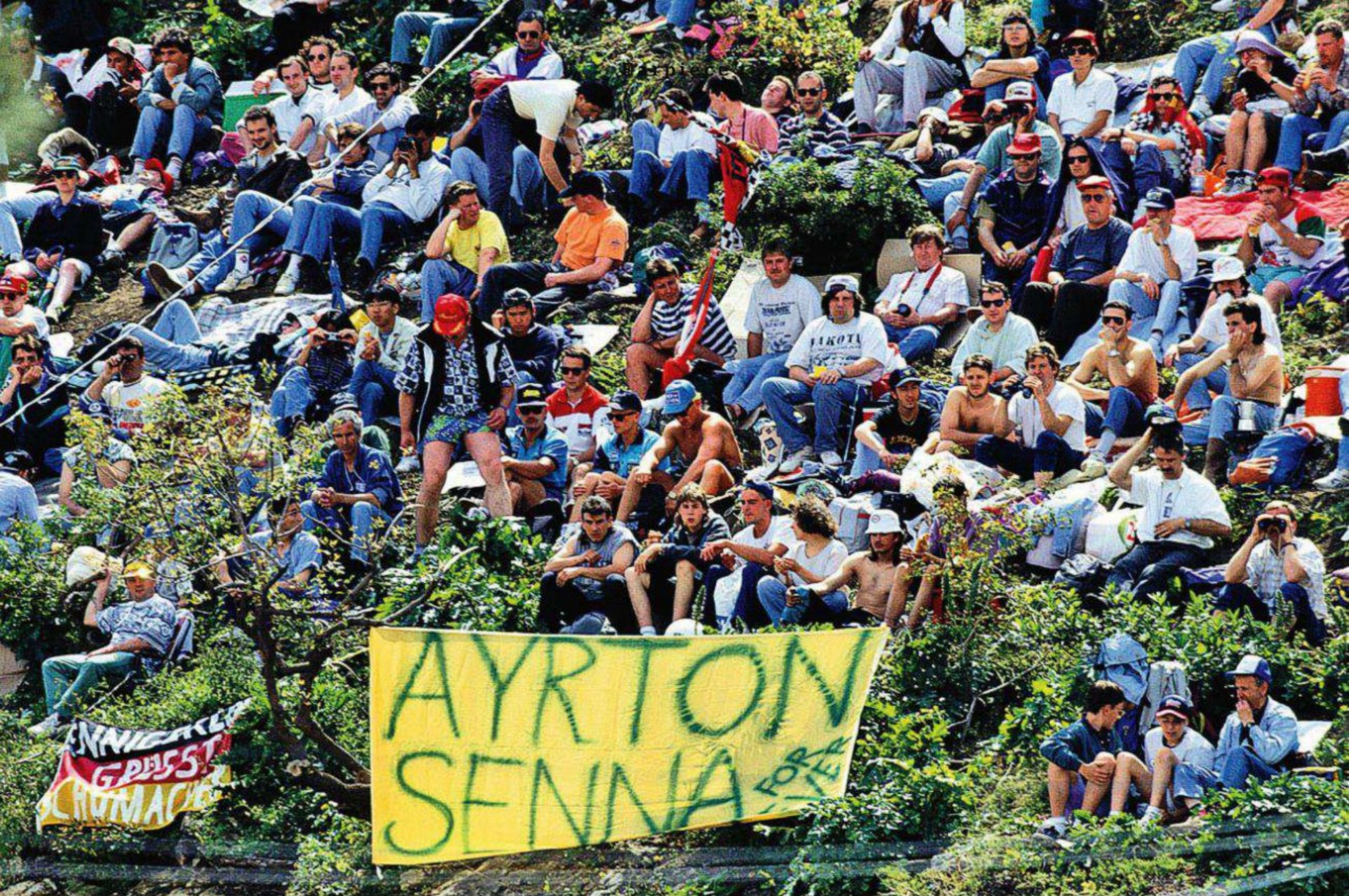
Still, working at Williams, the pressure was always on. And after two non-finishes in the first two races of 1994, it was really on. There wasn't a 'let's wait and see' attitude. Things had to change and we were pushing hard. It had become clear that something was not right with the pace of the car Ayrton Senna and Damon Hill had, and the engineers were trying to figure out what it was. It was down to the powers that be, Adrian Newey and Patrick Head, to sort it out and they'd identified that there was something amiss and that it was an aerodynamic issue of some kind. There was a frustration and we were wondering why the car wasn't quicker because, by rights, it should've been.

It wasn't that the car lacked outright pace. Ayrton had put the thing on pole for the first two races, but it was a struggle when the green light came on; we didn't seem to have race pace and Ayrton had retired from the opening two grands prix of the season. We'd only had one podium with Damon Hill, but Williams weren't the sort of team who panicked. We started going through everything properly and methodically and we'd put some upgrades on the car for the race in Italy. By the time we got to Imola that weekend, everybody was gagging for a result.

Qualifying on Friday went well for us. Senna went out and did 1min 21.5secs, which was half a second faster than Michael Schumacher's Benetton; Damon was seventh. Apart from a spin by Damon, I can't remember any huge dramas for our team, but that wasn't the case everywhere. Rubens Barrichello had a major off at Variante Bassa and was knocked unconscious. It was a big accident but he survived it and things carried on as usual.

Then we got to Saturday qualifying and Roland Ratzenberger's accident. It was 20 minutes into the final session of the day and Ayrton hadn't even gone out to do a time by that stage. Damon had done some laps and was second fastest in the session, which was enough to put him fourth on the grid. Then there was a

"Ayrton had put the thing on pole for the first two races, but we didn't have race pace. We'd put on some upgrades for Imola and we were all gagging for a result"



The Williams move didn't deliver the success Senna had expected, but he was determined to turn it around

F1 entered a period of mourning after Senna's death. But for the fans at Monaco, his legend lived on. Seventeen years later, flags and shirts bearing his name are still seen at tracks all over the world

red flag and the news began to filter back to us that Roland's accident had been a big one.

Ayrton went to see for himself what had happened in Ratzenberger's accident and he also went to the medical centre afterwards. You might think that this was an unusual reaction, but he was a humane guy. I didn't think Ayrton's actions in going to the scene of the crash were strange at the time because he was the man in motor racing. He was the top man. He was a bloke who was passionate about motor racing and Formula 1. He was interested in the sport and he wanted to know what was going on with everybody. He was wrapped up in it and this was one of his ways of showing it. Ayrton was always up front with everything and he wasn't a bloke who shied away from saying what he thought, which for me was great. I think going to the scene and then to the medical centre was just his way of dealing with it. He was interested in safety and deeply concerned with humanity. He had a thing about that.

One thing that struck me about Senna's reaction, though, was that we didn't really know him – we didn't know him at all. The relationship was just beginning to get there. It was starting to get to the stage where if he wanted something, he would just come and ask me. I remember before Imola, Frank Williams had asked me how it was going with Ayrton and I said that the bloke was fine but that I wished he would just come and speak to me if he wanted something. That was what I was there for. During the early part of the season, his manager would come and speak to us if there was something Ayrton wanted but for it to have worked properly, I knew that we needed to build up that personal relationship with him so we could give him what he wanted. Well Frank must have had a word in his ear because during that weekend at Imola, he was

different. He was asking me “Can we get this?” and “Can we do that?” It wasn’t a problem.

I remember that after the Ratzenberger accident, Charlie Moody, who was the team manager at Simtek at the time, came to see Adrian. I remember it like it was yesterday. We were sat in our awning and I just think he needed someone to talk to. I remember going back to our garage afterwards and thinking, ‘Christ, what on earth must this poor bloke be going through?’

We didn’t take part in the second part of qualifying after the red flag. Schumacher had improved his time but it wasn’t enough to take pole position away from Ayrton, while Damon was on the second row. We had a shock on that Saturday with the accident, but the Williams team were a bunch of professionals and they just put their heads down and got on with the job. It’s just the way the team were – there was still a race to prepare for. F1 was a lot less complicated in those days and it’s quite amusing to think back now about how we used to prepare. On the Sunday morning, we would cycle through a programme that isn’t a patch on modern racing. It was almost like,

‘Off we go, here we are chaps, let’s go motor racing!’

Damon, Ayrton and myself went to the drivers’ briefing in Race Control and then straight after that we went into an engineering meeting. Engineering was the core of Williams; that’s what made it what it was. I went through the rules – just the petty stuff like ‘watch the pitlane entry’, ‘don’t go over this line or that line’ and things like that. It was easier back then because there weren’t nearly as many rules in Formula 1 at that stage as there are today. We went through the warm-up session and, again, Ayrton was first and Damon second. It was all going well.

In the build-up to the race, we did practice pitstops because it was the first year of refuelling. While the guys were doing that, me, David Brown and John Russell, the engineers, sat down and worked out the final calculations for the fuel stops. It wasn’t like today where you can press a button on a computer and it works it out for you. We had to look at the fuel usage from qualifying and from the warm-up and then we were looking to see what other factors we’d have to take into account at Imola. We thought about whether the guys would have to turn up their mixture at any stage, what the weather was likely to do and things like that. Ayrton and Damon were involved in the decisions too, and we came to a conclusion that we were all happy with.

I had these little cards printed up, and I wrote down what laps the pitstop window would be on and then I went around and handed one to every member of the pit crew so there could be no confusion. The cards also said what fuel loads Ayrton and Damon wanted in their cars. Finally, before the race, we had a strategy meeting so that everybody knew exactly what was going on. Whenever you do that, you have to build in a degree of flexibility in case something happens or something changes during the race but that was all agreed. All I remember was that it was a pretty flat-out build-up to the start. Race days were always a blur and it was usually a rush to get my overalls on at the start because I’d be working right up until the last minute.

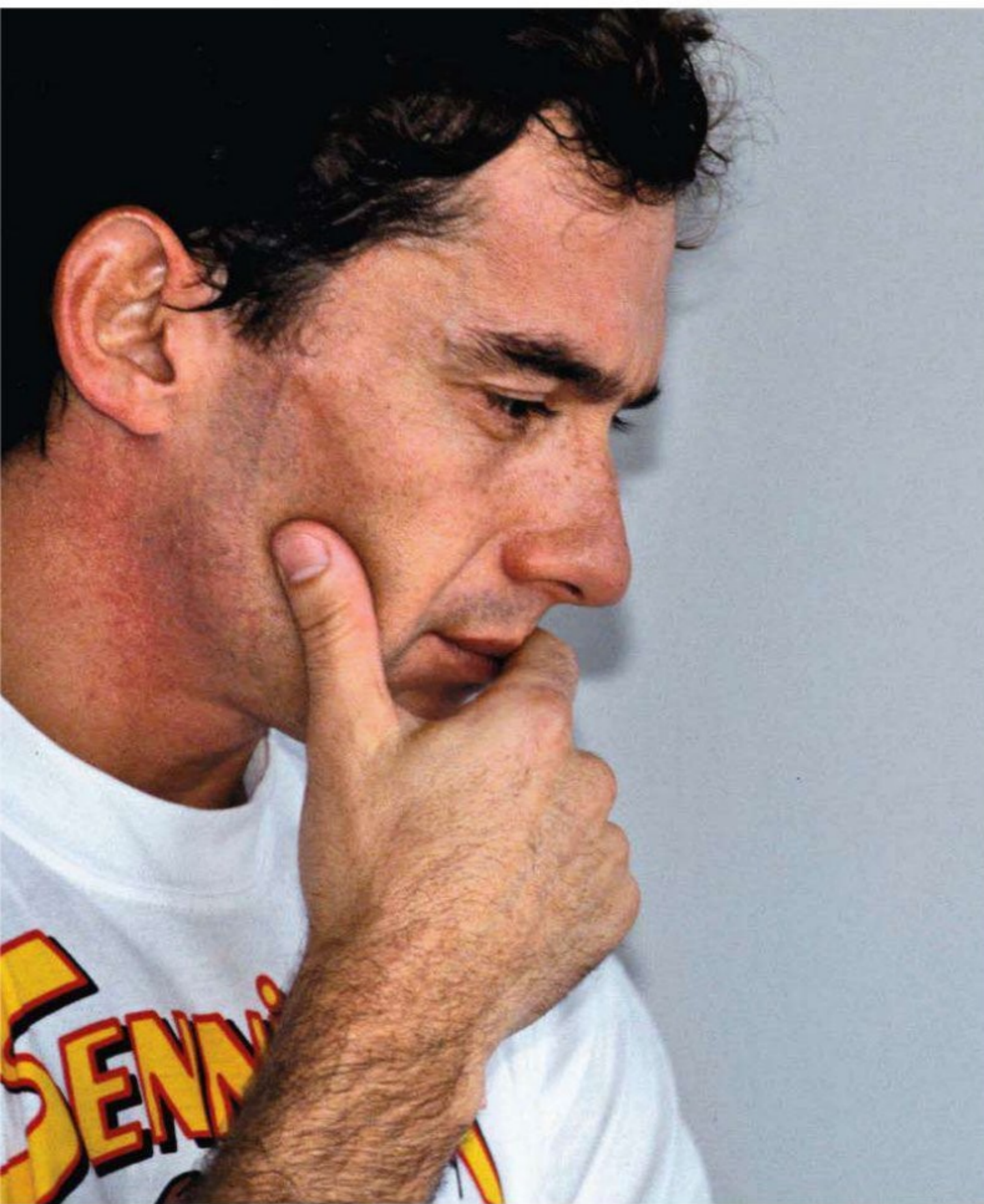
I remember one of the things the paddock was getting obsessed with at the time was Schumacher’s Benetton and its electronics. There was all sorts of paddock gossip about traction control, which seemed to be the norm at the time. Ayrton himself was convinced that there was something different about Schumacher’s car. I know that because I’d gone to meet him after his first-corner accident at Aida in Japan and we walked back to the pits together. Senna was still on

“There was all sorts of paddock gossip about traction control. Ayrton himself was convinced there was something different about Schumacher’s car”

a suspended ban after decking Eddie Irvine after the race at Suzuka the year before, so I thought I’d better go and find him after the Aida crash to make sure nothing else kicked off.

When I got to him, he was walking back and he was very calm. We stopped for two minutes to watch in the infield section. Ayrton said to me that he thought there was something different about Michael’s car. Whether there was or not I don’t know, but Ayrton was utterly sure that there was. On race morning at Imola, I got Richard West, who was the commercial manager of Williams, to get a video camera and go up onto the roof of the garages to record Schumacher’s start to see if he left thick black lines on the Tarmac, like you’d expect.

Everyone was pretty matter-of-fact about the weekend. Ratzenberger’s accident had already cast a



Senna was clearly moved by the death of Ratzenberger in qualifying and was focussed on improving F1 safety



For the third time in as many races at Williams, Senna took pole position for the San Marino Grand Prix, giving him and the team confidence they could break their 1994 duck in the race itself



Ayrton had been watching Schumacher carefully, and was convinced there was something different about his Benetton



At the start of the San Marino GP, Pedro Lamy hit the back of JJ Lehto's stalled car on the grid, bringing out the safety car – one of the first times it had been used since its introduction to F1

dark gloom over the paddock, and then there was another huge accident at the start when JJ Lehto, who'd qualified fifth, stalled on the grid and Pedro Lamy's Lotus smashed into the back of him. Bits flew into the grandstands, people were hurt and there was crap flying everywhere. I turned to someone in the garage and said that I thought the whole weekend was getting a bit like chariot racing. It was just 'wham, bam!' Things were happening everywhere.

I was the lollipop man that day, like I always was. Ultimately, we had all the top crew at Williams and it just fell to me to do that particular job. I didn't mind – I wanted to do it. I was the last of the old school and it meant I was responsible for releasing my car back into the race, with no pitlane speed limit in those days, which suited me fine. Besides, there was John Russell, Patrick Head, David Brown and Adrian Newey up on the pitwall. What the hell was I going to do up there apart from point out the bloody obvious? They were the top men in their field at that time, so I ran the pitlane side of it. That way I could make sure that the fuel was right, that we were ready to go, and that the

ALL PICS: LAT ARCHIVE



To reflect the team's status as reigning world champions, the Williams garage at Imola was the biggest and was located in the centre of the pitlane

pitstops went okay. Frank used to give us a hard time about not being fast enough in the pitstops, so I concentrated a lot on trying to improve that aspect of the team. It was crucial. Not to the level it is now, but it was vital.

After the shunt at the start, the safety car came out. It had been in the rulebook for 12 months and had only been used twice before, so the whole scenario was new to everyone and threw a spanner in the works as far as fuel calculations for the race were concerned. We had to think on our feet a bit but not for long, because the race restarted after five laps. I was in the garage watching on the monitor. Senna held the lead from Schumacher for a lap until he got to Tamburello on lap 7.

We saw the TV pictures... actually the only live TV picture I saw was one where the car disappears behind a wall. I couldn't see it properly because it was a shot looking back from Tosa. I couldn't see the actual impact but I could see the shit flying up and all the rest of it. Then there was another camera shot of the crash and I immediately thought, 'That was a big one.' There'd been some big crashes at that corner before,

like Nelson Piquet in 1987 and Gerhard Berger's Ferrari in 1989. Those drivers had walked away.

I remember looking at it and after probably about 10 seconds I just started saying, 'Move, move.' We'd seen Ayrton twitch inside the car and that represented movement. So there was hope. Initially.

Then there was nothing. It just stopped. It became obvious that there was a bit of an issue but nobody knew how serious it was.

They stopped the grand prix and I went up to Race Control. I walked the length of the pitlane from where we were based in the middle of the pits, because we were the world champions and we had the biggest garage. As I walked, I started to register that it didn't look very good and one of the guys from Arrows, I think it was, patted me on the back as I went past. I didn't acknowledge it at the time but that made me think. I was beginning to realise that this could be really serious.

I got to the officials' office and it was a scene of controlled panic. The officials could see that there was something big unfolding. There was loads of talk going on in garbled Italian; people were speaking at 100mph and it certainly wasn't as organised as it is now. It was all a bit different at Imola. No disrespect to the guys there, but this was a massive incident and there was total pandemonium.

I was up there with a radio in communication with the team, because Damon had gridded up ready for the restart and the crew needed to know what was going on. After a few minutes in Race Control Bernie Ecclestone turned up and started organising it. He was talking to everyone, sorting things out. He became the focal point of the whole thing. He turned around to me

"I got to the officials' office and it was a scene of controlled panic. This was a massive incident and there was total pandemonium. Bernie asked why I was there"

as it was all getting a bit fraught and said, "What are you doing here?" I told him that I'd come to see what was happening with my driver and he just turned around and carried on with what he was doing. He was organising it and I hope he thought 'fair enough' and didn't answer me. He left me there, which was fine.

A couple of unofficial reports came through that Ayrton had a broken shoulder and that he had been knocked out, something along those lines. It came from someone in the control tower who could speak English. Once I had heard that, I decided to go back to the team because I needed to go and tell Frank what was happening. I told him that although I'd heard it third-hand, the report was that Ayrton was basically okay.

In the meantime, Patrick and Adrian had been getting on with checking the remote data, trying to see what had happened because, by this time, there was a picture of the steering column sitting on the sidepod of Ayrton's car. They quite rightly went through the data and told Damon that they couldn't see anything fundamentally wrong with his car.

Eventually, Ayrton's car came back to the garages. The officials impounded it, but somebody, and I don't know who it was, insisted that we could pull the data off the car – or at least get what we could because it was all smashed up on that side. We were able to get some data from it; it wasn't a massive amount, but it was enough from what I understand, and Damon decided to continue in the second part of the race.



Senna at the Brazilian GP in March, his first with Williams, followed by Harrison, Ann Bradshaw and Damon Hill

A big man's decision.

I went back up to the organiser's office but I can't really remember anything about the race from that point onwards. I spent most of the time in Race Control trying to find out from the people there what was going on. I knew by that stage that Ayrton had been taken off in a helicopter, obviously, but everybody was hoping for the best. We thought he might have been a bit smashed up, but that was the extent of it.

After a while in Race Control, I was called into a little side room where there was this Italian lawyer who spoke really good English. He told me what the situation was. He told me that Ayrton had died in hospital. In Italy they treat it as a road traffic accident and so all of a sudden I was the 'responsible' person in the eyes of the law... I had to sign a load of papers... the lawyer was very good and he went through it all with me. It was a total blur... I had to go and get my passport, which they then took off me. Eventually, they gave it back and they were okay with everything. The people at the track were good but it took a while to go through the whole process.

By the time I got back down to the garage, the flyaway Williams crew had gone home and it was just me and the truckies left, packing the things away. I went in to see [Ecclestone's Austrian caterer] Karl-Heinz Zimmermann as he was in the next bit of the paddock to me and we were quite pally because I could speak the lingo. He was in his little unit, very upset, but having a schnapps while he was at it. He's a proper bloke. He kept saying to me, "Come on Ian, you've got to have a drink." I remember saying that I shouldn't because the boys were still there packing up and I really needed to be there supporting them. I had to make sure they were alright and I guess I was on autopilot.

We'd been staying in Faenza and the people at the hotel had been great. I managed to book the remaining crew back into a hotel in Imola overnight rather than go to the airport, which was no easy task in the days before proper mobile phones and internet access. We'd all missed our flights, what with the delay. I guess there were about six of us, and we went out for a pizza. When I got back to the hotel, I managed to get hold of Ann Bradshaw, who was Williams' PR. She was at the airport and she told me that they'd managed to find a side room for the crew to get them out of the way of the press and everything and that the guys had got back to the UK without a problem.

Early the next morning I got a call from one of the lawyers to say he was coming to pick me up and take me to the mortuary. I'm still not sure why they needed me to go, but I did what they said. When I arrived, Senna's manager Julian Jakobi was there as well as the guy from Senna's sponsor, Varig Airlines. It became clear that they were organising everything and it was all under control. The people at the mortuary asked if I'd like to see Senna, but I said no... I squared everything with Julian. I took a taxi back to the airport. Finally, I got on the flight home.

I got back to Heathrow and nobody was there. Normally there would be someone to collect you but there wasn't so I got a cab from Heathrow to Didcot. It was hugely expensive. I got in and the driver was a typical good old London cabbie. He looked at my kit and saw I was from Williams. He said, "Hey mate, bit of a shit weekend." I just automatically responded, "Yeah, yeah, it was," and he told me that he had the daily newspapers in the cab if I wanted to read them. So I sat and read the newspaper reports on the way back to the factory. I was just thinking that the whole situation was so sad. So utterly sad.

When I got back to the factory on Basil Hill Road in Didcot, it was amazing. There were about 200 people there and this was about 4pm. The front gates were just



Senna led the field as it circulated behind the safety car – was it these slow laps that led to the fateful crash on lap seven?



covered in flowers. I'd never seen anything like it. I actually had to get out of the cab to move all the flowers so that the security man could open the gates to let me in. Luckily no one knew who I was.

I got into the factory and there was no one there except Patrick Head. Normally everyone would be in getting ready for the next race, but the place was virtually shut down. Although I was still on autopilot, it started to hit home when I went to the deserted factory. It was a bit strange. Up until then, I'd just been doing my job, and then I started to come out of that mode. Patrick asked how it had gone after the team left and I told him everything was sorted out. It wasn't until I got home and my wife and kids came to meet me at the front door that I just fell apart. I absolutely lost it big time.

Then we were into work at 8.30am the next day. Peter Goodman, who was our company lawyer, came in and took statements from everybody about what they could remember from the weekend. The company

The smashed Williams FW16 was impounded at the track, but Williams managed to salvage some data

offered everybody counselling but not one person took it. The T-car and Damon's car arrived back on Tuesday and by the Wednesday morning, everyone was back in and we got on with getting ready for the next race.

By Thursday night, the team had run tests on the rig at Williams and tried to replicate Ayrton's accident from the data they'd been able to get from his car. They tried to simulate a mechanical failure and, from my understanding, couldn't get it to look the same as the data taken off the car. I'm adamant it happened because it was one of the first times a safety car had been used; the tyre pressures were low, the car was running low anyway and it was full of fuel. If you looked at the in-car footage from Schumacher's Benetton you could see the car was bottoming out really badly from the restart. It was probably a combination of all those things that caused the shunt. I'm not an engineer but I think the thing bottomed out and Ayrton lost the front end.

After Imola, we went to Monaco with just one car. Nobody, and I mean nobody, wanted to be there. Of any race that you've got to do after what had just happened, we had to go to bloody Monaco – the most difficult one logistically on the calendar. The team had to schlep 10 tonnes of kit up to the garages each morning and 10 tonnes back in the evening. What an awful setup.

On the Friday, Karl Wendlinger went into the end of

the barrier and hurt himself badly. To a man, the Williams crew all went and had dinner with the Sauber guys – and we did it quite deliberately I suppose. We sat in their awning and tried to make conversation and support them because of what we'd been through two weeks before. That was Williams and that's the kind of people they had. It was a nice gesture.

The whole atmosphere of the place was down. I remember at the drivers' briefing that people were talking about the start and the first corner and the likelihood of an accident there. I sort of lost it a bit. I said we should start the race under a safety car because they were concerned about accidents at Ste Devote. I remember Gerhard Berger saying no and we had what you might call 'a full and frank discussion' about it. Looking back, I think it was just the emotion coming out.

Damon put the car off on the first lap with broken front suspension after a clash with Mika Hakkinen's McLaren. The mechanics packed up straight away and I sat back in the motorhome, having a beer with Patrick Head and the engineers. We weren't watching the race. I remember Patrick just turning round and saying, "Bloody hell, these things are noisy." None of us wanted to be there. It was a hard weekend to get through and Damon going out early wasn't such a bad thing.

When we got to Barcelona, the fifth race of the year, we were back up to full strength and David Coulthard was in the second car. It was an incredible race and Damon won. Schumacher had been stuck in fifth gear for most of the race and even then you could see the bloke was going to be special – but we didn't care. We'd won. Williams had finished first and that was the race that got the momentum going. After that, we really started to compete. It was a massive result for us.

I've actually got a Renault video that was taken from just over the other side of the pitwall. As Damon's car crosses the line, there's a shot of me, Adrian Newey,

"After Imola, we went to Monaco with one car. Nobody, and I mean nobody, wanted to be there. Damon went out on the first lap and we packed up straight away"

John Russell and David Brown. In it, you can see that Adrian and I just fall apart with the emotion of it all – although Adrian recovered a lot quicker than I did, I have to say. I had to go on the podium with Damon to collect the winning constructors' trophy. It was one of the great privileges as team manager at Williams that I had to go and do it. I had my Ray-Bans on because I was a mess. I didn't want people to see what a state I was in.

I just kept feeling that we were back and the car was better. It felt like we'd seen the light at the end of an awful tunnel. After I'd climbed on the podium and got the trophy, I returned to the team, went straight out to the back of the garage and just bawled my eyes out. It got to the stage where some of the boys were telling me to get a grip and toughen up, but after all we'd been through I just couldn't help it.

It's funny how the emotion of that day comes back to me when I see a crash in Formula 1. It really makes me wince, and just takes me straight back to that weekend at Imola. With Ayrton, we were just beginning to understand him, beginning to see how hard he worked and how determined he was. I'm totally convinced that if he hadn't been killed that weekend, he would've won the 1994 world championship.

Like I said, it was just so utterly sad. And do you know one of the biggest regrets I have? We didn't really have time to get to know Ayrton Senna at all.



The Williams factory gates were already covered with flowers and tributes to Senna by the next day



The race after Imola was Monaco and the front row of the grid was left empty



Harrison's shades hide tears as Damon Hill celebrates victory in Spain

Earpiece



NACIONAL

Alfonso Soriano



Rothmans



RENAULT



ans



NO RALLY JACKET REQUIRED

On a windy day in Wales in 1986, Senna tested a group of rally cars for *Cars & Car Conversions* magazine. Among them were an MG Metro 6R4 and the Ford Sierra Cosworth (pictured) of noted national rally ace Phil Collins. "I think 99 per cent of those people thought I would stick it in the trees," said Senna







Lest we forget that fateful day...

Formula 1 was rocked to its core at Imola in 1994. Many drivers admit now they considered stopping in the aftermath. In their own words, this is how the drivers coped with those devastating events



By
Anthony Rowlinson
Gary Watkins
Edd Straw
Heikki Kulta

5

MICHAEL SCHUMACHER

BENETTON-FORD GRID: 2 RACE: 1



“For me, dying on a race track was related to the past, clearly not to ‘our’ times”

Michael Schumacher

I was always a great admirer of Ayrton. I had seen him at a karting race, back in Zolder, and this guy I didn't know at that time immediately caught my attention: the lines he was driving, the way he was doing it, I just loved the way he was karting there. From that day on I knew his name, and obviously when he entered F1 I still looked at him. And when I got to F1 it was the same, I just loved the way he was driving. So in a way Ayrton was my idol, even if I wasn't happy at first with his approach towards young drivers when I entered F1. But this was part of the game, so it was no big deal.

The 1994 season started surprisingly well for us, and we found ourselves in the position to eventually fight for the championship which was great, obviously. I looked forward to fighting against Ayrton and Imola was the next step in this fight.

I saw his accident but I wasn't informed what had happened. So at first, I wasn't aware of the consequences. But when I heard about it, I remember it was a deep shock. You know, it might sound strange, but that weekend, with Roland Ratzenberger and Ayrton Senna dying, was the first time for me that I experienced that somebody found death through the sport I loved so much. For me, dying on a race track was something related to the past, to the times I didn't know a lot about, but clearly not to 'our' times. The Sunday night after the race I was totally shattered. I was seriously thinking about quitting F1, as I struggled with the fact that people could lose their lives there. I really wasn't sure if I wanted to go on, and I was speaking a lot with [my wife] Corinna about it. I remember at the next test I was mainly trying to find out for myself if I still liked it.

Schumacher and Senna together on the Imola grid. Michael was “totally shattered” by Ayrton’s death



DAMON HILL

WILLIAMS-RENAULT GRID: 4 RACE: 6 (Set fastest lap)



“Information about Ayrton’s condition was not available. We didn’t know until after the race that Ayrton had been killed”

Damon Hill

Imola 1994 was basically the most enormous experience and test of everything in my life, as a racing driver and as a person – certainly of my professional career. It was surreal. At the time it just didn’t seem real and after seeing *Senna*, the film, I realise there were some bits that I had forgotten and some bits that were very uncomfortable. There were things, too, that I really didn’t want to go into again and maybe had shut away.

So many things happened... little things... and then it became a weekend where everything happened and led to one big catastrophe. Everyone was stunned and after that weekend didn’t know how to proceed. We didn’t realise immediately that Ayrton was dead. Nobody really knew. It had only just happened. Real information about Ayrton’s condition wasn’t available to anyone apart from Sid [Watkins]. It wasn’t until the end of the race that we knew Ayrton had been killed. I’d heard that it wasn’t good and the team tried to protect me to some extent. These things are so enormous it takes time for the enormity of it to sink in.

As for the race... does anyone really remember what happened? Just being a grand prix driver on the grid is a bit surreal anyway, you’re so focused on what you’ve got to do. And when something goes as wrong as this, part of you is concerned about what happened. But then you realise there’s not a role for you to play in it. So I felt that we had to go out there and get on with it. That was all that I could do at the time. It was the first European event of the season so there was an added buzz ahead of the weekend that wasn’t there in the previous races. I was still getting used to the added dimension that Senna brought to the event. The interest and intrigue that surrounded him was even more keenly felt when you got to Imola. So it just kind of built and built, and created a lot of excitement.

After his bad start to the season, there was pressure mounting on Ayrton to perform. And I remember AUTOSPORT the week before running a cover that added pressure on Ayrton.

Really we were at the start of a new era. We didn’t really know who Michael Schumacher was. He was very much the new kid on the block and we were all readjusting to this new dimension. When you look back at it and think about it, it’s apparent that there was a sense of a shift into a new era that started at Imola. At the start of the season the mood was that Ayrton had got himself into the best car, in the best team, and another world championship – though it wouldn’t be easy – would be a lot easier than it was actually proving to be.

Then on the weekend itself, to be brutal about it, when Roland was killed, it felt already that things had got as bad as they could get. It didn’t seem possible that it could get any worse. We all believed that we’d got beyond the time when drivers being killed was a regular occurrence. And particularly for people who had come into the sport after that time, or started following it, the fact that drivers were dying at a race was deeply shocking. It all seemed to be contributing to the power of what happened. It hit everyone very, very hard and made lots of people question why should they be doing something that had these consequences. And added to that it was beamed into people’s homes.

The shockwaves had an enormous effect on the sport. From my point of view, my life completely changed at that point. My career was completely thrust into a different trajectory. Imola ’94 was a huge, seismic shift in the sport. And the good thing that came out of it, if anything can be seen in that light, is that car and circuit safety has improved immeasurably. The tragedy is that it took that weekend to make that happen.

Damon and Ayrton had just three races as team-mates



The startline shunt which brought out the safety car: Lamy (right) smashes into the stationary Lehto

6

JJ LEHTO

BENETTON-FORD GRID:5 RACE:RETIRED

“Before Imola, I’d had dinner with Roland, then we drove to Italy. I saw his fatal accident”

JJ Lehto

Imola was my race debut for Benetton as I was still recovering from a huge testing accident at Silverstone in January, in which I broke my neck. It was only 92 days since the accident, but we rushed a bit to get me back in the car and I was still in a lot of pain.

Before travelling to Imola I had dinner in Monaco with Roland, who was my close friend. The next day we drove together to Italy. I saw his fatal accident during qualifying on Saturday.

I started fifth, I think, but the race was the shortest of my F1 career, as Pedro Lamy’s Lotus hit my car from behind, while I was stuck on the grid. The front tyre of Lamy’s car was hurled over the barrier towards the spectators. Four spectators and one policeman were hurt.

Then, later that day, Ayrton, my long-time idol, had his fatal accident in Tamburello corner. I’d been training with him in the gym just the night before. Things like this cannot happen even in the most dreadful nightmares.

11

PEDRO LAMY

LOTUS-MUGEN-HONDA GRID:22 RACE:RET

I was on one side, there was a car in front of me and I didn’t realise that a car had stalled. I had just time to avoid crashing straight into the back of JJ and managed to hit him with my right-hand side.

People didn’t realise at the time how big Ayrton’s accident was initially. I was standing next to some Portuguese and Brazilian TV people and they didn’t know how bad it was. Even when people were telling me that Ayrton was in trouble, I couldn’t believe. I think it was the same for everyone there: Ayrton Senna could not die. It was a difficult weekend, Rubens’ accident, Roland Ratzenberger’s death, my accident and then Senna’s. It was a wake-up call for F1.

GERHARD BERGER

FERRARI GRID: 3 RACE: RETIRED

Most of you are going to ask whether it was right to continue to drive. Honestly, I saw Roland's accident. I saw it in repeat and I know what happened. I know how heavy it was, how bad it was for the driver.

I knew before I went out that the situation was critical. But without even knowing, I could feel it myself. It was the first time that I have found myself shaking after an accident. I was sitting in the car, I watched it on the monitor, and when they started to get him out of the car, I could see that it was going to be very bad.

Of course, in our job you are sometimes a bit prepared to see situations like this. But as it was another Austrian driver, as it was a personal contact to a person, it was even worse. I know that it should not make a difference between a driver that you know and a driver that you do not know. But it affects you in a different way.

I went out from the car. I felt sick. I went to the motorhome and I was shaking, all my body. Then the difficult situation was coming, to say if I was going to drive or not.

I told myself that it was not whether I was going to drive now. The question was whether I would drive tomorrow [in the race] and in the future, or if I was not going to drive at all. It was not related to this [Saturday] afternoon, it is related to whether you are prepared to have this risk or not. It was

not going to make any difference to Roland if I drove or not. But I had to decide if I was prepared to still take risks like this.

Honestly, when Barrichello went off, it gave me a picture of how close sometimes we are between life and death. I felt really on the limit.

But I said to myself, 'Do you want to race tomorrow or are you not going to race?' And I said I was going to race.

From this moment on, I told myself to concentrate on the job, because it was not going to make any difference to anybody. It was a difficult situation and it was very hard."

But Ayrton – I think he was incredibly unlucky to have the head impact where he had it. There had definitely been worse accidents at that corner. It's true that he was worried about safety that weekend, particularly after Roland's accident. He talked to me quite a lot about it and then again after the drivers' briefing on Sunday. I went to the hospital to see Ayrton immediately after the race and that was a very heavy impact for me. He was dead, but on a life support machine and that's when I saw him for the last time. I went to both funerals – Roland's in Salzburg and Ayrton's in Sao Paolo and, OK, that's when you say goodbye in an official way. But what you see at a race track when two of your friends die is what affects you the most.

"But what you see at a race track when two of your friends die is what affects you the most"

Gerhard Berger

Senna and Berger: no longer McLaren team-mates, but firm paddock friends



20

ERIK COMAS

LARROUSSE-FORD GRID: 18 RACE: RET

I sat next to Ayrton in the drivers' briefing on race morning and for the first time everyone was talking about safety. He said, 'We cannot carry on like this.'

Ayrton basically saved my life at Spa in 1992. The weekend before the GP was the Spa 24 Hours and they had removed the inside kerb at Blanchimont and forgotten to put it back for F1. After only three laps of free practice JJ Lehto put dirt and gravel all over the track. I was just seconds behind and went straight off. I had an accident just like Ayrton's. The right front wheel hit my helmet and knocked me out. All the cars passed my car, including my team-mate [Thierry Boutsen], but Ayrton heard that my engine was still running, stopped and turned the master switch off. After that we had a close relationship and we were both shocked by the events of the first two days at Imola.

During the safety car situation at Imola Eric Bernard bumped me and I had a huge vibration, so I decided to stop to get the car checked over. The team was concentrating on fixing the car and didn't realise Senna had crashed. When my car was fixed, I went to the end of the pitlane. There was a big confusion about whether I could rejoin but eventually the marshal let me go.

When I got to Tamburello I couldn't pass because there were ambulances and the helicopter there. I had to stop my car and get out. I could see my friend lying there but couldn't do anything to help him. It was a terrible feeling. I didn't wait for the restart. I left the track and flew home to London.

At first I didn't want to race in F1 anymore but Gerard Larrousse and others persuaded me to do a test and then Monaco, and finally I decided to continue through the season.

It was a very traumatic experience for me; it was impossible for me to talk about it for more than 10 years.



Team owner Gerard Larrousse persuaded Comas to carry on after the devastation of that weekend

14

RUBENS BARRICHELLO

JORDAN-HART GRID: DNQ RACE: DNS

I remember everything about that weekend. I had a good start to practice and we were really well set in the morning. I remember being eight-tenths up on my previous lap, when of course as I was coming up to the end of the lap I crashed going into the Variante Bassa. All I remember about the accident itself was that a very young and very silly Rubens Barrichello tried to go too fast into the corner. Pretty much as soon as I did I said: 'Oops...' It was such a big shunt I don't remember the impact. I just remember the 'Oops'. I can't remember Senna visiting me in the hospital. I don't remember the hospital at all, in fact. But I do remember coming back to the circuit the next day with my broken nose and it was still very hard to breathe. Thinking about it now, it was a *really* big shunt – it was measured at 95g. But because I was basically OK, I went back to England to stay with a friend and watch the race before going back to Brazil. That's where I saw the accident. The atmosphere was already very sad after what happened to Roland. Then with Senna's accident, when he crashed, he moved his head and to us it was a sign that he was still alive, although of course it was the very opposite. It was all so very sad, in every aspect.

Ayrton was the first person whose funeral I attended – it hadn't happened to me then with family, even. There was something wrong about that whole weekend, you know. You may or may not believe in spiritual things, but that weekend the spiritual feeling was all wrong.

"You may or may not believe in spiritual things, but there was something wrong about that whole weekend"

Rubens Barrichello



Barrichello's massive Friday accident had already raised safety concerns in F1 at Imola

Imola '94: a tragic weekend



Larini (left) and Hakkinen joined Schumacher on the podium. But there was no champagne

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NICOLA LARINI

FERRARI GRID:6 RACE:2

“Really the race weekend should have been stopped when Rubens had his big accident on Friday”

Mika Hakkinen

When we were on the podium, no-one knew about what had happened to Ayrton. The race had been stopped, but there was no other information about him other than he was in hospital. But I was worried about my crew because Michele Alboreto had lost a wheel in the pitlane and hit three of my mechanics. On the podium, we were thinking about what happened on Saturday with Roland Ratzenberger, so we couldn't use the champagne. But to imagine that Ayrton was lost? No...

7

MIKA HAKKINEN

McLAREN-PEUGEOT GRID:8 RACE:3

My first memory, of course, is what a horrible weekend it was. Just a black weekend. There is no other way to describe it; nothing positive from it, or to say about it. When I do think back to it though, I do have many positive, human memories of Roland and Ayrton and these guys will always stay in my thoughts. All I wish is that we could turn back time and that it had never happened, but obviously that is not possible.

Really I think the race weekend should have been stopped when Rubens had his accident on Friday. It was obvious there was something about the track, or the combination of those cars on the track. They should have said 'OK, something's wrong here'. And after Roland was killed, well obviously, then, that should have been it. We shouldn't have gone racing. It's easy to say these things now and sure it would have been a tough decision to take at the time, but...

MARTIN BRUNDLE

McLAREN-PEUGEOT GRID: 13 RACE: 8

“We didn’t know that Ayrton was killed instantly. We carried on racing where there was literally a pool of his blood beside the track”

Martin Brundle

My feeling that weekend was that it reminded me very much of the sportscar days in 1985 when we were losing lots of drivers and there was very much a feeling of ‘What’s going to happen next?’ and ‘What’s really going on?’ and ‘Why are they all coming at once?’

At Imola there was Rubens’ accident, then Ratzenberger, then Senna and two weeks later there was Wendlinger’s massive shunt at Monaco.

We hadn’t had a driver death since Elio [de Angelis] in 1986, but there had been a lot of big shunts, so that feeling of invincibility had started to creep in. That made Imola a pretty shocking weekend. I was with Senna in a lift in a little hotel we were staying in the night before his accident. He was pretty upset with the Ratzenberger news.

We had the drivers’ briefing the next day and it was pretty emotional. I can’t pretend to remember the detail super-clearly, but I can remember the room and I can picture myself sitting there. Seeing the *Senna* movie reminded me of some things I’d forgotten and even one or two things that I hadn’t noticed at the time with my ‘driver blinkers’ on.

Things like the shunt at the start, then the hassle in the pitlane, leaving four mechanics needing medical treatment. And one thing that surprised me, watching the film, was how good Ayrton’s car seemed to be. There was one lap of in-car footage before the accident that I hadn’t seen before. That surprised me. I distinctly remember getting back to the grid after Ayrton’s accident. It was a big shunt: I remember ducking around bits and pieces that came back onto the race track. Initially I was under the impression that it was Damon. Then we heard it was Senna. Then all the TV screens in the garages were getting switched off. Then we were told he was OK and we’d all seen him move his head, but we all know now that was almost his last movement.

When we restarted I was thinking it had been a big shunt, but survivable. We’d seen bigger accidents at Tamburello – like Berger’s. So off we went racing. We didn’t know that Ayrton was effectively killed instantly. I was very disappointed that we carried on racing where there was literally a pool of Ayrton’s blood sitting by the side of the track.

After the race there was this atmosphere in the paddock... The thing you noticed most was the deafening silence. People were just mooching about, going about their business. There was a lot of denial going on.

One of the first people to know what had happened was Keke Rosberg. He told me and soon after Ron Dennis asked me what I’d heard. I told him what Keke had told me and Ron said absolutely nothing. He was very close to Ayrton.

Later, I left the track for the airport with Giorgio Ascanelli, who was my race engineer at McLaren and had been Senna’s. We got half way to Bologna airport with Giorgio saying absolutely nothing. And then suddenly he said, ‘And what do you know about the accident?’ And I said, ‘I’m told he’s dead. I’m told he didn’t make it.’

That seemed to set the tone after that. We went a bit safety crazy for a while and got the GPDA reformed. Each of us was allocated circuits to go and look at with regard to the safety aspects. To an extent there was a knee-jerk reaction and we saw tyre chicanes in places like Barcelona. The thing was, we all knew, either consciously or sub-consciously, that there were corners where you could well die if you got it absolutely wrong, or where if something went wrong there was a good chance you could die.

There was a feeling that, as racing drivers, we needed to take control of the safety element. There was definitely a sense of making a statement. Then it began to normalise a bit, but it was a time that forever changed F1. It was also a time when people seemed to become more aware of F1, bizarrely.



An intensely competitive history with these two, but the respect and friendship was always visible

4

MARK BLUNDELL

TYRRELL-YAMAHA GRID:12 RACE:9



Blundell, like all the drivers, had a wake-up call to the risks he was taking every grand prix



The start-line collision brought out the safety car

Obviously it was a weekend with very bad memories and bad vibes, starting with Rubens, then Roland, then the start-line accident, then Ayrton. It seems strange to say it now, but the atmosphere was very subdued all weekend, not like an Italian race at all. I remember sitting in the drivers' briefing on Sunday with this very strong feeling that even after what had happened already, it wasn't finished, there was more to come. There was a sense of realisation that yes, this can happen and that we were risking our lives even if we chose not to think of it like that. We'd put it to the back of our minds, but events brought it to the front.

After Rubens' accident on Friday, there were conversations around the garage, but it wasn't something we chose to dwell on. We didn't want to keep talking about it. I remember saying to the guys, 'We don't know exactly what's happened. We just have to wait.' Any racing driver at the top level will say the same if you can get them to admit it: we have to be able to put things in boxes and compartmentalise. We have a job to do and we have to go out and do it and that becomes your focus, even in the most difficult circumstances.

The worst thing for me, actually, was the conversations with my family, my wife and kids. My eldest was old enough to understand what had happened, but I didn't want to talk to him about it. I remember calling to talk to my mum and dad and that wasn't an easy conversation. Talking to them was quite an emotional release – certainly more of one than you can afford to have in the garage, or with your team. You don't open up like that unless you have to.

“The worst thing for me actually was the conversations with my family. My eldest was old enough to understand what had happened”

Mark Blundell



Panis, in just his third grand prix with Ligier, suffered from this 'nightmare weekend' but did not consider stopping

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OLIVIER PANIS

LIGIER-RENAULT GRID: 19 RACE: 11

It was the worst memory I have had in motor racing to be honest. Everybody was such big fans of Ayrton, and Roland also. This weekend was a nightmare really and it still is, even though it was a long time ago. It's a weekend that in some ways I would like to forget, but it happened and we cannot change that. I wanted to leave the circuit as quickly as possible to try to forget about it, but as a young Formula 1 driver, as I was then, at the beginning of my career [the '94 San Marino GP was his third], there was no question of stopping. But still I felt very sad about everything that happened. Afterwards the drivers did make a lot more effort with safety and the GPDA. It's always sad that it takes something like this to make people respond and to have a big change in safety.

I must say that I am very pleased to see the Senna name racing in Formula 1 again this year. What Bruno did in Spa this year [2011] was pretty special.



Even the magic and excitement surrounding the tifosi at any race in Italy became subdued as events took over that weekend

JOHNNY HERBERT

LOTUS-MUGEN-HONDA GRID: 20 RACE: 10

I was at Lotus that year and we were having a bit of a difficult time as we weren't really up to the speed that we wanted to be. The main memory was really that violent incident with Rubens and then very suddenly with Roland, which was a bit of a shock to us. And then obviously what happened to Senna.

From my point of view, with the Lotus situation, and having a frustrating time there, it was an added shock to the system as we were all feeling a bit low anyway. Very suddenly we'd lost a good friend. Roland was someone I knew very well, as I'd known him since the Formula Ford days and he was one of the last people who used to do the whole lot himself: live in a Transit with his girlfriend, trailer his car around, do the preparation, fuel it, change the tyres, be the mechanics... the whole monty. And of course he won the FF Festival in 1986, so it was very sad that he got his F1 chance only for it to be taken away so quickly. He was a lovely, down to earth guy, very un-Austrian in some ways. The accident happened when he lost his wing and it tucked under the car at 200mph, then he was head-on into the barriers. It wasn't an awful lot different to what happened to Mark Webber at Monza [in 2011], just much faster.

After all this, we were a bit sensitive in the warm-up. When we eventually started the race, we had the first accident with Pedro hitting JJ and the wheel going into the crowd. Then after the restart we weren't aware what had happened to Ayrton... We saw his crash in the race, but none of us knew what had happened to him. It didn't actually look too bad. His car had just stopped moving when I passed it and I could see a crack in the chassis but basically it looked alright, so I didn't think so much of it.

When we found out it made us all very aware of how fragile life is. We knew he used to drive with God on his side and he was very calculated about how he did that: on the edge, with the belief that God was his protection. I knew Ayrton quite well and the way that it all happened was surreal. It actually ended up being a whole month of incidents.

There was Karl's accident at Monaco two weeks later and then, in the same month, Pedro's accident in testing at Silverstone. That gets a bit forgotten about but I was Pedro's team-mate and we were the only two cars on track that day – in fact I was only 100 yards behind him. It happened just as he went out of sight into the old Abbey. After Imola we'd had the big diffusers cut back to the rear axle line, so there was a lot more stress going through the rear wing mounting. Unfortunately Pedro's failed in a split second and as I went round Abbey all I could see in front of me was a smoking engine in the middle of the track. No bits, nothing, just the engine.

I stopped and got out to see what had happened. I went up the banking at the side of the track and only when I got there could I see that he'd barrel-rolled into the pedestrian tunnel. I could see a little flame coming from the mouth of the tunnel and from about 20 metres away, the remains of a monocoque. I realised he was stuck in the tunnel, so I rushed in there. The monocoque had broken in half hitting the handrail going into the tunnel and Pedro was in there, slumped forward with his legs sticking out,



crossed, almost like he was sitting in a deck chair. There was a little fire burning behind him where the refuelling cap was and the paint on his helmet had started smoking. I remember thinking first that I didn't know if he was alive, then that if I didn't help him, his brains were going to get burned.

Eventually a marshal found us and got the extinguisher going, but that just filled the tunnel with powder. Pedro was conscious by now and we got him out and his eyes were massive, out on stalks – he was in a total state of shock, not surprisingly. It all added to the surreal feeling of that time.

In F1 we'd sort of got used to feeling invincible but sadly it took an accident like Ayrton's to make the safety changes that have made such a massive difference today. I was one of only two drivers who went to both Roland's and Ayrton's funerals. Gerhard was the other one. It felt like the right thing to do as I didn't want Roland to be forgotten. Even after all the sadness it's good to remember sometimes that I raced both of them. They're nice memories.

Like everyone, Herbert wanted to know the reasons behind Ayrton's crash, but it would be a while

"I was one of only two drivers who went to both Roland's and Ayrton's funerals. I didn't want Roland to be forgotten"

Johnny Herbert

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DAVID BRABHAM

SIMTEK-FORD GRID: 24 RACE: RET

It didn't start off as a good weekend, and it just got worse and worse. I had to deal with Roland's accident, not just as an individual but also because I had my pregnant wife there. Not just that, with the team being so young and so stretched financially, there was a lot of shit going on. You don't quite know how to deal with the situation like that because you've never experienced it before.

Normally you wouldn't race in that situation: you would pack up and go home. I was asked on the Saturday night if I wanted to go on. Because I hadn't been in that situation, I didn't really know how to answer it. I said that I would do the warm-up and see how I felt. For whatever reason, we were halfway up the times, which wasn't normal. I came into the pits and I could just sense this massive black cloud that had been over the team starting to lift. I did the race for the team, not for myself. I felt that it was the best way for the team to move forward.

The front wing did have a problem and they beefed it up, and Nick [Wirth] swore on his life that it was a lot stronger and perfectly safe. I took his word and did the race.

We took off after the safety car and I was at the back. By the time I got to Senna's accident, the dust was beginning to settle. I thought it was a Tyrrell, not a Williams. We ended up stopping and word went around who it was. At the time I didn't know how bad the accident was; there was no information coming to us.

I only got word that Ayrton had died when I got home and looked at teletext. I must admit that I didn't feel like hanging around [after going out of the race early]. I got a flight that night. It was a massive shock having gone through all the stuff with Roland. I sat there with my head spinning.



“We were halfway up the times in the warm-up which wasn't normal. I felt like the massive black cloud had started to lift”

David Brabham

David Brabham, left, discusses Simtek issues with Nick Wirth and Ratzemberger prior to Saturday's qualifying tragedy

HEINZ-HARALD FRENTZEN

SAUBER-MERCEDES GRID: 7 RACE: 7



The Saubers of Wendlinger (leading) and Frentzen at Tosa

I have tried many times to think back to this weekend and it always stands apart. It had an almost 'mystical' quality, if I can say such a thing.

Now when we think of it we paint it as such a totally depressing, disastrous weekend, but beforehand I can't remember any particularly bad feeling.

So it was quite a shock when Rubens went off in practice, but for me the real shocks started on the Saturday, when my friend Roland was killed, and there was a feeling that things were going to get worse every day and maybe without stopping.

I was close to Roland as we had spent 18 months together racing in Japan before F1 and you know he was really a good person, a great guy. It felt to me like everyone we lost at Imola was a special individual in some way. We'd had a few conversations that weekend and we took some pictures of ourselves together in scrutineering. We were having some fun, you know?

Ayrton spoke to me that weekend, too – I remember feeling quite proud that he took the time to have a conversation. He'd done the same in Brazil and Aida at the start of the year. It was my first season in F1 and he wanted to know more about me, how I was getting to know the business, how I was 'settling in'. He'd started having a chat even earlier, actually, back in pre-season testing at Estoril. He seemed to have a real personal interest in all the young drivers.

When he was killed it seemed all the bad things were coming all together and there were so many all at once. We'd had many accidents before – big ones with heavy

damage, but drivers not suffering too serious injuries – then suddenly the worst ones altogether.

When we got to Monaco two weeks later, my team-mate Karl Wendlinger had his crash in practice and really, then, there was such a tremendously bad vibe. It was disastrous: it felt like this was never going to stop.

Everyone was so shocked and disappointed and it meant that all anyone could talk about was safety. But it did create a very big development in safety in all aspects. In some ways it went over the top, with what we did at circuits at the time, but we wanted to cover every possibility. It was a very fundamental time and it gave a lot of energy to everyone to make changes and improvements in Formula 1.

The accidents were a message for us, I think, that something had to be done and it meant, for example, that we got the GPDA going again, which got the drivers involved in safety issues once more.

The thing I remember feeling during that period was that I didn't really know what to think or do. I was totally confused. It made me think back to one of the first times I ever went karting and one of the kids there was in a really serious accident and it was like a warning sign – like, 'My God, I only came here to have fun and something like this can happen.'

Imola and Monaco reminded us that there was always danger in motor racing and that something like this can happen and that basically you have to be really focused on what you're doing.

"Everyone was so shocked and disappointed, it meant all anyone could talk about was safety"
Heinz-Harald Frentzen

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OLIVIER BERETTA

LARROUSSE-FORD GRID: 23 RACE: DNF

It was a strange and sad weekend. I saw the big crash at Tamburello. I didn't know which car it was, but I knew it was a big one. We all knew the speeds there and that there were no tyres, no protection before the wall. I knew it was a big one, but I never imagined that it was Senna.

There was a red light and we all stopped. There was a lot of confusion. Erik [Comas] had stopped in the pits and gone back onto the track because there was no red light at the end of the pits. I could see on the faces of the mechanics that something had happened. I tried to find out what and the guys said that they thought something bad had happened to Ayrton.

Just before the race restarted, I heard on the radio that Erik would not take the restart. The team said they couldn't find him. I knew something bad had happened. I did my race and when the engine failed I went to the marshals. They said it is a very sad day today. They told me what had happened; there was nothing more to say. It was an extremely sad moment that's difficult to explain.

Ayrton was such a nice guy. I remember at my first GP in Brazil. He saw me in the drivers' briefing and said, 'Ah a new face here.' I said, 'Yeah, it's my first GP.' He told me that if I needed anything, I just had to pop by and see him.

I had a small problem with the engine which delayed me and that saved me from a big accident. In those days you had a foot clutch, and it wasn't perfect. I had a little delay and that was just enough to save me. Lamy hit Lehto and I was just behind. I can't remember everything; all I know is that because I didn't do a perfect start, I was saved a big one.

I also had a big crash just after Barrichello. It was almost exactly the same accident, but I went in backwards. During free practice Hakkinen broke an engine and there was oil at the chicane [Variante Bassa]. I am sure that Barrichello went out because of the oil. There was a red flag, but they didn't see the oil. I was the first car to restart and I arrive at the chicane and went off. I have a picture of my car a metre up in the air, but going backwards.

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KARL WENDLINGER

SAUBER-MERCEDES GRID: 10 RACE: 4

The whole weekend is clear in my mind. Rubens had his big crash and wasn't badly hurt, so everyone said that in a modern F1 car nothing could happen to you. Then the next day we had the death of Roland Ratzenberger. It was a big shock, but it didn't really sink in.

On raceday I remember passing the accident and thinking that must be a Williams. They stopped us before the grid and Tim Wright, who was my race engineer, told me that Senna had had an accident but he should be okay. Then after the race there was the shock news.

I couldn't really see what happened. You were passing that place at such speed that all I knew was that the car was quite badly damaged.

After the race I came back to the Sauber pit and there was a bad atmosphere. I said, 'Hey what's going on?' Mr Sauber told me the news with tears in his eyes: 'Senna is dead.' I don't have the right words in English to explain my feelings. The whole weekend was so strange. I couldn't believe it. Nothing had happened for so many years and then two guys dead. I just got my stuff and left.

"I couldn't believe it. Nothing had happened for so many years and then two guys dead. I just got my stuff and left"

Karl Wendlinger



Beretta had struck a chord with Senna at his first GP that year in Brazil. This was the previous race to Imola, at Aida



FAREWELL TO A HERO

May 1994: three million people line the streets of Sao Paulo to pay their last respects to Senna, whose coffin (top centre-left) is draped with the Brazilian flag. His last journey ends at the Morumbi Cemetery. Among the pallbearers are Alain Prost, Jackie Stewart, Damon Hill and Emerson Fittipaldi



Sitting with Senna

At the start of the 1993 season, which was to be his last with McLaren, Senna shared the secrets of his cockpit with AUTOSPORT

As I'm slim and not too tall, it's not difficult to make the cockpit fit me. I sit as low as possible, to have less turbulence around my head.

I always take a lot of trouble having the seat made and I like to have anti-vibration material on the back of my seat to save my back.

I also pay a lot of attention to the mirrors so I can have maximum visibility.

Because I sit lower in the car, I like the steering wheel to be low too and I like it to have a big diameter and be very thin because I have small hands. I drive with a lot of feeling, so I don't need to put a lot of effort into the steering.

I also like to have everything written on the switches in the car so they are easy to identify and with the semi-automatic gearshift, I like to have a gearshift that has a firm 'click' when it changes.

I take a lot of care over the windscreen too. You have to find the best compromise between being able to see the track and not having too much turbulence around the head. And I like to have my safety belts very tight and prefer to adjust them myself rather than have the mechanics do it.

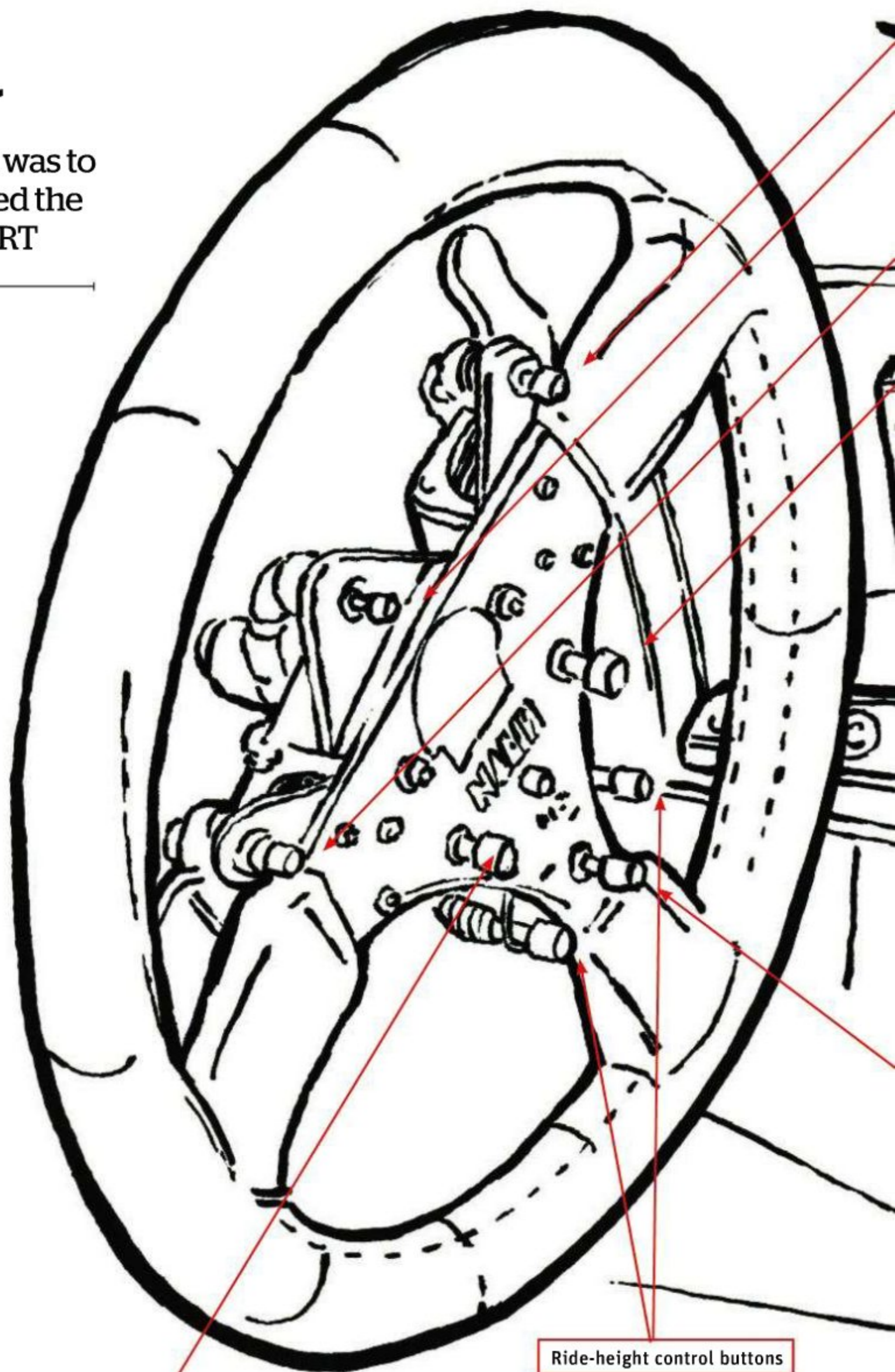
"I work very hard to optimise everything. And I have a special system for warming up the tyres – but I don't want to talk about it!"

I'm good at remembering every detail of how a car performs over a lap and I love reading all of the telemetry readouts from a lap. I spend a lot of time working out how the car behaves when it's in different gears.

Sometimes I lose a lot of time in qualifying working on little details. I work very hard at getting the fuel/air mixture to the engine right and the pressure of the tyres so that everything is optimised. And I have a special system for warming up the tyres – but I don't want to talk about it!

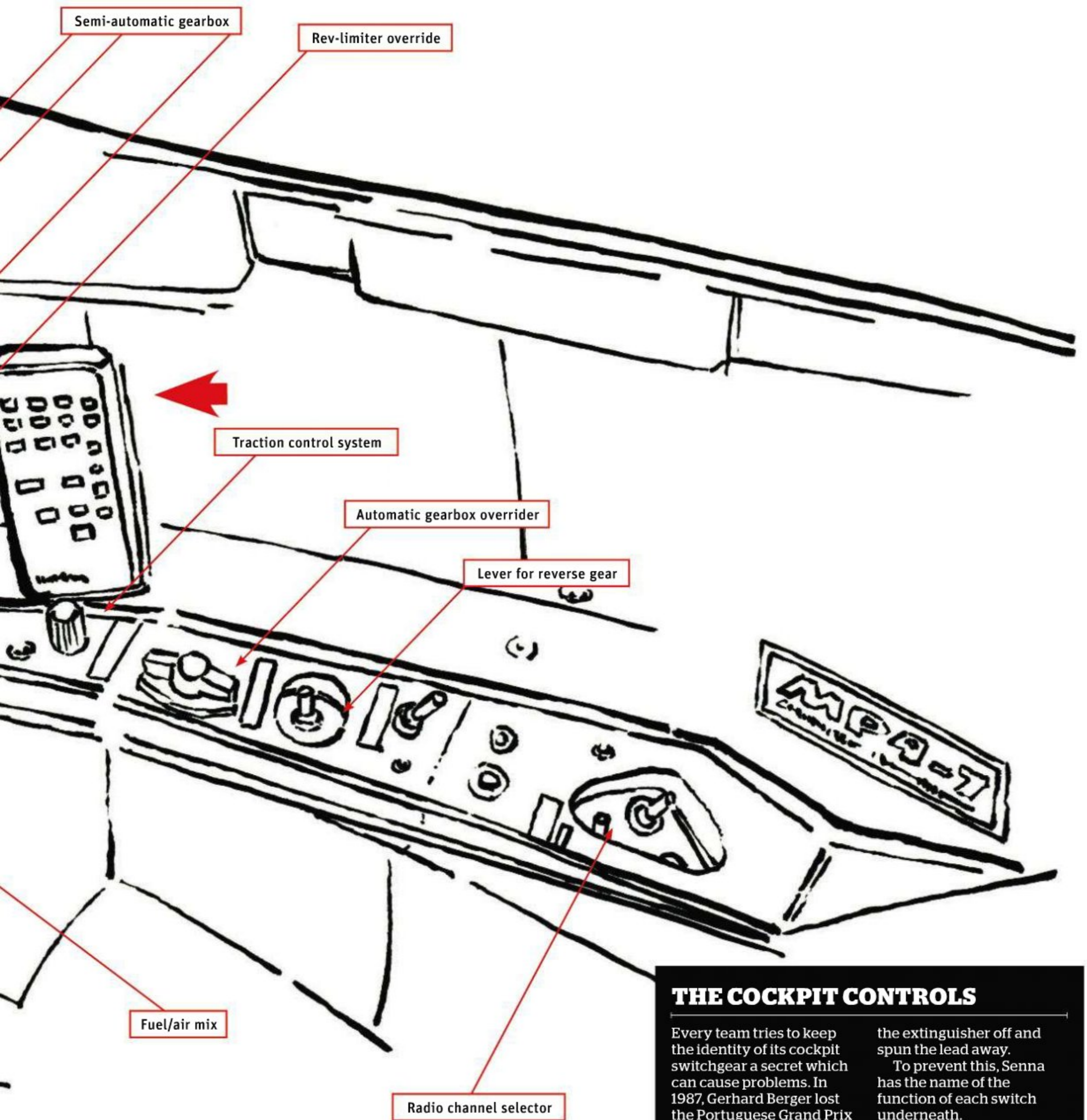
I like to drive with less understeer than other drivers. And I'm good at changing my tactics as the race goes on. I'm aggressive but not like Mansell!

I generally don't need to warm up to do a quick lap in qualifying. And to have maximum speed around the corner I like to enter it faster and leave it slower. I study other drivers a lot and think a lot about tactics and how to stop people overtaking me.



Radio activation button

Ride-height control buttons



THE COCKPIT CONTROLS

Every team tries to keep the identity of its cockpit switchgear a secret which can cause problems. In 1987, Gerhard Berger lost the Portuguese Grand Prix because the ride height button in his Ferrari was unmarked, next to the fire extinguisher. He tried to adjust the ride height, set

the extinguisher off and spun the lead away.

To prevent this, Senna has the name of the function of each switch underneath.

Red-arrowed on his right is a remote control unit enabling the drivers to change the channel on the garage TV monitors.

Senna says...

Senna was a man of strong opinions. He often spoke his mind, but could also be very private. In 1990, he shared with AUTOSPORT his feelings on many people and things...

ON THE CHALLENGE OF COMPETITION

The challenge of competing is so big that it tends to extract the best from your personality. It shows you the best from yourself. At the same time the stress of such a great effort helps a great deal in achieving the goal of knowing yourself.

ON HIS COMMITMENT TO F1

I give a lot. I give everything I can humanly give, but my family is my equilibrium – my balance – and my point of reference in life.

ON WHY OTHER DRIVERS DISLIKE HIM

I think that it is a matter of character and professionalism. It is probably very difficult for people to understand the desire, the determination and the talent which drives one to success. Not many people are in this position. Therefore I would say that we are living in a rarified atmosphere. When you climb the steep hill of fame, difficulties and misunderstandings begin.

ON FRIENDSHIP WITH OTHER DRIVERS

Everybody has a personal way of living, his or her personality, education. There are people you identify with and people that you do not. I have some identification with Thierry Boutsen and Gerhard Berger and we have built up some friendship. It doesn't matter that we are in this business, whether we are rivals, there is some respect among us.

ON DRIVER SOLIDARITY

Unfortunately in our profession, there is no place for feelings of friendship. There will never be decisions taken collectively.

ON JEAN ALESI

He has already demonstrated that he has bravery, talent and the class that is needed to achieve success. What is more, these special abilities will increase in the future. I personally admire him and I think he has the hot blood that this sport needs. You can be sure that his success will create unfriendliness. It is a fact that



Senna leads Jean Alesi's Tyrrell home at Monaco in 1990. It was the young French Sicilian's first full season of grand prix racing, and his bravery and talent was noted by Senna





he is having that problem already and his way of driving and his aggressiveness is being criticised. Some drivers who are established do not accept his lack of complexes. When Alesi sits at the wheel he does not mind who is in front or who is behind. All he cares about is to do the best he can, overtaking anyone, without worrying if the other guy is a World Champion or not. This will give him a lot of problems because that kind of criticism is not fair and honest. It has already happened to me.

ON BEING THE BEST

I think the ambition of any driver is to try and win and be the best. Who is the best? That is the question. What looks good this week, may not be so good the following. For that reason my wishes and my efforts are always aimed in the way of perfection. I believe that I am improving and I find myself in good shape. Therefore, I may already be the best.

ON GETTING THE PERFECT QUALIFYING LAP

I think it is the determination I put into doing it. At the same time, it is the conviction and faith of knowing you can do it, even before you start. This, in my opinion, has allowed me to take so many poles and is a part of my success.

ON THE [1989] WINTER OF DISCONTENT

I have more experience, I am more mature and, above all, much more calm.

ON THE 1989 JAPANESE GRAND PRIX

As far as I am concerned I was the winner in Japan – in 1988 and 1989. The facts, the circumstances and the decisions of those moments don't count for me anymore.

ON ALAIN PROST

I believe that the things that happened between us when at the same team showed me his destructive character, for which I had to pay a very high price. For that reason I have decided to stay away from him. We all make mistakes. At the same time we all have our good points. For me, to be honest with oneself is the most important thing in life and, right or wrong, I felt I should not offer my hand to someone who is not being genuine and did not mean what he was doing.

ON JUSTICE

In the world we live, justice only exists when God decides so. Human nature is, in itself, destructive,

At first, Senna and Prost worked together professionally for the good of the team (left), but the rivalry soon intensified to the point where they couldn't be in the same room. On track, it was fierce, and at Suzuka in 1989 (above) it boiled over as Prost drove into his team-mate. He thought he had won the title – but Senna recovered and won the race, only to be excluded



negative and envious. This is the role that the Devil plays in the world: to instigate men to robbery, crime and destruction.

The Devil is the true prince of our world, but everything that happens on earth has already been stabilised by our King. What is sometimes very difficult for us to understand are the ways He has chosen. In our limited knowledge many things look good and they are not. Everything has a reason and only God knows the harmony of the universe. His will, His motivation, His reasons, He only understands.

Therefore it is my biggest wish to be able to understand a little better the way he has given us life: the sky, the moon, the earth, the sun, the animals, the human beings, the enormous universe that is out there, the unknown space we ignore.

ON STATISTICS

They are only figures, numbers. In 1985 I took my first pole position in Portugal. I thought it was the happiest day of my life. This feeling remained when I got the second. After a certain time these things stop being important and the only thing that counts is to win.





Senna celebrates winning the 1981 Formula Ford 1600 championship at Brands Hatch (above) with wife Liliane and team-mate Alfonso Toledano. By 1990, he was picking up the Formula 1 Drivers' Championship trophy from Jean-Marie Balestre at the FIA Awards ceremony, (left) for the second time

ON HIS HOPES

I would like to have more peace in my work and a healthier environment, which would permit me to have a more cordial and human relationship with people.

ON WOMEN AND SEX

We all know that we need them both.

ON MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

I believe they are a great experience in any man's life.

ON WHAT GOD MEANS TO HIM

Absolutely everything. He is my support wherever in the world I may be. He is the difference between a family member and a friend. Faith in God, no matter who you are, where you are or with whom you are, is essential. If you believe – if you have faith – this faith remains with you.

ON RELIGION BEING A WAY TO WARD OFF THE FEAR OF DEATH

There is a great difference between faith and the fear of death or getting hurt. Life is something God gives us

and in many cases it depends on us to use our common sense to demonstrate to Him that we understand that health and life are a very important gift that He gives us. It is our responsibility to preserve such an important gift.

ON WHAT HE WOULD WANT IF GOD COULD GRANT HIM ANYTHING

I would ask Him to give me proper wisdom to understand people and the real meaning of our lives. To know their attitudes, their reactions, the good and bad. To be able to accept them as they are. But always with a great understanding and in a peaceful manner.

I think if that was ever possible I would also find peace that I need to live my present life and hopefully, the grace of being by His side one day.

ON RISK

I think that risk is very attractive. Racing drivers are used to living surrounded by danger. The bigger the danger is, the bigger the passion. Of course, those who follow this sport are conscious of – and share – our challenge and risks. They are able to feel the fear and the feelings we feel. This is, in my opinion, what allows them to experience sensations that their real life would never let them live.

ON FAIR WEATHER FRIENDS

That is the world we live in. Hopefully your common sense would let you know the difference between the genuine and the false.

ON FERRARI

There are many contacts going on. I have the door open in any F1 team despite all the controversies and difficulties that have been spoken and written about me worldwide.

ON CART

Some years ago it did not exist at all for me. However, it is a category which is becoming bigger and bigger every year. It is still restricted to America, but it has incredible organisation, good promotion and it's very professional. Formula 1 nevertheless is streets ahead, whichever the angle you analyse.

ON JEAN-MARIE BALESTRE

Balestre is a subject not worth talking about. I have no motivation nor desire to talk about that subject.

ON GORDON MURRAY AND STEVE NICHOLS

They are missing. McLaren is a great team, it has good engineers, people who work hard. F1, however, has self-imposed such a high level that no one can allow himself the slightest hesitation. The team has lost many things since 1989. Besides engineers like Gordon and Steve it has lost the advantage from the Honda engine.

ON WHAT TO DO AFTER F1

I think I will use the experience of these years to be able to do something constructive. I think the experience, the good feelings and the things learned in all these years, should enable me to build something positive, not only for myself, but for others, in other activities and different ways of life.

ON SATISFACTION

My personal satisfaction comes from winning the challenges as and when they show up. Very often you don't choose the moment, it just arrives and it is from your ability to react quickly and correctly that the success comes.

The greatest of them all

This tribute to Ayrton Senna appeared in the May 5 1994 issue of **AUTOSPORT**, in the immediate aftermath of the San Marino GP

From the moment he stepped into a racing car, the world knew that Ayrton Senna da Silva was destined for the very top. The young Brazilian had all the hallmarks of greatness, winning races both effortlessly and regularly.

These winning ways continued from his Formula Ford days in quick succession through to his graduation to Formula 1. Three F1 world championship titles, 41 grand prix victories and a record number of pole positions (65) followed, to say nothing of wealth beyond the comprehension of all but the world's richest tycoons. Yet mere figures alone don't even come close to doing Ayrton justice, for he was a very special and intelligent man. Bologna airport was a sad and sorry place last Sunday night. Every face was grim. Nobody knew where to look or what to say. Words were useless: Ayrton was gone and the effect on the F1 community was numbing.

"You know," said a mechanic from a rival team, "my uncle used to work with Jimmy Clark. He absolutely worshipped Jimmy, but he thinks Ayrton was better." Mechanics get to know a driver and his abilities better than anyone. Their faces were a barometer of Ayrton's standing. The Williams team was distraught,

obviously, but its grief was shared by the others.

Senna was, quite simply, the best. And everybody knew it. Ayrton was not so much a driver as a driven man. Never has a racing driver had such intensity of purpose. Although thrice world champion and a multi-millionaire, his desire to win at the start of this year was as strong as ever. Ayrton had awesome speed and a special talent. Immediately he could find the limit in any given conditions. We saw it time without number on cold tyres in the junior formulas and again when he won in Japan last year. Some thought him arrogant, but it was fairer to say that he knew precisely how good he was and he did not tolerate fools gladly.

Ayrton also possessed an unusual conviction about his racing, one that made him stand out from the crowd: he was a most religious man, drawing an inner strength and a seeming air of invincibility from his Christian belief. This made him unshakable, even in times of controversy such as the Japanese Grands Prix of 1989 and 1990 in which he was involved in confrontation with chief rival Alain Prost. Whether right or wrong on either of these occasions, his belief in his actions was total.

Yet Ayrton was a paradox. He could be the toughest

*By Tony Dodgins
and Bruce Jones*



negotiator, he could be disdainful and he would always be serious. Yet he had deep feelings. He gave liberally to charity and, professionally, if he told you he would do something, he always did it.

Emotion ran strongly through him. He was deeply concerned about the well-being of injured fellow drivers. Just last weekend he visited Rubens Barrichello in the circuit medical centre immediately after the Jordan had crashed. He also went to the scene of Roland Ratzenberger's accident. Later, reflecting on that, he was moved to tears.

It is ironic that the safety aspect was starting to gnaw at him. Possibly the passing of years and an appreciation of life heightened the awareness. Increasingly it seemed, he was planning for a life after racing. Tragically he will never enjoy it.

The words of Goodyear's Barry Griffin stick in the mind. Fighting emotion, he said at Imola: "I consider it a privilege and a life enriching experience to have known him. Listening to him could raise hairs on the neck. He had an aura and he was a special man."

That much was obvious at the AUTOSPORT Awards ceremony three years ago. When he spoke, you would have heard a pin drop. There won't be another like Ayrton Senna.

3 WORLD
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