F1 1993 Review

AUTOSPORT

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT WITH AUTOSPORT, DECEMBER 1993



ALAIN PROST
WORLD CHAMPION
WILLIAMS-RENAULT
TOP CONSTRUCTOR

The Year of the Machine

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS: THE TOP 10 DRIVERS ASSESS THE YEAR

The Year of the Machine

THE VERDICT • BY NIGEL ROEBUCK

The 1993 season will be remembered as the year that Grand Prix racing tipped too far in the direction of technology – or, rather, the electronic systems which had come to perform many tasks previously the responsibility of the driver. Gizmos necessarily penalise the great, flatter the mediocre. While one may deprecate the manner in which the FIA bludgeoned the new rules through – by-passing the Concorde Agreement en route – few without vested interests disagreed with their objectives.

Of 16 Grands Prix, Alain Prost won seven, Ayrton Senna five, Damon Hill three, Michael Schumacher one. As expected, Williams-Renault began the year with a clear advantage, but it was then progressively whittled down by Benetton and McLaren.

Prost, back from sabbatical, was full of motivation in the early part of the season, but this diminished as time went by, and it was no real surprise when he announced his retirement. While entirely happy within the Williams-Renault team, he found his resolve worn down by a variety of external elements – not least a conviction that the powers-that-be were out to get him. Yes, perhaps 'passive' cars were more his thing, but the real problem was simply an increasing loss of enjoyment in life as an F1 driver.

For all that, Alain left the sport as World Champion, and no F1 driver can reasonably ask more than that. His departure leaves Senna as the last of the old guard, and while Ayrton may be pumped up at the prospect of a new life at Williams-Renault, there is little doubt that his motivation, too, sometimes slipped a notch or two in 1993. It returned in spades, however, when late-season changes transformed the McLaren.

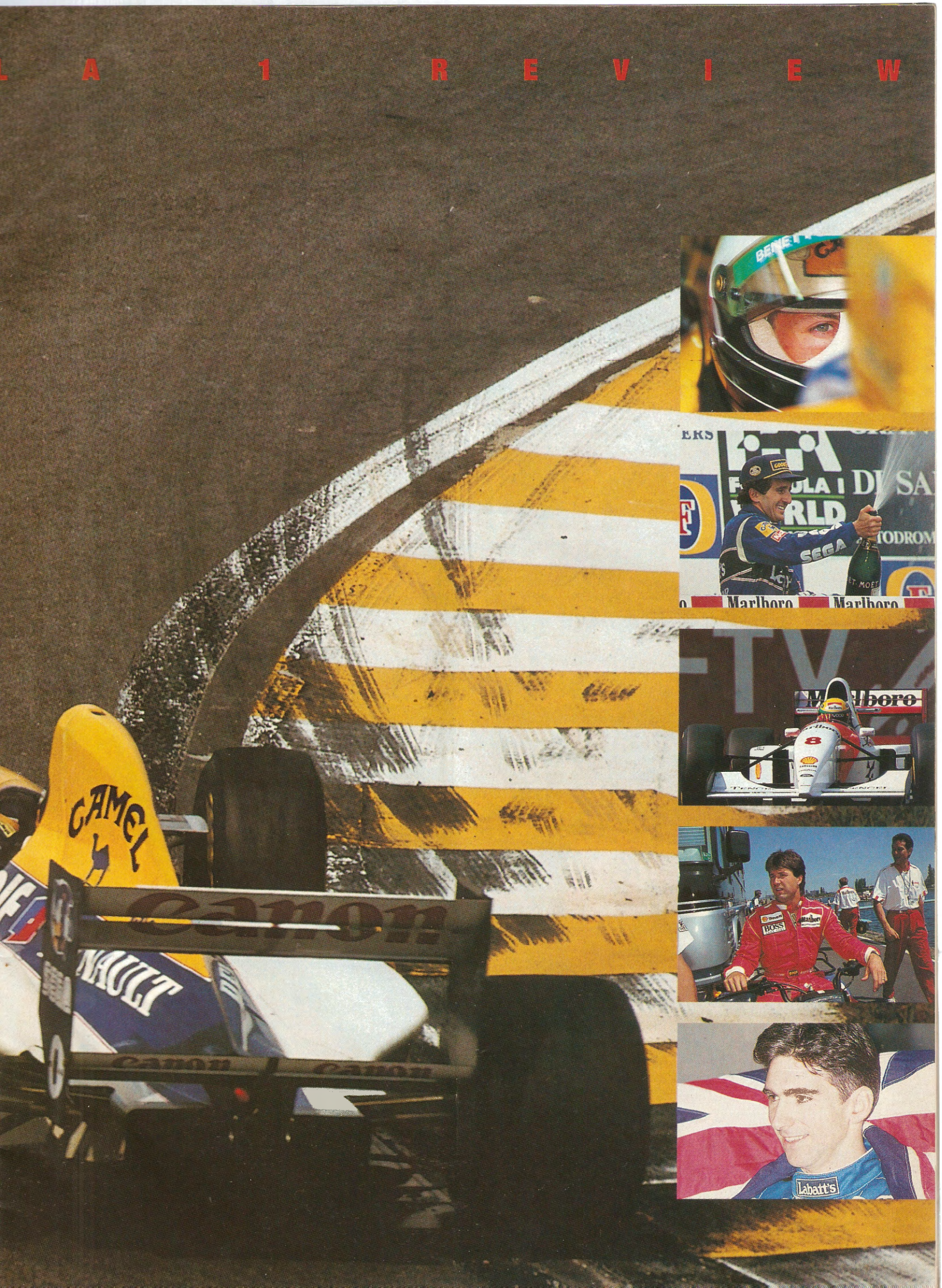
If Senna and Prost have been unquestionably the greatest drivers of the last dozen years, neither consistently impressed this season as much as Schumacher, wonderfully fast in the Benetton-Ford every time he stepped aboard. Mature well beyond his years, Michael, too, will have his World Championships.

Senna, though, believes his major competition in 1994 will come not from Schumacher, not Jean Alesi, nor Mika Hakkinen, but from his new team mate, Damon Hill, who improved startlingly through the season.

There is a feeling in F1 that a new era is upon us, with cars perhaps less sophisticated yet more rewarding, and with the next generation of great drivers ready to make their move.

Whatever happens on the track, the main hope must be for less political acrimony than in 1993, allowing some of us to cling to the tattered notion that this is still a sport.




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But can he beat Senna?

This was the year the dream came true for Damon Hill, his debut Formula 1 season the most successful in history. Joe Saward explains how it happened – and looks ahead to the even bigger test lying in wait for Britain's new star next year

At the 1992 Italian Grand Prix in Monza Damon Hill was at a low ebb. His career prospects did not look good. He had taken over Giovanna Amati's drive with the struggling Brabham team and had managed to qualify just twice before the team collapsed after the Hungarian Grand Prix.

Damon went to Monza out of work, looking around and talking to see if he could sort something out for the 1993 season. He didn't have any sponsorship money to promise and prospects did not look good.

That weekend, as Damon wandered around the paddock like a lost soul, the newly-crowned World Champion Nigel Mansell was in the process of blowing a gasket. Frank Williams would not let Nigel have what he wanted and Williams held all the cards. Mansell didn't like it, but Williams showed no sign of budging. Over the Monza weekend the pressure mounted. On Sunday morning Mansell decided he had had enough. He announced to the world that he was quitting F1. It was typical Mansell melodrama.

That Sunday morning, as the world's press beamed the story around the world, Damon might have allowed himself a moment or two to daydream. He was the Williams test driver. It was logical therefore that Frank Williams would give him the chance to partner Alain Prost in 1993.

But at Monza in 1992 it could only have been a dream. The chance of F1's top team blithely handing its second seat to a Grand Prix novice was so slim it was not really worth considering. Frank Williams and Patrick Head did not have a record of gambling on drivers. Traditionally they had always picked up talents proven with other teams.

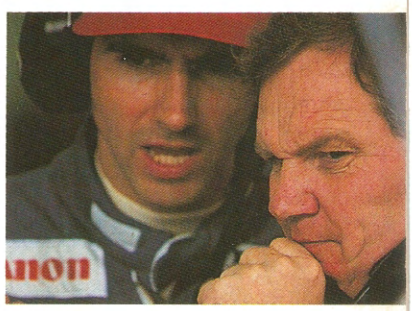
Within three months, Patrick Head, a man convinced that Hill had what it took to race in F1, had ground down Frank Williams's resistance to the risk of signing Hill. Damon was confirmed as the second driver. The many F1 cynics asked why. What had Damon proved in the junior racing formulae?

But good fortune brought its own peculiar problems. The British national newspapers, deprived of Mansell, immediately began to build up Damon, promising the public a new star. Long before he lined up on the grid in South Africa, expectations were high.

Damon did not allow himself to be freaked out by this. He kept his head down, produced quick testing times and settled back to learn as much as he could from Alain Prost. In winter testing Prost never really looked as though he was pushing to the maximum, so no one was really sure how quick Damon was going to be. His F1 critics reckoned Prost would blow him into the weeds.

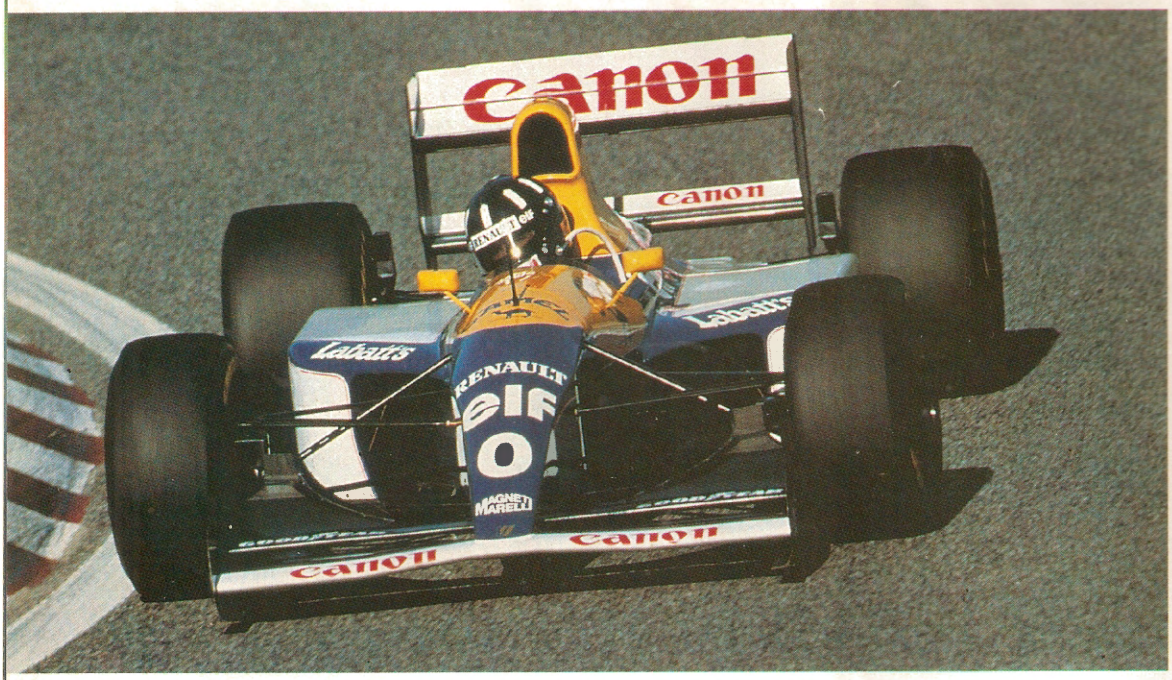
But if the critics were tough on Damon, he was even harder on himself. He decided not to be affected by the hype. His aim was to satisfy himself. The rest of the world did not matter.

There were inevitable ups and downs in the early races but gradually Hill's confidence grew.



Williams technical director Patrick Head insisted from the start that Damon could do the job

'I have a split personality. One half thinks I am better than everyone else and the other half keeps doubting it'



So much of racing at the highest level is now down to confidence. When a driver is on a high, he will get better and better. And Damon did. He had the machinery and he used it. He showed he could beat Prost.

By the end of the year he was third in the world championship with three victories to his name. And all that after taking part in just 18 GPs. It was one of the most successful GP apprenticeships ever. He was re-signed by Williams and will be team mate next year to Ayrton Senna.



Top: Damon drove a spectacular comeback race in Portugal. Left: Respect for the master – Damon followed Prost home in France

It really is an extraordinary story, an amazing fairytale. And Damon is the first to admit it.

'Yes,' he smiles. 'It has been extraordinary. That's fine. I've done it. It is history. But motor racing is not about saying "I've done that". You have to keep proving yourself.'

For a moment he sounds like every racing driver. Perhaps it is an essential part of the psychological make-up of these driven men, but it seems they can never allow themselves to sit back for a moment and enjoy their success. They are always too busy talking about the next race. As soon as a chequered flag is waved they seem to be waiting for their next green light.

'Now I must think about next year, and make sure I have the best second season in F1 history'

One is often left wondering if they really can be so focused or whether it is just a pose to enhance their 'professionalism'. When you talk often enough to F1 drivers you find out that most of them say what they are supposed to say and not what they really think. The younger ones do not know the difference because they have lived and breathed racing from their early childhoods. They don't know anything about life and cannot tell you what they like to do in their spare time – except fitness training. They are boring 24-year-old plastic Action Men who can talk of nothing but racing. Only as they grow older and richer do they begin to realise that there is more to life than motor racing; that there is such a thing as family life or intellectual activity.

Damon is different. He was a late-starter in motor racing, a late-starter in F1 and is now a man in a hurry. He has a sense of perspective about F1 and is willing to admit that he has his faults. He seems like a rounded character, but is he?

'Actually, I have a split personality,' he admits. 'One half of me thinks I am better than everyone else and the other half keeps doubting me. If other people doubt me the half that thinks I am better comes out, but sometimes I have doubts and need to prove myself to myself. So I am motivated by this stick-and-carrot routine.

'Now, with such a good season achieved, the doubts are back. Now I have to think about next year and make sure I have the best second season in F1 history. I have to keep it up. Motor racing is about consistency of performance. People do not pay any attention to flashes in the pan.'

Damon's detractors agree. They argue that his performances, while impressive for one of his experience, were largely the result of a remarkable car coupled with Prost's unusual style.

Alain has never been one to humiliate his team mates. He drives only as quickly as he needs to win and in the past this has made his team mates look good. But, with the notable exception of Senna in 1988, Alain has beaten all of them. Senna is a very different animal because he has always worked on the principle that racing is a war. A team mate is there to be beaten – annihilated if possible. The basic truth is that while your team mate must be your closest ally, he must also be your worst enemy. A driver's value and reputation in F1 these days are based solely on who he has beaten in the same machinery.

Senna will be the acid test for Hill. Giving a good account of himself against Prost will not be enough. If he can hack it with Ayrton the Hill critics will disappear – and the Hill supporters, including the national newspapers, will have been right.

'Everything will be totally different next year,' predicts Damon. 'We will have cars with passive suspensions and there will be different team mates and more competition.

'It's going to be a totally different ball game, so I'll have to start all over again.'

Johnny Herbert

Lotus-Ford 107B

1993 FIA Formula 1 World Championship



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Andretti: the true story

He was the subject of incessant criticism through the year and eventually left McLaren under a cloud. What really happened to Michael Andretti in Formula 1, asks Maurice Hamilton

It would be impertinent to suggest that Michael Andretti was a slow-moving target for his critics, but there is no question that he was easy meat for them.

In the first three Grands Prix, Andretti completed just four laps and that set in motion a disastrous sequence of events. By the time he reached Silverstone, where he spun off at the first corner, the case had been closed. The entrenched belief was that Indycar drivers couldn't hack it in F1.

The news that Andretti would not see out the season came as no surprise; a devastating and public put-down for a driver of Andretti's standing and ability. The frustration was immense, particularly as his last Grand Prix brought a podium finish at Monza, in many ways the spiritual home of motor sport for the Andretti dynasty.

That was part of the trouble. Michael was shouldering the family name in the international arena and, for the first time, he was doing it without parental guidance. Much of his success in the past had come under the watchful eye of his father, Mario. Michael could literally get in and drive brilliantly without worrying unduly about anything else. It was the worst possible preparation for what was to come.

Michael not only found himself in foreign territory but, through no fault of his own, he discovered that the goal posts had not simply been moved, they had been redesigned and placed out of sight.

When agreement was reached with McLaren, Andretti had hoped to enjoy Renault power in 1993. The customer Ford deal was a disappointment, albeit one Andretti could live with because his performance yardstick, Ayrton Senna, would have the same equipment. But what Andretti could not hope to cope with was the swingeing reforms which reduced the number of practice laps and prevented pre-race testing at most circuits. Andretti already had one hand tied behind his back. Now they were attempting to blindfold him as well.

'If I had known all those things were going to change,' he says, 'I wouldn't have done the deal. It couldn't have been worse because every single move seemed to be going against me.'

Andretti had to learn the circuits and, due to a limited amount of testing, get to grips with the technology packed on board the MP4/8. On top of that, he had to adjust to the impersonal and frequently hostile F1 environment. He was to quickly discover that the intensity of life in the cramped garages at Interlagos is far removed from the warm atmosphere of the cosy paddock at Phoenix. And, apart from the company of his wife Sandy, Michael was completely alone. The one person with whom he communicated more than any other about racing was Steve Hallam, a sincere and vastly experienced engineer whose previous drivers had included Ayrton Senna.

'The whole environment was different for Michael,' says



Andretti (left) faces up to reality with McLaren boss Ron Dennis. McLaren said it would not stand in Andretti's way if he wanted to quit





Andretti already had one hand tied behind his back. Now they were trying to blindfold him as well

Hallam. 'Normally, drivers come from F3 or F3000 and, because of that, they have been on the fringes of F1, soaking up information. They form a picture before they even arrive. Michael was coming in completely cold.

'He needed help,' Hallam goes on. 'But the word should be used in the right context. I wasn't teaching him to drive or learn the circuits or anything like that. I was trying to help him get the best from the car and learn about the difference in technology between Indycars and F1. And, of course, the limitation placed on the number of laps was a big problem. We dreamed about a return to the situation where you could put on an old set of tyres and go out for 20 or 30 laps just to learn the circuit and feel at home. The fact that he couldn't do that had a marked effect, one which was even more pronounced because he was coming from outside F1.'

Driving errors were compounded by an unbelievable run of bad fortune and the culminative effect was an erosion of Andretti's confidence. No longer

FIA's high-o

There were more wrangles, rows and rule chan time since the wars of a decade ago, and it all l

'Don't tell my mother I'm in politics,' goes an American saying from the Depression. 'She thinks I play piano in a whorehouse.'

Politics abounded in Formula 1 through 1993, to a greater degree than at any time since the days of the FISA-FOCA War, back in 1980/81. It was a year of revolution and revolt, during which the governing body bared its teeth in a manner not seen even in Jean-Marie Balestre's most militant period.

Back in those days, of course, Bernie Ecclestone and Max Mosley were the poachers in the game, taking on the Establishment. And when the battle with FISA was done, the two of them were instrumental in conceiving the Concorde Agreement, under which Formula 1 rules stability was theoretically guaranteed.

Now, a dozen years on, they are the gamekeepers of the estate, and their own document – it seemed – had come back to haunt them. In February FISA – now the FIA – announced its intention to introduce major technical rule changes for 1994, and, in so doing, appeared blithely to ignore the Concorde Agreement, for, under its statutes, any such changes for 1994 should have been announced not later than 31 December 1992.

Ecclestone argued that the Concorde Agreement no longer had any relevance.





Above: (from left) Ron Dennis, Bernie Ecclestone, Frank Williams and Max Mosley, chew the fat as the technology war hots up. Below: The anti-technology lobby was led by Benetton's Flavio Briatore, here with Jean Todt of Ferrari, one of the other teams pressing for change

'It was a peace document, drawn up at the end of a war between FISA and FOCA. But we've outgrown it now, because there isn't a war any longer.'

What the changes amounted to was a ban on 'gizmos', the electronic systems which have burgeoned through F1 in the recent past. Mosley – formerly a firm advocate of technological progress in F1 – described them as 'driver aids'. Conceding that he had performed something of a volte-face, he suggested he had not appreciated how far the electronic systems had progressed. Yet, as long ago as 1982, Lotus had raced with active suspension, and by 1989 Ferrari was using a semi-automatic gearbox.

Mosley then painted an Orwellian picture of the sport's future, were not such systems to be outlawed. Ere long, he suggested, a racing driver would be required simply to hang on.

There was no denying the logic of much of his argument. This was indeed primarily a drivers' World Championship, and devices serving to minimise a driver's contribution might therefore be considered inappropriate. But his other stated motive for change – helping the smaller F1 teams – was generally greeted with some scepticism.

If FISA were truly concerned with the plight of the financially hard-pressed, surely a massive first step would be to allow them to campaign other cars, rather than insist on their building their own vehicles.

When the plan to ban gizmos was announced, the reaction within F1 was mixed. The smaller, poorer, teams were in favour, of course, yet so also were such as Benetton and Ferrari – which meant a field day for the cynics. Flavio Briatore, they murmured, will do whatever Bernie wants, and Ferrari... well, Ferrari want the systems banned because they cannot make them work.

Doubtless it was an unworthy thought, but many suspected that the over-riding motive behind the changes was to spice up the show – The TV Show. F1 may have easily maintained its reputation as the technological cutting-edge of motor racing down the years, but the quality of the actual racing – cars overtaking cars – left much to be desired.

Before the season began, a whole series of fatuous suggestions – for example, weight penalties for cars, calculated on points scored in the previous season – was put forward to make F1 more artificially competitive. Mercifully, they came to nought.

It was easily understandable that such as Williams and McLaren – teams which had made the electronic systems work – felt hard done by, punished for their success. Frank Williams and Ron Dennis said they had no intention of accepting the proposed changes.

Thus the ambience of F1 was poisoned, and you began to wonder at a multi-million dollar business in which men behaved like spiteful little boys.

Williams, for example, had missed by hours the deadline for

octane soap

ges in Formula 1 this year than at any other left a nasty taste, reports Nigel Roebuck

formal entry of the 1993 World Championship. In any sane world, this would have caused no problem; if all other team owners agreed, Frank's entry would have been instantly accepted. But when it became clear that Williams would not readily accept the disregard of the Concorde Agreement, go along with the rule changes, Flavio Briatore and Giancarlo Minardi said, very well, they would not accept the Williams entry.

Ultimately, this was resolved, but it was one of several episodes which left a nasty taste. The next concerned the Williams number one driver, Alain Prost, hauled before the beak in Paris for allegedly bringing the sport into disrepute by criticising FISA in a magazine interview. At Kyalami, Ecclestone suggested darkly that he would be 'surprised' if Prost were not banned for a while.

Again, the thing was resolved; again the taste was nasty. Given that other drivers, notably Ayrton Senna, had previously attacked FISA with both venom and impunity, the governing body's action against Prost seemed wholly inappropriate. Alain may have survived this particular encounter, but he came to feel through the season that he was a marked man, being punished in other ways, and if this sometimes smacked a little of paranoia, yet also it seemed to have plenty of evidence on which to feed.

As ever, the F1 teams played straight into FISA's hands. When Mosley suggested, very well, if you don't like our rules, come up with some of your own, there was predictably not a hope in hell of concensus. In Montreal, therefore, the governing body gave them a jolt. After scrutineering, FISA's technical steward decreed that all cars with active suspension and/or traction control were in violation of the rules.

This accounted for virtually the entire field, and at Magny-Cours and Silverstone the procedure was repeated.

Mosley made no bones about it: 'On February 12, at a meeting of the F1 Commission, certain decisions were taken. Had they simply been accepted, without further controversy, there would have been no need to consider any... further point.' There was the unequivocal message, then: accept that active ride, etc, are illegal in 1994, or they become illegal right away. In the middle of a season.

Williams and McLaren appealed against the scrutineer's findings, and the teams gathered for a crisis meeting at Hockenheim, now well aware that real pressure was on.

If they did not go along with FISA, they knew, the appeal had no chance of success, and, at the next race in Hungary, cars with active ride and/or traction control would be disallowed.

Thus they agreed – or appeared to, anyway. Ecclestone was asked what had motivated the teams. 'Terrorism!' he laughed. That, one team owner commented, was rather close to the truth.

'No, seriously,' said Ecclestone – who is at once an FIA vice-president and FOCA president – 'it was time for people to stop worrying about their own tiny problems, and consider the long-term future of F1.'

The ambience of F1 was poisoned, and you began to wonder at a multi-million dollar business in which men behaved like spiteful little boys

Williams and McLaren, however, did not consider their problems 'tiny,' and reasonably so. Incalculable hours and dollars had gone into perfecting systems which were now suddenly obsolete. Even at Adelaide, the last race, no designer seemed entirely certain to which rules he would be working in 1994.

'I don't really care what the rules are,' Patrick Head repeatedly said, 'so long as I know what they are in good time – so long as we have stability, in other words. Under the Concorde Agreement, it's quite clear that, to introduce new technical regulations, you must give more than one year's notice. And that FISA failed to do, right?'

Right. That much was undeniable. Head, interestingly, always agreed that, for the sake of racing as sport, there was an argument for changing the rules, eliminating some of the gizmos which served to dehumanise it. The majority went along with that.

Ecclestone persistently denied that the Concorde Agreement had been broken. 'It's just that the changes were made a bit late, that's all.' But that, really, was the whole point. It is the manner in which the governing body's victory has been achieved which leaves a wound which may take a long time to heal. Can anyone play the piano?

The top 10 tell all

The highs, the lows, the triumphs and the disappointments — all is revealed as the year's 10 most successful drivers spill the beans on the 1993 season



1 ALAIN PROST (France) Williams-Renault 99 points

Of course I was pleased to win the World Championship again. On the sporting side, and within Williams-Renault, the season was wonderful. There was a very good mentality in the team and I depended on them a lot because I had no experience of active cars. From a driving point of view, I admit I prefer passive ones. Psychologically, the season was strange, because, from a media point of view, the championship was decided before the first race. That made the job less fun; winning wasn't so satisfying and losing was considered a disaster. But I retired at the top, which must be the best way.

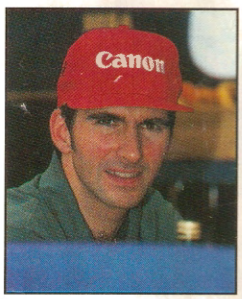


2 AYRTON SENNA (Brazil) McLaren-Ford 73 points

My victories this year were all very special. The low point was halfway through the season when we were finding it extremely difficult to improve our performances and as a result we were losing our competitiveness bit by bit.

To some degree the discussions and negotiations regarding the future were also hard because they take a lot of thinking about and a lot of time. There was already enough to think about on the circuit, trying to get the best out of our car in each race.

It's been very challenging with the continued development of the technology and the introduction of different systems in the car and the engine. The electronics were very sophisticated in our car. But we didn't get full use of them because some fundamental parts of the car were not working as they should and that limited the capabilities of the electronics.



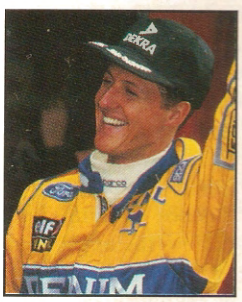
3 DAMON HILL (Great Britain) Williams-Renault 69 points

I think I've done a brilliant job. It was an excellent season for someone thrown in at the sharp end of F1 with so little experience.

The low point was South Africa, but after that it just got better and better. I know 100% more about a season of F1 than I did when I started and I can use that to good effect in the future.

I know I have the fitness and the speed in the races. I would have liked to have outqualified Alain a little more often and I need to work on that because next year Senna is going to be extremely difficult to overhaul in that department.

I feel I have been a pretty strong competitor. There have been loads of Grands Prix with changing conditions where you have to make tactical decisions about pit stops and new tyres, and that has given me invaluable racing experience.



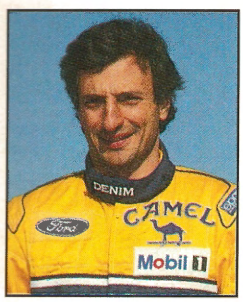
4 MICHAEL SCHUMACHER (Germany) Benetton-Ford 52 points

I have had a good year, but I didn't manage to get the results we should have got, although everyone tried very hard.

I was delighted to win in Portugal but there might have been other wins. At the start of the year we didn't have traction control and that was a problem until Monaco. After that the car was very good and competitive although sometimes quite difficult in qualifying. Normally we were able to get good performance in the races.

We had a problem with software for the traction control towards the end of the year, which made things more difficult. I also had some trouble with my knee problem which deteriorated during the year.

My knee has been bad for a long time but towards the end of the year I couldn't ride a bike or jog. I had to swim to keep fit and I don't like swimming!

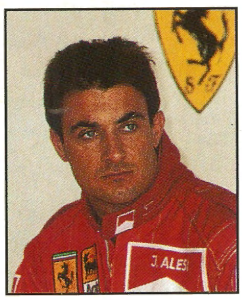


5 RICCARDO PATRESE (Italy) Benetton-Ford 20 points

I was expecting better results this year. The first part of the year was really poor but it got better. Michael has always been quicker than me and this year his morale was higher. That can make the difference. When you are down you are slower.

I know that I was quicker in 1991 and 1992. I know my character so I know why. If you look at athletes, some years they go well, some years they do not. It is a question of form. This year my form was not very good.

From a technical point of view Michael was able to use his car's grip better than I could. The grip was not sharp and it did not give me confidence to go quicker. I think he is able to use this car better than me, but at the end of the day fifth is still fifth.

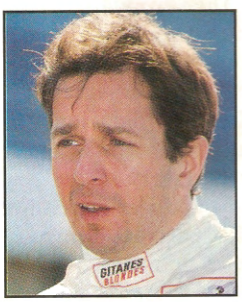


6 JEAN ALESI
(France)
Ferrari
16 points

I am happy with the season because we were more competitive at the end of the year than we were at the beginning. The start of the year was very bad and we were nowhere near the pace, but we did a lot of work and things gradually began to improve. By the end of the year we were fighting for the second and third rows on the grid.

I had some good races. The best was at Monza. It wasn't really my best race, it was best because Italy was following me. When I finished second Italy was happy and that was wonderful.

It is annoying that I have not yet won a Grand Prix but it is not the end of the world for me. I know I can do it and when everything comes right I will be able to do what is necessary and then we can go and have a big party.

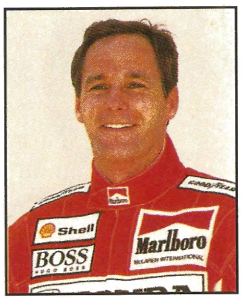


7 MARTIN BRUNDLE
(Great Britain)
Ligier-Renault
13 points

Basically I am happy. I started the year carrying a lot of frustration with me because of the whole Benetton/Williams saga over last winter. That came out in all sorts of negative ways but then I got my head together and I don't think I've driven better.

There were frustrations like at the British GP when the gearbox let me down. Then there was the totally ridiculous stop-go penalty in Germany.

After that, my progress came to a grinding halt. That goes for the team as well. In July we had the most motivated team in the pitlane, and by the end of August we had one of the least. Suddenly we were struggling. That was just a case of inexperience.



8 GERHARD BERGER
(Austria)
Ferrari
12 points

I expected a year like this when I signed my contract with Ferrari. On the one hand it was a very good season because we started seven seconds off the pace and by the end of the year we were only half a second off.

I am sure I played a big part in getting us there. That is important to me because it shows my experience helped the team and from this point of view it was a fine season.

On the other hand I have had a lot of big crashes. Two of them were my fault — in qualifying at Hockenheim and in Adelaide — but in other places I couldn't do anything, like with Andretti in Sao Paulo and when Jean didn't see me in practice at Monza.

Monte Carlo was a good race for me. If I hadn't been held up by Jean, I would have been behind Hill 10 laps earlier and that could have made a bit of a difference, but 'if' doesn't count in F1, does it?

'I think I've done a brilliant job. It was an excellent season for someone who was thrown in at the sharp end'
DAMON HILL



9 JOHNNY HERBERT
(Great Britain)
Lotus-Ford
11 points

I feel pretty frustrated because when we went to test at Paul Ricard last winter the car looked to be very good. It was quicker than the Benettons, about half a second slower than the Williams and quicker than the Sauber, which at that particular time was going very well.

That gave me a lot of confidence before the season started. But, when we went to South Africa, it did not work and it never really worked thereafter.

It seems to have been a problem with the active suspension system. We haven't been able to understand why most of the time it doesn't work. When it was right it went quicker, but that only happened three times and it wasn't enough.

Personally my best race was Silverstone, where I had a good fight with Martin Brundle and Patrese. It was a good strong performance rather than just hanging on and waiting for people to drop out.



10 MARK BLUNDELL
(Great Britain)
Ligier-Renault
10 points

You have to remember that this was only my second full season in Grand Prix racing and that I wasn't racing F1 in 1992.

I think I had some good results, but at the same time I had some bad results as well. There were other times when I had the chance to do well but through one fault or another it didn't happen. I have certainly learnt from my mistakes.

I think my world championship standing should be a bit better, but I am still 75% happy with what I have done. I know there is still a lot more to come from me.

The team has done a good job although the latter part of the year was difficult because of the political problems to deal with.

Williams: The best seat in the house



For the second year in succession Williams-Renault dominated Formula 1, winning the Drivers' and Constructors' titles. Nigel Roebuck analyses Williams's formula for success and on the following pages looks at the teams who were left in their wake

All was very different at Williams in 1993. For the first time in 15 years, both drivers were changed for the new season, for Nigel Mansell, having rejected a stipend well in excess of what Alain Prost was happy to accept, had scuttled off across the pond. And Riccardo Patrese, unwilling or unable to wait for a firm decision from Frank, accepted a Benetton offer.

While Prost was firmly aboard, a long time passed before Williams finally settled on Damon Hill for the second car. The team's technical director, Patrick Head — a strong believer in the importance of continuity — was delighted. If Damon had done only a clutch of Grands Prix in a joke of a car (Brabham), he had served admirably as Williams test driver, and was probably more familiar with the team's various electronic systems than any other driver.

This was going to be significant, for to Prost everything was unfamiliar. While he had been on sabbatical, in 1992, Formula 1 underwent a technological revolution. The Ferrari he had driven in 1991 came with a semi-automatic gearbox, but not much else in the way of gizmos. With 12 years of F1 behind him, he was effectively starting again.

Alain saw this as a new challenge, and relished it. He had kept ferociously fit, and, once his neck muscles built themselves up again, quickly settled to what he has always found most satisfying in motor racing: testing, learning, evaluating, improving the car.

While all in the team were soon impressed by his desire to involve himself in every technical aspect of the car, some were a little nonplussed by his manner of testing. All those years with Mansell had led them to expect the quick lap on fresh tyres at the end of each day, but Prost showed no such inclination. Was he, some began to murmur, perhaps not as quick as he had been?

Their fears were groundless, based on a lack of familiarity with their new driver's methods. Alain was unconcerned. 'I have always,' he said, 'tried to drive at around 80% of my potential in testing, and to keep it constant. That way you know that any improvement in the times is coming from progress with the car. Am I as quick as before? Until we get to a race, I won't know, but I think the quick lap – when it matters – will be no problem.'

He was right. At Kyalami he and Senna fought their own personal battle for pole, a clear second and a half faster than the rest. In the race, Prost made the first of many poor starts, and had to chase the McLaren, which he duly overtook, then pulling away to a conclusive victory in his first race for 18 months.



The only blot on his landscape was a forthcoming FISA tribunal, which he was summoned to attend in Paris the following week. In a magazine interview, published during the winter, he was alleged to have made remarks derogatory to the governing body, and was accused of bringing the sport into disrepute.

In light of unpunished behaviour by certain other drivers, notably A Senna, FISA's calling Prost to account seemed somewhat draconian. There were suggestions of a multi-race ban – some unworthy souls even suggested that the consequent enlivening of the championship was a possible motive. Shocking.

Rather to the surprise of many, Alain was found not guilty, and went to Interlagos with a light heart. He took pole, and



this time made a good start, leading the first part of the race without problem. But everything went awry; there was a downpour, which Senna ascribed to God's Will. The terrifying thing is, there was every indication he meant it.

As a consequence of misinterpreting his race engineer's message, Prost stayed out a lap too many before pitting for wets, and skated off the road. It was his mistake, and he admitted it. Donington was another matter. Both Williams drivers made endless tyre changes in the changing conditions, and found themselves constantly out of synch with the track surface. Unlike McLaren, neither Williams-Renault went to the grid with 'full wet' settings, and by no means were the cars as easy to drive as a McLaren in the rain, but Senna was, in any case, quite on his own that day.

Hill and Prost finished second

Above: Although not the fastest pit crew in Formula 1, Williams is still the team the champions want to drive for. Left: Alain Prost won seven Grands Prix and his fourth world title before announcing his retirement

Dispiriting for Prost was that he was clearly expected to win every time out

and third — disappointing, but hardly the end of the world. The following day, though, Alain was taken apart by the French press, and became extremely depressed about it. 'These days most journalists rate you entirely by your last race,' he said. 'I came close to stopping right then — just getting away from F1.'

In the event, he continued, but thoughts of retirement began to enter his mind. The ambience of the sport, he would mutter, had changed since his early years in F1. Another dispiriting aspect of the season was that, clearly, he was expected to win every time – 'If I do, it's just normal; if I don't, it's a disaster. An unusual pressure, but a big one all the same.'

In subdued frame of mind, he came to Imola, took the pole, and dominated the race. Perhaps what pleased him most was that part of it was run in the wet; in one beautifully-judged move, he passed both Senna and Hill out of Tosa, moving from third back to first, following his tyre stop.

At Barcelona Alain excelled, taking pole in an ill-handling car, which required him to discard his smoothness. It was, concluded Frank Williams, one of *the* great laps. And the race, too, he won; his car still misbehaving.

Prost commanded Monaco — until Authority intervened. From pole position, he had minutely jumped the start, and was given a stop-go penalty — the kiss of death at a circuit where overtaking is nigh impossible, and pit entry fiddly and slow. To compound the problem, Alain stalled in the pit lane, although for once it was clutch, rather than driver, at fault. He finished fourth.

The next four races all went his way, however, with Montreal perhaps his most assertive victory

of the season. Still, though, his inability to get the Williams-Renault off the line properly was causing him unnecessary work. And Senna, whose fuel-light McLaren was a rocket in the early part of a race, was not slow to capitalise. At Silverstone, while Hill built up a substantial lead, Senna used what John Watson called 'unacceptable tactics' to keep Prost back. It is not difficult to understand why young drivers are unwilling to endure lectures from Ayrton on similar matters.

The intimidation game, Alain decided, had gone far enough. He was not going to give way at Hockenheim, and when the Williams and McLaren arrived side-by-side at the first chicane, it was Senna's car which spun. 'Tasty, that, wasn't it?' beamed Patrick Head. 'A tasty moment...'

One rather less so awaited Prost a little further round the lap. At the second chicane, he looked in his mirrors, and perceived Brundle's Ligier spinning towards him. He flicked his car into the escape road, out of Brundle's path. And the stewards, using that judgement which has long been their hallmark, decided to penalise the pair of them.

At the time he was brought in, Alain was in the lead; following the stop-go, he chased Hill, but never had a realistic hope of catching him. It was only Damon's late puncture which gave him the 10 points. Victory had little mollifying effect; the penalty had been a scandal, Prost said. 'For sure, the rules are not the same for everyone.' And, on the evidence of that afternoon, his remarks were not without foundation. 'The rule-makers,' commented Head, 'have just got it in for Alain, haven't they?'

Now Prost's thoughts of retirement hardened. His heart has always been on his sleeve, and, if he savoured driving as much as ever, appreciated the 'wonderful ambience' in the team, by the day he was falling out of love with the sport. If there was a degree of paranoia in his belief of a witch hunt against him, so also there was evidence on which it could feed.

The pattern of his season, oddly, echoed Mansell's of 1992. Both had a spate of wins in the first half of the year, concluding with the German GP. Of the next six races Mansell won one, and Prost none, although he ran away with Monza before his engine blew within four laps of the flag.



Prost and Hill chased Senna at Donington, one of the few times this season that the potent Williams combination lost out

In Hungary Alain did what he had long threatened to do, and stalled his car on the beginning of the parade lap, which meant starting from the back. 'The problem,' said Head, 'is that he cannot bring himself to be brutal with a car — his mechanical sympathy is working against him.'

It was at this point in the season that Hill came into his own.

Perhaps not surprisingly, his season had begun nervously. At the first corner of his first race in a Williams, he spun, then was the victim of someone else's accident. In Brazil, aware that he needed to finish, he drove a well-judged, if cautious, race to second place.

Thereafter, Damon had the better of his team leader at Donington, but then unfortunately dropped it at Imola, after leading for a while. Afterwards Senna attempted to intimidate him, with accusations of weaving and blocking. Damon politely pointed out that perhaps Ayrton was less than ideally placed to complain of such things. An important marker for the future.

Without doubt the Williams motorhome was a happier, more relaxed place than for many a year

In Spain Hill raced strongly with an admittedly hobbled Prost, and at Magny-Cours he beat Alain to pole for the first time. It was here that the tabloids, now deprived of their fortnightly Mansell crisis, first raised the vexed question of 'team orders'; for a while there was a deal of huffing and puffing — 'Damon must be allowed to win' — but ultimately it died away. Perhaps these folk were unaware that team orders were as old as motor racing; why else had they ignored them the previous year when they favoured Mansell? Pass.

In one respect, at least, Hill



had conspicuously the better of Prost throughout the season. Where Alain hesitated to punish his clutch, Damon had no such inhibitions, and although Prost started 13 times from the pole, invariably Hill's was the leading Williams at the first corner.

Damon had no doubts that, had his engine lasted, he would have won at Silverstone, while at Hockenheim, too, he was on course for his first victory; this time a puncture took it away. Then he cranked out three on the trot: a cruise to the flag in Hungary, with all his major rivals accounting for themselves, then a racer's triumph at Spa, and an inherited win at Monza, following a superb comeback drive.

Through the season, more than one of his contemporaries muttered that, given Hill's car, they could have done a better job; that Damon was lucky to have got the ride in the first place. Bertrand Gachot, a man of limited modesty, remarked that Hill's successes merely proved that driving ability wasn't the whole story any more; why, he had beaten him regularly in F3. So?

Probably Damon was not too concerned. The fact was that he did get the drive, and he truly made something of it, proving through the year that he is a hard racer, as well as a tough and mentally resilient character. Unquestionably, he exceeded even the team's best expectations of him, and he and Prost established a fine working relationship. Without any doubt, the Williams motorhome in 1993 was a happier, more relaxed place than for many a year.

Towards the end of the year, though, the car's superiority was eroded. Given FISA's announcement of the ban on 'driver aids' for 1994, development of the Williams active ride system was curtailed relatively early in the season. In effect, the drivers said, what they had at Adelaide was what they'd had at Kyalami. Others, notably McLaren and Benetton, closed the gap.

At no stage, though, was the gap ever what it had been the year before, when Williams alone raced with active suspension. On top of that, Prost and Hill always reckoned the FW15 inferior to its predecessor in some ways, while Head allowed that this year's active system was more troublesome than its 1992 counterpart.

For all that, this was another magnificent season for Williams. The team walked the championship, and the only surprise was that Prost and Hill scored but a single one-two in 16 races. 'I've really enjoyed the season with these two,' remarked Head. 'They're... real people! Damon's done everything I hoped he'd do, and more. As for Alain, people were saying we'd have trouble with him, that he was political, and so on — and we've seen not the slightest hint of it. I find him as straightforward as any driver I've ever worked with. A good bloke. I'm sorry he's stopping.

'Mind you, Alain's still a bit of a mystery to me,' Patrick grinned. 'I genuinely don't know how quick he is. I mean, how quick he could be, if he had to be...'

FORMULA 1 DRIVER'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

	Driver	Team/Car	Wins	Pts
1	Alain Prost	Williams-Renault FW15C	7	99
2	Ayrton Senna	McLaren-Ford MP4/8	5	73
3	Damon Hill	Williams-Renault FW15C	3	69
4	Michael Schumacher	Benetton-Ford B193B	1	52
5	Riccardo Patrese	Benetton-Ford B193B	-	20
6	Jean Alesi	Ferrari F93A	-	16
7	Martin Brundle	Ligier-Renault JS39	-	13
8	Gerhard Berger	Ferrari F93A	-	12
9	Johnny Herbert	Lotus-Ford 107B	-	11
10	Mark Blundell	Ligier-Renault JS39	-	10
11	Michael Andretti	McLaren-Ford MP4/8	-	7
12	Kark Wendlinger	Sauber C12	-	7
13	Christian Fittipaldi	Minardi-Ford M193	-	5
	JJ Lehto	Sauber C12	-	5
15	Mika Hakkinen	McLaren Ford MP4/8	-	4
16	Derek Warwick	Footwork-Mugen FA13B	-	4
17	Philippe Alliot	Larousse-Lambo LH93	-	2
	Rubens Barichello	Jordan-Hart 193	-	2
19	Fabrizio Barbazza	Minardi-Ford M193	-	2
20	Alessandro Zanardi	Lotus-Ford 107B	-	1
	Erik Comas	Larousse-Lambo LH93	-	1
	Eddie Irvine	Jordan-Hart 193	-	1

CONSTRUCTORS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

	Team	Wins	Laps led	Dist Covered	Pts
1	Williams-Renault	10	673	5504 miles	168
2	McLaren-Ford	5	290	4110	84
3	Benetton-Ford	1	63	4592	72
4	Ferrari	-	19	4045	28
5	Ligier-Renault	-	-	4305	23
6	Lotus-Ford	-	-	4065	12
7	Sauber	-	-	4175	12
8	Minardi-Ford	-	-	4218	7
9	Footwork-Mugen	-	-	4085	4
10	Larousse-Lamborghini	-	-	4556	3
11	Jordan-Hart	-	-	3335	3
12	BMS Lola-Ferrari	-	-	2777	-
13	Tyrrell-Yamaha	-	-	3319	-

• The total laps of all 16 Grands Prix is 1045

Fastest circuit: Autodromo di Monza: Fastest lap by Damon Hill, Williams-Renault, 155.241 mph

Slowest circuit: Monaco: Fastest lap by Alain Prost, 89.045 mph

Most reliable car: Williams-Renault finished all 16 Grands Prix, Prost only retired once and Hill failed to finish on five occasions
Least reliable car: BMS-Lola Ferrari only managed to finish 10 times

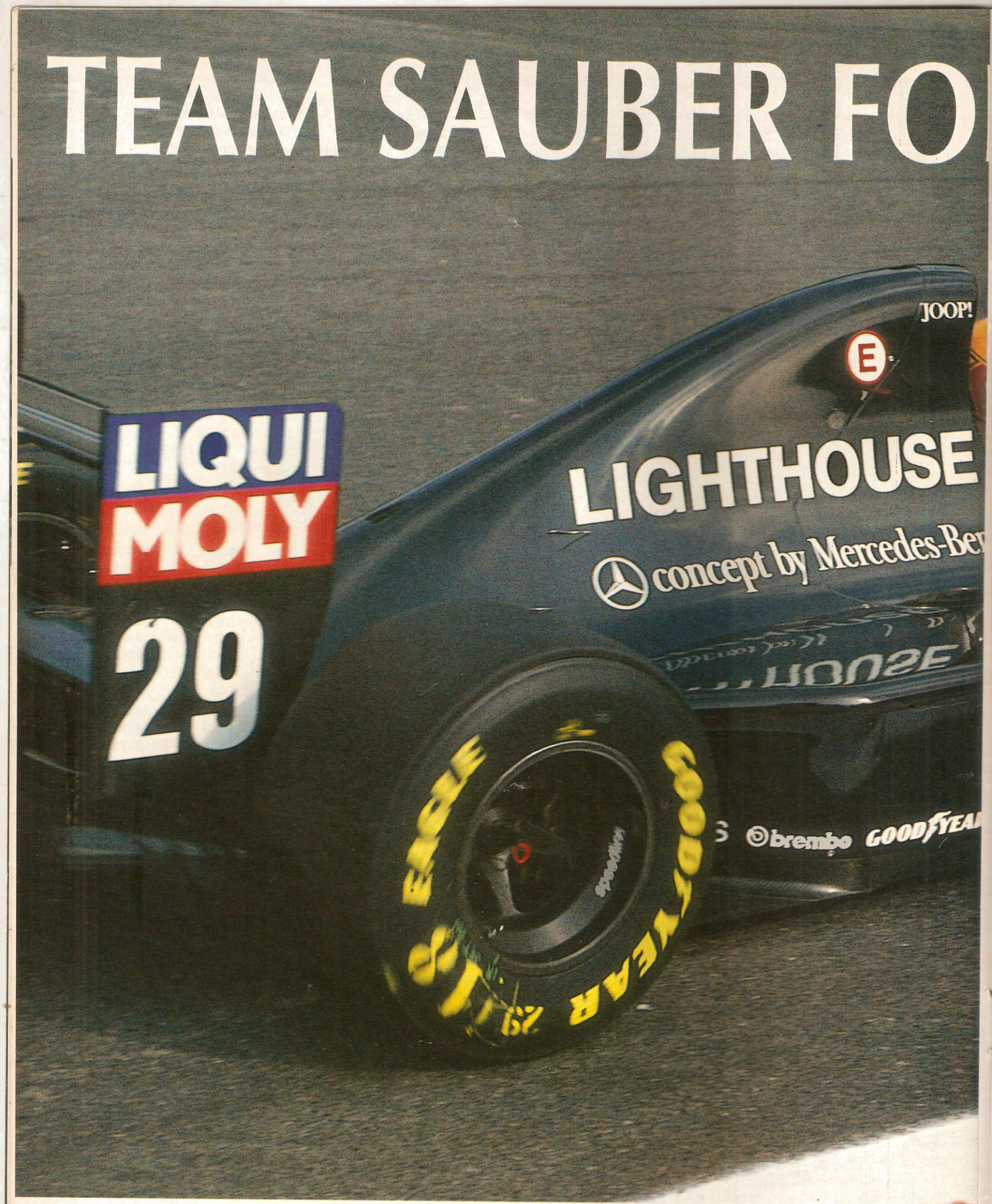
Toughest Grand Prix: Kyalami, South Africa: Only 7 finishes and 19 retirements. Later in the season at Imola (San Marino), nine finished out of 25

Most accident-prone driver: Ukyo Katayama, Tyrrell-Yamaha, spun or crashed out of six Grands Prix. He finished only five times

Slowest Car: BMS-Lola Ferrari was 13.45mph off the pace at Kylami, the biggest gap of the year in qualifying

DRIVERS' PERFORMANCE CHART

	Driver	Total Laps	Laps led	%	Poles
1	Alain Prost	989	431	41.2	13
2	Damon Hill	904	242	23.1	2
3	Ayrton Senna	861	290	27.75	1
4	Michael Schumacher	726	63	6.00	-
5	Jean Alesi	702	19	1.80	-



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Keeping Senna satisfied

McLaren's year without Honda hardly ranks as the team's smoothest, with both engines and drivers in knife-edge negotiations, but it still managed to topple Ferrari as the most successful F1 team ever. At the heart, as ever, was a driver called Ayrton Senna



To put it mildly, McLaren was in a state of flux at the end of the 1992 season, and no one could quite figure how Ron Dennis, the master planner, had got himself and his team into such a tortured and uncertain situation. At the root of it, of course, was the withdrawal of Honda, after five highly successful years with the team. Dennis made strenuous efforts to get Renault engines, by the circuitous route of buying Ligier, but these came to nought. What was he going to use to power his McLarens in 1993?

Honda's disappearance meant more than merely the loss of the most powerful engine in F1. There were also financial implications for Dennis and his team. For one thing, the Japanese motors had been gratis; for another, Honda had frequently helped out with Mr Senna's terrifying financial requirements. Now it seemed Ron would not only have to pay for his engines in 1993, but also stump up unaided for Ayrton's wages – should he agree to drive again for the McLaren team, that is. At the end of 1992, there was no certainty of that.

It was in a confused frame of mind that Senna went home to Sao Paulo for his traditional three-month winter holiday. Once Honda's decision to quit had been confirmed, he had immediately set his cap firmly at a Williams-Renault drive for 1993, but this had been ruled out by a clause in Prost's contract, which said that if Ayrton came aboard, Alain was free to jump ship. Any drive which might have appealed to Senna was already taken. If he was going to compete in the '93 World Championship, it appeared, he would have to stay with McLaren.

While new signings Michael Andretti and Mika Hakkinen tested in Europe, therefore, Ayrton pondered his future, considered a sabbatical, even a move to Indycars – indeed, he tested a Penske a few days before Christmas, and spoke glowingly of the experience. This was 'a human's car', he said, where the work was done by the driver rather than the software.



Dennis, meantime, had committed himself to Ford HBs for 1993. Paying for them, too. There was no alternative, and this deepened Senna's gloom. A V8 – even one as strong as this – would not, he felt sure, be able to compete with the Renault V10 in Prost's Williams. And it didn't help that McLaren was merely another Ford customer, albeit a privileged one, for Henry's contracted team was Benetton, and the deal required Flavio Briatore's outfit always to be 'one step ahead'.

McLaren's new Ford-powered car, the MP4/8, was ready to run a month or so before the season's first race, and early tests suggested the season might not be a write-off after all, Hakkinen setting impressive times at Silverstone. Eventually, Senna turned up to give the car a try, and was far more impressed than he had anticipated. At Silverstone he set the fastest lap of the winter tests. There was no contract between McLaren and



himself, he stressed, but, yes, he would drive at Kyalami. After that, who knew?

Thus began a most wearisome saga in which every race was supposedly the subject of an individual contract. Fortnightly, one had the impression of a last-minute whip-round, the McLaren directors turning out their pockets and raiding petty cash – anything to get the great man into a red-and-white car at the next race.

Cynics saw the whole procedure as a ploy, a means of persuading McLaren sponsors to open their wallets a little wider. Ultimately, they were proved right. Seven figures were added to Senna's bank account every time he went to the grid in 1993.

The height of the folly came at Imola, where Ayrton arrived only five minutes before the first session, having spent the previous night on an aeroplane. Scam? No one was saying. But it seemed significant that Hakkinen, the reserve driver, was not even in Italy at that moment.

Ayrton Senna made McLaren the most successful F1 team of all time with his win in Adelaide – the team's record 104th victory. Below left: A jubilant McLaren crew celebrates at Donington, where Senna's first lap will stand as one of the greatest ever

AYRTON SENNA

'The car is extremely difficult to drive ... it is a great relief stepping out of it in one piece'

For all the antics, though, there was no denying that Senna was emphatically delivering at that point, having won two of the first three races. At home in Interlagos he benefited from a mistake by Prost, and from Hill's understandable caution, but at Donington he needed no help at all. In the chaotic wet-dry-wet race conditions, he was in a class by himself, and his opening lap – fifth to first – stands as one of the greatest in the sport's history.

The MP4/8 was working well. It may have lacked in horsepower but in the wet at least it was indubitably a match for the Williams, its power throttle permitting seamless downward gearchanges, beyond price on a slippery surface. Prost and Hill, by contrast, were troubled by the abruptness of their transmissions, a distinct clunk as each new gear went in, often causing their rear wheels momentarily to lock.

Given the narrower tyres demanded by FISA in 1993, traction control was clearly going to be of paramount importance in the new season – but Cosworth was very unhappy with the idea of such devices, which operated



by cutting out cylinders. It was all right, they said finally, if teams were prepared to pay the bill for possible consequent engine damage.

Dennis hadn't hesitated. Thus, McLaren had a traction control system from the start, and it proved of crucial importance in the wet races at Interlagos and Donington, where Schumacher could not keep Senna in sight. Benetton was without the system until Monaco.

There Ayrton won for the fifth straight year, but this time, for once, the victory owed much to luck. In the early part of the race he was unable to stay with either Prost or Schumacher, but they were accounted for, respectively, by a stop/go penalty and a hydraulics leak.

Thereafter, for quite a time, Senna seemed to be less than himself at the races. Given that the McLaren, with its compact Ford V8 engine and lesser fuel load, went to the grid significantly lighter than the Williams-Renaults, Ayrton invariably made rocket getaways and frequently troubled the habitually slow-starting Prost in the early laps. But it seemed sometimes that here lay his only real interest in a race; once Alain had found a way by him, he would fade.

From Silverstone on, McLaren and Benetton had engine parity, yet usually Senna was unable to get on terms with Schumacher. At mid-season Benetton development was undoubtedly progressing apace; it was through the corners that McLaren was losing out.

Senna, at this point, was plainly dispirited. 'The car is extremely difficult to drive,' he would say. 'At the moment it's a great relief just stepping out of it in one piece.'

Michael Andretti must have thought something similar. Dennis had hired him for his reputation as a no-holds-barred racer. 'Overtaking,' he had said, 'is very difficult with the cars of today, and Michael seems to me one of very few drivers who knows how to do it.'

Perhaps so, but during his early F1 races, it appeared that every time he tried it, either he hit someone, or someone hit him. Usually it was Karl Wendlinger.



Mika Hakkinen was boosted from test driver to racer and immediately set a blinding pace. He made the podium in only his second race, the Japanese Grand Prix

'I haven't seen Senna sweat like that since Prost was here'

At first, perhaps, Andretti simply tried too hard, and undoubtedly he found his new colleagues a far less forgiving bunch than those he had known in Indycar racing. The early part of his season constituted a series of accidents – including a truly horrifying one with Gerhard Berger, at Interlagos – and as the pressure on him mounted, so his confidence plummeted. Anyone who had seen him laser through 220mph traffic at Indianapolis was mystified.

Unquestionably he made a major error in deciding not to live in Europe. Symbolically, his continuing to live in America was perceived by his team as indicative of a lack of commitment, not only to McLaren, but also to F1.

All this time Hakkinen was sitting in the wings, and, as September approached, Michael was unable to get a commitment from Dennis for 1994. Therefore he accepted an offer from Ganassi Racing to return to Indycars, and on race morning at Monza told his mechanics this would be his final race.

Perhaps he then at last went into a Grand Prix with lightness in his heart, the feeling that now there was nothing to be lost. Whatever, after an early mistake, he drove a beautiful race through the field, passing incisively – *racing* – as he did so, and making the podium for the first time. But, alas, too late.

Hakkinen duly took over the second McLaren for the last three races, and promptly out-qualified Senna at Estoril. Ayrton, who had eventually signed a contract by the French Grand Prix, tried all he knew to put the situation to rights, but failed, by five-hundredths of a second. 'That's wakened him up!' beamed a member of the team. 'I haven't seen Senna sweat like that since Prost was here...'

McLaren indeed came back strongly towards the end of the season, but there was a little more to it than that. Significant aerodynamic changes and new software for the active ride system made the car far more effective and also easier to drive.

Both men tested a McLaren with Chrysler (Lamborghini) V12 engine at around this time; Senna expressed a wish to run with it at the last two races. In light of the way they turned out, he will rejoice the plan came to nothing, thanks to Chrysler's wrath upon learning of Dennis's new four-year deal with Peugeot. In the regular Ford-powered car, Ayrton won conclusively in both Suzuka and Adelaide, thereby finishing the season with five victories.

By this stage of the game, though, it was all over with McLaren, for Prost was retiring, and Senna taking his place at Williams-Renault. The move, Ayrton said, had been in his mind for nearly three years. There were no bad feelings; team and driver just needed a change of air. For McLaren, Hakkinen will undoubtedly provide it.

Ferrari & the art of losing

Although the famous prancing horse seemed lame in the early season, Ferrari threw a lot of money into developing its package and by the end of 1993 things began to look hopeful again

It seems a very long time now since the tragic and premature end of Martin Donnelly's F1 career, back at Jerez in the autumn of 1990. And that weekend is noteworthy for something else, too, albeit a matter of rather less consequence. On the Sunday, Alain Prost won the Spanish Grand Prix; Ferrari haven't won since.

Nor, in 1993, did they look like breaking back into the circle. Fifty races have now gone by without a victory for the red cars. A record. Indeed, by the end of the season, McLaren had surpassed Ferrari's total of Grand Prix wins, having needed considerably fewer summers in which to do it.

Still, the year went better than the one before, when Ferrari was effectively a one-car team, having wasted half its resources on Ivan Capelli, whose selection will remain one of the stranger decisions in Maranello history. For 1993, they lured back from McLaren Gerhard Berger – who probably didn't need another season as Senna's team mate anyway, but whose remaining doubts were swept away by a financial offer three times greater than Ron Dennis could contemplate.

At the Kyalami weigh-in, Berger came out heaviest, at 78kgs. 'Presumably,' Keke Rosberg drily observed, 'he had his wallet with him.'

By Barcelona, though, there were suggestions that Gerhard might have to give some of it back, by way of a fine, having publicly compared his car with something you avoid treading in.

Ferrari's 1993 racing budget is estimated by a rival team owner at US$160 million, which, if close to accurate, is three times greater than any other team's. There is no fear of throwing money around at Maranello. What there is, though, is an apparent inability to throw it in the right direction. 'Ferrari,' as Frank Williams remarked, 'proves that money alone is not the answer to success. They don't know what to *do* with their money! No, it's engineering excellence that matters.'

It was a thought much in Berger's mind when first he drove the F93A in an Estoril test session. 'That night I went back to the hotel, and thought, "Jesus Christ, what have I done?" But then we began to make some progress. Now,' said Gerhard, with admirable clarity, 'we have just two problems: one is reliability, the other is performance...'

No argument there. Of the two, he said he preferred to concentrate on performance, neither he nor the estimable Jean Alesi having any interest in a reliable run to eighth place or something.

The problems they faced were manifold. Ferrari's active ride system was by no means sorted, sometimes terrifying even drivers as relatively fearless as these. And





Jean Alesi drove at 110 percent all year and was rewarded with second place in Ferrari's home Grand Prix at Monza



Gerhard Berger's return to Ferrari from McLaren proved difficult. He had many spectacular accidents, including this one in Brazil

the V12 couldn't shake a stick at a good Ford HB, let alone Renault's V10. On top of that, Berger and Alesi were also plagued by gearbox and clutch problems in the early part of the season, which seemed absurd for a team that pioneered semi-autos, back in 1989.

Originally, the F93A had been considered merely an interim car, to be replaced mid-season by a wholly new one from John Barnard. But uncertainty over the future rules, following FISA's announcement of the ban on 'driver aids' for 1994 (heartily endorsed by Ferrari, incidentally), caused the project to be shelved, which obliged Gerhard and Jean to stick with what they had for the balance of the year.

Gerhard and Jean stay at Ferrari in 1994 and the indications are of 'a far more competitive season'

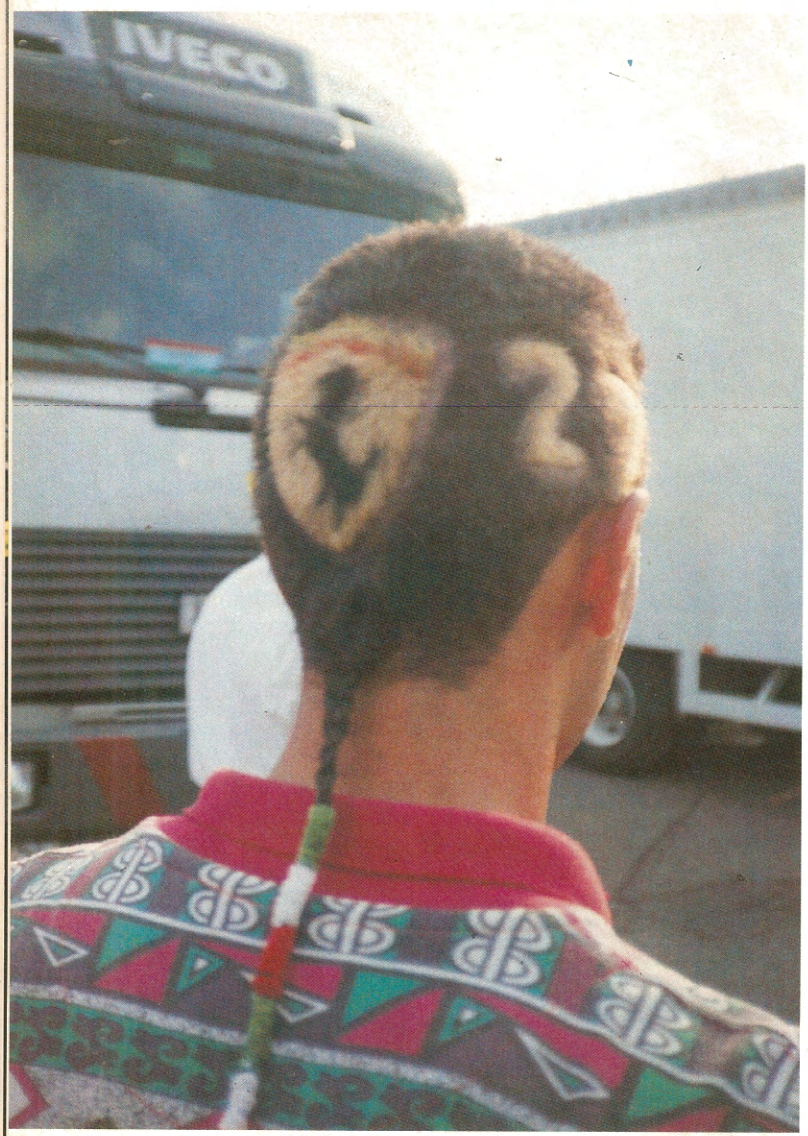
Gradually, though, the position improved. Barnard worked miracles with the active ride system, while on the engine front, too, there was progress – conspicuously so by the end of the season. At the end of October, an extraordinarily coy release came from the Ferrari press office. It bears quoting:

'The continuity of the friendly relations existing between Ferrari and Honda led the two companies, at the end of last year, to exchange information regarding their experience in the fields of motorsport and methods of working, as well as suppliers.

'This agreement has encouraged an exchange of visits of the engineers of both companies. Now the exchange of information has reached the initial task (sic) with mutual satisfaction. The relations between Ferrari and Honda are still friendly, and open to future contacts.'

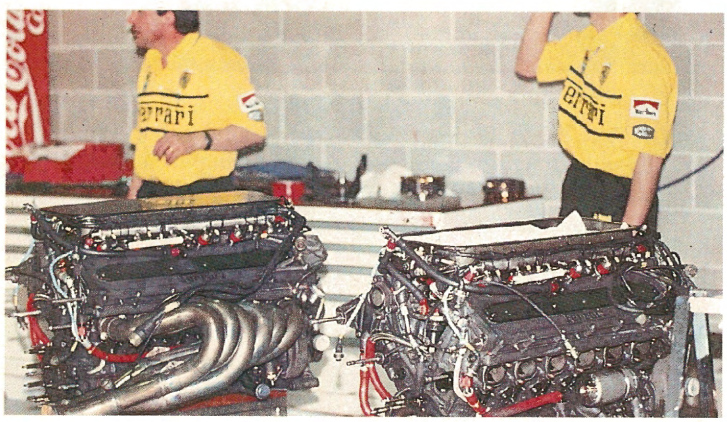
The missive reached us a few days after the Japanese Grand Prix, for which Berger – albeit only temporarily – had at one stage been on pole position. Since Monza, others had detected a change in the way the Ferraris gathered pace. 'I used to be able to blow past them in a straight line,' said Martin Brundle of Ligier-Renault. 'I can't now...'

Folk began to speak of 'Ferrondas,' and suggestions – surely apochryphal – abounded that not only ideas had been exchanged, but blueprints too. From Wako to Maranello, any-

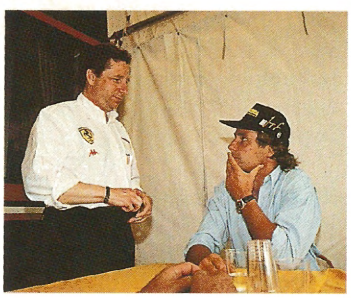




Left: Don't mess with the Ferrari fans. Their team's disappointing performances saw low turnouts at Imola and Monza. Top: Always pretty, usually slow.



Left: Ferrari sought advice from Honda on its V12 engine... and the power came back. Bottom: Jean Todt took the reins mid-season and his influence was immediately visible



way. The question that came from cynical mouths was what was in this for Honda?

At all events, Ferrari had now discarded their 60-valve V12, replacing it with a 48-valver – just as Honda did, back in 1991. Tongues wagged unworthily. Enzo wouldn't have liked it.

He would have liked the opening laps of the Portuguese Grand Prix, however, for Alesi led them, and if there was a more satisfying sight in the 1993 F1 season, it passed me by. Jean grabbed the lead in a piece of splendid opportunism into the first corner, after Mika Hakkinen had all but driven Prost off the road, delaying not only Alain, but also himself.

If there was a more satisfying sight in 1993 than Alesi leading in Portugal, it passed me by

Alesi's run at the front lasted only as far as the first tyre stops, of course, but nonetheless it was a fine thing to see him in the lead, if a poignant reminder that, somehow, he has yet to win his first Grand Prix.

On raw talent, Jean is up there with any of his rivals, and it is to be hoped that blind devotion to Ferrari, while admirable in itself, does not shade what should already be a great career.

Certainly, he had generally much the better of Berger in 1993. In the second half of the season, Gerhard was hampered with an arm infection, which required surgery, and caused him intense discomfort, but this did not explain away the huge number of accidents he had during the course of the year.

At virtually every race, it seemed, the number 28 Ferrari made contact with something solid, and frequently it was another car. Several rivals offered the opinion that Berger was simply over-driving.

Whatever, he never lost his humour, and this, in a contemporary F1 paddock, is a commodity not often in plentiful supply.

Gerhard and Jean stay at Ferrari for 1994, and the indications are of a far more competitive season than for many a day, with a newly-designed Barnard car in which to put the newly-found horsepower.

The dauntingly autocratic Jean Todt continues at the reins. It remains to be seen how many egos Maranello can accommodate, and for how long.

Sula
SUGARFREE
OMGE
GOODYEAR



Magic at Eau Rouge

To understand the full measure of Benetton's achievement in 1993, you needed, most of all, to see their cars at the Eau Rouge corner at Spa Francorchamps. Through this, the most daunting corner sequence in F1, the yellow car was simply in a different class from anything else

Riccardo Patrese, it is fair to say, was never truly at his ease this season, but after the race at Spa Martin Brundle, who had spent part of the afternoon in his company, confirmed that, even in Riccar-do's more cautious hands, the Benetton through Eau Rouge was something else again.

In 1993 the team had only one victory, in Estoril, whereas McLaren won five times. Race for race, though, it was Benetton – or Schumacher's Benetton – which constituted the major threat to Williams. Patrick Head predicted it before the season, and he was right.

By the end of the year, the team was competing with four-wheel steering, yet, 12 months before, there had not been so much as a semi-automatic gearbox on the car. Through last winter, therefore, a huge job list needed to be tackled, and it was a supreme irony that none more than Flavio Briatore supported the FIA plan to get rid of the electronic gizmos.

Originally, the plan had been to compete with the B193A throughout this year – but off-season testing on the new, narrower, tyres suggested that, no, a new car would be necessary, and this duly made its debut at Donington, the third race. Ross Brawn, Rory Byrne, Pat Symonds and co had done their work exceptionally well. There had been some teething problems with the new gearbox, but the active ride system – whose mysteries such as Ferrari and Lotus were never fully to unravel – worked remarkably well almost from the start.

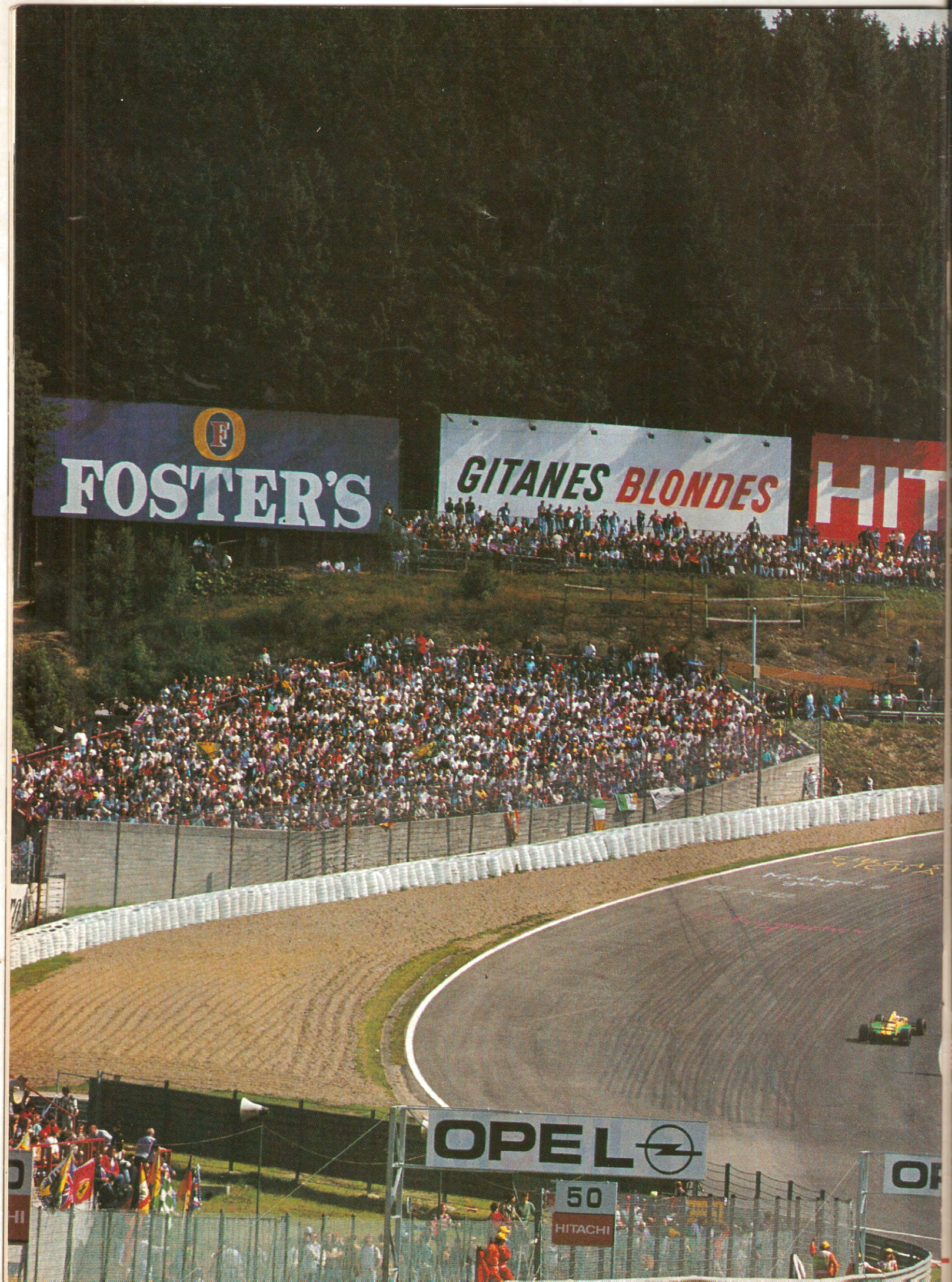
Using the old car for the first two races, Schumacher tangled with Senna at Kyalami, then finished third in Brazil. In the new one, at Donington, he was outqualified only by Prost and Hill, but the dreadful conditions on race day served to illustrate the true significance of traction control – which Benetton, at this point, did not have, thanks to Cosworth worries about such systems which operated by cutting out cylinders.

McLaren, not contracted to Ford, but merely a customer, went ahead with traction control anyway, and Senna dominated the race, while Schumacher, understandably struggling in the conditions, ultimately went off the road. Afterwards, Ayrton vociferously suggested that it was clear only McLaren could win races for Ford, and that Henry should make available to them the latest Series VII HB, then exclusively supplied to Benetton.

Schumacher, for his part, suggested that Senna might be surprised at the latest engine's minimal superiority; he well knew that Benetton's essential problem on that slippery day was that no driver's foot controls wheelspin like software. Traction control was a must.



Brave and fast and strong, the young Michael Schumacher is the driver Benetton dreamed of


FOSTER'S
GITANES BLONDES
HIT
OPEL
50
HITACHI



Even without it, though, he qualified third at Imola, and took second place in the race. But in the damp early stages, the Benetton was again outpaced, not only by the Williams, but also the McLaren. There was a third place in Barcelona, and then, finally, at Monaco the cars raced with traction control.

The difference, Michael said, was enormous. Ford's V8 may have lacked the raw power of the Renault V10, but at least now such as there was could be used to maximum effect. In the race he alone kept Prost in sight during the early laps, and after Alain was called in for a stop/go penalty, the Benetton looked comfortably set, well clear of Senna. After 20 laps in the lead, though, it suddenly slowed: hydraulics.

At Montreal, Magny-Cours and Silverstone, Schumacher finished second, third, second, with never anything but a Williams-Renault in front of him, and at this point in the season Benetton had established a very clear edge over McLaren – despite, from the British Grand Prix onwards, engine parity between the two teams. Suddenly Senna wasn't talking about Ford any more. And Schumacher, whose enthusiasm for the Brazilian is well under control, simply smiled.

He was second again at Hockenheim, seizing a German flag on his slowing-down lap, the vast crowd – emphatically there for him – appreciating this was tantamount to a victory: on an ultra-fast track there was no way to live with the Renault V10.

In Hungary Michael qualified more than a second faster than Senna, but blew up in the race. Then we came to Spa – and his best drive of the season. Very well, he was fortunate to come up on Prost before the Williams's tyres were fully up to temperature, but he passed him at the top of the hill, which says everything about the speed he was carrying out of... Eau Rouge. To split the Williams at Francorchamps was a huge achievement – particularly after a quite dreadful start, without which he may well have won.

Schumacher won a race, finally, in Portugal, holding off a Prost not too determined in the late stages – second place guaranteed him the Championship. Nevertheless, it was a victory which had long been coming.

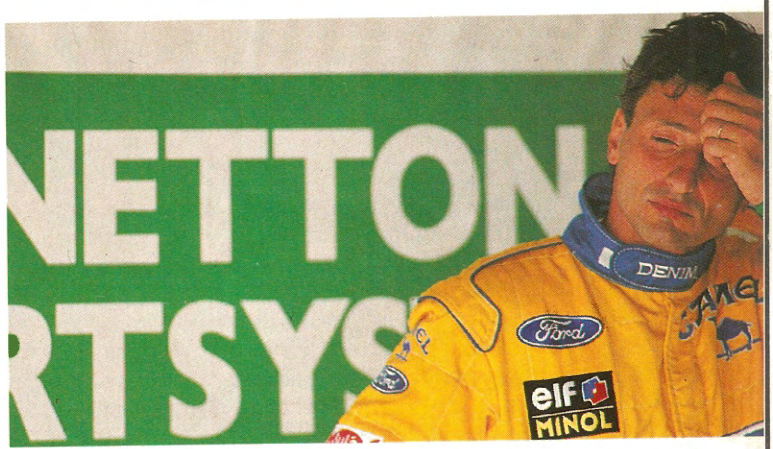
Race-for-race, it was Schumacher's Benetton which constituted the major threat to Williams

What so impressed about Michael in 1993 was that he never once gave up, never compromised his willingness to give it everything. For me, anyway, he was the driver of the season – not least because he smiled every time he made the podium. No driver who I can remember – not Prost, not Senna – has become an absolute topliner in a shorter time. 'Senna?' said Tom Walkinshaw. 'Why would I want Senna? I've got Schumacher.'

Patrese's year, by contrast, was rather sad, and perhaps prompted a reappraisal of Brundle's 1992 season with Schumacher. Riccardo finished only a place behind his team mate in the final standings, but 32 points separated them, and the majority of the Italian's had come from fourths, fifths and sixths. True, he has never liked 'active' cars, and he missed the ambience of Williams. But not once, it has to be said, did he look like a contender in 1993, and it was no real surprise that he was dropped.

All in all, a very fine season for Benetton, this. One only wonders if his engineering staff went along with Briatore on his 'ban the gizmos' stand...







Main picture: Benetton flies through the daunting Eau Rouge at Spa. Above, from top: engineers Frank Dernie, Rory Byrne and Ross Brawn; Patrese was never at ease in '93. Michael's fans travel far and wide to cheer their hero

Outside the top four, there were some points finishes to be had, but for most it was a case of making do with limited technology and waiting for an economic upturn to bring in more sponsor dollars



Ligier bought in Williams's semi-automatic gearbox and, under the direction of the two drivers, found a new level of competitiveness

LIGIER-RENAULT

Brundell twins save the day

For 1993 Ligier – ostensibly, anyway – was under the new ownership of Cyril de Rouvre, and the first shock was the absence of a Frenchman in the driver line-up. The second was that two Brits were signed.

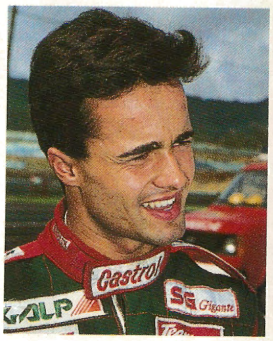
After the predictable outrage had settled in France, none could reasonably deny that Messrs Brundle and Blundell did a very much better job for 'Les Bleues' than any Ligier driver pairing of recent times. And it didn't hurt that Martin and Mark – unlike Thierry Boutsen and Erik Comas – would not only speak to each other, but were actually friends. For once, both Ligier drivers were pulling in the same direction, *rosbifs* or not.

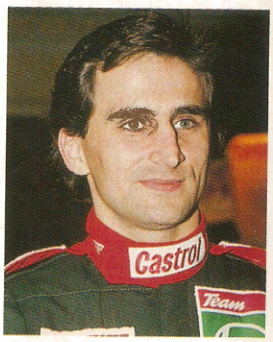
All told, Ligier was in very much better shape than for many a year; to complement the Renault V10 engines now went gearbox technology from Williams, and if the French team never came close to matching the English one, nevertheless scoring points became a matter of routine. There were even three podium finishes, one of them at the opening race.

For some inexplicable reason, Brundle invariably begins a season badly, then comes on ever stronger through the summer. So, initially, it was Blundell who made the greater impression, scoring points in the first two races – but thereafter he only once added to his score, while Brundle was in the top six on seven occasions.

Undoubtedly, Ligier's season suffered from the curtailment of its active ride programme, following FISA's sworn intention to ban it. Already, both drivers said, the active car was vastly superior, but it was never to race in anger, leaving them only to lead the 'passive' brigade, rather than making any further progress.

For all that, Ligier finished fifth in the constructors' table, with both its drivers in the top 10 of the World Championship, after acquitting themselves well, as expected. Had G Berger not been at the races, they would have done even better...





Pedro Lamy (top) replaced Alessandro Zanardi (above), who nearly killed himself at Spa in the Lotus. Below: Johnny Herbert pushes the awkward car



LOTUS-FORD

PROMISE UNFULFILLED

Lotus, on the other hand, had a terrible time of it in 1993, and it was all the more disappointing after highly favourable initial messages from the new 107B. Following testing of the car at Snetterton and Silverstone, Johnny Herbert talked in terms of winning races with it.

When they got to Kyalami, though, Herbert and Alessandro Zanardi qualified 16th and 17th, and all was gloom. But at Interlagos Johnny finished an encouraging fourth, and 'Alice' sixth, and at Donington Herbert took three more points.

Thereafter, the elegant green cars scored only twice more, Herbert's most competitive race being at Silverstone, where he fought hard with Brundle and Patrese for much of the afternoon – and finished fourth yet again.

Facetious as it may sound, one never had the impression that anyone in the team truly understood the mysteries of Lotus's active suspension system. Some time passed before it was appreciated how much the software was being affected by high ambient temperatures. Lotus chose to concentrate its very limited resources on the active system, and perhaps underestimated the significance of traction control in a year of new, narrower, tyres.

On occasion, perhaps not surprisingly, Herbert seemed to lose heart. The 107B was clearly very much a knife-edge car, and in the course of the year he and Zanardi had more than their allotment of accidents. The Italian's huge shunt at Spa, however, was a consequence of going too fast on cold tyres. Alessandro was lucky to come out of it alive, let alone with relatively minor injuries. For the last four races, he was replaced by Pedro Lamy, who did not, it must be said, create any great impression.

JORDAN-HART

EDDIE PLAYS MUSICAL CHAIRS

In 1993 Eddie Jordan's team had a new engine to work with, its third in three seasons. You could not but be impressed by Brian Hart's V10, which came on ever stronger through the year, nor by the way the youthful Barrichello invariably made the most of it. It is early days to be predicting greatness for him, but the signs are there. At Donington – traction control or not – he looked wonderful, and it was not until Eddie Irvine came into the team, at Suzuka, that any other Jordan driver caused him sweat. A bewildering assortment preceded Irvine in the car. Ivan Capelli's F1 career was mercifully terminated following two embarrassing outings, after which a demotivated Thierry Boutsen took over until Spa, where he sadly called it a day. Marco Apicella stepped in at Monza, offering Jordan valuable feedback as he did so, and then Emanuele Naspetti drove in Portugal. There seemed a good chance that Michael Jackson was hiding in the second Jordan. If the team scored only three points, all of them in Japan, still one felt that Eddie was back on course, back to basics, after the nightmare of the previous year with Yamaha power.





Above: Eddie Jordan lost $1 million when Rubens Barrichello missed out on a sixth place at Magny-Cours. Below: Footwork bought McLaren's active suspension and immediately went faster

MINARDI-FORD

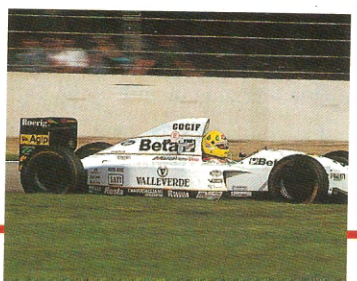
MAKING THE MOST OF IT

As they have done before, Minardi proved that, with sound engineering and good drivers, a lot can be done with a little. By comparison with most others in F1, the M193 was not a sophisticated car, lacking even a semi-automatic gearbox, but it did feature an effective hydraulic ride height control system. No longer were the Minardis powered by a Lamborghini or Ferrari V12; instead, they had Ford HBs, and were much the better for it. Christian Fittipaldi had some fine drives in 1993, and twice finished in the points – as also did Fabrizio Barbazza, who raced the second car until his money ran out. After that Pierluigi Martini returned to the team, and it is good he will stay there next year.

FOOTWORK-MUGEN HONDA

BUYING IN THE GOODIES

This was the 16th season in F1 for Footwork (nee Arrows), and it came and went like all the others, without so much as a realistic sniff of victory. The Mugen-Honda V10 engines pumped out vigorous horsepower, as ever, but their weight and thirst were major minus points. As for the FA13B, it made little impression until active technology, bought in from TAG, was adopted in the second half of the year. On occasion, both Warwick and Suzuki ran strongly, and Derek's best qualities were on view in his fight with Berger and Brundle in Hungary. But that was one of only two points finishes for him. For Aguri there were none at all.





Sauber flew in pre-season testing and occasionally in qualifying. Next year they will have Mercedes's full backing. Below: Christian Fittipaldi had some fine drives

TYRRELL-YAMAHA

TURNING JAPANESE

Yamaha engines – V10s now – were in the back of the Tyrrells this season, and both horsepower and reliability improved significantly as time went by. Ken himself, though, was the first to admit that the Tyrrell 020 was very far from a great car, and neither Andrea de Cesaris nor the even more unpredictable Ukyo Katayama scored a single point.

SAUBER

MERCEDES TESTS THE WATER

A team which did make an impression – during winter testing, at least – was Sauber, for whom Karl Wendlinger and JJ Lehto set consistently impressive times, in cars which may or may not have been above the minimum weight limit.

At the races, though, their performance fell short of this impressive baptism. Usually, with their Ilmor V10 engines, Wendlinger and Lehto qualified quite well, but on Sunday afternoons they were rarely to the fore. It was surely a huge mistake to dispense, before the season, with the services and experience of Steve Nichols.

Indubitably, there was a touch of arrogance about the way Sauber tackled Formula 1 – or Formel 1, as their press releases insisted. Wendlinger, something of a bullyboy on occasion, had a reasonable season, but Lehto was firmly treated as a number two, his talents largely wasted.

LARROUSSE-LAMBORGHINI

FAILING TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION

Over a single lap, anyway, Philippe Alliot remains one of the fastest of all F1 drivers, and more often than not he had the edge on the highly-touted Erik Comas in the Larrousse-Lamborghini team. Neither, though, made much impression.

BMS LOLA-FERRARI

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

The BMS Lolas were quite lamentable. These huge devices, with their technicolour yawn 'livery', had the added handicap of second-class Ferrari V12 engines, and completely wasted the time of Michele Alboreto and Luca Badoer. Would Alboreto, perhaps with his F1 career drawing to a close, join the European exodus to Indycar racing? 'Maybe,' Michele smiled whistfully. 'I've got the experience to do it. After all, I've been driving an Indycar all year...'

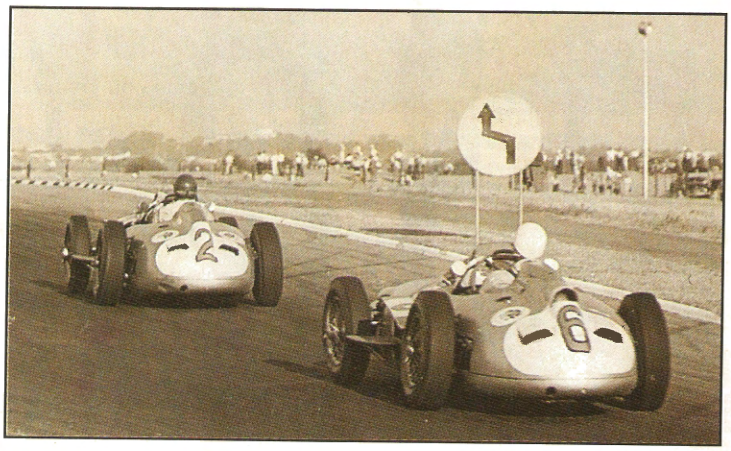
Giving the likely lads a chance

Test driving is a good way to learn your craft, says Denis Jenkinson – and if you're lucky you might win a GP or three

This year we saw two test drivers rise to the front of the Grand Prix grid: Damon Hill and Mika Hakkinen. But likely lads such as McLaren/Autosport Young Driver Ralph Firman Jr shouldn't look at them and think 'I'll become a test driver and then I've got it made.' The transition to glory isn't quite that easy.

Becoming a test driver is a big step and you can fall off very easily. You must have a lot of ability in order to be accepted by the team. But I would say that if you get a chance to test with one of the top four teams, then make the most of it but remember: many test drivers are never likely to win a Grand Prix.

For people with talent the test driver role is very good because it gets them into a disciplined frame of mind in a racing car. There are a lot of drivers who get into a car and their minds aren't disciplined at all.



1955: Stirling Moss follows the maestro Juan-Manuel Fangio. Damon Hill learned from Prost this year and next year will work with Senna

You can tell from their feedback that teams like a driver who does what they ask and no more. Patrick Head told me once that Williams asked Damon, 'not to be Harry the Hero'. I thought that was lovely. 'Just drive the car at a sensible pace and don't do anything silly,' he told him. Patrick said the same thing about Damon's predecessor, Mark Blundell: 'A good solid chap doing what we ask him to do.' If Patrick says that of a driver you can be sure that he's a good runner.

But it's a hard slog. You can't just step into Formula 1 and win the World Championship – look at a photograph of a driver when he becomes World Champion and then look at a picture of him when he entered F1. He's aged 10 years in three. You think, 'When he came in he was a pimply-faced schoolboy, and now he's a hard-bitten professional, and he's still learning.'

Damon has lived five years in one this season, from the point of view of experience. You've got to have bad experiences as well as good, otherwise you don't learn anything. But you cannot make the same mistake twice. Alain Prost said to me recently, 'You can never stop learning' and look at how much experience he's had.

Damon has made the most of his time as a test driver and turned it to good use when he got the call. He's a prime example of what can be done. I'm not going to say it was easy and I'm not going to say that anyone else could have done it. If others can match that progress then good luck to them.

Now Damon will work with, and learn from, Ayrton Senna. It's a similar situation to Stirling Moss learning from Juan-Manuel Fangio at Mercedes in 1955. I'm sure that Damon doesn't think he's going to be better than Senna, but he'll be very pleased if he finds that he's as good as Senna

Stirling knew that he was going to beat Fangio one day, but he couldn't tell you when it would be. He was pleased to sit in Fangio's wheeltracks and he said he learned more that year than in the rest of his career.

He learned precision, regularity and consistency. Those are the requirements to go fast. Stirling was very appreciative. He used to say, 'I've got to hand it to the old bugger, he keeps me on my toes'.

He never did work out how Fangio managed to outbrake him, particularly into hairpins.

Stirling used to say to me: 'Go and stand by the side of the track exactly where he lifts off and puts his brakes on.' So off I'd trot to the corner and stand at Fangio's braking point, and Stirling would come charging down and try so hard to match it, but he could never do it. He was always earlier than Fangio. We tried it at a number of circuits, like Zandvoort and Monaco, where you brake from high speed to a hairpin. And he said, 'How does that bugger do it, are you sure you were in the right place?'

Two feet might be worth only a tenth of a second, but after 10 laps, that's a whole second he would have lost.

I don't think that Damon has the same natural talent as Stirling. He hasn't got that inspired ability to go beyond his limit and do the seemingly impossible. But then Ayrton has more natural talent than Fangio, so there is a lot that Damon can learn.

In the past there used to be non-championship events which gave the factory teams the chance to try out their young likely lads. Stirling used to drive works Maseratis in events like the Gold Cup at Oulton Park. It was a bit like testing, because they could try out the driver and experiment on the car away from the pressure of a GP. Unfortunately all that is gone, but the role of test driver today gives the youngsters a similar opportunity to get experience.

It is a good way to learn, and as Damon and to some extent Mika Hakkinen have shown this year, it can come good for you.

1993 Formula 1 Review
Editor James Allen
Deputy editor Andrew Benson
Sub editor Mike Herd
Design Luca Menato
Publisher Peter Foubister

Photography Martyn Elford, Jeff Bloxham, Sutton Photographic, DPPI, Allsport, Bryn Williams, Colin McMaster
Advertising Henry Hope-Frost, Tim Wright

Production Robin Shute
Colour Origination Fairway Litho, 3 Seax Way, Southfields Industrial Park, Laindon, Basildon, Essex, SS15 6SW
Printed by St Ives plc, Peterborough
Published in Autosport, dated December 22/30, by Haymarket Specialist Motoring Magazines Ltd, 60 Waldegrave Road, Teddington, Middx, TW11 8LG

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