

AYRTON SENNA

Ayrton Senna is, perhaps, the greatest racing driver ever to have walked the planet. He was certainly the best qualifier of all time in Formula One racing, obtaining twice as many poles as the great Alain Prost . He was in pole position a remarkable four times out of every ten races altogether 65 times which even Schumacher has not beaten yet.

It was in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 21.3.1960 that Ayrton Senna Da Silva was born. His parents were wealthy, especially by Brazilian standards, so he did not have to experience many of the hardships associated with growing up there (his father was a thriving businessman and landowner). As a young boy, he had a reputation for being clumsy, which was later diagnosed as a motor coordination deficiency, but his father could see the racing driver in him, and bought him his first go-kart at the age of four. Young Ayrton showed remarkable dedication to the machine, both in racing it, and its maintenance. His father rewarded him by buying him another better kart, and at the age of eight, Ayrton Senna competed in his first race. This time also saw the emergence of the great Brazilian driver Emerson Fittipaldi, and it was he along with Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart, that proved to be a great inspiration for the young Senna. When Ayrton was thirteen he was allowed to enter kart races, and promptly won his first one in style, against some prodigious local talent. 1976 the great Brazilian won the South American Kart Championships, and by 1980 had finished second in two consecutive World Kart Championships, virtually unheard of for a driver with such limited experience.

Senna made his Formula One debut in front of his home country in 1984 driving for the Toleman team but things were different then Formula Three. Here even the best driver without the right car and engine would not be able to make much of an impression on the leader board.

Senna had been secretly negotiating with Lotus for the following season and even though he had a three-year contract with Toleman he did have a buy-out clause. He moved to Lotus the next year. Lotus had been on the downward slope after the death of their founder Colin Chapman. To his new team Senna was the man to return them to the top. After showing the racing world a glimpse of the future at Monaco, Senna was more determined than ever to break through.. But even Senna could not return Lotus to their prior glory and in 1988 he moved to McLaren. Ironically instead of vetoing Senna as his teammate, Prost initially welcomed the Brazilian. At last all of the pieces were in place and that year we saw him win 8 races and his first World Championship. In 1989 he came in second to his teammate [Alain Prost](#) despite having more wins. The relationship between the two had deteriorated to the point where Prost (that became second fiddle after the arrival of senna) left McLaren to join Ferrari. In 1990 and 1991 Senna, now joined at McLaren by Gerhard Berger, won back to back titles while being involved in fierce battles with Prost and Nigel Mansell. Eventually the loss of Honda power and the rise of [Renault](#) would bring McLaren to its knees. Only Senna's brilliance remained and in 1994 that too left.

Joining Williams was a goal that he had long sought, even offering to drive the Williams for free at one point. The new season, which began with so much promise for Senna, ended almost before it began. On his seventh lap at Tamburello, in a heated race with Michael Schumacher, Ayrton Senna crashed into a wall at high speed. He died later that day in hospital. The Grand Prix world was already reeling from the death of the young Austrian

Roland Ratzeberger and the serious practice crash of Rubens Barrichello. This final tragedy will haunt Formula 1 for many years.

In all Ayrton Senna won 41 Grand Prix races. If the brilliant Brazilian had lived to race longer he would undoubtedly have broken every Formula One record there is. He still holds the records for most pole positions won 65. . Ayrton Senna brought with him seemingly limitless talent and will to win. Many remember the Brazilian even long after his death as one of the greatest drivers in history of F1.