

Rendall, Ivan. *Ayrton Senna: A Tribute*. London: Pavilion Books, 1994. 174 pp. Black-and-white and color plates, tables. Foreword by Stirling Moss. £20.

By the time of his tragic death on May 1, 1994, on Lap 7 of the San Marino Grand Prix, Brazilian driver Ayrton Senna da Silva had started 161 Grand Prix races, holding 65 pole positions (including a record 13 in 1988) running 19 fastest laps, and capturing 41 victories. In the process, he won three World Championships (1988, 1990, 1991), following the brilliant South American examples of his countrymen Emerson Fittipaldi and Nelson Piquet—the latter and Senna were never on good terms—and of Argentine Juan Manuel Fangio. (For a comparable profile of Fangio in English, see Stirling Moss and Doug Nye, *Fangio: A Pirelli Album* [London: Pavilion Books, 1991]).

To achieve such standing, Senna had gone through a stunning career. Born (1960) into a São Paulo family whose wealth derived from selling automobile parts, distributing beverages, and raising cattle, he was a capable but unenthusiastic student who had to overcome parental resistance to satisfy his growing love of racing. He began Kart racing (1973) at age 13, moved to Formula Ford in 1981 and Formula Three in 1983, then joined the Grand Prix circuit in 1984, finishing ninth in World Championship points. After that he jumped quickly into the circle of elite Formula One drivers, racing at different times for Hart, Renault, Honda, and Ford.

Senna's death was as dramatic and controversial as his life. Central was the debate over recent rules changes that had banned both the computers that controlled suspension and traction control systems and the anti-lock brakes, making the cars more difficult to handle. The assumed objective, as in much of racing, was to increase danger and excitement without really compromising safety. Accidents that week at San Marino had killed one driver and injured another, causing many drivers, including Senna, to doubt the wisdom of the decision. Then, after Senna's crash, there was a debate over how well he was attended, when he really died, and whether the race should have been continued despite his death. Throughout, was money more important than safety and human decency?

Senna's life generally was a mix of contradictions and enigmas. He was both private and aloof in his relations with most people outside his family, yet used extensive publicity to promote his business schemes and personal wealth; he left an estate of some \$180 million. He raced for "sheer excitement and love," yet could be ruthless and vengeful toward other drivers on and off the track. He contributed to charities but never spoke out on their behalf. He was a self-proclaimed, "devout" Christian who frequently prayed and read the Bible, yet rarely attended church and, following a youthful one-year marriage, developed relationships with numerous beautiful women.

However controversial his personal and professional life, Senna was a Brazilian national hero, a patriot and global star considered an unofficial ambas-

sador of his people. Despite his wealth and European connections, he made it a point of running regularly in the Brazilian Grand Prix and of spending extensive time around his family home in São Paulo. The period of national mourning and the massive public expressions of grief that followed his death were apparently sincere proof of his popularity. And racing fans in other Latin American countries were moved almost as much as the openly emotional Brazilians.

Rendall's is not a "scholarly" work, often failing to ask the right questions or provide sufficient detail: we might, for example, like to see more on the place of racing in Brazilian culture, the terms of contracts, and the nature of Senna's complicated personal life. But at times it is surprisingly analytical and frank. As such it can be extremely useful to students of auto racing, international sports, heroism in sport, commercial and technological dimensions of sport, and the sporting culture of Brazil and, by extension, of Latin America: it will thus serve until a more "scholarly" book appears. And, as in the Fangio volume, the photographs of people and of racing machines are superb.

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