

Monaco pays tribute to the late great Senna

On the 20th anniversary of Senna's first victory in Monaco, the principality celebrates the life of the man thought by many to be the greatest F1 driver ever

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"Racing was in Ayrton's blood, but Monaco was in his heart," asserted Ricardo Garrafa of the Ayrton Senna Foundation.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Senna's first win in the mini state on the Mediterranean, Monaco is paying homage to the man described by many as the greatest Formula 1 driver to have ever taken the wheel.

In Monaco for the opening of the tribute, Garrafa, director of business and development for the Brazil-based Foundation, told MonacoRevue.com Senna had a special bond with the principality because he came to master its circuit. Indeed, in 10 outings on the Monaco course, the Sao Paulo-born pilot mounted the podium eight times, six of those times as the winner - a feat no one else has matched.

Senna (who was born into a wealthy family and raced for the love of the sport) not only scored his most cherished victories in Monaco, but he was among the first drivers to establish a home in the state, the second smallest in the world, the most densely populated, and among the most costly for real estate.

"I remember coming across him in the streets; you could see he felt at home here," Monaco businessman Francois Coizy, organizer of the Senna celebrations, told the online magazine MonacoRevue.com.

The homage, which coincides with the 65th Monaco Grand Prix (May 24 to 27), includes a nine-day multi-media exhibition occupying 700 square meters of space at the Fairmont Monte Carlo, in the heart of the Monaco circuit. There will also be an auction sale of F1 memorabilia, including helmets belonging to racing drivers, with all proceeds going to an educational project developed by the Ayrton Senna Institute and Barrichello Kanaan Foundation

On May 25, Senna's sister Viviane, who established the Ayrton Senna Foundation in his memory, is expected to join Prince Albert II of Monaco in unveiling a plaque commemorating the F1 pilot's close ties with the principality. The plaque will be installed at the Fairmont Monte Carlo, a four-star luxury hotel, which recently underwent a US\$50-million renovation.

Senna made his first Formula One appearance on home ground on the Rio Jacarepagua circuit in 1984, but could only muster an eight-place

qualifying finish. During his debut on the Monaco course later that year, he seemed poised to steal the chequered flag from the then seemingly unbeatable Alain Prost, but torrential rain squelched that epic duel.

Senna went on to take his first win in Monaco in 1987, as part of a career total of 41 first place finishes and three world champion titles.

Racing fans following the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix live on television were shocked when Senna's car smashed into an unprotected concrete barrier. He was just 34 years old at the time of that fatal crash.

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