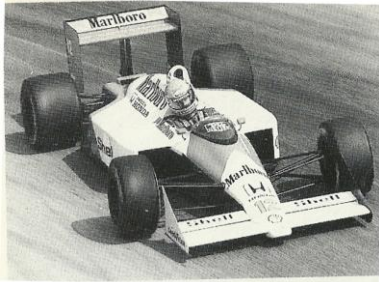


Note 97



McLaren-Honda problems at Monza in 1988



The Italian GP at Monza in 1988 provides a very interesting example of a racing team's engine-related problems and their management.

The Honda RA168E 1.5L TC powered the 2 McLaren MP4/4s of Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna and also the 2 Lotus 100Ts of Nelson Piquet and Satoru Nakajima. Senna and Prost were 1st and 2nd on the grid, Piquet 7th and Nakajima 12th.

The McLaren drivers led the 51 lap race at first in grid order but Piquet spun off at 11 laps and Nakajima had engine failure at 14 laps.

Prost's engine had an audible misfire from lap 29 onwards (941), afterwards reported as a faulty sparking plug, which was apparent in the pits from telemetry (574). Prost drove on, however, still 2nd until a piston collapsed on lap 35 (574), when he then pitted.

After 2 engine failures the Honda technicians then radioed Senna, who had about half-a-minute lead over Gerhard Berger (Ferrari 187/88C) who had inherited 2nd place, and advised him to richen his mixture by the in-cockpit adjustment (941). With his fuel status displayed on-board this obliged him to slow down to make his 150L of fuel last the 305 km of the race.

Observing Senna to be going more slowly, the Ferrari pit radioed Berger to speed up and on starting lap 49 the gap was reduced to a few seconds and Senna could see the Ferrari in his mirrors.

Coming upon the inexperienced Jean-Louis Schlesser (WilliamsFW12-Judd, NA 3.5L), a lap behind, at the 1st chicane after the start line, Senna felt obliged to try to pass and trust Schlesser to make room – *which he did not do!* The cars collided. Schlesser apologised afterwards but the McLaren's race was finished with 2 laps to run, during which Senna might or might not have been able to stave off Berger. The Ferrari driver won and his team-mate was 2nd, to the especial delight of the *tifosi* because it was the first Ferrari win since the recent death of Enzo.
