A Comment On A Memorable Event Essay, Research Paper

Often in people’s lives an event can happen that is forever remembered as one of the most important. Be it a family story, or something that has absolutely nothing to do with the person, the event is deeply engraved in the individual’s mind and will always stay with him or her.

This happened when I was twelve years old. I have been a car-racing fan since the age of nine and ever since I started getting into the world of the Formula 1 World Championship, one driver started capturing my attention more and more. His name was Ayrton Senna, of Brazil. A three-time World Champion, whom I saw in 1994, after two seasons of driving for the same mediocre team (while still managing to win a few races), poised to win his fourth title, driving for the best team in the sport, Williams-Renault. Even after crashing in the first two races of the season, everybody, including me, saw him as the main contender. Then came the third race of the season, in a little country of San Marino, in the small city of Imola…

The racing weekend started off on April 29th, 1994 on a very sour note. During free practice, the Jordan of the new Formula 1 star, Rubens Barrichello, crashed at a speed close to 150 miles per hour, slamming headfirst into a wall of tires. The driver was knocked unconscious and transported to a hospital, where Senna, his countryman, was the first person Rubens saw when he came to. Next day, during the qualifying session, a promising Austrian driver Roland Ratzenberger was killed when a wing on his Simtek ripped off on a speed of about 170 miles per hour. The car then hit a concrete wall, Roland suffering extensive damage to his head. He died on the spot, forcing Senna to say to a friend and rival of his, Frenchman Alain Prost, that if he could avoid racing the next day, he would. Nevertheless, unable to do much himself, Senna won the pole position and was to start first in Sunday’s race.

Sunday’s race started off on a tragic note as well. A young Portuguese driver, Pedro Lamy, did not see the stalled Benetton of a Finn Yurki Yarvi Lehto, slamming his Lotus into Lehto’s car at a high speed. The debris flew all over the spectator’s stands, injuring five people. One of them was hurt so bad, he went into a coma. The race was halted, then restarted, and on Lap Six, Senna was leading his title contender, Michael Schumacher by over two seconds – a fairly substantial lead. Meanwhile, in the pits, the crew of the veteran of the sport, Michele Alboreto, of Italy, did something wrong with his car, resulting in a wheel flying off his Minardi as he was speeding off, injuring four mechanics of Ferrari and Lotus.

Then came Lap Seven. While calmly watching the race with my friend, I remember seeing a blue-and-white Williams enter a high-speed curve at about 200 mph, then hammer sideways into a concrete wall. I have to admit I am a prejudiced person. The thought that went through my head was this: “Dear God, let that be Hill.” (Damon Hill, Senna’s teammate) Granted, the wish was not one of a philanthropist, but what can I do…When I saw the yellow helmet bobbing lifelessly in the cockpit I thought: “Maybe he is just unconscious, he will be all right.” A helicopter airlifted him to the nearby hospital, but my friend and I were hopeful. The race went on but then two people all of a sudden just drove into the pits, pulling themselves out of the race. Those were an Austrian driver, Gerhard Berger, Senna’s ex-teammate, and Frenchman Eric Comas, who were the first one to arrive on the accident scene. As I learned much later they went on to check on Ayrton because of something they learned over the pit radio.

Next day, I was still hopeful. After practicing some soccer moves early in the morning, I ran up to our apartment and was going to call my friend, when the phone rang. It was Tony, that same friend of mine. He only said but three words, but by the grave atmosphere that was in the air, he need not have said one. “Senna is dead.” Apparently he stuck around late at night to watch the news, then called me first thing in the morning. Stunned, I turned around and repeated the words to my mother. While never a sports fan, she knew who Ayrton Senna was practically as well as she knew my name. Her always happy face turned the same pale color mine was. My father, who could really care less about my sports enthusiasm, cam up to us and asked what in the world happened. To my great surprise, he took the situation very close to heart. Him and my mom both knew how much I was into the sport and how much Senna meant to me as a role model. I spent the next two hours practicing soccer shots by myself thinking: it is just not fair. Senna’s devotedness to God and religion in general was unsurpassed. Why him, then? He was only 33! Age of Christ, I remember thinking to myself. While never a religious person, I then realized how much faith and devotedness mean in a person’s life.

Senna’s death as like thunder during a sunny day for me. I really felt like a part of my life has been taken away by a huge vacuum of space. While never actually knowing the guy, I still felt like he was a part of my life, for I knew so much about him. I never had a brother, but losing Ayrton was much like losing a brother to me. He was a model of devotedness to his God, his sport and his family. Never in my life have I had such a vivid example coming from the outside of my own family, and Senna, even now still means a lot to me as a role model.