

RICCARDO PATRESE

■ Mexican Grand Prix ■ June 16 1991 ■ Williams-Renault FW14 ■ Winning despite sickness



Patrese (l) and Mansell worry Williams chiefs

I ARRIVED IN Mexico ill with food poisoning, so from the Wednesday before the race I was sick with a fever and feeling very weak.

That meant that I managed only to do a few laps on Friday because I felt very bad in the car. It was a particularly challenging circuit; very bumpy with long straights and really quick corners. Also, we were racing at 2000m above sea level so physically it was very difficult.

But gradually I started to feel a little bit better. In those days we had the very soft qualifying tyres that only lasted a lap. Because I only had two sets I had two flying laps and I was able to use all of my energy to get pole.

I was still not in perfect condition after that but I managed to start the race. The first lap was not so brilliant and I fell to fourth behind Nigel Mansell, Jean Alesi and Ayrton Senna.

Slowly, lap by lap, I was able to get back past them. When you have drivers like them ahead of you it's

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not easy at all to overtake, but I managed to get by Alesi and Senna and then I came up behind Nigel.

I think Frank Williams and Patrick Head were a bit nervous at that point because Nigel and I were running very close and tight

together, but I was able to get past on the main straight and then I managed to build a bit of a gap. I then held on to win, which was a fantastic result for me because of the way I felt.

I used all my adrenalin during

the race and afterwards I was absolutely finished – completely exhausted – although extremely happy. I had a plane to catch at 5pm, so I couldn't really celebrate at the track, but when I got back to England I celebrated with the whole team. Everybody was just so happy because we'd got a one-two.

Frank and Patrick were very pleased with my drive but they were always very simple with their praise. And if you were doing badly they were quick to tell you to do better as well! ✪ Riccardo Patrese was speaking to Tim Swietochowski

IN PROFILE



BETWEEN 1977 and '93 Riccardo Patrese started 256 world championship grands prix for Shadow, Arrows, Brabham, Alfa Romeo, Williams and Benetton. He won six of them, started eight from pole and was second in the '92 world championship. He also won the Italian and European F3 titles in 1976, the Macau Grand Prix twice, and was second in the '82 World Endurance Championship. A three-time winner of the Giro d'Italia road race, he also won in Italian touring cars, Japanese F2 and Formula Atlantic.

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