

JOCHEN RINDT – BY DAVID TREMAYNE

Two decades ago (September 1990) I wrote a chapter about Jochen Rindt in a book called *Racers Apart*. It began: ‘Even now, twenty years after that day when tragedy snatched him from the world title that was to follow, it sets the mind tingling, instantly conjures up mental imagery of a car being driven to its absolute maximum. Of a long-faced man with a distinctively flat nose and tousled hair, who would inevitably seek the sustenance of a cigarette whenever he stepped from the cockpit.’

Another twenty years later, those words still rang true, still painted evocative images, when I penned a biography of the great Austrian called **JOCHEN RINDT: Uncrowned King – *The superfast life of F1’s only posthumous World Champion.***

I wrote that book as part of a mission, to ensure that new generations of motorsport fans remember the heroes of the past. And what a hero Jochen was!

When I was a kid I was fortunate to watch him drive to second place in the 1970 Race of Champions, the tragic year in which he would go on to become the sport’s greatest performer. Back then all I knew about him was what I read in magazines: that he was blindingly quick but had a bit of a reputation for being arrogant. That rather put me off him, for at that age you feel cowed by such things. But after *Racers Apart* I learned more of his character from talking with people who knew him well, and that knowledge increased tenfold as I wrote the biography and sought not just to recapture the glories of his racing and to paint a sharper portrait of his character and life, but also to put him into the true perspective in which he deserves to be remembered.

Jochen was undoubtedly a true great. In Formula Two he could beat Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart. That said so much. In Formula One he showed the talent and the pace to beat anyone, and towards the end of his brief career he finally had the machinery to succeed. It seems ridiculous in retrospect that he only won six Grands Prix, in the course of the final 10-month period, given what a prodigy he was at the wheel.

The tragedy of his young life is that it was all finally coming together for him after all those wasted years in uncompetitive and unreliable cars. At Monza on September 5 1970 he could see the summit of his great mountain, after he had won half of the season’s 10 races.

“Because none of us knows how long we will be alive,” he

said, “we have to pack into our lives as much as we can and use our time to the limit.”

How cruel then, that he would never live to see that he had indeed done enough to unfurl the Rindt flag atop that mountain even though four races remained. Enough to become the sport’s first Austrian World Champion, and it’s only posthumous title holder.

Along the way, through all the research and the writing, I came to appreciate that Jochen was far from arrogant. Yes, if he didn’t like you, you knew it. And who could blame him for his dislike of the writer Denis Jenkinson who made no secret of that fact that he didn’t rate him, despite Jochen’s stellar ability to race with Clark and Stewart, both of whom regarded him as a major threat?

And besides having even greater respect for him by the time I had finished, I realised that I also liked him very much. He was blisteringly fast, clean-driving, funny and extraordinarily acute commercially. And a racer to the core. A man who deserved to be remembered, respected - and revered.

Ends