

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's former F1 champ Nigel Mansell

The prized possession you value above all others... My health. I've broken my back, my neck, legs, arms, wrists and feet. I'm 62 now and my biggest achievement is that I'm still alive.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I wish I'd spent more time with my mum Joyce when she had cancer – we didn't know how ill she was. She died in 1984 at 60 and I always think about her.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Chickenhawk, about a helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War. You can almost feel the fear and bravery.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd stop criminals committing crimes. I'm a Special Constable and I hate what crime does to people.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Chewing gum on pavements or stuck under tables. There should be a penalty.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Cadbury's Dairy Milk chocolate. It used to be my treat after training and it's still a weakness.

Right: Gladiator. Above right: Cadbury's Dairy Milk. Far right: a sunset in Clearwater, Florida

The film you can watch time and time again... Gladiator has brilliant action and tremendous acting. We've just got surround sound in the cinema at home and when I watched that film I ducked because it felt like the arrows were going right over my head!

The person who has influenced you most... Colin Chapman, who founded the Lotus racing team and gave me my first F1 drive. Without him I'd never have achieved anything. I was devastated when he died of a heart attack in 1982 at only 54.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... A pint with Jesus Christ would be interesting, if a little daunting!

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Time and opportunities are precious commodities – don't waste them.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Magic. I took it up after a crash at Le Mans in 2010 which left me with a blood clot on the brain. I lost my memory and had difficulty



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...talking. Learning magic tricks challenges the brain and it helped me recover – definitely the best trick of all! Now I'm a member of the Magic Circle society.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A platinum Ebel watch made for me after my five back-to-back wins in 1992. I'm not sure if it was stolen or mislaid.

The unending quest that drives you on... I've been the president of the UK Youth charity for 16 years and I'm committed to securing the funds to inspire young people to have greater self-esteem.

The poem that touches your soul... Kipling's If is hard to beat as a guide to how to aim for perfection.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I was a whinger who moaned about a car's mechanical problems. I was advising engineers on how to improve the car – I'm highly educated in mechanics.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... The day Elio

de Angelis died after a crash in France in 1986. I tried to get him out of the car, but it was on fire. It reminded me how dangerous racing is.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... As a policeman I'm against crime, but if you forced me I'd steal the Williams FW18B Turbo and drive it on the M1 at 250mph.

The song that means most to you... The Road To Hell by my friend Chris Rea. He gave me his gold disc for the song, saying, 'You deserve this, you've been on the road to hell – and back!'

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd wake up at home in Jersey and have Frosties and fried eggs on toast. After that my wife Rosanne and our kids – Chloe, 32, Leo, 30, and Greg, 28 – and our three grandchildren [aged 18 months to seven] would go to Adelaide to see my sister Gail. We'd have lunch with her, then zoom to our home in Clearwater, Florida. In the afternoon, I'd

play golf with mates at the Belleview Biltmore club there and in the evening, we'd have friends over for a barbecue. I'm not a great cook, but I'm useful over the coals. I've been teetotal for 40 years but once in a while I have champagne or a brandy and Coke, so maybe I'll have a tippie as the sun goes down. Rosanne and I would end the day in Jersey.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When I saw a fantastic pair of legs walking down Blossomfield Road in Solihull when I was 17. I thought, 'That's the lady I'm going to marry', so I pulled over and offered Rosanne a lift. We've been together over 45 years.

The saddest time that shook your world... The day my mother died. I had to race for Lotus the next day. I came third and my flowers from the podium were on her coffin a few days later.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To be a benevolent dictator of Great Britain for a year during which I'd make a fairer society.

The philosophy that underpins your life... No matter what's thrown at you, dust yourself down and bounce back.

The order of service at your funeral... I hope it will be a jolly affair and I want to be laid to rest in Jersey.

The way you want to be remembered... For being a dogged, determined and positive person who thought the best of everyone and never did anyone down.

The Plug... Staying On Track: The Autobiography by Nigel Mansell is published by Simon & Schuster, £20.

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: HEATHCLIFF O'MALLEY; ALAMY; ALLSTAR GETTY

PS...

Emma Watson stars in psychological thriller Regression – in cinemas from Friday. BGT's Alesha Dixon releases her new album Do It For Love on the same day. And Romola Garai is in Measure For Measure at London's Young Vic now



NEXT WEEK

- Behind the scenes on bizarre new comedy-drama You, Me And The Apocalypse with Pauline Quirke
- Fantastic family recipes from pottery queen Emma Bridgewater
- Monty Don's hot tips for growing chillies
- PLUS Britain's best TV guide