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David Schumacher: Portrait of the 2018 Best Rookie

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- **Schumacher dreaming of a career in motorsport**

Hockenheim: Schumacher – it’s a name that resonates in motorsport like no other. There is Michael Schumacher, the seven-time world champion and most successful Formula 1 driver in history. And then there is Ralf Schumacher, who won six races in the premier class, competed in the DTM over a number of years and today manages the successful junior team US Racing CHRS. Michael’s son Mick, who finished the 2016 ADAC Formula 4 season as championship runner-up, is currently causing a stir in the Formula 3 European Championship where he tops the table. But this season, there is yet another Schumacher who is busy writing his own success story. David, the 16-year-old son of Ralf, has been competing in the ADAC High-Speed Academy of Formula 4 where he finished as Best Rookie at the first attempt.

P14 in the general classification of the penultimate race of the season at Hockenheim was enough for Schumacher junior to wrap up the title. And, as is fitting for such a thrilling season, in a dramatic finish. Schumacher was involved in an accident early on, in which he sustained a puncture. It seemed as if the title decision would be postponed to the final race on Sunday, but Schumacher limped back to the pits, had his car repaired and went on to score the points that clinched the championship. “Towards the end, I was just trying to keep the car on the track and finish,” he says.

Schumacher was delighted with the outcome. The 16-year-old had been in a two-horse race for most of the year with Niklas Krütten (15, Germany, ADAC Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.): “The title was my objective from the beginning of the year, and now I’ve done it. I’m obviously very happy about that; in fact, I’m overjoyed.” The two did each other no favours and drove each other on to an outstanding level of performance, but ultimately it was Schumacher who had the edge.

Like so many of his predecessors, Schumacher took the first steps of his motorsport career in kart racing where he went from success to success. In 2016, he finished fifth in the German Kart Championship, and in 2017 was series runner-up. At the beginning of the year, it was decided that the time had come for him to switch from karting to formula racing. His first venture at this level – the Formula 4 of the United Arab Emirates – went off very well, as David Schumacher was soon notching up victories in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. He ended the campaign in second place. After such an encouraging experience in the Emirates, the next logical step was to enter the much more competitive ADAC Formula 4.

Schumacher junior immediately settled in well at his new team, US Racing CHRS, which is jointly managed by his father Ralf and Gerhard Ungar, “His development has proceeded at a steady pace, and he has been on a steep learning curve,” says Ralf Schumacher. “Towards the end, he has been one of the fastest drivers in the field, which is in any case already very strong. Of course, it’s very gratifying for me personally. My main focus has not so much been on winning the title, but rather on David’s personal development.”

And David Schumacher was not unduly overawed by the strong internal competition. After all, the new champion Lirim Zendeli (18, Germany) and the 2017 rookie champion Mick Wishofer (18, Austria) are also members of the US Racing CHRS squad. But there is a strong sense of solidarity in the team, the benefits of which were also felt by Schumacher.



“Of course, there are also advantages if your team-mates can give you advice,” says David Schumacher. “But ultimately, we all drive our own race and want to be fast. All four of us drivers get the best possible support from our team which works very hard on our behalf. I’ve felt very well looked after throughout the season. Certainly, there has been more pressure in recent races, but that was because of the championship.”

Schumacher emphasises the amount of hard work he has put in to achieving this goal. Twice a day, he trains with his father Ralf. Plus, there is all the travelling and the intense preparation that goes into the races. “In addition, I’m getting ready to do the test for my driving licence right now,” says David. He then adds with a smile: “Of course, it’s a bit more boring on the road than on the racetrack.”

With his secondary school leaving certificate (average grade 2.1) in the bag, Schumacher now intends to concentrate fully on his career in motorsport. And if, contrary to expectations, things don’t work out for him there, he is looking at taking a degree in the general field of technology. “Maybe mechanical engineering, but I’m not sure at the moment,” says the 16-year-old with a smile. But in any case, his focus for the near future is sport, and the ADAC Formula 4 rookie title is the reward for a strong season. “At the moment, things are looking good, so I’ll enjoy that while I can.”

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