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FIA F3 EUROPEAN SERIES

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Q&A WITH RICCARDO AGOSTINI

2014 season will be extremely important for Riccardo Agostini, who is betting this year on the FIA F3 European Championship driving for Antonio Ferrari's Eurointernational team. 19-year-old Italian set to series' starting on April 20th, the same day of his birthday... and what Agostini is expecting from this season is a "special" present.



After taking part in 2013 Auto GP season, entering the F.Renault 3.5 Red Bull Ring event, this year you opted for the FIA F3 European Championship. What led you to make this choice?

The European F3 is nowadays a milestone in the young drivers' career and a reference for the FIA, as it has revealed by level of drivers and teams that raced the last season. My management and I considered the series to be the ideal showcase to move another step towards Formula 1. Our choice was well thought out and deliberated. Betting on the FIA F3, means playing an important, if not critical, card. It is surely the right context, at this particular stage in my career, to build on what has been done until now.

You won the 2012 Italian F3 title, and you are still the last champion in the history of the Italian series. Now that you make your return in F3 with a good deal of experience, what are your expectations?

The goal this year is to gain more experience and to aim for the title. The Eurointernational team is one of the most respected of the championship. Last season, with Tom Blomqvist, they have always managed to fit in the top positions of the standings. Beside, my relationship with the team manager Antonio Ferrari and with the whole team is also excellent.

Are you expecting to find similarities between the car you won the Italian title with in 2012 and the latest generation of Mercedes-unit-powered Dallara that you will be racing this year?

The experience gained during my only year in F3 will be crucial. This year, the manufacturers engine upgrades are many and important. It will certainly be interesting to evaluate the first lap times on the track, considering also the new paddle shift system gearbox. I tested the Dallara 312 at the end of the last year and honestly, from the first day, I was impressed by how different was driving this car when compared with the Mygale with which I won the championship in 2012. While adapting quickly to a different driving style, at the end of the tests I was among the fastest. I am very curious to get back on track again and compare myself with the others to confirm the good performance that I had.

Last year a pole on the first Monza's qualifying marked your debut in the Auto GP. Which prerogative will open the 2014 season?

With that pole I started the last season in the best way. This year the goal is the same: to be competitive right away to earn important points at the beginning of the championship creating immediately a gap over my rivals. The first race will take place at Silverstone, a track that I already know, even if last year did not bring me much luck. This does not bother me... The street circuit of Pau, very similar to Montecarlo, is one of the five tracks of the season that will be new for me. Sincerely Pau has more unknowns. My experience of street circuits is limited to the one Auto GP race last year in Marrakech, and I have to say that between walls and sidewalks that time I felt immediately at ease.

Which difficulties are you expecting – if any – and in which areas do you feel instead capable to best express yourself?

Surely the experience gained in these four years of racing in Formula Abarth, F3, Auto GP and in the World Series, will be of help to face this championship from a different and more mature point of view, with greater awareness of my abilities. The greatest difficulty for everyone will be to remain focused in this very long championship, with 33 races, where it's easy to lose points, as well as earning them.

The first appointment for Riccardo has already been set for **Friday April 4th**, in just one month, with the **Hungaroring** tests.