



FIA WOMEN IN MOTOR SPORT
MAY 2016 – ISSUE 10

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WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.
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Welcome to this latest edition of the FIA's AUTO+ Women in Motorsport newsletter.

In this edition we mark the achievements of the women involved in one of the Commission's most recent initiatives - the Sealine Cross Country Rally Selection.

Last year the Commission, in partnership with the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation, launched a search for new rallying talent, offering the prize of a fully-funded drive at the Sealine Rally to the best crew. In the end the level was so high that three crews were chosen and after a tough pre-event training schedule the women finally tested their mettle on the gruelling Sealine Cross Country Rally. You can read about their adventures in our cover story. Elsewhere, we focus on two drivers receiving commission support in 2016. First, we look at the exploits of Shion Tsujimoto in the CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy and later we hear from the Commission's first US racer, Ashley Freiburg, who is making waves in the world of Stateside sportscar racing.

Finally, we celebrate some great starts to the season with Lucile Cypriano, who finished on the podium at the season opening round of the SEAT Leon Eurocup, and with Peugeot works rally co-driver Lara Vanneste who recently won in the German Rally Championship.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Your AUTO+ team

Cross Country Rallying

Desert Determination

Having come through a tough selection process instigated by Qatar's ASN and the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission, three all-new female cross country crews recently took part in one of motor sport's toughest challenges – the Sealine Cross Country Rally. What followed was a tale of grit, bravery and immense perseverance

The Sealine Cross Country Rally lived up to its reputation as a gruelling test of competitors and machinery as the three female crews selected by the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission and the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation battled towering dunes, mechanical mishaps and the vast emptiness of the Arabian desert to eventually gain hugely valuable experience of this incredibly tough motor sport discipline.

Prior to the event, the pairings of Charlotte Berton and Antonia de Roissard from France, Emma Gilmour and Lisette Bakker from New Zealand and Holland respectively, and Cristina Gutierrez Herrero (ESP) and South Africa's Sandra Labuscagne, spent three days training in the desert under the expert supervision of Dakar Rally winner Jutta Kleinschmidt and multiple rally and cross country winning co-driver Fabrizia Pons.

Then, with the practicalities of managing tyre changes, GPS and trip systems completed, it was time to take on the ultimate challenge – the rally stages.

The first of five punishing days of action across the length and breadth of Qatar saw the crews tackle a first selective section of 226.42km, stretching from a starting point at the ancient northerly military fort at Al-Zubara to a finish close to Sealine. All three female crews finished the first stage, though the shortest of the rally's stages wasn't without its difficulties. Gilmour and Bakker were forced to drive with a broken GPS,

while Berton and de Roissard suffered two punctures and got stuck in the sand. Gutierrez Herrero and Labuscagne fared better and ended the day in 25th place overall, despite getting stuck once.

Afterwards, Berton admitted it had been a baptism of fire. "It was a tricky first day for us," she admitted. "Two punctures, and when you are running at the back of the field and you get stuck, there is no-one there to help you. We lost 45 minutes."

Day two saw the competitors battle through a 345.89km section, starting in Al-Kharrara. Once again the three female crews made it to the finish, with Gilmour and Bakker finishing in 21st position, though this time it was their turn to suffer with a puncture. Berton and de Roissard, meanwhile, had to contend with a broken shock absorber and were forced to drive slowly to finish the stage.

It was a tougher outing for Gutierrez Herrero and Labuscagne. The women were halted at km281 by electrical problems, though they were eventually recovered and transported back to the bivouac by trailer. They would take part in the following day's stage, however.

Day three brought the rally's biggest test, a massive stage of 355.49km. The day began close to the former bivouac at Sealine before heading towards the Inland Sea and the Saudi Arabian border, before revisiting the western coastline and turning inland to finish between Umm Qarn and Abu Nakhla.

Charlotte Berton and Antonia de Roissard tackle one of the many beautiful but gruelling stages of the Sealine Rally in their QMMF supported Nissan T1 Patrol.



Despite the stage length all three crews again got their T1 Nissan Patrols to the end, with Kiwi Gilmour in 18th overall at one point. Berton and Gutierrez Herrero also made good progress after early delays.

After overcoming the difficulties of the first three days, the women might have been forgiven for imagining their goal was in sight, but day four proved to be an even bigger challenge as each crew encountered technical difficulties.

Gilmour and Bakker lost the studs from one wheel, while Gutierrez Herrero and Labuscagne suffered a broken front differential. Berton and de Roissard seemed set to escape the mechanical woes, but 30km before the end of the stage the rear differential on their Nissan broke. Once again, the women were recovered and were able to start the final day.

The 350km final stage saw the crews battle through more hardship. Gilmour was forced to retire when the wheel hub broke again and she shed the same wheel as on Thursday. Berton's Nissan, meanwhile, succumbed to an oil leak. That left Gutierrez Herrero as the sole finisher and the Spanish competitor and her co-driver reached Losail in 24th place overall.

At the front of the pack, Qatar's Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah emerged unscathed from the final stage to confirm a memorable victory.

Finishing ahead of the X-raid Mini All4 Racing crew of Yazeed Al-Rajhi and Timo Gottschalk, Al-Attiyah recorded a second outright triumph with Overdrive Racing and the Toyota Hilux in the space of four weeks and a fifth home win in six years.

The achievement marked a third successive victory for his French navigator Matthieu Baumel and gives the pair a comfortable lead in the FIA World Cup for Cross Country Rallies after three rounds.

Behind Al-Rajhi, G-Energy Team Mini's Vladimir Vasilyev and Konstantin Zhiltsov were third overall, while Yuriy Sazonov and Konstantin Zhiltsov finished an impressive fourth in the Mobilex Racing Team H3.

Jutta Kleinschmidt and co-driver Philipp Beier, meanwhile, finished in an excellent fifth position.

"This has been a really enjoyable event, demanding, different and the stages were just the right length," said Kleinschmidt. "It was a proper cross-country rally. It's great to be back in the car and I hope that I can do some more events now. There is still work to do."

Commenting on her Sealine experience Gutierrez Herrero said: "In cross country there are many kilometres, you have to learn to get out of the difficulties encountered, and you have to know how to control your nerves and learn to keep a steady pace for many hours. But challenges are always opportunities for learning, and especially as we are here for the great opportunity we have been given.

"I will continue in this speciality because I feel very identified with everything that surrounds this world, and hopefully I will continue to find support from it to continue growing as a driver," she added. "Of course I want to make a special mention of Sandra, my co-driver, who did a brilliant job getting me to the end of the stage every day."

Her feelings were echoed by Gilmour who is now determined to take on more cross country events.

"The whole cross country training and racing has been an amazing experience and I thoroughly enjoyed the stages; navigating the dunes and driving flat-out across wide open spaces and then nursing the car over the rougher rockier roads," she said.

"It was all I expected, and more, and I really hope that I will have another opportunity to start and finish a cross country rally. Dakar maybe!

"A very big thank you to the QMMF and to the FIA for making the whole experience happen, and especially Jutta and Fabrizia who had the dream and the passion to make the training a reality," she added. "It was a shame we had mechanical problems that prevented us from repaying everyone's efforts. I really hope I get to go cross country rallying again soon!"



ADAC Deutsche Rallye-Meisterschaft

Navigating her way back to the big stages

Selected by the QMMF and the FIA to take part in the Sealine Cross Country Rally, Belgium's Lara Vanneste suddenly found herself with an irresistible offer of a works rally drive in the German Rally Championship. Her results since have vindicated her choice but she insists she will eventually heed the call of cross country...

Late last year Lara Vanneste's immediate future was all mapped out. After spending the past five years in the FIA World Rally Championship and the FIA European Rally Championship, where she had co-driven for drivers such as Freddy Loix, Craig Breen, Christian Riedemann and Kevin Abbring, the 25-year-old was on the brink of a new adventure – cross country rallying.

Inspired by her ASN, the Royal Automobile Club of Belgium, Lara had applied for the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation/FIA Women in Motorsport Cross Country Selection. The prize on offer was a fully-funded drive in this year's Sealine Rally.

"I hadn't been really thinking about rally raid so far," she says. "Dakar was of course one of my dreams, but I really saw cross country as an option for the long term, for when I was older, stronger, more experienced, and when I had fulfilled my goals in rallying!"

"Suddenly there was this opportunity of a lifetime," she adds. "A boot camp, a week in the desert with Jutta [Kleinschmidt] and Fabrizia [Pons], and I understood it was my chance to learn, in a very short amount of time and with the best teachers, all there is to know about cross country rallying. Having this opportunity offered by the FIA and the QMMF, I absolutely wanted to get selected."

In a bid to prepare, she immediately attempted to gather as much experience as possible, heading to Morocco for the penultimate round of last year's FIA World Cup for Cross Country Rallies.

"I annoyed some friends of mine to take me testing," she

says. "I was so impressed and from the very first moment I got into a proper cross country car, I knew I wanted this very badly. I started an intense physical training programme. The Cross Country selection in November was the first step of my big plan. I was over the moon when I was finally selected as one of the winners. I think I gave it all I had and I really showed my motivation and determination."

Having been selected for the event Lara began further preparations for the gruelling desert rally, but in February the shape of her 2016 season changed suddenly when she was offered a works Peugeot drive in the German Rally Championship alongside a familiar partner, driver Christian Riedemann.

"I was extremely disappointed not being able to go to the Sealine Rally," Lara admits. "I had worked very hard to get selected and I had started my physical preparation. The official programme with Peugeot was only confirmed at the end of February, which is quite late. Unfortunately, the second rally on the calendar coincided with the Sealine. I tried to look for solutions but Peugeot Germany decided they wanted me to be present at all events."

The opportunity with Peugeot was too significant to turn down and so, having slimmed her calendar in recent times, Lara returned to making a more intensive commitment to motor sport.

"I have been co-driving for nine years now. I have driven for VW in the WRC and for Peugeot in the ERC and I have experienced so much joy, but sometimes also bitter disappointment," she explains. "The last two years I decided

An offer of a works Peugeot drive in the German Rally Championship was impossible to resist for Vanneste.





Lara and driver Christian Riedemann celebrate their first win of the 2016 German Rally season at Hessen Rallye Vogelsberg.

to withdraw a bit from the rally scene to focus on other things. I was still doing a number of events, so people wouldn't completely forget about me, but it was definitely fewer than before.

"It was a good thing, because these two years made it possible for me to fall in love with the sport all over again," she adds. "It might sound like a cliché, but everything I do now, I do it for myself, because I love this sport. The official programme with Peugeot in the German Rally Championship, I see it as a comeback. I'm happy to find my way back to Christian, to our loyal sponsors, to the PSA group. I feel small in this whole project, there are so many people working to make this project a success. I feel grateful. With Christian we will do everything we can to win the German title."

The campaign got off to a tricky start, however, at the season-opening Saarland-Pfalz Rallye.

"The weather conditions were extreme; ice and snow," says Lara. "Not ideal conditions in which to get to know a new car. We struggled to find confidence. Christian had only done two rallies in a 4WD car before and that was back in 2011. Because of a puncture the second day we were only fifth, otherwise we would have been on the podium. The result was not great but we did what we had to do."

Round two, though, vindicated Lara's decision to compete in the German championship, as she and Riedemann claimed a hard-fought victory in the Hessen Rallye Vogelsberg.

With round one's winner Fabian Kreim and Frank Christian being forced to retire in Vogelsberg, Lara and Christian now sit atop the championship standings, with eight rounds of the championship left.

Lara's commitment to rallying has also seen her take on another challenge – competing in the French Rally Championship alongside driver Sylvain Michel in a Skodia Fabia R5.

"Sylvain is definitely one of the biggest talents I have ever co-driven," she says. "I think he has the potential to go very far. We have been friends for years but we had never competed together."

"We finished third overall in the first rally of the season, the Rallye du Touquet-Pas de Calais, and we were first in R5. Then we finished second in the second round, the Rally Lyon-Charbonnières. Because of the regulations in France, which penalise WRC cars, we are leading the French championship. We finished second behind a WRC car, with three other WRC cars behind us. Our biggest competition, Yoann Bonato, went off in the rain on slick tyres."

"In both recent events, in Germany and France, it was difficult to stay concentrated after the retirement of Kreim and Bonato," she adds. "It was a big relief after the first win for Peugeot. We have high expectations for the season, so it was really good to win the second event. In France, Sylvain really is the revelation of the season. He impressed everybody. For sure one of the biggest talents I've co-driven for."

While her focus is now firmly back on her rally career, Lara says she hasn't forgotten the world of cross country and she insists that she will one day return to the discipline.

"Without any doubt," she says emphatically. "I discovered an amazing discipline. The kick of cross country is much bigger than any other discipline in motor sport. I felt so overwhelmed."

"The distance you are doing in cross country is enormous – in the World Cup it's several thousands of kilometres. When you are driving in the desert, crossing dunes, you feel so tiny," she adds. "As a co-driver you have such a big responsibility. You see no recognition points, nothing but sand and dunes, you have to trust your tools and your own navigation skills. When you panic, it's over. You need to be very strong physically, but also mentally. I have the deepest respect for cross country co-drivers."



Molly Taylor opened her 2016 Australian Rally Championship account with a brace of fourth places at the season-opening Quit Forest Rally.

Australian Rally Championship

Taylor makes solid start to life with Subaru in the ARC

Molly Taylor's career as a works rally driver with Subaru got off to a solid start with two fourth places at the Quit Forest Rally, the opening round of the Australian Rally Championship.

Subaru is this year returning to the Australian rally scene after a decade away and earlier this year the manufacturer chose Molly, last year's ARC runner-up, to spearhead its new era of competition Down Under.

And in the first round of the five-event championship, in Western Australia, Molly and co-driver Bill Hayes took fourth place finishes in the weekend's two heats.

Piloting an all-wheel drive Group N production class WRX STI, Molly's campaign began in modest fashion, with the 27-year-old getting used to her new machine and placing 11th after two rapid fire 2.71 kilometre sprints around Barnard Park in Busselton.

However, the following day, which featured six forest stages and two 0.85 km bursts around a local oval, saw Molly quickly reel in the competition. By the lunchtime service she was up to fourth place in the standings and with the pace maintained through the afternoon she cemented herself into the position.

The second heat covered nine more stages and again Molly was the model of consistency as she climbed the order to secure a second consecutive fourth place, just 33.3 seconds off a podium finish. The result puts her in joint third place in the overall standings.

Reflecting on her championship start, Molly said: "It's been great to get quality time in the car. I've been used to swapping between several different cars in recent years and after this weekend I realise how awesome it's going to be to stick with this showroom STI and build experience in this new package."

Commenting on Taylor's start to the season Subaru Australia Managing Director, Nick Senior, said: "It's been a fantastic first time out for the team and we're very happy with the production WRX STI. All credit to Molly and Bill – they've certainly raised a few eyebrows with their abilities this weekend."

For Molly the chance to compete with a works team is the pinnacle of her career to date.

"To make rallying my profession has been what I have been working towards for 10 years, so it feels pretty surreal to have this opportunity," she said before the start of the season. "There aren't many factory seats available and only one in Australia, so it's very exciting!"

"It definitely feels like a major breakthrough," she added. "It's been an incredible rollercoaster ride and I am very grateful for all the opportunities I have had, but now I can focus on just the driving part rather than putting every dollar I earn towards being able to compete. There is a lot more work and pressure that comes with this, but it's what I've been preparing for."

The opening round, in which she was driving the WRX STI for the first time, presented a steep learning curve, especially for a driver used to front-wheel drive cars.

"We had just two days testing with the car over Easter," she said of her pre-season preparation. "I have spent the last nine years in front-wheel drive cars, so the Subaru WRX STI is a big change for me. So far I am really enjoying the move to 4WD and it's a step I've been wanting to take for a while! I learned a huge amount from the engineers and know the next steps I need to take in order to get the most from the car."

The big challenge for the rest of the season is to remain competitive in a strong field in which the variety of car types is daunting.

"Our regulations for the Australian Championship have changed coming into 2016. We're running in Group N specification, however the regulations allow for much more modified cars including R5, S2000 etc," she said. "We are realistic about what we can achieve but obviously want to be as competitive as we can! There's a much stronger field this year also, so I think we'll have a good battle on our hands."

The battle continues at the end of May, when Molly and Bill head for round two of the ARC, the National Capital Rally, ACT.



Shion Tsujimoto in action during the opening weekend of the CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy in France.

CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy

Shion Tsujimoto launches Academy Trophy kart campaign in France

FIA Women in Motorsport-supported kart racer Shion Tsujimoto recently began her CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy campaign with a successful opening weekend at the Circuit Internationale d'Aunay-les-Bois in France.

The Japanese racer, who prior to winning a fully-funded drive in this year's Academy Trophy took part in the 2015 competition as a representative of the Japanese Automobile Federation, began the weekend by showing good pace in the two qualifying sessions. And despite cold conditions and fierce rain showers, the 13-year-old went on to finish inside the top 10 in her heats.

Shion started the pre-final from 12th position and finished in 16th place, with the Japanese girl driving a cautious race to ensure a finish and a start in the final.

In the final, Shion started from the eighth row and before the first turn she began to move up the order. However, in the first corner she was involved in a collision and was forced to retire.

Despite the disappointment of not making it to the flag in the final Shion was pleased with her progress across the opening event of the campaign.

"This weekend was difficult, especially because of the weather conditions," she said afterwards. "Therefore, I am determined to test a lot back home in both dry and wet conditions as well in order to build up more experience."

"Overall, the fact that we had many practices and two heats was very good," she added. "I very much enjoyed the driving and the opportunity to improve myself. I really liked the fact that all kart chassis and engines are the same and my mechanic Bert Nelissen gave me good advice to improve my driving."

The youngster's interest in karting dates back to 2012 when her father first took her to a race in Japan where she was bitten by the motor sport bug. She began competing

domestically in 2013 and, in addition to outings in JAF Junior Karting Championships, she contested events in Europe in 2014 and 2015, including all three rounds of last year's CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy.

Speaking of her selection as this year's FIA Women in Motorsport-supported driver, the first from outside Europe, Shion added: "This is a great honour for me. Since being chosen my motivation has increased a lot. I have never felt so happy. It has made me determined to concentrate on motor sport in the future."

And her major goal for the campaign? "To achieve a podium finish. I'll keep on pushing myself."

Joining Shion on the grid at the French circuit was 13-year-old Hamda al Quabaisi, from the United Arab Emirates, who is supported by the Women in Motorsport Commission in the Middle East.

Selected for the Academy Trophy by her local ASN, the ATCUAE, Hamda faced a tough time adapting to the unfamiliar wet and chilly conditions at the Circuit Internationale d'Aunay-les-Bois.

She managed to drive all of the test sessions and finished both heats. However, she had to qualify within the first six during the 'second chance race' to get a starting place for the final. Hamda started from 13th position, but crashed in the second corner, missing a place on the grid for the final.

"My weekend was really good. I gained a lot of experience and it was a lot of fun," she said. "It was my first time driving in the rain and I started the first heat from 24th of 33 and finished 22nd, which I felt was a good result for me."

"In the second heat I bent my track rod in the first corner and finished 28th," she continued. "Unfortunately, I crashed in the 'second chance race' and couldn't start the final. I am looking forward to the next race and thank my coach, mechanic and everyone in my team for their support."

MSA UK

Former F1 driver Susie Wolff and MSA UK launch Dare to be Different with first event

Former Formula One driver Susie Wolff's Dare to be Different campaign, developed in conjunction with MSA UK, recently got off to a flying start at its first UK event.

The initiative aims to encourage female participation in all areas of motor sport and the scheme's first event saw 100 schoolgirls from 10 schools journey to Sandown Park's Daytona karting facility to gain a valuable insight into a variety of racing activities from driving and engineering to media skills, fitness and nutrition.

While the girls were given the opportunity to test their driving skills in 160cc Cadet and Junior karts in a series of track events, they were also shown that careers in motor sport do not just exist behind the wheel of racing machinery.

The schoolgoers were set pit stop and tyre change challenges to show the diversity of roles available in motor sport, while possibilities on the engineering side were demonstrated by ambassadors from the UK's STEMNET (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network) programme who presented the girls with a test of mechanical ingenuity involving the construction of a hovercraft. The girls were also treated to workshops on nutrition and fitness.

Elsewhere, media skills, in both presentation and in interview etiquette for those in the spotlight, were demonstrated by Sky Sports F1 presenter Natalie Pinkham. Finally, the girls had an opportunity to get close to the top level of motor sport with a tour of a Williams F1 show car.

For Susie, the event marked the successful launch of a campaign that had its genesis in her decision to step back from driving with the Williams F1 team late last year.

"When I made the decision to hang up my helmet last year I knew I couldn't walk away without doing anything because as much as I followed my passion in life, I had become to be seen as quite a trailblazer," she says. "So I called (MSA Chief Executive) Rob Jones and said 'I have an idea that I want to do something'."

Wolff's timing couldn't have been more fortuitous, as Jones explains.

"My initial thoughts were that the stars were aligning, as quite separately I had been contemplating the issue of the under-representation of women in motor sport and had already asked colleagues to start thinking about how it might be addressed," says the MSA Chief Executive. "Principally, this was because I'd visited the MSA Kartmasters event last August, where I shook hands with every competitor – there were around 200 and half a dozen were girls. I thought, 'we need to do something about this'. Then Susie rang!"

The result is a scheme that aims to boost the number of female competition license holders in the UK above the current 1,500, or five per cent of the total. Wolff, though, admits that change will not be achieved overnight.

"It's very difficult to talk about targets," she says. "I'm not going to increase female license holders in the UK within two years but what I do hope is that I can help shape the next generation. These girls [at the Sandown event] are only 8-12 years of age, they're still at that age where they are open to ideas, so for me it's about opening up this sport. This event is very important but it's more about the building up of a community."



FIA Women in Motorsport Ambassador Susie Wolff with MSA UK Chief Executive Rob Jones at the first Dare to be Different event.



One hundred schoolgirls from 10 UK schools attended the first Dare to be Different event, where they got to try their hand at karting.

"It's a numbers game in motor sport. Everyone keeps asking 'why are there not more women at the top, not just on track but in engineering' and it's simply because there are not enough girls trying to get in. You will never have quotas, that won't work. You simply have to inspire more women and hope that the best rise to the top."

From what she saw at Sandown Park, that goal is more than attainable.

"It was incredible to see so many smiling faces," she says. "The karting was fascinating, because a lot of the girls didn't initially want to do it. They were a little bit afraid, a bit nervous, but they came in after five laps and said 'when can I do that again'. And that's it: that's the notion of sometimes daring to be different, of trying something that does scare you, because it gives you so much more afterwards."

"This is where it all started for me, at a little kart track in Scotland," she adds. "As a I say, I'm not expecting to get racing drivers out of these girls, this is a long-term project but what I do hope is that each one left the event thinking 'wow, I did something really cool today' and that they dared to be different."

The Dare to be Different initiative will take in four further events in the UK over the coming months. On 17 May it will visit Nutts Corner, Crumlin, Northern Ireland. On 22 June, it heads to Daytona Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes. On 25 August, it is at Knockhill Circuit, Fife, Scotland, and on 15 September it will be at Daytona Manchester, Manchester.

"The five events across the UK are invitation-only events for local schools in those areas," explains Jones. "The format

is simple – take 100 girls from 10 local schools, introduce them to various aspects of motor sport both on and off the track, and then send them back into their schools to spread the word and act as ambassadors for the sport."

Helping to spread the message is an online community, set up by the MSA.

"A big part of D2BD is connecting women in motor sport, regardless of which area of the sport they work in or at what level," adds Jones. "The great thing about the online community is that it gives newcomers to the sport a chance to network and communicate with those who are already established and successful – it's a platform for sharing knowledge, experiences and ultimately inspiration."

Wolff is also sure that the Dare to be Different programme fits well with her role as an FIA Women in Motorsport Commission Ambassador.

"Michele [Mouton, FIA Women in Motorsport Commission President] was a role model for me, through what she achieved in racing and in just being able to ask her 'what would you do, how would you have reacted?' That was a huge asset for me and so is working with her in the commission. For me it's about using my role as an Ambassador to help others. I get great delight in doing that."

"I've been there, I've done it. OK, I didn't quite get all the way, but I really want to make sure we do get a girl all the way because one thing is clear, there is no reason why it can't happen," she insists. "As soon as we break through and get a girl on the starting grid, racing, it will open the floodgates, not immediately but over time you will see so many more."



Ashley Freiburg is racing a Turner Motorsport BMW M6 GT3 in the 2016 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. (Photo: Motorsport Media)

IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship

Following the American racing dream

The first US racer to be supported by the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission, Ashley Freiburg is making waves in sportscar racing Stateside. Here she explains how she's tackling a busy 2016 programme, taking in some of American racing's most iconic events, and why she's determined to promote female involvement in motor sport in the United States

You're involved in a diverse racing programme this season – tell us what you are up to?

This year is an exciting one for me because I will be racing across two programmes in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship.

In the big endurance races – the Daytona 24 Hour, the Sebring 12 Hour, and Petit Le Mans – I am continuing my partnership from last season as a BMW of North America Scholarship Driver, with IHG Rewards Club in a Turner Motorsport M6 GT3 [in the GT Daytona class].

At the Daytona [24-Hour race, in January] we had a few mechanical issues that dropped us many laps down, but at the 12 Hours of Sebring [in March] we bounced back strongly to finish second. It was my first attempt at the race so I was beyond thrilled, and we also scored a first podium for the M6 GT3.

In between the three endurance events, I will be racing the number 88 LMPC (Le Mans Prototype Challenge) car with Starworks Motorsport, driving alongside Mark Kvamme. Our first event together, at the Long Beach Grand Prix, went well and we finished fifth, so I'm looking forward to the next events.

What did it mean to you to get recognition from the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission?

"I am thrilled to be the first American driver to be a part of the WIMC. I have always been a big supporter of women succeeding in any occupation, especially in motor sport, and to be a part of a worldwide commission alongside my idol and inspiration, Michèle Mouton, means everything to me. The WIMC is everything that I stand for, on a much bigger scale. I think it is a perfect fit for me and I am excited to encourage and inspire more women to get involved in motor sport. I also feel it is a huge honor to be recognised alongside some of the most highly respected and successful women in motor sport."

What have you been doing to promote women in motor sport in the US?

I think I make the most impact through my social media channels, because I work hard at using my love for driving to inspire people to follow their passion, whatever it may be. I also do some public speaking with the Girl Scouts of America and have had seminars at a Girl Scouts STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Expo, to show young girls that there are lots of

exciting careers in motor sport, not just driving but as an engineer, a mechanic, team owner or manager, or in marketing.

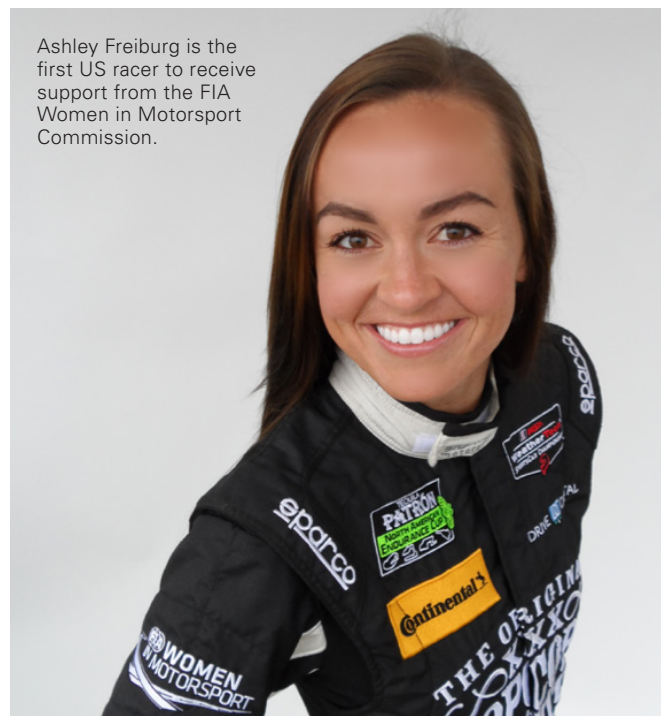
How are women in motor sport perceived in the US; typically what type of roles do they fill?

There are definitely more and more women getting involved in motor sport in the US, whether it is driving, engineering, or as mechanics, but I think there is still quite a way to go. The number of women who make it to the top and are successful is still very small, but I think we are heading in the right direction.

What are your hopes for the season?

My goal is ultimately to win races. Because of my split schedule, I won't be racing for overall championship points, so I plan to take it race by race and I'll aim for the top step of the podium in each one.

Ashley Freiburg is the first US racer to receive support from the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission.





Lucile Cypriano set the fastest lap of the weekend in Estoril on her way to a race-two podium finish

SEAT Leon Eurocup

Lucile powers to podium at season opener in Estoril

SEAT Leon Eurocup racer Lucile Cypriano took her first podium finish of the 2016 season with a superb drive to second place in race two of the series' opening round at the Autodromo Estoril late last month. The French woman also set the fastest lap of the weekend.

The JSB Competition racer, who had finished in a useful seventh place in the weekend's first race after qualifying sixth, started race two from fourth on the grid. At the start fifth-placed Stian Paulsen made a superb getaway and took the lead after two laps.

Lucile was able to match the Norwegian's pace through the opening stages, however, and on lap two of the sprint she set the fastest lap of the race with a time of 1:49.319. That pace, which was also good enough to earn her the fastest time of the weekend, put her in third place behind Costa Rica's Mauricio Hernández.

Later in the race Paulsen began to pull away from the pack to set himself up for a first win of the season, four seconds clear of the field, but the battle behind remained intense. Finally, on the final lap Lucile made her move to power past Hernandez and claim second place and her first podium finish of the season.

"[In the first race] I was not satisfied with seventh position but today was totally different," said Lucile afterwards. "We improved through some changes and mechanical alterations and I'm really pleased with my performance."

"Today, we were able to run faster and I hope to continue to take points for the championship and fight for the podium in the next races."

Lucile's efforts across the Estoril weekend mean she heads towards round two, in Silverstone in mid-May, in third place in the championship standings.

With seven rounds remaining the French racer has 24 points, 16 points behind race one winner Mikel Azcona from Spain and 20 points adrift of Paulsen who finished race one in second place.



Lucile Cypriano's podium finish in Estoril puts her third in the overall standings.

Audi Sport Racing Academy

Hungarian 15-year-old wins place at Audi racing academy

Fifteen-year-old Hungarian racing driver Vivien Keszthelyi has won one of three much coveted places at the Audi Sport Racing Academy.

The recently launched programme aims to promote young talent in motor sport, assisting academy members on the road to becoming professional race drivers via individual training programmes including track time, technical lessons, athletic activities, nutrition and media training.

The academy selects up to six talents per year and Keszthelyi, who only began racing at the age of 13, was one of those chosen for the first intake.

"My dream has come true," she said of her selection. "It is unbelievable that I have been in motor sport for just two years and that I've reached the Audi Sport racing academy so soon.

"It is a pleasure to work with professional drivers and professional mechanics," she added. "I am going to do everything to be 100 per cent focused on motor sport."

Assisted by race drivers Pierre Kaffer and Rahel Frey, together with co-ordinator Sepp Haider, the academy drivers will develop their driving style at the Audi driving experience center in Neuburg an der Donau, the Driving Center Groß Döln, on various European race tracks, and during ice training sessions in Finland and Sweden. Audi's current RS and R models are the main cars used for training. The Audi TT Cup and Audi R8 LMS race cars complement the line-up.

"The Audi Sport racing academy is the ideal programme to support motorsport stars of tomorrow as they take the first steps in their career," says Haider. "These young talents will receive all-round support as they are thoroughly prepared for the actual racing series.

"Vivien is pretty quick on the track, has a great driving style and learns fast," he adds. "She knows her goal exactly and improves step by step."





Obituary

Farewell to a legend

The world of motor sport lost one of its true pioneers earlier this year with the death, at the age of 89, of Maria Teresa de Filippis, the first woman to compete in a world championship Formula One Grand Prix.

De Filippis' first taste of racing came at the 1948 Salerno-Cava dei Tirreni, where she finished second overall in a Fiat 500. She was soon competing against the stars of the age in gruelling sportscar events such as the Mille Miglia and Targa Florio and by 1954 she was among the front-runners in the Italian Sports Car Championship.

After finishing second overall she was invited to join the works Maserati squad. Over the next few years she scored a number of standout results, finishing second at the 1955 Pergusa Grand Prix and repeating the position in the 1956 Napoli GP.

Two years later she was offered the chance to race Juan Manuel Fangio's 1957 F1 title-winning Maserati 250F car at the 1958 Monaco GP, but she failed to qualify.

The setback did not deter the Naples-born racer and a month later she returned to grand prix racing at the Belgian GP.

This time she qualified her Maserati 250F in 19th place and on Sunday, 15 June, 1958 she became the first woman to start an F1 race, finishing in 10th place in a field that included future champions Mike Hawthorn, Jack Brabham and Graham Hill, as well as Stirling Moss and de Filippis's soon-to-be mentor Jean Behra.

De Filippis would race twice more in F1 – in Portugal and Italy in 1958 – and would fail to qualify for the 1959 Monaco GP in a Behra-Porsche. However, when Behra was killed in a sports car race at the Avus circuit in Germany in August 1959, de Filippis retired from racing.

In later life she joined the Internationale des Anciens Pilotes de Grand Prix F1 for retired drivers, eventually going on to become its honorary president. She was also president of the Maserati Club. She died in January, aged 89.

Commenting on de Filippis' passing, FIA Women in Motorsport Commission President Michèle Mouton said: "The loss of Maria reminds us to remember and admire the first woman who ran at the highest level of motor sport, F1. As always, she proved that when one wants something enough, one can do it... and we must continue to encourage more women to follow her example."