Family man and full-throttle virtuoso

07/04/2020 A wild sideways drift on the way from the living room to the kitchen; tyre skid marks on the off-white floor tiles; the sound of laughter echoing through the family home in the town of Waiblingen close to Stuttgart. The life of the Porsche works driver Laurens Vanthoor is full of speed and action – even during the quiet times of the lockdown.

The 29-year-old and his wife Jacqueline take delight in their daughter's driving antics. Even at the tender age of just over one, the swift toddler is already showing talent as a real racer – in a bobby car decked out in the colours of a Manthey-Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R. The green-yellow "Grello" hue is reflected in the blue eyes of the proud father.

Emily keeps her parents on their toes as she races full speed ahead through the day. How could it be any different? Her dad is a Porsche works driver, Le Mans class winner and the reigning champion of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. Mama Jacqueline comes from a family of racing enthusiasts. The Brutschin family is well known far beyond the boundaries of the Waiblingen district. Father Harald competed in Formula 3, brother Riccardo worked his way up in the GT3 scene.

It is not surprising that motor racing is a big topic in the Vanthoor household. The polished trophies stand in neat rows on the shelf; countless helmets in different designs take up an entire rack in Laurens's bicycle workshop. A top-of-the-range simulator allows "Larry" to turn hot laps on the racetracks of the world in the safety of his own home. A life at the limit? Not always. Laurens Vanthoor has a quiet side.

The eyes of the 1.8-metre-tall racing professional from Hasselt (Belgium) are a mirror to his soul: sometimes gentle and relaxed when strolling with his wife, child, and three dogs; at other times squinting in complete concentration while attempting to find that last hundredth of a second in the hunt for victory on the racetracks. "I flip a switch, and when I'm in the racing car I block out any distractions," says Vanthoor, who at first comes across as quiet and reserved. In private, the Belgian, who is born under the Taurus star sign (May 8), seems extremely gentle. His taste in music underlines this: "I like listening to relaxing music, preferably coffee shop style," he explains. His inner peace comes not only from the self-confidence of being a successful racing driver and the harmony within his young family.

"I changed my eating habits at the end of last year and chose a vegan diet for a while. I really enjoyed it. Unfortunately, with all my travel commitments, it proved almost impossible to maintain. Still, I now eat differently and suddenly I like foods that are very different from what I used to eat," explains Vanthoor. He laughs and adds: "I couldn't continue like that. After really tough races I'd often reward myself with a couple of burgers. But afterwards I always felt as if I shouldn't have. These days I simply choose not to."

The 29-year-old keeps fit with a regular training programme. Vanthoor gets his endurance fitness from long rides on his racing bike. His workshop in the converted winter garden at home resembles a bicycle repair shop. “I began riding bikes during rehab after fracturing my hip in 2015 when I could hardly do anything else. I love it. I’ve made a lot of new friends during my rides out on the road, including a banker I trust,” smiles the 2018 Le Mans class winner. “I’ve cut back a little on my cycling since becoming a father. My wife feels I shouldn’t be out on the road for such long stints. She’s absolutely right because I’m away from my family a lot with my job.”

Vanthoor reaches top form when he spends time with his loved ones and is out riding his racing bike – one of which is finished in Porsche’s legendary Pink Pig livery. The aim: to achieve the next sporting goals. “I have a dream,” he says. “I’m determined to win the four biggest 24-hour races in the world. I’ve already ticked off Le Mans as well as the races at Spa and the Nürburgring. Only Daytona is missing. We finished second there this year. So obviously I know what needs to happen in 2021…”

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