

The two sides of a thoroughbred racer

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28/05/2020 A background story about Porsche works driver Kévin Estre.

Porsche works driver Kévin Estre and his wife Carolin stand on the edge of a parcel of land in the small Austrian town of Höchst. They laugh with delight.

In their imaginations they create their future. It will be large, modern and exciting. “We’re expecting a child in July, so we’re hoping to move from our apartment into our new home next year,” explains the 31-year-old Frenchman. Their hearts are set on this building site and discussions are already underway with the architects. “If everything goes according to plan, construction will start soon,” says the elated world endurance champion. Preparation for the arrival of the fourth generation is at full revs. “We’re having a boy, so it’s on the cards that he’ll follow in the footsteps of my grandfather, my father and me to become another racing driver.”

Motorsport runs deep in the veins of the Estre family. Kévin's grandfather competed in karting, his father started in karts before moving to single-seaters. Jean Claude Estre still runs the Formula Motorsport squad in France. He also worked alongside rising Formula 1 stars like Nico Rosberg, Jean-Eric Vergne and Romain Grosjean. "After graduating from high school in France, I worked as a member of my family team for about five years. That proved to be a formative phase in my life," says Kévin Estre. "I got my lorry license and worked as the team trucker and mechanic. I cleaned the rims and did many other jobs. Through this I gained an insight into all the processes. That still helps me today when it comes to teamwork," he explains. Motor racing is not only a big topic with his parents, but also with his wife Carolin.

"I met Caro ten years ago. I was driving for the Mühlner squad at that time and she worked there. That's where we fell in love," laughs Estre. Despite ten years of contentment as a couple, July will bring a whole new level of happiness. Still, even without having their own offspring, the topic of children was often discussed in the Estre household. "Whenever we can, we involve ourselves in social issues," explains the winner of the 2019 Spa-Francorchamps 24 Hours. "I'm a patron of a charity in France that supports sick children. We organise track days for them every year, with the proceeds going to this initiative. The wellbeing of children is very important to us both," he explains, radiating warmth and compassion. This is the soft side of Kévin Estre, which appears without fail whenever he steps out of the cockpit. However, when he takes the wheel of the Porsche 911 RSR or the 911 GT3 R, the flip side of his personality emerges.

"I automatically flip the switch," states Estre. "We didn't have a lot of financial opportunities in my family, so throughout my career I had to work hard for everything. On my way to becoming a works driver I had to prove that I was better than others over and over again – and that doesn't stop with the signing of a contract. When I get into the car I always give my absolute utmost. My aggressive style has become a bit of a trademark. It's not intentional, it's just how I am," grins Kévin Estre, who last year delighted spectators with his remarkable overtaking manoeuvre over the grass at the Nürburgring 24-hour race. "When I take off my helmet I become docile again," he jokes.

His relaxed country living in the tri-border area near Lake Constance lends him inner calm and serenity. Born in the French city of Lyon in October 1988, Estre spent the first eight years of his life in the hectic metropolis of two million people before the family moved to the country. "That's where I belong," says the 1.84-metre Frenchman, who also speaks fluent German. "Many racing drivers live around here. Marco Holzer lives close by. We've forged great relationships within a ten kilometre radius. We're close friends with René Rast and his partner Diana. We see a lot of each other. And I also catch up occasionally with Timo Scheider," says the Porsche works driver.

Estre has received a few tips about "becoming a father" from both colleagues, each of whom has notched up two DTM titles. The countdown is on. In less than two months, Estre Junior will be born. Until then, preparations and plans are in full swing for the new family member and the return to normal motor racing. "I keep myself fit by running, I ride my bike often, I hike and play tennis – I like a variety of sports. Unlike some of my teammates, I don't focus on one discipline," declares Estre. Something else that differentiates the Frenchman from the other works drivers: "I don't have a simulator," he states.

“Before the coronavirus pandemic, I had no time for it. I don't have the right equipment and I don't have the space. It would've had to go in the living room, which is not particularly cosy. I'll wait until we're allowed to get back into a real car. I cannot wait!”

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