

A Different Eye On The World Of Motorsport

19/03/2016 Being in the same room with four of the most prominent names in top level world motorsport evokes an irresistible urge to bombard them with a laundry list of questions. When all four names are female, however, one burning question very quickly rises above the rest – what is it like being a woman in a man's world?

But what if the focus zooms out from gender and into individuality instead? What if these women were asked questions that acknowledged their equal footing with their male counterparts? As the guests at the Porsche and *woman with drive* ladies lunch recently found out, they reward us with a different perspective on strength, tenacity and ambition.

Porsche flagged off the 20th anniversary of the 2016 Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix at Albert Park in Melbourne with a ladies lunch at its luxury suite, the Porsche Pavilion. That lunch went beyond the customary three elements of exquisite food, a stunning setting and beautiful company to feature a panel of speakers who have made big waves in the world of motorsport.

Ann Neal, manager for Porsche former Porsche race driver, now Porsche Brand Ambassador and nine time Formula 1 winner Mark Webber, is one of them. Known for her unrelenting pursuit of goals and opportunities, she has established her place at the top level of motorsport by refusing to yield to intimidation.

"It is about being confident," she said. "The Formula 1 paddock has a few schoolyard bullies and if you can stand your ground with them and show them that you know what you are talking about, then that is the way you have to go about your business."

Sometimes that also means facing up to your own strengths and weaknesses. There are things, Ann said, that do not appeal to her, like being part of the "old boys club".

"It just does not float my boat. So you have to think how to reach your goal with the resources you have. Then you start including people with those strengths into your team. It is about recognising where you can help but not being shy to admit to what you are not good at."

International senior Formula 1 motorsport journalist, Jennie Gow, has no qualms asking the questions that her male peers "would not even dream of asking". And that has helped her work her way up to a point where her presence and credibility as in the Formula 1 paddock does not just go unquestioned but is also highly respected.

Pointing out that there are many females who know just as much about motorsport and the technology

as their male counterparts, Jennie is determined to keep pushing towards changing the perception that women are in motorsport to merely make up a number. Her personal drive, meanwhile, is fuelled by the stories behind the sport.

"I am very much about the human side of the sport," she said. "For me it is about walking into the paddock, which so many people would love to do, and bridging that gap by bringing them in there with me."

Closing the gap is also what Monisha Kaltenborn is working towards as far as girls in motorsport are concerned. The Team Principal of the Sauber Formula 1 Team recalled talking to a 12-year-old girl a few years ago who confidently shared her dream of being a Formula 1 driver only for her father to remark that it was a "really nice dream" but she needed to have a Plan B.

"Now imagine if it was a young boy who had said the same thing," Monisha said. "Everyone would have called him an ambitious young man who knows what he wants. When you start racing there is no difference between a young boy and girl, and most girls are really good. But after the age of 12, they need the full support from their surroundings when making a decision on whether they want to continue that way or not."

"There is still a perception of girls in motorsport and a lot more has to change. The thinking has to change. It is not just about opportunities that the girls need. Things are changing but slowly."

According to Laura Anderson, Board Member of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, making a difference always starts with purpose and ends with people.

"It is always important to first understand the *raison d'être* and then what motivates and drives people. It is about approaching any situation thinking about what three things you can learn and contribute. I try to lead with my heart, then my head and then my hand."

Consumption data

911 Carrera S (Predecessor model)

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO₂ emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO₂-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO₂ Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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