

Focused

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27/12/2019 Precision and concentration on the moment are qualities shared by good race-car drivers and photographers alike. André Lotterer is both: a passionate racer and talented photographer. The three-time Le Mans winner is one of two drivers in the newly formed TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team. A portrait.

He opens the passenger window, prepares to overtake on the tight switchback, and cheers on the cyclist: “Allez, allez!” Thirty-eight-year-old André Lotterer is heading up to his favorite corner in the French Maritime Alps. He wants to photograph the Porsche Panamera S E-Hybrid there in a small turnout. In the foreground, the chalk-colored sports car with its acid green brake calipers; in the background, a breathtaking backdrop: Monaco, his chosen home.

Lotterer has returned to Porsche. In 2017 he drove the Porsche 919 Hybrid for the Porsche factory team in the World Endurance Championship (WEC). Now—following two Formula E seasons with Techeetah—he’ll be one of two Porsche drivers at the ABB FIA Formula E championship, alongside an

old acquaintance: the Swiss Neel Jani, who was Lotterer's teammate in the 919 Hybrid as well.

"Driving in Formula E is the most difficult thing I've ever done," says the Duisburg, Germany, native, who has already gained experience in the series. "The city circuits are very tight and challenging, and the overtaking maneuvers spectacular." Then there are the different road surfaces, bumps, and occasional dusty asphalt. "Of course we intensively train for all eventualities in the simulator beforehand and try to program the car as optimally as possible. But we have to deliver on a single day: training in the morning, qualifying at noon, and the race in the afternoon. That calls for extremely focused work," explains the three-time Le Mans winner. "The series is the perfect test environment for all developments in the field of e-mobility. I really love the sustainability, the family friendliness, and the amazing feel of the event. This is the future."

He parks the Panamera and gets out. 1.84 meters tall, light blue shirt, dark jeans, white sneakers, mirrored aviator sunglasses, a 1984 Leica M6 in his left hand. Lotterer looks through the viewfinder of the 35 mm camera, then takes a few steps back and refocuses on the Panamera. When he was thirteen, his father—a passionate amateur photographer—gave him his first camera, a Minolta. From then on, young Lotterer observed the world through a lens and clicked away. Not digitally, not saved to a memory card, but on film that had to be inserted in the camera and later developed in a lab. "Analog photographs have more life in them, tell more interesting stories, and are at once more timeless and more authentic," he says, pulling the camera away from his face and pointing far into the distance toward Fontvieille. He has lived there since 2011, in the southernmost quarter of Monaco.

Just a few hours ago he was doing yoga with friends in his apartment on the eighth floor, led by his partner, Takako. He met the thirty-three-year-old in her homeland of Japan in 2014. These days, the branding consultant and the Formula E driver—together with their Labrador retriever, Max—divide their time between Monaco and Belgium. Between 2003 and 2018 the race-car driver lived in Tokyo, where he met with success in the Super Formula series, then still called Formula Nippon, as well as in the Super GT Championship. "The Japanese welcomed me with open arms. My years there were great, with very straightforward, polite people."

Photography and racing share the quality of being focused on the objective. André Lotterer's father, originally from Peru, taught him early on: "The more precisely you have your goal in your sights, the sooner you will achieve it." His father started building a racing team in Belgium when André was still young. At the age of seven, his father allowed him to start kart racing. André had wanted to be a race-car driver since he was five, and he won his first race when he was eight. "My father said, 'If you really want to do this, then you can't do it halfheartedly. You have to give it your all. Racing is an expensive sport. If we start here today, then we're taking it all the way to Formula One,'" says Lotterer. His father died of cancer in 2009. "We had the opportunity to say a long and intense goodbye to him, for which I'm very grateful."

André Lotterer certainly didn't disappoint his father; he did indeed make it all the way to Formula One. He became a test-driver in 2002 and had his race debut in 2014. His father taught him to set the bar high, "because you can always do things better. You should never stop working on yourself. Self-

criticism is just as important as self-confidence." In this way, too, Ayrton Senna and Jacky Ickx are Lotterer's role models. A cartoon version of Senna adorned his kart helmet thirty years ago, and the Belgian Ickx is a living legend for Lotterer. He recently had one of his helmets decked out with a white stripe on the bottom edge, a nod to the helmet design of Ickx, now seventy-four years old. When he encountered Ickx at the Laguna Seca racetrack some time ago, he snapped a portrait of his idol in black and white and posted it on Instagram. The tag: #jackyickx. Enough said.

Before races, Lotterer likes to step back and take some time for his hobby. "I often arrive a few days early to capture some beautiful moments. Photography is perfect. I can be by myself, switch off, get over the jet lag, and clear my head." Some days he'll grab his cameras, set off in one of his four classic Porsches, drive around, and stop now and then to photograph his car. It's the combination of technology and precision, he says, that fascinates him about photography. It reminds him of motorsports: "With the camera in my hand, I'm just as ambitious and self-critical as in the race car. To me, a photo is never perfect. I always try to shoot a better one. It's like driving a corner. There's always room for improvement. You never drive a corner absolutely perfectly." And that's the standard by which André Lotterer measures himself.

Formula E 2019 / 2020

The season began on November 22/23 with two races in Diriyah outside the gates of the Saudi capital of Riyadh. It ends on July 25/26 with another doubleheader in London. Altogether, Lotterer and the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team will take part in fourteen races with the new 99X Electric. Other race locations include Santiago, Mexico City, Jakarta, Rome, Paris, Seoul, Berlin, and New York City.

Info

Text first published in the Porsche customer magazine Christophorus, No. 393.

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Image Sublines

Path: Andre Lotterer: Focused/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: André Lotterer, 2019, Porsche AG
Subline: André Lotterer: “Driving in Formula E is the most difficult thing I've ever done.”

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