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Motorsport

Audi “works” driver Allan McNish in the spotlight

- **Scot resides in Monaco**
- **Son Finlay is a calming influence**
- **Returns to Audi after three year spell in Formula 1**

In peace lies strength? This saying is not valid for Allan McNish. The mercurial, jockey-like Scot (1.65 metres, 58 kilograms) is driven by a permanent zest for action. “I’m not very good at relaxing,” confesses the Audi “works” driver. Sunbathing on the beach in Monaco? Two hours in front of the television? Read a book? “No way – I’m always thinking about what’s coming up next.”

In particular, just how he can make his Audi A4 DTM even quicker? Just how his driving style can still be improved after more than 20 years in motorsport? The thoughts always revolve around the next race, the next test. Allan McNish is a pure blooded racing driver who finds it difficult to switch off but who knows that he must learn how to relax. “Otherwise I’ll burn out sometime or other.”

In the meantime, there is light at the end of the tunnel. In May, just before the Spa DTM race, the personable Scot became a father. Since then, son Finlay is helping him to slow down. Suddenly the focus of attention is not only racing and his wife Kelly. All of a sudden they are a real family with completely new priorities, which obviously inspires McNish. Or is it purely coincidence that his results in the DTM have improved since then?

McNish is a proud father, who simply could not imagine what it meant to have a child before Finlay’s birth. How noticeably your life changes when you are no longer a couple but are three.

Allan McNish himself often comes across as an endearing child, not only because of his stature but it can be that he makes a bet with his friend Johnny Herbert as to who can eat more Jaffa Cakes. He lost the duel 6:12. “Quite simply because Johnny has a bigger mouth,” as McNish brushes off the reason for a painful defeat with his typically dry humour.

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Sweets are one of the DTM star's great passions. He'd do almost anything for a Stracciatella ice-cream. Even if it is not immediately visible, because he keeps himself in tip-top condition either in the fitness gym, by jogging or cycling, the Scot loves food. In contrast to his wife Kelly, he also enjoys cooking – since he left home at 18 as a young, aspiring racing driver and rented an apartment in south London. Because funds were short, and did not allow regular visits to a restaurant, he automatically learned to cook. Even today he can switch off when he sweats at the stove and wields the potato peeler.

Today he can now afford to go out for a meal. In Monaco, preferably to “La Saliere”, an Italian restaurant just around the corner. Allan and Kelly McNish have been living in Fontvielle for four years, a new quarter of Monaco, in which many other motorsport people live. Most of the McNish family friends come from this scene. Mick Doohan, Johnny Herbert and David Coulthard for example, in whose hotel fitness gym the Audi driver trains, and was born in the same hospital as McNish in Scotland. The fact that Allan McNish's physics teacher taught Formula 1 team boss Frank Williams mathematics several years earlier shows just how small the world in Scotland is.

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Although he enjoys the lifestyle on the Côte d'Azur with its almost permanent sunshine, Allan McNish is a true Scotsman. He regularly wears the family tartan kilt to official engagements – a procedure that takes 30 minutes and which almost cost him the championship title, which he clinched for Audi, at the end of 2000: At the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) finale he sprained his back during a photo session in his kilt. He was in acute pain when he contested the race in Australia.

Allan McNish became a Formula 1 driver the following year, which fulfilled his great dream, albeit with some delay. After three years he returned to Audi. For him it was a homecoming and for Audi the return of a prodigal son.

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Photographs of Allan McNish in Monaco and additional information to download at: www.audi-motorsport.info (accreditation required)