

Media Information



12.09.2025

Claire Schönborn: “That rally changed my life”

- German driver won a global development programme and is competing in the Junior World Championship in 2025
- 2024 Central European Rally was the breakthrough for the 26-year-old
- Schönborn must juggle her job and rallying

Munich. As the winner of “Beyond Rally Women’s Driver Development”, a global development programme run by the WRC promoter, Claire Schönborn is the official driver in the WRC Young Driver Team and is competing in the 2025 Junior World Rally Championship (JWRC). Her career received the ultimate boost at last year’s Central European Rally (CER), since when things have never been the same again for the driver from the Hunsrück region.

Claire, when you are at home and pop into your local baker’s for a loaf of bread, how do people react to you?

“Where I live, I get the impression that people know what I do and have started to follow my career – thanks in part to various TV appearances in recent weeks. People actually talk to me more about the latest rally than they used to do about the hillclimbs. In that sense, interest has grown in my motorsport outings. Many people are pleased to see a young woman from their region make it into the World Rally Championship, but they also ask when I am going to win for the first time like I did on the hill. We obviously still have a way to go before then ...”

Why might you have to wait a while for that really big success?

“I am lacking experience, experience and more experience. That is more important than anything else in the World Rally Championship. Thanks to my job as an engineer working on test drives, I believe I have a good basic feel for the car and rallying. However, virtually everything beyond that is new to me – from working with a co-driver, putting together pace notes and adapting to a car with four-wheel drive, to the details that go into the chassis set-up, optimal tyre selection, and so on. I drove in my first ever rally pretty much a year ago to the day, and had only contested two minor rallies before the 2024 Central European Rally. To be able to show what I am capable of at a WRC rally on German soil, and to come through against two other female drivers with far more rally experience and support than me, was a dream. The CER unquestionably changed my life. I am all the more proud that they recognised this in the rally Mecca that is Finland, and that they gave me the support I needed to travel to the final shootout at the Rally Sweden a bit better prepared. The result there speaks for itself. Since then, I have had to juggle my job and my vocation.”

How much of a challenge is that?

“To be honest, it is brutal. I flew home as the winner of the event in Sweden. Everyone was thrilled for me – then I had to go back to work the following day. Rally driving, particularly at this level, is actually a full-time job. It is incredible how versatile you have to be in the World Rally Championship. The first time I drove on gravel was as recently as May, two weeks before the Rally Portugal. I am totally



Media Information



committed, am trying to learn as much as I can as quickly as I can, and am battling for any opportunity to get behind the wheel of a rally car. All my rivals have significantly more experience and have contested more rallies. But that does not put me off – it makes me more determined to show what I am capable of.”

How difficult is it to gain more experience?

“Through the Beyond programme I won a season in the Junior World Rally Championship. That includes a test before each actual event, usually about 50 kilometres. And then you obviously have the World Championship rallies themselves. I have to more or less organise and finance anything else myself. That takes money and time. No question, sponsors are more than welcome. Without wishing to sound arrogant, I believe I can offer an attractive package. However, we are not professional, so my usual work life continues as it was. It is not the case that I can simply get in a rally car and go and practice. It is also worth noting that – with the exception of a little sideways roll in Portugal – I have never had a crash, so have never been right on the limit. I simply want to take get every possible kilometre under my belt, and cannot afford to crash.”

You are now returning to the Central European Rally. What are your hopes for the rally?

“The CER is my first rally of the season on asphalt – that suits me, as that is what I grew up on. On the other hand, my direct rivals have a huge advantage in terms of experience. With that in mind, a place somewhere in the top half would be a great success. Finland showed just how slim the margins are. We were only about a second per kilometres slower than the fastest in our class on the particularly tricky sections – and they have far more experience on gravel and some have started there three or four times. In the end, all the drivers in the Junior World Championship made it to the finish. In that case, you tend to look more at the result than the actual time differences.”

How many of the people you see on a Sunday at the baker’s will be on the special stages supporting you?

“My entire family will be there, including my grandparents, and my motorsport club – that much is certain. I think there will also be many friends and acquaintances who take the opportunity to come and watch. The Central European Rally is a mega event, for which it is worth making the trip to the tri-border region. I can’t say whether the baker will be there. However, I will invite him this Sunday ... (laughs).”

Media Contact

CER Media Team

Michael Kramp, T +49 221 957434-34, E-mail media@centraleuropeanrally.eu

ADAC e.V.

Oliver Runschke, T +49 89 7676-6965, E-mail oliver.runschke@adac.de

adac.de/motorsport

