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Interview with championship leader Alessio Picariello to mark the mid-point of season

- Alessio Picariello leads the 2013 Formel ADAC drivers' standings on 202 points after 12 of 24 races
- The young Belgian has secured seven wins, four pole positions and five fastest laps
- Picariello: "I learn something new every time I get in the car"

We are half-way through the 2013 Formel ADAC season, and Alessio Picariello (19, Mücke Motorsport) has led the overall standings since the first race of the season. The Mücke Motorsport driver takes stock after the first four race weekends and talks about his future plans.

You were one of the favourites in the Formel ADAC at the start of the season. Did you expect to be this successful?

Alessio Picariello: I never thought about specific goals or about numbers of victories. I always try to do my best and, of course, I want to win as many races as possible, which is very important to me in my further development as a racing driver.

What do you think is the key to your success?

Alessio Picariello: I'm with Mücke Motorsport this year. They are an excellent team. Compared to recent years, 2013 is altogether just perfect as regards every aspect of my motor racing environment. This year, I've had the opportunity to test properly for the first time – even during the season. I learn something new every time I climb into the car and my engineer and my mechanics are brilliant. I hear people continually say that I've got a lot of experience, but actually, I'm only just getting to grips with things this year.

What do you yourself regard as your biggest improvement?

Alessio Picariello: My speed over a single lap, most probably. I've made significant progress in this area during 2013. My driving style did not suit the car last year. My engineer taught me the basics and we are now working on the finer points. I've noted significant progress this season, especially in the dry.

You are one of the best Formel ADAC drivers in the wet. What is your secret?

Alessio Picariello: Basically, there's no real mystery. Driving in the wet is very difficult to learn, because the driver must rely on his instincts. Feeling at ease in the car is crucial. A driver must never be afraid to be on the limit in wet conditions, because that is absolutely where you must be in the rain. The car has to slide around, but it's important to assess the circuit correctly, since some turns should be taken in an aggressive manner. However, you need to remain calm and collected when running through others.

So far this season, you've achieved seven wins from twelve races. Looking back, which victory was the best in your opinion?

Alessio Picariello: Each victory is special. It is very difficult to filter out a particular one. One of the best was, without doubt, my opening win at Oschersleben. It was my maiden race with my new team Mücke Motorsport and made the perfect debut. My home wins at Spa-Francorchamps were also simply wonderful too, especially in the second race where I started fourth on the grid and immediately fought my way to the front of the field, as the fans cheered me on.



You've been driving for Mücke Motorsport since the start of this season. What is the atmosphere like in the team?

Alessio Picariello: Driving for this team is something really special. Work is taken very seriously and pursued in a determined way. And yet at the same time, the atmosphere is excellent. When the mechanics are busy in the evenings preparing the cars for the next day, there's always a relaxed atmosphere and plenty of laughter. They're a really great outfit!

You have led the championship table since the first race of the season. Do you ever consider the standings during the race and occasionally ease off?

Alessio Picariello: I always put my foot down in the first two races of the weekend. In the third race, I then begin to think a bit about the points. But when I'm competing, I aim to win. It's still too early to always have the rankings in mind at this stage of the championship. At any rate, I've learned that it is sometimes better to be fourth, rather than risk not finishing in a battle for third place.

You put a Pikachu sticker on your car after each win. How did this practice come about?

Alessio Picariello: During my karting days, we used to play Pokémon and give each other nicknames. Since I wore yellow overalls, I got the name Pikachu, which has stuck right up until the present. 'Smilies' on cars for each win had been the tradition at Mücke Motorsport since Sebastian Vettel's time. However, my mechanic was not keen, and we talked about other possibilities, which is how the fun idea of the Pikachu stickers originally came about.

Do you have any thoughts about where your career path might lead next year?

Alessio Picariello: I would like to contest the Formula 3 Championship with Mücke Motorsport. There have been some preliminary discussions with Peter Mücke, but he said I should stay focused on this first season. If results are good, then we'll see. Moving up to such a series is always a question of money, but the Formula 3 European Championship would be a good and realistic route to take.

Where do you see your long-term future in motor racing?

Alessio Picariello: Obviously, in Formula 1 – that's my big dream. But I'm realistic and know that it's not an easy path. Initially, it looked as though it would be impossible to drive for Mücke Motorsport in 2013, but I did it. Since that happened, I know that nothing is impossible. My goal is Formula 1 and I will remain true to that goal. If, one day, I realise that the way forward is closed, then there are certainly other exciting alternatives in motor racing.

Media Contact

Formel ADAC

Robert Seiwert, adrivo Sportpresse GmbH

Tel: +49 (0) 89 189 659 260, Mobile: +49 (0) 160 9797 3030, email: adac@adrivo.com

ADAC e.V.

Kay-Oliver Langendorff, Head of Motorsport Communication

Tel: +49 (0) 89 7676 6936, Mobile: +49 (0) 171 555 5936, email: kay.langendorff@adac.de

www.adac.de/motorsport

