



Media Information  
BMW Motorsport  
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## **An interview with BMW Motorsport Junior Nico Menzel: “I am living my dream.”**

- **Part one of a series of interviews with the BMW Motorsport Juniors.**
- **Nico Menzel races regularly in the BMW M6 GT3 in his second year of training.**
- **Menzel: “My dad allows me to do my own thing.”**

**Munich. The BMW Motorsport Junior programme features five promising, talented youngsters in the 2017 season. They are all still in the early stages of their development as racing drivers, but already have fascinating careers behind them. In a series of interviews, we present the BMW Motorsport Juniors. First up: Nico Menzel (GER).**

Now in the second year of his training, the son of racing driver Christian Menzel (GER) is already racing regularly for BMW Motorsport. He is contesting the complete season of the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup in a BMW M6 GT3, which he shares with another BMW Motorsport Junior, Mikkel Jensen (DEN). His programme also included the 24-hour classics at Spa-Francorchamps (BEL) and the Nürburgring (GER). Menzel, like the other Juniors, is also actively involved in the development work on the BMW M4 GT4. This weekend, the 19-year-old from the Eifel region of Germany will attend the DTM event at the Nürburgring.

### **Nico, does being the son of a racing driver mean that you automatically become a racing driver yourself?**

Nico Menzel: “No, not automatically. Some fathers try to encourage their sons to go into motor racing – perhaps to realise the odd unfulfilled dream or two with the



help of their sons. I am happy that that was not the case for me. My dad always said: 'If you want, I am happy to do that with you.' I obviously grew up with motorsport and accompanied my father to most of his races. He always kept the option open for me, but, for a long time, I had no desire. However, at some point I said: 'Let's go karting.' That worked out well. I started in the junior class in Kerpen and it all developed from there. Just because my father is a racing driver does not mean that I also have to go down that line. I made that decision myself."

**Do you sometimes ask your father for advice?**

Menzel: "He has obviously supported me throughout my journey so far. Despite that, we try to plough our career paths on our own. If I have any questions, I can ask him. However, it is not the case that we only have one topic of conversation every day at home, and racing is all we discuss. Like in other families, we often chat about football. My favourite club Hamburger SV, which is going through something of a crisis at the moment, is actually the topic of conversation more often than motorsport. Basically, my dad allows me to do my own thing, without monitoring my every step."

**You have often been the youngest in your racing series. Has that made your career easier or more difficult?**

Menzel: "It has not made it any easier, as the other drivers always had at least one or two years more experience than me. But that has always been the case for me. I have had to come through my father's tough school. He usually threw me straight in at the deep end, which I did not always find so great at the time. In hindsight, however, you have to say that it is the best way to learn, and that you always gear yourself towards the older and more experienced kids that way. That is how I learned to hold my own."

**Do you have a role model in motorsport? Or outside motorsport?**

Menzel: "My motorsport role model is Fernando Alonso. That still makes me a bit of a rare breed in Germany. All my peers supported Sebastian Vettel or Michael Schumacher. Why Alonso? Because he has hardly ever had the best car, but has still often been in contention for the world championship title, and because he



always keeps fighting right to the bitter end. That is a valuable characteristic, even in situations that may at first appear hopeless. Another role model is definitely Alex Zanardi. He is another example of how you can achieve anything if you have the willpower. Alex is quite simply a role model for life – for everyone, not just for racing drivers. What he has come through, the way he deals with that today, his sense of humour and his zest for life are hugely impressive.”

**How did you come into contact with BMW?**

Menzel: “I drove in the BMW Talent Cup in 2013. That was my first year in motor racing, and the first time I came into contact with BMW. We have maintained that contact ever since. After a good first year in the Porsche Carrera Cup, in which I finished third in 2015, I received the call and went to Munich for a meeting. We then drove the BMW M235i Racing at the Junior Shootout in Dijon and, obviously, I was good enough to be accepted onto the Junior programme. That was a dream, as everyone wants to drive for a manufacturer at some point but first as a Junior gives you the opportunity to perhaps become a regular works driver sometime further down the line. Jesse Krohn has shown that this is possible. As such, this has been a big step in my career so far.”

**What does the BMW Motorsport Junior programme entail?**

Menzel: “We are supported both on and off the track, and are given a programme at the start of the year. For me, it is the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup this year. The best GT drivers in the world drive in that series, so it is a very close competition. On top of that, I have other jobs, like working on the development of the new BMW M4 GT4. That provides great insights, because you are working with a factory team and can learn a lot. Even as a 19-year-old lad, I can still do my bit to help improve a customer car. Furthermore, BMW allows us to race at the very highest level. That is fantastic. Not everyone gets the chance to drive such great cars. Away from the track, there is a fitness camp each year. That allows you to explore your own limits and to continue your development. Not everyone gets these opportunities. It is all very professional.”



**How is your relationship with the other Juniors?**

Menzel: "I share a car with Mikkel Jensen in the Blancpain GT Series. We get on really well and have known each other for years, as you keep coming across the same people in different motorsport classes. We are a team and drive the same car. You could say that we are also rivals, but you cannot see it that way. We want to move the team and the car forward, so we try to complement each other as well as possible. We are entirely open, in order to push one another and help the Junior programme, BMW and the team."

**What do you get up to when you are not behind the wheel of a racing car?**

Menzel: "I did my Abitur (German school-leaving examinations) this year, and followed that by doing an instructor training course at the driving safety centre at the Nürburgring. I work there at the moment. However, I still intend to study whenever my motorsport career allows it, in order to have something to fall back on. Ideally, I would like to study medicine – perhaps something to do with sports medicine. We'll have to see when that might be possible. At the moment, BMW has given me a great programme and I am, in principle, living my dream. However, that does not mean that you should not have a plan B."

**How would you describe your character in three words – both on and off the track?**

Menzel: "I would say: positive, determined and focussed."

**Racing aside, what are you good at?**

Menzel: "I am good at doing impersonations. We have a lot of fun with each other doing that. I don't have one stand-out impersonation – I am actually really rather good."

**What has been the best moment of your career so far – and what was your worst moment?**

Menzel: "The best moment was winning the championship in last year's Carrera Cup Asia, and also being accepted on the BMW Motorsport Junior programme.



2014 was bad. It was a very difficult year for me in what used to be Formula ADAC. Nothing seemed to work out. Sometimes you have years like that. However, I have to say that, although it was a very disappointing time at first, I believe that I learned an awful lot, especially from these situations – maybe more than in successful years.”

**Do you have a particular goal for your career?**

Menzel: “As I am with a great manufacturer at the moment, my goal is obviously to earn myself a permanent place in the squad of drivers at BMW Motorsport. I am fully-focussed on working towards that.”

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