

FIA Formula E Championship

An interview with Jens Marquardt and Michael Andretti ahead of the start of the FIA Formula E Championship.

Munich (DE), 5th October 2016. The MS Amlin Andretti team takes to the track for the start of the new FIA Formula E Championship season this weekend. As partner of the team from Indianapolis (US), BMW will also be involved in the 2016/17 season. In an interview, BMW Motorsport Director Jens Marquardt and team owner Michael Andretti (US) discuss the new partnership and their expectations ahead of the opening race of the season, the Hong Kong ePrix.

Mr Marquardt, Mr Andretti, why do you feel the combination of BMW Motorsport and MS Amlin Andretti in Formula E is so promising?

Jens Marquardt: "Michael Andretti's team has been involved in Formula E from the word go, and knows the series better than anyone. As 'Official Vehicle Partner', BMW i has also been represented in this series from the outset. And, last but not least, we have also received first-hand information from our BMW works driver António Félix da Costa. It seemed a logical step to put these strengths together and intensify the commitment. We now need the right input to get BMW technology into the car – we are gaining that through the close cooperation with Michael's team."

Michael Andretti: "We're also very excited about the relationship with BMW. Having an OEM relationship is important, but having that relationship be with BMW is even better. It's quite an honour to be associated with such a great company."

How important is it in Formula E to be willing to learn and to gain new experience from race to race?

Andretti: "When it comes to racing there is always learning. You don't go into any race not thinking you're going to learn something. That's the beauty of racing, nobody knows everything and you're constantly learning."

Marquardt: "It goes without saying that both BMW and Andretti Formula E already have plenty of experience. However, Formula E is only in its third year. In a championship like this, which demands completely new approaches as a fully-electric racing series, it is extremely important to ensure that you are learning all the time. You have to know exactly what you are dealing with. Every little detail can make the difference. It is precisely this know-how that we want to acquire."

What exact form will the partnership take?

Marquardt: "We obviously add our know-how and development expertise to this equation. We will have people on site at the racetrack, and our staff will evaluate the data back home in Munich. Through us, Andretti has access to the BMW facilities, which we also use at BMW Motorsport: the wind tunnel, test rigs and much more. Andretti employees have already been out to Munich, and we have visited the team in the USA. The partnership is already a very close one."

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Andretti: “Yes, indeed. We are 100% integrated with BMW when it comes to the Formula E project, and BMW is 100% integrated with Andretti Formula E, so there are things we will be working on together in many different areas to hopefully have us running up front.”

How well suited to each other are the ‘American way of racing’ and the ‘German way of racing’?

Marquardt: “They are both very well suited to each other. We’ve also seen this in our cooperation with BMW Team RLL, and have enjoyed great success together in North America. I am confident that this combination of American and German approaches will also produce good results in an international series like Formula E.”

Andretti: “I also believe the two sides will compliment each other very well. There are a lot of things we do on this side of the pond that work well and there are a lot of things that are done on that side of the pond that work well, and I think bringing them both together can only strengthen the way we approach things.”

Lean back and rest on your laurels: why can you not afford to do this in motorsport?

Andretti: “What makes our brands so complimentary to each other is Andretti and BMW are both in it to win. While the foundation of our history is important, you can’t just look back – you always have to continue pushing to run up front and win races and that is what we are all about.”

Marquardt: “The same goes for us. The key to success in motorsport is to look forward and be innovative. If you’re not moving forwards, you’re heading backwards. For this reason, you have to keep working all the time and ensure that you never stop developing. At BMW Motorsport, we are fortunate enough to be very close to our colleagues in the production department and to be able to incorporate all the innovations that come out of BMW AG. The network is absolutely huge. We also benefit from this in Formula E. We have gained good experience in series production with the BMW i models, and are able to transfer these findings straight into motorsport. In recent years, BMW has established a leading position in the automobile industry in the field of electric mobility, which is forever growing in importance. Production development will, in turn, also benefit from the knowledge acquired through racing in Formula E.”

What expectations do you have going into the third season of Formula E?

Andretti: “To be running up front. To be running in the top five every race, win some races and hopefully at the end of the season be running in championship contention.”

Marquardt: “For us, season three heralds a new phase in Formula E. Together with Andretti, we are charged with improving the package and laying the foundations, on which we can be successful in the long term. Every one of us is looking forward to this exciting challenge.”

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