



F1 People – Michael Schumacher

Hello, and welcome to the fourth instalment of F1 People, a series from Sidepodcast bringing you a biography of the important names in Formula 1. Today, it's Michael Schumacher's turn.

Michael Schumacher was born January 3rd 1969 in Germany. At an early age, his father modified a pedal kart to include an engine, and at the age of six he had won his first karting club championship, despite being the youngest member.

His parents took on extra jobs at the karting circuit to be able to afford their son's hobby, but when the expenses got too much, Schumacher found investment from several businesses. In Germany, you have to be 14 to get a karting licence, so a 12 year old Schumacher obtained his from Luxemburg instead. A few years later he was legal in Germany, and winning karting championships easily.

He left school in 1987 to work as a mechanic, and graduated to single seater racing the next year. Of course he was brilliant at it, and spotted by Willi Weber's Formula 3 team. Weber financed him for a couple of years, and was rewarded when Schumacher won in 1990. His next move would usually have been to progress to Formula 3000, but Schumacher decided to join the junior Mercedes team in the World Sportscar Championship. He did take part in one Formula 3000 race, in 1991 and won it. He won several races in the Sportscar Championship. People were beginning to sit up and take notice.

Schumacher's Formula 1 debut came with the Jordan-Ford team in 1991, as a one off replacement driver. Mercedes paid Eddie Jordan to let Schumacher drive, and Jordan immediately signed him up, because he showed promise. He qualified brilliantly, but retired from the race. Despite the potential deal, and subsequent court injunctions by Jordan, Schumacher was snatched up by Benetton for the rest of the season.

His first podium came in 1992, at the Mexican Grand Prix, and his first victory was the same year in Belgium.

1994 was Schumacher's year and despite the death of Ayrton Senna at Imola, Schumacher proved himself to be a worthy, if controversial, rival. He won six out of the first seven races, but endured a three race ban for ignoring a black flag, and completed the title race by pushing Damon Hill off the road. He retained his title the next year, and then switched allegiance to the Ferrari team. He continued to fight to clear up his damaged reputation, only to lose it again with a similar "run off the road" incident with Villeneuve.

A heavy accident early on in 1999, resulted in a broken leg for Schumacher that sidelined him for much of the season, but he returned to championship winning form in 2000. Thus began the Ferrari dominance, and the record breaking that continued until 2004. Most driver titles. Longest reign as champion. Most wins. Most pole positions. Most podiums. The list is endless.

In 2005, the pairing of Fernando Alonso and Renault brought Schumacher and Ferrari's winning streak to an end. Schumacher's only win that year came at the tarnished US GP, when only six of the twenty cars took part. 2006 was better, but Alonso took the championship again. The controversial moments were back, with a parking incident at Monaco and some conveniently placed penalties for other teams.

Schumacher confirmed his retirement at the Italian Grand Prix post-race press conference. There had been much speculation and continued to be so for his next move, but Ferrari retained his services as an advisor on the pit wall for some races in the 2007 season.



Schumacher has received many awards for his achievements, most notably the Laureus World Sportsman of the Year. He has won twice, and been nominated four times – another record he holds.

Michael lives in Switzerland with his wife Corinna and children Gina-Maria and Mick. His younger brother Ralf is also a racing driver, although much less successful in Formula 1. That is hardly surprising though, when the fans and the statistics proclaim Schumacher to be the greatest driver in the world.

Thank you for listening to F1 People, and don't forget to join me tomorrow for another famous face.

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