



Too fast, too young

By Guillaume

Playing with Juliette to F12000 and listen to the commentary discussing about Verstappen (the hopes they put in him which didn't turn into results) made me think about young drivers that came too fast to F1.

Yes, I will wander away from the point and talk about the youngest drivers coming to F1, something which Verstappen isn't concerned because he arrived in F1 at the age of 22, and he was the victim of Schumacher's cannibalism towards his teammates. But let's focus on the ten youngest drivers to have started a F1 race.

So there is Alguersuari, Thackwell, Rodriguez, Alonso, Tuero, Amon, Vettel, Button, Cheever and Marques. Although it is too early to judge Alguersuari, and that Vettel and Alonso don't have to suffer from their reputation, Button's case is more delicate, but it is because of the disastrous choices he made in his career. But fortunately, Button hasn't had to suffer from it *ad vitam eternam*, clinching his well-deserved title heads down last year. Let's now have a look on the other drivers.

Thackwell's F1 career was quite short-lived. It wasn't in its progression but in its duration. He replaced Mass at a moment's notice without winning major titles before, he wouldn't confirm this too quick promotion, and although he became tougher, especially in F2, he never really got a second chance even after a four-year break. Esteban Tuero knew the same kind of career, plus the money. Although he is nice, the Argentinian would stay for one season only with Minardi. We never saw him again and besides, we didn't see him much before because his performances lacked consistency and constancy.

Ricardo Rodriguez comes from another era, the 1960s. Plus, he was more talented than the aforementioned guys. Showing what he got with Ferrari, he slowly confirmed before he died in Mexico almost one year before he started in F1. Chris Amon's end was less tragic, and his qualities are undeniable. Despite four years staying at the back of the grid, Ferrari gave him an opportunity – without success. There had been podiums and poles, but no victories – neither with Ferrari, nor with March or Matra or elsewhere. Because he couldn't bring victories although he was talented enough, he left F1 after thirteen seasons. But Amon didn't suffer much from the lack of success, as his records in Prototypes showed (something he did at the same time as F1). Cheever would know the same thing. Although he was talented, his results were erratic according to the series. He never succeeded in F1 despite opportunities and wrong team choices. But he managed to be remembered in motorsport in single-seaters within the CART championship, winning the Indy 500 miles.

And in the middle of all these people, there was a UFO. Tarso Marques. Yes, I see you're smiling. But Tarso was one of these drivers who were very brilliant in feeder series (as well as having quite a lot of money) but he never succeeded in F1. He wanted to get into F1 too fast

and accepted Minardi's offer when he was only 20. Minardi was looking for more cash than Fisichella brought. But he would get his fingers burnt because he would replace drivers that season and the one after that... And four years later where the comparison with Alonso was too much for him.

In the end, although I am aware that ten – sorry, nine – drivers are too limited a number to judge. But with these nine drivers, there are two world champions plus one potentially, three talented drivers who never made concrete because they lacked time, choice or even because they died before proving anything. But there were also three short-lived careers over time, one of them longer than the others thanks to money. So one third of winners, one third of good guys and one third of total failures. Having said that, I will now tell you what I personally think (and subjectively also): beginning one's career very young is double edge, almost triple. One may get his fingers burnt as well, use more or less its huge talent or be a hard-worker and lead a pretty great career without much glory, though. On the other hand, score points as young as one can – even though it is easier than before – is a more than encouraging sign towards success. So yeah, I'm not teaching you anything new.