

Max Verstappen

The Formula One ace on living the good life in Monaco and jostling with Lewis Hamilton

Verstappen, 23, was born in Hasselt in Belgium and began karting aged four. He adopted his father's Dutch nationality for his career, and took part in Formula Three before becoming the youngest driver to compete in Formula One when he raced in the 2015 Australian Grand Prix, aged 17. The following year he became the youngest to win a race. He is currently second place in this year's hotly contested drivers' championship, behind Lewis Hamilton. When not racing he lives in Fontvieille in Monaco.

“ I have a flat that looks out to the harbour in Cap d'Ail and down the coastline there, which is beautiful. I wake up around 10am. If I can get seven or eight hours' sleep at least, it's ideal.

I never eat breakfast at home because I'm not hungry. I grew up not eating in the morning. I didn't like it. My first meal depends on when I wake up, but it can be as late as 1pm. It depends on what

day it is but quite often I'll work out before. Either that or I spend an hour on the racing simulator if I have some ideas I want try out.

One of the best things about living in Monaco is the quality of life. Italy is very close and Nice and Cannes are just around the corner. St Tropez is very near too. They're all within two hours. I think where you choose to live is really important when you're away a lot. And, for me, the weather makes it all the better because working out around Monaco isn't really a chore. You can just go for a run, even in the winter. I always run in shorts, even in January.

I'll regularly head out on the water with friends, where we spend the day out on the jet skis or the boat. It's a lot of fun — drive a bit, park up somewhere in a little bay and then head off to explore a part of the coastline.

If I'm going out for lunch, it's always nice to overlook the harbour. I'll eat most things but not too much fish. Anything else is good, like steak, pasta and pizza,

but my favourite meal is actually tomato soup and carpaccio. I'm one of the taller drivers but I'm not really, let's say, the most skinny build. So I do have to take care with what I eat, because if I ate what I wanted then I could probably go into sumo wrestling.

At the Dutch Grand Prix in Zandvoort it was great to see so many fans, all dressed in orange. I could see them showing their support, which was really cool. It was a relief to win that one because the pressure was high. I mean, to win in front of your own friends, that's the best that can happen, right?

At Monza [where Verstappen was involved in a crash with Lewis Hamilton last month] we were racing for position, but you need two people to work together to make the corner and Lewis just kept squeezing until there wasn't any more room for two cars — and that's when we crashed [Verstappen was penalised after being found at fault]. I was there to try and race hard but fair. I don't fully agree with the penalty as I believe it was a racing incident. It's very unfortunate what happened, but we are both professionals so we will move on.

Despite so many other racing drivers living in Monaco, everyone has their own schedule, so you don't bump into many of them that often. Maybe sometimes in a restaurant, but everyone just lives their own lives. Also, I don't really pay attention.

In the evening I like to watch a series, a movie, or I'll go on my simulator with friends. Because my schedule during a race week is so strict, when I can I like to go to bed at 2am because I really enjoy being awake at night. It's nice and quiet and you don't get disturbed.

In terms of the championship there's still a long way to go, so I'm not thinking about the title too much yet. It's more about trying to maximize every single weekend to try and gain a better advantage. I'm not really much of a dreamer, so I'm not thinking about Abu Dhabi [the season finale] too much yet. I just go step by step, race by race.

And no, despite driving for a living I don't drive in Monaco much — it's very small and it isn't the quickest place to get around when it's not a race circuit! ■ ”

Interview by Rory Smith



WORDS OF WISDOM

BEST ADVICE I WAS GIVEN

Work hard — and if you can, have fun doing it

ADVICE I'D GIVE

Don't give up. It's important to fight for what you really want to achieve

WHAT I WISH I'D KNOWN

I don't think there is anything. I always try to look forwards