

## The Racedriver who fell in love with a Ghost

As every year, the Nürburgring was swarming with people and racecars. It was a long track with 150 turns or so. Johan Schumacher had practised the track for 3 years and always came 3 weeks early to get the feel again. Each track was like a wife you learn to know well, however, this track was a passionate woman. She simply threw you out if you made mistakes or lost concentration. After 1st round any driver suffered from exhaustion in the muscles and every turn started to be dangerous. Later rounds gave pain in the eyes because of shifting lights. Truly a much more difficult battle than just driving.

Johan had an interview exactly about driving. A journalist from the Bild named Karen wanted to have a story about the techniques in race driving. Now Johan was looking for her as the clock was getting near to the time of that meeting. He was in the Pit with his two mechanics and didn't want to drive while waiting for her. He was looking at the car computer while speaking to one of his mechanics because he wanted to adjust the angle on the frontwheels to get less oversteering - he liked oversteering on this track. It was easier to get through a double turn, but if too much, he ended up on the grass at less steep turns when in high speed. Or worst of all, in a slide - it was impossible to keep the car moving forward in the worst situation of multiple counter steerings. The steering would go way too fast and give less and less control.

Karen was making her second interview this week about racing. She had learned about the track, its history and accidents and wrote an article in the Bild. They wanted more and she liked to speak with the people there. Today she had a setup of getting to know the techniques of actually driving through the track. When she saw Johan there in the pit, she thought he was a bit short and closer up he seemed sturdy and strong. Johan seemed to have read her mind: "Guten Tag, Karen", "I know you think we are short, but I tell you what it feels like to sit in a small racecar for several hours, it's not pleasant and you wonder why you never win. It's kilo's and gram's when we brake and accelerate back."

Suddenly a car came out in the pits. "Wroooooom, sqreeeeech, weeee". Karen looked amazed. It was so small, like a go-cart. Johan: "It's a Formula 1 car, 2007 specs and regulations, topspeed 340 km/h", "come, I show you mine". They walked over to the pit of Johan. "Jump in", "Wow", Karen said, "It's soo small, and wheres the steering wheel?" - Johan slammed the steeringwheel on. Karen: "I'm trapped". "Push that button and it releases, then take it with you."

Later: "Thanks, Johan, it was amazing to sit there!", "I'm glad to help!", he said. They had found a small table and 2 chairs, sitting at the back of the pit. Johan had found some refreshments, some juice mix.

Karen: "I want to ask about the techniques of racing, as it seems to be some sort of balance between science, making arcs on the road and hard discipline?"

Johan: "Yes, it's a mix of maximum high speed, breaking enough and staying on the road, keeping the grip on the road with the cars wheels and keeping your own control of the car and your body through these steps."

Karen: "So, what does it mean to draw arcs on the road - making a line, I think it's called, and how can you remember the gear you need to be in over so many turns?"

Johan: "We can use the computer in the pit to keep track of everything, even change settings during a race, as it transmits info to the car of the point where it's about to turn and the computer shows at the steeringwheel which gear level is the optimum, but after a 100 laps you know the turns in your spine. During a longer race with fuel economy thus more weight at times, you can need to gear down a bit earlier due to the extra weight. The line you mention is likewise a proven optimum way of getting through the track - it's a way to balance centrifugal pressure or call it "horizontal gravity" and a longer distance through a turn. The longer distance and less curving makes it possible to drive faster through instead of slowing too much down."

Karen: "Well, I see. What about breaking, it seems to me a waste of time when using the breaks so much?"

Johan: "No it's not waste due to a slightly break, turning and slide effect at times, other than that, it's a win or lose in the breaking. You simply break in the very last instant needed. Further theres the passing technique where two cars are close at a turn and the one behind delays the breaking to the uttermost dangerous moment so he can pass the other inside, where the car being outside is also partly blocked. In a right turn it means that the car behind first "ride the wind" created by the car in front and secondly delay the breaking and stay to the right in this example, so the other will be blocked in turning right. The winner being the car behind. As you can hear, it's a bold and dangerous move - but it works miracles sometimes and other times creates a crash or simply that the car behind don't make the turn and continue to the other side."

To be continued...