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Motorsport

Audi factory driver Vanina Ickx in portrait

- **Scientist in Audi A4 DTM**
- **Belgian dares things that many men only dream of**
- **From equestrian sport to motorsport**

She parachutes. She was the first woman to cross the English Channel in an Ultra-Light plane. She holds, at 136 kph, the speed record on skis on a ski-jump. And since the start of the year, her “office” is a powerful 460-hp Audi A4 DTM.

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Vanina Ickx does things that many men only dream of – and, bearing in mind her delicate figure of 1.55 metres in height and just over 50 kilograms in weight, things that you can hardly believe possible at first glance. “I’m amazed at just how courageous I’ve become,” says the Audi factory driver. “As a child I was actually very cautious and afraid of practically everything.”

At that time, she didn’t even waste a single thought on becoming a racing driver. As daughter of the former Formula 1 driver and six-time Le Mans winner, Jacky Ickx, it appears only natural for Vanina Ickx to follow in her successful father’s footsteps today. However, her motorsport career began at the ‘old’ age of 21 – and only really by accident: “I jumped in at the last minute for somebody, who couldn’t make it, for a one-make cup race. This is how I got the taste.”

Prior to this, the great passion of the young Belgian, whose charm and charisma virtually no one can resist in the DTM paddock, was show jumping. “I spent every spare minute with my horse,” she remembers. “After school I went riding or trained for tournaments that were held on weekends or during the holidays.”

Her favourite subject at school was Biology – and she also followed this route during her studies. The budding Biologist wrote her thesis about genetics and embryology. “I love nature, plants, trees, animals, birds and insects,” explains the DTM driver with sparkling eyes. “In my opinion it is much more interesting to

know how nature functions and how everything works than to study economics for example.”

If she had not become a racing driver Vanina Ickx would probably work as a scientist. “But not in a laboratory,” she stresses. “I hated it during my thesis. I think I would have ended up somewhere in the nature, studying insects for example.” Insects and marine animals interest the qualified Biologist the most.

The other Vanina Ickx is attracted by the magic of speed. “I really don’t know where this comes from,” she smiles dreamily. “As a teenager, you try everything possible once and get to know yourself better in the process. First on skis, then in a car. My strength today is that I have no fear.”

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No fear, but respect. “The DTM is without doubt the biggest challenge of my career,” she says. “I feel really comfortable within the Audi family, like a princess. However, I also have to show that I have earned this place, which isn’t easy in the DTM.”

Her team Futurecom TME is, just as she is, also new to the premier league of touring cars. “We are trying to improve together,” says Vanina Ickx, who was born, and is at home, in Brussels but lives together with her friend Fabien in Wiesbaden, Germany. Since his partner has been an Audi “factory” driver, he sees her even more infrequently than before. As a consolation, he is allowed to drive her Audi RS 4 from time to time – and this is also something from which many men can only dream...

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Private photographs of Vanina Ickx in her hometown Brussels can be found in the Internet at www.audi-motorsport.info (accreditation necessary). TV Footage showing Vanina Ickx in private can also be ordered via www.audi-motorsport.info