

Women In Motorsport – By Toby Hancox

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Why is the world of cars and motorsport such a male dominated space? Some might say it's because on average women are shorter and therefore find it difficult to reach the pedals and steering wheel – I know that's a bit rich coming from me! Others may say it's because to be able to drive a car fast you must have sharp reflexes and be physically strong - characterises traditionally attributed to the male sex. However, these incredible women completely defy these misogynistic claims and prove that females in motorsport can succeed.

Firstly, I'm going to do a little bit of a quiz/census/survey. I'm going to ask you to identify some people I will show on the board, if you know who they are raise your hand. Who is this? [show picture of Michael Schumacher] And what about this person? [show Jeremy Clarkson] And now this? [Lewis Hamilton] What about her? [Jamie Chadwick] This person? [Suzie Wolff] what about this person? [Sabine Schmitz] and lastly this person? [Lela Lombardi].

From that little survey I can see you knew who the three men were, but no one knew who any of the females were. Every picture I showed on screen was involved with motorsport and all had arguably the same impact on the sport. (Now run through who they are and what they have achieved: Schumacher 7x world champ F1, Clarkson biggest car TV presenter, Lewis 7x world champ F1, Chadwick 2x W series champ, Wolff latest female in F1, Schmitz queen of the Nürburgring and TV presenter, Lombardi most successful female f1 driver.)

Why do you know the guys but not the girls?

Show image of Chadwick beating Shumacher at ROC and explain why it's annoying there isn't as much coverage on good female racers.

My main aim of showing that video is the same aim that I have for this speech - to inspire you, especially the women among us, to get involved and stuck in with the world of motorsport. If cars are not your thing, take the lessons given by people like Chadwick and Lombardi: women can be just as good, if not a lot better than men in not just motorsport but all walks of life. No one in this room should feel they cannot achieve their dream because of their sex.

If you want to help promote women in motorsport, follow and support categories such as Extreme E which has 50% female drivers and W series which is an all-female single seater category and is extremely competitive and exciting.