

Biography

2 March 2004

Fernando Alonso

Born on 29 July, 1981, Spaniard Alonso was only 19 when he made his Grand Prix debut in 2001 - the third youngest driver in the history of the sport. By the end of the season, however, he had earned the respect of the veterans for his speed and talent. In 2004 he will be closely watched as a driver tipped to be the next big thing in F1 after becoming the youngest ever winner of a GP in 2003.

1988-1998

An early starter in speed, he was driving karts by the age of three and winning in 'infants' (1988-89), Cadets (1990-91), and Juniors (1993-94). These early successes suggested more was to come and he was Spain's national karting champion in 1994, 1996 and 1997. He also reached a global peak in 1996 when he won the World Championship, proving that speed and success were natural to him from the beginning.

1999

Aged only 17, he stepped up to enter car racing - and the natural speed and success continued. In the Euro-Open Movistar Nissan single-seater series, he secured nine pole positions and six wins on his way to championship victory. Seasoned observers raised their eyebrows. He was one to watch.

2000

Moving swiftly onwards to Formula 3000, he joined the Astromega team and continued to shock his competitors with his pace. Aged only 18, he commanded the attention of Formula One talent-watchers by winning at the notoriously challenging Spa-Francorchamps circuit on his way to an impressive fourth place in the championship at the first attempt. It was enough. Grand Prix racing was next.

2001

In his first full season in Formula One, he gave the unsung Minardi team, under new ownership, plenty to enjoy with a series of strong performances that oozed pace and potential. In an uncompetitive car, he outpaced his more experienced teammate, frequently out-qualified many rivals and claimed one top ten finish. An impressive maiden season.

2002

After relinquishing a race seat at Minardi for 2002, Alonso took a career step by joining the Renault F1 Team to develop his knowledge and experience with a major team. His pace, promise and technical feedback earned him a race drive with the team for 2003.

2003

In a breakthrough year, Alonso became the youngest ever winner of a Grand Prix when he took the honours in Hungary. This was one of four podium appearances in a season that also saw him claim pole position twice and finished sixth overall in the Drivers' Championship.

For further information (not for publication):

Paul Scully
Marketing Communications Manager
LeasePlan
T: 03 9269 2279
M: 0411 225 717
E: paul_scully@leaseplan.com.au