

Alberto Longo: “Formula E will be the reference in motorsport”

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15/04/2021 It was through searching for new challenges that lawyer and investment consultant Alberto Longo came to motor racing 20 years ago. His first project in motorsport was the purchase of the Formula One TV rights together with his business partner Alejandro Agag; but their biggest and most important mission would be to create Formula E.

In the latest Inside E podcast, the Spaniard talks about the unusual inception and rapid growth of the world’s first electric racing series, about Porsche’s recent podium finish in Rome and why doubleheader events are working so well during the pandemic.

“There’s a lot of gossip in Formula E. And believe me – most of it is true.” Alberto Longo smiles when he tells how Formula E’s course was mapped out at a dinner in a Paris restaurant in 2011. With him at the table was the FIA President Jean Todt and Alejandro Agag, the Formula E founder and its current

chairman. The gentlemen talked about the future of mobility and quickly agreed that it would definitely be electric. At some point during this notable evening, the three visionaries came up with the idea that the FIA should launch the world's first electric single-seater championship. "Alejandro recognised the potential immediately and offered himself as a promoter. The others agreed. That serviette is framed and now hangs over the table in that restaurant."

Formula E continued to evolve faster than anticipated

Old friends Agag and Longo received the official go-ahead from the FIA to found Formula E on August 27 2013. "The first race was planned for 2015. That alone would've posed a massive challenge. At that time, we had absolutely nothing, no technology, no teams, no drivers, no cities or partners," explains Longo. Ultimately, however, they were given even less time. In January 2014, just after the first teams had signed up, a call came from the FIA headquarters in Paris asking that they bring the start forward to autumn. "That was the biggest challenge of our lives, but our dream turned to reality with the first race in Beijing on 13 September."

Formula E continued to evolve much faster than anticipated. "If someone had told us seven years ago that we'd be where we are now, I would've said they were absolutely crazy," says Longo. "The fact that we've come this far so quickly is an absolute highlight." Still, with success comes responsibility. "We need to live up to these responsibilities every day and hopefully do right by the many people who have placed their trust in us."

As Chief Championship Officer, his everyday business is first and foremost to organise the series. This also involves the racing calendar, which is particularly challenging in times of a global pandemic. In this regard, another update will be announced towards the end of April. For him, it is important to keep a global perspective. "The whole world is affected, not just sport." The way out of such a crisis is to forge strong and trusting ties with partners. "We're working as a team and we're very flexible. That's our big advantage. This flexibility allows us to keep the series thriving, even in difficult times." An example of this flexibility: in order to ensure safety during the ever-developing pandemic – and because the doubleheader event worked so well in Diriyah – the decision was made to hold two races in Rome and again in Valencia. "To reach the planned number of 15 races for this season, we'll probably need as many doubleheaders as possible," says Longo. Rather than being a problem, he describes it as "a very efficient format". "We have the racetracks and the superstructures and the teams with their equipment – why wouldn't we use that for two days instead of one?"

A new era: the Gen3 racing cars

With the Gen3 racing cars, Formula E will enter a new era in the 2022/23 season. For Alberto Longo, it is an honour that Porsche is following this pathway. "To have a manufacturer like Porsche on board is a massive achievement and helps us convey our most important messages such as environmental protection and sustainability to people in a credible way," he says, adding that Porsche's first podium of

the season, claimed by Pascal Wehrlein in Rome, “is a huge success. After all, Porsche is the newest team in Formula E, a bit like being the new kid in the class.” The performance of the Porsche 99X Electric and the squad in just their second Formula E season is impressive. It’s a huge challenge to compete against such strong and seasoned rivals on totally unfamiliar circuits in the heart of cities. “To be honest, I didn’t expect Porsche to compete for podium places so soon,” he adds.

Aside from his day-to-day business, one of Alberto Longo’s strengths is undoubtedly the ability to anticipate developments and plan for the future. The question of where he sees Formula E in five years does not faze him in the least: “That’s easy,” he smiles. “I firmly believe that Formula E will be the reference in motorsport in terms of innovation, technology, sustainability, inclusion and equality. Obviously, there is still a lot of work to do before that happens, but Formula E was born for this role.”

Info

The Porsche Formula E podcast is available in English and can be downloaded in the Porsche Newsroom. Inside E is also available on other platforms, such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Google Podcasts.

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