



# JAZEMAN JAAFAR

THE HIGH-REACHING MALAYSIAN RACER GIVES **FHM** THE LOWDOWN ON HIS WINNING FORMULA, AND FEIGNS IGNORANCE WHEN WE GIVE HIM A HARD TIME ABOUT PIT BABES

## Q&A

Here's the good news: all that stuff you've been told about being too young to drive is all lies, utter lies. If you can't reach the accelerator pedal and keep your eyes on the road, that means instant death, right? Not true. OK, maybe we're exaggerating here; Newtonian rules didn't change midway though *Fast and Furious*. That said, when we found out that 19-year-old Jazeman Jaafar finished sixth in last year's British Formula Three Championship Series (with British motor racing team Carlin), we were stupefied. Most of us still had our big red "P" sticker at that age announcing the second-class citizenship of our second-hand Proton. Jazeman, on the other hand, began go-kart racing at six, and was granted an International C license at the tender age of 14 — two years earlier than full eligibility — to compete in Formula BMW Asia. And apart from Alex Yoong and Fairuz Fauzy, he is probably the closest this country has to its next bona fide Formula One driver.

Racing at Formula One, however, still seems like a long shot. "Not even after winning my fair share of races," he admits. But his stock has risen quickly enough that he is being groomed to take a crack at it.

### So, you're like really young...

In my first year of Formula Three, I was only 17, the youngest driver on the grid. In fact, throughout my career, I've always been racing against drivers who are older, so I've always had to fight with the big boys.

### Are you married?

No. It hasn't even crossed my mind to get married — I'm only 19 years old!

### How do you feel when you win a race?

Top of the world! It makes all the training and hard work worthwhile.

### And if you don't?

If I do not have a podium finish or at least score some points for the championship tally, I get really frustrated. But you improve and learn from your mistakes, so I just have to be patient.

### And we presume it all started with go-karts huh?

Yup! One Sunday morning, my dad got a phone call from his friend to watch a go-kart race. We both had no clue what it was all about then. So when we went to the Shah Alam circuit to check it out, I was shocked to see kids racing! Dad asked whether I would like to have a go, and I said "YES!" before he could even finish his sentence.

### Always had a passion for cars?

Of course. [laughs] I had a collection of Hot Wheels and was assembling Tamiya cars when I was a kid.

### Did you still have to take our Malaysian driving test?

Yes! I even failed my *Undang-Undang* — the dreaded theory test — on my first attempt. Thankfully, the actual driving test I passed on my first try. My driving instructor was really cool though. He was a big motor racing fan.

### We failed the test too the first time round...

I understand how you feel. I've been there. You have my sympathy. [laughs]

### Would you drag race on the streets if someone challenged you?

No, I will never race on the street. I'll save my racing for the tracks.

### And you're based in the UK because...

Because all the top racing and Formula One teams are based here. It's definitely the place you have to be if you want to reach the top. It's also good to meet the team on a weekly basis to discuss updates on the car, meet with the engineers, and work out and train on simulators.

### Q: Will a Malaysian step on a Formula 1 podium one day?

A: With the right breaks, sure. Why not? We have loads of talented drivers.



### You've worked out with Michael Schumacher. Did he have a specific workout for his lantern jaw?

Michael is such an awesome guy; he's very humble and approachable. Training with him was amazing. We did a couple of balance and core exercises. He's extremely fit physically and mentally.

### Did you get sufficient pointers from him?

I would love to spend more time with him, but obviously Michael is a busy man. But for him to take a few hours to train with me was incredible. I attend five Formula One races each year with the Mercedes AMG Petronas team, which is part of the Petronas Talent Development Programme. I usually visit the garage to learn how the drivers communicate with their engineers. I join all the team's de-briefings

too.

### Why are pit babes always so hot?

Maybe it's because of their outfits?

### Which countries do you think have the hottest pit babes?

It has to be Monaco. It also comes with the glitz and glamour of the venue.

### Are they distracting during a race?

[Laughs] Not at all.

### Should the pit babes be replaced?

[Sighs] The pit babes are there for the fans.



Most racing drivers are very focused before a race and are not easily distracted.

### How hard is it to make it to Formula One?

It's extremely difficult. First, you have to prove yourself in feeder championships like the British Formula Three. In addition, you'll need strong financial support to get there.

### Where is Fairuz Fauzy now?

Fairuz is currently based in the UK, too. We do catch up and train together. We also share racing tips whenever we meet. I'm not too sure where he'll be racing this year.

### Finally, will a Malaysian step on a Formula One podium one day?

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