**The emperor’s great-grandson pushing himself to the limit on Hankook race tyres**

**The Red Bull Ring in Austria is the venue for the penultimate round of the FIA Formula 3 European Championship this weekend. One of the young drivers will be working hard, both on and off the track: Ferdinand Habsburg, the great-grandson of the last emperor is a wanted man in his native Austria. The 20-year-old would actually be “Imperial Crown Prince and Archduke of Austria”, were there not a ban on nobility in this country. As a result, Ferdinand Habsburg can focus fully on his passion, motor racing. As a newcomer, he has established himself among the top ten in what is probably the strongest Formula series in the world for young drivers. His goal is a seat in the pinnacle of motorsport, Formula 1.**

***Spielberg/Austria, 24th September* 2017** – Even as a young boy, Ferdinand Habsburg was fascinated by motorsport. He used to race his toy cars around a track that he had built himself, and wore a child’s Ferrari racing overall around the house whilst making engine noises. “My father eventually understood and gave me a kart, which I used to drive at the kart track as often as possible. I then entered my first race when I was ten. I actually wanted to be a musician, but soon noticed that I was better suited to motorsport,” says the young driver.

When he was 16, Ferdinand Habsburg attended the renowned Lechner Racing School. In 2014, he took part in the Formula Renault series and ended the season in fourth place. Two years later, he was runner-up at the Euroformula Open. By this time, his hobby had become a profession and the Austrian was proving to be a quick learner. “I did not really have an experienced mentor, who showed me certain things. As such, I made a lot of mistakes at first in Formula Renault. However, I then started being successful and began to train seriously after school.”

After his school days, he had to convince his father that his future lay in the cockpit of a racing car. Habsburg: “My father wanted me to go to university. However, I was able to convince him that I feel the same way about a steering wheel as he does about politics and history. When he realised that I was serious about motorsport, he gave me his approval. Parents are like sponsors: If you perform, they are happy – so I really put my foot down and went for it.”

The rookie season in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship is a new challenge for the 20-year-old. The strength in depth and the quality of the drivers have pushed him to his limits. “While the cars are separated by seconds in other classes, it comes down to mere tenths or hundredths of a second here. One little mistake and you can find yourself at the back of the field. That is tough, but it is also more fun that way. There are no drive aids and the cars and drivers are always at the limit. If you are quick, you can win. Otherwise, you will be right at the back. This is honest motor racing, and that is why the FIA Formula 3 European Championship is so much fun,” explains Habsburg.

One very important element that really helps him is the race tyre provided by premium tyre maker Hankook, who have been supplying the series with the *Ventus Race* since 2012. “The Hankook tyre is ideal for kids like me. You have grip from the first lap to the last, the tyre does not degrade quickly, and you can always push. That gives you plenty of opportunity to observe how the car behaves when you push it to the limit, and how you have to react in these situations. The Hankook tyre gives you more opportunities to practice and learn in extreme situations. This kind of experience is invaluable for young drivers.”

Habsburg is hoping the experience he gains now will help him break into Formula 1 over the coming years. That is his self-declared goal. Until that point, he is hungry to improve as a racing driver and to reach the highest possible standard. “I would like to sit in a Formula 1 car and prove that I was right to pursue a career as a racing driver. After that, I can also imagine being involved in Formula E – in that order.”

As the great-grandson of the emperor, Habsburg is already a star in his native Austria. “When I arrived at the Red Bull Ring on Thursday morning, there were already fans there asking for my autograph. That is a cool feeling, and I like the fact that people still value tradition. I would like to continue to make history – but, unlike in the past, I would prefer to do so from the cockpit.”

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| **Contact:**  **Hankook Tire Europe GmbH |** Corporate Communications Europe/CIS **|** Siemensstr. 14, 63263 Neu-Isenburg **|** Germany | | | |
| **Anna Magdalena Pasternak**  PR Manager  Tel.: +49 (0) 6102 8149 – 173  a.pasternak@hankookreifen.de  **Sven Kaatz**  Media Relations  Tel: +49 (0) 171 8609730  sk@9pm-media.com | **Yara Willems**  Public Relations  Tel.: +49 (0) 6102 8149 – 172  y.willems@hankookreifen.de |  |  |