

Sports

Susie Wolff has more than gender on her agenda

Encouraging and highlighting female involvement in motorsport

LONDON: Susie Wolff can expect plenty of attention when Formula E starts season five this weekend with a first ever race in Saudi Arabia, a country that only this year ended a ban on women driving. The Scot, who served as a Williams development driver in Formula One before hanging up her helmet in 2015, is the first and only female team boss in the all-electric city-based racing series.

The 36-year-old is also active in encouraging and highlighting female involvement in motorsport through her 'Dare to be Different' initiative. But, while happy to stand out by example, Wolff is looking forward to a time when her gender becomes less of a talking point.

"I've never played on my gender. It was a little bit of a shock to me, when I was announced in my role (last June), that it was still all about my gender," the shareholder and principal of the Monaco-based Venturi team told Reuters in an interview.

"Even now still, for every interview I do it's still a massive part talking about my gender and gender issues within the sport. "I'm not doing what I do to prove what a woman is capable of. I'm not doing what I do to make Formula E more diverse. I'm doing what I do to be successful. If that's inspirational, then great."

Wolff does not have to look far for her own inspiration—no further than home, in fact. Husband Toto has led Formula One world champions Mercedes to the last five constructors' and drivers' titles and Wolff said she had learned a lot from how he goes about his job.

"Especially this year when the challenge was even greater, how he builds his team, how he puts the people together and really makes sure that they are motivated in the right way," she said.

"The energy he brings into the team, the energy that you feel when you go to the factory or walk into that team at a race weekend. "They have an absolute trust and belief in each other and when

failures happen, they learn from them. They don't allow cracks to appear. They come out of it even stronger and that takes a lot of mental strength. "He is inspirational how he does it and I'm lucky to watch it first hand."

STEP UP

Wolff has also had to show plenty of mental strength through her career, chasing a dream of trying to become the first woman to compete in Formula One since 1976. That did not happen but she did take part in two grand prix practice sessions for Williams, a team also with a woman at the helm in Claire Williams.

Venturi, owned by businessman Gillo Pastor, is her debut in team management. "The main job for me right now is getting all the structure in place and making sure that the team is led in the right way," she said. "Because of the step up in competition in Formula E we also need to step up."

The team lineup is Brazilian ex-F1 racer Felipe Massa and Swiss-Italian Edoardo Mortara, while Switzerland's Simona de Silvestro is the test driver. De Silvestro has raced previously in the series, which has attracted increasing manufacturer interest including Mercedes in 2019-20, and will feature in a test session with some seven women drivers on the Ad Diriyah layout on Sunday.

Wolff is supportive of that move, promoted by local organisers, but also wants to see some real substance emerge from it. "I do hope some of those girls can go out and really show what they are capable of and that it can lead to more long-term opportunity, because it shouldn't just be a one-off test day which is window-dressing," said Wolff. "It has to lead to more."

"We need to get more women into sport, whether that's young girls in karting or off the track. The more we get into sport, the more



Susie Wolff

you are going to get rising to the top of the sport," she added. "You need to get female talent which is good enough to compete at the right level because no team is going to compromise on on-track performance just to tick a gender box." — Reuters

NBK sponsors Flare Sports Festival for third consecutive year

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsors the Flare sports festival for the third consecutive year. The festival is organized by Flare Fitness starting from January 25th, 2019 until January 27th, 2019 at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST).

The sponsorship comes in line with NBK's commitment to support youths' health. This sponsorship aims to spread physical awareness and attract youth to participate in sporting events.

Yousef Al-Shaya, Managing Partner at Flare Fitness visited National Bank of Kuwait Public Relations and highlighted the successful partnership with NBK for the past three years.

In his turn, NBK Public Relations Team Leader, Talal Al Turki welcomed Al Shaya and commented on NBK's sponsorship to this sports event " Our sponsorship comes in line with the bank's customary and on-going spirit of corporate citizenship as well as the vital role it plays in supporting youth and their health. NBK always strives to em-



power youth to realize their potentials, providing different supportive opportunities".

"The competition participants are University students.

NBK's booth will hold various sports challenges and distribute rewards to the winners and participants", added Al Turki. "The purpose of this event is to increase fitness awareness for all Kuwait citizens. This event highlights the potential of youth in regards to fitness and sport awareness".

NBK has always considered supporting

youth an essential part of its social and philanthropic outreach which comes in line with the bank's commitment to encourage a merit-based system in health, education and environment that promotes the best and the brightest the country has to offer.

It's worth mentioning that this is the fifth year Flare Fitness is running the Festival. The Festival is a fitness challenge and a health weekend for sports enthusiasts. This event aims at increasing fitness awareness and elevate Kuwait's Fitness.

India's Sindhu stuns number one Tai in badminton Tour Finals

SHANGHAI: India's P.V. Sindhu pulled off a shock at the badminton World Tour Finals yesterday as she defeated top-ranked Tai Tzu-ying of Taiwan in three thrilling games. Sindhu sank to her knees at the end of an exhausting 14-21, 21-16, 21-18 victory in 61 enthralling minutes in the Chinese city of Guangzhou.

The 23-year-old, a silver medallist at the Rio Olympics in 2016, faces Zhang Beiwen of the United States on Friday looking to make it three wins out of three in Group A.

It was a disappointing day for Taiwan. As well as Tai going down to the sixth-ranked Sindhu, men's world number three Chou Tien-chen also lost, this time in the men's draw. Chou was on the end of an 18-21, 21-11, 21-14 defeat to South Korea's buoyant Son Wan-ho.

There was no such trouble for men's number one and world champion Kento Momota of Japan. He is in ominous form as he looks to put the seal on a breakthrough year and swatted aside Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen 21-15, 21-7 for a second win in a row.

China's Shi Yuqi, one of the main threats to red-hot Momota, was even more emphatic in dismissing Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia, 21-8, 21-19 in 37 minutes. — AFP