

CATCHING UP WITH **ANDREAS BAKKERUD**

Racing under Ken Block's Hoonigan Racing, Andreas Bakkerud enjoyed a successful South African outing last year, reaching the semi-finals. Second time around and his hopes are even higher with EKS Audi Sport. From giving his boss grey hairs to selling his Rallycross car, it's time to catch up with the Norwegian.

"FIRST OF ALL, coming here last year for the first Rallycross event in South Africa was really epic, and the track itself is super cool. It's pretty Scandinavian and European as a championship so I wasn't expecting much in 2017, but seeing how massive the crowd was last year makes me pumped to be back!"

The driver's championship might be wrapped up, but the fight for second place is still on, and the 27-year-old fancies his chances of taking a career-best championship finish. "I'm going against Solberg who is just a couple of points behind me, and then Ekström who is my boss and teammate."

What makes this battle for silverware so special is that Bakkerud believes he's racing in the company of heroes. "To be honest, I'm honoured to be in this position - I've been with Solberg and Ekström in this fight and in my eyes they're the two best drivers we have had in Scandinavian motorsport history.

"And for me to be only a couple of points adrift from Ekström in his own car, in his own team in just one season, that's pretty cool! I've always looked up to Mattias because he has ventured across a few different motorsports and been so successful in DTM.

"So coming into this last event I feel like I have everything to win. I'll go in there

pretending like it's war! I want to look back at the season knowing that I gave it my all," adds the driver.

In motorsport, it's always desirable to have two strong drivers pushing each other as teammates. Although Bakkerud is at loggerheads with Ekström for second in the championship, he admits he may have given his boss some grey hairs during the season.

"The first task I got from Mattias was to keep him young! I know that we're a little different when it comes to control in life. He's a perfectionist and rarely makes mistakes, while I can be very forgetful. So having said that I've probably given him some grey hairs, but hopefully





GET TO KNOW DRIVER NO. 13

A quick Q&A with one of the quickest in the business.

Straight line speed or sideways around a corner?

Sideways going around a corner.

King of Pop or king of Rock?

King of Pop

Snow and ice or gravel and asphalt?

Oh man, can I choose both? No, I would say snow and ice.

GoPro or selfie stick?

Hmm. I'm sponsored by GoPro, so I'll say GoPro, but I'll take a selfie stick too!

Festive night out or quiet night in?

That depends, but I can't wait for the party in South Africa, so I choose the festive night out!

Big air jump or badass donuts for the crowds?

Big ass jump!

Four wheel drive or rear-wheel drive?

Four-wheel.

Best driver to never win a championship or worst driver to win one?

Hahaha, I would rather be the best to never win a championship!

“Mattias has a lot of experience and has had huge success. He’s not just a factory driver, he’s also a boss.”

I've given him some smiles and laughs and I've extended his life!”

In the space of just two years, the Audi driver has served under two motorsport giants in Mattias Ekström and Ken Block. Although totally different in almost every sense of the word, Bakkerud says the pair share some distinct similarities, and both have taught him a lot about racing and business.

“Partnering up with Ken last year, you can actually see a lot of similarities between him and Mattias. They're both very hard working men – early up in the morning and late to bed after a full day of activities. They're

always trying to push forward, but both going in different directions. Ken is more into marketing while Mattias is more into performance. At the end of the day you need both to succeed in motorsport, so it's been an honour to work with both of them.

“Mattias has a lot of experience and has had huge success. He's not just a factory driver, he's also a boss. I've only been a factory driver for four years, and I know just how hard I've worked to stay in the game, and someone like Mattias who has managed to stay for 18 years as a factory driver, I take my hat off

to that,” shares Bakkerud.

On his 2018 return to Cape Town, Bakkerud says he's thrilled to be racing under sunshiny skies in the Mother City. In some parts of his native Norway it's Polar Night at this time of year, which is when the sun doesn't rise for three months.

“Being from a region where the winter is super cold, it'll be nice to have nice warm, summer weather in Cape Town, together with the great food. I must say, you guys have some great food down here! I'm just glad to be back so you guys can get to know the drivers and the sport even better.”

Not just an athlete, Bakkerud is also a prominent YouTuber with a subscriber base of 26,000 strong. “Last year when we did Gymkhana grid in Joburg, I got to work in a restaurant for an evening and cook all the food for the guests! I got to see the way you guys grill the meat, and that was just epic. There's a cool video of that up on my YouTube Channel.”

Come the season's end at Killarney, fans will be checking the classifieds to see if his Audi S1 car is up for sale. Last year, Bakkerud announced in jest that his Hoonigan Racing Ford Focus RS RX was up for sale, though many took this as a serious advertisement. This year however, could be different, says Bakkerud. But then again, does he really want to give his boss more grey hairs? Probably not. ■



Bakkerud on Cape Town

Why he could be your neighbour soon.

Andreas Bakkerud was one of Killarney's crowd favorites in 2017. With over 100 flights a year, the Norwegian says the one that takes him to the Mother City has to be the best, for a very special reason. So why does he have so much love for Cape Town? “What I said to my friends and family last year when I was in Cape Town was: I travel around the world to many amazing places, but Cape Town is actually that city I could see myself living in if I'd like to move somewhere.

“I think it's got to do with the mountains and being surrounded by the mountains. Where I live in Norway there are a lot of mountains and green trees. The weather in Cape Town is awesome, with a nice breeze and sunny weather,” says Bakkerud, adding, “the people are great too because they're always smiling and are very generous and happy.”

