

2. Spanish Driver Is Out in Front Now

Renault driver Fernando Alonso knows that sometimes it helps to be both fast and lucky. The 24-year-old Spaniard was both, on Sunday, winning the European Grand Prix. This was Alonso's fourth win out of the seven races of the season in 2005, and fifth in his career.

The effect of the victory didn't stop there; it strengthened Alonso's chances of becoming the youngest ever to win a Formula One world championship. This has been dominated by Michael Schumacher for five years.

After the win, Alonso was surprisingly calm, as though he hadn't seen the exciting future.

"It's my character," he said with a maturity that contrasted with his age. "I have always been very calm on the outside. For me, tomorrow will be another day whether I finish first or last. I have to do the maximum and I cannot ask any more of myself."

Alonso said his balanced outlook came from his family. "My parents are similar to me. For me, F-1 is a simple sport and a simple way to live these seven or eight years."

Alonso's F-1 story started with his family; his father Jose Luis Fernando was a racing fan and instilled his enthusiasm in his son.

At the age of three, Alonso "inherited" a racing kart made by his father. From that moment, he showed some skill and his father started to see his hopes fulfilled.

Alonso "played" with the kart until 1988. In 1999, he made the jump to open-wheel cars, racing the Spanish Nissan Open series, then, only 18 years old, and became the series champion, immediately earning him a ticket to Formula One in 2001. His talent earned him a spot with the Renault team in 2002. Alonso became the youngest driver ever to win a Formula One race at the 2003 Hungarian Grand Prix. At season's end, he was a solid sixth in the championship, with 55 points and four podiums.

Alonso remained with Renault for the 2004 season, and, although he failed to win a race, he ended the year a career-best fourth in the championship standings.

Despite the past success and the bright future ahead, Alonso doubts that, like Schumacher, he can drive into his mid-30s and perhaps beyond.

"Honestly, no. I started much earlier and I cannot be concentrated and motivated for so long. Too many years, I think. We will see." A calm answer from a calmly posed guy.