

Beat: Sports

## Motorsport Junior Driver Programme

George Russell

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**USPA NEWS** - Rising British star becomes the latest talent selected by the Silver Arrows for racing support. Russell becomes the third member of the Mercedes-AMG Petronas Motorsport Junior Programme, joining incumbents Pascal Wehrlein and Esteban Ocon.

2016 proved a breakthrough year for the Mercedes-AMG Petronas Motorsport Junior Programme. Pascal Wehrlein shone in his first Formula One season with Manor Racing, posting a string of impressive qualifying performances to reach Q2 five times "" in addition to clinching only the second ever points scoring finish for the team at the Austrian Grand Prix. Esteban Ocon joined Pascal at Manor from the Belgian Grand Prix through the remainder of the year "" showing his class to adapt quickly from his first experience of tin-top racing in the DTM to a half-season in an F1 cockpit.

Pascal and Esteban will line up on the 2017 Formula One grid at Sauber and Force India respectively, in what should be a fascinating year for the pair as they continue their racing education at the highest level. And now, George Russell (18, Great Britain) joins them as the third member of the Junior Programme.

"It's great to be part of the Junior Programme," [?] beamed George. " It is an incredibly opportunity to have the backing of the Formula One World Champions. I'm proud to have been given this kind of recognition for all the hard work that's gone into my career over the years so far." [?]

George showed speed, determination and fighting spirit to seal third place in the 2016 European Formula 3 Championship, with Mercedes-Benz powering him to a total of three pole positions, two wins, ten podium finishes and five fastest race laps along the way.

"George has shown impressive form in the junior categories and we've been keeping a close eye on him for a while now," [?] commented Toto Wolff. "It's still early days in his career but we see great potential in him." [?]

For 2017, George will compete in the GP3 Series with ART Grand Prix on Formula One weekends, following in the footsteps of fellow Mercedes-AMG Petronas Motorsport Junior Esteban Ocon and, of course, newly announced race driver Valtteri Bottas "" both of whom won this championship en route to F1.

"George's next challenge in GP3 will provide a good test of his credentials for the future," [?] continued Toto. "We have already seen with Esteban how effective this series can be as a training ground and, of course, this is the Championship which propelled Valtteri into Formula One, so we will follow George's progress with great interest." [?]

With the first pre-season test for the 2017 GP3 Series still a number of weeks away, George is keen to maximise his time at Brackley in the interim. But he's under no illusions as to his top priority for the year ahead.

"I've started doing some work with the team in the simulator and it's already become clear to me that I'm working with people who are the best in the business, who I know will help me develop as a driver and as a person," [?] concluded George. "Of course, my priority is to get the job done over the coming season in GP3 and I'm fully focused on that. But this opportunity is a huge motivation and I'm looking forward to the challenge. It should be an exciting year ahead." [?]

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