



Racecar Driver Michael Lewis Hits Both the Books and the Track While Competing in Europe

One second after the other, each of the five, red stop lights standing above the racetrack snaps on. Strapped into the driver's seat, Michael Lewis '13 is watching these lights and thinks solely about crossing the finish line before anyone else. But right now, with his car positioned on the starting grid, he's executing a series of several precise tasks in a confined space: "All at the same time, you let the clutch go, let off the brake and work the throttle making sure not to spin the tires. Once you're off, you just fly toward the first turn and focus on your job."

At 19 years old, Lewis' job has been racing around tracks for almost a decade, and he's now made a career of it. This spring and summer, he's racing in the Formula BMW European championship for Eurointernational, a team based in Italy. He is the only American in the

entire series, and he earned a place on the team with his performance last year in the Formula BMW America's championship – he won the rookie championship (and a BMW scholarship) and placed fourth overall. "If you want to continue in Formula car racing," says Lewis, "you have to go to Europe and race there."

His introduction to the track was with go-karts, accompanied by his father, who is the publisher of a racing-industry magazine. "We would go karting for fun," says Lewis, who lives in Laguna Beach, and then they began to take it seriously. He won a major go-kart championship in the United States two years ago, and raced in Europe before

moving on competitively to cars. But, go-karts are still good training, he says: "I still practice in karts because it is physically intense, and a lot of things happen very quickly."

Lewis is looking ahead, he says, to mastering the business side of being a driver, which entails substantial sponsorship negotiations, travel and media relations. He knows he needs the business acumen to attain his ultimate goal: Racing in the Formula One World Championship. He's currently in his second semester at Mihaylo College, and while he's overseas, he's completing his college courses online. "To be the best athlete, you have to have complete focus on your sport, and that is what I am doing in Europe. At the moment, school is very manageable and I'll continue with it."

Lewis still has three years left to complete his degree, and in the meantime, he'll spend a lot of time on the track. "When I drive, nothing else matters at that moment. I'm thinking, 'OK, Michael, focus. Let's get down to business. Hit your lines. Hit your reference points. Keep everything smooth. Focus on what you have to do – drive fast!'"

—Laurie McLaughlin

To follow Lewis's career, visit www.mjlracing.com.