

First electric car race to zoom off on Saturday

September 12 2014, by Neil Connor



Bruno Senna, pictured competing in the Le Mans 24 Hours race on June 23, 2013, will be among the drivers in the first electric car race on Saturday

Formula E will be a laboratory for new technology, according to motor sport great Alain Prost, while Bruno Senna said drivers will face a "lottery" when electric car racing kicks off in Beijing Saturday.

The nephew of Ayrton Senna was speaking Friday as he prepared to line up against the son of four-time Formula One champion Prost, rekindling one of the greatest rivalries in motorsport.

The pair will be competing in the first-ever Formula E race, in the

shadow of the Bird's Nest stadium in the Chinese capital.

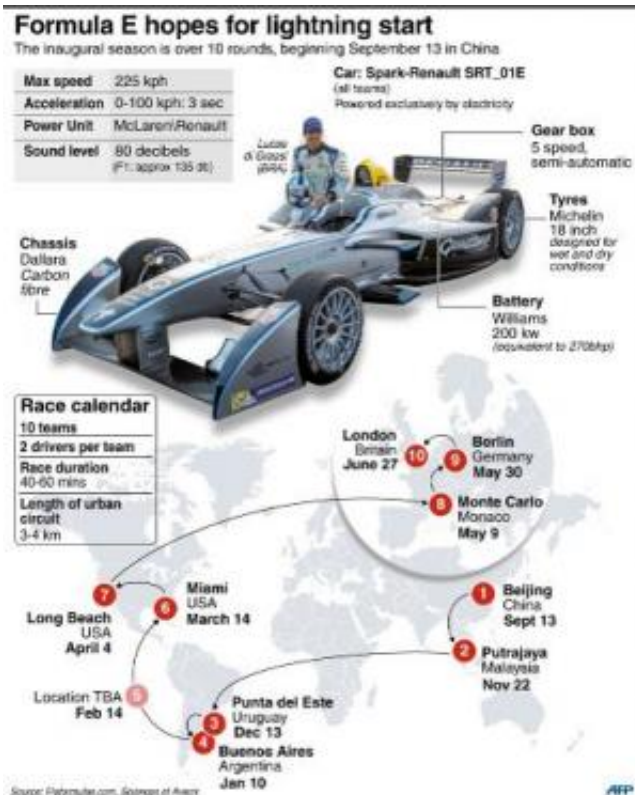
Formula E has received high-profile backing from the likes of Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio and British tycoon Richard Branson, and some believe it represents an environmentally-friendly future for motor sports.

"Beyond a competition, Formula E needs to be a sort of laboratory... especially for completely new technologies," said Prost, the co-founder of E.Dams Renault, the team which has his son Nicolas as one of its drivers.

Prost said the race itself will be "quite complicated" and the winning driver will need to work closely with the car's engineers, given that the teams are using identical vehicles for Formula E's inaugural season.

"Just by pushing like hell is not going to be good, at least at the beginning," he said.

"Maybe in the future when we are going to improve the batteries, the power, we will see."



Calendar and details on the new electric Formula E cars

Senna said that drivers were expected to run into "a few bits and pieces of trouble" as Formula E is a new series.

"I think the first few races will probably be a bit more of a lottery," said Senna, who has been signed up by Mumbai-based Mahindra Racing.

'Old school battles'

Prost and Senna will be lining up on the grid with Nelson Piquet Junior, whose father was also a formidable racer in the 1980s and '90s.

"I think it is exciting for sure and is good for the championship to revive some of the old school battles," Senna said.

"Of course for me, Nico and Nelson we have a great relationship which is a bit different to what our family members had before," he said while laughing—and peering towards Prost senior.



French driver Nicolas Prost (L) and Swiss driver Sebastien Buemi speak at the launch of the Formula E Championship in London on June 30, 2014

Piquet will be driving for home favourite China Racing, which is led by Steven Lu.

Lu said the Chinese government was keen to back Formula E as it wanted to promote the use of [electric cars](#).

Many Chinese cities are regularly covered in thick blankets of smog, and car use accounts for almost a third of Beijing's levels of PM2.5, the smallest and most dangerous particulates.



Host broadcasters set up their cameras along the race track for the Formula E debut in Beijing on September 11, 2014

Many Chinese children will see Formula E on social media, Lu said, "and for them, it will be really cool".

"Maybe in the future. Maybe in five, six, 10 years, these young kids, they buy their first cars and they are electric cars so this (Formula E) means a lot, and this is why the Chinese government wants to promote electric cars for the future."

The Forumla E series will see 10 races on different street circuits around the world involving 20 drivers from 10 different teams, with Branson and DiCaprio backing one team each.

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