

## JUNIOR SPORT

# Watch out Lewis – Daniel is hot on your heels!

**A** TEENAGE racing sensation from West Cumbria is hoping to become the next big thing in motorsport – by following in the footsteps of the latest headliner, Lewis Hamilton.

Daniel Baldwin, 18, has already had to overcome more problems in his fledgling career than most have to put up with in a lifetime.

But he hopes that with enough sponsorship he could be joining Hamilton and co on the track inside the next 12 months.

"I have been offered a ride in the BMW Championship for 2008, and they race in support of Formula 1, so I'd be on the same tracks at the same time as the big boys, and that would be fantastic," he said.

"The only trouble is that I need to raise the money to get involved in that, and we are talking about a lot of money.

"I am inspired by Lewis Hamilton, because he was in a similar situation to me. He doesn't come from a particularly wealthy background and his family will have had to scrimp and save to get him to where he is now.

"But it has been worth it, and if I can make the big time then the first thing I'd do would be to repay my parents for the support they have shown me and the faith they have had in me. They believe in me and I believe in myself, if Lewis Hamilton can do it they why can't I?"

Daniel, who lives at Holmrook, first got into racing as a very small child, when he would watch Formula one on television

BY KARL CONNOR

with his father.

"I used to love watching the Grand Prix, for as long as I can remember, I have been really into watching it on the TV. I would have probably been about four or five at the most.

"Then the family moved to Cumbria from Leeds, and someone told me that there was a go-kart track in Rowrah, so my dad took me along.

"I fell in love with it straight away. I was quite good at it and I really enjoyed it."

Daniel became a junior karting champion, but sponsorship problems prevented him from competing further afield.

And then his dad Kevin was seriously injured, ironically in a car accident, which put the breaks firmly on Daniel's racing ambitions.

"My dad was badly injured and my racing had to stop for a while because he couldn't take me, but racing was just a hobby and what happened to my dad was far more important.

"I maintained my interest in racing and now, thankfully, I've been able to get back into it. My dad is getting there now too, which is even more important to me.

"With the kind of cars I am driving now he can be involved without having to do anything physical."

Daniel revived his interest while watching formula BMW on the television.

His mum, Ruth, said: "We wanted him to get through his schooling before we allowed him to throw himself

into the motorsport fully, and he did that.

"We got in touch with some of the teams in the BMW series and Daniel went off and did some testing for them, he was very successful.

"He is a good lad and we are backing him as far as we can, I think it is important that we give him every opportunity to go as far as he can in the sport.

"When he was a child it was just a hobby but this is something Daniel wants to do professionally and something that some good judges think he can go far in."

Daniel added: "The testing days have gone very well indeed and I am fully committed to racing and going as far as I possibly can.

"The trouble is that even the testing days cost money, and for me to compete next year I am going to have to raise in excess of £100,000.

"The organisers have merged the BMW series in the UK with the one in Germany so it is now a European competition, which means more travelling and more expense, but also more exposure and more opportunity.

"I just hope that I can generate the funds, because it would be a shame if all this effort was to be in vain. I'm keeping my fingers crossed."

Daniel stood out amongst 40 entrants at a showcase for new racing drivers in Valencia, Spain, reaching speeds of up to 145mph in the process.

He has been testing with Motaworld Racing over the last year at several circuits including Silverstone and Rockingham with a view to

possibly driving for them in the 2008 season BMW Championship

Alf Boarer, a motorsport consultant who has worked with Formula 1/GP2 driver Giorgio Pantano, witnessed Daniel's trial and says the teenager "stood out because of his passion, desire and raw talent".

Mr Boarer, who supervises development for potential Formula One drivers, believes Daniel could become a successful driver if he can raise sufficient sponsorship to take part in single seater racing in 2008.

And Alan Waite, team manager of Motaworld Racing, said: "Daniel tested with us earlier this year, he impressed us with his calm nature and ability that far exceeded his experience.

"He is the fastest novice that we have tested, with support and training we have no doubt that he will be a very accomplished driver. We are very keen to sign Daniel for the 2008 season."

Potential sponsors – no matter how small – who would like to hear more about how they can become involved in Daniel's career, can contact him by email at [info@danielbaldwinracing.co.uk](mailto:info@danielbaldwinracing.co.uk) or visit his website at [www.danielbaldwinracing.co.uk](http://www.danielbaldwinracing.co.uk) or call Kevin Baldwin on 07850 500200.

Ruth added: "We don't want people to be put off by the fact that we need to raise so much – we are better having lots of small sponsors in a way, and then if someone pulls out we aren't in trouble.

"But anyone who can help will be very, very welcome."