

# WORLD

## features

# History is created in French GP racing



Aseel Al-Hamad of Saudi Arabia drives a Lotus Renault E20 Formula One car during a parade before the race

*Aseel Al-Hamad declared the start of a new era for Saudi women in motorsport*

### Le Castellet, France

**A**seel Al-Hamad drove a Renault Formula One car around the French Grand Prix circuit in front of thousands of fans yesterday and declared the start of a new era for Saudi women in motorsport.

The lap of Le Castellet's Paul Ricard track, in a race-winning 2012 Lotus Renault E20, came on the day a ban ended on female drivers getting behind the wheel on the Gulf kingdom's roads.

"I believe today is not just celebrating the new era of women starting to drive, it's also the birth of women in motorsport in Saudi Arabia," she said.

"The most important thing I am looking forward to is to start seeing the next generation, young girls, trying (motorsport).

"I want to watch them training and taking the sport very seriously as a career. This is going to be really my biggest achievement."

Yesterday was not the first time Al-Hamad had driven a Formula One car, the Saudi interior designer and businesswoman trying out the same one at the circuit on June 5 as part of a familiarisation day.

But that was private, whereas Sunday was very public as part of a parade of the French manufacturer's historic racing cars to mark the return of Formula One to France after a 10 year absence.

The car took 2007 world cham-

pion Kimi Raikkonen, now at Ferrari, to victory in Abu Dhabi in November 2012.

"It was perfect. Everything was smooth, I felt I belong in the seat," she said afterwards. "I loved the fact that there was an audience around...today is magical."

### Dream the Impossible

"I never even imagined it in my dreams. So the opportunity was amazing," she said of her first outing. "That day I thought it was the only lifetime experience. And they invited me again.

"It's a great honour for me to share with them the celebration and passion for Renault.

"I believe the beauty of this story is that everything is possible. Even if you dream the impossible you can still achieve it," she said.

Al-Hamad is already the first female member of the Saudi Arabian Motorsport Federation and on the Women in Motorsport Commission set up by Formula One's governing body, the International Automobile Federation (FIA).

She is also the first woman to import a Ferrari into Saudi Arabia, and has taken her 458 Spider to racetracks around the world to take part in track days, workshops and professional racing courses.

Asked whether there would now be female Saudi racing drivers, she replied: "For sure, definitely. And this is going to be my mission in Saudi.

"Thanks to Renault, by this ges-



Aseel Al-Hamad

ture I can be hopefully an ambassador to push it more in Saudi.

"The Women in Motorsport Commission is encouraging the participation in all sectors of motorsport, including racers, engineers, mechanics and marshals," she said, adding that she could also see Saudi women working in F1.

"The beautiful thing is that motorsport is not a sport that is divided. So women are able to compete equally with everyone. We just have to dream to have more women in all job sectors of motorsport."

Michele Mouton, a former rally driver and president of the FIA's commission, said in a statement she hoped Al-Hamad's example would help pave the way for more Saudi women to get involved.

The lifting, ordered last September by King Salman, is part of sweeping reforms pushed by his powerful young son Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.



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ASEEL AL-HAMAD

## As Facebook ages, teens look elsewhere to connect with friends

AFF | San Francisco

**M**anon, 17, has a Facebook account but to connect with her friends she turns to other social networks like Instagram or Snapchat.

"I don't use it to post status updates or personal information," the San Francisco teen says.

Manon maintains her Facebook account to be able to stay in touch with the large number of users on the huge social network and as a "gateway" to log into other apps.

"But to communicate with my



The survey found 85 percent used the Google video sharing service YouTube



**Adult Facebook users in the United States spend 68 per cent of their mobile device time using apps**

friends, it's Snapchat," the high schooler said.

"Everyone says Facebook is out of date. I think it's because all the parents are on Facebook."

As Facebook has grown into a network of more than two billion people globally it has lost its luster for younger users who made up a core base.

While Facebook has become one of the world's most valuable and powerful companies, it's no longer seen as a cool destination for teens, who are turning to Snapchat and Instagram, which is owned by Facebook.

According to a Pew Research Center survey this year, 51 percent of US teens ages 13 to 17 use

Facebook, compared with 72 percent for Instagram and 69 percent who are on Snapchat. The survey found 85 percent used the Google video sharing service YouTube.

The landscape has shifted since a 2014-15 Pew survey which found Facebook leading other social networks with 71 percent of the teen segment.

"The social media environment among teens is quite different from what it was just three years ago," said Pew researcher Monica Anderson. "Back then, teens' social media use mostly revolved around Facebook. Today, their habits revolve less around a single platform."