

Villeneuve may retire from F1 next year

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The Canadian Press



Former Formula One rivals Michael Schumacher, right, and Jacques Villeneuve have a laugh at a demonstration of electronic safety features for cars Thursday in Blainville, Que. (Ryan Remiorz/Canadian Press) Jacques Villeneuve suggests he will retire from Formula One racing if he doesn't land a job on the circuit by next year.

The former champion says he'll continue trying to return to the world's premier car-racing circuit — but he can't keep trying forever.

"For F1, I think I have to give myself a limit — and 2011 will be the limit," Villeneuve told The Canadian Press on Thursday.

"That's the priority, so I'm working on 2011."

Villeneuve, who became Canada's first F1 champion in 1997, has not raced on the circuit in four years.

"I was busy raising two kids and now they're grown up a bit and I can get back behind the wheel, Villeneuve said. "I would obviously be happier behind a wheel. Once you've been a racer, I think, you're a racer all your life."

But the 39-year-old admits he's worried race teams might start to ignore him.

"Because it will have been too many years outside and the teams don't want to take a risk which, [if I were] in their shoes, I might do the same.

"There comes a point where you've been out for too long and the teams just won't give you a chance,"

—Jacques Villeneuve

"There comes a point where you've been out for too long and the teams just won't give you a chance."

Villeneuve says he "can't put in numbers" his chances of returning to F1 racing — but he says "there are opportunities right now," and hopefully they will work out and get finalized.

Still competing with NASCAR

While he may have to give up on F1, the native of St-Jean-Sur-Richelieu, Que., says there could still be a future for him on the NASCAR circuit.

He will be competing in two upcoming NASCAR Nationwide events — in Elkhart Lake, Wis., on June 19, and at Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve, the Montreal track named after his father, on Aug. 28.

The Montreal track is playing host this week to the Canadian F1 Grand Prix, after a one-year hiatus.

Villeneuve made his comments in Blainville, north of Montreal, as he was reunited with old nemesis Michael Schumacher. The old rivals were promoting new automobile safety technologies Thursday.

Both drivers took turns on a rainy track to demonstrate features like electronic stability control, which already exist on some vehicles.

The men appear to be getting along better.

It's been over a decade since Schumacher tried running his Canadian foe off the track in a crucial F1 race but, on Thursday, they had kind words for each other.

'[Montreal's] certainly an exciting place from a driver's point of view ... The track is always good emotion because the spectators really live the Grand Prix and you can feel that and that makes it special,'

—F1 driver Michael Schumacher

Schumacher would welcome Villeneuve's return

Schumacher now says he believes there's still a place in F1 for Villeneuve — who hasn't driven on the circuit since 2006.

The 41-year-old cited his own return from retirement as evidence that Villeneuve can do it too.

"We are racers and we have that in our blood, so what you have there, you always keep," Schumacher told reporters.

"There's no reason why Jacques couldn't come back and, with my [experience as] proof, maybe he has even less concern to do so."

In return, Villeneuve had nice things to say about Schumacher — who tried running his car off the road in the decisive race of the 1997 season. The men have also had public sparring matches.

But Villeneuve is applauding the return of the seven-time champion.

"It's great for Formula One," Villeneuve said.

"It was starting to run short a bit of heroes ... It's important because it brings in fans."

Unfortunately for Villeneuve, he will be forced to watch Schumacher from the sidelines while F1 returns to the Montreal track named after his dad.

Schumacher says he's pleased the Canadian Grand Prix is back on the F1 calendar.

"[Montreal's] certainly an exciting place from a driver's point of view," he said.

"[It's] a beautiful city ... The track is always good emotion because the spectators really live the Grand Prix and you can feel that and that makes it special."

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NO ONE can watch F1 on CBC-the moneybags at TSN have the rights to all F1, now including Montreal. At least Speed covers practice/qualifying so fans can see everything. But hey CBC IS covering REAL sports action-the World Jogging Cup. Personally I'll be up most of the night watching the world's GREATEST auto race-Le Mans.

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RichardMcDonell wrote:

Dear CBC, now that you have several articles running at the same time on Montreal's big race, when are you going to put the "auto racing" tab back on your sports banner?

Auto racing is not a sport as per CBC. And Villeneuve has not been an F1 driver since 10 seconds after his last race. This announcement is a joke.

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[Get Smart](#) wrote:Posted 2010/06/11

at 8:24 AM ET I like Jacques and I think we should support him.

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Mr Beaver wrote: Posted 2010/06/11

at 1:10 AM ET Hope that Jacques gets one F-1 seat next year, he deserved it. He has been an inspiration for all Canadians.

Charisma and great attitude. Nice personality. Go Jacques Go !

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