



# Being Marc Márquez

This is how  
I win my race

gestalten

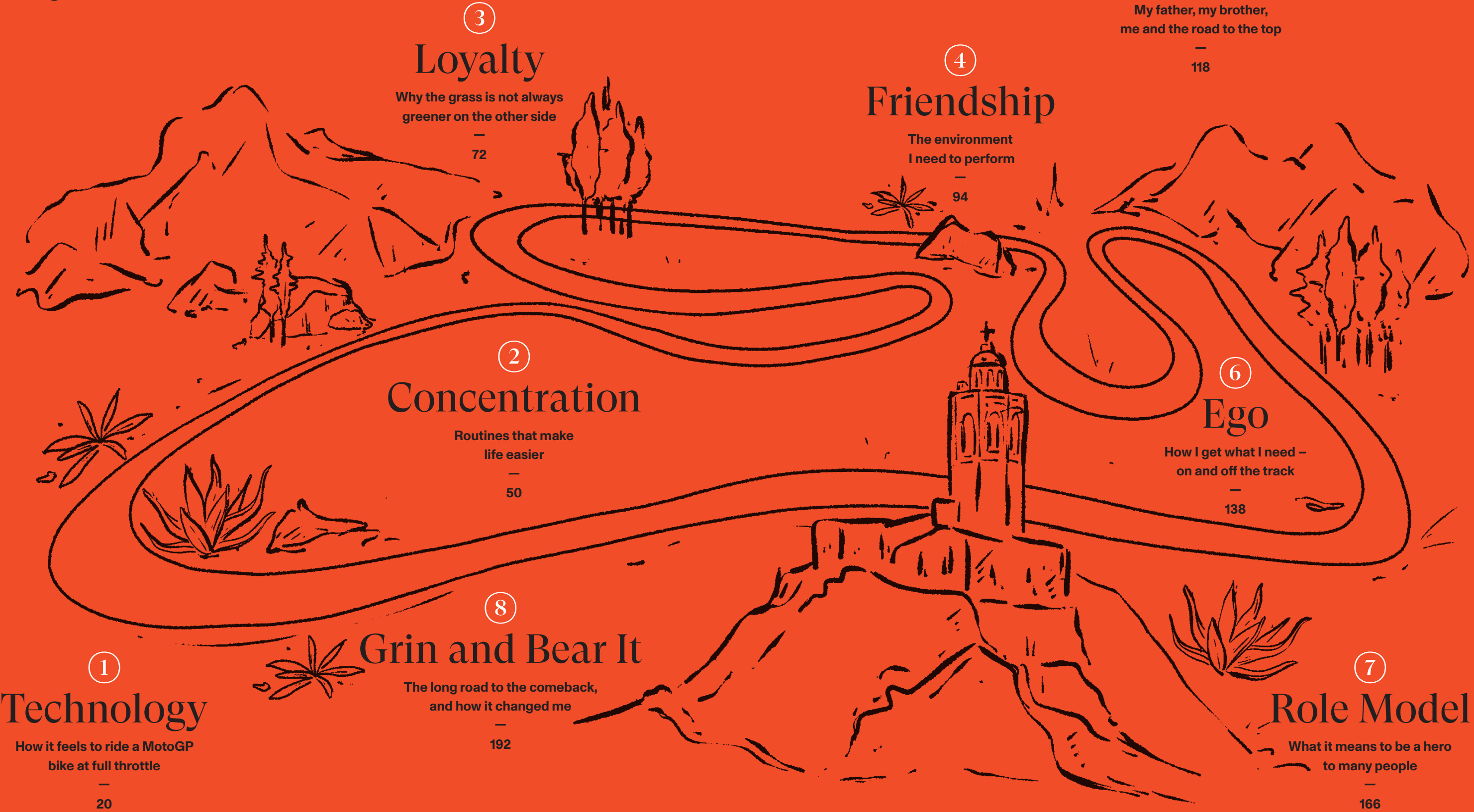
PANTAURO





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Every rider, every sportsman or woman, has their own routine before they even start. Some routines come about sub-consciously; others are a conscious ritual. Science talks of “pre-performance routines”, or PPR for short. Valentino Rossi would get down on his knees next to his motorbike and talk to it. Pierre Gasly tests his reflexes by catching tennis balls. Rafael Nadal tugs his clothes and touches his face before his serve. These routines have two purposes: on the one hand, they reassure the athlete, remind them that they have been in this situation many times before, that they already know what is about to happen. And secondly, they are a wake-up ritual for body and mind. Uh-oh! Things are about to get serious. It’s the calm before the storm. Athletes get into the “zone”, the state that allows them to perform at their best. A 2021 study published in the *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* confirms the effectiveness of PPR across sports and genders. The science distinguishes between rituals and routines. Routines are recurring sequences that benefit the process, the thing itself. Rituals have a more symbolic character that convey emotional security: like the footballer who crosses himself before a game, or keeping a lucky charm in a shoe, as Sebastian Vettel used to do. Marc’s father Julià also has a ritual: when Marc is racing, he stands in the box with his fingers crossed. And as for his son? He is more the routine type, and very precise routines they are too.

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The calm before the storm: things get real when the visor comes down. Body and mind are on heightened alert even earlier.







always do the same thing to get into the zone, and someone watching on TV only sees the half of it. It starts with me always getting up at the same time on race weekends, 8:10 AM on Fridays and Saturdays. Not eight. Not quarter past eight. Ten past eight. On Sundays, I get up at 7:55 AM because race day schedule starts a quarter of an hour earlier. I get up, have breakfast, then shower, always in that order. On the track, I go from my motorhome to the box first, say good morning to my mechanics and have a coffee with them. Then I disappear into the truck and start my warm-up exercises to make my body flexible. Once I'm done, I slip into my leathers at exactly the right time. After that, we go over to the box, perhaps a minute – but no more than that – either side of the set time. When it's time, I put my helmet on in my corner on the

right-hand side of the box and slip on my gloves – always at the exact same minute.

I never break these routines. The idea of stopping to talk to someone on the way from the truck to the box is unthinkable. If someone approaches me, I put them off until later, and as a rule I am met with understanding. The only possible exception might be before a free practice session, if someone very important or perhaps a child is waiting. Then I stop for 20 seconds max, say a quick hello and pose for a selfie, but that's it. As a point of honour, I give 15 minutes to fans waiting for me after practice, but beforehand, no chance.

In my routines, there is no distinction between practice, qualifying and race days. The process and the timing are always the same. At the circuit, I live in my motorhome next to the track, but as soon as the day starts, I switch to the Repsol Honda truck in the paddock. The truck is my workplace, the motorhome my home. At home you're relaxed, and I don't like to feel relaxed on weekends, or not too relaxed, at least. There's constant coming-and-going in the truck. There is a lot of fooling around and laughter until an hour before the race. That's when the atmosphere changes and you can literally feel the concentration in the room, or at least hear it. It gets quieter.

I am more nervous some weekends than others. There are even races I go into pretty relaxed because I feel I have the situation under control or, at least, have nothing to lose anyway. If I'm not in the running to win the championship or have to start from way back, there's no reason to be nervous. So I was quite relaxed when I returned in 2022, with the exception of two occasions: I knew I could win at Phillip Island and Valencia, so there was immediately that excitement again.

I like that tense feeling, though of course I do always wonder what the hell I'm doing and why I'm subjecting myself to all this. But I can now manage those thoughts pretty well and put myself in

a good, focused mood, regardless of how nervous I am. That was far from the case when I was younger. I guess you gain that ability over the years. It's about finding that fine line between being too relaxed and too tense. There are said to be sports-men and women who throw up due to nerves before every race or game. It hasn't been that bad for me for a long time. On the contrary, if I feel too relaxed, I drink a coffee before the start. It helps trigger that tingly feeling. I know myself very well; if I'm too relaxed, I'm lacking that last little bit of focus and there's a higher chance I'll crash.

When things finally get started, it's time for that part of the Sunday I hate the most: the sighting lap from the pit lane to the grid, and then the warm-up lap. You have to look out for really boring things like fuel consumption and going easy on the tyres, getting the bike around the track, nice and easy. It totally contradicts my instincts. Riding a MotoGP bike slowly intentionally feels unnatural. I want to get out of the pit lane and attack immediately, from the first corner.

As soon as I can feel my bike beneath me, I become another human being, a racer. I'm allowed to go a little faster in the warm-up lap, but I would like to push even harder. When things finally begin and the lights go green at long last, I feel like a fish in water; I go at my rivals on the first corner perhaps 90% of the time.

You still had time to think as you lined up on the grid five years ago. Now, you have to concentrate fully on the tasks at hand: activating the holeshot – launch control – device front and rear, getting your body in the correct position, paying attention to even weight distribution... By the time that's all done, the marshal is already on the move with his flag, making sure the track is clear, and the lights go on.

“I want to get out of the pit lane and attack immediately, from the first corner. As soon as I can feel my bike beneath me, I become another human being, a racer.”

There were push starts in motorcycle racing world championships up until 1987. The riders ran alongside their bikes and released the clutch to start the engine. This went relatively smoothly due to the comparatively low compression ratio of the two-stroke engines used at the time, and being able to make a good start was seen as part of a complete rider's repertoire. Such starts were banned for safety reasons; when a bike in the front rows didn't start and other riders came roaring up from behind, things got dangerous. In the decades thereafter, the delicate interplay of the throttle and clutch hand was necessary for a good start, until finally wheelie control arrived with more electronics; if the sensors showed the motorcycle was in danger of rearing up in the air, power was reduced. In 2019, Ducati brought a device we know from motocross – the holeshot device – into MotoGP for the first time. It compresses the suspension fork and manually keeps it low. This lowers the centre of gravity, reduces the bike's tendency to wheelie and allows the control electronics to release more engine power. The system was subsequently extended to the suspension strut, which lowers the bike's overall centre of gravity. The holeshot device disengages in the first braking zone, the bike roars back to life, regains its normal height and can tilt fully again. Launch control, by contrast, allows the rider to go at full throttle. Regardless of what the rider specifies, the ride-by-wire system, which does not require a fixed connection between throttle and engine, means maximum torque is only ever equivalent to what can actually be brought to the track, dependent on how aggressively the electronics are tuned, of course. Ideally, a MotoGP bike should go from 0 to 200 kph in 4.8 seconds, 0.4 of a second faster than a Formula 1 car!



I think my aggressiveness at the start even comes across on screen. I always go full throttle, with my elbows down. Some of my rivals like to play with the throttle. I control engine power with the clutch and rear brake, and fully open the throttle straight off. It also depends on how aggressively I tune the bike’s electronics. Admittedly, my way of starting isn’t the fastest, but it’s the most reliable for me. Getting started manually and balancing power with your wrist can go really well, or not. Thanks to my technique, I regularly get away from the start pretty quickly and rarely gain or lose more than one position.

In the warm-up round, there are always riders who try mind games, getting right in front of you, coming extremely close to overtaking, that kind of thing. At that point, I don’t care. I’m paying close attention to my rivals’ tyres. We do get a list from Michelin beforehand of which rider is going with which spec, but it isn’t always accurate, of course. It’s a trick, and my team is in on it. You say you’re using the softer rubber compound, but in reality it’s the harder rubber compound, or vice versa.

The rubber compound influences race strategy, and the warm-up round is the last chance to review that. Who will go flat-out at the start? Who might still have aces up their sleeve towards the end of the race? You take a good look at your closest rivals on that front, especially when it’s getting down to the nitty-gritty in the world championship.

On the starting grid, just before the race starts, there is something I now double and triple check based on experience, namely, IS THE BIKE IN FIRST? If the bike is still idling when the light jumps to green, you are in mortal danger with 20 MotoGP bikes bearing down on you from behind. So, if the “1” for first gear is showing on the dashboard, I can feel if the traction comes when I release the clutch lever slightly. Some of you may still remember Argentina 2018, when I had my

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**Holeshot is a term used in motocross to describe the first racer to get through the apex of the first turn: Marc doing just that at the 2018 Spanish Grand Prix in Barcelona.**

legendary balls-up at the start. What happened was, I was on the grid, the N was showing on the dashboard, but I was somewhere between neutral and first. Either I wasn’t properly in gear or it was a technical problem. Either way, the bike stalled as soon as I released the clutch. I have become much more cautious since then and am extremely careful in the way I touch the clutch lever at the start so it doesn’t happen to me again. You can’t always rely on the display. It was a miracle that I managed to get the Honda going again on my own. I had to get back in position with the engine running as the man with the red flag was already on the starting line. So I drove a big loop round, reversed, took up my position at the start again and then got away pretty quickly at the actual start.

**It really was a wild start to a crazy race in Argentina. It had started raining before the race so all the riders, bar Ducati’s Jack Miller, put on rain tyres. But the track dried off really quickly and everyone – bar Miller – came into the pits just before the start of the race to switch to slicks. So 23 riders would have been starting the race from the pit lane, which would be far too dangerous. The stewards came up with a creative solution: all the riders were pushed 23 places down the grid, i.e. to the back of the field, with Miller alone at the front. And Marc’s engine was stalling in the middle of all that fuss. The fact he got his 1000cc Honda to start again was probably down to adrenaline. Not even the international TV commentators were aware of what the right thing for Marc to do was according to the letter of the law, and nor, clearly, was the race steward. Once Marc was back in position, he started the race normally, without having a penalty imposed on him. Marc didn’t**

## Autódromo Termas de Río Hondo, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2018





Rare sighting: Marc won his 2010 125cc World Championship on a Derbi.



Moto2 World Champion on the second attempt on a Suter with a four-cylinder Honda engine.



MotoGP staple since 2013: Marc in the iconic Repsol Honda colours.









# BEING MARC MÁRQUEZ

## This Is How I Win My Race

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SAMPLE COVER

## Get to know and take a ride with the eight-time world-champion.

*Being Marc Márquez* lifts the curtain behind the iconic acronym MM93 and reveals what matters to the fastest man on two wheels both on the racetrack and in life.

Whether it's friendship, fun, focus, loyalty, spirit, or family—in eight chapters, he allows readers to get an up-close look, opening his tinted visor to let us peak into his mind and all-out racing soul.

This book shares the personal insights and credos of a tireless fighter and unapologetically optimistic family guy.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Intimate insights of the world-champion, loved and chased a million times
- Eight easy chapters of his complex life script, one more exciting than the other
- Unseen images of the well-captured super-athlete

**WERNER JESSNER**, a founding member of the legendary Red Bulletin editorial team, has been writing about extreme athletes for more than a decade. In addition to the physical aspects, the 43-year-old Austrian is particularly interested and versed in the mental aspects of exceptional athletes.

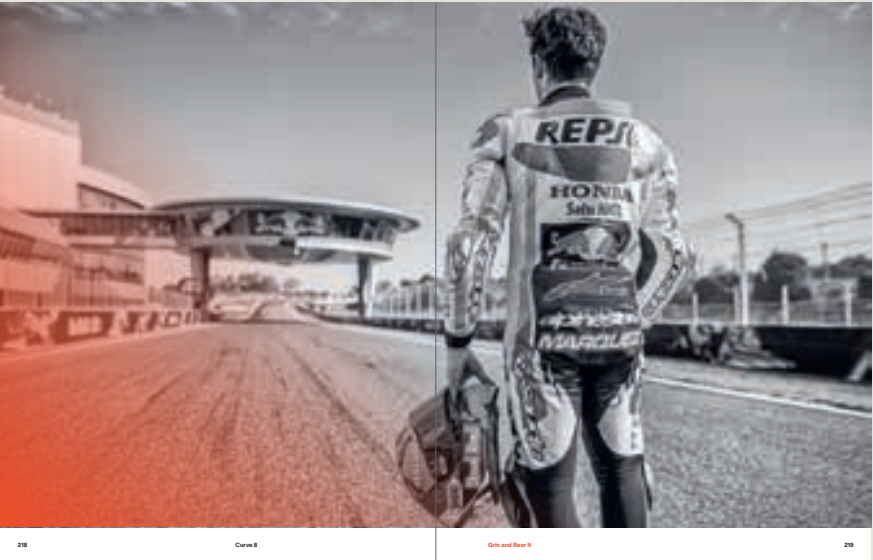
### ALSO AVAILABLE IN SPANISH



## SER MARC MÁRQUEZ

### Cómo gano mis carreras

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Curve 8

Grid and Start 1

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I wanted to please every single fan. You see so many eyes, so many faces, so many hopes, so much enthusiasm. That's what makes turning away and walking on difficult. This isn't an anonymous mass of people. They're all individuals I mean something to. And if these fans could spend one day, just one day, with me during a race weekend, I'm sure they would understand where I'm coming from. And there's another thing. My actual and most important job is to race, to perform. Distractions have an adverse effect, so I have to block the spectators out from a certain point. I hope those fans that didn't manage to get a selfie with me will still be just as enthusiastic in the stands on race day and cheer me on!

So that was the positive side of being popular. The negative side is that I am always under observation. It isn't easy for me, and the fact that the world is full of mobile phones with cameras in them also limits my privacy. When I'm free, I love to party. Who doesn't love a cool party?

The parties we throw after winning a World Championship are always particularly awesome, and the most emotional one was certainly the one after my first MotoGP title in 2013. It was in Valencia, I had won the World Championship, the first rookie to do so since Kenny Roberts, and the youngest winning rider in the history of the premier class too.

Marc went into the decisive final race 13 points ahead of Yamaha rider Jorge Lorenzo. If reigning world champion Lorenzo won, fourth place would still be enough for Marc to win a historic title. He was on pole, but missed up the start. Lorenzo took the lead and Pedrosa slipped past too. Right at the Doohan turn, named after Marc's legendary predecessor at Repsol Honda, he both missed the braking point and had to contend with Valentino

Rossi. In the following laps, Lorenzo controlled the pace and tried to keep the group up front as large as possible, the reason being there might then be enough riders between him in the lead and Marc for him to bring the World Championship home. But it didn't go according to plan. The tactic got him tangled up in skirmishes with a feisty Dani Pedrosa. Twenty-one laps from the finish, both had to move away from the ideal line as, of places, again, the Doohan turn. Marc briefly took the lead and then did what you wouldn't normally expect of him: he rode a controlled race, came home in a risk-free third place and thus dethroned Lorenzo in a confidently relaxed manner, or so it seemed to onlookers, at least.

I remember missing gears four or five times on the last lap, which never normally happens to me. I had completely lost my focus and, mentally, I was already celebrating my title. In Formula 1, you can hear what the drivers say on the radio when they cross the finish line and have won the title. We don't have that, but rest assured, you didn't need an on-board radio to hear me screaming with joy under my helmet the way I did that day. People must have heard me all over Spain! And the best was still to come. First I stopped off by the official fan club in the cool-down lap. I threw my gloves into the crowd, someone glued the number 1 over my traditional number 93 to show I was world champion, my original helmet was swapped for one with a special world champion design, and I had a specially designed T-shirt with "Baby Champ on Board" printed on it. Wonderful!

And then came the highlight, at least for me. I went back on the bike and off to the parc fermé, where my father was waiting, between the bikes of Lorenzo, who had won the race, and my friend and teammate Pedrosa. It was a very emotional moment. I could finally turn the bike off

and at long last collapse into my team's arms! At moments like those I'm a total hugger. I love collapsing into people's arms, feeling hands putting me on the back, jumping up and down in circles together, being picked up and thrown into the air... It's the best feeling in the whole world! I think I floated that afternoon.

The party on the Sunday evening right after that decisive race didn't actually go on very long; those celebrations never really do, as I would learn in subsequent years. After a Grand Prix, you're just too shattered physically. But as for the big World Championship bash in Cervantes... That rarely finished before eight or nine o'clock in the morning! Those parties were legendary. The best ever. Ride hard, party hard!

However, I have to earn my parties, because I am very strict. And there are times of the year when there is a total partying ban. And when I do allow myself to get carried away, when I really deserve a little fun, unfortunately I can't usually go for it as much as I would sometimes like to. What's the point of partying in first gear?

That's not who I am, sorry. Sometimes I ask one or two friends to take care of me and pull the plug on proceedings before I do anything crazy and things get completely out of hand. That's a real downer for me, mainly because I have to think carefully in advance about when I can party and not live it up every night until three o'clock in the morning. But in my holidays I like to, just like every other Spaniard of my age.

But I also have to be careful in my day-to-day life and set myself very strict standards, whether on the road, at restaurants, in public. There's always someone watching what I'm doing.

However, there is another level still, and that is at racetracks with other motorcyclists close by. There is one scene I will never forget. I was training on a private racetrack on a Honda from my garage. During a break, I had to move the bike a few metres. Without much thought, I got on, started it and rode maybe 20 metres at walking pace to get it out of the way, without putting on a helmet. You can picture what happened next. Not long after,

4 Hours after Marc celebrated victory at the Catalan Grand Prix in Montmeló in 2016, his third of Montmeló.



Circuit Ricardo Tormo, 10th November 2013

Curve 7