



# FROM GAMER TO RACER

Being good on the PlayStation could never lead to becoming a professional racing driver for real, could it? Ask Jann Mardenborough – it did for him...

**A**ny football fan who believes that battering his mates at *FIFA* qualifies him to play Premier League football should probably be deemed certifiable. But if you're a motor racing fan who is into gaming, it seems that same dream is not quite so mental...

Until two years ago, 22-year-old Jann Mardenborough from Cardiff was just a lad who was pretty handy on *Gran Turismo*. Then, while playing online, he got a message saying he should try out for the Nissan PlayStation GT Academy; a scheme that offered the chance for talented *GT* players to become pro racing drivers.

Cut to about nine months later and after beating 90,000 other *Gran Turismo* obsessives, going to Silverstone for the national finals and getting his chance to drive an actual racing car, Jann was crowned the winner.

Now racing in European Formula 3 and fresh from a third-place finish in his class at the legendary 24 Hours Of Le Mans, he tells ZOO what it will take to follow in his footsteps. Pay attention, gaming fans...

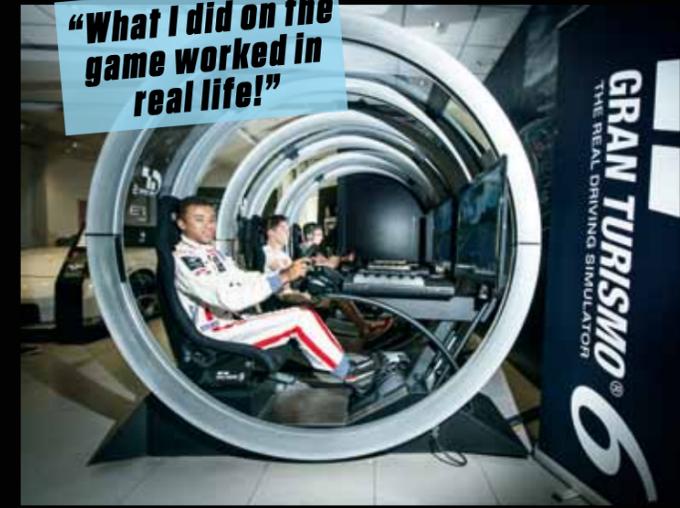
## BE A GOOD GAMER

"I was an average gamer before I heard about the GT Academy, and played racing and shooting games for about two hours a day. I only started using a steering wheel and pedals four years ago – until then, I was just using the controller. After I made that switch, I noticed my hand/eye co-ordination improve.

"Some people made the national finals just using the normal controller, but if you want to give it your all, get a good steering wheel and pedals. The Logitech G27 set is pretty good. When you get into a road car, it makes you drive better!"

INTERVIEW: Jon Meedy, PICS: Nissan, Gran Turismo, Nissan, PlayStation

**"What I did on the game worked in real life!"**



## LEARN FAST

"I'd never driven on a racetrack before the GT Academy; in fact, I'd never even driven a sports car. But at the national finals at Silverstone, I drove a Nissan 370Z around the circuit, and there was this long stretch with a right-hand corner. Suddenly I had a 370Z going sideways with opposite lock, and I was like, 'I'm instinctively doing what I did on the game and it's working in real life!'"

"There's certainly a relationship between the game and real life: like how throttle and braking affects the car, the steering and how aggressive you can be."



**"Get a good steering wheel and pedals"**



## FORGET SELF-PRESERVATION

"There's no natural racing driver. It's the most unnatural thing in the world to jump into a racing car and drive quickly in it – your body is not prepared for that.

"The physics engines in today's games are so advanced in the way the cars lean and pitch – the basic thrust or brake input – that they're really realistic. But even if you're driving perfectly in the game, sometimes it doesn't translate in real life because of the natural self-preservation mechanism in your brain.

"That's why going into a corner at 100mph in the game is a bit different to going into a corner at 100mph in real life!"

## STAY FOCUSED

"If you want to do something like this, just don't give up. When I was in the online time-trials, there were loads of times when I thought, 'I'll just give up, there's no chance. I'd rather just go and watch *Top Gear* on Dave,' – but instead, I decided I had nothing to lose, so I stuck at it.

"It has to be your passion; there are guys who quit their jobs to try and get into the GT Academy. You also need to get yourself really fit, because that's a major part of being a racing driver. You have to go for up to three hours at a time without having water on board... and that is tough."



## AND... FAIL YOUR DRIVING TEST

"Yes, I passed my driving test second time. All the best drivers pass second time! I had my licence when I was 17 and back then, I was fascinated by racing drivers' techniques.

"I used to watch videos of Ayrton Senna racing and the techniques he used. On my 17th birthday, I remember trying to recreate them in my mum's car. She was pretty scared – she said I'd have to pay for any damage I did!"

