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German driver Stephanie Halm.

Steffi is setting standards in truck racing

By **Rohit Paniker** in New Delhi

THE only female driver in the T1 Prima Truck Racing Championship, Germany's Stephanie Halm will be in the spotlight when the final flags off at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida today.

On back of a good season in 2016, where she finished fourth in individual ranking and third in team ranking, Steffi, as she prefers to be called, will race in the Pro Class of the championship alongside British partner Ryan Smith.

The 32-year-old is breaking barriers in the truck racing world, being the only female racer as of 2017.

Steffi started racing at the age of 10, taking part in the local kart racing championships in Germany. However, it was not before 2011 truck racing knocked her doors.

"Truck racing wasn't a part of plan. One of the teams in Germany wanted to rebuild and they asked me if I was interested and I

said 'why not'. It was completely new for me...I didn't even have a license for truck driving. After a scruffy start, I started to enjoy it and I am racing ever since," she told MAIL TODAY on Saturday.

A year on, Steffi went on to win back-to-back French Cup titles (2012, 2013) - becoming the first female racer to do so.

In a sport dominated by men, Steffi had fair share of bumps in the road. She recalls how difficult it was for people to accept her as a truck driver.

Sharing a few instances, Steffi said: "It has always been male drivers in truck racing as you see. In Germany, truck racing is about strong men they can't accept a blonde girl. Whenever I get out of my truck, remove my helmet, people would point at me saying, 'look, it's a girl!' It is pretty weird for me."

Enjoying the attention, meanwhile, Steffi says she is looking forward to a competi-

itive final and hopes to win.

"If you ask me, it does feel a bit different standing next to the other drivers. But on the track, everyone is the same. It is the effort and how you perform that matters. I am really enjoying the spotlight, being the only female racer does add a bit of pressure to perform but I am confident to give my best. It is obviously going to be competitive. The other racers are European champions and have more experience than me. But I feel I am up to the task," she said.

The Championship will see some of the top international truck drivers competing in the Pro Class while the elite Indian drivers from season 3 will go head-to-head in the Champions Class.

A Super Class is also introduced in the season 4 which will be comprised of Indian race truck drivers selected through the T1 Racer Program.

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