

Doctors give no prognosis for Michael Schumacher

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Professor Jean-Francois Payen answers questions from journalists during a press conference at the Grenoble hospital, in the French Alps, where former seven-time Formula One champion Michael Schumacher is being treated after sustaining a head injury during a ski accident in Meribel, France, Monday, Dec. 30, 2013. Doctors treating Michael Schumacher refused Monday to predict the outcome for the former Formula One driver, saying they were taking his very critical head injury "hour by hour". Chief anesthesiologist Jean-Francois Payen told reporters that the seven-time champion is still in a medically induced coma. (AP Photo/Laurent Cipriani)

Doctors offered a grim assessment of Michael Schumacher's head injuries Monday, providing no prognosis for the Formula One driving great after his skiing accident in the French Alps.

Schumacher has been placed in a medically induced coma to relieve pressure on his brain, which suffered bruising and bleeding when the retired seven-time world champion fell and struck a rock Sunday while skiing during a family vacation.

"We cannot predict the future for Michael Schumacher," Dr. Jean-Francois Payen, the doctor in charge of Grenoble University Hospital's

[intensive care unit](#), said at a news conference.

"He is in a critical state in terms of cerebral resuscitation," said Payen, the chief anesthesiologist treating the 44-year-old German driver. "We are working hour by hour."

Schumacher's wife, Corinna, daughter Gina Maria and son Mick were at his bedside.

"The family is not doing very well, obviously. They are shocked," his manager, Sabine Kehm, told reporters.

Schumacher earned universal admiration for his uncommon driving talent, which led to a record 91 race wins. His single-minded dedication to victory sometimes meant he was denied the same affection during his career that he received Monday.

Schumacher "gave the image of someone indestructible, powerful," France's four-time F1 champion Alain Prost said on iTele TV channel. "It's a banal accident compared to what he's done in the past . It's just a dumb thing that ended badly."

Schumacher and his 14-year-old son were skiing Sunday morning in the French Alpine resort of Meribel, where the family has a chalet. He fell and hit the right side of his head on a rock.

By wearing a helmet, Schumacher had given himself a chance of survival, Payen said, though the protection was not enough to prevent serious injury.

Gerard Saillant, a trauma surgeon who operated on Schumacher when he broke his leg in a 1999 race crash, was at the hospital as a visitor. He told reporters that Schumacher's age and fitness should work in his favor.

Schumacher, who turns 45 on Friday, retired from

the track for the second time only last year, after a three-season comeback.

Still, the hospital's neurology team, which is recognized as among the best in France, was cautious about Schumacher's prospects.



An unidentified person stands at the entrance of the property "La Reserve" occupied by German-born Formula One car driver Michael Schumacher, in Gland, on the shores of Lake Geneva, Switzerland, Monday, Dec. 30, 2013. Former seven-time Formula One champion Schumacher is being treated in a hospital in Grenoble after sustaining a head injury during a ski accident in Meribel, France on Sunday. (AP Photo/Keystone, Laurent Gillieron)

Doctors lowered his body temperature to between 34 and 35 degrees Celsius (93.2 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit) as part of the coma, which essentially rests the brain, slowing its metabolism to help reduce inflammation after an injury.

The hospital, in a city that is the gateway to the French Alps, sees a large number of skiing accidents every year.

Schumacher has been seriously hurt before. In addition to the broken leg in a crash at the 1999 British Grand Prix, he also suffered neck and spine injuries after a motorcycle accident in 2009 in Spain.

An expert skier, Schumacher fell in a section of

trails that slice down through a vast and, in parts, very steep snowfield. Although challenging, the snowfield is not extreme skiing. The runs are broad and neatly tended, and the ungroomed area in between—where the resort said Schumacher was found—is free of trees.

"He was in the deep snow. But it was not an off-piste track," Kehm said, suggesting Schumacher had not taken undue risks. "They were skiing on pistes, but in the moment that it (the accident) happened, it was not on the piste."

Meribel resort officials said Schumacher was conscious when first responders arrived, although agitated and in shock.

After the fall, Payen said Monday, Schumacher was not in a "normal state of consciousness." He did not respond to questions, and his limbs appeared to move involuntarily, the doctor said.

He was airlifted to a local hospital and then later brought to Grenoble. Doctors said that stopover was typical and did not affect his condition.

The French prosecutor in Albertville has opened an investigation into the accident, according to the Mountain Gendarmerie in Bourg-Saint-Maurice. The goal is to determine the circumstances and cause of the accident.

Formula One drivers and fans rushed to wish Schumacher a quick recovery.

"Like millions of Germans, the chancellor and members of the government were extremely dismayed when they heard about Michael Schumacher's serious skiing accident," German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said in Berlin.



Some fans gathered outside the hospital Monday.

Nuravil Raimbekov, a student from Kyrgyzstan who is studying in Grenoble, said Schumacher has been an inspiration to him.

"I'm worried, of course ... But I still hope, and I will pray for him," he said.

During his career, Schumacher set an array of Formula One records. After initial success with the Benetton team, winning his first two championships in 1994 and 1995, Schumacher moved to Ferrari.

Journalists from a German TV channel broadcast outside the entrance of the Grenoble hospital where former seven-time Formula One champion Michael Schumacher is being treated after sustaining a head injury during a ski accident, in Grenoble, France, Monday, Dec. 30, 2013. Doctors treating Michael Schumacher refused Monday to predict an outcome for the seven-time Formula One champion, saying they were taking his critical head injury "hour by hour" following a skiing accident. Chief anesthesiologist Jean-Francois Payen told reporters that Schumacher was still in a medically induced coma and doctors were focusing only on his current condition. (AP Photo/Laurent Cipriani)

There, he helped turn the storied Italian team into the sport's dominant force. After initially retiring in 2006, he made a comeback in 2010 and raced for three years with Mercedes.

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Sebastian Vettel, the Formula One racer for whom Schumacher was a boyhood idol, told German news agency dpa: "I am shocked and hope that he will get better as soon as possible."

Ferrari, which Schumacher raced for, also expressed its concern. Company President Luca di Montezemolo and race team leader Stefano Domenicali were in contact with the family, the company said in a statement.

Former Ferrari teammate Felipe Massa, who himself recovered from life-threatening [head injuries](#) at the Hungarian Grand Prix in 2009, wrote on Instagram: "I am praying for you my brother!! I hope you have a quick recovery!! God bless you, Michael."

British former F1 champion Jenson Button posted that "Michael more than anyone has the strength to pull through this."

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