

The 2011 Malaysian Grand Prix in Sepang will forever be associated in the motorcycling world with the fatal accident of Marco Simoncelli, when the Honda of the charismatic Italian, with his frizzy hair and electrifying laugh, skidded out on a corner on the second lap of the race and was overrun by Colin Edwards, who was right behind him, and none other than his friend, Valentino Rossi, too. But on the Friday, the career of another great had come within a whisker of ending in the first free practice, in the most stupid, you could almost say negligent, way. Marc Márquez was in a dogged battle for the Moto2 World Championship with Stefan Bradl of Germany that year. Marc had lost many points at the start of the season due to his radical approach (crash or win), but later in the year he was making up ground on Bradl, who was more consistent than him, but slower. The German was three points ahead with two races to go. Malaysia would go some way to settling the winner and Marc was one of the first riders to take to a not-quite-dry track in the first free practice on his Suter. None of the track marshals had warned the riders about a small stream of water running across the track in one spot. Unprepared, many promptly crashed out there, including Marc in a particularly spectacular highside, hitting his head on the ground in the process. There was no obvious physical damage, so the reigning 125cc world champion tried qualifying again on the Saturday. The fact that he finished 36th out of 37 riders, five seconds off pole, clearly showed that something was very wrong. He had to withdraw from the race and the world championship was lost. And yet it was precisely this moment that revealed a facet of Marc Márquez's personality that would never have come to the forefront otherwise: the fact that he is a fighter willing to make greater sacrifices for his passion than most people could.

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Even before his devastating crash in Jerez 2020, Marc's right upper arm has been his most problematic area: Here after shoulder surgery with his physiotherapist.

