



# THE CHAMPIONS ISSUE

## LEWIS HAMILTON

Speed secrets of Formula 1's fastest driver



274

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Lewis Hamilton joined an exclusive list of three-time Formula 1 World Champions in 2015. Photo: Mark Thompson/Getty Images



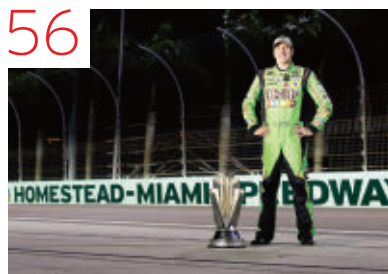
Nigel Kennedy/LAT

**“Yeah, I feel like I went out pretty much on top. I wanted to show that I still have what it takes”**

**JEFF GORDON**



Wes Duenkel/Porsche



Matthew T. Thacker/LAT



Red Bull

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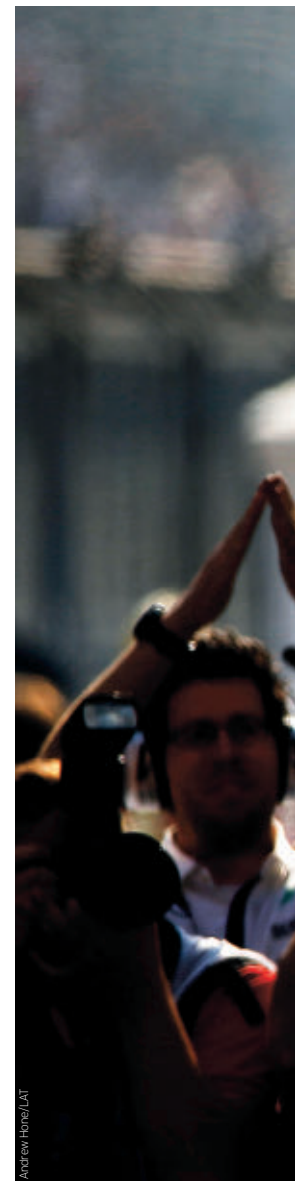
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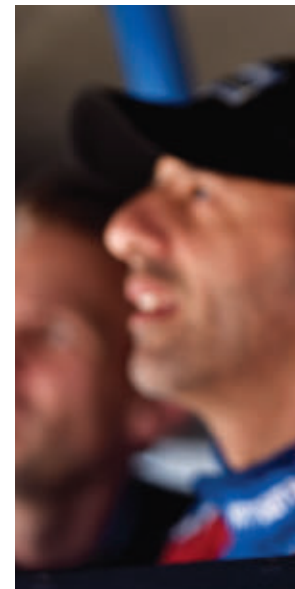
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Jace Hewitt/LAT





(MAIN) Lewis Hamilton did a lot of celebrating in 2015, thanks to 10 wins, 11 poles and a third Formula 1 title. (BELOW LEFT) Scott Dixon: low-key, but effective. (BELOW) Porsche ruled the roost in WEC LMP1.



Scott B. LePage/LAT



Nick Dungan/AzraelMedia.com

## FREEZE FRAME

Suffering end-of-season withdrawal? The good news is that the Dakar Rally kicks off Jan. 3. Adam Malysz's X-raid MINI could be at the sharp end of things in Argentina and Bolivia.

**WHERE** Rallye Maroc, Morocco

**WHEN** 10/02/15

**PHOTOGRAPHER** Marcin Kin/Red Bull







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## **F** FREEZE FRAME

Force India driver Sergio Perez locks a wheel in practice for the Brazilian Grand Prix. The Mexican ace finished a career-best ninth in the final 2016 Formula 1 standings.

**WHERE** Autodromo José Carlos Pace, Sao Paulo, Brazil

**WHEN** 11/14/15

**PHOTOGRAPHER** Glenn Dunbar/LAT

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**Fax** (949) 417-6116 **Website** www.racer.com

*RACER* (ISSN 1066-6060) is published eight times per year by Racer Media & Marketing, Inc. Periodical postage paid at Irvine, CA 92619, and at additional mailing offices.

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Postmaster send address changes to:  
*RACER*  
P.O. Box 231  
Congers, NY 10920.  
Printed in USA

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Manuscripts, photos and other material submitted must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope. *RACER* assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material.

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ELECTRONIC PRE-PRESS: Reclaim Design, Irvine, Calif.  
PRINTING: R.R. Donnelley, Pontiac, Ill.



How do you analyze something as instinctive and ethereal as the ability to drive a racecar faster than anybody else? Sure, you can break down certain techniques or traits, but that doesn't entirely explain why one driver using those basic techniques is merely quick, and another - same techniques - can be on a whole other level.

Case in point, three-time (and counting) Formula 1 World Champion Lewis Hamilton. Few would argue that he isn't the fastest driver in F1, but what is it that so elevates him above the rest?

In our cover story (starts page 22), Mark Hughes goes beyond the 2015 champ's technique (a straightforward one, he notes) and considers the motivations and the mindset that make him the stand-out driver of his generation.

More fascinating still, he also explores why those same traits can also work against Hamilton at times - the final races of this year's championship, for example, when his Mercedes teammate, Nico Rosberg, scored six straight poles and won the last three grands prix of the season, while Lewis hinted at irreversible car changes and reminded people how fast he'd been for the first dozen-plus races... One driver who rarely, if ever, feels the



need to justify himself is four-time IndyCar Series Champion Scott Dixon. He's a guy who's happy to fly under the radar, while continuing to deliver at an extraordinarily high and consistent level. But, as he tells Mark Glendenning (page 32), there are still areas where he'd like to raise his game.

• It's fitting that in *RACER*'s annual Champions Issue we're saying farewell to a truly great champion in Jeff Gordon. No, he didn't bow out with that elusive fifth NASCAR Sprint Cup title, but the mere fact he was still in the running at Homestead's finale speaks volumes of the man. That he exited before his powers had diminished, and with the same humility and dignity that have marked his whole career, deserves huge respect. ■  
**editor@racer.com**

**STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION** 1. Publication Title: Racer; 2. Publication Number: 1066-6060; 3. Filing Date: Oct. 1, 2015; 4. Issue Frequency: 8X; 5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 8; 6. Annual Subscription Price: U.S.: United Stated \$49.95; 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: Racer Media & Marketing, Inc., 17030 Red Hill Avenue, Irvine, Orange County, CA 92614-5626; 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: Racer Media & Marketing, Inc., 17030 Red Hill Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614-5626; 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: Bill Sparks, Racer Media & Marketing, Inc., 17030 Red Hill Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614-5626; Editor: Laurence Foster, Racer Media & Marketing, Inc., 17030 Red Hill Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614-5626; Managing Editor: Andrew Crask, Racer Media & Marketing, Inc., 17030 Red Hill Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614-5626; 10. Owner: Racer Media & Marketing, Inc., Racer Media & Marketing, Inc., 17030 Red Hill Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614-5626; 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None; 12. Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months; 13. Publication Title: Racer; 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Sept. 2015; 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation [i] Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months [ii] No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run) [i] 22,335 [ii] 22,174; b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation: (1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 [i] 10,967 [ii] 10,347; (2) Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 [i] 0 [ii] 0; (3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution [i] 2,720 [ii] 2,887; (4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS [i] 417 [ii] 390; c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation [i] 14,104 [ii] 13,624; d. Non-requested distribution: (1) Outside-County as Stated of Form 3541 [i] 3,983 [ii] 4,053; (2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541 [i] 0 [ii] 0; (3) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Through the USPS by Other Classes of Mail [i] 0 [ii] 0; (4) Nonrequested Copies Distribution Outside the Mail [i] 870 [ii] 620; e. Total Nonrequested Distribution [i] 4,853 [ii] 4,673; f. Total Distribution [i] 18,957 [ii] 18,297; g. Copies Not Distributed [i] 3,378 [ii] 3,877; h. Total [i] 22,335 [ii] 22,174; i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation [i] 74.4% [ii] 74.46%; 16. Electronic Copy Circulation: a. Requested and Paid Electronic Copies; [i] 8,180 [ii] 10,362; b. [i]; b. Total Requested and Paid Print Copies + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies [i] 22,284 [ii] 23,986; c. Total Requested Copy Distribution + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies [i] 27,137 [ii] 28,659; d. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Both Print & Electronic Copies) [i] 82.12% [ii] 83.69%; 17. Publication of Statement of Ownership for a Requestor Publication is required and will be printed in the Winter 2015 issue of this publication; 18. Signature and Publisher or owner: Bill Sparks, Publisher, 10/1/2015 I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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Jeff Gordon had some high-profile support for his last ride at Homestead, with F1 world champion Lewis Hamilton among pilgrims to the No. 24. Hamilton also admitted he would like to try NASCAR himself some time...

# WONDER BOY EXITS IN STYLE

**No fairytale end for Jeff Gordon's NASCAR career, but he's a championship contender to the end**

> It might not have ended the way he wanted it, but when Jeff Gordon climbed from his famous No. 24 Chevrolet for the final time at Homestead-Miami Speedway, Nov. 22, he did so with the grace and dignity that characterized his legendary career - in sharp contrast to the antics of a number of his rivals this season...

It was probably asking too much to expect a fifth NASCAR Sprint Cup title-winning performance from Gordon, who qualified for the four-driver final showdown on the strength of a victory at Martinsville - after the clash between Matt Kenseth and

Joey Logano that created such acrimony and led to the former's two-race benching.

As he neared the end of a Cup career that appropriately spanned 24 seasons, Gordon admitted he felt extra pressure to deliver after finishing the regular-season campaign only 12th in the points.

"Nothing is more frustrating than when people call in [to radio shows] and

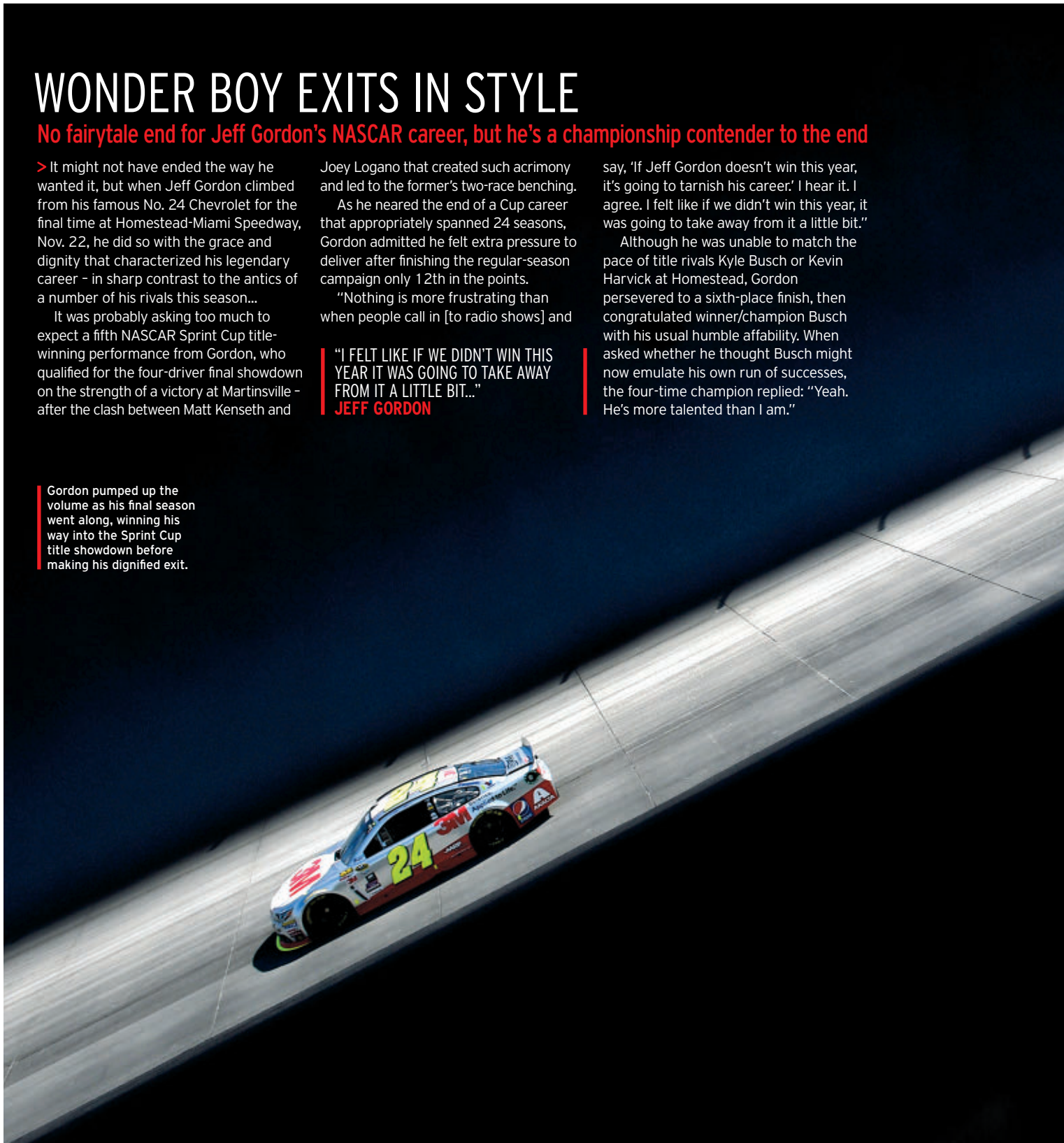
**"I FELT LIKE IF WE DIDN'T WIN THIS YEAR IT WAS GOING TO TAKE AWAY FROM IT A LITTLE BIT..."**

**JEFF GORDON**

say, 'If Jeff Gordon doesn't win this year, it's going to tarnish his career.' I hear it. I agree. I felt like if we didn't win this year, it was going to take away from it a little bit."

Although he was unable to match the pace of title rivals Kyle Busch or Kevin Harvick at Homestead, Gordon persevered to a sixth-place finish, then congratulated winner/champion Busch with his usual humble affability. When asked whether he thought Busch might now emulate his own run of successes, the four-time champion replied: "Yeah. He's more talented than I am."

Gordon pumped up the volume as his final season went along, winning his way into the Sprint Cup title showdown before making his dignified exit.





Chris Graythen/Getty Images

While Gordon was a sentimental favorite, much of the smart money was on Kyle Busch – and he exceeded expectations with a dominant charge to victory. The full story of Kyle's comeback crown starts on page 56.

All the latest NASCAR news at  
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Matthew T. Thacker/LAT

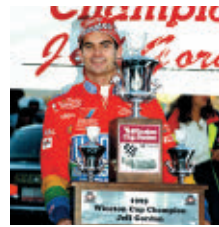
**FRESH TAKE**

Gordon might not be actively competing any longer, but he will still be integral to the NASCAR fan experience in 2016 as a TV analyst for FOX.

Nigel Kinrade/LAT

**FIRSTS AND LASTS...**

Gordon took on NASCAR's old guard right off, which grated on some...but his consistent speed and poise won most fans over.



Dozier Wobley/Getty Images

**1995 >>**

First Cup crown in just his third full season, with seven wins and only three DNFs



Jonathan Ferrey/ALSPORT

**>> 2001**

Fourth and final Cup title came in a six-win season with another Brickyard 400 triumph



ISC Archives/Getty Images

**1997 >>**

First Daytona 500 win started a back-to-back Cup title run



Jonathan Ferrey/Getty Images

**>> 2005**

Third and last D500 win comes in a green-white-checker finish



2001 Snowbound

**1994 >>**

Boyhood dream of an Indy win came in NASCAR's debut there



Russell Labourn/LAT

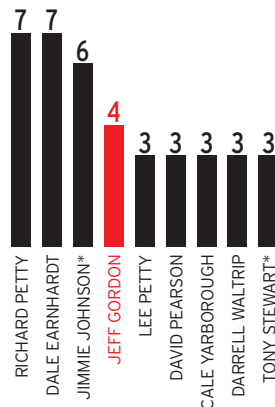
**>> 2014**

Four-win resurgence included a record fifth Brickyard trophy

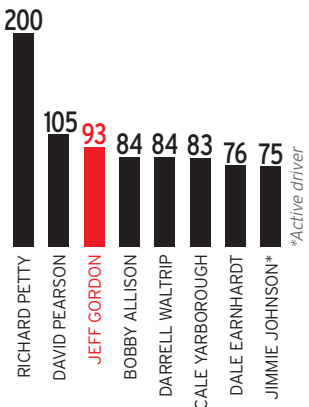
**THE COMPANY HE KEEPS...**

Gordon's numbers rank him high among NASCAR's all-time greats, despite arguably deeper competition of the modern era.

**CHAMPIONSHIPS**



**RACE WINS**





Mark Thompson/Getty Images

Circuit of The Americas took a heavy punch from the weather gods on USGP weekend, which mirrored the stormy picture for the race off-track. A reduction in state funding for the event has cast its future into doubt.

# RED-LETTER DAYS

## Ferrari reinforces its F1 rep as the straw that stirs the drink

> Like the New York Yankees in baseball, Ferrari is the team everyone watches in F1, whether it's winning or losing. And although it's still doing too much of the latter for its expectant fans (and management), the Prancing Horse has offered plentiful evidence of its competitive resources and political heft.

While Mercedes again effectively beat back the challenge from Ferrari this year, in Sebastian Vettel's hands the red

**"I WOULD SAY THAT THEY [FERRARI] MATCHED US IN TERMS OF POWER AND EFFICIENCY"**  
**NIKI LAUDA**

SF-15T has been the most consistent challenger to the silver cars, bolstered by customized fuel advances from Shell, as well as the relentless technical development from Ferrari's chassis and engine departments at Maranello.

Off the track, Ferrari has been throwing its weight around as well. It teamed up with Mercedes to veto the push toward an independently sourced "budget" engine option for F1 teams in favor of an agreement to lower the cost of customer versions of existing turbo-hybrid power units like Ferrari's - which Mercedes' Niki Lauda says is now as strong as Merc's erstwhile benchmark.

"Since they introduced the updated engine at Monza, I would say that they matched us in terms of power and efficiency," Lauda said of Ferrari. "The 20hp advantage we had is now gone."

Ferrari team principal Maurizio Arrivabene agreed with Lauda's assessment. When asked if he felt Ferrari could fight Mercedes on pure pace and challenge for the world title in 2016, Arrivabene said: "If you want my honest expectation, it's not to be closer to them, but to be in front of them..."



Alastair Staley/LAT

### REVIVING WITH ARRIVABENE

While the technical push overseen by James Allison obviously gets most of the credit, the fighting spirit encouraged by Maurizio Arrivabene (ABOVE) since his November 2014 appointment as Ferrari team principal can't be overlooked in assessing the Prancing Horse's resurgence in '15.

Increasingly prancing horses from its turbo power unit have Ferrari talking big about 2016.



Charles Coates/LAT

## CAN'T LIVE WITH 'EM, CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT 'EM

> The partnership of Red Bull Racing and engine supplier Renault continues to follow the pattern of a dysfunctional yet co-dependent relationship. Even as RBR team principal Christian Horner affirmed at the Abu Dhabi finale that his team had settled on a supplier for 2016 - hence officially ending its threat to pull out of F1 - he declined to name the source of that power, even though a Red Bull/Renault reunion was an open secret.

The challenges to the relationship remain unresolved. Renault's power units continue to under-deliver - a point underlined by RBR driver Daniel Ricciardo's assertion in Abu Dhabi that his team's chassis was as good as Mercedes, clearly implying where the blame for a lack of results lay. RBR is expected to initiate its own in-house engine development program, aided by Ilmor founder Mario Illien.

Meanwhile, Renault's expected takeover of the Lotus team has proceeded at a glacial pace, maintaining an air of uncertainty over the company's commitment to F1.

Horner emphasized his team's 2016 plans are "transitional," but at least for now Red Bull and Renault need each other more than they want to go their separate ways.



Peter Fox/Getty Images

Red Bull's Toro Rosso junior squad (LEFT, Max Verstappen) is ditching Renault and going back to Ferrari power, like it ran from 2007-'13.

Steven Tee/LAT



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IndyCar returns to more traditional open-wheel strongholds for 2016 with renewed races at Phoenix (LEFT) and Road America. A street race in downtown Boston in September will lift the unpopular Labor Day curfew.



Honda-kitted entries like Ryan Hunter Reay's will get a breath of fresh air for IndyCar 2016.

## BOOST PHASE FOR AERONAUTS

Honda gets a do-over for its problematic IndyCar aero kits

> The simmering issue of Honda's IndyCar aero-kit performance gap was resolved, at least in the short term, with confirmation that it would be permitted to significantly revise its package. IndyCar rules allow such development if any manufacturer's aero deficit is deemed detrimental to the series.

Mark Miles, president and CEO of IndyCar, said full-scale wind tunnel tests conducted at Windshear in Charlotte clearly showed a discrepancy in performance between the two makes - but only in road course/short

oval configuration, meaning speedway aero kits for the 100th Indianapolis 500 will be unchanged from '15, bar tweaks in a limited number of pre-agreed development areas.

"Next step is that Honda has to present to us the parts they'd like us to consider and then we'll take those parts back to the wind tunnel," Miles said. "We'll examine the data and determine what changes we might approve. This gives Honda a chance to close the gap before we go into the next year of aero kit competition."

Chevrolet, naturally, bristled at the news. "All manufacturers received the same set of aero regulations and subsequent updates," noted Jim Campbell, Chevy's U.S. vice president of Performance Vehicles & Motorsports.

Honda-aligned team owner A.J. Foyt had mixed feelings. "I want to be competitive and I do feel like we had our hands tied, but you hate to see everything equal because racing's always been about trying to get an advantage," mused Super Tex.



### NIP AND TUCK FOR SPEEDWAYS

IndyCar addressed propensity for cars to get airborne at Indy (ABOVE, Ed Carpenter) and the danger from flying debris with new rules specifying a domed underbody skidplate to improve yaw and spin characteristics, rear-wing flaps that deploy if a car spins and travels backward, and Zylon tethers to restrain significant bodywork elements in an impact.



Marquez (93) was out of title contention, but his war with Rossi (46) still held center stage.

## SUCKER PUNCH OR FIGHT OF THE CENTURY?

> F1 has had its Senna/Prost and Schumacher/Villeneuve championship prize fights, and now MotoGP has its Rossi/Marquez mayhem, paving the way for Rossi's Yamaha teammate Jorge Lorenzo to claim a controversial third title.

Multi-titled Valentino Rossi and outgoing champ Marc Marquez had been engaging in a war of words for much of the year, but their dispute took a bitter turn following Rossi's claim that Honda's Marquez was trying to help countryman Lorenzo. Rossi and Marquez then clashed

in Malaysia, and the Italian started the season finale at Valencia from the back of the grid after he was determined to be at fault. Lorenzo took a relatively easy win there over Marquez - too easy, said Rossi, who claimed the Spaniards had colluded.

The whole affair pitted teams, fans and even media against one another, souring what had been one of the most entertaining championship battles in MotoGP for years. How it all effects the relationship of teammates Lorenzo and Rossi may be of more lasting significance.



Lorenzo was largely a spectator to the Marquez/Rossi feud, but even his faultless ride to victory in the Valencia finale stirred conspiracy theories.



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Sebastian Vettel, who won six straight Nations Cup crowns in the end-of-year Race of Champions with Michael Schumacher, won his first overall title in London, besting "Mr. Le Mans" Tom Kristensen in the final.

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## TWISTING THE AMERICAN TALE

A classic rivalry starts anew in IMSA as Ford's GT arrives to take on Chevy

> Everyone's hero needs a rival, and the Chevrolet-vs-Ford struggle for automotive bragging rights has long ranked among the signature themes of motorsports. Next year it will be renewed in sportscar racing, as Ford's new GT arrives in IMSA's WeatherTech Championship in partnership with Chip Ganassi Racing to take on the works Corvette Racing team.

Ryan Briscoe, Richard Westbrook, Dirk Muller and Joey Hand have been selected for full-time rides in the two

Ford entries. Hand and Muller will co-drive the No. 66 Ford GT, while Briscoe and Westbrook take the reins of the No. 67 Ford GT. Those car numbers are significant - the original predecessor of the Ford GT, the GT40, won at Le Mans in 1966 and '67 with Shelby-American Inc. (and in '68 and '69, too, courtesy of John Wyer Automotive Engineering).

"At this level, all drivers are fast. We want drivers who can work well with others," said Ganassi. "Drivers who have

endurance car experience. Drivers who've been to Le Mans. All these things add up. It's a team of drivers that act like they've been together for quite a while already."

Corvette Racing has reacted positively to Ford's return - and also bolstered its own driver lineup for 2016. Marcel Fassler and Mike Rockenfeller - both veterans of Audi's sportscar racing programs - have been added to the Corvette lineup for IMSA's season-opening enduros at Daytona and Sebring.



**DARK FORCES**  
Menacing carbon black of Corvette's C7.R in testing emphasized the amped-up intensity of Chevy's rivalry with the Blue Oval.

Richard Doney/LAT



Audi's latest LMP1 R18 e-tron quattro (ABOVE) will race in the 2016 WEC in the 6MJ hybrid sub-class, up from 4MJ.

Audi Sport

## VW CLEARS THE AIR OVER ITS RACING FUTURE

> Volkswagen Group's ongoing emissions scandal will not significantly affect the automotive giant's motorsport activities, according to new boss Matthias Muller.

The German manufacturer supports a two-pronged clash of titans in sportscar racing with Porsche and Audi, as well as VW's wildly successful WRC campaign, and Muller said speculation that problems elsewhere would have a major impact underestimates the value VW derives from those activities.

"The motorsports programs are not in danger of being dropped or significantly



**Muller (AT RIGHT) congratulates Mark Webber on his WEC P1 driver's title, part of a sweep of P1 and GTE Pro titles for Porsche this year.**

Alain Barthelemy/LAT

reduced because motorsports is very important for the group and the brands," he said on a visit to the World Endurance Championship finale at Bahrain, where Porsche clinched its first prototype class world crowns since 1986.

However, two definite casualties of the group-wide cost savings that VW has been forced to initiate are the third cars Audi and Porsche usually enter for the 24 Hours of Le Mans, meaning Porsche drivers Nick Tandy and Earl Bamber will not get the chance to defend their 2015 overall win.



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A man with short dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a watch, is driving a green off-road vehicle. He is looking forward with a focused expression. The vehicle is on a dirt road with large rocks and dust kicked up by the tires. The background shows a hazy, mountainous landscape under a bright sky.

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ADVENTURE PHOTOGRAPHER

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# MOTION PICTURE

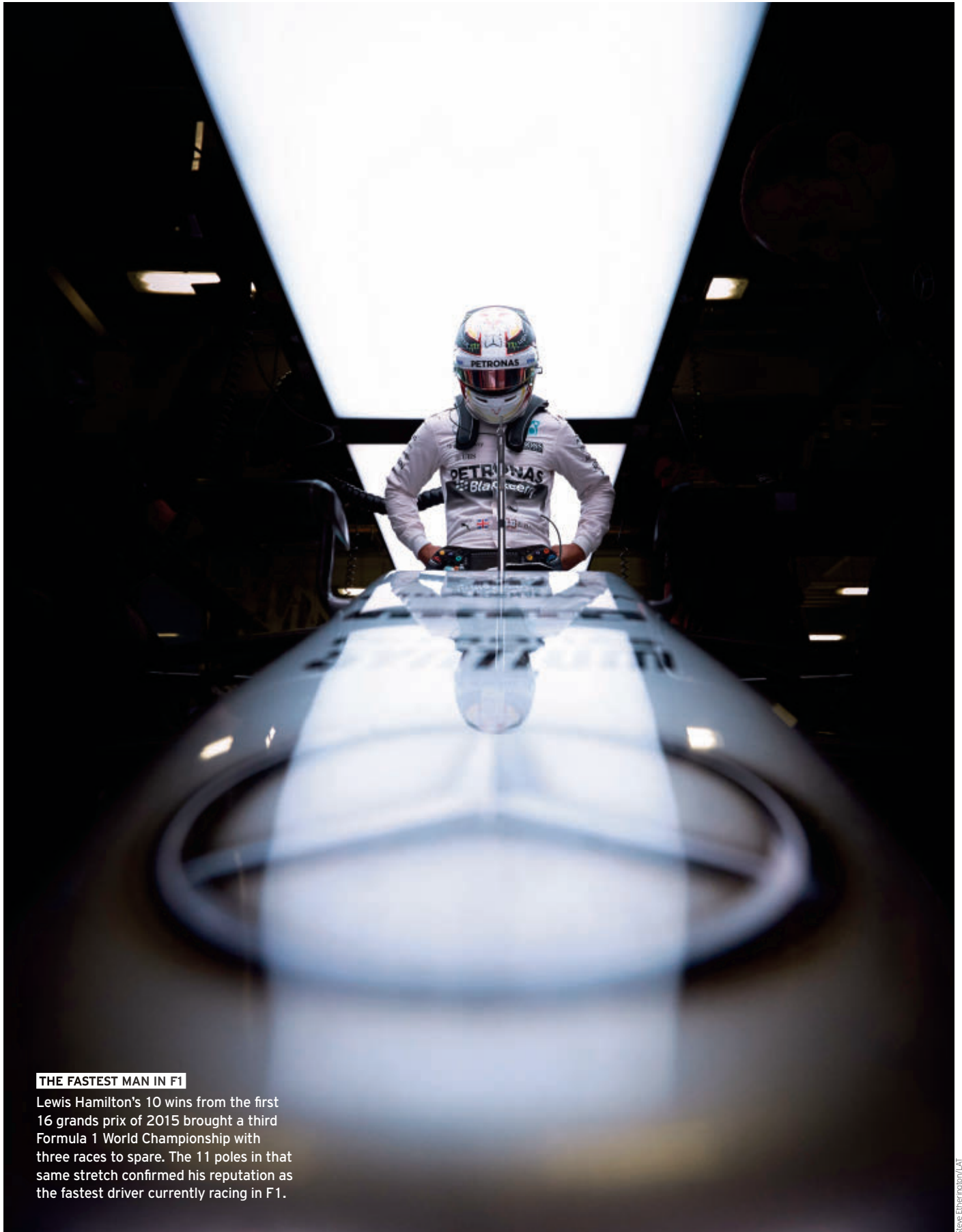
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Working out what triple World Champion Lewis Hamilton does in a racecar isn't so difficult. Grasping *how* the fastest man in F1 operates at such an elevated level is the hard bit.

WORDS Mark Hughes | MAIN IMAGE Glenn Dunbar/LAT

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Silver in gold... Lewis Hamilton and his Mercedes F1 W06 Hybrid dominated the majority of the 2015 Formula 1 season. A solitary DNF and one sixth-place finish were the only glitches in a year of podium near-perfection.



**THE FASTEST MAN IN F1**

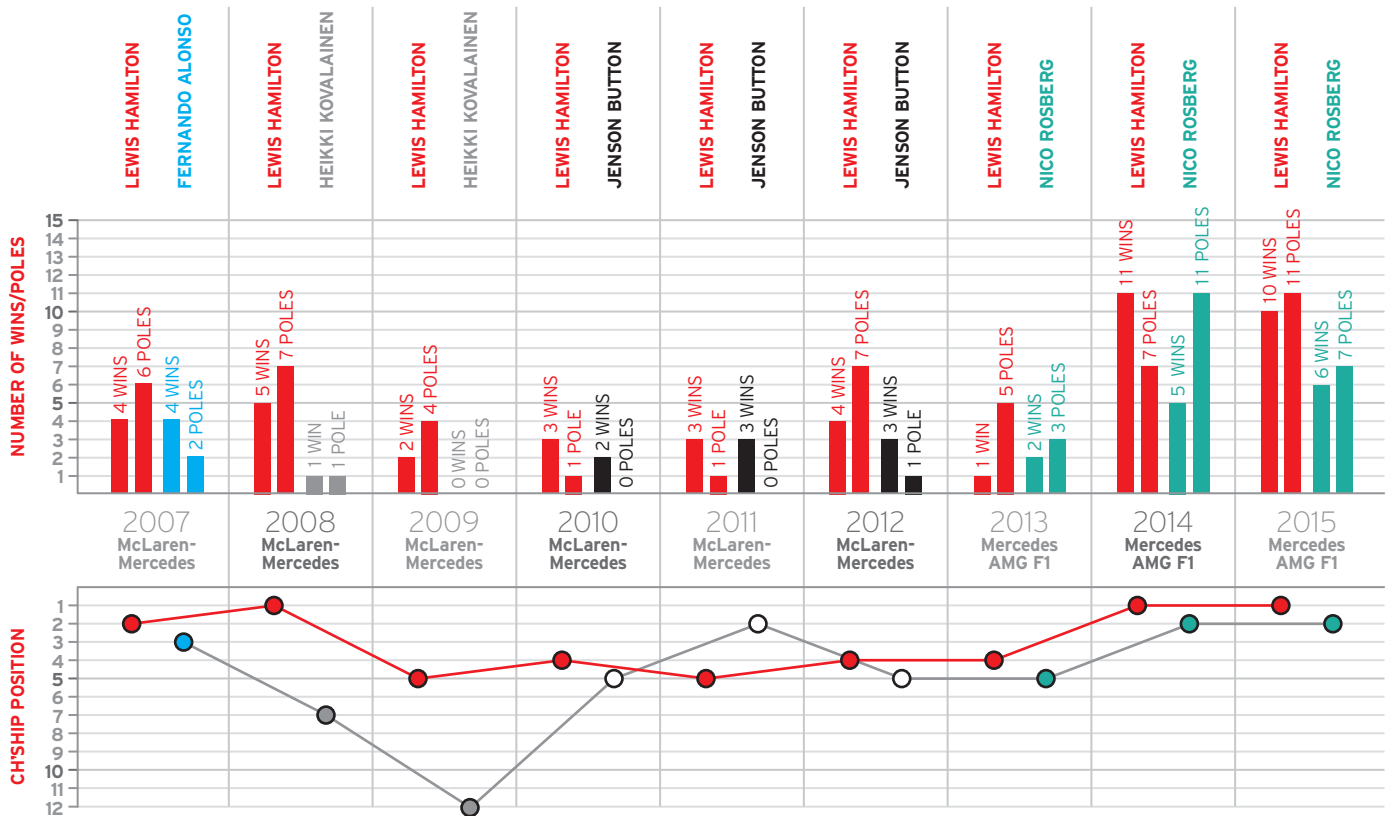
Lewis Hamilton's 10 wins from the first 16 grands prix of 2015 brought a third Formula 1 World Championship with three races to spare. The 11 poles in that same stretch confirmed his reputation as the fastest driver currently racing in F1.

Steve Etherington/LAT



# LEWIS HAMILTON vs. HIS TEAMMATES

Nine seasons in Formula 1, and only once has Lewis Hamilton finished behind a teammate in the final standings (2011, to Jenson Button). Same goes for race wins and pole positions, with Nico Rosberg besting him in 2013 and '14, respectively.



Even after taking his third Formula 1 World Championship with three races still to go, and against a hugely-accomplished teammate, Lewis Hamilton still managed to introduce ambiguity into his 2015.

In the 12 races before the bizarre punctuation to Mercedes' season that the Singapore Grand Prix represented, when the team spent the weekend grip-less and confused, the most naturally gifted driver of his generation had, for once, translated all his phenomenal gifts into lap times and results almost 100 percent. He'd beaten Nico Rosberg to pole 11 times. Only once, when the team overheated Hamilton's tire blankets in Spain, did Nico out-qualify him. And only once, in Austria, was Hamilton out-raced by the German.

Post-Singapore, Hamilton did win the next three grands prix, sealing his inevitable championship in the United States Grand Prix at Circuit of The Americas, but Rosberg began a pole streak that would be unbroken until season's end - six straight.

Post-COTA, Hamilton's form was mediocre, his teammate's impeccable.



Steve Etherington/LAT

Three wins for Nico; three best-of-the-rest seconds for Lewis. And, once again, that's ignited a debate about Hamilton's true level.

If any examination of excellence is to include consistency, as it must, then he cannot be considered among the tiny handful of true greats that could *always* deliver mesmerizing performances - Juan Manuel Fangio, Jim Clark, Stirling Moss, Jackie Stewart, Ayrton Senna, Michael Schumacher, to pluck the obvious ones - whose careers were not a succession of correcting crises in between the brilliance.

But brilliance of their order, Lewis most certainly has - if what we are talking about is just the raw essence that allows

one man to be capable of driving a racecar faster than any of his peers.

That's the picture painted not only by direct observation out on track over his nine-year F1 career, but one pretty much universally backed up by any engineer who's ever worked with him, the guys who've studied the traces and understood what they were witnessing. It's even been occasionally admitted - through gritted teeth, of course - by his fellow drivers. When it comes to *fastest*, nobody else even crops up in those discussions.

So a couple of questions arise from that. What is it he actually does that makes him so evidently the fastest guy out there? And why does it not always translate?

**In the words of "Pinball Wizard" by Pete Townshend and The Who, "How do you think he does it, what makes him so good?"** Hamilton doesn't have an unusual technique; it's quite straightforward - late braking and geometrical lines. The only unusual thing is how well it's done.

"The outstanding thing about his driving," says Paddy Lowe, Mercedes' >



Alastair Stacey/LAT

**(LEFT) Lewis Hamilton's technique isn't unusual. The only unusual thing is how well he does it. (ABOVE) At the age of 30, Hamilton is in the prime of his career. How many more F1 titles might be in his future?**



Steven Tee/LAT

technical director and before that a senior engineer at McLaren, where he and Hamilton worked together for six years, "is how at ease he is with rear instability. In his very first F1 test for McLaren at Silverstone, we were seeing on the data huge instability on corner entry - to an extent where if it had been our regular race drivers [Kimi Raikkonen and Juan Pablo Montoya], they would have been bitching about it. He didn't even mention it and so we pressed him on it and he said, 'No, it's fine.'

"Now, once you have a driver who can live with that level of rear instability it gets very interesting for the engineer, because the stability limit for an F1 car is usually defined by what the driver is comfortable with in the fast corners. An F1 car tends to understeer in slow corners and oversteer in fast ones. So the more instability he's comfortable with in fast corners, the less understeer you have to tolerate on the slow ones - and the more overall grip you have over the lap."

"It's effortless," says John Booth, whose Manor Formula 3 team ran



Steve Etherington/LAT

**"First lap out of the box, Lewis clear by 2.5sec. That's just how he is, every lap, every corner"**

**JOHN BOOTH**

Hamilton and Robert Kubica as team mates at the 2004 Macau GP. "If you just started everyone from cold, told them to go flat out for one flying lap and then come back in, if that was the only thing you had to do, nobody would ever even get close to him. It's only as everyone then works away at building up speed that his

(ABOVE) Hamilton's natural desire to not just lead, but to dominate, is laudable. But it's not always conducive with the need to look after Pirelli's high-degradation tires.

margin decreases, relatively speaking. "At Macau, his first lap would be 2.5sec clear of everyone. Robert would chip at it and get close by the end of the session. Every session was the same - first lap out of the box, Lewis clear by 2.5sec. That's just how he is, every lap, every corner. It's just balance and also a fantastic feel for how hard to brake. As the downforce comes off the car, so the braking pressure must reduce, and he's uncanny in how he can always be on the limit in that respect."

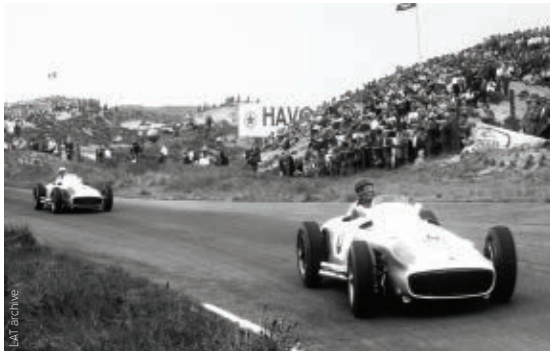
Backing this up is an inner certainty that his limits are higher than anyone else's.

"That's his default point," says Jock Clear, who worked with him at Mercedes and prior to that with Schumacher. "His center of gravity is always that he's the fastest driver. So if he's not the fastest, there's something wrong with the car. It will always come back to that.

"That's very different from how, say, Michael was. He was always inwardly concerned that there might be someone who could drive faster than him, so he had to align all his energies into making sure he was protected from that by making the car >

## THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE IN...

Lewis Hamilton became the 10th driver to join an elite club of triple Formula 1 World Champions when he clinched the 2015 title with a victory - his 10th and last of the season - at the United States GP. Of the others, four went on to earn more. Here's the membership list...



### 1 JUAN MANUEL FANGIO (ARG)

**1951 (Alfa Romeo), '54 (Maserati/Mercedes-Benz) and '55 (Mercedes-Benz)**

*(Won five championships in total - also 1956, '57)*

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **36**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **5**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **44.4%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **8**



### 4 NIKI LAUDA (AUT)

**1975, '77 (Ferrari), and '84 (McLaren-TAG)**

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **157**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **12**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **15.2%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **15**

### 7 AYRTON SENNA (BRA)

**1988, '90 and '91 (McLaren-Honda)**

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **125**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **8**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **25.6%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **16**



### 9 SEBASTIAN VETTEL (GER)

**2010, '11 and '12 (Red Bull Racing-Renault)**

*(Won four championships in total - so far - also 2013)*

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **101**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **6**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **25.7%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **18**

### 2 JACK BRABHAM (AUS)

**1959, '60 (Cooper-Climax), and '66 (Brabham-Repco)**

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **82**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **12**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **13.4%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **9**



### 3 JACKIE STEWART (GBR)

**1969 (Matra), '71 and '73 (Tyrrell-Ford)**

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **98**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **9**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **27.5%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **11.5**



### 5 NELSON PIQUET (BRA)

**1981 (Brabham-Ford), '83 (Brabham-BMW) and '87 (Williams-Honda)**

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **140**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **10**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **14.2%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **15**

### 6 ALAIN PROST (FRA)

**1985, '86 (McLaren-TAG) and '89 (McLaren-Honda)**

*(Won four championships in total - also 1993)*

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **152**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **10**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **25.6%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **15.5**



### 8 MICHAEL SCHUMACHER (GER)

**1994 (Benetton-Ford), '95 (Benetton-Renault) and 2000 (Ferrari)**

*(Won seven championships in total - also 2001-'04)*

GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **141**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **10**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **30.4%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **16**



### 10 LEWIS HAMILTON (GBR)

**2008 (McLaren-Mercedes), '14 and '15 (Mercedes)**

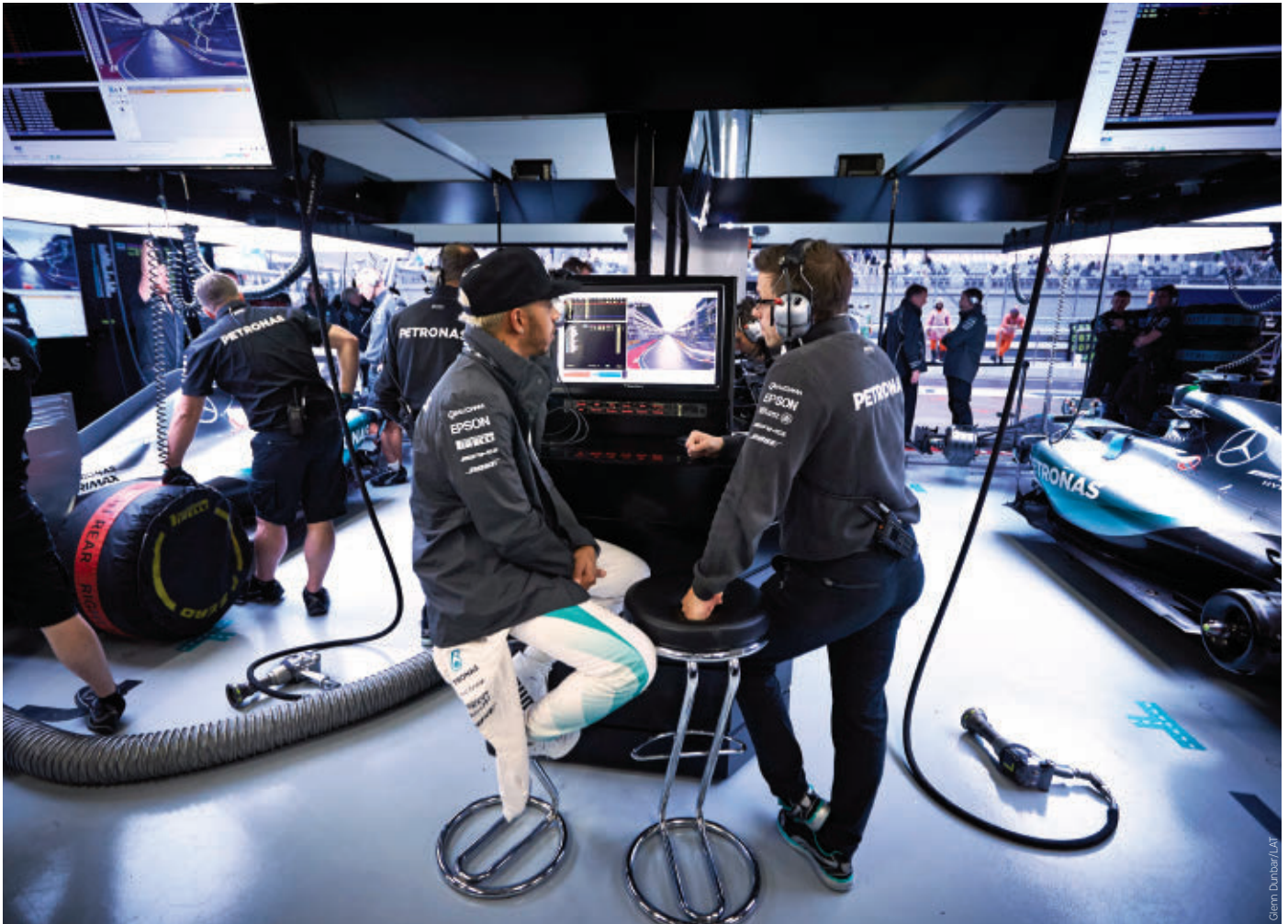
GP starts prior to third ch'ship: **164**

F1 seasons to reach third ch'ship: **9**

Win rate prior to third ch'ship: **26.8%**

Average no. of GPs held per season prior to third ch'ship: **18.5**





Glenn Dunbar/LAT

faster. It was an intensity fueled by insecurity, whereas Lewis is fueled by a total belief in his ability. It's not better, just very different. As I said, if Lewis isn't fastest, there's something wrong with the car. So you work from there."

Hamilton's inner gyroscopes just seem more finely tuned than anyone else's and that's underscored by total belief - and a deep desire to prove it.

"I call it council estate [housing project] grit," says his former karting mentor Jonny Restrick. "Lewis doesn't crumble when the pressure's on. There's never panic, just grit. So often in karting you see kids from privileged backgrounds who know that they'll be racing, no matter what, and because of that they just don't have that resilience, don't know how to dig deep."

Lewis no longer has to worry about whether he'll be racing or not, but the psychology that those formative days bred into him runs deep.

**But is his conviction also his weakness?** Let's take the post-Singapore Mercedes as a case study. It would be easy and simplistic to assume he'd just taken his



Glenn Dunbar/LAT

**"If Lewis isn't fastest, there's something wrong with the car. So you work from there"**

**JOCK CLEAR**

foot off the gas once his title had become a formality. Maybe there's a subconscious element of truth in that - and he's not been shy in admitting how hard he's been partying since the title win. But his trouncing by Rosberg in the last few races has left him embarrassed, defensive. It cannot be happening,

**(ABOVE) Is Hamilton's unshakable belief that he's fastest (and who'd argue?) sometimes to the detriment of working to improve his car? (LEFT) Lewis plays hardball with Rosberg at COTA.**

because he can drive quicker than Rosberg. But it's happening regardless.

"I have all the data from earlier this year that shows I was always quicker than Nico until Singapore, by about three tenths," he points out - unnecessarily. That default of being 100 percent certain he's the fastest can also undermine him.

Following the debacle of Singapore, where the usually dominant Mercs could qualify only seventh and eighth, the team quickly understood that the post-Spa increase in minimum tire pressure imposed by Pirelli required the car to be set up in a fundamentally different way. Since that setup change was made, Rosberg - on six consecutive occasions - beat Hamilton to pole, having managed it only once in the previous 13 races.

"Nico worked his ass off in understanding the full implications of the set up changes we needed to make," says a key Mercedes engineer. Hamilton did not. With the title already won and the parties and promotions he was attending, it was a bad time for Hamilton to have a fundamentally re-configured setup >

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Charles Coates/LAT

**AND RELAX...?**

Did Lewis Hamilton take his foot off the gas once he'd secured his third F1 World Championship in COTA? (LEFT) If he did, it's debatable as to what extent. But what wasn't in doubt was his Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg's determination to "work his ass off" in the final races. Six consecutive poles and three straight wins for the German was the result.

imposed - and a perfect time for Rosberg.

When Jenson Button joined Hamilton's McLaren team in 2010, he spent a couple of races looking at the telemetry comparisons and confided to his father, John, "If Lewis ever works out how deeply he needs to work with the engineers, the rest of us may as well go home. But he's never going to, so we've all got a chance against him."

There are other things working against Hamilton, too. He's winning in the Pirelli era, *despite* it being the Pirelli era. High degradation tires that cannot be raced flat-out the whole way deprive him of much of his natural advantage. He can sometimes damage his own chances with his dominance. At Monaco he pulled out a massive lead over Rosberg, but that left him vulnerable in this Pirelli and safety car era. Sure enough, look what happened. The safety car came out, wiping Hamilton's big lead and leaving him only with the downside of significantly more worn tires than Rosberg. That worry about the state of his tires played a crucial part in the



Steven Test/LAT

**"If Lewis ever works out how deeply he needs to work with the engineers, the rest of us may as well go home"**

**JENSON BUTTON**

team's fateful decision to pit him, gifting the win to Rosberg at the 11th hour.

To contain him, as Rosberg has done recently, you have to be in front of him from the start, smother his full-attack irrepressibility - and wait until his tire energy is spent. Then you pit.

Hamilton's aware of this weakness, and

**(LEFT) Hamilton's affinity with rear instability in fast corners allows for setups with less understeer in slow corners - and that means more grip over the whole lap.**

he strains against the leash of it - because it's instinctual. In the competitive intensity of the racing moment - the kind of high-stress scenario when the human brain is wired to revert to instinct - he can still rail against it. But as he cools down, he's back to being a nice guy.

Hamilton's combination of visceral skills, belief and fire isn't enough on its own in current F1. What we see in this era is a Hamilton reined-in, the extravagant excesses of his talent tightly controlled so that we rarely get to revel in the full extent of it. But we also rarely get to see the downsides of his emotionally-driven approach, just occasional snippets of frustration over the radio that in an earlier era, when drivers were left to their own devices once the race had started, would have resulted in more brilliance, more misjudgements - Ronnie Peterson maybe.

The amplitudes of Hamilton's waves - from the crests of his brilliant best to the relative troughs of his weaknesses - are smaller in this era of F1 than they would have been in another. But they are still bigger than anyone else's. ■

## F1'S OTHER BENCHMARK

## A KING WITHOUT HIS CROWNS

"Best" is a subjective term, but most agree that Fernando Alonso's F1 stats don't match his abilities.

While Lewis Hamilton is widely recognized as Formula 1's fastest driver, it's Fernando Alonso - his 2007 McLaren teammate - who's more often been cited as F1's *best* over the years. They've each said on several occasions that they consider the other their biggest rival, the driver they respect the most. "I had to dig so deep with him as my teammate it was insane," recalls Hamilton.

Alonso's distinctive strength isn't really his single-lap, out-and-out peak pace, so much as a savage relentlessness. His speed perhaps has a slightly lower peak than Hamilton's, but the spread of that peak is amazingly wide. Yet, as with Hamilton, this skill isn't as readily rewarded in the Pirelli era of F1 as it was in earlier years, when F1 was flat-out start-to-finish.

"That full-burn racing you had in the Bridgestone era was what F1 was all about," recalls newly-crowned FIA World Endurance Champion and nine-time F1 grand prix winner Mark Webber. "Flat-out all the way; not just flat-out around the pit stops and a few critical laps like we have now. In that type of racing, Alonso was just a monster. I don't think he was ever the outright fastest, and he's definitely past the peak of that now, but he remains mind-blowingly good on a Sunday."

Jenson Button had Hamilton as a teammate for three years, and this season



Photo4/APB Images

## MAKING THE MOST OF IT...

When his McLaren-Honda stopped on track during Brazilian GP qualifying, Alonso took the chance for some impromptu sunbathing.



Steven Tee/LAT

## BACK IN THE DAY

Alonso's most recent F1 title came in 2006. Since then, second with Ferrari in 2010, '12 and '13 have been his best title showings.

he's raced alongside Alonso.

"In many ways Fernando is an even tougher challenge to race against than Lewis," he says. "In a race, it's a bigger challenge, a more consistent challenge, I would say. He's always there. On some race days, Lewis was untouchable. And on others, it was like, 'where is he?' Fernando is always there, always competitive. If he's in front of you, you're holding on, and if he's behind you, he's pushing you a lot."

The one weakness that might be aimed at Alonso is his apparent tendency to divide a team. It happened at both McLaren and Ferrari. When he was replaced at the Scuderia by Sebastian Vettel, those inside the team said Vettel's inclusive attitude and work rate behind the scenes were in stark contrast to Alonso's. It's a trait that's left the Spaniard with a difficult reputation. The two most dominant teams of the last six years, Red Bull and Mercedes, were wary of taking him and - as he now admits - the only way he can win another title to add to those he garnered in 2005 and '06 is if the McLaren-Honda partnership comes good.

It's more than feasible that the "best" driver of his generation retires one day with just those two titles to his name and a set of career statistics dwarfed by both Hamilton's and Vettel's.



With the clock ticking, Fernando Alonso knows his Formula 1 legacy could be made or broken by the performance of the McLaren-Honda package. So far, it's been frustrating.



---

Despite the success that Scott Dixon has already enjoyed, he believes he still has room to improve - and at 35 years old, there's plenty of time left in which to do so.



# STEALTH FIGHTER

Scott Dixon has never subscribed to the “fame” part of being famous. But he’s quietly building a career that will stand as one of Indy car racing’s greatest-ever.

| WORDS Mark Glendenning  
| MAIN IMAGE Scott R LePage/LAT

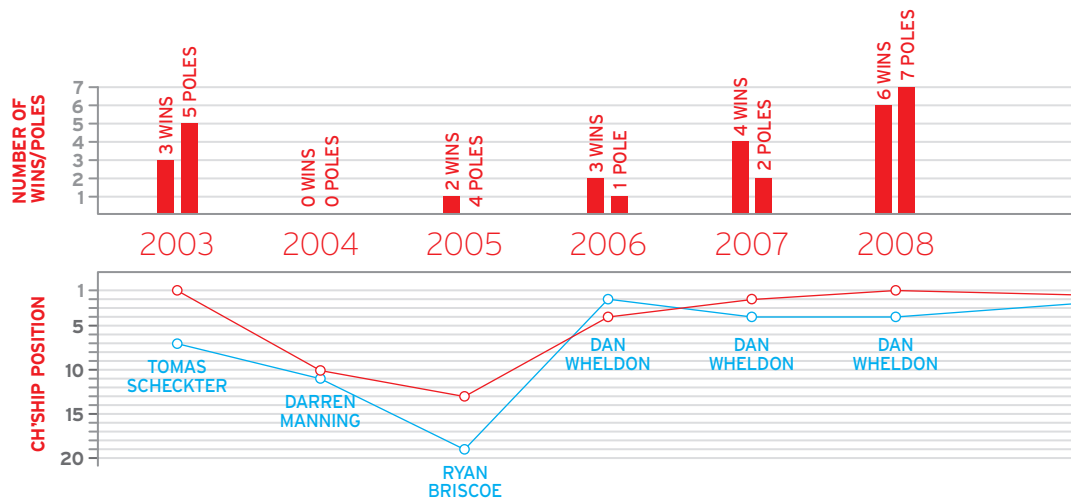


Understatement embodied: Scott Dixon's stealthily efficient driving style is the antithesis of flamboyant. Out of the car, he projects a low-key persona to match, letting the results (TOP RIGHT, winning the 2015 IndyCar Series title) speak for themselves.

**EXTENDED EXCELLENCE**

Comparing Dixon's championship finishes with those of his teammates through his IndyCar Series career tells a couple of stories. The first is one of consistency - and looking at the graph, it's not hard to spot the wilderness years when he was saddled with an underperforming Toyota engine. Secondly, he has the current DW12 nailed...

- KEY
- SCOTT DIXON
- HIGHEST-PLACED TEAMMATE



If Scott Dixon didn't already exist, you probably couldn't invent him. In an era where a professional athlete's value is measured in part by their potential for social media ubiquity, there shouldn't be much space for someone who can turn up, beat everyone without looking like he's done anything spectacular, and then willingly fade into the background. Nothing about Dixon lends itself easily to a GIF.

The four-time IndyCar Series champ is understatement embodied. In his racecar, he's all stealthy efficiency; outside of it, he's different things to different people - loyal and intelligent with a rapier wit to those who know him; obscured by an amiable inscrutability to those who don't.

The numbers tell a clearer story: those four titles, fifth on IndyCar's all-time win list, one Indy 500 win accompanied by a few near-misses. And yet he's a driver who you define not by his peaks, but by his consistency. He hasn't finished outside the top four in the championship for a decade. In 15 top-level seasons - two in CART, 13 in IndyCar - he's only gone winless twice. And 192 of his 215 career starts have been for Target Chip Ganassi Racing. But all of that comes served with a side-helping of laid-back humility that has made him one of the most underappreciated drivers among fans.

"Dixon isn't flash," says close friend and former teammate Dario Franchitti. "He just doesn't do flash, in the car or out of it."

His ability to keep the world at a distance when he's away from the track might be one of the keys to his sustained performance. Where Will Power has spoken of sleepless nights after difficult weekends, and Franchitti has admitted to keeping a notepad next to his bed, there's



Ernie Mueser/LAT

**"Dixon has an ability to make things look effortless. It can wear you down if you're fighting against him"**

**DARIO FRANCHITTI**

a sense that Dixon has an off-switch, and he's not afraid to use it.

"If he does worry about things, he's bloody good at hiding it," says Franchitti. "He clearly thinks about racing a lot, because nobody is that successful without it being your life. But he does have an ability to switch off, and he does have an ability to make it look effortless, which is really annoying! It can wear you down if you're fighting against him."

Dixon himself believes that the different perspectives brought about by fatherhood have taught him to deal with racing-related disappointments.

"Having kids definitely changed the dynamic," he says. "If you have a crappy race, it's a good way to switch off when you get home - see what they've been up to for the weekend, play with some Barbies, maybe a Ken doll here and there. And [wife] Emma is very competitive; probably more competitive than myself. If

I have a bad weekend, I can forget about it much quicker than she does, and she'll keep asking questions. That keeps me competitive as well, but I can also switch off and say, 'Hey, let's stop talking about that and move on to next week.'"

All that said, Dixon's record suggests that bad weekends are relatively rare, and drilling into the reasons for that is where things get more complicated. His work ethic is widely touted: during his own driving career, long-time manager Stefan Johansson was a teammate to both Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna in Formula 1, and notes that Dixon shows a similar level of application.

"Maybe they had a little more ability than anyone else," he says. "But they still put in 10, 15 percent more work, and that's what makes the difference".

Another of the bedrocks is the team environment at Ganassi, where strong personal friendships are accompanied by high expectations and accountability.

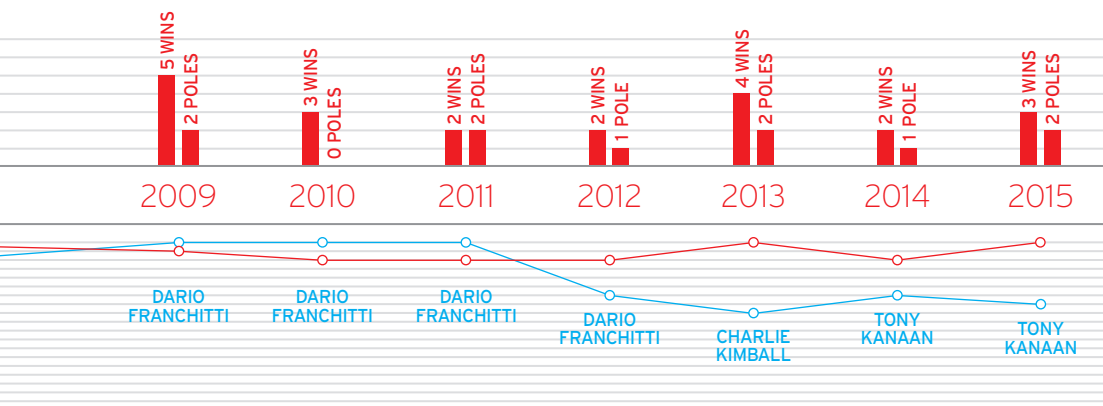
"It's a different culture to what I was used to at Andretti Green," says Franchitti. "At Andretti there was a wee bit more leeway when you had a bad result; I guess it was a more coddled environment. Ganassi's a lovely group of guys, but they're racers, and they let you get away with nothing. They think the world of Scott, but they keep pushing him, and he's learned to keep pushing them, too."

The latter point is significant, because asserting his authority within a team wasn't something that came naturally to Dixon.

"He always had somebody else doing it for him," says Franchitti. "Dan [Wheldon] was there doing it, I was there doing it, and now he's learned to do it in a constructive way, and it's really impressive to see." >



Philip Abbott/LAT



Walt Kuhn/LAT

**STARTING EARLY**

Chip Ganassi Racing moved Dixon across from CART into IndyCar in 2003, and he responded by winning the title first time out.



Dixon's also proven adept at learning from his teammates. Sometimes that was about becoming stronger on a particular type of track: he picked up a lot about one-and-a-half milers and Indianapolis from Wheldon, and took cues from Franchitti's forensic approach to road and street courses. He and Franchitti also helped each other get the most from various specifications of tires. But more fundamentally, both Britons taught Dixon the importance of working to improve an ill-handling car rather than trying to drive around problems.

"I was always about the details, and I think some of that's rubbed off on him," Franchitti says. "But he's kept his ability to just hang onto something, and as a driver that's one of his biggest talents. Sometimes he'll squeeze a result out of a racecar that's got no business getting a result."

The importance of his former partners in convincing him not to rely too heavily on those talents is not lost on Dixon himself.

"I can be quite relaxed and try to adapt to things, or drive around them," he admits. "But I learned from those guys that I had to keep pushing [the team] for more."

And the "unflappable" persona? Anyone who heard Dixon unloading about former race director Beaux Barfield at Baltimore a couple of years ago, or bellowing an expletive over the radio when he hit an



**"People think of him as quiet. But he's not afraid to get on the radio and be upset about something"**

**ERIC BRETZMAN**

errant patch of dirt on the track during his qualifying run at this year's Sonoma finale, will know the image doesn't stand up to scrutiny. But Eric Bretzman, who was his engineer for more than a decade before handing the reins to Chris Simmons at the start of this year, says that his former charge doesn't dwell on setbacks.

"He gets emotional," Bretzman says. "People think of him as being quiet, or having no personality. But if something happens, we'll hear about it. He's not afraid to get on the radio and be upset

about something. But then he'll move on.

"He's never overwhelmed by what's happening when he's in the car. He's very aware of what's going on from a strategy standpoint; he's got a good sense for what everybody around him is probably up to."

The problem for IndyCar's marketing department is that it's hard to make relentless efficiency sexy. How do you Instagram a photo of someone doing the same lap times as the other frontrunners, but squeezing two extra laps out of a tank of fuel in the process? And Dixon himself isn't going to make a big deal about it.

"Most drivers, when you get in front of the camera, there's a certain amount of acting," Franchitti says. "But Scott just doesn't let many people in to see the real him. And he's not being aloof or anything, he just doesn't feel the need to do it.

"But when you do get to know the real him... He's one of my favorite people. He is such a funny, funny person. My little brother [Marino] said to me a while back, 'Dixon is one of the best human beings I've ever met.' And he really is. But he doesn't ever feel the need to trumpet it, or ham it up in front of the camera. So people don't really know him, and that helps him blend into the background. I really do think he likes other people to take the limelight. And he takes the prize money." ■

**Scott Dixon's impromptu crowd surf after taking the 2015 title (ABOVE) gave a glimpse of a driver Dario Franchitti describes as a "funny, funny person." Dixon learned a lot about Indianapolis from his former teammate Dan Wheldon, winning the "500" in 2008 and earning the pole this year (LEFT).**

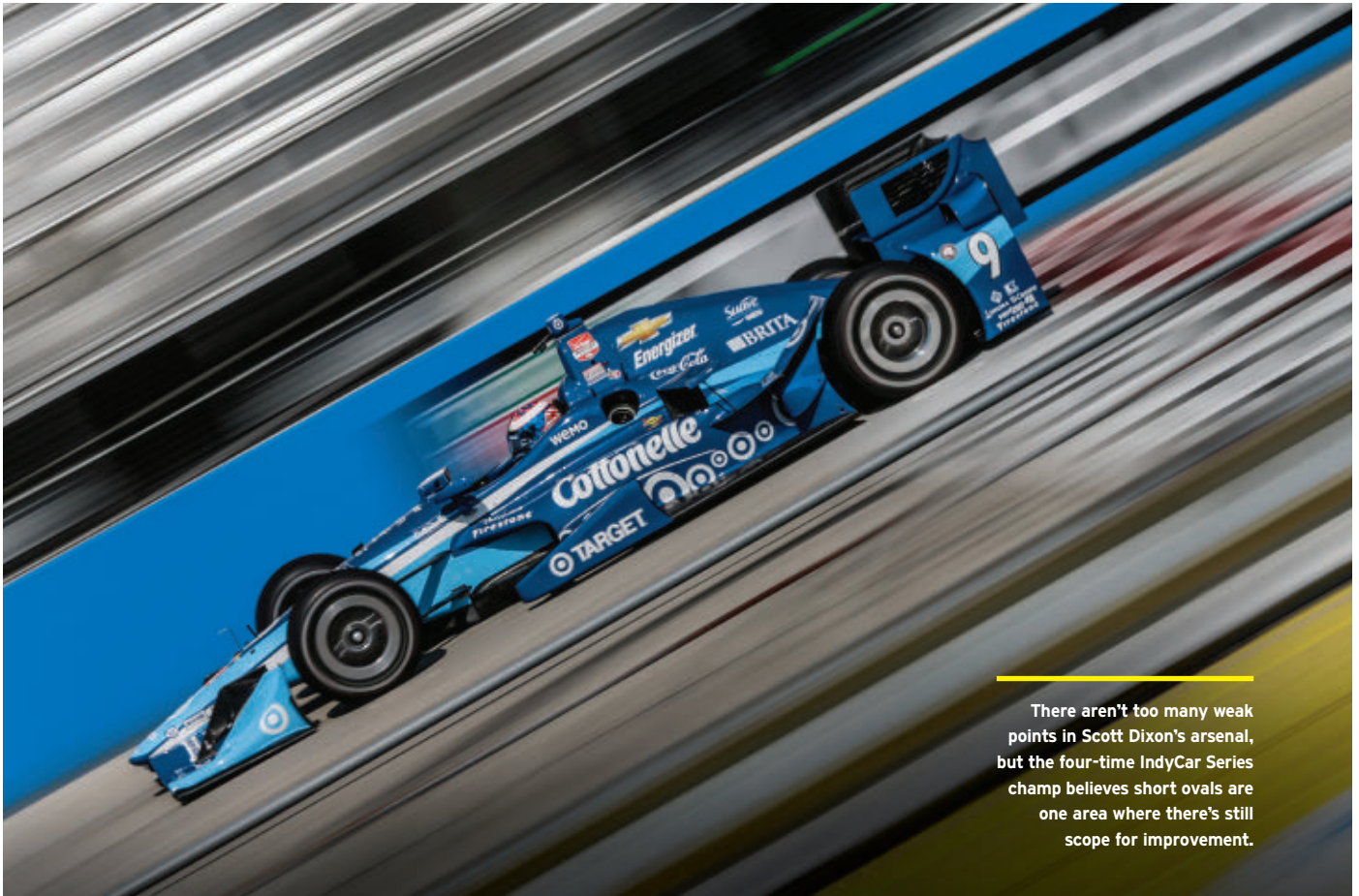


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***SCOTT DIXON***  
*2015 VERIZON INDYCAR®*  
*SERIES CHAMPION*



There aren't too many weak points in Scott Dixon's arsenal, but the four-time IndyCar Series champ believes short ovals are one area where there's still scope for improvement.

**THE FINAL FEW TENTHS**

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Four championships in the bag, but Dixon has already set himself some homework for the winter.

For all of his achievements, Scott Dixon has never fallen into the trap of complacency. Target Chip Ganassi Racing managing director Mike Hull says that his dedication to unlocking more speed was evident in post-season testing at Road America, where Dixon spent eight hours "tweaking a car that most people thought was ready to go." Dixon himself laughs that day off as a combination of enjoying the track and the long job list handed to him by engineering manager Julian Robinson. ("You could go to a 10-day test and Julian would still have crap to go through...")

That said, Dixon has identified areas where he is targeting improvement.

"Short tracks," he says. "I was really looking forward to going to Milwaukee in 2016 because I felt like this year we got the car a bit better. And I've never won at Iowa. So we need to work on that a little bit.

"And qualifying at some tracks, such as Barber - I feel like we always have the fastest race car there, but I don't get enough out of it in qualifying."

That he's still searching for more at the age of 35 is one of the other secrets to his career: Franchitti describes Dixon's sustained competitive fire as his most impressive quality as a driver.

"For me, that motivation was never a constant thing," says the Scot. "But Dixon has kept that up for what, 15 years? And

that's what impresses me, that hunger. You can't teach people that; they've got to have it in their make-up."

That hunger has earned Dixon a guaranteed place among the sport's all-time greats, and while he's aware of his stats, he views such plaudits through a wide lens.

"Stats are something that you look at when you retire, or when you move away from that formula," he says. "And, sure, you hope you're happy with what you achieved. For me, I just want to win. And if that helps the stats, fantastic."

Dixon still has plenty of time to build upon his numbers.

"If you look at Helio [Castroneves], and Juan [Pablo Montoya], and TK [Tony Kanaan], these guys have been going even longer than myself," he says.

"Helio's like a bloody jack-in-the-box that keeps going off the whole time. He's got a lot of energy and it's inspiring to see. I'm competitive, and I want to race, and when I race I don't want to just turn up and fill the field. I want to be able to win."



**FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS**

Scott Dixon and Dario Franchitti exemplified the open-book approach as teammates, and Franchitti continues to have a valuable presence on the pitwall.

Ernie Mische/LAT

Shawn Gettemacher/IMS photo



March 12	S	Streets of St. Petersburg
March 13	S	Streets of St. Petersburg
April 2	N	Phoenix International Raceway
April 23	S	Barber Motorsports Park
April 24	S	Barber Motorsports Park
May 13	S	Indianapolis Motor Speedway
May 14	S	Indianapolis Motor Speedway
May 27	N	Indianapolis Motor Speedway
June 25	S	Road America
June 26	S	Road America
July 10	N	Iowa Speedway
July 16	S	Streets of Toronto
July 17	S	Streets of Toronto
July 30	S	Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course
July 31	S	Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course
Sept. 4	S	Streets of Boston
Sept. 10	S	Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca
Sept. 11	S	Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca

Schedule subject to change. N Oval S Street/Road Course

[indylights.com](http://indylights.com) | [twitter.com/indylights](https://twitter.com/indylights)



March 12	S	Streets of St. Petersburg
March 13	S	Streets of St. Petersburg
April 23	S	Barber Motorsports Park
April 24	S	Barber Motorsports Park
May 13	S	Indianapolis Motor Speedway
May 14	S	Indianapolis Motor Speedway
May 28	N	Lucas Oil Raceway at Indianapolis
June 25	S	Road America
June 26	S	Road America
July 10	N	Iowa Speedway
July 16	S	Streets of Toronto
July 17	S	Streets of Toronto
July 30	S	Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course
July 31	S	Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course
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July 17	S	Streets of Toronto
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Schedule subject to change. N Oval S Street/Road Course

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## THIS YEAR'S STARRING LINEUP

A BLEND OF PREMIER OVAL, ROAD AND STREET CIRCUIT EVENTS SET THE STAGE FOR THE MAZDA ROAD TO INDY IN 2016 WHERE COMPETITORS WILL VIE FOR OVER \$2.3M IN SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS TO ADVANCE TO THE NEXT STEP ON THE LADDER.

THE MAZDA ROAD TO INDY—THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT IN THE WORLD. HELPING DRIVERS REACH THEIR DREAMS WITH A SCHOLARSHIP-FUNDED PATH TO THE VERIZON INDYCAR SERIES AND INDIANAPOLIS 500.

**THE MAZDA ROAD TO INDY | WHERE TOMORROW'S STARS RACE...TODAY!**

It's like riding a bike: Indy 500 winner Juan Pablo Montoya would have been two for two in the oval standings since his IndyCar comeback - that's if the oval trophy still existed.

WORDS Mark Glendenning  
MAIN IMAGE Michael Levitt/LAT

# CONSISTENCY RULES

If trophies for IndyCar's oval and road course champions were still on offer, there'd have been two familiar winners.

Three years have passed since the Verizon IndyCar Series last handed out separate awards for the road/street and oval champions. But looking at how the leaderboards would have stacked up if the Mario Andretti Road Course Trophy and AJ Foyt Oval Course Trophy were still on offer reinforces just how fine the margins really were in 2015.

Scott Dixon would have won the road course trophy; Juan Pablo Montoya would have taken the oval honors. That right there underlines the significance of the double-points that those two picked up at Sonoma and the Indianapolis 500, respectively. But it also speaks to just how good Montoya has been on ovals since he returned to open-wheel racing in 2014. (If the oval trophy still existed, this year's would have been his second-straight.)

The double points at Indy certainly helped pave the Colombian's way to the



Berry Nelson/LAT

A dearth of podiums didn't keep Kanaan (LEFT), from being a player on road courses, while Rahal (ABOVE RIGHT) performed wonders with the unfancied Honda aero kit.

top of the oval pile in 2015, but what stands out more is that there were only six oval races, and at one of them - 7/8-mile Iowa Speedway - he was back in the locker room after nine laps. Double-score at Indy aside, the reason he was able to come out on top despite burying so many points in the cornfields was that he never finished lower than fourth at any other oval.

It was a similar story for Dixon. An air jack failure contributed to his 15th place at

St Petersburg, and he drew 11th in the NOLA lottery. But otherwise, his only real catastrophe on a road/street course came when he was punted into the wall by Chip Ganassi Racing teammate Charlie Kimball in the Sunday race at Detroit's Belle Isle street track. Everywhere else? Top 10.

IndyCar champions are invariably all-rounders, but in a season with so many different race winners, and so many drivers operating within the same performance window, consistency was at a higher premium than ever. For example, if Montoya had gained just one more point on the road/street courses, the drivers who finished one-two in the championship would also have finished one-two in both disciplines. More surprisingly, Tony Kanaan's second place at St Pete was his only road/street course podium, and yet his results elsewhere were still even enough to place him fourth in the road course standings.





Michael Levitz/LAT



Philip Abbott/LAT

**MUTED DEFENSE**

Team Penske's Will Power was a regular frontrunner during his season as defending IndyCar champion, but he was only able to summon two podiums to go with his win on the IMS road course.

**KING OF THE ROAD**  
2015 Verizon IndyCar Series  
**Road Course/Street Course Championship**

- 1 Scott Dixon**  
(2 wins\*) **346 pts**
- 2 Will Power**  
(1 win, 1 other podium) **317**
- 3 Juan Pablo Montoya**  
(1 win, 2 other podiums) **316**
- 4 Tony Kanaan**  
(1 podium) **287**
- 5 Graham Rahal**  
(1 win, 2 other podiums) **285**

\* Includes double-points Sonoma finale

**Counting races:**  
St. Petersburg;  
NOLA; Long Beach;  
Barber Motorsports Park;  
GP of Indianapolis;  
Detroit Belle Isle 1 & 2;  
Toronto; Mid-Ohio;  
Sonoma Raceway



Michael Levitz/LAT

**BEST OF THE LEFT**  
2015 Verizon IndyCar Series  
**Oval Championship**

- 1 Juan Pablo Montoya**  
(1 win\*\* 1 other podium) **240pts**
- 2 Scott Dixon**  
(1 win, 1 other podium) **210**
- 3 Graham Rahal**  
(1 win, 2 other podiums) **205**
- 4 Marco Andretti**  
(1 podium) **185**
- 5 Josef Newgarden**  
(2 podiums) **180**

\*\* Includes double-points Indianapolis 500

**Counting races:**  
Indianapolis 500;  
Texas; Auto Club  
Speedway (Fontana);  
Milwaukee; Iowa;  
Pocono



Michael Levitz/LAT

Average weekends were punished: Helio Castroneves was stranded outside the top 10 eight times in 2014 and still achieved second in the points; he reduced that count to seven this year, but ended his season fifth in the overall championship.

Graham Rahal's presence on both lists is interesting when you consider that Honda was recently granted permission to make additional updates to its aero kits.

IndyCar's reasoning was that its analysis of wind tunnel and track data proved Honda's kit was deficient on road/street courses and short ovals. And yet it was good enough for Rahal to make the top five in both disciplines. His results on short tracks were fourth (Milwaukee) and third (Iowa, which was won by fellow Honda racer Ryan Hunter-Reay of Andretti Autosport). And Hunter-Reay himself was only three points shy of bumping Josef Newgarden out of the oval top five - a gap

he could have closed by improving his 15th place at Indy by just two positions.

This raises some interesting questions. IndyCar's data is unequivocal, but Rahal's ability to sustain such a strong level of performance across every type of track also proves that there was potential in the Honda kit that none of the other teams managed to tap into. If we assume that Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing wrung every possible drop out of the Honda package to get Rahal as high as it did, sheer weight of numbers suggests that there should still have been enough strong Chevrolets to keep him out of the top five.

And on many weekends there were, albeit with different drivers doing it from race to race - Newgarden, Kanaan, Sebastien Bourdais, Simon Pagenaud. But the same guys couldn't do it every weekend. And in a year where consistency was king, that proved decisive. ■



A 1971 Tyrrell 003 (LEFT) shares the bill with a 2005 Audi R8 LMP (TOP) in an eclectic mix of old and new at COTA. Amelia Island hosted racing in the 1960s (BOTTOM) - and will again in 2016.



# SVRA CLOSSES SUCCESSFUL 2015, LOOKS AHEAD TO '16

An amazing COTA finale, and an exciting new event for next season.

Vintage met ultra-modern for the third time at the state-of-the-art Circuit of The Americas, Nov. 4-8, when the annual SVRA National Championships concluded another successful vintage racing season - one that brought the biggest expansion of events and sponsorship in the association's history.

Despite storms during the weeks prior to the event, only light precipitation fell during the first days of racing. By Sunday, the track was bathed in sunlight as most of the 11 race groups took to the track for their final championship race in pursuit of a coveted Bell Racing National Champions helmet.

The hundreds of vehicles in attendance represented more than 50 years of fast-moving motorsports history, ranging in vintage from a 1952 Devin MG Speedster to a 2008 Courage Oreca LMP1 prototype, and as varied as a 1974 Fiat 124 Spider to a '97 Benetton B197 Formula 1 car.

Joining the cars were some equally prominent drivers, such as FIA World Endurance Championship driver/factor Patrick Dempsey and 2005 Indy Lights Champion Wade Cunningham.

For the fifth time this season, ground-shaking Trans-Am shared the bill with SVRA, presenting a contrast of new and old for the many fans in attendance, and ensuring an overload of action on the track.

Meanwhile car auctions and a rock concert entertained off-track.

But after finishing 2015 on another memorable high, SVRA is already looking forward to next year's exciting calendar of events, including the return of auto racing to Amelia Island, Fla., after a hiatus of almost 50 years.

Scheduled for March 17-20, at Fernandina Beach Municipal Airport, the SVRA Amelia Island Vintage Gran Prix will be less than a week after the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance,



Go to **SVRA.com** for news bulletins, event schedules, membership info and all regulation details.

something the concours founder and chairman, Bill Warner, is excited about.

"[SVRA CEO] Tony Parella runs a superb organization and brings to Amelia Island a world class racing event," said Warner, an SVRA racer since its inception. "It will be a perfect addition to March on Amelia Island."

The invitation-only event will take place on a 2.4-mile road course at the airport, which last hosted sports car races in the 1960s. Additionally, one runway will be devoted to vintage aircraft, providing an appropriate and spectacular backdrop to the racing.

The event will also introduce the Gold Medallion program to the east coast, in addition to the debut of SVRA vintage motorcycle racing.

"I know the SVRA can produce a worthy complement to The Amelia Island Concours d' Elegance," said Parella. "This will be a big treat for people who love cars, planes, bikes and their history."

## 2016 SVRA SCHEDULE

<b>FEB. 5-7</b>	DUEL IN THE DESERT with VARA Spring Mountain Motorsports Ranch, Nev.
<b>MARCH 3-6</b>	SPRING VINTAGE CLASSIC Sebring International Raceway, Fla.
<b>MARCH 17-20</b>	AMELIA ISLAND VINTAGE GRAN PRIX Amelia Island, Fla.
<b>MARCH 19-20</b>	WILLOW SPRINGS HISTORICS with VARA Willow Springs International Raceway, Calif.
<b>APRIL 23-24</b>	BRITISH EXTRAVAGANZA with VARA Buttonwillow Raceway Park, Calif.
<b>APRIL 28 - MAY 1</b>	SOUTHERN CALIF. HISTORIC SPORTS CAR FESTIVAL Auto Club Speedway, Calif.
<b>MAY 12-15</b>	SPRING VINTAGE FESTIVAL Road America, Wis.
<b>JUNE 2-5</b>	SONOMA HISTORIC MOTORSPORTS FESTIVAL Sonoma Raceway, Calif.

<b>JUNE 15-19</b>	BRICKYARD VINTAGE RACING INVITATIONAL Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Ind.
<b>JUNE 23-26</b>	THE VINTAGE GRAND PRIX OF MID-OHIO Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, Ohio
<b>JULY 7-10</b>	PORTLAND VINTAGE RACING FESTIVAL Portland International Raceway, Ore.
<b>SEPT. 8-11</b>	U.S. VINTAGE GRAND PRIX Watkins Glen International, N.Y.
<b>SEPT. 16-18</b>	CORONADO SPEED FESTIVAL with SAN DIEGO FLEET WEEK Naval Air Station North Island, Coronado, Calif.
<b>SEPT. 22-25</b>	HEACOCK CLASSIC GOLD CUP Virginia International Raceway, Va.
<b>OCT. 13-16</b>	MARDI GRAS IN OCTOBER NOLA Motorsports Park, La.
<b>NOV. 2-6</b>	U.S. VINTAGE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP Circuit of the Americas, Texas

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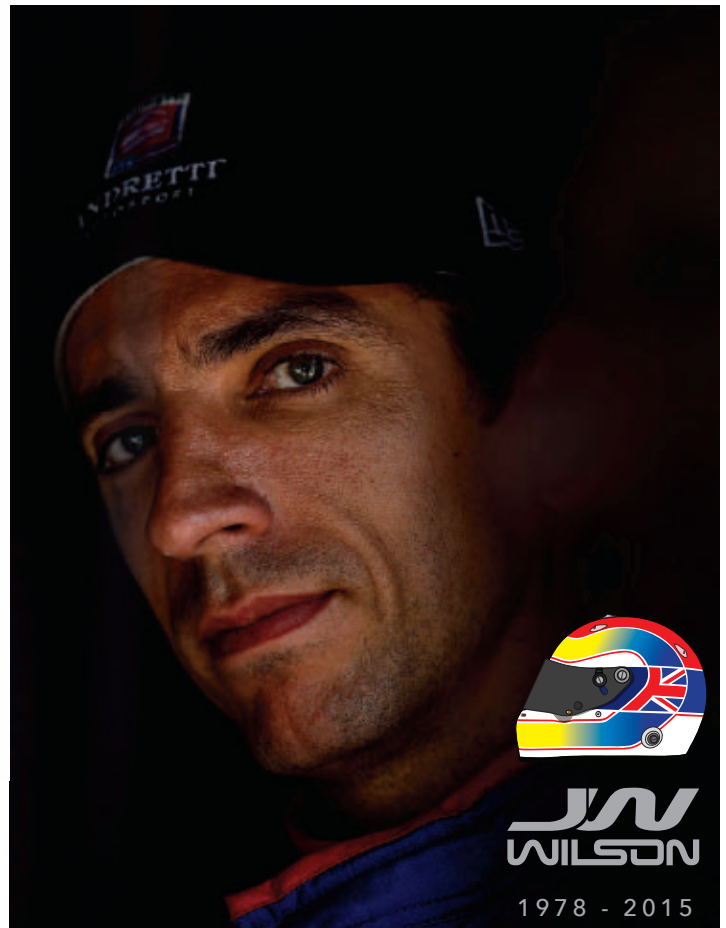
From my heart to yours, thank you so much for your generosity in donating to the Wilson Children Fund. I am thankful for your thoughtfulness and will always be grateful for your donations.

On behalf of myself, Jane and Jess I want to express how nice and caring everyone has been in supporting us through this horrible time.

Despite our grief, we are lucky to be surrounded by such a big family community, who are so loyal and caring. Your kindness means the world to us.

Again, please accept my heartfelt thanks for all your thoughts, emails, messages and everything that you have done.

With love,  
My Family to yours



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# PATRICK RACING

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Sure, he had a highly-competitive car in the Porsche 911 RSR, but Patrick Pilet still had to bring his A game to IMSA's GTLM class in 2015. And that's exactly what the Frenchman did.

WORDS Marshall Pruett | MAIN IMAGE Michael Levitt/LAT

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Rain or shine, the No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR of GTLM champ Patrick Pilet and Nick Tandy was the benchmark - and a four-time winner - in the second half of the 2015 TUDOR United SportsCar Championship. How much was down to IMSA's BoP adjustments? That depends on who you ask...





Scott R. LePage/LAT

IMSA's remarkable GT Le Mans class generated four compelling story arcs in the 2015 TUDOR United SportsCar Championship, making predictions all but impossible to offer until the home-stretch races began to hint at an inevitable ending.

The opening salvo came when Corvette Racing emerged twice victorious after 36 hours of combined endurance racing during the TUDOR United SportsCar Championship's Florida swing. Corvette's C7.R knocked down IMSA's Super Bowl - January's Rolex 24 at Daytona - then rampaged south to the 12 Hours of Sebring, where Antonio Garcia, Jan Magnussen and enduro addition Ryan Briscoe captured IMSA's other crown jewel some eight weeks later.

The early script pointed to the primal V8-powered 'Vettes taking their Sunshine State streak into Hollywood's backyard as

the series headed to Long Beach, Calif., but the ominous, yellow-tinged chapter second act began when BMW Team RLL's Bill Auberlen and Dirk Werner won a thriller on the streets, then switched location to Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, where John Edwards and Lucas Luhr claimed Round 4 in the sister Z4.

Porsche continued the Noah's Ark theme in the third act as the next two wins were split between the 911 RSRs of Team Falken Tire, with Bryan Sellers and Wolf Henzler mastering the changing conditions over six hours at Watkins Glen, and the factory Porsche North America team, which blitzed the GTLM field north of the border at Mosport, courtesy of Patrick Pilet and Nick Tandy. Six rounds in the books, it was two victories apiece for Corvette, BMW, and Porsche, and

**(ABOVE) 34-year-old Frenchman Patrick Pilet anchored Porsche North America's GTLM 2015 campaign, earning four class wins (all shared with Nick Tandy) and the Drivers' Championship.**

three story arcs completed.

The fourth and final act in IMSA's GTLM drama broke the two-by-two trend wide open as Porsche went on to win three of the last four races. From the streak that began at the Glen, June 28, the German marque would maintain a chokehold on the class through the season finale at Road Atlanta, Oct. 3. Across those six races, only one race slipped away, when brilliant race strategy by BMW Team RLL - and incomparable driving by Auberlen and Werner - stole the win during the final two laps at Circuit of The Americas.

With its 50 percent win rate, Porsche took the GTLM Manufacturers' Championship with ease, Porsche North America secured the Teams' title thanks to four wins by its No. 911 Porsche 911 RSR, and Pilet completed the trifecta by earning the Drivers' crown in his first full season of North American racing.

In a packed season for the Frenchman, Pilet also contested seven of eight FIA World Endurance Championship rounds with Porsche's European-based factory GT squad, Team Manthey. Five GTE-Pro class podiums alongside Frederic Makowiecki, including a win at the Bahrain finale, further endorsed Porsche's faith in him.

On the surface - and even for those



F. Pierce Williams/LAT



Scott R. LePage/LAT

**EARLY PACESETTERS**

**Corvette Racing ruled GTLM in Florida, with wins at the Rolex 24 (FAR LEFT) and 12 Hours of Sebring. BMW Team RLL took over in California, winning at Long Beach (LEFT) and Laguna Seca. BMW would take one more win, but not until COTA in September.**



Wes Duerksen Motorsport Photography



Michael Levent/LAT



Scott R. LePage/LAT

**“It was such a good spirit. Honestly, I think that is the key to our success this year, not the BoP stuff”**

**PATRICK PILET**

down in the trenches - the first half of IMSA's GTLM season was a marvel to behold. Although Ferrari came up short of Victory Lane, the slugfest between all four manufacturers made it IMSA's can't-miss class through Watkins Glen.

Outside of the Porsche camp, few shared the same enthusiasm for the second half of the championship. On the sheer strength of Pilet and the PNA team executing at a staggeringly high level, the 911 RSR was always in the hunt. And thanks to small Balance of Performance (BoP) changes that slowed BMW and Corvette, plus a new tire introduced by Michelin that happened to love the rear-engine Porsche, the program was nearly impossible to beat

Altogether, car, team and driver Pilet (aided and abetted by Tandy, whose Porsche LMP1 commitments earned him an overall Le Mans win, but put him out of the GTLM title frame, courtesy of two

missed races) had the field covered from Mosport to the No. 911's stuff-of-legend overall victory at a soaking Petit Le Mans.

“The main key to our success was the team - the group spirit we have together,” Pilet says. “We had a tough season at the beginning with many mechanical issues, some crashes, and it was hard for everybody. But we believed in our potential to win this championship. Especially when Nick [Tandy] arrived at Watkins Glen after the Le Mans victory, it was really incredible. With Nick, we worked really close with the team, the engineers, everyone. It was such a good spirit. Honestly, I think that is the key to our success this year, not the BoP stuff.”

In the bizarre world of BoP-managed competition, admitting that an advantage exists is a competitive liability. Despite spanking the opposition, Pilet is duty bound to push back at the notion that he and his teammates had a superior car. Even winning teams know to complain about the neutering effects of BoP; success comes as a result of luck, or superior strategy, but *never* because of what BoP giveth or taketh away...

And Pilet does make a point that's worth considering. IMSA was not guilty of giving the Porsche *too* many concessions via BoP. >

(TOP) The Porsche North America team celebrates a GTLM 1-2 at Elkhart Lake. (ABOVE LEFT) The season culminated in an overall win at Petit Le Mans. (ABOVE RIGHT) Slick pit work played a big part, too.

**CHANGE IN THE SEASON**  
Prior to Team Falken Tire's win at Watkins Glen, best GTLM result for a Porsche was third at Sebring and Laguna Seca. After that, the floodgates opened...

**1. ROLEX 24 AT DAYTONA**



Antonio Garcia/Jan Magnussen/Ryan Briscoe

**2. 12 HOURS OF SEBRING**



Antonio Garcia/Jan Magnussen/Ryan Briscoe

**3. LONG BEACH**



Bill Auberlen/Dirk Werner

**4. MAZDA RACEWAY LAGUNA SECA**



John Edwards/Lucas Luhr

**5. WATKINS GLEN**



Wolf Henzler/Bryan Sellers

**6. CANADIAN TIRE MOTORPORT PARK (MOSPORT)**



Patrick Pilet/Nick Tandy

**7. ROAD AMERICA**



Patrick Pilet/Nick Tandy

**8. VIRGINIA INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY**



Patrick Pilet/Nick Tandy

**9. CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS**



Bill Auberlen/Dirk Werner

**10. PETIT LE MANS (ROAD ATLANTA)**



Patrick Pilet/Nick Tandy/ Richard Lietz (1st overall)

**FINAL GTLM POINTS**

<b>1st</b>	Patrick Pilet	<b>315pts</b>
<b>2nd</b>	Bill Auberlen/Dirk Werner	<b>305</b>
<b>3rd</b>	Antonio Garcia/Jan Magnussen	<b>295</b>
<b>(9th)</b>	Nick Tandy	<b>255</b>



**.5 BATTING AVERAGE FOR THE RSR**

Porsche's 2015-spec GTE/GTLM 911 RSR managed a clean sweep of FIA WEC GTE-Pro and IMSA GTLM titles, taking nine of a possible 18 class wins combined – a 50 percent overall hit rate.

**“You only needed to look at Le Mans as an example of BoP that created some pretty great racing”**

**DOUG FEHAN**

yet it's hard to ignore how the series' efforts to slow BMW and Corvette coincided with Porsche's rise. It was addition by subtraction.

“Everybody's talking about the BoP, but if you look at the BoP change during the season it's taking away 10kg [22lb] from us, then 20, then back to 10 again,” the Frenchman says. “It was nearly the same all season. Those 10 kilos will not change completely the performance on track. We believed in our chances and fought until the end. That's why we won the championship, and why we were so strong at the end of the season, especially.”

Pilet's suggestion that teamwork and belief accounted for steamrolling the second half of the season is a stretch, and Corvette Racing program manager Doug Fehan questions whether IMSA's control over its BoP tables would benefit from following the example set by the ACO's technical team at Le Mans.

“You only needed to look at Le Mans

as an example of Balance of Performance that created some pretty great racing,” says Fehan, whose team won the GTE-Pro class at the 24 Hours with its C7.R. “That BoP is decidedly different than what we have here in the U.S. My hope is our sanctioning body looks closely at that and brings everyone back to more of a Le Mans-centric BoP program.”

BMW Team RLL technical director Jay O'Connell's team was also in the title hunt until the mid-season shift. The No. 25 Z4 of Auberlen and Werner took the fight to Porsche and finished an admirable second in the Drivers' and Teams' Championships. But, like Fehan, he watched as their title aspirations slipped away.

“The most difficult part for us was the Elkhart Lake-VIR sequence in the championship,” says O'Connell. “Michelin introduced a new tire that worked on the Porsche better than it did on our car, or the Corvette, or the Ferrari, and you can't complain; that's racing. But if you put all the changes together, it blew the championship apart. The season was looking really good for everyone up until that point, and from then on, winning wasn't realistic without desperate strategy gambles. We took one win away from Porsche in COTA, but it wasn't enough. It's



Sam Blohm/LAT

**(ABOVE) Nick Tandy missed out on a share of the GTLM Drivers' title, thanks to missing two rounds when he was drafted in to Porsche's third LMP1 entry for Le Mans, along with Earl Bamber and Nico Hulkenberg. An overall 24 Hours of Le Mans win later, we're sure he was fine with that decision...**

too bad, because the racing was so good and so close until things changed.”

Freed from the requisite BoP barking, Porsche's ownership of the GTLM championship was guaranteed in the driving rain at Petit Le Mans, where Pilet, Tandy and Richard Lietz used Michelin's superior tires and the 911 RSR's rear weight bias to humble their class rivals... and the entire field, Prototypes and all.

“Nick and me, we love the rain and we're used to it in Europe,” says Pilet, who watched Tandy pass a Corvette DP for the overall win. “Victory was the bonus because we did not expect and we did not really fight for that. Normally it looks nearly impossible on paper, but the combination of the car, the team and the tires helped us to be that quick.”

Of all the headlines IMSA made in 2015, Porsche's win at the Road Atlanta, coupled with Pilet's career-defining results, made for a dream ending to the season.

“It can be really difficult to find the balance in your professional life, your personal life, and often it's just the small things that can make everything go completely wrong,” opines Pilet. “This year, everything went the right way for me. The result in the IMSA series was completely incredible.” ■





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# TUDOR UNITED SPORTSCAR CHAMPIONSHIP THE 2015 CHAMPIONS

## PROTOTYPE CLASS

# REPEAT OF THE ACTION

Daytona Prototypes dominated, with Action Express edging VFR after a dramatic finale.

The win column in IMSA's marquee class had more in common with the old Grand-Am Rolex Series than anything expected from a category filled with diverse chassis and engine combinations. Despite the array of HPD, Ligier, and Mazda P2 machinery, Daytona Prototypes took all 10 rounds, and did so with complete authority.

P2s, be they gasoline- or diesel-powered, were swept aside with ease, while the DeltaWing was no more than a tasty snack for the Corvette and Ford EcoBoost DPs.

Chip Ganassi Racing opened the year with a fine win for Ford at Daytona and took another at COTA, but spent the majority of 2015 chasing four Corvettes from Action Express Racing, Visit Florida.com Racing and Wayne Taylor Racing.

Across the remaining eight races, AXR (four wins), VFR (two), and WTR (two) made sure the Bowtie held onto its Manufacturers' Championship, and with

VFR's Richard Westbrook and Michael Valiante locking into an impressively consistent stride, it appeared a new Corvette DP program was on its way to championship glory. Heading the points entering the final race, all VFR needed



Richard Dole/LAT

### A PAIN IN THE GRASS...

Spins by VFR's Michael Valiante and third driver Mike Rockenfeller at a soaking Petit Le Mans finale ended its title chances.

was a podium to guarantee the title.

But as VFR's visions of glory pirouetted through Road Atlanta's water-logged grass, AXR's Joao Barbosa and Christian Fittipaldi pounced on the opportunity.

"It's more important to lead the championship at the end than the beginning..." notes a smiling Barbosa. "When we got to Petit, we just needed to be smart to win, and that's what we did. We weren't always as consistent as we'd like, but we knew we could defend our championship. We raced like we could win every time."

Thanks to two wins and two podiums in the four Tequila Patron North American Endurance Cup events, AXR's No. 5 'Vette DP entry also took home the NAEC crown, along with the Teams' title and that second Drivers' Championship for Barbosa and Fittipaldi. The incoming No. 31 AXR Corvette piloted by Dane Cameron and Eric Curran accounted for two more wins.

### FINAL PROTOTYPE POINTS

<b>1st</b>	Joao Barbosa/ Christian Fittipaldi	<b>309pts</b>
<b>2nd</b>	Michael Valiante/ Richard Westbrook	<b>306</b>
<b>3rd</b>	Dane Cameron/ Eric Curran	<b>304</b>



The No. 5 Action Express Racing Corvette DP played catchup in 2015, but was there at the end.

Richard Dole/LAT



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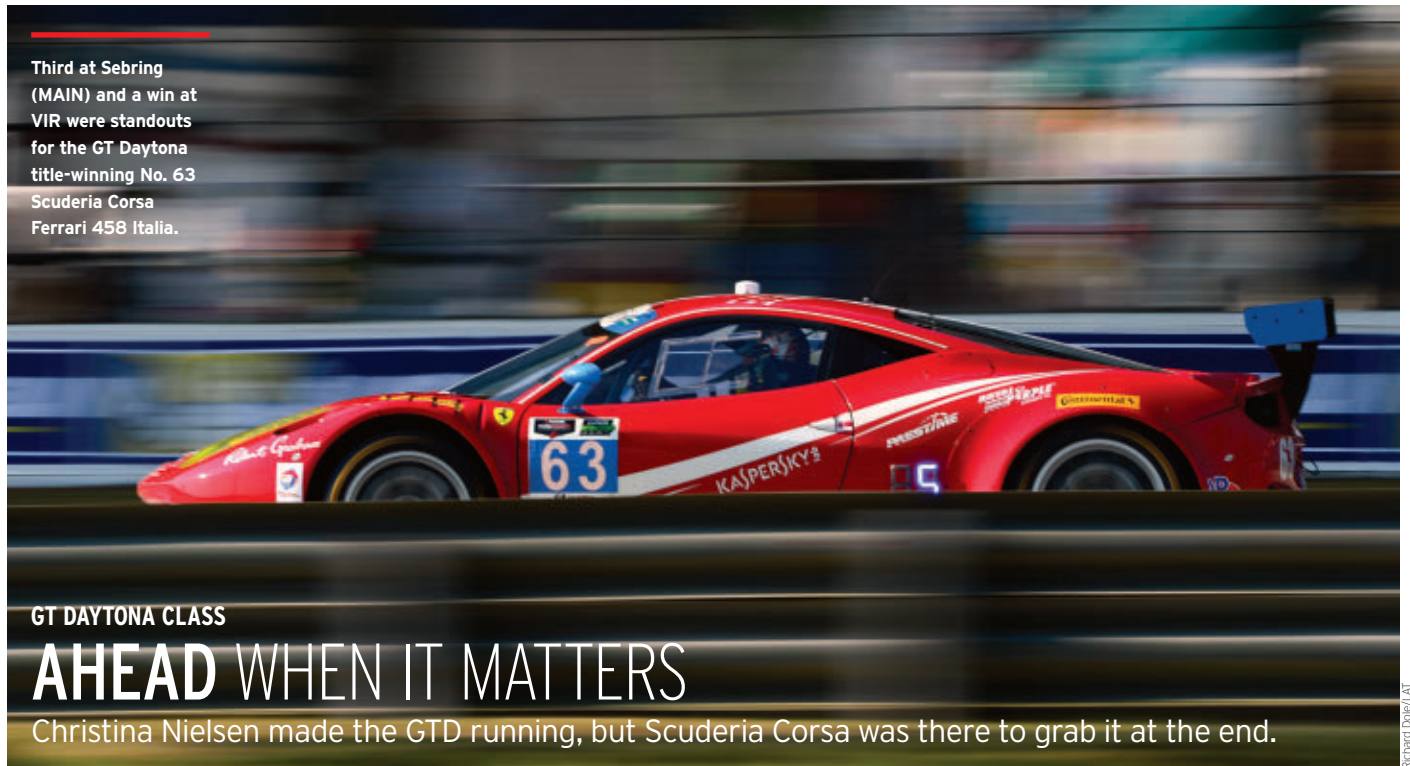
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Third at Sebring (MAIN) and a win at VIR were standouts for the GT Daytona title-winning No. 63 Scuderia Corsa Ferrari 458 Italia.



GT DAYTONA CLASS

# AHEAD WHEN IT MATTERS

Christina Nielsen made the GTD running, but Scuderia Corsa was there to grab it at the end.

Richard Doney/LAT

One point is all that separated TRG-AMR's Christina Nielsen from those chasing the Dane to the season finale at Petit Le Mans. A mid-season change in teammates to 2014 GTLM Drivers' Champion Kuno Wittmer launched Nielsen toward history, yet it was a group of salty veterans who mastered the rulebook - and the tricky conditions - at IMSA's championship closer to swing the title in their favor. By *two* points.

"We didn't lead the points at any stage of the season, except for when the last race was over and done," says Townsend Bell, who shared the No. 63 Scuderia Corsa Ferrari F458 Italia with Bill Sweedler to snatch GT Daytona glory from TRG-AMR. "I look back at the season and think about all of the ways we could have been



Richard Doney/LAT

**CHRISTINA NIELSEN**  
The 23-year-old Dane's racing pedigree includes IMSA Porsche GT3 Cup USA and the ADAC GT Masters.

better; the job we did this year won't get the job done next year, that's for sure."

Scuderia Corsa's artful use of pro ace Jeff Segal at the finale was also a major factor in the final standings.

"Jeff was rated as a Silver (pro-am), which is the same as Bill, and we followed the rulebook to the letter, and it said Bill only needed to do one lap," Bell says. "I'm not sure what else to say. The rules were there for everyone to use to their advantage, and some found more advantage than others."

The surprising rise of Nielsen as a championship contender coincided with Wittmer coming onboard at Watkins Glen.

"On a professional level, I went from the GTLM Championship to looking for a

new home," says the French-Canadian. "I just wanted to stay active. Christina was doing good, and I thought I could bring a little more to the table with coaching."

In Nielsen, he saw a young driver who had the raw talent to succeed, and with the chance to work with a championship-winning pro, she flourished into one of the TUDOR Championships most compelling storylines from 2015.

**FINAL GTD POINTS**

<b>1st</b>	Townsend Bell/ Bill Sweedler	<b>281pts</b>
<b>2nd</b>	Christina Nielsen	<b>279</b>
<b>3rd</b>	Christopher Haase/ Dion von Moltke	<b>277</b>

Fourth in PC at Petit Le Mans (BELOW) concluded a remarkably consistent title-winning season for CORE autosport.



Scott R. LePage/LAT

## PROTOTYPE CHALLENGE CLASS CORE'S DRIVE FOR FIVE

CORE autosport managed to break a streak and extend a streak on the way to its fifth consecutive PC Teams' title.

Winless dating back to Watkins Glen in 2014, team owner/driver Jon Bennett and co-driver Colin Braun persevered through a 379-day dry spell until the No. 54 ORECA FLM09-Chevrolet finally vanquished the field at Mosport.

A second win at COTA helped Bennett and Braun to repeat as Drivers' Champions, but not as much as the North Carolina-based team's impeccable consistency - six podiums from 10 rounds,

and no other finishes lower than fourth.

Meanwhile, PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports was king of the NAEC, scoring unforgettable PC wins in the Rolex 24 at Daytona, 12 Hours of Sebring and Petit Le Mans.

**FINAL PC POINTS**

<b>1st</b>	Jon Bennett/ Colin Braun	<b>318pts</b>
<b>2nd</b>	Mike Guasch/ Tom Kimber-Smith	<b>313</b>
<b>3rd</b>	Chris Cumming/ Bruno Junqueira	<b>301</b>



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# MONSIEUR VERSATILE

If there was an all-'rounders championship, Sebastien Bourdais would be a prime contender.

Two Verizon IndyCar Series wins for KVSH Racing, two IMSA TUDOR United SportsCar Championship victories for Action Express Racing that helped earn the Prototype Drivers' and Teams' titles and the Tequila Patron North American Endurance Cup. 2015 was a stellar year for Sebastien Bourdais, and with two V8 Supercar top-10s to boot, the 36-year-old Frenchman produced one of the finest, multi-faceted bodies of work from any point in his career.

It wasn't an error-free year for the four-time Champ Car title-winner, but his crushing drive in sweltering heat at one of sports car racing's classic enduros, the 12 Hours of Sebring, and his pure dominance at the Milwaukee Mile's IndyCar race rank among the greatest virtuoso performances in any category this season.

"He's in his prime and his results are showing it," says KVSH co-owner Jimmy Vasser. "He's the only guy going over to IMSA and winning there between wins for us in IndyCar, and he's competitive in V8 Supercars, too. Out of all the IndyCar drivers, he's the only one who keeps getting called to race down there in Australia."

"It wasn't a perfect year for Seb; he screwed up a few times, and it hurt us in the championship, but even his big years in Champ Car had some mistakes. All in all, I'd have to agree and say his year was probably as good as I've ever seen from the guy."

Bourdais' countryman Simon Pagenaud fought with the Le Mans native in IndyCar, and also witnessed his work in IMSA.

"He's in a good spirit now and he's always been a very high quality driver; he



Ernie Masche/LAT



Michael Levitz/LAT

## MULTIPLE SUCCESS

In IndyCar, Sebastien Bourdais triumphed on Detroit's Belle Isle street course (TOP), then dominated at the Milwaukee Mile (MAIN). Over in IMSA's TUDOR Championship, wins at Sebring (ABOVE) and the Petit Le Mans season-closer helped Action Express retain its Prototype class titles.



always produces," says the Team Penske driver. "It's easy to just look at results, but competing against him, you look at all the work he's been doing lately to improve his teams, and what he's achieved is incredible. With KV, he's been really strong, and he's shown tremendous speed in sports cars, too. He's very versatile. If you give him more pressure, he does even better. He took all the pressure and crushed it this season."

Action Express race engineer Iain Watt credits Bourdais' adaptability for the success he's had in the team's Corvette Prototype.

"What Sebastien brought to us was a unique way to switch off IndyCar and go straight into sports car mode, compared to one-lap open-wheel thinking," says the Scot. "He fits in like he's been here all along, even though it's been six months away. To win Sebring with Joao [Barbosa] and Christian [Fittipaldi], then Petit Le Mans, where we won the title again, is huge."

"I look at things this way: He's driven for us six times since joining in 2014, and he's got three wins, two seconds and a third. And we repeated as champions. Pretty amazing year, I would say." ■

By Marshall Pruett



Glenn Dunbar/LAT

#### ALSO NOMINATED...

### HULK'S WINNING START

France's Loire Valley is a perfect location for a vacation getaway and, as Nico Hulkenberg found on his maiden outing in the 24 Hours of Le Mans last June, the region also offers a chance for a Formula 1 driver to break free from mid-pack frustration.

Back in the day, F1 drivers racing at Le Mans was a common occurrence. But in today's rarefied climate, it's a major talking point. Yet the Force India driver didn't merely compete - he joined an elite club of debut overall winners at La Sarthe in June, sharing the No. 19 Porsche 919 Hybrid with fellow LMP1 newcomers Nick Tandy and Earl Bamber.

"For me, the main reason Nico could show up and win straight away was because of his desire," Tandy says. "We did a lot of testing, but his hunger to win was evident from the moment we got to Le Mans. He wasn't there to make up the numbers. He *needed* to win."

"And I can understand it from his perspective, going from years of winning, to many seasons in F1 with no chance, to having a shot at winning and being the best. Le Mans, thanks to Porsche, gave Nico something he could not have anywhere else."



Sam Boxer/LAT

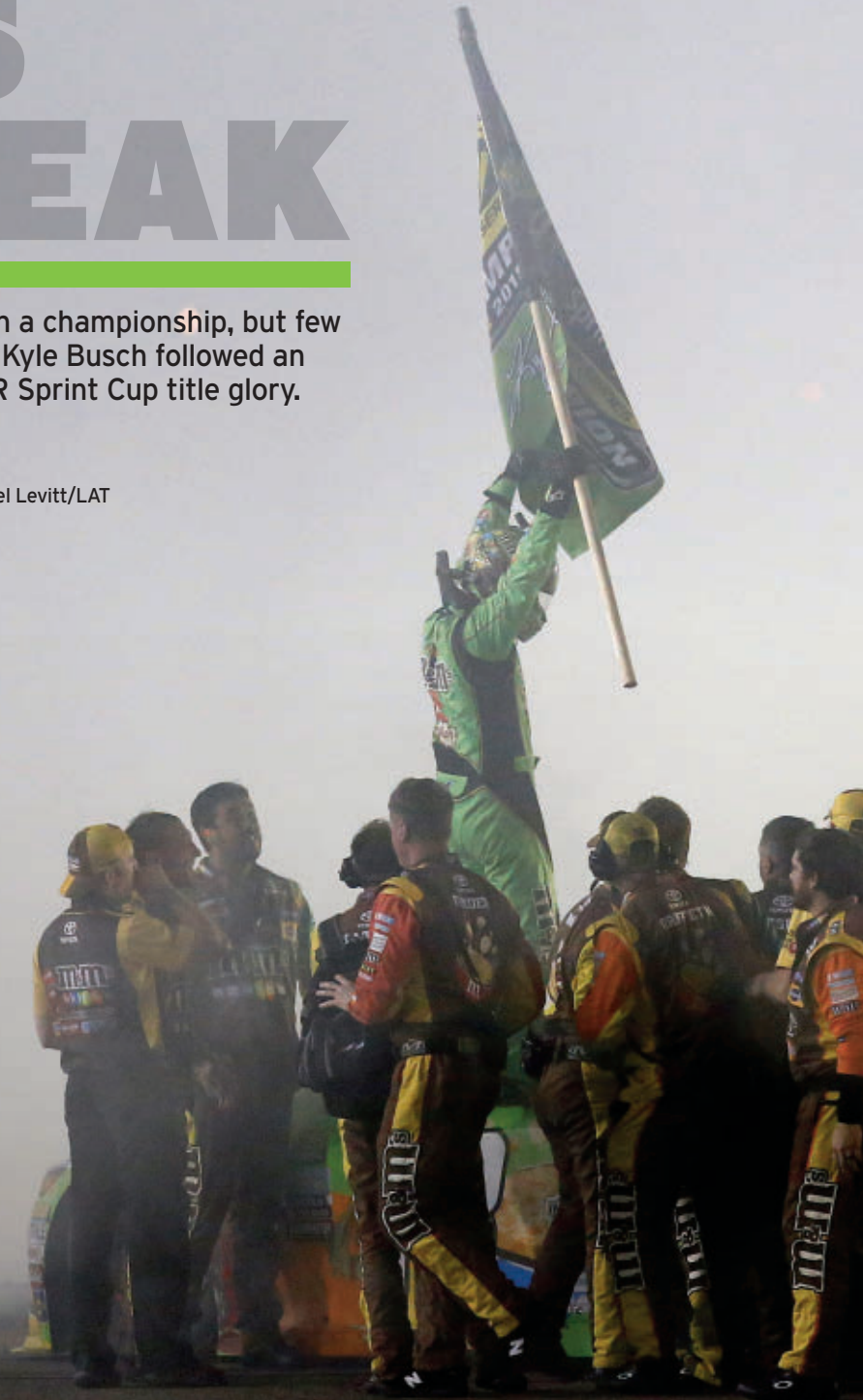
Hulkenberg (CENTER) teamed with Earl Bamber (LEFT) and Nick Tandy for a debut Le Mans win. Thanks to F1 date clashes and Porsche's decision not to run a third car, the trio is unlikely to run for the double in 2016.

# KYLE GETS A BREAK

There are a thousand ways to win a championship, but few of them begin with a broken leg. Kyle Busch followed an unconventional route to NASCAR Sprint Cup title glory.

WORDS Mark Glendenning | MAIN IMAGE Michael Levitt/LAT

Kyle Busch's victory in the NASCAR Sprint Cup season-finale at Homestead completed what will surely go down as one of motorsport's most improbable championship runs.





The road to any championship usually includes a couple of potholes along the way. But if someone devised a point system for adversity, Kyle Busch would have set the bar high this year.

A compound right-leg fracture and broken left foot, acquired in an Xfinity Series crash (RIGHT) at Daytona International Speedway on Feb. 21, the eve of the "500." An 11-race head-start for the rest of the field. A special rule dispensation to restore his eligibility for the title. And an unlikely run of four wins in five starts upon his return. After 12 seasons, Busch's first NASCAR Sprint Cup crown came in a year where injury, the rulebook and the laws of probability should have rendered the feat impossible.

Busch returned for the All-Star Race in Charlotte, May 16, where he finished sixth, then made his debut on the points table the following weekend with his 11th-place at the Coca-Cola 600. He left that race sitting 41st in the standings, some 440 markers behind then-leader Kevin Harvick. (The highest score a Cup driver can take from a single round is 48.)



It's hardly a scenario straight from the playbook for aspiring series champions, and yet in one area, he was already slightly ahead of the curve. NASCAR regulations stipulate that Chase contenders must enter every round of the "regular season," although it has a history of waiving this if drivers are sidelined for reasons considered beyond their control. Brian Vickers was given the green light despite being benched for health reasons; the races that Kurt Busch missed while suspended pending the outcome of a domestic assault investigation were overlooked when he was reinstated after the case was dropped.

So it was no huge surprise when the rule was waived again for Kyle, although the dispensation was conditional: he had to win at least one of the 15 remaining non-Chase races, and finish inside the top 30 - or earn a spot based solely on his points position - to secure one of the 16 Chase positions. To achieve that, Busch needed to average 28.2 points per race; just better than 16th place without the bonus point for leading a lap. So the 33 points that he took away from Charlotte gave him a tiny, tiny launch pad for the weekends that followed.

By the time he cracked the top 30 in points for the first time at Watkins Glen, he already had the win he required - plus another three to keep it company. That he reeled the first one off on the rollercoaster road course layout at Sonoma, Calif., was all the more remarkable when you consider that Busch was braking with his injured left foot...

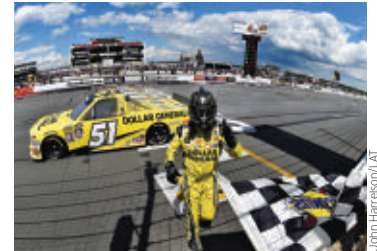
"Getting up the hill is a little bit of brakes, but the most braking is into Turn 4, Turn 7, Turn 11, where you see over >





(MAIN) Skittles-bobbing on the yard of bricks. Eventually, this will become an Indy tradition. Maybe... (BELOW) Busch takes the checkered flag at the Homestead finale.

Russell Laboury/LAT



John Harbeck/LAT

**WINNER AT EVERY LEVEL**

**THE BUSCH LEAGUES**

There's a time-honored tradition of Cup drivers conducting raids on the lower echelons of NASCAR's national touring championships.

But when racing in a secondary event (say, an Xfinity Series race) has an unpleasant outcome (such as a broken leg and foot) on the eve of a rather more important event (the Daytona 500, perhaps), you might think that a driver would step back and take a moment to reassess their priorities.

Kyle Busch thinks differently. Not only did he keep racing in Xfinity and Camping World Truck Series events once he'd returned to the cockpit in May, he did so to considerable effect. Busch added six Xfinity wins to take his all-time tally to 76, as well as two more Truck victories. Across all three championships, he made 13 visits to Victory Lane in 2015, despite being on the sidelines between Daytona and the All-Star Race.

As a comparison, fellow serial trophy-bandit Joey Logano ran an uninterrupted season, and earned four Xfinity wins and his maiden Truck Series victory to keep his six 2015 Cup wins company: a haul that combines for a total of 11.

When viewed in those sorts of terms, it's scary to think what Busch might have done if he'd had an intact leg for the entire year...



Jeff Gross/Getty Images

Despite time on the sidelines, Busch added more Xfinity (ABOVE) and Truck (TOP) trophies to his already-heaving collection.



Jonathan Ferrey/NASCAR/Getty Images

**"All of what happened... I wouldn't recommend it if you're looking for a championship"**

**KYLE BUSCH**

1,000lbs of brake pressure," he said. "I don't know what that equates to if you were doing a leg press, but it's a lot. The foot definitely tells me that it's a lot. "I knew it was going to get painful and I was going to have to power through it," he added, "but when you've got fresh tires and seven laps to go and you see the checkered flag waiting for you, you forget about all those things." What followed was a demonstration of versatility that would do IndyCar proud. With a road course win under his belt, Busch added consecutive victories at a 1.5-miler (Kentucky), a one-miler (New Hampshire) and a superspeedway (the Brickyard 400 at Indy, no less). The streak surprised even him, and it could have been

even better had he not run dry on the final lap at Pocono, derailing what would have been a fourth-straight victory.

For all the work that Busch had done to reverse his early disadvantages, there were still a few scares awaiting him in the Chase. A crash caused by a cut tire at New Hampshire left him last among the contenders as the series moved onto the first elimination round at Dover, but he rescued his chances with a second place. A pitlane collision with Kyle Larson hurt his chances at Charlotte, but once he'd dusted himself off from that, he became a regular presence toward the front.

The final showdown at Homestead pitched Busch the Comeback King against the reigning champion (Harvick), the sentimental favorite (Jeff Gordon), and the plucky outsider (Martin Truex Jr.). NASCAR couldn't have hoped for a better cast, but if the Disneyland version of the last race had Gordon signing off with a fifth championship, Busch had the real world locked down. Each driver had the same mission: to simply finish ahead of the other three. Busch removed any doubt on that front by winning the race.

"All of what happened [during the season]... I wouldn't recommend it if you're looking to achieve a championship," Busch said. "It's certainly not easy, but it'll make you mentally stronger and physically stronger. This is definitely a lot different season than anybody would have expected to have happen for myself, or this race team, or anything in this sport." ■



**BANDS OF BROTHERS**  
Kyle and Kurt Busch are the second pair of champion brothers in NASCAR history, although Bobby and Terry Labonte still have the edge - Terry won two, in 1984 and '96.

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WORDS Gary Watkins  
 MAIN IMAGE P. Depalmas/AdrenalMedia

# PORSCHE SERVICE

Porsche dominated its second season in the WEC's LMP1 class, delivering a first world championship to Mark Webber in the process.

It's the obvious question really. Does winning the 2015 FIA World Endurance Championship make up for the failure to clinch the Formula 1 title back in 2010? Mark Webber doesn't really want to go there, but he is willing to say his triumph with Porsche is "right up there" with his achievements in grand prix racing.

"It's a first world championship for me and it feels beautiful," says the Australian, who sealed the WEC drivers' title with Timo Bernhard and Brendon Hartley courtesy of finishing a delayed fifth in the Bahrain finale, Nov. 21. "It's not an easy thing to achieve, so to win it is very special.

"I'm very happy to have this moment with an incredible brand that's raised the bar so high in 18 months [since its return to top-flight, LMP1 sports car racing in 2014] against some really organized and competitive teams," he adds. "I think we've brought a different mentality and a bit of F1, a whole new style. Audi has constantly been on the back foot because we've been so strong in all areas."

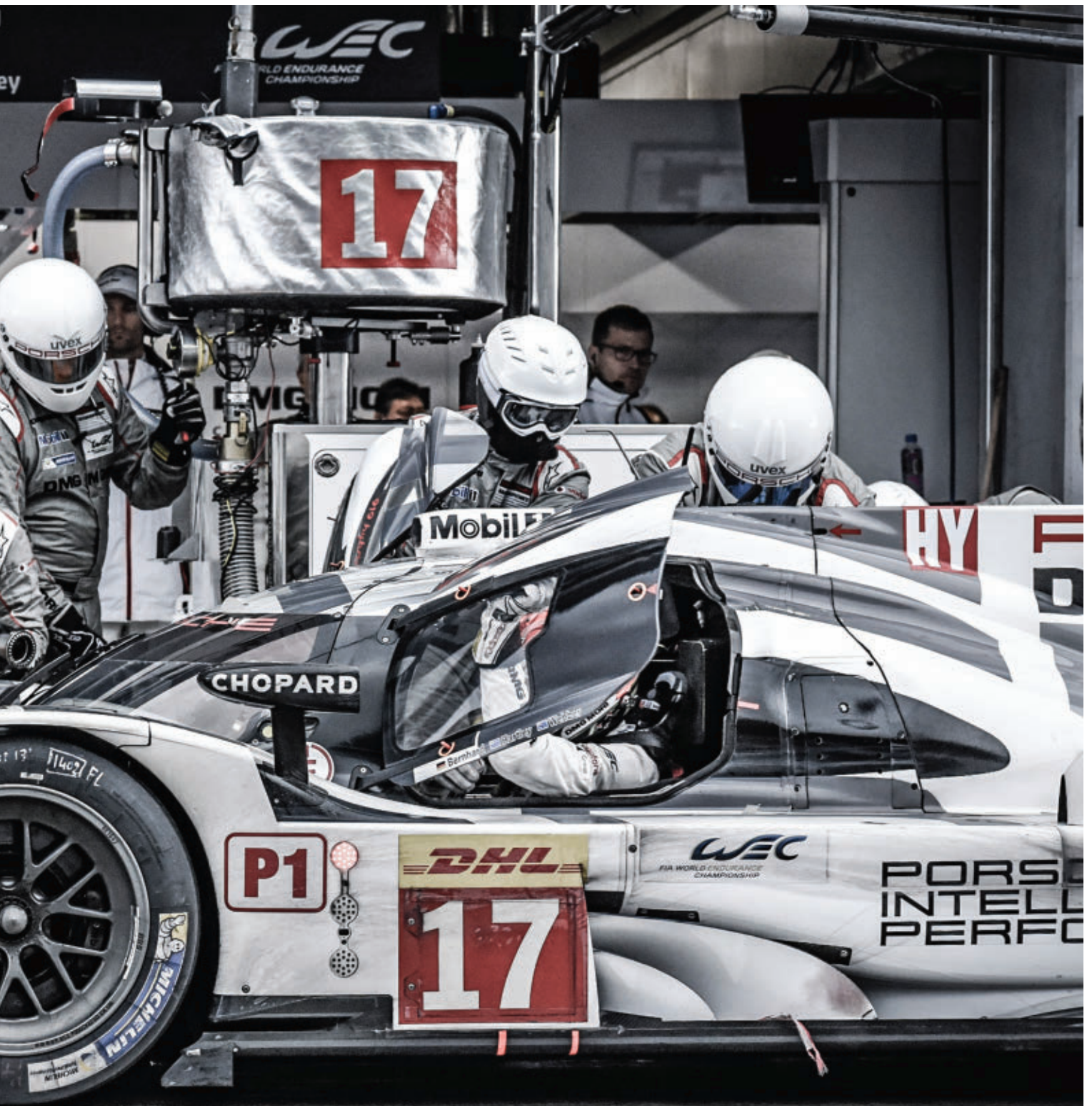
Winning the title with Porsche provides added resonance for Webber. He's a massive fan of the marque and has a fleet of its road cars - including a 918 Spyder plug-in hybrid supercar - in the garage at his UK home.

"To win it wearing a Porsche suit is definitely more special for me," he says, pointing out that he and his teammates in the No. 17 919 Hybrid are Porsche's first world champions since Derek Bell took the title in a factory 962C back in 1986.

And on the question of his 2010 F1 title near-miss in Abu Dhabi?

"I'm not thinking about 2010 at the moment," he says, flatly. "It's just a massive >





After playing second fiddle to its sister car in the 2014 WEC, the No. 17 Porsche 919 Hybrid LMP1 of Timo Bernhard, Brendon Hartley and former F1 star Mark Webber became a championship-caliber combo in 2015.



**A LONG TIME COMING...**

Despite a successful F1 career, championships have been in short supply for Mark Webber. The WEC LMP1 crown is his first since karting.

moment for me to win a world title with Porsche, and I'm certainly not thinking about what's happened in the past."

Webber does tip-toe around comparisons with the achievements of a 12-year F1 career that yielded nine grands prix wins (all with Red Bull Racing), 33 other podiums, and that title near-miss in 2010, when he went to the finale as RBR's top points scorer.

"OK there aren't 20 cars at the same pace," he says of his WEC opposition, "but there are five or six absolutely top cars, and the drivers in LMP1 are very, very strong. They're specialists and very quick."

That may or may not be a veiled reference to the time it took Webber to get on top of a new form of racing after so long in F1. He wasn't the real deal as a sports car driver on his return last season to a discipline he'd sampled with Mercedes in 1998-'99, but certainly grew into the role in 2015.

He doesn't dispute the steepness of his learning curve, and admits he struggled at times in the original iteration of the 919 Hybrid in 2014. Basically, the high-tech prototype's inherent understeer was anathema to what he'd come to know in F1.

"I was probably frustrated with the car, because we had a lot of things to improve," he says in reference to the understeer. "Patience was required. And coming in with an aggressive mindset after 12 years in F1 made it hard to accept that. It was even worse when you go to tracks where you have so much knowledge and want to try to squeeze more out of it."



A throttle issue cost the No. 17 Porsche five laps in the pits and a chance of win in the Bahrain finale. But fifth at the finish was still enough to secure the 2015 WEC LMP1 Drivers' Championship.

The arrival of the high-downforce version of this year's all-new 919 at the Nurburgring changed that. "I've been able to get much more out of it and get on the right path," he explains.

Yet there's more to it than that. Team insiders suggest that Webber has had a renewed focus this year, for instance spending more time with the engineers poring over the data. Did he, the big-money star signing from F1, underestimate the task ahead of him when he switched racing codes to make his WEC LMP1 debut, along with Porsche, in 2014? That would be a natural conclusion to reach.

In that first year, Webber, Bernhard and Hartley played second fiddle to their teammates in the sister car, Neel Jani, Romain Dumas and Marc Lieb, who perhaps still held an advantage at the start of 2015, too. But Webber and Co. were their equals over the second half of the season, outperforming the No. 18 machine at some races, such as COTA and Shanghai, while being outperformed in others, the >

**TOYOTA'S TITLE DEFENSE**

**FAST, BUT NOT FASTEST**

Toyota took a big step forward with its championship-winning TS040 HYBRID over the winter, but it turned out to be not nearly enough. In the face of the arrival of an all-new Porsche - a re-designed car based on the same concept as the original 919 - and an Audi that was more or less completely new apart from its monocoque, Toyota was never in a position to defend its WEC Drivers' and Manufacturers' titles.

There was some hope with a third place finish for Anthony Davidson, Sebastien Buemi and Kazuki Nakajima in the Silverstone opener, but there were no more podiums until the curtain-closer in Bahrain, when Alex Wurz, Stephane Sarrazin and Mike Conway took third after one Porsche and one Audi were delayed.

The writing was on the wall for Toyota as early as Spa in May. The team looked shell-shocked after the best of its cars trailed home three laps behind the winning Audi. Even before Le Mans, the decision had been made to build an all-new engine for 2016 to go with a new battery-storage system to replace the super-capacitor it's used since '12.

As for Audi's R18 e-tron quattro, once Porsche annulled its key advantage with the updated, high-downforce 919 Hybrid, it was always on the back foot. Audi's 4MJ hybrid system was no match for Porsche's BMJ, and the wins dried up.

Relative to the 2014 car, Toyota's latest TS040 HYBRID (BELOW) was definitely faster. But even bigger leaps by Porsche and Audi meant they were faster still.



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(MAIN) With three major manufacturers - Audi, Porsche and Toyota - spending big bucks on high-tech hybrid prototypes, winning the WEC's LMP1 title is a worthy accolade. (BELOW) Mark Webber confers with Porsche teammate Brendon Hartley.



Paola Depalmas/ArenaMedia.com

Nurburgring and Fuji included.

In the end, the title-winning No. 17 Porsche won four of the season's eight races, with the No. 18 crew taking the season finale and backing that up with five second-place finishes to earn third in points. Splitting them was the Audi R18 e-tron quattro of Marcel Fassler, Andre Lotterer and Benoit Treliuyer, which won the opening two races, pre-high-downforce 919 Hybrid.

Eluding all three combos was the 24 Hours of Le Mans, which did fall to Porsche, albeit the "guest" 919 of Earl Bamber, Nico Hulkenberg and Nick Tandy.

Bernhard, the experienced hand in the title-winning lineup, had a role to play in developing both of his teammates into the all-round sports car drivers they became in 2015. As well as getting to grips with the pure driving, Webber mastered the art of scything through constant traffic without losing time. Hartley, meanwhile, banished the mistakes that had been part of his game in his debut season with Porsche.

Hartley, 26, can't quite believe that he

can now call himself a world champion.

"It's everything I ever wanted when I was a kid growing up around the race tracks watching my dad," offers the Kiwi. For him, thoughts of F1 and his removal from the Red Bull ladder program before his switch to sports cars seem a lifetime away.

"This absolutely makes up for not getting to F1," he says. "Racing at Le Mans with Porsche for the first time last year was a dream come true, and winning a world championship is something else again."

Bernhard isn't one for hyperbole and, of course, he's used to success in sports cars. The German was a winner at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2010 while on loan to Audi, and he's won the big enduros at Daytona and Sebring. He's a Porsche man through and through, having been on its books since 1999 when he joined its junior program.

"I owe Porsche so much," he says. "They gave me the chance to be a professional racing driver, and to secure the WEC drivers' title is incredible. I have Porsche in my heart, so a dream has come true."

Bernhard is a keen student of the sport, a fan at heart. He even celebrated the life of his boyhood hero, Stefan Bellof, earlier this year at Spa when he sported a replica of the helmet design worn by the German legend, who died 30 years ago at the Belgian track.

For him to join a list of world champions that includes Jacky Ickx, Bell, Hans Stuck and, of course, Bellof probably means that, beneath the understated demeanor, he was celebrating just as much as his teammates. ■

**WEC'S OTHER CHAMPS**

The FIA World Endurance Championship's LMP2, GTE-Pro and GTE-Am titles all went down to the season finale. Porsche added to its LMP1 haul with success in GTE-Pro.



Nick Dungan/ArenaMedia.com



Nick Dungan/ArenaMedia.com

**LMP2**

G-Drive's Sam Bird, Julien Canal and Roman Rusinov took their Ligier-Nissan JSP2 to four wins, including the Silverstone opener and Bahrain finale, to claim the P2 drivers' spoils. Rusinov is now the joint winningest driver in FIA WEC history, with 12 P2 race victories.

**GTE-Pro**

As in IMSA racing, BoP adjustments made the Porsche 911 RSR the car to have in the second half of the season. Richard Lietz was GTE-Pro champ after winning three of the last four races with Michael Christensen in a factory Manthey entry.



John Rourke/ArenaMedia.com

**GTE-Am**

A three-race, mid-season victory streak, including a somewhat fortuitous double-points win at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, set up SMP Racing's No. 72 Ferrari 458 Italia crew of Alexsey Basov, Andrea Bertolini and Victor Shaytar for GTE-Am class honors.





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THE 2015 CHAMPIONS



**JOHNNY COMES MARCHING**

The ATS-V was Cadillac's first GT3 car, it having run to PWC's own tech rules prior to that. But despite developing it on the fly, O'Connell ended the season with four wins and 13 other top-10 finishes.

Bob Chapman/Cadillac Racing



(ABOVE) Corey Fergus was the model of consistency in TC, winning if he could, but grabbing solid points when he couldn't.

**TC**  
FERGUS POWERED BY FAMILY

Successful SCCA club racer Corey Fergus took the Pirelli World Challenge's Touring Car class in his family-run Porsche Cayman.

Dad John (himself a 15-time SCCA champion) is the team owner and Corey's uncle is crew chief, and together the familial group took on some serious opposition and the constant specter of PWC's performance adjustments to build an impressively consistent championship push. Three wins were the centerpiece results, but it was the 12 other top-six finishes from 18 races that powered the rookie's debut TC title.

"We just kept testing and we really made our car the best it could possibly be," said Fergus. "I have to thank my family for being there and working their butts off to accomplish this with me."

Behind, Ernie Francis Jr. finished runner-up with four wins, ahead of fellow Mazda MX-5 racer Adam Poland. But it was Vesko Kozarov who racked up the big win tally, taking seven in total. Unfortunately, the Nissan Altima driver was forced to miss the Mosport triple-header and that, combined with a handful of troubled races, blunted his title challenge.

GT

## PHOENIX FROM THE FLAMES

Johnny O'Connell delivers again for Cadillac Racing.

Developing Cadillac's all-new ATS-V GT3 racer should have been challenge enough for Johnny O'Connell in his quest for a fourth-straight Pirelli World Challenge GT title. So watching his car reduced to ashes at Barber Motorsport Park's seventh round only added to the burden. But when the going gets tough...

Sure enough, come the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca finale, the irrepressible O'Connell/Cadillac Racing combo found itself head to head with Olivier Beretta's R.Ferri Motorsport Ferrari 458 Italia for the championship.

The Barber blaze, caused by a fuel-pump leak, proved pivotal for O'Connell. Forced into the ATS-V test mule for the Mosport double-header, he dug deep for a double win that kick-started his title charge.

Two more victories came at Miller Motorsports Park, but Beretta's early-season run of three wins from the first five races and his consistent podiums thereafter ensured O'Connell couldn't be in coast 'n' collect mode at the finale.

Come the race, more drama ensued, with a lunge by Beretta in Turn 8 leaving O'Connell down in 12th place as the Ferrari driver remained in the title frame. But in a final twist, Beretta tagged the Turn 11 wall and posted a DNF, confirming Caddy's talisman as the champ once again.



GTA

### FRANK'S TITLE

GT's class for non-pro drivers went to Frank Montecalvo after a strong second half to his season that included seven wins from the last nine races.



GT CUP

### IT'S THOMPSON

Colin Thompson dominated the Porsche 991 Super Cup-only class, taking 13 wins and 16 poles from 18 races. Sloan Urry was best of the rest.

### THREE FOR THE DOG

Michael Cooper's GTS Drivers' Championship made it three straight for Blackdog Speed Shop Racing, Lawson Asch doubling up in 2013-'14.



GTS

## COOPER STEPS UP WITH THE BIG DOGS

Former Mazda MX-5 Cup and PWC Touring Car champ Michael Cooper added a hard-fought GTS title in 2015, toughing it out in his Blackdog Speed Shop Chevy Camaro Z/28 against a fleet of potent Ford Mustang Boss 302s and the ever-competitive Jack Baldwin's Porsche Cayman.

"Bringing the new Z/28 into the series definitely presented some challenges in the first half of the year," says Cooper. "The overall level of competition was so stout, and with this being my first year in the class, it took some time to get used to that and to learn what it takes to race with these guys."

Despite the learning curve, Cooper won the second race of the COTA season-opener, but would have to wait until round 11 at Mid-Ohio to add a second. Two more in the last six races put him in the driving seat as the Mustang onslaught lost a little steam.

But despite not claiming a Drivers' title, Ford's four Mustang wins, split between four different drivers, and the consistent scoring of runner-up Andrew Aquilante (12 top-5 finishes to go with his lone win at Elkhart Lake) ensured it would take the Manufacturers' honors.

Baldwin completed the top three in Drivers' points, winning at Mosport.

TCA

## WOLFE FIGHTS BACK

Eight wins, including seven in the last nine races, delivered Kinetic Motorports Kia Forte Koup racer Jason Wolfe a second-straight TCA title. But that doesn't even start to tell the story of a season in which Wolfe and the Kinetic crew (or should that be crew?) grabbed victory from the jaws of defeat following a car-destroying crash at Mosport. Burning the midnight oil, the team had built a brand-new car for the next event, Road America, and picked up a haul of valuable points before going on that late-season, multi-win tear, beginning at Mid-Ohio.



Jason Wolfe wrapped up his bust-to-boom 2015 TCA season with two wins and a podium at the Laguna Seca finale.

TCB

## SCHWARTZ SUCKS IT UP

The thing about the Pirelli World Challenge's ongoing performance adjustments is that you shouldn't take them personally. If, like Johan Schwartz, you feel as if you're being hammered every time you turn a wheel, you take it as a compliment, right? Because getting pulled back means you were ahead...

For Chevy Sonic driver Schwartz, despite a raft of air restrictor and weight tweaks over the season, nine TCB wins from 18 rounds, including three-race sweeps at COTA and Mid-Ohio, was an impressive way to earn a championship.



Johan Schwartz and the TechSport Racing team battled nine performance adjustments to still come out top in TCB.

SEBASTIEN OGIER  
2015 WORLD RALLY CHAMPION

Sebastien Ogier wrapped up the 2015 World Rally Championship for Drivers with his seventh win of the season on Rally Australia (MAIN). A VW 1-2 on the event also secured the Manufacturers' title.



DEL WORSHAM  
2015 FUNNY CAR CHAMPION



MIC GOWATZ/NHRA

## DEL'S DOUBLE

Del Worsham became just the third driver to win a championship in both NHRA pro nitro classes, adding the 2015 Funny Car crown to a Top Fuel title earned in 2011.

The 45-year-old Californian, who joins Kenny Bernstein and Gary Scelzi in the exclusive club, didn't grab an event win during the 18-round regular season. But he cut loose in the Countdown to One playoffs, winning four of six events in his Kalitta Motorsports DHL Toyota Camry flopper (LEFT), including a title-sealing win in the season-ending Pomona Finals.

"I've been in the hospital, I've been hurt, I've lost races I should've won... I went years between wins at one point. So for it all to come together like that, it takes its toll on anybody," said an emotional Worsham after clinching the title in his home state.

# ONE MORE FOR THE SEBS

Sebastien Ogier continued to rack up big WRC numbers. But sustained opposition for the VW ace proved elusive.

For a 12th straight year, a French guy named Sebastien won the World Rally Championship. In 2015, it was a third title for the Ogier version, adding to the nine earned by previous Seb-in-residence, Loeb.

Ogier's eight wins from 13 rallies sealed the deal with three to spare. It would have been nine wins, had he not thrown a surefire one away with a crash on the final stage in Spain while leading a Volkswagen 1-2-3.

Ogier's brain fade did allow Andreas Mikkelsen to inherit a first WRC overall win, but there's the crux of it. VW is the WRC's dominant marque, with Citroen, Ford and Hyundai all failing to mount any level of sustained opposition to the German giant's Polo R WRC, yet Ogier's teammates aren't bringing the fight to him either. The fast, but woefully inconsistent Jari-Matti Latvala and the more consistent, albeit somewhat less rapid Mikkelsen are in the same equipment as Ogier, yet neither can contrive to challenge on a regular basis.

Rally greatness comes not just from racking up wins, but from who you beat, and until Ogier finds himself against a worthy adversary on a regular basis, he's just the best guy in the best car. In contrast,

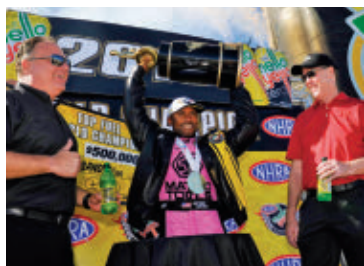
Colin McRae won his *only* WRC title in '95, but had to beat Carlos Sainz, Tommi Makinen, Juha Kankkunen and Didier Auriol to achieve it. Greatness was assured.

Ogier can only beat the guys out there, but it's a shame we never really got to see Seb vs. Seb for a sustained period. Here's hoping that a genuine challenger appears from somewhere soon. They don't even have to be French and called Sebastien...



## 1-2 FOR THE SEBASTIENS

Triple WRC champ Sebastien Ogier's eight wins in 2015 vaulted him to second in the all-time wins list with 32. Runaway leader is Seb Loeb on a staggering 78.



## ANTRON BROWN 2015 TOP FUEL CHAMPION

Antron Brown added the 2015 NHRA Top Fuel Championship to the one he collected in 2012, earning both with the multi-car, multi-class Don Schumacher Racing empire. Brown's TF-leading seven event wins included three-straight to open his Countdown to One playoffs account - a streak that left him uncatchable in the final standings.



## ERICA ENDERS-STEVENS 2015 PRO STOCK CHAMPION

Erica Enders-Stevens raced to a second successive Pro Stock title in 2015. Clinching with nine wins and a round to spare, the Chevrolet Camaro driver surpassed Shirley Muldowney's 18 NHRA career wins, pushing the female record to 21, and bested Pro Stock Motorcycle racer Angelle Sampey's seven-win season in 2001.



## SCOTT SPEED 2015 GLOBAL RALLYCROSS CHAMPION

### SPEED AND CONSISTENCY

Seven different drivers tasted victory in the 2015 Red Bull Global RallyCross Championship's headlining Supercars class, but it was Scott Speed's blend of speed and consistency - not an easy trait in the bump 'n' grind world of GRC - that made the difference in the end.

The ex-Formula 1 driver took two finals wins, doing the double at the Port of Los Angeles, but backed those up with five second places and a third at the Las Vegas finale in his Volkswagen Andretti Rallycross Beetle.

When it came to those podium visits, nobody even got close to Speed, and his victory at the high-profile, non-points X Games Austin only added to a stellar season.

Speed's teammate, Tanner Foust, took a season-high three wins - an accolade he shared with crowd favorite Ken Block in the Hoonigan Racing Division Ford Fiesta ST - but had to settle for third in the points behind Olsberg MSE Fiesta pilot Sebastian Eriksson. Inaugural Formula E champ Nelson Piquet Jr. completed the top four.

With the likes of Block, Brian Deegan, Bucky Lasek and occasional interloper Travis Pastrana in the 2015 GRC field, the series remains a crossover marketer's dream. And the participation of major manufacturers such as VW and Ford, title sponsor Red Bull, and multiple IndyCar Series teams points to sustained growth for the category.



## THE VERSATILE MR. SPEED

After racing in F1 with Toro Rosso for one-and-a-half seasons in 2006-'07, Scott Speed competed in NASCAR for six years, then discovered GRC in 2013. 2014-'15 also included four Formula E races, with a best finish of second.



WORDS & IMAGES Richard S. James

# TURNING POINTS

It may take the benefit of hindsight to see them, but there are always often moments that both effect and define a championship run in the Lucas Oil Off Road Racing Series.

**C**hampionships aren't won in a single race; they're earned by being competitive over a long, hard season. In the 2015 Lucas Oil Off Road Racing Series that meant bringing it to every single race, all 16 of them, to have any hopes of a title.

"That's what we were shooting for, hitting the podium all year," says Rob MacCachren, the 2015 and now triple LOORRS Pro 2 champ. "We missed it three times." Which is equal to the number of wins that he scored. Contrast that with Pro 4 champion Kyle LeDuc, who had 13 wins, but only one more podium than MacCachren. With 50 points for a win, and just four less for third, a podium is almost as good as a win where championships are concerned.

Yet while strings of podiums are critical, there are also moments that define a title-winning season, shape it, give it momentum. Sometimes they're obvious as they happen; other times it's only hindsight that imbues them with significance. But they're almost always there.

## **ROB MACCACHREN, Pro 2** **Rockstar Energy/Makita Tools Ford**

MacCachren says he thought before the season that it was going to be between him, usual title rival Brian Deegan and Bryce Menzies. But with Deegan missing the first race due to a medical issue and not coming back as strong as he'd been, it boiled down to MacCachren and Menzies.

"I really race the whole season to win

the championship. With that said, there are times when you need to settle for where you're at and not try forcing something to happen. I think my whole season was that way. We only took three wins - I'd have liked more - but we've got the last nine rounds where we were either second or first."

It's that string of races, from round two at Miller Motorsports Park through the end of the season, that MacCachren cites as the key to his title. But there's one race that stands out in that streak.

"At Estero Beach, we had a green-white-checkedered," he recalls. "RJ Anderson was leading, Bryce was second, I was third, and Deegan was fourth. In Turn 1 after the green, Deegan got into me, pushed me into Bryce and spun him out. That gave us a little bit of a points gap. That was a pivotal moment. From there, Bryce had to go and win. He knew he had to go for it all the time. He ended up stringing some wins together, but we got a lot of seconds, so we were only giving up two points a race to him."

MacCachren notes that a decision made the previous season, to switch engine builders to Kroyer Racing Engines, also played a major part in his 2015 success. Fewer failures gave him the consistency that he needed to be on the podium 13 times out of 16 races.

## **KYLE LEDUC, Pro 4** **Monster Energy/Toyo Tires Ford**

For LeDuc, the key moment of 2015, when



(MAIN) Amazing consistency laid the groundwork for Rob MacCachren's well-earned 2015 LOORRS Pro 2 title. (BELOW) Kyle LeDuc brought a brand-new truck to the Pro 4 class and used it to record-breaking effect on his way to a second consecutive championship.





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he won a second consecutive and third total Pro 4 title, actually occurred in '14.

"The way 2014 played out, the things that broke and the things that happened, really helped us to succeed this year," says LeDuc, who describes 2015 and its record-setting 13-race victory streak as "Epic." "We were definitely able to shut those problems down. The truck was brand new for 2015 [See *RACER* Fall 2015], but straight out of the box, that very first weekend, it was so easy and simple to work on and drive. Then and there, we knew it would allow us to do whatever we needed to win."

**RJ ANDERSON, Pro Lite**  
**LoanMart/South Point Nissan**

As happened with MacCachren, a key moment for RJ Anderson's second Pro Lite championship - his first was in 2012 - came at the Baja International Short Course at Estero Beach Resort in Ensenada, during LOORRS maiden event in Mexico. It was a tough weekend for the Pro Lites, as the sand-based course deteriorated quickly throughout the race, and the problems that developed impacted Pro Lites a lot more than the big trucks.

"That track was so gnarly for Pro Lites," Anderson says. "But I was able to

**"Deegan got into me, spun me into Bryce and spun him out. That gave us a little bit of a points gap"**

**ROB MACCACHREN**

come home with a third and a first. Just to be able to get to the finish on that track - the holes were so big for a Pro Lite. So just to get through it, get great points and have the finishes that we did, I'd say that was the turning point for us. That's where we came up on the points >



## GENERATION NEXT

### MODIFIED KART CHAMP CHRISTOPHER POLVOORDE AIMS TO CLIMB THE OFF-ROAD RACING LADDER.

Christopher Polvoorde was visibly disappointed on the podium after the season finale; although he'd just won the race, he thought he'd lost the Modified Kart title by a single point. However, when the third-place driver and apparent points winner was disqualified for a technical infraction, Polvoorde was elevated to champion.

That might appear to be the greatest moment in the 15-year-old high school student's season, but it was the same spot, on the podium at Lake Elsinore, seven months earlier that he points to as significant.

"The first race of the year, that was big," he says. "To come out and win, that was a big deal for our team. That proved we could do it, and that we had something for the championship this year."

Polvoorde knocked out seven wins for the season, a total exceeded only by Pro 4 champ Kyle LeDuc. Significantly, he won on every single weekend of competition with the exception of Glen Helen, which lost a race due to weather.

"It's seasons like this that will rarely happen again. Even when we thought we got second, the season overall was amazing for us," he says.

Now Polvoorde, who also races cross-country mountain bikes for Hemet High School in a Southern California high school league, is preparing for the next stage of his racing career. In 2016 he'll race a Pro Lite in the Lucas Oil Regional Racing Series, along with some select national events, while continuing to race his Mod Kart.



Christopher Polvoorde (ABOVE) posted seven race wins on his way to the 2015 Modified Kart championship in LOORRS.

lead and kind of took it from there."

That was also where Anderson captured his first Pro 2 class victory, making it an even more significant weekend. But there was another turning point earlier in the season - one that could have derailed his championship.

"Round 3, I was leading and lost a rear gear, and it killed us in the points," he recalls. "Third race of the year and we got



RJ Anderson (ABOVE) fought back from an early-season setback to take the 2015 Pro Lite title. (LEFT) Garrett George made it two Pro Buggy titles in two years for the George family.

### "How do you bounce back? We just put our head down and said, 'All we've got to do is go out and win races'"

**RJ ANDERSON**

hit with that. How do you bounce back? We just put our head down and said, 'All we've got to do is go out and win races.' That's the only way you can come back, by beating everyone."

Anderson did just that, sweeping the two rounds at the next race weekend at Lake Elsinore, Calif., and winning four of the next six races. Seven straight podium finishes to finish the season - not including the last two races where he could afford to play it more conservative - sealed the championship.

### GARRETT GEORGE, Pro Buggy Mickey Thompson/King Off-Road Shocks Funco

No Pro class was more competitive than Pro Buggy in 2015. Eight different drivers stood atop the podium (nine if you count

the season-ending, non-points Lucas Oil Challenge Cup). So it was natural that there would be some ups and downs on the road to the championship.

"It was a long, tough year," says Garrett George, who took the title a year after his cousin, Chad, won the 2014 championship. "I gained the points lead, like, two or three races in. But the trip to Mexico was a big downer - we DNF'd. We also DNF'd in Reno, and I was tied with Mike Valentine coming into Las Vegas. I knew I had to give it everything I had in Vegas and I worked my butt off so that coming into the final race, I'd have it a little easier on myself."

What he had to do in Las Vegas was win, and he did just that in the second race, after finishing third in the first one. His chief rival for the championship, Valentine, didn't finish the first race, giving George the cushion he needed.

"At one point, going into Utah, we were something like 30 points up, and it all fell apart," he says. "The pivotal moment was that second night in Vegas, when we won the whole thing, with fast lap, too, and left there with a 25-point lead." ■





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In the information age, we expect to know things now. As in, *right* now. The era of smartphones and data transfer via cellular networks has made that the norm. And the same is true in motorsports, where faster, more consistent data delivered straight from a racecar out on the track to its pit box, hauler, or even back to the race shop can help teams to build a competitive advantage.

But keeping that advantage means staying ahead of the curve when it comes to understanding and implementing the latest in cutting edge technology - which is how Bosch Motorsport has always excelled. Now, using the same data network that powers our smartphones, it's created a telemetry system for its customers that's faster, more reliable and simpler to use.

Bosch's Telemetry System LTE60 is designed for real-time telemetry transmission over a 4G-LTE data network. It permits multiple transmitters and multiple receivers, so not only can the team on the pitwall monitor what's going on with the car,



Richard S. James

**ADDED EFFICIENCY**  
**The LTE60 system's real-time telemetry transmission allows race engineers to work smarter and more efficiently at the track, without time-consuming pit lane data downloads slowing things down.**

but an engineer at the engine shop could be privy to the same information, too. And thanks to its flexibility and simplicity of operation, teams at all levels of motorsport are finding that it's an essential tool in understanding and enhancing the performance of racecars and their drivers.

"The LTE60 system is different from others in that it uses 4G-LTE as the communications medium, rather than traditional UHF/VHF modems," says Bosch Engineering North America senior engineer Matthew Anderson. "With that,

we've minimized dropouts on track. It's a much more reliable transmission medium and it affords the ability to transmit a lot more data at a faster rate to customers without having to rely on an infrastructure that the customer would have to set up."

For teams in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, such abilities are becoming critical. From leading Prototype teams, to GT Daytona class competitors such as Viper Exchange Racing, Bosch Motorsport customers are using the system to obtain more information, more consistently than they've been able to in the past.

"The biggest gain we've found is reception," says Ben Levite, technical director for the ViperExchange.com/TI Automotive/Riley Motorsports Dodge Viper GT3-R team in GTD. "Nationwide, at every track, we can get full track coverage, which was rare with standard UHF and VHF radios. Not only that, but the stream is very close to real time. To have real time *plus* full coverage is great in helping

PRO TEAMS ENJOY BENEFITS OF LTE60

Several leading teams in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship use Bosch Motorsport's 4G-LTE-based LTE60 telemetry system (BELOW). "To have real-time [data streaming] plus full coverage is great in helping us to do diagnosis when the car is on track," says Ben Levite (LEFT), technical director for the ViperExchange.com/TI Automotive/Riley Motorsports Dodge Viper GT3-R team racing in the GT Daytona class.



Richard S. James



Richard Dole/LAT



AT A GLANCE

BOSCH TELEMETRY SYSTEM LTE60

The Bosch LTE60 is a 4G-LTE-based telemetry system that can connect to a variety of data acquisition units from Bosch, MoTeC and Cosworth and send it to multiple receivers over an LTE cellular data network. That means a receiver anywhere within LTE coverage can receive the data, and no line-of-sight communication is necessary. It also means that Bosch engineers can update the system in place, rather than removing it.

The LTE60 uses a standard RS232 connector, and transmits data every 30 milliseconds, compared with 100 or 150 milliseconds from traditional UHF or VHF telemetry systems.

The receiver connects to a computer via ethernet or serial.



SIMPLY EFFECTIVE

The LTE60 package consists of a sender modem and a receiver modem that are connected to each other via a 4G-LTE cellular network.

REAL-TIME INFORMATION

For more information on the LTE60 telemetry system, email [boschmotorsport@us.bosch.com](mailto:boschmotorsport@us.bosch.com)



**BOSCH**

**"The system is essentially plug and play. You plug it in at the pit box and you start receiving data from the car"**

**ERICH OHLDE**

us to do diagnosis when the car is on track."

Better data doesn't just help in improving the car; it can help drivers as well, which makes it a powerful tool not only for the top echelons of motorsport, but also entry level pros and even club racers, too.

"When you start to receive data every 30 milliseconds, you can look at things in a different way," says Anderson.

"That can aid in driver training. You get a much better picture of when a driver is letting off the throttle, or when they're getting on the brakes."

Anderson also finds he can start working on calibration for the Bosch M4 ABS system without having to download data once the car comes to a stop. That

means when the car comes into the pits, he can upload the new calibration and it can head straight back out. "It can turn a two-day test into a one-day test," he says.

Another major benefit of the LTE60 system, according to many who've used it, is its simplicity and user-friendly operation.

"The system is essentially plug and play," says Bosch engineer Erich Ohlde.

"With a traditional UHF or VHF telemetry system, you have to go and set repeaters up if there are geographical blockages like hills or heavy trees. With this system, you plug it in at the pit box and you start receiving data from the car. That's been the number one thing of which engineers on the teams have been appreciative."

Telemetry may seem like the stuff of science fiction to many amateur and entry level pro racers, but a system like the Bosch LTE60 brings its capabilities within reach. And, bottom line, anything that can help racers to improve their performance goes beyond desirable and into the realm of the essential. ■

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1



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## MAKING TRACKS



# DAKOTA DICKERSON REMEMBER THE NAME



The 2015 Skip Barber Championship Shootout winner heads to USF2000 in 2016.

➤ Rising star Dakota Dickerson captured this year's coveted 2015 Skip Barber Championship Shootout.

The 18-year-old from San Diego, Calif., competed against a talented roster of racers including Summer Series champion Timo Reger and runner-up Chase Owen, Konrad Czaczyk, Jorge Herrera, and more.

At the conclusion of the three-day event, Dickerson had one of the most definitive showings in Shootout history. He took home first place finishes in all of the sessions except one. Moreover, he recorded a flawless score during the nerve-racking media interview and a near-perfect score on his business plan.

Dickerson's prize for his Shootout win



is a \$200,000 scholarship to compete in the 2016 Cooper Tires USF2000 Championship Powered by Mazda – a prize that other champions like Aaron Telitz and Luke Gabin have also used to effectively accelerate their careers.

Dickerson is just another great example of why the Skip Barber Racing School system exists – to find those talented and passionate enough to make a career in motorsports.

While the results of the Shootout were a disappointment for the nine other drivers, the event taught them significant life lessons – both on and off the track – and they will be stronger for the experience. They, along with a new crop of talent, will have an opportunity to compete again next year at Skip Barber Racing School Race Series events and get a chance to win valuable scholarship cash in the 2016 Championship Events.

By **Debbie Ebalobo**

**(MAIN) Dakota Dickerson gets focused and ready. (ABOVE) The fruits of victory. (LEFT) Taking on whatever the weather throws at you is just part of the challenge.**



### ON TOP FROM DOWN UNDER

2015 Shootout winner Dakota Dickerson began his Skip Barber Racing School career in the Karts to Cars Scholarship event. The Skip Barber Karts to Cars Scholarship program is the premier scholarship event for young racers transitioning from karts to racecars. With thousands of scholarship dollars on the line, the event has groomed the best drivers and jump started their careers.

This year, the Kart to Cars Scholarship was held at NOLA Motorsports Park, La. Bayley Mickler, an Australian, traveled halfway round the world to take the coveted title.

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# SLOT CARS REAL RACING IN MINIATURE



Nobody was faster in a Porsche 956 than the late, great Stefan Bellof. **Slot.it** pays tribute with the car in which he set the outright Nordschleife lap record at the 1983 Nurburgring 1,000km, sharing with Derek Bell.



## A DREAM BECOMES REALITY

**Jeff Mosing's Dream Weaver Raceway is one of the latest and greatest from track masterbuilders Slot Mods.**

You could say that Jeff Mosing is something of a car fanatic. Throughout the season you can find him racing a Porsche Cayman in IMSA's Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge Street Tuning class, or participating in the Porsche GT3 Cup series.

Away from the race track, he's CEO and founder of Mosing Motorcars, a collectable/unique car dealership in Austin, Texas.

With cars such a defining part of his life, it's no surprise then that Mosing is also a huge fan of slot-car racing. Taking it to the ultimate level, at the end of 2014, he reached out to David Beattie at Slot Mods USA for a custom track for the lobby of



### TEXAS-SIZED

**Jeff Mosing (RIGHT) with Slot Mods USA founder David Beattie in front of Dream Weaver Raceway, putting the track's imposing 12ft x 20ft layout and recreation of Daytona's banked start/finish straight into perspective.**

his personal car collection.

Five months later, Dream Weaver Raceway was spectacular reality. Typical of Slot Mods, the 1:32 scale track features sections of famous raceways that have meaning for their owner. Mosing's track features a 20ft long recreation of Daytona's banked front straight (complete with checkerboard grass), the old Oak Tree turn from Virginia International Raceway, the esses from his local track, Circuit of The Americas, and the long-gone pits from Sebring International Raceway.

The track also features LED lighting throughout, allowing a simulation of night

### SEE MORE...

Learn more about Slot Mods USA's hand-crafted, museum-quality slot-car tracks at [slotmods.com](http://slotmods.com)



**David Beattie, founder of Slot Mods USA, with his 20ft x 20ft home track, "Legends International Raceway." The 170ft long layout includes sections from Le Mans, Monza, Monaco, Road Atlanta and the Targa Florio.**

### MY ENDURING PASSION; DAVID BEATTIE

For Slot Mods USA founder David Beattie, his first exposure to slot-car racing began with his older brother's set - an oval that incorporated all the rooms in their house. However, the hobby didn't have a defining presence in his life until some years later.

In 2004, Beattie's wife rekindled his interest by buying him a 1:43-scale set for Christmas. Slot-car racing became a welcome reprieve from his managerial job at a marketing agency - evidenced by the track growing in length from 12ft to 109ft in the space of just six months.

When Beattie was laid off during the 2008 recession, he began building

premium wooden 1:32 tracks of a realism and detail not found anywhere else.

His first sale at a local hobby shop netted him \$179. Soon after, Ford exec Jim Farley had a replica of Laguna Seca custom built. Taking out a sizeable loan, Beattie recreated the 1950s Pebble Beach course for the 2010 AutoRetro high-end collectables event, and with the buzz growing, business soon began to take off.

Today, the "interactive dioramas," as Beattie calls his miniature marvels, are owned by many well-known car guys.

"It's been a great ride," says Beattie. "Every track we build is a piece of me."



Exquisite as it looks, NSR's 1:32 rendering of the 1969 Le Mans-winning Ford GT40 driven by Jackie Ickx and Jackie Oliver doesn't compromise on its on-track performance. Find out more at [nrsrslot.it](http://nrsrslot.it).



### CLASSIC CORNERS IN MINIATURE

DWR features the old Sebring pits (LEFT), Daytona's banked front straight (TOP), and the esses from Jeff Mosing's local track, COTA in Austin, Texas (BOTTOM).

racing if the lobby's lights are switched off. The 12ft x 20ft analogue three-lane track also includes lap-timing which is projected onto a miniature Jumbotron screen.

"It's amazing, mood altering," says Mosing. "People break out into smiles almost immediately entering the building, thinking that the entire thing is just a static diorama display. But when they find out that it's a functioning electric track to race cars on they can't believe it."

"It's like real racing, but without completely destroying your wallet," he chuckles. "It's a great bonding tool and alternative to a typical guys/gals hang-out."



The one that started it all... David Beattie's first built-for-retail track on display at his local hobby store in Michigan. Slot Mod USA's tracks are still hand-crafted in the Motor City, at the company's base in Clinton Township.

Recent additions to Scalextric's stable of cars include GPR Racing's Aston Martin Vantage GT3 that finished 16th in the Pro-Am class at the 2012 Spa 24 Hours. Why that particular car, you ask? Because it's painted in Gulf colors! Enough said...



### INTRODUCING ARC ONE...

Personalizing your slot car racing experience is now truly at your fingertips. Scalextric's new ARC ONE slot car system allows users to wirelessly create and manage races via a smartphone or tablet.

Download ARC (App Race Control), then connect your device via Bluetooth to the ARC One Powerbase, unlocking unique features and control of your races.

Select features such as one of seven different race modes, driver names and number of laps. Customize and save your race settings and car setup, then head out on the track to test your skills and challenge your opponent.

For added realism, you can even monitor top speeds, fuel load and tire

wear. Then afterward, post your results on Facebook or Twitter.

• Scalextric continues to release some incredibly varied, eclectic and stunningly detailed 1:32 slot cars. Recent additions include GT3 exotica such as the Bentley Continental and Aston Martin Vantage.

[www.hornbyamerica.com](http://www.hornbyamerica.com)



### UNLEASH THE 'VETTES

It's Corvette vs Corvette in this new 1:32-scale set from Carrera that features a new-for-2015 mold of the C7.R racecar complete with its 2015 IMSA TUDOR United SportsCar Championship livery (RIGHT). Not only is it the first set to feature the latest car, but a C6.R is also provided for some intra-team, cross-generational competition - a Corvette first for Carrera.

This digital system starter set comes with wired controllers, nearly 25ft of track, fences and a power supply.

It features a double lane-change section and Carrera's Digital Control Unit, which makes it a great starting point for Carrera's Digital world that can provide real digital racing for up to six

competitors and features exclusively-licensed Ferrari F1 and GT cars.

Available accessories include a pitlane fueling feature, start light, lap counter, and wireless controllers, plus an application for race management.

[carrera-toys.com](http://carrera-toys.com)





McLaren protege Stoffel Van Dorne was *The Man* in GP2 this year, winning six races to breeze to the championship. But he faces the same problem Kevin Magnussen did with two stars locked in at McLaren's F1 squad...



Steven Tee/LAT

### WAKING THE KRAKEN AT COTA

The USGP at Circuit of The Americas had a little bit of everything. Foul weather postponing qualifying; mixed conditions in the race that created a fascinating tactical battle; a first-turn set-to between Mercedes teammates Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg at the start, and then a championship celebration when Hamilton won on U.S. soil for the fourth time.

While financial issues may have clouded the race's future, it's already won a place in F1 lore.

### F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

March 15	Australia	Lewis Hamilton
March 29	China	Lewis Hamilton
April 12	Malaysia	Sebastian Vettel
April 19	Bahrain	Lewis Hamilton
May 10	Spain	Nico Rosberg
May 24	Monaco	Nico Rosberg
June 7	Canada	Lewis Hamilton
June 21	Austria	Nico Rosberg
July 5	Britain	Lewis Hamilton
July 26	Hungary	Sebastian Vettel
Aug. 23	Belgium	Lewis Hamilton
Sept. 6	Italy	Lewis Hamilton
Sept. 20	Singapore	Sebastian Vettel
Sept. 27	Japan	Lewis Hamilton
Oct. 11	Russia	Lewis Hamilton
Oct. 25	United States	Lewis Hamilton
Nov. 1	Mexico	Nico Rosberg
Nov. 15	Brazil	Nico Rosberg
Nov. 29	Abu Dhabi	Nico Rosberg

July 12	Milwaukee	Sebastien Bourdais
July 18	Iowa	Ryan Hunter-Reay
Aug. 2	Mid-Ohio	Graham Rahal
Aug. 23	Pocono	Ryan Hunter-Reay
Aug. 30	Sonoma	Scott Dixon

### IMSA TUDOR UNITED SPORTSCAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan. 24-25	Daytona	S. Dixon/T. Kanaan/ K. Larson/J. McMurray
March 21	Sebring	J. Barbosa/S. Bourdais/ C. Fittipaldi
April 18	Long Beach	J. Taylor/R. Taylor
May 3	Laguna Seca	Westbrook/Valiante
May 30	Detroit	Cameron/Curran
June 28	Watkins Glen	Westbrook/Valiante
July 12	Mosport	J. Taylor/R. Taylor
July 25	Lime Rock	Guasch/Kimber-Smith
Aug. 9	Elkhart Lake	Cameron/Curran
Aug. 23	VIR	N. Tandy/P. Pilet
Sept. 19	COTA	S. Pruett/J. Hand
Oct. 3	Road Atlanta	R. Lietz/ P. Pilet/N. Tandy

### NASCAR SPRINT CUP SERIES

Feb. 22	Daytona 500	Joey Logano
March 1	Atlanta	Jimmie Johnson
March 8	Las Vegas	Kevin Harvick
March 15	Phoenix	Kevin Harvick
March 22	Fontana	Brad Keselowski
March 29	Martinsville	Denny Hamlin
April 11	Texas	Jimmie Johnson
April 19	Bristol	Matt Kenseth

April 26	Richmond	Kurt Busch
May 3	Talladega	Dale Earnhardt Jr.
May 9	Kansas	Jimmie Johnson
May 24	Charlotte	Carl Edwards
May 31	Dover	Jimmie Johnson
June 7	Pocono	Martin Truex
June 14	Michigan	Kurt Busch
June 28	Sonoma	Kyle Busch
July 5	Daytona	Dale Earnhardt Jr.
July 11	Kentucky	Kyle Busch
July 19	Loudon	Kyle Busch
July 26	Indianapolis	Kyle Busch
Aug. 2	Pocono	Matt Kenseth
Aug. 9	Watkins Glen	Joey Logano
Aug. 16	Michigan	Matt Kenseth
Aug. 22	Bristol	Joey Logano
Sept. 6	Darlington	Carl Edwards
Sept. 12	Richmond	Matt Kenseth
Sept. 20	Chicagoland	Denny Hamlin
Sept. 27	Loudon	Matt Kenseth
Oct. 4	Dover	Kevin Harvick
Oct. 11	Charlotte	Joey Logano
Oct. 18	Kansas	Joey Logano
Oct. 25	Talladega	Joey Logano
Nov. 1	Martinsville	Jeff Gordon
Nov. 8	Texas	Jimmie Johnson
Nov. 15	Phoenix	Dale Earnhardt Jr.
Nov. 22	Homestead	Kyle Busch

### VERIZON INDYCAR SERIES

March 29	St. Petersburg	Juan Pablo Montoya
April 12	NOLA	James Hinchcliffe
April 19	Long Beach	Scott Dixon
April 26	Barber	Josef Newgarden
May 9	Indianapolis GP	Will Power
May 25	Indy 500	Juan Pablo Montoya
May 30	Detroit 1	Carlos Munoz
May 31	Detroit 2	Sebastien Bourdais
June 6	Texas	Scott Dixon
June 14	Toronto	Josef Newgarden
June 27	Fontana	Graham Rahal



Michael Leary/LAT

### FEATURE RACE

#### ROLEX 24 AT DAYTONA

WHEN Jan. 30-31, 2016  
WHERE Daytona Beach, Fla.

Shake off the winter frost as IMSA's new season begins amid Daytona's mega-makeover.

### TICKET INFO

Order race tickets directly at [racetickets.com](http://racetickets.com)

### WHERE & HOW

Daytona Beach has all the amenities and attractions, and a race track just minutes away.

### COOL AFTER PRESSURE

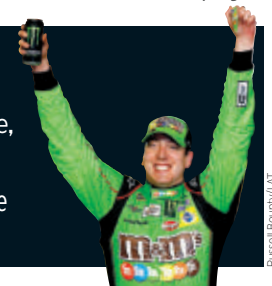
Having fumbled away victory at the USGP to end his slim title hopes, Nico Rosberg promptly went on a tear over Mercedes F1 teammate Lewis Hamilton. Can he carry the momentum into 2016?



Steve Ehrlich/LAT

"I don't know if I understand life yet, but there's something to be said about this year. A dream of a lifetime, a dream come true..."

**KYLE BUSCH** after winning his way to the NASCAR Sprint Cup title at Homestead



Russell Bournay/LAT





“If the driver determines strategy then he is going to lose every single race, because that is not an instinct-driven decision”  
**TOTO WOLFF** rejecting Lewis Hamilton's call that Mercedes should let its drivers choose their strategy



Mark Webber leapt at the chance to drop F1 for WEC, and leaped again for joy after clinching the P1 driver's crown along with Timo Bernhard and Brendon Hartley.

March 21	Fontana	Kevin Harvick
April 10	Texas	Erik Jones
April 18	Bristol	Joey Logano
April 24	Richmond	Denny Hamlin
May 2	Talladega	Joey Logano
May 17	Iowa	Chris Buescher
May 23	Charlotte	Austin Dillon
May 30	Dover	Chris Buescher
June 13	Michigan	Kyle Busch
June 20	Chicagoland	Erik Jones
July 4	Daytona	Austin Dillon
July 10	Kentucky	Brad Keselowski
July 18	Loudon	Denny Hamlin
July 25	Indianapolis	Kyle Busch
Aug. 1	Iowa	Ryan Blaney
Aug. 8	Watkins Glen	Joey Logano
Aug. 15	Mid-Ohio	Regan Smith
Aug. 21	Bristol	Kyle Busch
Aug. 29	Elkhart Lake	Paul Menard
Sept. 5	Darlington	Denny Hamlin
Sept. 11	Richmond	Chase Elliott
Sept. 19	Chicagoland	Kyle Busch
Sept. 26	Kentucky	Ryan Blaney
Oct. 3	Dover	Regan Smith
Oct. 9	Charlotte	Austin Dillon
Oct. 17	Kansas	Kyle Busch
Nov. 7	Texas	Brad Keselowski
Nov. 14	Phoenix	Kyle Busch
Nov. 21	Homestead	Kyle Larson

### NASCAR CAMPING WORLD TRUCK SERIES

Feb. 20	Daytona	Tyler Reddick
Feb. 28	Atlanta	Matt Crafton
March 28	Martinsville	Joey Logano
May 8	Kansas	Matt Crafton
May 15	Charlotte	Kasey Kahne
May 29	Dover	Tyler Reddick
June 5	Texas	Matt Crafton
June 13	Madison	Cole Custer
July 9	Kentucky	Matt Crafton
July 22	Eldora	Christopher Bell
Aug. 1	Pocono	Kyle Busch
Aug. 15	Michigan	Kyle Busch
Aug. 19	Bristol	Kyle Busch
Aug. 30	Bowmanville	Erik Jones
Sept. 18	Chicagoland	John Nemechek
Sept. 26	Loudon	Austin Dillon
Oct. 3	Las Vegas	John Wes Townley
Oct. 24	Talladega	Timothy Peters
Oct. 31	Martinsville	Matt Crafton
Nov. 6	Texas	Erik Jones
Nov. 13	Phoenix	Timothy Peters
Nov. 20	Homestead	Matt Crafton

### FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CH'SHIP

April 12	Silverstone	B. Treluyer/ M. Fassler/A. Lotterer
May 2	Spa	B. Treluyer/ M. Fassler/A. Lotterer
June 13-14	Le Mans	E. Bamber/ N. Hulkenberg/N. Tandy
Aug. 30	Nurburgring	T. Bernhard/ B. Hartley/M. Webber
Sept. 19	COTA	T. Bernhard/ B. Hartley/M. Webber
Oct. 11	Fuji	T. Bernhard/ B. Hartley/M. Webber
Nov 1	Shanghai	T. Bernhard/ B. Hartley/M. Webber
Nov 21	Bahrain	B. Treluyer/ M. Fassler/A. Lotterer

### FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan. 25	Monte Carlo	Sebastien Ogier
Feb. 15	Sweden	Sebastien Ogier
March 8	Mexico	Sebastien Ogier
April 26	Argentina	Kris Meeke
May 24	Portugal	Jari-Matti Latvala



June 14	Italy (Sardinia)	Sebastien Ogier
July 5	Poland	Sebastien Ogier
Aug. 2	Finland	Jari-Matti Latvala
Aug. 23	Germany	Sebastien Ogier
Sept. 13	Australia	Sebastien Ogier
Oct. 4	France	Jari-Matti Latvala
Oct. 25	Spain	Andreas Mikkelsen

### SAN ANDREAS

The earth shook at Rally Catalunya when series heavyweight Sebastien Ogier made a rare mistake and crashed out of the lead on the final stage. His VW teammate Andreas Mikkelsen eagerly cashed in for his first WRC win.



Nov. 15	Britain	Sebastien Ogier
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### NHRA MELLO YELLO SERIES

Feb. 8	Pomona, Calif.	
Feb. 22	Phoenix, Ariz.	
March 15	Gainesville, Fla. (PSM)	
March 29	Charlotte, N.C. (PSM)	
April 12	Las Vegas, Nev.	
April 26	Houston, Texas	
May 17	Atlanta, Ga. (PSM)	
May 24	Topeka, Kan.	
June 7	Englishtown, N.J. (PSM)	
June 14	Epping, N.H. (PSM)	
June 21	Bristol, Tenn.	
July 5	Norwalk, Ohio (PSM)	
July 12	Chicago, Ill. (PSM)	
July 26	Denver, Colo. (PSM)	
Aug. 2	Sonoma, Calif. (PSM)	
Aug. 9	Seattle, Wash.	
Aug. 23	Brainerd, Minn.	
Sept. 7	Indianapolis, Ind. (PSM)	

Sept. 20	Charlotte, N.C. (PSM)	
Sept. 27	Madison, Ill. (PSM)	
Oct. 4	Reading, Pa. (PSM)	
Oct. 18	Dallas, Texas (PSM)	
Nov. 1	Las Vegas, Nev. (PSM)	
Nov. 15	Pomona, Calif. (PSM)	

### BACK FOR SECONDS

Del Worsham's Funny Car championship triumph at the Pomona finale made him just the third driver in NHRA history to win championships in both the Top Fuel (2011) and Funny Car divisions.



### PIRELLI WORLD CHALLENGE

March 6-8	COTA, Austin, Texas (GT, TC)*	
March 27-29	St. Petersburg, Fla. (GT)*	
April 17-19	Long Beach, Calif. (GT)	
April 24-26	Barber, Birmingham, Ala. (GT)*	
May 15-17	CTMP, Bowmanville, Ont. (TC)**	
May 29-31	Detroit, Mich. (GT)	
June 26-28	Elkhart Lake, Wis. (GT, TC)**	
Jul 31-Aug. 2	Mid-Ohio, Ohio (GT)*	
Aug. 14-16	Mid-Ohio, Ohio (TC)*	
Aug. 21-23	Miller Park, Tooele, Utah (GT, TC)*	
Aug. 28-30	Sonoma, Calif. (GT)*	
Sept. 11-13	Monterey, Calif. (GT, TC)*	

\* double-header event \*\* triple-header event

### COOPER TIRES INDY LIGHTS CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar. 28-29	St. Petersburg 1&2	Ed Jones
April 19	Long Beach	Ed Jones
April 25-26	Barber 1&2	Spencer Pigot
May 8	Indianapolis (road) 1	Jack Harvey
May 9	Indianapolis (road) 2	Sean Rayhall

### FEATURE RACE

**MONTE CARLO RALLY**  
**WHEN** Jan. 22-24, 2016

**WHERE** Monaco & French Alps  
 With a mix of urban flair, country chic and a dash of Pikes Peak crazy, the Monte is a showpiece.

### EVENT INFO

Get the latest itinerary and other vital info at [wrc.com](http://wrc.com)

### WHERE & HOW

The run over Col de Turini offers one of rallying's most iconic viewing spots as the cars cross the mountain summit.

May 22	Indianapolis (oval)	Jack Harvey
June 13	Toronto 1&2	Spencer Pigot
July 12	Milwaukee	Felix Serralles
July 18	Iowa	Max Chilton
Aug. 1	Mid-Ohio 1	RC Enerson
Aug. 2	Mid-Ohio 2	Sean Rayhall
Sept. 12	Monterey 1	Spencer Pigot
Sept. 13	Monterey 2	Spencer Pigot

### PRO MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar. 28-29	St. Petersburg 1&2	Neil Alberico
April 12	NOLA	Santiago Urrutia
April 25	Barber 1	Weiron Tan
April 26	Barber 2	Neil Alberico
May 7	Indianapolis (road) 1	Weiron Tan
May 8	Indianapolis (road) 2	Timothe Buret
May 9	Indianapolis (road) 3	S. Urrutia
May 23	Indianapolis (LORP)	Weiron Tan
June 13	Toronto 1	Florian Latorre
June 14	Toronto 2	Garett Grist
July 18	Iowa	Weiron Tan
Aug. 1	Mid-Ohio 1	S. Urrutia
Aug. 2	Mid-Ohio 2	Neil Alberico
Sept. 12	Monterey1	Santiago Urrutia
Sept. 13	Monterey2	Garett Grist

### USF2000 CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar. 28-29	St. Petersburg 1&2	Jake Eidson
April 11	NOLA 1	Nico Jamin
April 12	NOLA 2	V. Franzoni
April 24	Barber 1	Aaron Telitz
April 25	Barber 2	Nico Jamin
May 8-9	Indianapolis (road) 1&2	Nico Jamin
May 23	Indianapolis (LORP)	Jake Eidson
June 13	Toronto 1	Jake Eidson
June 14	Toronto 2	Nico Jamin
July 31	Mid-Ohio 1	Nico Jamin
Aug. 1	Mid-Ohio 2	Nico Jamin
Aug. 1	Mid-Ohio 3	Nico Jamin
Sept. 12	Monterey 1	Nico Jamin
Sept. 13	Monterey 2	Nico Jamin

## RACER.com

RACER.com has the latest racing news, views and features, plus Robin Miller's answers to your questions. Write to [MillersMailbag@racer.com](mailto:MillersMailbag@racer.com)



Robin Miller isn't hibernating in the offseason - he's hard at work on his popular "Bench Racer" series of video vignettes of Indy stars of the past at The RACER Channel on YouTube.



Jason Halley/Red Bull

### OUT TAKE

You think the odds were stacked against Red Bull Racing's Daniel Ricciardo when he took on a sumo wrestler? Well how about racing against Mercedes F1 with a Renault power unit - that's a *real* David vs. Goliath battle...

## MULTIMEDIA

### THEN AS NOW

#### 1974 Porsche 911 RSR in-car



Historic racing offers the chance to see classic cars driven at speed with modern camera tech. Visit HSR's channel on YouTube to watch Bobby Rahal in this ex-George Dyer Porsche 911 at Daytona.

### CHARTING CHANGES

#### TRC on the testing circuit



The RACER Channel keeps you up to date on winter testing, like with SpeedSource team owner/driver Sylvain Tremblay discussing the new gas-powered 4-cylinder turbo engine in Mazda's IMSA P2 challenger.

### ON TWITTER

Follow @peugeot sport to keep up to date with rally legend



Sebastien Loeb as he takes on the Dakar Rally in a Peugeot 2008 DKR. It's the 9-time WRC champ's first run in the epic South American marathon.

## RACER.com

Robin Miller's Mailbag now also contains Marshall Pruett's answers to your technical questions. Send all questions to [MillersMailbag@Racer.com](mailto:MillersMailbag@Racer.com)

## ANNIVERSARIES

### DECEMBER/JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



LAT archive

JACKY ICKX

Bobby Allison, 12/3/37; Rick Mears, 12/3/51; Raul Boesel, 12/4/57; Keke Rosberg, 12/6/48; Ned Jarrett, 12/10/32; Emerson Fittipaldi, 12/12/46; A.J. Allmendinger, 12/16/81; Paul Tracy, 12/17/68; Ryan Hunter-Reay, 12/17/80; David Pearson, 12/22/34; **JACKY ICKX 1/1/45**; Hans Stuck, 1/1/51; Robby Gordon, 1/2/69; Willy T. Ribbs, 1/3/56; Michael Schumacher, 1/3/69; Jim Downing, 1/4/42; **LEWIS HAMILTON, 1/7/85**; Greg Pickett, 1/8/47; Mark Martin, 1/9/59; Bobby Rahal, 1/10/53; Don Garlits, 1/14/32; Tom McEwen, 1/14/37; A.J. Foyt Jr., 1/16/35; George Follmer, 1/27/34.



Asker Stacey/LAT

**LEWIS HAMILTON B. 1/14/85**  
Don't tell his party-chasing posse, but the newly re-crowned Formula 1 World Champion hits the big three-o early in the new year. Don't count on it slowing him down though, as he gets set to add to his already-strong credentials as grand prix racing's driver of the century.

### WE REMEMBER



LAT archive

CLAY REGAZZONI

Malcolm Campbell, 12/31/48; Bobby Marshman, 12/4/64; Ernesto Maserati, 12/1/75; Peter Gregg, 12/15/80; Colin Chapman, 12/16/82; Lee Roy Yarbrough, 12/7/84; Prince B. Bira, 12/23/85; Grant King, 12/17/99; Stan Fox, 12/18/00; Walter Hayes, 12/26/00; Jim Gilmore, 12/31/00; Bob Estes, **CLAY REGAZZONI, 12/15/06**; John Anderson, 12/16/10; Bernd Rosemeyer, 1/28/38; Mike Hawthorn, 1/22/59; Reg Parnell, 1/7/64; Joe Weatherly, 1/19/64; **RAY HARROUN, 1/19/68**; Mauri Rose, 1/1/81; Piero Taruffi, 1/12/88; Jim Hurtubise, 1/6/89; Benny Parsons, 1/16/07.



MS archive

**RAY HARROUN D. 1/19/68**  
We all know of Harroun as the winner of the first Indy 500 back in 1911 with the Marmon Wasp he helped to develop. Fewer know of his long, productive career in the auto industry...or that he appeared on the TV game show "I've Got a Secret" in 1961 with that year's "500" winner, A.J. Foyt!

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**WHO** LEWIS HAMILTON'S BOSS, NIKI LAUDA  
**WHAT** THE FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP  
**WHEN** 1984



McLaren boss Ron Dennis (MAIN, right) leapt at the chance to sign Alain Prost for the 1984 Formula 1 season. It was a move that didn't go down massively well with *de facto* team leader Niki Lauda (left). But after a trying season, the Austrian took a third championship by the narrowest of margins.

When Lewis Hamilton took the checkered flag at this year's United States Grand Prix, he joined only nine other drivers who've won at least three Formula 1 World Championships - one of whom happens to be a boss of his at Mercedes F1, non-executive chairman Niki Lauda. But in contrast to Hamilton's canter to the crown, Lauda's third title was a close-run thing.

In 1984, the two-time champ from Austria was to begin his third season with McLaren since returning to the sport after a brief retirement in '79. So far, he'd had a good measure of his teammate, John Watson, but the Englishman was replaced by French hotshot Alain Prost for '84.

With nine GP wins already under his belt, Prost was F1's fastest-rising star and had narrowly missed out on the '83 title to Brabham's Nelson Piquet. When he publicly blamed Renault for the loss, he was fired and on the driver market. Enter McLaren boss Ron Dennis, who eagerly snatched up Prost to partner the canny, experienced (and somewhat nonplussed) Lauda.

Out of the box, McLaren's TAG-Porsche-powered MP4/2 was quick, winning the season-opener with Prost. In contrast,



Largely outperformed by Lotus's ground-effect 78 in 1977, Lauda earned his second F1 title by consistency - three victories and six seconds.



Lauda welcomes Mercedes F1 driver Lewis Hamilton to the three-time champions' club. Unlike his boss, Lewis is far from done yet...

Lauda retired with an electrical issue, setting a tone for the first half of the year.

After nine of 16 races, Prost had scored three wins and two other podiums to eke out a sizeable points lead. Lauda, meanwhile, had two wins, but *six* DNFs.

The second of Prost's wins came in Monaco, where the race was stopped before half-distance due to torrential rain. Because of that, he only earned half points, meaning 4.5 instead of the usual nine. The ultimate significance of that would only become clear at season's end.

At round 10, the British GP, momentum began to shift. Lauda won, cutting back a non-finishing Prost's lead. In the next four races, both won twice, but Lauda backed his up with two seconds as Prost took a pair of DNFs. It was game on with two races to go...

Prost won the penultimate GP, with Lauda struggling home fourth to cling on to a three-and-a-half point advantage heading in to the Portuguese finale.

Starting second, Prost went on to win comfortably. Lauda qualified a lowly 11th, but worked his up to second at the finish. It was enough to win the title by a half point - the smallest margin in F1 history. ■



## 1985: GOODBYE (FOR REAL)

The 1985 season was one to forget for Niki Lauda. The defending champ suffered no less than 11 DNFs and missed two races due to an injured wrist. He finished only three races, taking 10th in final points.

Sole high for Lauda was his 25th and final Grand Prix win, beating his teammate and champion-to-be, Alain Prost, by 0.232 sec in the Dutch GP (ABOVE).

Announcing his retirement at Monza, Lauda swapped red helmet for red cap for good at season's end.

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**1988 Buick Regal**  
Driven by Hall of Fame driver, Bobby Allison, in his final season. Built by Stavola Brothers Racing and restored by Bill Elliot Motorsports. Set up in road course configuration. Historics ready.



**1990 Chevrolet Beretta**  
Winner of the 1990 Trans-Am Championship, driven by Tommy Kendall. This factory racecar with unassailable provenance has been restored, revitalized, and is track ready.



**1979 Porsche 935/79**  
Winner of the 1979 24 Hours of Daytona, this Interscope team car has 5 podium finishes in 1979. Driven by Field, Ongais, Haywood, and Minter. Fully restored by Canepa Motorsports.



**1968 Ford Torino**  
Driven by David Pearson in his 1968 championship NASCAR season. Acquired directly from Pearson by Canepa. Built by Holman Moody. 427ci Ford FE V8. Historic racing eligible.

**1991 Porsche 962C**  
This Team Trust car is one of the last Porsche built 962s. Ordered with high downforce bodywork, the turbo 3.2 liter motor is of the last factory 962 specification. Fully restored and race ready.



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## **R** FREEZE FRAME

A season ends and another begins. Some six weeks following the 2015 Petit Le Mans, several teams and manufacturers came together at Daytona International Speedway for the first test of the 2016 season. Many cars appeared in naked carbon as they are still very much in development mode. What they'll wear in 2016 will be revealed prior to the Rolex 24 At Daytona on January 28. In the meantime, there's something appealing about seeing cars like the all-new BMW M6 GTLM in "skunk works" mode. It's a sure sign that these machines are purpose-built on the leading edge of the rulebooks that regulate them.

**WHEN** November 19, 2015

**WHERE** Daytona International Speedway / Daytona Beach, Fla.

**PHOTOGRAPHER** Richard Dole







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WeatherTech comes on board as the series' title partner as well as stays on board the Alex Job Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R.

CREDIT: RICHARD DOULE / LAT

Schedule continuity from year-to-year is a good thing for teams, promoters, and most importantly, the fans. Once again the WeatherTech Championship returns in 2016 to put more date and venue equity in the bank. The Tequila Patrón North American Endurance Challenge also carries on the championship within the championship with the four long-distance races at Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen and Road Atlanta. The fact that there is nothing new, nor that no events have folded, should be taken as sure sign that the series has worked hard to keep promoters pleased and the series in demand. For fans, it's a license to plan ahead and look forward to another year of action-packed sports car racing at all of North America's best road courses and street circuits. 🏁

### 2016 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Schedule

- |  |           |  |
|--|-----------|--|
|  | <b>1</b>  | <b>January 28-31</b> Rolex 24 At Daytona / Daytona International Speedway  |
|  | <b>2</b>  | <b>March 16-19</b> Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring Fueled by Fresh From Florida                                    |
|  | <b>3</b>  | <b>April 15-16</b> Long Beach Grand Prix / Long Beach Street Circuit   |
|  | <b>4</b>  | <b>April 29-May 1</b> Continental Tire Monterey Grand Prix Powered by Mazda / Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca            |
|  | <b>5</b>  | <b>June 3-4</b> Chevrolet Sports Car Classic presented by Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers / Raceway at Belle Isle Park |
|  | <b>6</b>  | <b>June 30-July 3</b> Sahlen's Six Hours at The Glen / Watkins Glen International                                  |
|  | <b>7</b>  | <b>July 8-10</b> Canadian Tire Motorsport Park / Canadian Tire Motorsport Park                                     |
|  | <b>8</b>  | <b>July 22-23</b> Northeast Grand Prix / Lime Rock Park  |
|  | <b>9</b>  | <b>August 4-7</b> Continental Tire Road Race Showcase / Road America   |
|  | <b>10</b> | <b>August 26-28</b> Oak Tree Grand Prix at VIR / VIRginia International Raceway                                    |
|  | <b>11</b> | <b>September 15-17</b> Lone Star Le Mans / Circuit of The Americas   |
|  | <b>12</b> | <b>September 28 - October 1</b> Petit Le Mans / Road Atlanta   |



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The technology used in developing, designing and building a competition car cannot be directly utilized in production cars but the engineering principles can be applied in many areas.

# 2016: IT'S LESS OF, "WHAT'S NEW," AND MORE LIKE "WHAT ISN'T?"

IMSA has much to look forward to in 2016. Following on the merger of 2014, 2015 was a solid year of stability that saw title fights go down to the final round in all four classes and the series hitting a steady stride. But racing isn't about sitting still, and 2016 is part one of a two-phase launch into the stratosphere that stretches into 2017.

It begins with a revamped name as the series welcomes WeatherTech as the new title partner while TUDOR moves into the official watch and series partner role. The "merger" has so seamlessly become a thing of the past that the word "United" now seems superfluous, so the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship is how the series shall henceforth be known.

But what's a new name without new cars and stars? All four classes will have something new to say over the next two years that will truly see IMSA wholly come into its own, yet still remain globally relevant at the forefront of sports car racing.

This is the final year of having to distinguish between Daytona Prototypes and P2 cars in the Prototype Class before new car specs come online in 2017. The Prototype Challenge (PC) class also gets a refresh, opening the door to some additional technologies that should make the class even more appealing to a wide range of drivers and teams. That should also mean the bar will rise competitively.

On the GT side, we would be hard pressed to recall a more anticipated era than the one about to launch in Daytona this January. Ford Motor Company officially returns to GT racing with Ford Chip Ganassi Racing after more than 45 years away. Joining the Blue Oval as new manufacturers among the IMSA ranks is the rampaging bull of Lamborghini with the GT3 spec Huracán.

Speaking of GT3, 2016 will see the GT Daytona (GTD) class fully embrace the global FIA spec. The result will be


faster, more dynamic cars and perhaps a few other manufacturers considering an IMSA program.

Virtually every car in the GT Le Mans and GTD ranks will be either new or upgraded. Defending champs Porsche and long-time rivals Corvette are in the upgrade of 2015 machinery camp, while Audi comes with a re-developed version of the R8 LMS as part of the GT3 rules. BMW and Ferrari will have all-new machinery in the form of the M6 and 488 respectively, plus Porsche will bring a new GT3 spec version of the venerable 911.

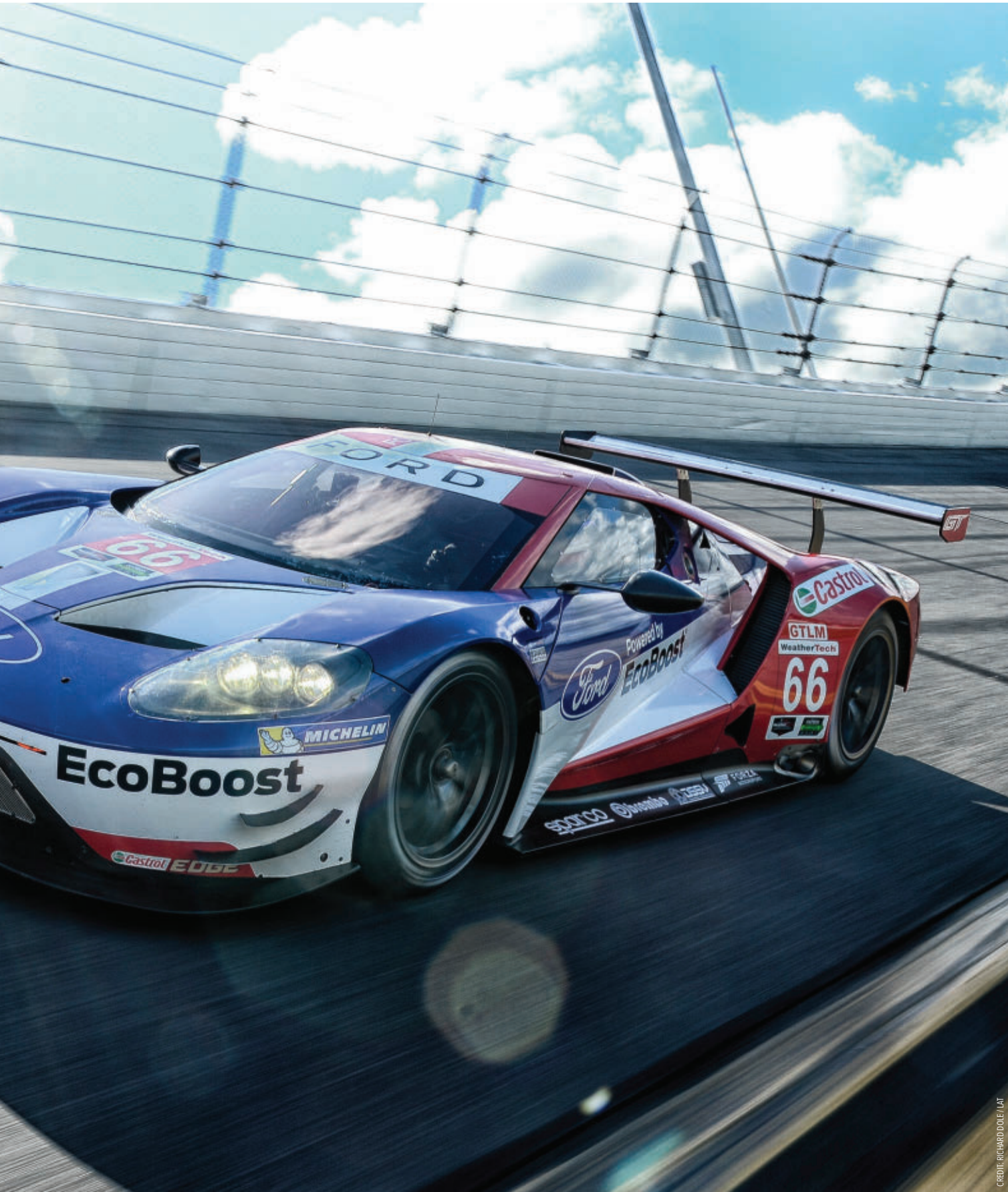


CREDIT: RICHARD DOOLEY / LAT

"There is no shortage of terrific storylines heading into the 2016 season. The introduction of the Ford GT in our GT Le Mans class has the potential to be a 'game changer' for our sport," says IMSA President Scott Atheton. "Our shift to full FIA GT3 specifications for our GT Daytona class brings several impressive new racecars and teams into the WeatherTech Championship - including a new manufacturer or two that have not participated at this level of the sport for some time. And the anticipation will build throughout the season for the new Daytona Prototype international (DPi) race cars, set to debut in 2017. The future for our sport has never been brighter."

If you're a fan of sports car racing (how can you not be?), the 2016 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship promises to deliver a mouth-watering season. Let the feast begin. 





CREDIT: RICHARD DOOLEY/LAT

This page: Sharon Ptak is all smiles between the Taylor brothers, Ricky (l) and Jordan (r). Opposite: Warren Daniel with his son Tats enjoying the open grid walk at Road America.



# BONDING EXPERIENCE

Words by George Tamayo

When a group of Chicago-based friends need to get away for the weekend, especially in the winter, they tend to head to Florida. Only instead of sandy beaches and piña colodas, these four and their kids head to the high banks of Daytona or the runways of Sebring to drink in the various sights and sounds of an IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship event.

“For our family, it’s usually Daytona instead of Disney,” says Sharon Ptak, who along with her husband Jim and son Wesley have made it to numerous IMSA races. “As a sensory experience it’s amazing, plus the access to the drivers and teams and the fact that the races are long enough to be able to watch from multiple vantage points makes it really family friendly.”

Jim has been a sports car racing fan since childhood, stating that he could pick out the sound of an air-cooled Porsche at the age of three.

Along with Doug Metzler and Warren Daniel, who often brings his son, Tats, these four friends have become kindred spirits around IMSA races, both on event as well as watching on TV or the IMSA app.

All of them enjoy a wide variety of motorsports, but there’s no doubt that they put IMSA races at the top of the list.

“I went to the F1 race in Austin and it was fantastic, but at the same time, my ability to enjoy the event was really



restricted to where my reserved seat was,” says Doug. “By contrast, IMSA races allow you almost total freedom to move around and see the race from different vantage points in addition to all the interaction with the teams in the paddock.”

Varied interaction is definitely a key to their enjoyment.

“Everyone from the drivers and crew members to the officials is so personable. You never feel like you don’t belong,” says Warren, who is admittedly the newest to the sport, but has quickly become an ardent fan.





CREDIT: SCOTT R. LEPRAGE / LAT

Main: The open pre-race grid walks are a big part of the IMSA fan experience and they are well-attended at every round. Bottom left: Sharon with Patrick Dempsey, clearly a highlight judging by the smile. Bottom right: The Ptak family (l to r) Wesley, Sharon and Jim.

Jim echoes Warren's sentiments about feeling welcome.

"Whenever you talk to a driver or crew member, they are always genuinely engaged in a conversation with you at a really sincere level. They're so passionate about the sport, and when you show an equal passion, the response is great," says Jim. "I think Sharon has taken a picture at some point with practically everyone in the series!"

The whole group laughs in agreement, and talking to Sharon about it, the enthusiasm is self-evident.



With Road America being only a few hours drive from the greater Chicago area, it's a natural place for the group to go and they usually do. But most of them have been to a variety of races at least once, from Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca to Sebring International Raceway, and points in between.

"Every event has its own flavor and offers something unique that's local to it," says Sharon

"My favorite is Sebring," Warren chimes in. "It has all these nooks and crannies that are fun to explore and the race distance is perfect. It's long enough that you can watch from multiple spots on the track, sometimes more than once, but there is still enough time to get away to the displays or just to hang out with every one over some food and drink. And then it's all done in a day, leaving you with just enough of a buzz to want more."

For Jim it's the Rolex 24 for much the same reasons as Warren loves Sebring; however, it's that added element of watching the sunrise at the track as the race gets ready for the final showdown that makes it totally unique.

Doug on the other hand likes all the events, but keeping it close to home at Road America is his ideal. "I love the track, and hiking through the woods to get to the different areas. It's a real throwback in many ways to the historic tracks, but still feels like a modern experience."



The car variety in the different classes, the different sounds, and the diversity of events all play a crucial role, but for this group of friends it's as much about the shared experience as it is the racing. On their collective downtime, they wouldn't have it any other way.



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P

# ASSAULT ON THE STATUS QUO

IS THIS THE YEAR THE P2 PLATFORM PUTS ONE OVER ON THE DPs?

Words by Marshall Pruett

Action Express Racing is keeping its focus on 2016 in a bid to win a hat trick of titles.

IMSA's headlining class is speeding toward a new set of regulations in 2017, and with entrants in the WeatherTech SportsCar Championship's Prototype category readying themselves for a busy 2016, part of the intrigue to follow will also be found in the choices they make for the future. Action Express Racing, Mazda Racing, Michael Shank Racing, Visit Florida Racing, and Wayne Taylor Racing are among the regular Prototype competitors who will vie for the coveted Drivers' and Teams' championships this year, and with unwavering participation from Chevrolet, Honda, and Mazda expected in the Manufacturers' championship, three titles are up for grabs.

Through its dominant Corvette Daytona

Prototype platform, Chevrolet has been the brand to beat, and there's every reason to believe the Bowtie's trio of title contenders will be chasing a championship hat trick. With full-time drivers Joao Barbosa and Christian Fittipaldi at the controls, AXR's No. 5 Corvette DP emerged as the car to beat in 2014, and followed it up in 2015 with major victories at two of the four Tequila Patrón North American Endurance Cup events, including the season finale, to retain the Prototype crown. AXR's path to success was challenged by fellow Corvette DP teams Visit Florida and WTR, but according to its team manager, Gary Nelson, they want nothing more than to repeat during the final season of Daytona Prototypes.



CREDIT: RICHARD DOOLEY/LAT

Michael Shank Racing gets more power in 2016, thanks to a bigger Honda V6 turbo. They were often fast in qualifying during 2015, but will they be able to keep pace and win in 2016?



CREDIT: RICHARD DOOLE / IAT

Fans of the muscular Corvette Daytona Prototype will have a final opportunity to see and hear the roaring V8-powered machines compete before they are retired for the new Daytona Prototype international formula.



CREDIT: MIKE LEAVITT / IAT

AXR's sister No. 31 Corvette DP also won two races, and their rivals can expect an unrelenting 1-2 punch from Nelson's squad.

At Visit Florida, an all-new driving team will steer the No. 90 Corvette DP, with veterans Marc Goossens and Ryan Dalziel helming the effort.

"This team came really close to the title just a few months ago, and I think we can put ourselves in a position to win it all this year," Dalziel says.

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"WE'RE LOOKING AT EACH RACE AS ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO GET A TROPHY, AND MORE CHANCES TO GET THE ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP. WE'LL TRY TO GET EVERYTHING WE CAN GET THIS SEASON BECAUSE WE DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP WHAT WE CAN WIN TODAY FOR FOCUSING TOO MUCH ON WHAT NEW CHASSIS OR ENGINE WE'LL RACE A YEAR FROM NOW."

Gary Nelson, AXR

---

P2-based teams will have one last chance to topple the DPs in 2016, and Mazda Racing and MSR have put in the work to make it happen. A switch from Mazda SkyActiv Diesel power to a new gas-fueled turbo engine has SpeedSource feeling bullish about its chances, and with a switch to Honda's larger twin-turbo V6 motor, MSR has more power to unleash on the field.

"I'm confident we can win some races this year and put Mazda out front," says SpeedSource owner Sylvain Tremblay. And when it comes to 2017, keep an eye on IMSA's news feed.

"We have a whole season of racing to do, but we all know we need to buy new cars," says Shank. "There's excitement on two fronts in Prototype, and it's a great time in general to be part of this series." 📺



CREDIT: SCOTT R. LEPAGE / IAT

Visit Florida Racing fell just shy of topping the AXR title dominance in 2015. A new driver lineup for 2016 looks to climb a place higher in the final tally.



CREDIT: SCOTT R. LEPAGE / IAT

As sure as the sun rises on Florida's eastern coast, Wayne Taylor's squad will be at the sharp end of affairs in the Prototype Class.

# ENTER THE FRAY

WITH FORD'S RETURN TO TOP LINE GT RACING, THE GTLM BATTLE IS SET FOR A NEW ERA OF GLORY.

*Words by Marshall Pruett*



CREDIT: RICHARD DOOLEY / LAT

Ford Chip Ganassi Racing will campaign a pair of Ford GTs, marking the Blue Oval's return as a manufacturer to sports car racing.

How serious is the brand new Ford Chip Ganassi Racing IMSA program? "We don't show up to place or show. We show up to win," says CGR team manager, Mike O'Gara. But the Blue Oval will have plenty of opposition trying to prevent it from happening.

Coming off a clean sweep of all three GT Le Mans championships, not to mention the Tequila Patrón North American Endurance Cup title, the Porsche North America factory program would love to humble Ford, BMW Team RLL, Corvette Racing and Risi Competizione Ferrari once more, but it won't be easy.

Renewed efforts from the Michigan-based Corvette team should see its rapturous V8-powered C7.Rs wage a frenetic battle to reclaim its place atop the manufacturer-rich GTLM class. BMW's new M6, which is propelled by a hearty twin-turbo V8, will add another high-tech layer to the

category through its partners at Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, and continuing the twin-turbo theme, Ferrari's new V8-powered 488 is expected to bring Italian flair through Giuseppe Risi's team.

Altogether, it's two American titans, two legendary German brands, and a Prancing Horse battling for GTLM honors.

"We're preparing for what should be a classic season, and hold every belief our Corvettes will be ready to continue Chevrolet's proud tradition in racing," says Corvette Racing program manager Doug Fehan. "As we are continually reminded, our class is built on very strict rules where even the smallest change can shift the competitive balance. What we're hopeful for, especially with our friends from Ford coming back to race among GT cars, is the balance to help us tell great stories as a manufacturer."




CREDIT: LAT

All GTLM cars will use Michelin tires, and in a nod to cutting-edge technology, it will go from zero turbos in 2015 to half the GTLM grid relying on twin-turbo power in 2016.

Porsche Motorsports North America CEO Jens Walther anticipates another fierce exchange between major automotive companies, and shares the same ambition expressed by Fehan when it comes to the final product.

"[GTLM] is a fantastic class where Porsche has earned great success, and we expect another exciting year of racing with Ford entering as a new competitor," he says. "We saw a great championship last year, we know it will be equally as challenging this year, and the biggest unknown is how close the cars will race together."


Walther witnessed Porsche's pair of 911 RSRs capture four wins, including the

overall victory at Petit Le Mans. And with another win added to the tally by a customer team, the 911 RSR accounted for half the GTLM victories in 2015. As the series works through its technical data to achieve parity in 2016, such declarative success could be elusive.

"It will be exciting to see how IMSA manages the racing so fans can see great competition," Walther continues. "The championship was not settled until the final race [in 2015], and it's this type of hard racing that makes such fantastic memories."

Of the five manufacturers waging war in GTLM, only Corvette and Porsche will continue using the same models. And from the three

with brand-new cars, Ford enters 2016 as not only the most anticipated name, but the best prepared, which could see Ford's new GT rise to prominence sooner than BMW and Ferrari.

"It's pretty intimidating to go against the guys who've been doing it for so long, and if anything, this class is harder and more daunting than any of the other classes," says Ford CGR's O'Gara. "But we're not treating it as a relaxed introduction. I don't see any reason why we can't go win races this year. That's why we've been doing so much running throughout the fall and during the pre-season. This is a global effort, Ford has tasked us with winning, and that's why they came to us." 



CREDIT: SCOTT R. LEPAGE / LAT

# OPEN TO NEW POSSIBILITIES

Words by Marshall Pruett



CREDIT: RICHARD DOLE / LAT

CORE autosport has had an unbelievable championship run. Here they are kicking off 2015 in the Rolex 24 At Daytona.

UPGRADES TO THE PROTOTYPE CHALLENGE CLASS CAR MAY OPEN THE DOOR TO RIVALS FINALLY KNOCKING CORE AUTOSPORT OFF THEIR PEDESTAL.

CREDIT: SCOTT R. LEPAGE / LAT



PC has been a hotbed of future talent development, with the likes of Renger van der Zande (pictured), Sean Rayhall, and James French catching the attention of other team owners. Who's next?

CORE autosport completed its amazing quest to win a fifth PC Teams' championship in 2015 amid fierce opposition from many familiar rivals. And with a new season ahead, the challenge for CORE and the rest of the PC entrants will be to master the changes coming to the spec ORECA FLM09-Chevrolet package.

"We're really pleased IMSA has focused some of its attention to our class while it's working on significant changes in others, and the result is a number of changes that will require learning for everyone," says CORE owner/driver Jon Bennett. "We expect the changes to be quite positive, with the addition of traction control, a new, more modern data system, and the potential for a new rain tire to bring overall improvements to the car."

With increased cornering stability and enhanced data-gathering tools available, Bennett hopes the revised PC platform will attract more customers and teams to participate in 2016.

"We want to see it bring more interest to the class and add more high-quality competitors for the entire season," Bennett continues. "I'm hoping these changes bring more attention to PC because we put on great races and the cars are a thrill to drive."

IMSA's PC class will race into the new season with CORE's Bennett and teammate Colin Braun looking to defend their Drivers' title, but many familiar faces will be returning with an eye to ruining those plans.

"We want to see it bring more interest to the class and add more high-quality competitors for the entire season. I'm hoping these changes bring more attention to PC because we put on great races and the cars are a thrill to drive."

*Jon Bennett, CORE autosport*

"You're always looking for the best the other teams have to offer, and that's what makes this class so great," Bennett adds. PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports, JDC-Miller Motorsports, Starworks Motorsport, Bar1 Motorsport, and Performance Tech Motorsports are among the main challengers preparing to do battle across 10 rounds.

# LET'S GO.



## NEXT UP

The Rolex 24 At Daytona / January 28-31

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The No. 16 Change Racing squad will be one of four teams campaigning the new Lamborghini Huracán GT3. Opposite: Audi has a new R8 LMS with all the GT3 bells and whistles.

# BRAVE NEW WORLD

GTD EMBRACES GT3 REGS, OPENING THE DOOR TO THE MOST COMPETITIVE YEAR YET FOR THE CLASS.

*Words by Marshall Pruett*





Coming off of a championship-winning season in 2015 driving a Scuderia Corsa Ferrari, Townsend Bell and Bill Sweedler made the obvious choice...by switching



CREDIT: RICHARD DOLE / LAT

teams and manufacturers!

"It worked for Lewis Hamilton," Bell says with a laugh, and as odd as it might appear to see the defending GT Daytona title winners perform a complete reboot of their program, it actually fits the trend taking place in GTD.

IMSA's embrace of FIA GT3 regulations has brought an influx of new teams and cars to GTD 2016, where the Bell/Sweedler tandem typifies the heavy moment behind the scenes. They'll move from one Italian brand to another as the leaders of O'Gara Motorsports' Lamborghini Huracán GT3 program, and with O'Gara, Bell will drive for a team he helped form using some of the members of his championship-winning Indy Lights program.

"I think what you're seeing with owners like a Tom O'Gara is someone who sees the value in aligning with a manufacturer – Lamborghini in this case – and building a program that is sustainable and can run at the highest levels," says Bell. "And it's a nice way to

use some pretty serious talent throughout the team. Gerald Tyler was my engineer and has had a distinguished career in IndyCar, and Shane [Seneviratne] is the same way.

What you're getting, even in a class like GTD that is supposed to be the entry-level way into IMSA, is some heavy hitters coming out to play. That's what

I look forward to most about next season."

GTD's season of change has a new version of Audi's venerable R8 heading to at least two teams. BMW's new twin-turbo M6 replaces the Z4. Ferrari's twin-turbo 488 supersedes the F458. And Porsche's all-new 911 GT3 R takes over from the 911 GT America as its GTD standard bearer. More GT3-spec cars could join the party as manufacturers from Aston Martin to Mercedes-AMG have offerings that would fit nicely among the confirmed entries.

"It's going to be fiercely competitive," Bell continues. "The teams that compete in GTD are well-funded, well-resourced in the depth of personnel, and you could literally unplug the Lamborghini from the O'Gara team, plug in a Dallara Indy car, and the caliber of people there could run it with ease. That's not unique to our team, and that's why winning a race, or something as big as the GTD championship, is a real

accomplishment. That's what attracted me to the class.

"I'm the type who always wants to race against the toughest competition, and I've only had that occasionally in my career. I have that in GTD, and that's something that stands out from so many other series or classes."

Heavyweights like Scuderia Corsa (Ferrari), Alex Job Racing (Porsche), Magnus Racing (Audi), Riley Technologies (Dodge Viper), Paul Miller Racing (Lamborghini), Park Place Motorsports (Porsche), and Turner Motorsport (BMW) will welcome incoming teams like O'Gara, Change Racing (Lamborghini), Stevenson Motorsports (Audi), and Konrad Motorsport (Lamborghini) to the GTD family.

Some of the veteran programs will also have new equipment to master as Magnus moves from Porsches to the R8, Paul Miller trades its R8 for a Huracán GT3, and both Turner and Scuderia Corsa adapt to forced induction. Drivers will also have some adaptations to make that should, according to Bell, bridge the gap in lap times from semi-pros to their professional teammates.

"The last cool thing about going to GT3 is we get all of the goodies – the driver aids – to give the gentleman drivers more of what they're used to having," he says. "Full traction control, ABS, and a bunch of little things that make racing at the limit more stable. I think we have the makings of something big here. GTD could have a breakout year." 🏁



CREDIT: RICHARD DOLE / LAT

With IMSA's bold move to embrace full FIA GT3 rules for GTD, more than 100 cars meeting GT3 specifications can come race at Daytona, Sebring, or any of the world-famous venues on the calendar.

# SEEING DOUBLE

Words by Richard S. James

There may be times in the 2016 Rolex 24 at Daytona when fans will see a Lamborghini Huracán leading a Huracán, a BMW M6 leading an M6 or an Audi R8 leading an R8, but the model leading and the one following will look rather different.

For the first time, The Rolex 24 at Daytona will have rotating pace cars, with each taking its turn leading the field during caution periods (which will hopefully be few and far between). And each of those pace cars will have its counterpart in the race - there are GTD (GT3) versions of the M6, Huracán and R8, and the GTLM class will feature the M6 as

well. These days, the similarities between the road cars that will be handling pace car duties and their racing brethren are closer than ever.

"Fifty-two percent is where we're at with parts that translate back to the road car," says Tristan Herbert, manager of Motorsport & Customer Racing for Audi, of the R8 LMS. With IMSA adopting the GT3 specification for the GTD class, each car is designed to be equal, so each will vary slightly in its similarity to the road car; but all are built around their road car platform.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BMW NORTH AMERICA

"The heart of the BMW M6 GT3 - the engine - has been transferred from the production car with only minor modifications. In this respect they are definitely brothers. The same goes for the chassis, as can be seen from the outline of the car. Other parts have been further developed for the race track, based on the production versions."

*Jens Marquardt  
BMW Motorsport Director*



**"A LOT OF THE HANDLING CHARACTERISTICS [OF THE ROAD CAR] ARE THERE [IN THE RACECAR]; THEY'RE JUST MORE HIGHLY TUNED ON THE RACECAR VERSION."**

*Tristan Herbert  
Manager of Motorsport & Customer Racing for Audi*



PHOTO: COURTESY OF AUDI USA



Lamborghini is the newest manufacturer to join the GTD class with the GT3 version of the Huracán, which was conceived almost in parallel with the road going version shown here.

Each of these cars is new to the series. Audi has introduced the second generation of the successful R8 and the LMS version will race at Daytona for the first time in January. BMW is replacing its Z4 GT3 with the M6 GT3 (and doing the same in GTLM), and Lamborghini has for the first time built a factory racecar for international competition in the Huracán GT3.

"We started in the beginning with the team [of Giorgio Sanna, the head of motorsport for Lamborghini Squadra Corse] to take in all the implications of the new car," says Maurizio Reggiani, research and development director at Automobili Lamborghini. "We took into consideration what could be the extreme

competitiveness of the car compared to others. That means GT3. It's clear that from the beginning some important decisions to build the racecar in two-wheel drive were taken, which is a little bit the opposite to what we did in the past with the Gallardo."

So the race car versions don't only take from the road cars; the desire for performance-oriented car companies to build great racecars influences the design of the road cars. And some of what is learned on the racetrack goes back into the next generation of road car. It's a cycle that both continually improves the product and brings the road and competition versions ever closer.

"A lot of the handling

characteristics [of the road car] are there [in the racecar]; they're just more highly tuned on the racecar version," says Audi's Herbert.

IMSA's adoption of the international GT3 rules means teams have a plethora of cars to choose from, and it could mean a greater variety of cars on the grid. And they will all have their die-hard fans in the infield and watching on TV, cheering on their favorite marque.

"The GT3 class is highly competitive," says Marquardt. "Virtually every major manufacturer builds a GT3 racecar, in order to be involved in this class. The cars are based on sporty production models, which means the fans can easily identify with them." 