

FORMULA 1 LEWIS WINS DRAMATIC CHINESE GP

 **AUTOSPORT**

HAMILTON HITS BACK

How
Ferrari
beat
itself
in China

**PORSCHE
V TOYOTA**
SILVERSTONE
SHOWDOWN
KICKS OFF WEC





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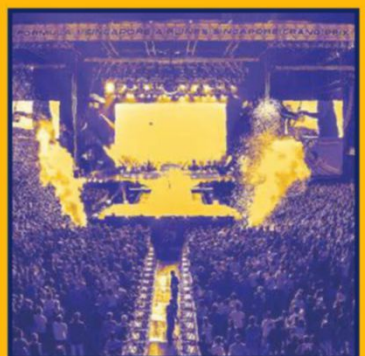


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Game on for battle of two Formula 1 greats

WHAT A DUEL WE HAVE DEVELOPING AT THE FRONT

of Formula 1. At last, Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel find themselves in competitive cars at the same time. Given they have scored 97 grand prix wins and seven world titles between them, it's about time they had a head-to-head.

The body language between the pair after both the Australian and Chinese GPs suggested genuine respect and enthusiasm for the contest ahead. After winning last weekend, Hamilton said: "I'm looking forward to this battle. I'm at my peak, Seb is at his peak – I can't wait."

At the moment, they are the class of the field. Taking the average 10 fastest laps during the race in Shanghai puts Vettel on 1m35.640s and Hamilton on 1m35.720s. The next best was Valtteri Bottas on 1m36.050s, while Kimi Raikkonen in the other Ferrari was – on average – 0.9s down on Vettel. That's why the lead duo was 40 seconds clear come the flag, despite Vettel being held up in the early stages.

Pleasingly, given the concerns over the new regulations, the Chinese GP was also a good race, with some fine overtaking and wheel-to-wheel fighting. The jury is still out on how often that will happen, but 2017 has certainly started well enough, and it was good to see Max Verstappen's charging drive rewarded with a podium. Fernando Alonso also again performed miracles that went unrewarded.

This weekend we're off to Bahrain, where Hamilton and Vettel have both won twice before. They're also tied at the top of the world championship, so let's hope round three is a true bout between two of the best racers in the business.



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Dunbar/LAT Images

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NIGEL ROEBUCK

Why faster is surely better

IN CHINA THEY MAY NOT BE HAPPY about what they have to pay for a grand prix – who is? – but whereas the Malaysians, in the face of continuing lack of local interest, have announced that this year's race will be the last, the Shanghai authorities must surely have been gratified by what was claimed to be a sell-out crowd last Sunday.

Those at the circuit last Friday, however, will not have been too thrilled, for they saw only a handful of laps by a handful of cars: rules is rules, and visibility was so bad that it would have been impossible, in the event of an emergency, for the circuit's helicopter to land at the nearest major hospital.

If Friday were a waste of time for the fans, so also it was a day lost to the teams, and the way they coped made you wonder – again – why, with so many races on the calendar these days, we don't have two-day GPs, with a couple of hours of practice on Saturday morning, then straight into qualifying. When the *parc ferme* rule was introduced, initially the teams were outraged and said it was unworkable, but they adapted as they always do, and these days nobody ever talks about it.

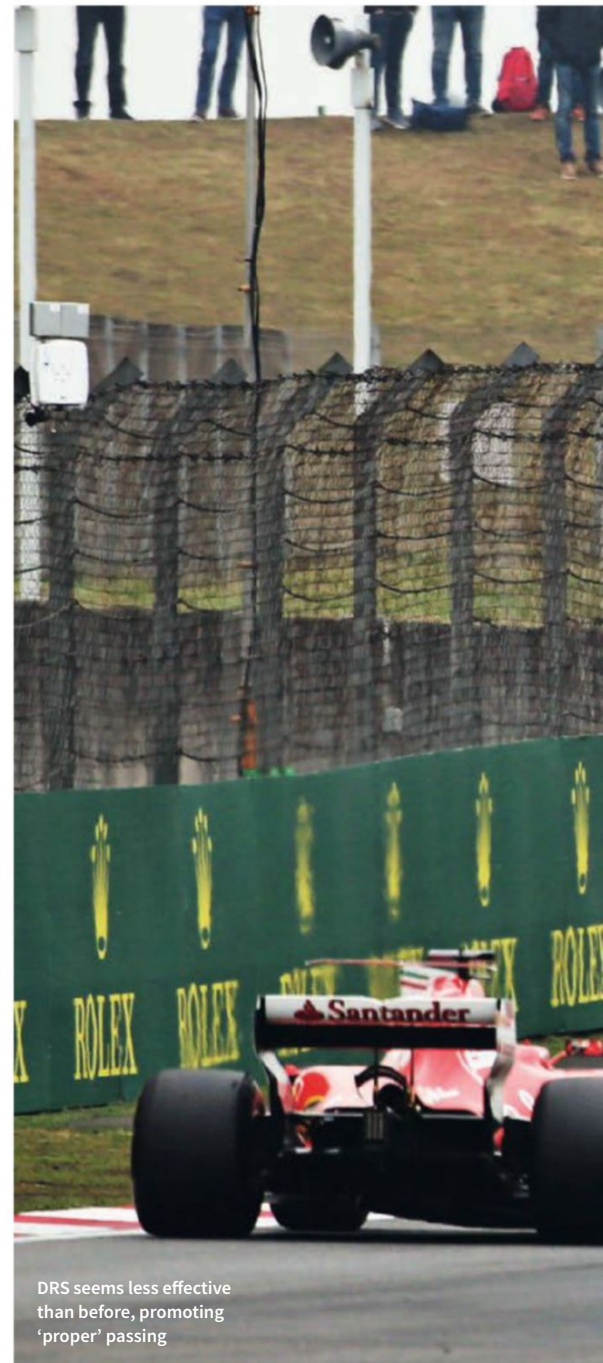
On the track they're adapting, too. When the new rules for 2017 were announced, most – apart from members of the F1 Strategy Group, anyway – were dismayed by the huge permitted

increase in downforce, for it was bound to make overtaking even more difficult than before. In absolute terms that is indeed the case, but one gratifying, if perhaps unexpected, consequence of the rule changes is that the dreaded Drag Reduction System appears to be less effective than before. In the late stages of the Chinese GP, for example, the Red Bulls of Verstappen and Ricciardo were nose to tail, but on the endless main straight Daniel could do nothing about Max.

As one who has always loathed the concept of DRS, I was delighted to hear Ross Brawn declare his aim eventually to get rid of it. If no-one wants to see a Formula 1 in which overtaking is nigh impossible, neither do I, for one, care to see it so commonplace that it ceases to register. To me a DRS pass is a penalty rather than a goal, and if there is a sport on earth that leaves me cold it is basketball, where there seems to be a score every seven seconds.

Back in the refuelling days in F1, more than one driver admitted to me that subconsciously it made him lazy, in the sense that, rather than put a risky move on the car in front, the temptation was to 'wait for the stops'. Similarly, if you know DRS will waft you past down the next straight, why get adventurous under braking for a tight corner?

As I say, though, happily it is proving less



potent with the latest cars. Ten laps in at Shanghai Lewis Hamilton led, and the combination of a stupefying first lap – in which he passed nine cars – and a safety car period after Antonio Giovinazzi's accident, had Verstappen up in second place, followed by team-mate Ricciardo, then Kimi Raikkonen and Sebastian Vettel. If the second Red Bull was holding up the Ferraris, so it was equally plain that Kimi was doing the same to Sebastian.

Quite why Ferrari didn't instruct Raikkonen to give way to his team-mate – as Mercedes did to Nico Rosberg at Monaco last year – is a question Vettel just may have raised after the race, but no such order was forthcoming, and in its absence Seb was obliged to go into business for himself, overtaking Kimi with a superbly deft move, after which he lost little time in similarly dealing with Ricciardo.

This, to me, was proper grand prix racing, and of course – as at Melbourne – the



LAT IMAGES

afternoon was greatly enhanced by the fact that, after years of misguided attempts to spice up the show with joke tyres, the drivers now find themselves with Pirellis that can be *raced*.

As one who has always found endless tyre stops a boring distraction, and a single ‘line’ through acres of marbles an unsightly joke, I am fundamentally heartened by the latest iteration of Formula 1. Now what Brawn needs to do is either reduce downforce or – if it’s decided we must have it – have it come from under the car, as in the ground-effect days, rather than from ugly appendages on top of it. This would make closely following other cars through a corner easier, and also greatly improve their aesthetics.

Already there seems to be common agreement that the next engine to be introduced into Formula 1, albeit not for some years, must – while retaining hybrid elements – be both simpler and significantly cheaper. While I have always agreed with Patrick Head’s contention

“As one who has always found endless tyre stops a boring distraction, I am heartened by the latest iteration of F1”

that F1 is an entity unto itself, with no need to justify itself as ‘improving the breed’, so I could see the logic in Jean Todt’s argument that GP racing had to go to hybrid engines if it were to attract the major manufacturers.

Problem is, four years into this era it doesn’t seem to have attracted very many of them, does it? The engines, heavy and horribly complex, as well as numbingly expensive, may be technological masterpieces, but if they achieve a startling power:consumption ratio, unfathomably neither the manufacturers

– through advertising – nor the sport itself has thought to tell anyone about it. In the meantime Toyota, which abandoned Formula 1 years ago, continues to build steel blocks for its NASCAR contingent.

Last weekend, in Shanghai qualifying, the Mercedes and Ferraris finally squeezed under Michael Schumacher’s lap record, set in the V10 era back in 2004, but in the race were not within three seconds of it. Down the road Formula 1 needs to turn back the clock to simpler, cheaper – faster – times. ✘



BRITISH MOTORSPORT

UK law change boosts

A CHANGE TO LEGISLATION IN THE United Kingdom has paved the way for motorsport events in England to use closed roads, opening the door for Formula E to return to the streets of London.

A change to the Road Traffic Act, effective from last Monday (April 10), means that the Motor Sports Association can approve a closed-road permit, although the local council(s) hold the final say on whether the event goes ahead. Formula E will not compete on the streets of the UK in the 2016/17 season, having agreed not to return following protests against its first two Battersea Park events.

Autosport understands that the championship has drawn up a putative route for a central London race and was waiting for the legislation to be amended before proceeding.

A London-based event could return to the calendar as soon as the 2017/2018 season, and a Formula E statement read: "The FIA Formula E Championship warmly welcomes the news that the UK's Road Traffic Act has been amended, permitting the closure of roads and allowing for the possibility of regulated motor racing on closed highways.

"This move considerably helps the prospect of the London ePrix returning to the streets of the British capital."

One of the stakeholders dealing with the legislation, MSA rallies executive Ian R Davis, confirmed that circuit racing organisers had contacted the governing body about hosting an event using closed roads.

"It's possible [to have a circuit event with closed roads] and it's been thought about and provided for in the statutory provision," said Davis. "It's going to be the large international events that have the financial resource to put everything in place.

"I expect we will see some events, but they will be bigger, high-profile events. I'm aware of two proposals for racing, one that I'm reasonably confident will go ahead, and one which was extremely unrealistic."

The change in legislation has been labelled enormous by MSA chief executive Rob Jones. The governing body has been lobbying for the change for decades.

"This is a seismic shift for UK motorsport, and one that the MSA and the wider motorsport community have pursued determinedly for



London ePrix hopes

many years," he said. "We can now take motorsport to the people, and in turn those local hosting communities have the opportunity to benefit from the economic boost that these events may provide."

Parliamentary under-secretary for the Department of Transport, Andrew Jones MP, talked up the economic impact the change could have, saying: "This is a very positive day for motorsport, not only for the fans but also for the people who work within it."

"Motorsport is already a huge part of the British economy and British sporting life. From an economic side, it already employs 45,000 people and has a £10billion impact on the economy."

"What we will see from this is the capacity for more events and different types of events. Let's see what promoters bring forward."

"I think people realise just how important motorsport is in the UK, and how many fans we have here. Ultimately this will allow promoters to bring forward events all over England."

"Promoters can use their creativity and entrepreneurialism and nous to put on great events. They'll have to discuss with local councils to get permission, but I would hope that we'll have more sport and more varied sport, therefore reaching a greater audience."

The change also has large implications for national rallying and hillclimb events in England. The possibility to connect forests and to run

spectator stages should help in rallying, while hillclimb events are already in the offing and will broaden the areas where hillclimb events can be run.

The change to the law only affects England. The move has been put into motion in Wales but is taking longer to

complete there because the documents have to be translated into Welsh before they can be seen by the Welsh Assembly.

The change is also in the offing for Scotland, but that must wait until Fatal Accident Inquiries into the 2013 Snowman Rally and 2014 Jim Clark Rally have been concluded.

JACK BENYON

"This helps Formula E's prospects considerably"



OBITUARY

Tim Parnell 1932-2017

TIM PARNELL, WHO HAS DIED aged 84, had motorsport in his veins as the son of Britain's pre-eminent post-war racer.

Parnell started racing in 1957 with a Cooper T39 sports car, and an attempt to qualify a Formula 2-specification T45 for the 1959 British Grand Prix proved too soon. However a Formula Junior season buoyed him to try GP racing again in the new 1500cc Formula 1 of 1961, with a Lotus-Climax 18.

After retiring at Aintree Parnell soldiered on in the outmoded and outpowered chassis to finish 10th in the Italian GP, but his second start was his last in F1.

Reg Parnell had brought Lola into F1 in 1962 and his sudden death, of peritonitis, in January 1964 changed Tim's focus. He took up Reg Parnell Racing's reins, fielding the Lolas and ex-works Lotuses powered by BRM V8s. When the family team closed down, after the 1969 Monaco Grand Prix, Tim Parnell managed the factory effort for BRM and presided over the last four of its 17 F1 victories.

In later years, Parnell was appointed vice president of the BRDC and did much for it.

His avuncular presence in the clubhouse always shone brightly at the British Grand Prix and Silverstone Classic, which the BRDC inaugurated.

MARCUS PYE



Q&A

JACK HARVEY INDY 500 ENTRY WITH ANDRETTI



Like his fellow Racing Steps Foundation graduate Rowland, Harvey is celebrating good news this week – an Indy 500 seat

What are your ambitions for the Indy 500?

If we can go and be in the top 10, I think that would be a strong starting point. The fifth car at Andretti has always run competitively at Indy and so they'll want to see that continue. Based on what they've done at Indy, and what I've done [Harvey won the Indy Lights race at IMS in 2015], top 10 is realistic.

How big a step will it be?

IndyCar is significantly faster than Lights and I haven't driven that quick in 18 months. But even when I got in a car last year, I felt comfortable straight away. I think the difference between the cars is probably the bigger factor, but I'm sure the first few laps at 210 or 215mph will feel fairly lively.

Has the Lights race win given you confidence?

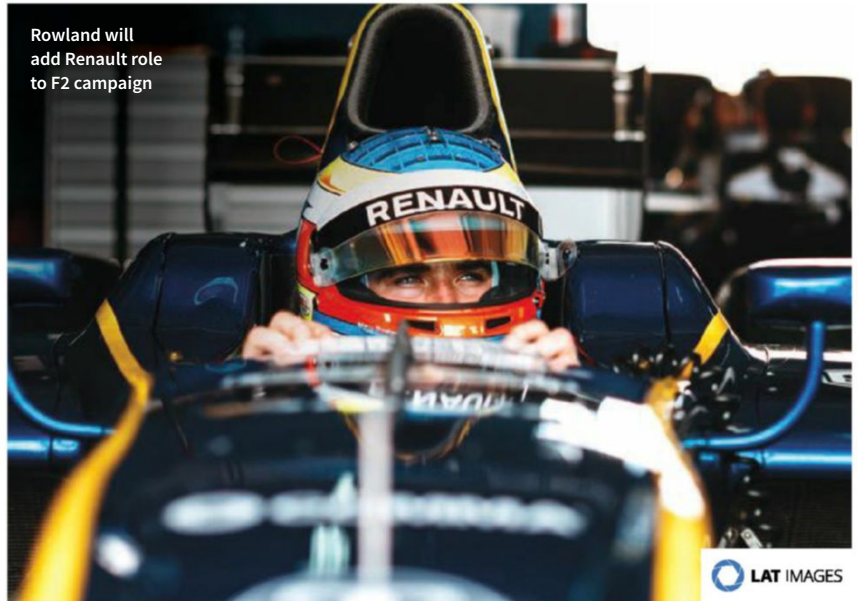
Actually it helps to give the team confidence in me that, if all goes to plan, I can be fast and I have decent racecraft. The year I won, I may not have had the quickest car but I saved the tyres and put my car where it needed to be for the final laps.

It's a fifth Andretti car. Extra pressure on you?

Of course! It must have been the most sought-after one-off entry for the 500, but the flipside is that expectations are high. It's high pressure for a reason, but I'm looking forward to adding success.

DAVID MALSHER

Rowland will add Renault role to F2 campaign



FORMULA 1

Is Renault the final step for Rowland?

OLIVER ROWLAND HOPES HIS NEW role as an official Renault Formula 1 development driver will lead to on-track opportunities with the French manufacturer this season and open the F1 door in 2018.

The 24-year-old, who won the 2015 Formula Renault 3.5 title, is competing in Formula 2 with DAMS in 2017 and will combine his racing commitments with a position in Renault's F1 set-up that includes simulator work and potential track time in the RS17.

It remains unclear just how much F1 seat time Rowland will get in 2017, though he hopes to take part in a rookie test or any future Pirelli tyre development running.

Rowland's primary focus is winning the F2 title this season – his second in the rebranded GP2 championship – and he hopes that success in the F1-supporting series will convince Renault to confirm his test outings.

"I'd like to think that if I've won World Series and Formula 2, then hopefully I'll be given a bigger role within Formula 1 next year," he said. "It doesn't always happen like that but I can only do the best that I can do.

"My goals are really focused on the F2 championship and I know that if I do a good job there then hopefully I'll be rewarded in some way, shape or form within Formula 1."

Rowland spent much of the 2016 season working in Renault's simulator and helped develop the RS17 he hopes to drive for real later this season. The Yorkshire-born racer also held an

unofficial role as a simulator driver with the Mercedes F1 team in 2015 – he racked up the miles doing correlation development work over 40-50 days – and feels that that experience and his feedback convinced Renault to take him on board in a similar capacity last year and helped him earn his promotion to development driver in 2017.

"That was another plus point from the Renault side," he said, "that I'd had that experience. I like to think that I do quite a good job in the simulator and it's valuable what I do. I suppose the job I did in GP2 and in the simulator last year helped them with their decisions towards making me a development driver."

The Renault deal and the potential for a further F1 role in 2018 puts pressure on Rowland this year, as does his race seat with DAMS, which won the GP2 drivers' title with Romain Grosjean, Davide Valsecchi and Jolyon Palmer.

Rowland therefore views 2017 as a make-or-break year, but that is a position the former Racing Steps Foundation driver feels comfortable with based on previous experience.

He said: "I've got one year to do the job, but quite a lot of years in my career have been quite similar to be honest. It seems to always be a make-or-break year for me, so I'm quite used to that and I quite like the pressure.

"I think I thrive under a bit of pressure and I fully expect that with the team I'm in and with my capabilities that I can win the F2 championship."

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



IN THE HEADLINES

TECHEETAH TO PONCE ON DS

The Techeetah Formula E team is evaluating a move to a DS Performance powertrain from the 2018/19 season in place of its current Renault deal. FE's last remaining customer team is in discussion with the French manufacturer, which has a works partnership with the Virgin team. Techeetah will continue to use a Renault powertrain in the 2017/18 campaign.

SUTTON JOINS THE NETWORK

Autosport's owner, Motorsport Network, has acquired the well-known Sutton Images photographic agency. The company, founded by Keith Sutton in 1980, will continue all of its trading activities under its own identity under the management of LAT Images.

KOIRANEN QUILTS GP3

Koiranen GP has quit the GP3 Series after four years in the Formula 1-supporting category. The Finnish-owned team's departure leaves just six GP3 squads for 2017. Koiranen withdrew from Formula Renault 2.0 one year ago, leaving its activity based around the SMP and Spanish Formula 4 championships it organises.

DAVISON IN DOUBT AFTER HUGE SHUNT

Two-time Bathurst 1000 winner Will Davison is in doubt for the next round of the Supercars at Phillip Island after suffering a suspected fractured vertebra in the multi-car pile-up in last Saturday's Supercars race at Symmons Plains. The Tekno Holden driver copped a 36G hit in the 12-car accident, and was discharged from Launceston General Hospital on Sunday.

DENNIS POISED FOR F3 RETURN

GT racing convert Jake Dennis is on the European Formula 3 entry list for this weekend's Silverstone opener with Carlin. The WRT Audi Blancpain GT Series driver raced in Euro F3 in 2014 with Carlin and then '15 with Prema, taking six wins and finishing third overall before switching to GP3 last year with Arden.

McLAREN RULES OUT ITS OWN ENGINE

McLaren has ruled out any prospect of building its own Formula 1 engine amid its partner Honda's continued troubles. Though McLaren's Automotive arm builds its own engine for its road car and GT racing programmes, McLaren executive director Zak Brown dismissed any suggestion that it could step in with its own replacement for Honda.

GLOCK SETS NEW RECORD IN DTM TEST

BMW driver Timo Glock completed four days of DTM pre-season testing at Hockenheim on top by setting a new series lap record. Glock's 1m30.201s on the final morning edged Mercedes' Paul di Resta and reigning champion Marco Wittmann, who was only 0.061s slower than RMG team-mate Glock. The fastest Audi of Mike Rockenfeller was seventh, 0.358s off the pace.



F1 PREVIEW

Bahrain Grand Prix
April 14-16

BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT
LENGTH 3.363 miles NUMBER OF LAPS 57
2016 POLE POSITION Lewis Hamilton 1m29.493s
POLE LAP RECORD Lewis Hamilton 1m29.493s (2016)
RACE LAP RECORD Pedro de la Rosa 1m31.447s (2005)

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SATURDAY
FP3 1300 QUALIFYING 1600
SUNDAY
RACE 1600

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BBC RADIO 5 LIVE 1530

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2016	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2010	Fernando Alonso	Ferrari
2009	Jenson Button	Brawn
2008	Felipe Massa	Ferrari
2007	Felipe Massa	Ferrari
2006	Fernando Alonso	Renault

THEMES TO WATCH

VETTEL v HAMILTON Hamilton's China win brought him level with Vettel in the standings. Could the desert conditions swing momentum back to the German?	RAIKKONEN RESPONSE Ferrari president Sergio Marchionne demanded talks on Kimi Raikkonen's 2017 form but a reprieve could come at a track where the Finn is strong.	MIDFIELD BATTLE Toro Rosso won this fight in China but Haas was strong and Force India, Renault and Williams should be a threat. It will be tight in Bahrain.
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Delay or cancel?

Staging last weekend's race a day early to avoid bad weather might have sounded like a good idea, but it was never going to happen

By Dieter Rencken, Special Contributor

[@RacingLines](#)

“IF BERNIE [ECCLESTONE] IS WATCHING RIGHT NOW I bet he's chuckling up his sleeve, particularly if Sunday's race is cancelled...” That was just one comment overheard in Shanghai's media centre as we (along with plenty of viewers worldwide, no doubt) stared at empty screens for well nigh three hours on Friday after FP1 and FP2 were aborted owing to low-level cloud and haze that meant the medical helicopter was unable to fly to the best-equipped local hospital.

“This can't be good for Formula 1 – imagine the millions of fans sitting about without track action” was another.

“Imagine the billions wasted if the race is canned. If Bernie were still in charge, he'd bang a few heads together, call up the Weather Gods, and no problem,” he continued before citing examples of the “show going on” during the recent past.

Then word filtered through that the FIA was supposedly considering rescheduling the Chinese Grand Prix for Saturday afternoon, with qualifying (and possibly a brief acclimatisation practice) staged earlier in the day. Folk who fell for that one simply failed to grasp neither the realities of international contract law, nor of F1's convoluted protocols and complex agreements.

True, the concept was discussed ever so briefly on Friday at 1500(ish), during a meeting of sporting directors called by the FIA's head of

Formula 1 Charlie Whiting after it became clear FP2 would be aborted. But, that is all it was – a brief discussion during which various options were tabled given that forecast conditions for Saturday were fair and Sunday even worse than Friday.

For starters, the FIA is not empowered to take such decisions. Start times and race programmes are subject to contractual arrangements entered into between race promoter (in this case Juss Events) and commercial rights holder Formula One Management. The FIA decrees when grands prix may *not* be staged due to safety considerations, not when they may.

Race promoters finance their events through the sale of race tickets – virtually all other revenue streams accrue to the CRH, including trackside signage, TV broadcast income and hospitality – through which they fund (just a portion in most cases) the hosting fees that flow to FOM. Around two-thirds of the income is then distributed to teams via a complex formula, with the CRH pocketing the rest.

Now consider the effect of moving the race forward to Saturday. Regardless of the number of tickets sold (estimates vary between 40,000 and 60,000, given that in China many

are believed to be distributed to local institutions to bolster attendance), the fact is that many ticket holders would be unable to attend on race day owing to clashing commitments or their travel/accommodation arrangements. At the very least they would be greatly inconvenienced by the rescheduling.

Guess what those individuals, each facing a hit of around £200 per ticket if they couldn't attend a Saturday race, could do. Sue the promoter, that's what, for the ticket forms a contract between holder and seller, stating the race will be staged at a certain time on a specific date. True, there are all sorts of weather caveats, but no provision is made for Saturday races, for it could be argued the weather may well improve by Sunday. Which turned out to be the case in Shanghai...

Astute promoters could insure against races being scrapped due to ‘Acts of God’, and thus cancellation is about the only option in the event of weather playing havoc. Pulling the race forward, whether by a few hours (as considered in 2014 when Typhoon Phanfone threatened the Japanese Grand Prix) or a whole day as discussed in China, might spell bankruptcy.

The CRH and broadcasters are equally affected by knee-jerk schedule changes, for costly satellite links are booked and TV schedules planned well in advance. Sponsors book commercials to be shown

during broadcasts and, even if it were possible to reschedule a grand prix, there are no guarantees that broadcasters would be willing to amend programmes at short notice.

Again insurance comes into play on the same terms as outlined above. FOM and broadcasters are indemnified (or should be) in the event of cancellation. F1's tight back-to-back scheduling with Bahrain made it impossible to consider staging the race on, say, Monday, as is so often possible with other major sporting events such as Wimbledon.

Such a solution simply cannot, though, be applied to F1 even if the affected race were the last of the season. Such are the sport's logistics, manning and safety requirements that delaying an event by a day is not feasible.

F1 is in the risk-management business, and there are no greater risks on Earth than those posed by weather. The sport should simply accept that certain things can be bent unto its will, but not all. As the calendar grows, so do the risks.

That is no bad thing, either. Consider the alternative of a dry Chinese Grand Prix staged last Saturday afternoon versus Sunday's wheel-to-wheel thriller... ❄️

“The sport should accept some things can be bent unto its will, but not all”

Red River Sport



CONGRATULATIONS

to Bonamy Grimes on a superb drive in the first round of the Britcar Endurance Championship at Silverstone, winning the main endurance race overall from class 2 in his Ferrari 458 Challenge race car



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FEEDBACK

Readers' voices should be heard

From your letters page in recent issues, it is clear that your readers have strong views and ideas about what needs to be done to improve Formula 1 racing and, in particular, overtaking.

Perhaps Autosport should collate these and send them to Ross Brawn and the group of experts he is putting together to consider ways of improving 'the show'.

After all, your readers' views are just as valid as the members of the Overtaking Working Group, which came up with... DRS!

Steve Tan
Runcorn

Fans need to see who's who

Adrian Morrow (Letters, April 6) reminds us that Jean Todt wanted F1 shark fins to clearly show driver numbers. We also have just two works teams left in the WEC P1 class, and they paint their cars in almost identical colours. Do teams really think that



anonymous competitors are what the paying customers want?

I've been watching motorsport for 50 years and I can't work out who is who. No wonder we are failing to gain new audiences for the top levels of our sport.

Steve Wright
Faringdon, Oxfordshire

Is Pascal being a bit precious?

On the Friday before the Chinese Grand Prix we learned that Pascal Wehrlein had once again opted not to drive his Sauber due to concerns about his fitness.

On Saturday I watched the Grand National, which was won by One for Arthur ridden by Derek Fox. After the race I heard that Fox had only returned to riding last week, having broken his collarbone and a wrist in a fall in March, which showed real spirit and demonstrated what can happen if you keep battling.

To a layman like me, Wehrlein is

WEC livery choices of Porsche and Toyota have stirred reader Wright's ire. He's unlikely to be alone

showing signs of being a bit precious and wanting everything to be perfect before he goes racing. Perhaps he doesn't really want to be a grand prix driver, in which case he should step aside and let someone with a bit more 'get up and go' have a shot.

Douglas Thomson
By email

Can't wait to watch F3

Where is European F3 on TV? F3 has provided most of the recent F1 drivers, but there is no sign of the Silverstone round being on the telly.

It looks to be a classic this year, with Lando Norris and Mick Schumacher to name just two. I hope a deal can be sorted out soon. Especially as Pau is my favourite circuit.

Jason Shreeve
By email

As long as you have internet access, you can see every race on the series' live stream at fiaf3europe.com — ed

Boot's on the other foot

Two races in and twice now McLaren has let Honda down with car issues while in the points. Haven't heard Honda complaining yet though. Wonder how long it will be before they say something and start talking about looking for a more reliable team to work with?

Dave Searles
By email

HAVE YOUR SAY, GET IN TOUCH

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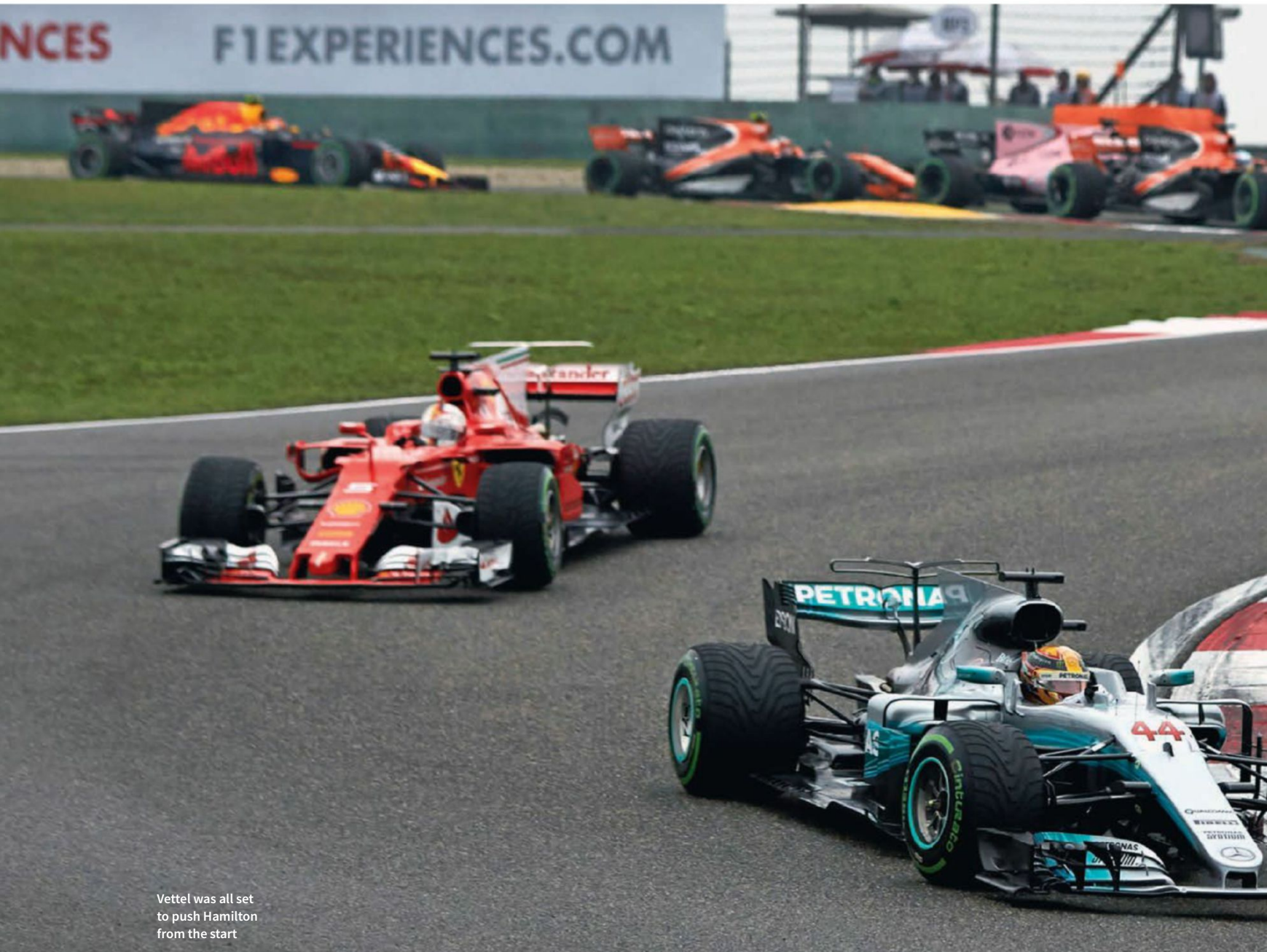
WEICHAI 潍柴

国际汽联 FIA

How Hamilton hit back in China

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor [@BenAndersonAuto](#)





Vettel was all set to push Hamilton from the start

LEWIS HAMILTON WON THE CHINESE GRAND PRIX QUITE CONVINCINGLY IN the end, making up for the surprise defeat Mercedes suffered at Ferrari’s hands in Australia, and tying Sebastian Vettel for the lead of the 2017 Formula 1 world championship.

But Hamilton was fortunate that he didn’t need to work much harder for F1’s Shanghai prize. It’s likely he would have faced a much more serious threat from Vettel – for the second race in a row – had the Ferrari driver not spent most of this one making up for time lost as a result of the struggles of Ferrari’s two other drivers.

It was not abundantly clear that Vettel would be a genuine victory contender again coming into China. Ferrari won first time out in Melbourne of course, but Albert Park is not a typical F1 track, so the question remained: could Ferrari maintain the form it showed in Australia and underline the suggestion that it can really fight Mercedes for the world championship this year, or would Mercedes finally capitalise on the slender pure-pace advantage it displayed during its surprise defeat in the season-opener?

Ultimately both propositions turned out to be true – Hamilton was again narrowly the out-and-out fastest driver over the course of the weekend, and this time delivered a result worthy of that status; but Ferrari again displayed the sort of speed in race

conditions that suggests it may seriously threaten Mercedes throughout this season.

As he did two weeks previously in Melbourne, Vettel set the pace in final practice – the only dry practice session of the Shanghai weekend owing to Friday’s bad weather grounding the FIA’s medical helicopter. Come qualifying, however, Hamilton again displayed a small but crucial edge to bag pole position.

But Vettel lapped within two tenths of Hamilton, an improvement of 0.123% compared with Melbourne, even allowing for the fact that Vettel felt he “chickened” out on the brakes into the final corner of his best lap in qualifying. He continued to maintain that the Mercedes has the edge on qualifying pace.

On a completely different circuit layout to Albert Park, Ferrari was again in the mix and, under normal circumstances, would have hoped to use what appears to be the superior consistency of the SF70H compared with the Wo8 in race trim to exert pressure from behind, and again force Mercedes and Hamilton into submission.



But this race did not begin under normal circumstances, owing to more bad weather that rendered the track partly wet as the start approached. The start/finish straight and early part of the lap was treacherous, the back part of the circuit dry. As the cars set off for the formation lap, nearly all were fitted with Pirelli's new intermediate tyre. Only "mad" Carlos Sainz Jr's Toro Rosso and Jolyon Palmer's Renault (which dived into the pits right before the start) opted to begin the race on slicks.

Vettel lined his Ferrari up to the left of his inside grid slot (for which he was investigated, with no further action taken) but again it was the Mercedes drivers who made the best of the start, and Vettel needed to repel a tentative challenge from the second Wo8 of Valtteri Bottas through the opening sequence of corners, instead of attacking Hamilton.

Vettel completed the first lap almost 1.4 seconds down on Hamilton, but had closed back to within six tenths during the next lap before driving into the pits for a switch to slicks, electing to take advantage of the virtual safety car period called to retrieve Lance Stroll's stranded Williams following its first-lap collision with Sergio Perez's Force India at Turn 10.

This looked like a smart strategic move for Ferrari, knowing that it was only a matter of time before slicks would be the right tyres to have for the conditions. "I realised the intermediates had quite

a lot of degradation," said Vettel. "It was very dry in some parts of the track, so I knew they would not last.

"I was happy to take the risk. Obviously [with the] virtual safety car you save time in the pitstop, [but] then the safety car came just when I was about to start to feel the dry tyre was a lot quicker. I couldn't use the momentum, and I lost a lot of positions."

Vettel dropped to sixth, but instead of moving back through the top order when his rivals made their own stops for dry tyres, running at reduced speed around the whole circuit meant he found himself stuck at the back of that elite train. For this he can thank Ferrari's reserve driver Antonio Giovinazzi, who crashed heavily on the pit straight at the end of lap three, having moved slightly off line after his Sauber team-mate Marcus Ericsson returned to the circuit following his own moment at the final corner.

"I just called dry tyres too early," explained Giovinazzi, who had also crashed his Sauber out of qualifying a matter of metres further back along the straight on the opposite side of the circuit.

"When I went on the main straight, I just had some aquaplaning and lost the car straight away, nothing to do. I want to say sorry to the guys, to the team, because they did a fantastic job all night to rebuild the car. So, sorry I made this mistake."

It's unlikely the irony of this situation was lost on Ferrari, which felt it made a strong call getting Vettel into the pits so >>



Being held up behind
Raikkonen and the
Red Bulls proved costly

early. Ultimately, the safety car situation means we'll never know whether Vettel would have had pace enough on slicks on a damp track to jump Hamilton.

The only indicator was Sainz, who plummeted to the back off the startline, but felt he could immediately make up significant ground through the drier parts of the track – before being forced to run at safety car pace cooled his tyres.

Vettel would have needed Hamilton's intermediates to drop off rapidly under normal circumstances – highly likely given the suggestion by some that this tyre couldn't last more than three laps in any case. But Vettel also required conditions to be dry enough to maintain sufficient tyre temperature. Again, much more likely at racing speeds rather than safety car ones – though the risk of a major accident such as Giovinazzi's is also exponentially higher in such tricky conditions.

For what it's worth, Hamilton felt that he had at least enough life left in his intermediates to do one more quick lap had the race not been neutralised. But whether that would have been enough to offset the time Vettel gained in the pits under VSC, or whether Vettel would have struggled to lap quickly enough on slicks on a partly wet track to overhaul the Mercedes when Hamilton stopped, is impossible to know.

Vettel gained one place back before the lap-eight restart, thanks to Bottas spinning off while weaving to keep heat in his tyres, but

then spent the next 20 tours fighting his way back through into second, which effectively gave Hamilton a free pass at the front.

Intriguingly, Vettel spent most of that time bottled up behind Ferrari team-mate Kimi Raikkonen, who in turn was struggling to overtake Daniel Ricciardo's understeering Red Bull – the big winner of the early safety car pitstop shuffle. For lap after lap the two red cars circulated in line behind Ricciardo.

Vettel admitted to feeling quite angry about the situation, feeling he could lap a lot quicker in clean air, but he channeled that anger productively and eventually relieved Raikkonen of fourth by diving inside the sister Ferrari on the brakes into Turn 6 on lap 20 of 56.

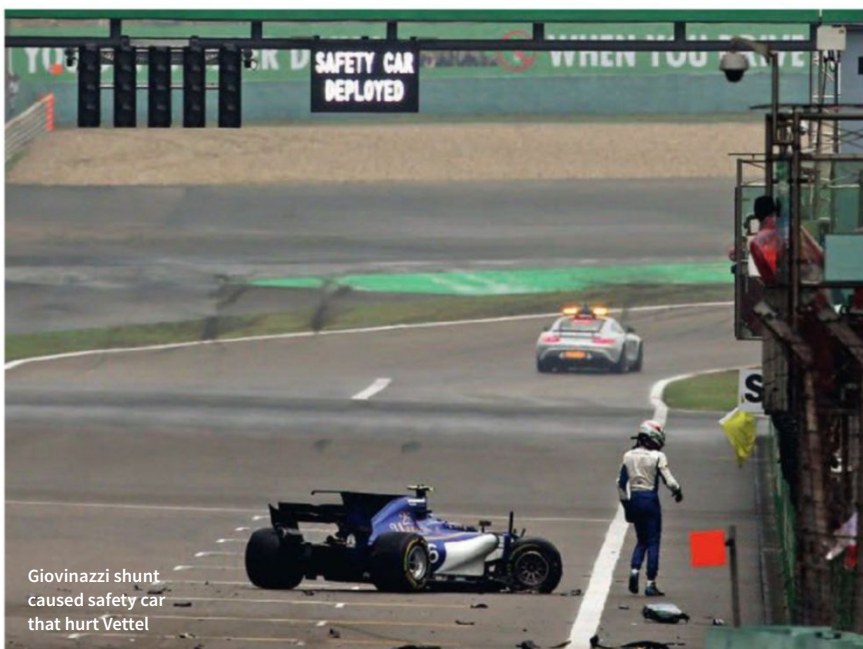
Two laps later he did what Raikkonen could not manage – driving past Ricciardo by first lunging down the Red Bull's outside on the brakes into Turn 6, then braving it around the outside to claim the inside line for the first of the high-speed esses at Turn 7.

The two former Red Bull team-mates even banged wheels when Vettel "got my elbows out a bit" as they powered out of Turn 6 side-by-side, but Vettel eventually won out.

It took him another five laps to close within striking distance of the other Red Bull of 'driver of the day' Max Verstappen (up to second from 16th on the grid!), but Vettel didn't have to work too hard to get past, thanks to Verstappen locking up under braking for the Turn 14 hairpin at the end of the back straight, having rooted his front super-soft Pirellis. >>



LAT IMAGES



Giovinazzi shunt caused safety car that hurt Vettel

QUALIFYING



THE SHANGHAI CIRCUIT IS VERY DIFFERENT TO MELBOURNE'S Albert Park, but ultimately qualifying for the Chinese Grand Prix still played out in a very similar fashion to the way it did in Australia. Ferrari again set the pace in final practice – which in this case was the only meaningful practice session – and was again a contender for pole position in an exclusive fight against Mercedes.

Barely more than two tenths of a second covered the Ferrari and Mercedes drivers after the first runs in Q2, with Sebastian Vettel fractionally ahead of Lewis Hamilton, followed by Valtteri Bottas and Kimi Raikkonen – who eventually went fastest in that segment by doing a second run when the others didn't.

But ultimately, as in Melbourne, it was Hamilton who emerged from a tight Q3 scrap with Vettel to bag pole for the second race in a row.

Hamilton moved into the ascendency at the start of Q3, leading Vettel by almost two tenths after the first runs, despite running wide out of Turn 3 and suffering a snap of oversteer at the exit of Turn 11. The Mercedes driver improved to a 1m31.678s best on his final run with a cleaner lap, claiming pole by 0.186 seconds.

"Ferrari looked so fast in practice, and in qualifying we knew it was going to be close, so I needed a perfect lap," said Hamilton, who was half a second slower than Vettel in FP3. "The lap started off not as good as Q1, but the rest got better and better."

Vettel joined Hamilton in the 1m31s on his own final flier, but failed to improve in sector one. When informed by Ferrari he had missed pole by two tenths, Vettel said he "didn't have that" time in the car, even though he felt he "chickened onto the brakes too soon" at the final corner. Mercedes was impressed that Bottas came only 0.001s

Lewis Hamilton

"We knew it was going to be close. I needed a perfect lap"

shy of denying Vettel a front-row spot. Bottas grew stronger as qualifying progressed and lapped fastest of all in the final sector on his last Q3 run, ending up within two tenths of Hamilton overall – a relative improvement of 0.152% compared to Melbourne.

"You must give credit to Valtteri because it's [only] the second race Valtteri is doing in the team," said Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, who reckoned Hamilton "clearly made the difference" in the fight with Ferrari for pole. "There was no running on Friday and he is less than two tenths off Lewis, so I'm very happy about his development slope."

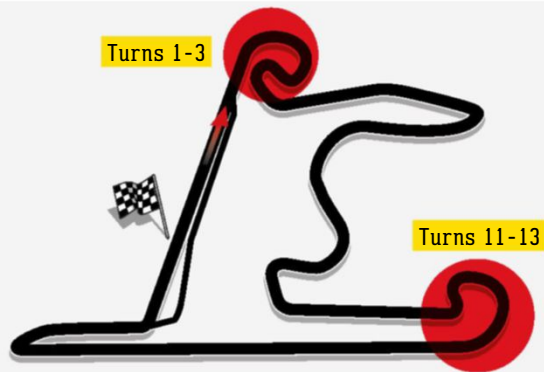
Raikkonen fell away in Q3, ending up fourth, nearly three tenths further back. He felt he gave most of the time away at Turn 3, where he struggled all weekend to get turned in properly.

Red Bull reckoned Daniel Ricciardo got everything out of his car in posting the fifth quickest time, nearly 1.5s away from pole but almost half a second clear of Felipe Massa's Williams, as team-mate Max Verstappen failed to escape Q1 thanks to a faulty ignition coil.

Ricciardo felt the RB13 was well-balanced, but lacked downforce and thus overall grip compared with Ferrari and Mercedes.



“YOU CAN HEAR HOW EXPERTLY HE BALANCES THE CAR”



WATCHING FORMULA 1 CARS IN WET WEATHER IS ALWAYS FUN. Of course, the speeds are much lower than in the dry, but the cars are constantly unstable, as the drivers walk a very different tightrope between slip and grip.

Max Verstappen usually discovers this fine balance better and quicker than most, and he is straight on the case in the first practice session at Shanghai, point-and-squirting his way in dead-straight lines past Autosport’s vantage point on the inside of Turns 11, 12 and 13.

Verstappen’s utter fearlessness is so apparent in these conditions, and even Red Bull is impressed by how quickly he gets up to speed in bad weather – particularly though the high-speed sweeps at Turns 7 and 8.

Team-mate Daniel Ricciardo’s style is smoother, and you can hear how expertly he balances the car on the throttle through the long arcing right-hander at 13, not a trace of over-commitment. He doesn’t hook a lap together, but through this corner he looks good.

Carlos Sainz Jr also impresses, driving the Toro Rosso hard and living with the rear instability the understeer he provokes eventually creates. It’s also impressive to see rookie Lance Stroll, during his first ever laps of this circuit, keep up admirably with veteran Williams team-mate Felipe Massa.

Unfortunately, the medical helicopter’s weather-induced woe spoils the fun far too soon, but this at least creates a busy final practice session on Saturday morning, held in dry conditions.

Through the long left-hand hairpin at Turn 3 the Red Bull looks difficult to drive. Verstappen and Ricciardo are both forced to use the inside kerb to help get the car turned in. Whenever they miss their cue, they are punished by understeer.

It’s a similar story for Kimi Raikkonen’s Ferrari, which he struggles to get turned in properly, seemingly overcommitting entry speed that the front of his SF70H will not stand. Raikkonen seems to be forever fighting this battle, and it will eventually cost him come qualifying.

Lewis Hamilton’s longer-wheelbase Mercedes also wants to push on here, but Hamilton acrobatically hustles the W08 into the corner, showing that it’s not just in wet weather that drivers can visibly showcase their skills.

BEN ANDERSON



The Red Bull RB13’s handling looked fraught



“I managed to get past Daniel in Turn 6 and I was building a gap,” said Verstappen, who overtook nine cars on the first lap and drove around the outside of Raikkonen (who complained of temporarily having “zero torque” thanks to being still on wet-weather engine settings) through the esses after the restart, before lunging past Ricciardo on the brakes on lap 11.

“But then straight away I felt the balance of the car was a bit limited to the front, so I was destroying the left-front and couldn’t get the car to turn. And that’s what basically happened when Sebastian was behind me – just under braking, very difficult, I locked up and went wide.”

With the traffic now cleared and half of the race still left to run, Formula 1 finally faced the prospect of a proper battle between Hamilton and Vettel at the front. But by this point Hamilton enjoyed a handy 10.664s buffer over the Ferrari, having been “quite chilled” controlling the pace at the front and trying to nurse his soft Pirellis to the flag, knowing he faced no real threat from the slower Red Bulls.

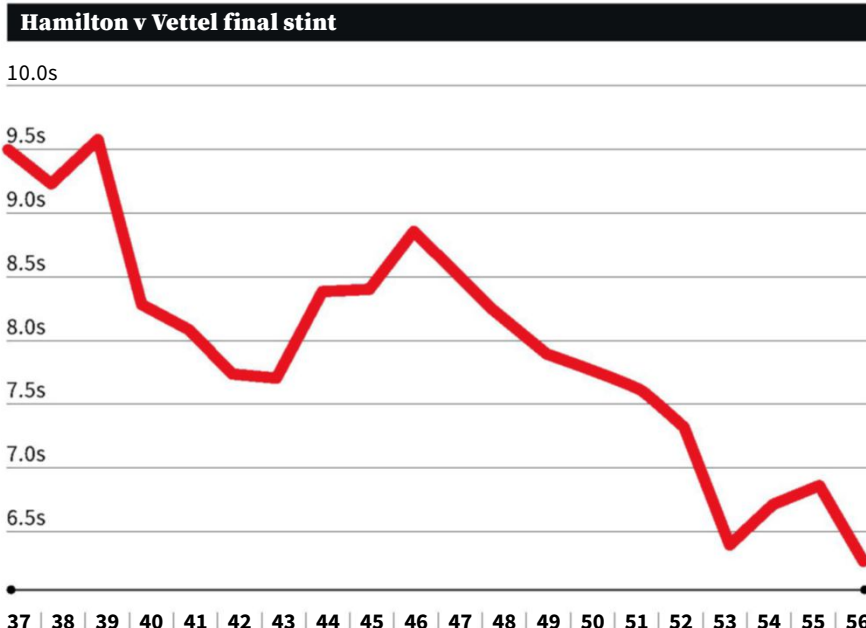
“But when Sebastian got behind, then we had a real race on our hands...”

That race took another eight laps to really spark into life, because Vettel was forced to pit for a fresh set of soft tyres to cover the super-soft shod Red Bulls, Verstappen having dived for the pits a lap after his major lock-up.

This triggered Hamilton to do likewise, once Mercedes was certain he wouldn’t emerge behind the slower Ferrari of Raikkonen. But for the last 20 laps it was then gloves-off between the championship’s leading protagonists – quadruple champion Vettel attempting to hunt down triple champion Hamilton.



Hamilton and Vettel are relishing the prospect of a tough fight for the championship





Vettel closed Hamilton down at a rate of 0.170s per lap over the last 19 laps of the race (see graph on page 20), but that was well short of the half-a-second per lap Vettel needed to make up the deficit, let alone overtake on track.

“I kept pushing because you never know,” Vettel said. “Maybe Lewis is doing a mistake, or has an issue with the car, so I wanted to keep the pressure on.”

Ultimately, Vettel was just too far behind when the chase properly began, which brings us neatly back to Ferrari’s other drivers, and specifically to the fact that Vettel lost a decent

chunk of time bottled up behind Raikkonen early on.

The second graph shows that Vettel lost 5.5s stuck behind the sister Ferrari after the restart. Given Raikkonen’s ongoing struggles with understeer, and how easily Vettel dispatched the two Red Bulls after Raikkonen’s failure to do so, it would surely have been better for Ferrari to ask Raikkonen to step aside for his team-mate.

Company president Sergio Marchionne certainly thought Raikkonen should have been more aggressive in trying to force his way past Ricciardo. Raikkonen argued he would have had a much better shot without that pesky understeer preventing him getting a decent run onto the straight that precedes Turn 6, which turned out to be the chief overtaking spot in this race.

Crediting the time Vettel lost stuck behind the other Ferrari brings him to within three quarters of a second of Hamilton’s eventual margin of victory, though of course we cannot know how much faster Hamilton might have gone in the middle of the race had he faced real pressure.

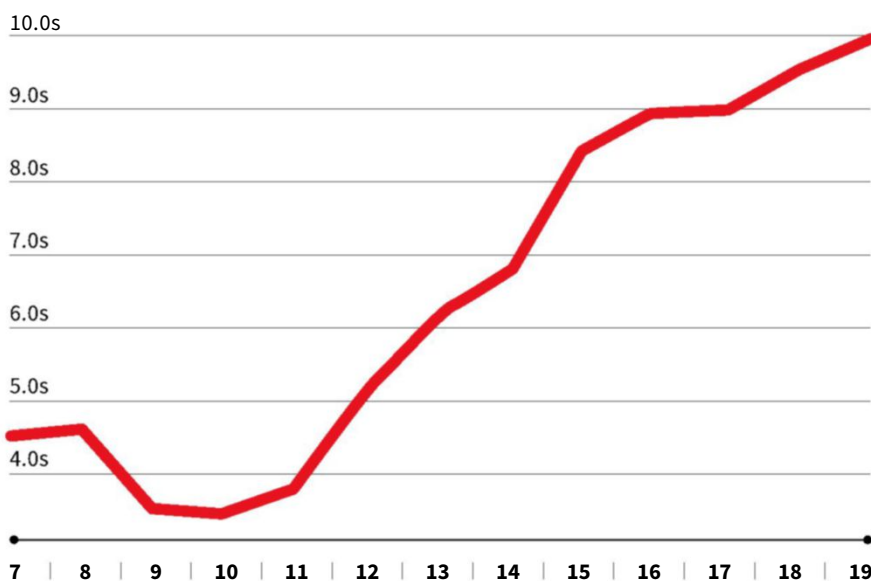
But Hamilton admitted that he was pushing on at the end of the race, when Vettel was closing him down, which suggests the Ferrari was potentially the quicker car again here in race trim – notwithstanding the impression that the Mercedes performed much better in the cooler conditions of Shanghai than it did in the heat of Melbourne.

Ultimately it seems fair to conclude that Vettel could have seriously challenged Hamilton’s superiority had the Ferrari not spent half the race mired in traffic.

Hamilton and Vettel look to be the class of the field at present, certainly a step ahead of their respective team-mates, although we are yet to see the Red Bull drivers properly in the mix owing to the present deficiencies of the RB13 and its Renault engine.

For now, this championship is looking like a two-horse race, and Hamilton admits he needs to be absolutely at the top of his game to get the better of Vettel. Which is why Ferrari’s star man could really do without his own team-mates tripping him up. ❗

Time Vettel lost behind Raikkonen





BOTTAS FEELS THAT 'AMATEUR' MISTAKE COST HIM PODIUM

VALTTERI BOTTAS CLAIMS he would have finished second to Lewis Hamilton in the Chinese Grand Prix, had he not suffered a slow first pitstop followed by what he called an "amateur" spin while running behind the safety car.

Bottas briefly got up to second when Sebastian Vettel's Ferrari pitted at the end of lap two, but dropped back to fifth when his own first stop was affected by a problem with the rear jack. He was then preparing for the race restart on lap seven when he spun off the track and fell back to 12th.

"I got a call that the safety car was going to come in, so it was the last chance to do some weaving [to heat the tyres]," Bottas explained. "Out of Turn 10 I was going quite slow, trying to put heat to the tyres by going left to right and accelerating. I had a bit of a slide, overcorrected and spun to the grass."

The blunder meant Bottas spent the rest of the race battling back to sixth place.

"I apologised to everyone," he added. "I guess this happens, but it's still pretty shit when it happens to you. Lewis proved it was a winning car, so I'm very disappointed with sixth and my mistake."

"I need to understand how I can prevent it in the future and just need to move on. I know the pace is there – I can do very good things with the car. We just need to keep going and the results will come."

Ferrari president wants Raikkonen form addressed

FERRARI PRESIDENT SERGIO Marchionne suggests his team should sit down for talks with Kimi Raikkonen, after another difficult race for the 2007 world champion at the Chinese Grand Prix.

While Ferrari's car has proved a match for main rival Mercedes in the first two races of this season, Raikkonen has yet to finish on the podium.

Raikkonen struggled with understeer again throughout the Shanghai weekend, qualifying behind team-mate Sebastian Vettel and holding him up during the race while failing to find a way past the slower Red Bull of Daniel Ricciardo.

Raikkonen was also passed around his outside by the other Red Bull of Max Verstappen, who finished third.

Attempts to get Raikkonen to the flag with a single pitstop also backfired, and he eventually finished fifth, two seconds behind Ricciardo.

Marchionne expressed frustration after the race: "I talked about this with

[team principal] Maurizio [Arrivabene]. Maybe they should sit around a table and talk to him [Raikkonen]. He seemed to be busy with other stuff. Vettel was more aggressive."

When asked if it was fair to suggest that the 2017 Ferrari is more comfortable for Vettel than it is for Raikkonen, Marchionne replied: "Absolutely no."

Raikkonen identified an issue with his Ferrari's set-up in Melbourne that he hoped to correct in China, but felt the lack of practice on Friday hindered attempts to find a solution.

"It was better here than it was last race, but the result shows we still have improvements to make in the set-up," he said. "The car was behaving pretty nicely with new tyres, but we lost the front after a few laps."

"The situation with no running on Friday didn't make it any easier. There's a lot of potential, but we just have to make a better job."



Mid-race front-wing adjustment transformed Ricciardo's pace

DANIEL RICCIARDO SAID HIS RED BULL "CAME TO life" for a late fight with team-mate Max Verstappen in the Chinese Grand Prix, after a front-wing adjustment at his second pitstop. He struggled for front grip in the first part of the race and, after initially running second, was passed by both Verstappen and Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel.

But after his second pitstop on lap 33 of 56, Ricciardo quickly reeled in Verstappen, put him under pressure, and almost re-passed him for third on the final lap.

"That first stint was frustrating," said Ricciardo, who ran more downforce than Verstappen throughout the race.

"We couldn't keep on top of the front tyres, we killed them quite quickly and got eaten up by the others."

"The second pitstop allowed us to make a change. It came to life. We gave it some front wing, got the front tyres working, and we were a lot quicker."

Red Bull was relatively more competitive in the mixed conditions of the race compared with dry qualifying, where Ricciardo was 1.355s off Lewis Hamilton's pole time.

Ricciardo said the car was well-balanced, but lacking overall grip, a problem which Red Bull team boss Christian Horner expects will be addressed by developments.





LAT IMAGES

Alonso hails 'incredible' Chinese GP performance

FERNANDO ALONSO DESCRIBED his drive in the Chinese Grand Prix as "incredible" after retiring from eighth place. He stopped after 33 laps thanks to a driveshaft problem, just after being repassed by Toro Rosso's Carlos Sainz Jr.

After describing his own performance in the season-opening Australian GP, where he ran in the top 10 against expectations, as "probably the best race of my life", Alonso suggested China was even better. McLaren-Honda came to Shanghai expecting to struggle badly, owing to the Honda engine's lack of power.

McLaren parked a new rear wing update after practice, but Alonso still qualified 13th and looked set for a comfortable points finish until his car failed.

"I thought Australia would be unrepeatable and here it was the same or even better," Alonso said. "The conditions helped. When the track was damp we were



keeping the pace of the best with a top-speed deficit. [It's] one of the best things that has happened to me."

Team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne also retired with a fuel system problem.

"Having not done testing we are discovering new problems race after race," Alonso added. "Let's hope we can have a normal reliability soon to be able to finish the races."

VERSTAPPEN STARS WITH PODIUM CHARGE

MAX VERSTAPPEN DELIVERED ANOTHER stirring drive in mixed conditions to bag Red Bull's first podium of the season in the Chinese Grand Prix, despite starting 16th after a problem with his Renault engine's ignition coil in qualifying.

Verstappen's charge to third earned him Formula 1's driver-of-the-day prize from a vote of fans, and the praise of his team boss Christian Horner, who reckons Verstappen has a "sixth sense" for grip in wet conditions.

The performance underlined Verstappen's emerging status as a wet-weather specialist, following impressive performances last season.

Q&A

RED BULL TEAM BOSS CHRISTIAN HORNER



How good was Max's wet race performance?

"Remarkable. His first lap in particular was mighty. I saw one of his passing moves where he went down the outside and passed about three cars and it was obvious that he meant business. He emerged from the first lap in seventh place, so it was hugely impressive."

Why is Max so good in the wet?

"He appears to have almost a sixth sense in the wet. He doesn't seem intimidated by it in any way, and is prepared to explore all the boundaries of the circuit to find where the grip is."

Where does he stand against the greats?

"I think he is right up there. It is not a coincidence now - you can see Brazil wasn't a one off, and that maybe good old Bernie's sprinkler system would be good for us. The way he has grown up driving go-karts in the wet on slick tyres, he has developed a real instinct and feeling."

What odds did you give on a podium finish?

"I think he was 30-1 to be on the podium, so it's a shame you guys didn't put any money on him. He did an amazing job. I had dinner with Helmut [Marko] and I said I bet he will be on the podium - that's why we looked at the odds. The drive he had was first class."



‘Totally mad’ Sainz stars with race to seventh

CARLOS SAINZ JR SAID his team thought he was crazy to gamble on starting the Chinese Grand Prix on slick tyres, before his starring drive to seventh.

The Toro Rosso driver slipped to the back of the field off the line, but

caught the pack in just a handful of corners on the dry part of the lap, and made up ground when everyone pitted for slicks.

“You should have seen the faces of my engineers, of Franz Tost, of Helmut Marko, when I told them

I wanted to start on the super-soft,” Sainz said. “They looked at me like I was totally mad, but it worked.”

Sainz had a lucky escape when he spun behind the safety car between Turns 2 and 3, but recovered

superbly and matched the pace of the leading cars for 11 laps after the restart.

“I thought I had blown it, I was so angry with myself,” Sainz added. “But in those cases you need to reset your mind. Suddenly the safety car came in and

we were faster than Ferrari, faster than Red Bull, in damp conditions.

“I couldn’t believe it – yesterday [in qualifying] they were two seconds faster than us, but in these conditions you can show you can make a difference.”



Friday practice cancelled after bad weather grounds helicopter

THE SECOND PRACTICE session for the Chinese Grand Prix was cancelled due to poor weather, leading to criticism that F1 needs to do more to entertain fans when track action is disrupted.

While the damp track conditions were fine for the cars, a lack of visibility meant it was not safe for the medical helicopter

to land at the FIA’s designated hospital, forcing a halt to proceedings.

With the weather forecast predicting similar conditions for Sunday, Formula 1 teams met with the FIA to discuss bringing the race forward to Saturday to avoid the risk of cancellation. But race director Charlie Whiting ruled out a change of

timetable, confident that higher cloud and windier conditions forecast for Sunday would prevent a repeat.

The FIA also arranged for a police escort to be on standby for ambulances, in case the medical helicopter could not operate, and for qualified neurological staff to be transferred to a closer hospital.

McLaren boss Zak Brown said the cancellation of Friday practice made him feel “terrible” for fans, and believes a better contingency plan is needed in future.

Lewis Hamilton, who crossed the track to greet spectators and hand out signed caps, felt F1’s new owners Liberty Media should take what happened as inspiration to spice up the format.



Haas criticises Grosjean penalty

HAAS TEAM BOSS GUNTHER STEINER criticised the decision to penalise Romain Grosjean for an offence under yellow flags, following Antonio Giovinazzi’s crash in Chinese Grand Prix qualifying.

Grosjean and Renault’s Jolyon Palmer were both penalised for improving under double-waved yellow flags for Giovinazzi’s wrecked Sauber, after he went off exiting the final corner.

Grosjean took to Twitter to reveal data from his lap, saying: “Apparently I made no effort to slow down and didn’t abandon the lap... data shows a different point of view.”

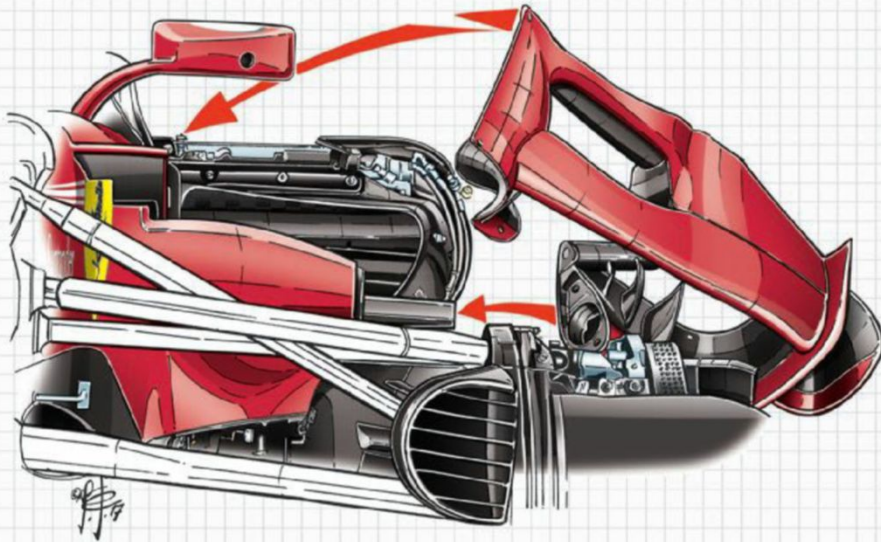
“The data that Romain tweeted speaks for itself,” Steiner said. “I don’t know if they look at all this stuff. It’s pretty unfair, and it’s not what they should be doing.”

Kevin Magnussen scored points for eighth in the race, but Grosjean finished out of the points after starting 19th.



DRAWING BOARD

By Giorgio Piola and Gary Anderson



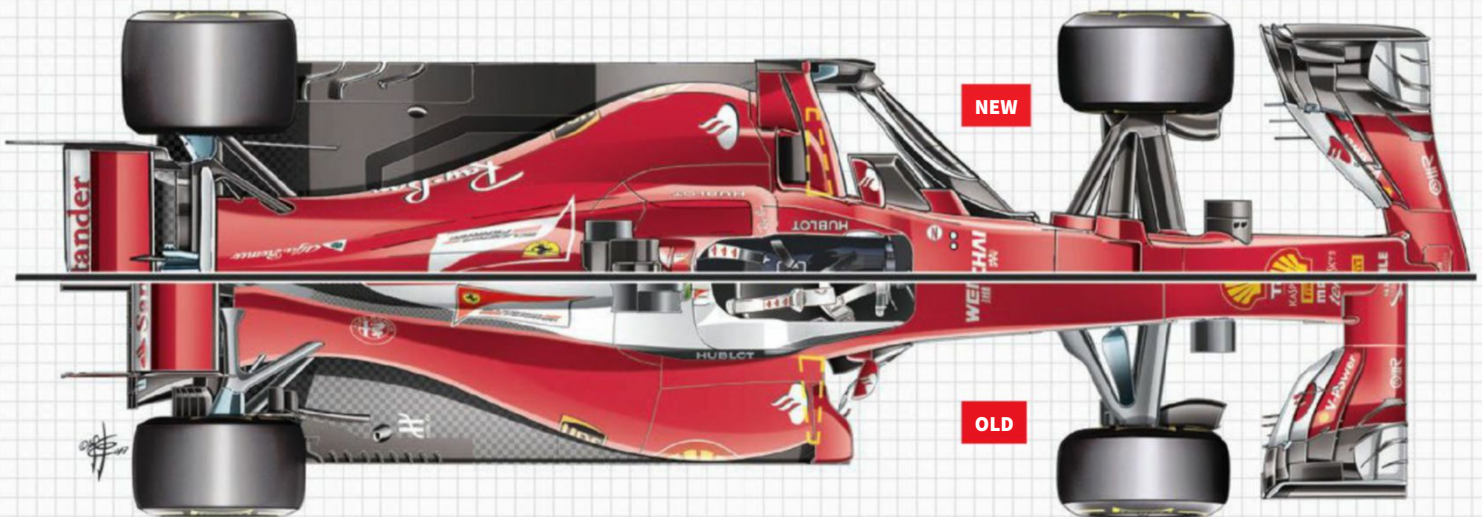
FERRARI SIDEPOD FAIRING

Now that the front tyres are 25% wider than before, the turbulence they create has increased. To manage this, and keep it away from the sidepod leading edge, Mercedes has given its W08 a longer wheelbase.

By contrast, Ferrari created a very complicated bargeboard and turning vane system. This package houses the mandatory sidepod impact structures,

while keeping the sidepod and radiator inlet area as far away from the front wheels as possible.

If this isn't managed correctly it can create a major loss of downforce from the underfloor. A longer wheelbase is not a bad thing, but it will make the car a little lazier. This can be a positive in faster corners, but a negative in slower corners.



NOSE AND S-DUCT

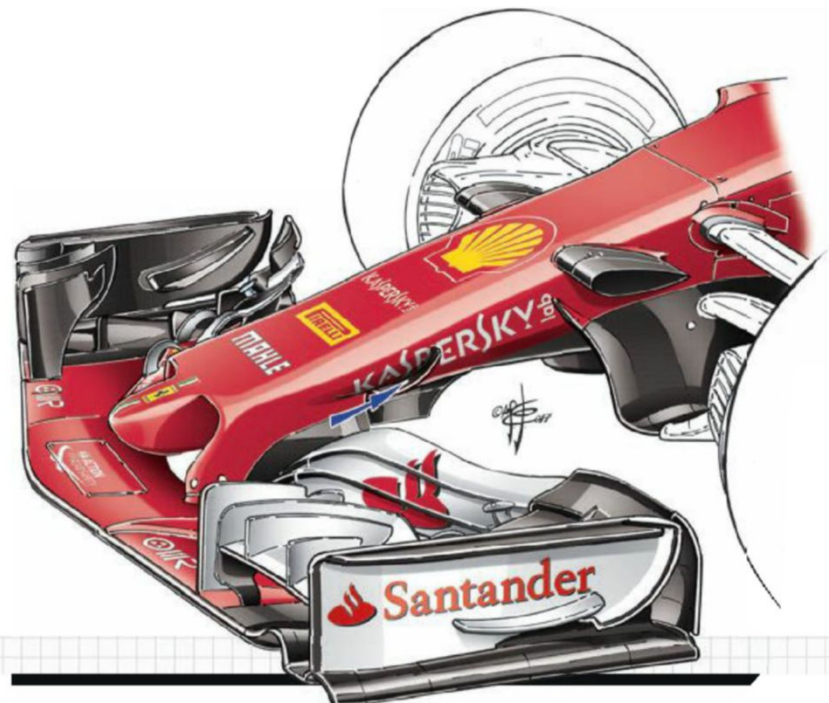
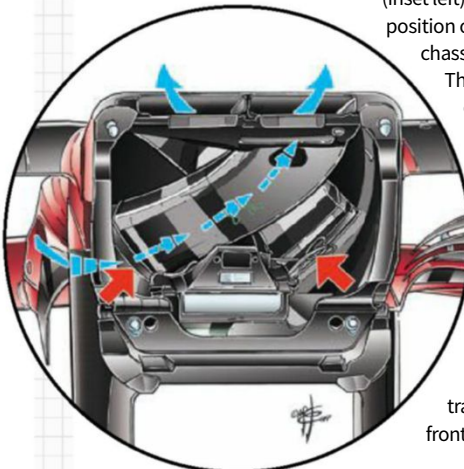
Most teams have their S-duct intake on the underside of the nose, but Ferrari's is on the

side, shown by a blue arrow in our illustration (right).

The internal channels (inset left) lead to the common position on top of the chassis/nose interface.

This reduces the lift caused by the airflow speeding up over the upper body surface. It also helps to keep the airflow attached where the inlet is positioned.

In Ferrari's case, it needs to be at the trailing edge of the front wing mountings.



F1/CHINESE GRAND PRIX RESULTS

STARTING GRID

1 Hamilton #44 1m31.678s	2 Vettel #5 1m31.864s	3 Bottas #77 1m31.865s	4 Raikkonen #7 1m32.140s	5 Ricciardo #3 1m33.033s	6 Massa #19 1m33.507s	7 Hulkenberg #27 1m33.580s	8 Perez #11 1m33.706s	9 Kvyat #26 1m33.719s	10 Stroll #18 1m34.220s	11 Sainz #55 1m34.150s
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Race results / 56 laps - 189.568 miles

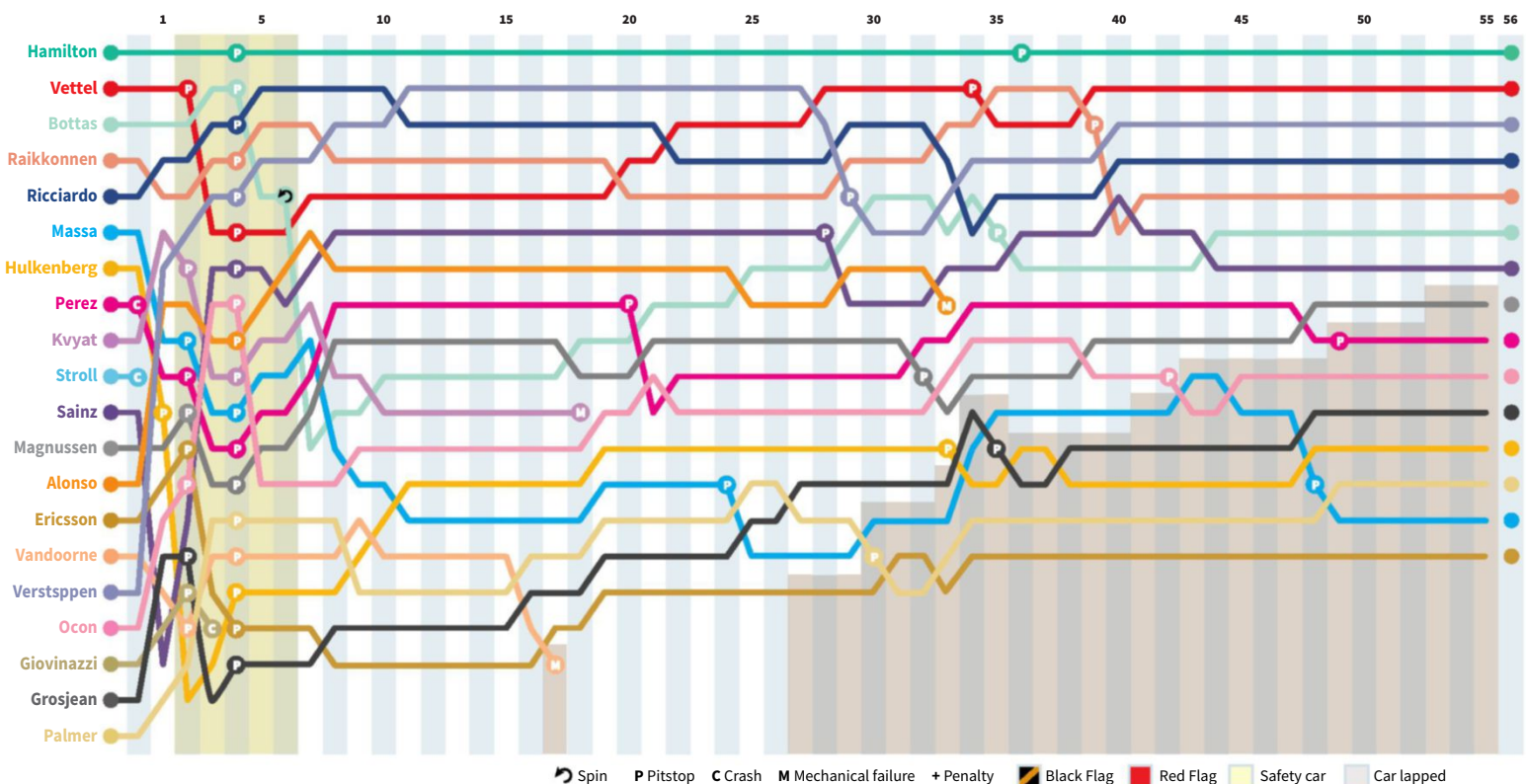
Fastest laps

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	TIME IN PITS	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1h37m36.158s	56	●●●●	45.667s	1	Hamilton	1m35.378s	-	44
2	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	+6.250s		●●●●	45.349s	2	Vettel	1m35.423s	+0.045s	40
3	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-Renault	+45.192s		●●●●	45.576s	3	Bottas	1m35.849s	+0.471s	41
4	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-Renault	+46.035s		●●●●	1m03.458s	4	Raikkonen	1m36.003s	+0.625s	42
5	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	+48.076s		●●●●	46.966s	5	Massa	1m36.511s	+1.133s	50
6	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	+48.808s		●●●●	56.604s	6	Perez	1m36.531s	+1.153s	55
7	Carlos Sainz	Toro Rosso-Renault	+1m12.893s		●●●●	22.840s	7	Verstappen	1m36.722s	+1.344s	31
8	Kevin Magnussen	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●●●	47.272s	8	Ricciardo	1m36.791s	+1.413s	36
9	Sergio Perez	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●●●	1m10.066s	9	Ocon	1m37.036s	+1.658s	55
10	Esteban Ocon	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●●●	1m14.090s	10	Sainz	1m37.398s	+2.020s	30
11	Romain Grosjean	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●●●	1m17.979s	11	Magnussen	1m37.528s	+2.150s	35
12	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	-1 lap		●●●●	1m03.694s	12	Grosjean	1m37.551s	+2.173s	50
13	Jolyon Palmer	Renault	-1 lap		●●●●	23.993s	13	Hulkenberg	1m38.015s	+2.637s	36
14	Felipe Massa	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●●●	1m09.091s	14	Palmer	1m38.181s	+2.803s	47
15	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●●●	27.934s	15	Alonso	1m39.496s	+4.118s	31
R	Fernando Alonso	McLaren-Honda	33 laps-halfshaft		●●●●	24.250s	16	Ericsson	1m39.732s	+4.354s	50
R	Daniil Kvyat	Toro Rosso-Renault	18 laps-hydraulics		●●●●	24.016s	17	Kvyat	1m40.090s	+4.712s	18
R	Stoffel Vandoorne	McLaren-Honda	17 laps-fuel pressure		●●●●	25.146s	18	Vandoorne	1m41.460s	+6.082s	15
R	Antonio Giovinazzi	Sauber-Ferrari	3 laps-spun off		●●●●	29.443s	19	Giovinazzi	2m02.409s	+27.031s	1
R	Lance Stroll	Williams-Mercedes	0 laps-collision		●●●●	-	20	Stroll	-	-	-

WEATHER Wet, drying; track 15C, air 12C WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 116.529mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 127.844mph ● New ○ Used ● Ultra-soft ● Super-soft ● Soft ● Medium ● Hard ● Wet ● Intermediate

5.9 Centimetres over the line that represents the 0.001s gap between Vettel and Bottas in qualifying	59 Hamilton's 'grand slam' (pole, fastest lap, all laps led) is the 59th in F1 world championship history	61 Massa has now started 61 world championship races for Williams, one more than Alan Jones	84 Despite McLaren's troubles, Alonso has run in the points for 84% of his laps completed in 2017	75 This was the 75th F1 pole position for the works Mercedes team	100 This was the 100th race in which Red Bull has been on the podium in F1	106 Hamilton has now scored as many F1 podiums as four-time champion Alain Prost
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Lap chart / What happened, when





13 Alonso #14
1m34.372s



15 Vandoorne #2
1m35.023s



17 Ocon #31
1m35.496s



19 Grosjean #8
1m35.223s



12 Magnussen #20
1m34.164s



14 Ericsson #9
1m35.046s



16 Verstappen #33
1m35.433s



18 Giovinazzi #36
no Q2 time



20 Palmer #30
1m35.279s

Qualifying 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m33.078s
2	Hamilton	1m33.333s
3	Raikkonen	1m33.341s
4	Bottas	1m33.684s
5	Stroll	1m33.986s
6	Ricciardo	1m34.041s
7	Massa	1m34.205s
8	Kvyat	1m34.440s
9	Hulkenberg	1m34.453s
10	Alonso	1m34.499s
11	Sainz	1m34.567s
12	Perez	1m34.657s
13	Ericsson	1m34.892s
14	Magnussen	1m34.942s
15	Giovinazzi	1m34.963s
16	Vandoorne	1m35.023s
17	Grosjean	1m35.223s
18	Palmer	1m35.279s
19	Verstappen	1m35.433s
20	Ocon	1m35.496s

Qualifying 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Raikkonen	1m32.181s
2	Vettel	1m32.391s
3	Hamilton	1m32.406s
4	Bottas	1m32.552s
5	Ricciardo	1m33.546s
6	Hulkenberg	1m33.636s
7	Massa	1m33.759s
8	Perez	1m33.920s
9	Kvyat	1m34.034s
10	Stroll	1m34.090s
11	Sainz	1m34.150s
12	Magnussen	1m34.164s
13	Alonso	1m34.372s
14	Ericsson	1m35.046s
15	Giovinazzi	no time

Qualifying 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m31.678s
2	Vettel	1m31.864s
3	Bottas	1m31.865s
4	Raikkonen	1m32.140s
5	Ricciardo	1m33.033s
6	Massa	1m33.507s
7	Hulkenberg	1m33.580s
8	Perez	1m33.706s
9	Kvyat	1m33.719s
10	Stroll	1m34.220s

Race briefing

GRID PENALTIES

GROSJEAN 5-place penalty for failing to slow for double waved yellow flags

PALMER 5-place penalty for failing to slow for double waved yellow flags

GIOVINAZZI 5-place penalty for replacement gearbox

WEATHER Dry, cloudy; track 32C, air 21C

SEASON STATS

Drivers' championship

1	Vettel	43
1	Hamilton	43
3	Verstappen	25
4	Bottas	23
5	Raikkonen	22
6	Ricciardo	12
7	Sainz	10
8	Massa	8
9	Perez	8
10	Magnussen	4
11	Kvyat	2
12	Ocon	2
13	Hulkenberg	0
14	Grosjean	0
15	Giovinazzi	0
16	Palmer	0
16	Vandoorne	0
18	Ericsson	0
19	Wehrlein	0
20	Vandoorne	0

Constructors' championship

1	Mercedes	66
2	Ferrari	65
3	Red Bull	37
4	Toro Rosso	12
5	Force India	10
6	Williams	8
7	Haas	4
8	Renault	0
9	Sauber	0
10	McLaren	0

Wins

Hamilton	1
Vettel	1

Fastest laps

Hamilton	1
Raikkonen	1

Pole positions

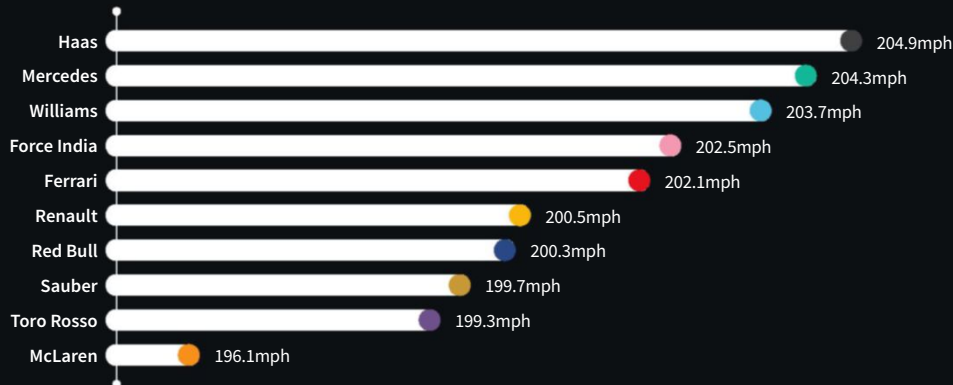
Hamilton	2
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Qualifying battle

HAM	2	0	BOT
RIC	1	1	VER
VET	2	0	RAI
PER	2	0	OCO
STR	0	2	MAS
VAN	0	2	ALO
KVY	1	1	SAI
GRO	1	1	MAG
HUL	2	0	PAL
ERI	2	0	GIO

SPEED TRAP

Fastest for each constructor in qualifying



Free practice 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m50.491s
2	Massa	1m52.086s
3	Stroll	1m52.507s
4	Sainz	1m52.840s
5	Grosjean	1m53.039s
6	Kvyat	1m53.314s
7	Alonso	1m53.520s
8	Ricciardo	1m54.038s
9	Bottas	1m54.664s
10	Magnussen	1m55.104s
11	Hulkenberg	1m55.608s
12	Vandoorne	1m57.445s
13	Ericsson	2m15.138s
14	Giovinazzi	2m15.281s
15	Palmer	no time
16	Vettel	no time
17	Raikkonen	no time
18	Ocon	no time
19	Perez	no time
20	Hamilton	no time

Free practice 2

CANCELLED



WEATHER Wet, cloudy; track 15C, air 13C

Free practice 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m33.336s
2	Raikkonen	1m33.389s
3	Bottas	1m33.707s
4	Hamilton	1m33.879s
5	Massa	1m34.773s
6	Verstappen	1m34.946s
7	Ricciardo	1m35.092s
8	Stroll	1m35.182s
9	Palmer	1m35.192s
10	Sainz	1m35.223s
11	Hulkenberg	1m35.449s
12	Magnussen	1m35.521s
13	Perez	1m35.626s
14	Grosjean	1m35.680s
15	Kvyat	1m35.804s
16	Ocon	1m35.811s
17	Alonso	1m35.912s
18	Ericsson	1m36.063s
19	Vandoorne	1m36.221s
20	Giovinazzi	1m36.705s

WEATHER Dry, cloudy; track 32C, air 20C

WEATHER Wet, raining; track 15C, air 13C

NEXT RACE



Bahrain Grand Prix
April 14-16

Podium perfection

The top three in China all deserved 10 out of 10 in our rankings

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

[@BenAndersonAuto](#)

MERCEDES



10 LEWIS HAMILTON

Mercedes admits it is not yet fully on top of its new car, but Hamilton made the difference against Ferrari again in qualifying to bag pole. Was untroubled in the race thanks to Vettel's strategic misfortune, but Hamilton cannot be faulted for the way he expertly controlled a hectic grand prix.



7 VALTTERI BOTTAS

Earned deserved praise from the team for nearly halving his pace deficit to Hamilton, only 0.187s behind in qualifying. Bottas felt he should have finished second here, but a jack problem at his first stop and an "amateur" spin while warming his tyres behind the safety car cost him dearly.

RED BULL



8 DANIEL RICCIARDO

Was quite happy with the balance of his car in qualifying, but Red Bull's lack of downforce and power meant he was in a no-man's land behind Mercedes and Ferrari. Outshone by team-mate Verstappen through the first half of the race, before a front wing change transformed the car's handling.



10 MAX VERSTAPPEN

Verstappen is arguably the best driver on the grid in mixed conditions. Pure confidence and reflexes negated Saturday's ignition coil problem, as he waltzed past nine rivals on the opening lap and beat his team-mate wheel-to-wheel. Rooting the front tyres allowed Vettel through, but this was still a great drive.

FERRARI



10 SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Admitted he "chickened" on the brakes into the final corner in Q3, but didn't think pole was reachable. His race was an outstanding effort in adversity. Overtook Raikkonen and Ricciardo decisively and chased Hamilton gamely after safety car setback, but the mountain was just too big to climb.



6 KIMI RAIKKONEN

Was happier here than in Melbourne, but continues to be troubled by understeer and cannot seem to find a way to drive around it. Was too far off in Q3, after looking decent in Q2, and was shown up by the way Vettel raced the Red Bulls. Even Ferrari's president was critical, so the pressure is really on to fix things.

FORCE INDIA



7 SERGIO PEREZ

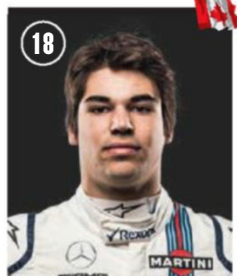
Did well to qualify eighth in a car that didn't look top-10 fast in practice – but he was lucky Giovinazzi's crash stopped others bumping him out in Q1. Recovered after botching the race start, survived a collision with Stroll, and might have beaten Magnussen but for getting stuck behind Alonso and burning up his tyres.



8 ESTEBAN OCON

Didn't qualify well on a track he doesn't know, but both his Q1 runs were spoiled by yellow flags and it's possible he would have bumped Perez out had Giovinazzi not crashed. Driving through the pits unnecessarily on lap two cost valuable time, but drove well to recover into the points again, just 6.6s behind Perez.

WILLIAMS



6 LANCE STROLL

Felt steering changes had transformed the car after a difficult debut in Melbourne, and was in much better form here. Making Q3 was decent, but used the best of his engine modes to get there and got slower as the session progressed. Had no chance in the race thanks to an unfortunate accident.



4 FELIPE MASSA

It briefly looked as though Massa might bother Ricciardo's Red Bull in qualifying, but ultimately that proved well out of reach. The race was a disaster – he lost ground at the start, lost tyre temperature behind the safety car, dropped to the back of the midfield, and never recovered. Very disappointing.

McLAREN



5 STOFFEL VANDOORNE

Another difficult weekend for Vandoorne, who lapped more than half a second behind Alonso in Q1 and got dumped out after a "scrappy" lap. He didn't make any progress at the start of the race and made little impression on proceedings generally, before a fuel problem put him out of his misery 17 laps in.



10 FERNANDO ALONSO

Another outstanding effort from Alonso in tough circumstances. Whether qualifying 13th was a "divine present" or not, making the top 10 in Q1 was excellent. Maximised conditions to put McLaren-Honda in the hunt for unlikely points, until his MCL32's transmission developed a fatal leak.



Sainz was impressive in tricky conditions



TORO ROSSO



7 DANIIIL KVIYAT
Was narrowly the best of the two Toro Rosso drivers in qualifying. Put himself in a great position with a strong opening lap in the race, but his weekend petered out as he struggled on slicks in the mixed conditions and dropped out of the points, before a hydraulic problem stopped his car.

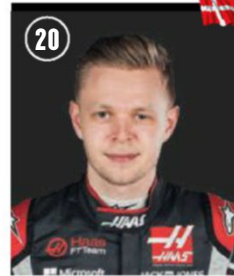


10 CARLOS SAINZ JR
I'm awarding Sainz a perfect score in spite of him qualifying behind Kvyat and smacking the barrier early in the race. He was outstanding after that early scrape on slicks on a treacherous track – keeping up with the frontrunning pack for 11 laps after the restart, and proving a class apart from the midfield.

HAAS

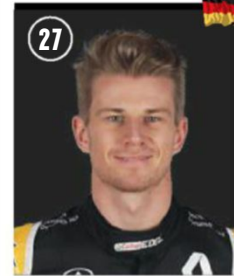


7 ROMAIN GROSJEAN
Messd up his first Q1 run with a spin, but was looking comfortably fast enough for Q2 before Giovinazzi crashed. The race's early safety car pit shuffle dropped him to last, and getting stuck behind Palmer ruined his recovery. Eventually cleared both Renaults and Massa's Williams with bold overtaking.



8 KEVIN MAGNUSSEN
Not the cleanest qualifying from Magnussen again, as he missed out on getting into Q3 by just 0.074s, but drove a very decent race in tough conditions to bag his first points for Haas. Kept his nose clean early on as others faltered and managed his tyres well, which helped him beat both Force Indias in the end.

RENAULT

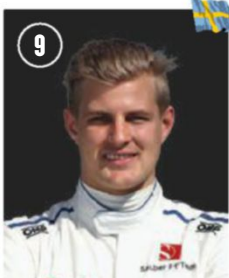


7 NICO HULKENBERG
Surprised himself by qualifying seventh, only 0.073s behind Massa's Williams, a great effort in a car not yet considered the most potent in the midfield. Passed Massa for sixth at the start, but was undone by spins after an early stop for slicks, and earned 15s of penalties for overtaking under the safety cars.



5 JOLYON PALMER
Lapping ninth fastest in practice suggested Palmer was in the midfield mix, but he flat-spotted his first set of tyres in Q1, and then dropped out. Felt that pitting for slicks on the formation lap was correct, but struggled badly after the restart. Matching Hulkenberg in the final stint was the only bright spot.

SAUBER



5 MARCUS ERICSSON
Needed two laps to narrowly outqualify rookie team-mate Giovinazzi again, after lapping nearly four tenths slower on his first effort. Giovinazzi's subsequent crash ensured passage to Q2. Started the race well enough, but never got the tyres working all race long and was cast adrift at the back.

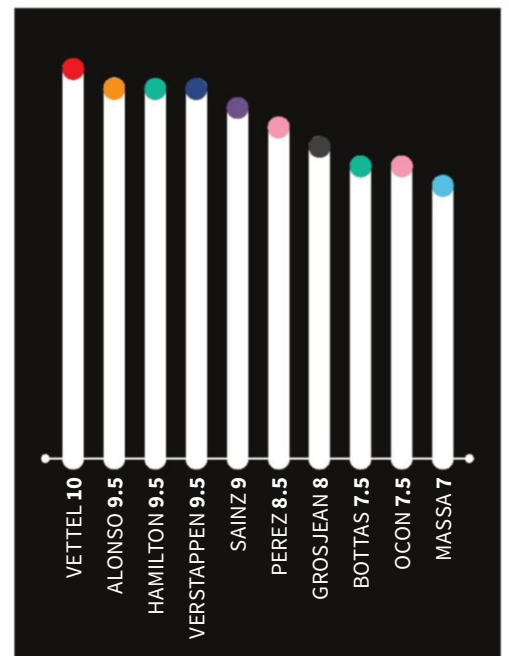


4 ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI
Didn't cover himself in glory. Briefly outpacing Ericsson in Q1 despite not knowing the track gave another glimpse of Giovinazzi's talent, but this good work was undone by two massive shunts on the main straight – first in Q1 then again on lap four of the race. A weekend to forget, ultimately.



Vettel was outstanding once again

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATING



Neuville breaks his duck as Meeke's engine goes bang

Hyundai's Thierry Neuville delivered on his early season promise with an assured victory in Corsica

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

[@davidevansrally](#)

Standing on a bank high above the road to Col de Bellevalle, I suddenly became aware that all conversation had stopped. Silence. Almost silence. A bellow. Closer. Louder. Bouncing off the mountains, the roar was interrupted only by the harsh anti-lag chatter that accompanies the negotiation of another of Corsica's famous 10,000 *virages*. Sebastien Ogier came into view mid-drift, playing with the throttle, flirting with a ditch and a drop.

As he departed, near silence returned as my companions and I gathered our thoughts and considered what we'd just seen. Pinch yourself. Did it really happen? Did we really just see that? It happened. Ogier provided proof in the shape of a pair of perfectly demarcated black arcs burned onto the road before our very eyes.

The WRC's record book will reflect Thierry Neuville's victory – a first of the season for him and Hyundai Motorsport – in Bastia last week. But the big winner was rallying and the WRC. Last week's Tour de Corse was proof that the new technical regulations have delivered precisely the shot in the arm the sport needed.

Four-wheeled powerslides with sticky tyres on hot tar has been the stuff of dreams for rally fans ever since the FIA strangled Group A cars with smaller restrictors at the end of 1994. Last week that dream became a reality. What's more, after nine years of Sebastien Loeb

domination and a further four of Ogier-Volkswagen supremacy, a fourth win for a fourth manufacturer in as many WRC rounds is just about the best possible indicator of the competitiveness of this new generation.

It's 30 years since four different makes won four rallies in a row, with Mazda, Lancia, Audi and BMW enjoying early success in 1987.

How times have changed. Three decades ago, nobody knew from one rally to the next which of those manufacturers would be turning up, such was the WRC's uncertainty in the immediate aftermath of Group B. Now? Week after next, it's Argentina to do it all again.

“It's 30 years since four different makes won four rallies in a row”

Who's going to win? Absolutely no idea.

Ogier, M-Sport, Jari-Matti Latvala and Toyota all have, to a large extent, one man to thank for their victories in Monte Carlo and Sweden. And that man was Thierry Neuville.

Looking comfortable out front in rounds one and two, the Belgian dropped it. He picked it up again with a ship-steadying podium in Mexico last month before pulling off a richly deserved win last Sunday. Arriving on Corsica, Neuville had won 16 of the 51 stages run and led for 23 of them. From the French Alps through the frozen north to the rocky roads of North America, Neuville had been ahead for almost half the stages

so far this season. On Sunday, potential turned to top step.

But the worry for the Frankfurt-based team is that he only went P1 once Kris Meeke's Citroen C3 WRC had lunched its motor on Saturday. Before Meeke's engine covered itself liberally in oil at the end of SS6, the Rally Mexico winner had been almost untouchable.

Fastest on three of the six stages he completed, Meeke rocketed into a 16-second lead and looked good for the kind of back-to-back wins that would put him back into title contention.

Towards the end of the 11-mile Novella stage, everything came undone. The first thing Meeke noticed was a change in the

car's handling. But it soon became clear what was actually going wrong.

“I started to understeer on some right-handers, which I thought was strange,” he said. “Maybe a kilometre later I started to see some oil coming through the front-left vent.

I knew it wasn't a damper. Immediately after that I got the oil pressure warning light on the dash. By now we were virtually at the end of the stage, but as soon as I put my foot on the throttle it let go; and basically, er, there's no way to put this politely: it shit itself.”

Meeke and co-driver Paul Nagle were deeply disappointed, but Dani Sordo was quick to point out that Lady Luck can be two-faced at the best of times.

“I'm sorry for Kris, he didn't deserve this,” said the Hyundai-driving Spaniard. “Maybe he ran out of luck on this one; I think he used it all up in Mexico!”

Few who witnessed Meeke's C3 flying through a hedge and touring a car park >>>





MCKLEIN

WORLD'S FASTEST HAND SIGNALS

DOES THE RALLY OF 10,000 CORNERS REALLY have 10,000 corners? Probably not. But it's not far off. Sunday's 33-miler – the event's longest test – from Antisanti to Poggio di Nazza was interspersed with 900 bends.

Describing those 900 bends took close to 100 pages of pacenotes and 34 minutes of non-stop talking from the co-drivers. On stage six, Craig Breen's partner Scott Martin sat in complete silence. He didn't say a word. A failed intercom meant the Englishman could offer no verbal guidance aboard the Citroen C3 WRC. Instead, he resorted to hand signals.

Holding his pacenote book with one hand, he flicked fingers at Breen to let him know which gear he needed to be for the next corner. At the same time, he created never-before-seen shapes with his hand to offer a visible prompt as to the severity of the coming curve.

"The only problem," said Martin, "was when we had a sixth-gear corner. I had to let go of the book to give him six fingers!"

It was an outstanding effort from Martin and from Breen, who had (mercifully or presciently) decided to watch the onboard video of the stage twice that morning.

Once the disappointment had waned, Breen admitted some of the sign language coming from his right was interesting.

"A couple of times I knew the corner that was coming and I thought, 'What's he going to do now?' To be honest, he was absolutely brilliant."

Talking of brilliant, we couldn't close out these pages without highlighting another peerless drive to a second successive WRC2 victory for Skoda's own ringer Andreas Mikkelsen. The Norwegian's command of a factory Fabia R5 once more reminded the watching world of what a waste it is to have such a great talent sitting on the sidelines.

Seemingly not for much longer, though – but more on that next week.

WRC TV



before returning to the stage to win in Mexico would disagree.

Only time – and a complete strip of the motor back in Paris – will tell if the #7 Citroen had been genuinely unlucky. There and then, it mattered little. The result was the same: Meeke and Nagle tucked into a bottle of beer and a sandwich from a roadside cafe instead of defending their lead at the front of the fourth round of the world championship.

Ogier was the immediate beneficiary of Meeke's demise, but last year's Corsica winner never technically led; Meeke's broken C3 crossed the line and retained a single-second lead over the M-Sport Ford Fiesta WRC.

One stage later and Ogier was under attack and overhauled by Neuville, who'd found the feeling aboard his i20 on day two. The same couldn't be said for Ogier.

Neuville's contentment was clear from Saturday's opener, where he went 8.8s faster than his main rivals. At the stage end, Neuville knew he'd driven well, but there wasn't the same kind of brash confidence we'd seen in Monte and Sweden. He was more reserved, more considered. He'd walked on water earlier in the year and sunk both times.

Just as Ogier was at a loss (or possibly unwilling...) to explain his feelings with the Fiesta, so Neuville couldn't really fathom his Saturday speed.

"We made some changes all around the car, but nothing major," he said. "We didn't change the set-up completely. I think the difference is in the nature of the road: it's a bit dirtier, more slippery."

Keeping a modern-day World Rally Car pinned through Corsican corners with compromised grip demands one thing: total confidence. Neuville had that.

He also had a car that was set up beautifully; soft enough to give traction on the loose, but still firm enough to provide precision when he got up through the gears and needed to lean on it a little bit more.

That's not to detract from Neuville's own input. He found consistent speed in

Meeke was flying until his engine let go



places his team-mates were unwilling to go with their i20s. Sordo, Hyundai's asphalt specialist, was all over the shop but managed to drag a podium out of it.

Hayden Paddon, by his own admission, wasn't really in the vicinity of the races.

For that reason, Hyundai team principal Michel Nandan's celebrations were slightly muted. "Of course we are relieved and we are happy, but we also know we have work to do," he said. "If Kris didn't have his problems, it would have been a big fight."

Would Neuville have had him?

"If you asked me on Friday, I say no," said the winner, "but after that first stage on Saturday I thought, 'Hmm, maybe this can be interesting...'"

The relief for Neuville was huge at the finish. He's a driver who never doubts himself, but the past couple of years have caused him to have a second look in the

Reliability issues held up Sebastien Ogier



McKLEIN



RALLY GURU

mirror. Mid-way through 2015, there were more than a few at Hyundai who wanted him gone, such as his attitude and reluctance to play a team game, but he's reset, regrouped and come back a stronger driver. Those two mistakes at the top of this season reminded him how fine the line is between hero and villain.

Talking of learning lessons, Ogier and M-Sport depart Corsica with homework to do. The set-up aboard the first Fiesta changed constantly through the event as Ogier sought sanctuary across the island's unforgiving bumps. It was, however, hydraulic failure (M-Sport's second, although Elfyn Evans came off worse, losing his paddleshift and centre diff for much of Friday – the event's only service-free day) on the last Saturday stage and an electrical glitch on Sunday morning's 33-miler that ended his hopes of a second win of the season. In fact, with one stage remaining, Ogier had slipped to third behind Sordo. Typically, the champ dug deep to elbow his way back past in the final six miles, further extending his lead of the championship and ensuring positives from what had been a trying event.

Craig Breen stepped up to provide Citroen's positives in the wake of Meeke's early bath. Last week was another superb run from the Waterford driver who now looks entirely at home among world rallying's elite. Without an intercom problem on Saturday (see page 32), fourth place would have been his, but he lost out to Toyota's Jari-Matti Latvala by the smallest possible margin.

Arriving at the end of one Saturday stage, Neuville was still wide-eyed and breathless. "I'm running for my life," he grinned. "I feel like I'm flying."

Finally, his season has taken off. 🚀

RESULTS ROUND 4/13, TOUR DE CORSE, APRIL 6-9

POS	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Thierry Neuville (B)	Nicolas Gilsoul (B)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	3h22m53.4s
2	Sebastien Ogier (F)	Julien Ingrassia (F)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+54.7s
3	Dani Sordo (E)	Marc Marti (E)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+56.0s
4	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	+1m09.6s
5	Craig Breen (IRL)	Scott Martin (GB)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	+1m09.7s
6	Hayden Paddon (NZ)	John Kennard (NZ)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+2m16.3s
7	Andreas Mikkelsen (N)	Anders Jager (N)	Skoda Motorsport · Skoda Fabia R5	+8m10.7s
8	Teemu Suninen (FIN)	Mikko Markkula (FIN)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta R5	+9m17.0s
9	Stephane Sarrazin (F)	Jacques-Julien Renucci (F)	Sarrazin Motorsport · Skoda Fabia R5	+9m23.6s
10	Yohan Rossel (F)	Benoit Fulcrand (F)	FFSA Rallye · Citroen DS3 R5	+12m57.1s
OTHERS				
11	Ott Tanak (EST)	Martin Jarveoja (EST)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+15m20.3s
21	Elfyn Evans (GB)	Daniel Barritt (GB)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+28m52.3s
27	Alain Vauthier (F)	Stevie Nollet (F)	Wagner Meca · Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+40m27.9s
31	Armando Pereira (F)	Remi Tutelaire (F)	Wagner Meca · Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+41m36.2s
50	Stephane Lefebvre (F)	Gabin Moreau (F)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	+1h11m57.3s
R	Juho Hanninen (FIN)	Kaj Lindstrom (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	SS9-accident
R	Kris Meeke (GB)	Paul Nagle (IRL)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	SS6-engine



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DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ogier 88; 2 Latvala 75; 3 Neuville 54; 4 Tanak 48; 5 Sordo 47; 6 Breen 33; 7 Meeke 27; 8 Paddon 25; 9 Evans 20; 10 Mikkelsen 12.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 M-Sport WRT 129; 2 Hyundai Motorsport 105; 3 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC 79; 4 Citroen Total 71.

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Pietrosella-Albitreccia1 19.39 miles	Meeke 19m56.5s	Meeke	Ogier +5.7s
SS2 Plage du Liamone-Sarrola Carcopino1 18.09 miles	Meeke 18m22.3s	Meeke	Ogier +8.9s
SS3 Pietrosella-Albitreccia2 19.39 miles	Ogier 19m52.1s	Meeke	Ogier +8.1s
SS4 Plage du Liamone-Sarrola Carcopino2 18.09 miles	Meeke 18m20.4s	Meeke	Ogier +10.3s
SS5 La Porta-Valle di Rostino1 30.27 miles	Neuville 32m19.6s	Meeke	Ogier +16.4s
SS6 Novella1 10.72 miles	Neuville 11m13.1s	Neuville	Ogier +8.2s
SS7 La Porta-Valle di Rostino2 30.27 miles	Ogier 32m15.9s	Neuville	Ogier +2.2s
SS8 Novella2 10.72 miles	Neuville 11m17.7s	Neuville	Ogier +38.9s
SS9 Antisanti-Poggio di Nazza 33.42 miles	Neuville 32m34.6s	Neuville	Sordo +57.8s
SS10 Porto Vecchio-Palombaggia [Power Stage] 6.47 miles	Latvala 6m02.2s	Neuville	Ogier +54.7s



Hinchcliffe stars on

The charismatic Schmidt Peterson Motorsports driver delivered a near-perfect performance at the prestigious Long Beach circuit, but other contenders would have made worthy winners

By David Malsher, IndyCar Correspondent

[@DavidMalsher](#)

Charismatic races deserve charismatic winners, and this year's 43rd running of IndyCar's most prestigious race outside of Indianapolis delivered. James Hinchcliffe, the man who can dance like a star, talk like Bob Hope and rise like Lazarus can also drive like an ace. He was metronomic, fast and unruffled in delivering a victory that was his fifth,

Schmidt Peterson Motorsports-Honda's sixth, but only their second together. The first win had been the abortive and aborted event at New Orleans Motorsports Park two years ago, when most of his leading laps had been delivered under yellow flag conditions — an unsatisfying way to deliver a satisfying result. But last weekend's triumph at Long Beach was altogether different. It relied heavily on starting high up — Hinchcliffe qualified on the second row for the second race in a row — and then driving without significant

Star turn: Hinchcliffe raced smart and had superb team support

error, executing a smart strategy, saving fuel a fraction better than his main rivals in his penultimate stint and then having a team perform flawless pitstops. All done, job done. But Hinchcliffe was by no means the only driver who would have made a worthy winner. Ryan Hunter-Reay and Scott Dixon both led slightly more laps, but the Andretti Autosport-Honda ace, who qualified third, had the right strategy, the wrong tyres and faulty electrics. Chip Ganassi Racing's four-time champion, who started second,



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the streets

had a reliable car but an uncompromising set-up and, most crucially, also the wrong strategy.

The driver who was going to offer the strongest challenge to Hinchcliffe over the race's final quarter was last year's Indy 500 winner Alexander Rossi, who qualified fifth. He, like Hinchcliffe and team-mate Hunter-Reay, was on a two-stop strategy, and had the softer-compound red-sidewalled tyres like Hinch for that final stint.

Following the final round of pitstops, Rossi was third, he and Hunter-Reay having been demoted by Hinchcliffe who had stopped one lap later. Yet Rossi got his reds up to temperature far quicker than Hunter-Reay could warm his harder-compound blacks. He passed his team-mate and closed on Hinchcliffe, a driver he had passed successfully in the previous stint. But then, on lap 63, his engine let go in a major way, and he coasted to a halt.

That brought out the full-course caution for only the second time in the race. The bunching behind the safety car

— along with IndyCar clearing the rubber tyre marbles, thereby reopening potential passing zones — appeared to give Hunter-Reay another chance to get on terms with the gold-and-black SPM car of his former team-mate. Although the red-tyred Hinch sprinted away at the restart on lap 69, swiftly opening up a 2.5-second gap, it stabilised there, and then reduced. With seven laps to go, it was down to 1.1s as Hinchcliffe's reds had lost their youthful bloom, and Hunter-Reay's blacks were remaining consistent.

Then, with only five to go, the #28 Andretti Autosport car coasted to a silent halt in Turn 5, its driver trying in vain to reboot its electronics, as he had done successfully when a similar thing happened at Pocono last year. Remarkably, this would mark the day's fourth DNF for the four-car Andretti Autosport team (see sidebar).

That left Dale Coyne Racing's Sebastien Bourdais, the St Petersburg winner, as Hinchcliffe's chief opposition over the final four laps. Bourdais had qualified a disappointing 12th, then >>

ANDRETTI PACE UNREWARDED

MICHAEL ANDRETTI SCORED HIS FIRST AND last Indy car victories at Long Beach, in 1986 and 2002, and while the latter was fortunate, karma flicked him the bird 15 years later.

Son Marco Andretti had been outpaced only by Will Power in second practice and, although neither he nor newest team-mate Takuma Sato could deliver on that promise in qualifying, Ryan Hunter-Reay and Alexander Rossi (below) started third and fifth respectively.

Remarkably, all four retired. Hunter-Reay, 2010 Long Beach winner, suffered an electrical issue while closing on leader Hinchcliffe in the final 10 laps, and Rossi appeared to have a pace advantage over both but lost out due to a "hole in the side of the engine".

The series sophomore told Autosport: "I don't know why it happened, and there was no warning. I just know that it cost us a real shot at victory. We had a fast car and we'd closed the gap [on Hinchcliffe and Hunter-Reay] by an obscene amount in the second stint while still getting our fuel number.

"We had the right tyres for that final stint as well, so I think the battle was going to be down to just me and James [Hinchcliffe]."

With Sato suffering a sudden loss in power, and Marco Andretti having a sensor problem that ended his race on lap 15, four DNFs produced a calamitous day for Andretti Autosport after so much promise. Rossi, however, chose to take the positives.

"I think it's unbelievable the turnaround we've had as a team during the off season and the positive is that running legitimately in the top three with one of your team-mates is pretty cool," he said. "I had a smile on my face the whole race! Seriously, it shows the team as a whole has taken a big step; that's where we needed to be, and the confidence boost the team receives by running that well, even despite the end result, is huge."



had to dodge flying debris on the opening lap. While he succeeded in avoiding bodily harm, the airborne shard ripped apart his rear wing, forcing a stop for a new one... something he was able to do without losing a lap, thanks to the yellow being thrown on that opening lap. Will Power (Penske-Chevrolet) and Charlie Kimball (Ganassi-Honda) had collided, to the terminal detriment of the latter.

That emergency stop aside, Bourdais thereafter stuck to his team owner's two-stop plan and, even from the back of the field, made his way into the top five, which became top three following the demise of Rossi and Hunter-Reay. But by the time he got within spitting distance of leader Hinchcliff under that third and final caution to retrieve Hunter-Reay's stranded car, the DCR machine's handling balance had gone awry and a tardy restart resigned him to respectable runner-up position. This, combined with his win in St. Pete, allowed the Coyne driver to stretch his lead at the head of the IndyCar championship. Now *that's* a sentence never written before.

By coincidence, it was Coyne who first told Autosport several weeks ago that IndyCar's decision to increase the Long Beach race from 80 to 85 laps this year – to avoid the painfully dull off-the-pace fuel-saving two-stop strategy of last year – would not be enough.

"They need to increase it to 90 laps to force everyone to go for three stops," he said. "I've looked hard, I looked back at history, and I cannot see how three stops can work. You look at how much time you lose on pitroad and you'd need to lap almost half-a-second faster every lap for three stops to work.

"The risk is too great because as soon as there's a yellow, that gives the two-stoppers more fuel to play with so they can go faster, plus it's hard to pass and doing that extra stop puts you back in the pack one more time. Making up half a second per lap in that situation... I just don't see it. So I think you're going to see everyone going slower than last year trying to stretch their mileage to make it two stops again."

He was half-right – two stops remained the way to go – but some groups took the three-stop route, and



one was Dixon's #9 Ganassi crew, which had originally planned for just two. Thanks to polesitter Helio Castroneves making a dreadful start and falling to sixth, fellow front-row starter Dixon was leading at the time he was first pulled into the pits on lap 15. It seemed the squad had expected IndyCar's Race Control to throw a full-course caution for Marco Andretti's car sputtering to a halt down an escape road but, when it didn't, Ganassi became locked into a three-stop strategy come what may.

A baffled Dixon, one of the best when it comes to fuel saving, and therefore the driver most likely to have made a two-stop strategy work, said: "We gave the race away at that point. The car was

Bourdais stuck to a two-stop plan to take a respectable second

Strategy issues ruined Dixon's chances

super-fast and we'd trimmed out to stay up front, so it got tricky later in the race when we were in traffic."

Indeed it did. Dixon's car became fast but loose, and its driver had to take a similar attitude towards the rules regarding blocking, in order to keep Team Penske's Josef Newgarden behind him before their final stops. In the end, it didn't matter. Newgarden, who like team-mate Power had messed up his qualifying run and started eighth (Power was ninth), was also on a three-stop strategy. On seeing how vigorously the four-time champion was defending, the #2 Penske crew called Newgarden in a lap earlier than Dixon, he carved a great out-lap, and that was enough to put him in front when Dixon made his final stop. Newgarden went on to record his first podium finish for Penske.

The other Penske driver who starred was Simon Pagenaud. Consigned to the back of the grid after having his two fastest qualifying times deleted due to "interference" with team-mate Castroneves' Q1 run, the reigning champion soared up the order with great pace, decisive passing and a three-stop strategy. That strategy was compromised by having to stop four laps early on lap 31 due to a left-rear puncture, enforcing lean third and fourth stints as he had to get back on fuel schedule. But the drive itself was flawless and netted fifth. Had





Newgarden celebrates his first podium since joining Penske

he started in the top six, he would have been a rare Chevrolet runner to contend for victory on a weekend where Honda cars appeared to have a power/torque advantage out of the final hairpin.

Maybe Castroneves and Power might also have had a shot but we'll never know. Power's replacement front wing (following his clash with Kimball) proved reluctant to provide downforce, and he trailed home 13th. Castroneves, having blown his start, also blew the pitlane speed limit twice, resulting in a drivethrough penalty and being sent to the back of the pack, respectively.

Ed Jones made a peach of a pass on Graham Rahal on his way to sixth place in the second Coyne car, Spencer Pigot starred for Ed Carpenter Racing and claimed eighth, while between them Carlos Munoz overcame braking difficulties throughout the weekend to grind out seventh for a grateful AJ Foyt Racing team that is still struggling to get its head around the Chevrolet aerokit. But it was Hinchcliffe's day.

"The greats have all raced here, the greats have all won here," he said. "To get in the winner's circle is huge."

Huge for IndyCar, too. Few predicted Chevrolet would lose the first two battles of the 2017 IndyCar season to Honda or that Honda's wins would come from Coyne and Schmidt. The signs are that this is going to be a very open season. 🌟

RESULTS ROUND 2/16, LONG BEACH, APRIL 9 (85 LAPS – 167.280 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	James Hinchcliffe (CDN)	Schmidt Peterson Motorsports · Dallara-Honda	1h50m28.9818s
2	Sebastien Bourdais (F)	Dale Coyne Racing · Dallara-Honda	+1.4940s
3	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske · Dallara-Chevrolet	+2.3160s
4	Scott Dixon (NZ)	Chip Ganassi Racing · Dallara-Honda	+2.7832s
5	Simon Pagenaud (F)	Team Penske · Dallara-Chevrolet	+3.3934s
6	Ed Jones (UAE)	Dale Coyne Racing · Dallara-Honda	+5.7951s
7	Carlos Munoz (CO)	AJ Foyt Enterprises · Dallara-Chevrolet	+6.9393s
8	Spencer Pigot (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing · Dallara-Chevrolet	+9.0570s
9	Helio Castroneves (BR)	Team Penske · Dallara-Chevrolet	+9.3403s
10	Graham Rahal (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing · Dallara-Honda	+17.8632s
11	JR Hildebrand (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing · Dallara-Chevrolet	84 laps-contact
12	Mikhail Aleshin (RUS)	Schmidt Peterson Motorsports · Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
13	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske · Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
14	Max Chilton (GB)	Chip Ganassi Racing · Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
15	Tony Kanaan (BR)	Chip Ganassi Racing · Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
16	Conor Daly (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises · Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
17	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA)	Andretti Autosport · Dallara-Honda	79 laps-electrics
18	Takuma Sato (J)	Andretti Autosport · Dallara-Honda	78 laps-loss of power
19	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Andretti Herta Autosport · Dallara-Honda	62 laps-engine
20	Marco Andretti (USA)	Andretti Autosport · Dallara-Honda	14 laps-sensor
21	Charlie Kimball (USA)	Chip Ganassi Racing · Dallara-Honda	1 lap-contact

Winner's average speed 90.845mph. **Fastest lap** Castroneves 1m07.7696s, 104.542mph.

QUALIFYING

Q1 Castroneves 1m06.2254s; **2** Dixon 1m06.4123s; **3** Hunter-Reay 1m06.4401s; **4** Hinchcliffe 1m06.5291s; **5** Rossi 1m06.5595s; **6** Rahal 1m06.7562s.

Q2 Dixon 1m06.2285s; Rossi 1m06.2288s; Rahal 1m06.4109s; Hinchcliffe 1m06.4297s; Castroneves 1m06.4792s; Hunter-Reay 1m06.5320s; **7** Kimball 1m06.5404s; **8** Newgarden 1m06.6074s; **9** Power 1m06.6145s; **10** Andretti 1m06.6222s; **11** Kanaan 1m06.6262s; **12** Bourdais 1m06.7853s.

Q1 - GROUP 1 Power 1m06.7340s; Dixon 1m06.8297s; Kanaan 1m07.0470s; Bourdais 1m07.0569s; Castroneves 1m07.1407s; Andretti 1m07.3054s; **14** Munoz 1m07.3783s; **16** Aleshin 1m07.3893s; **18** Sato 1m07.4699s; **20** Chilton 1m07.5333s; **21** Pagenaud 1m08.0439s.

Q1 - GROUP 2 Hunter-Reay 1m07.0176s; Newgarden 1m07.0619s; Rossi 1m07.0961s; Rahal 1m07.2517s; Hinchcliffe 1m07.3209s; Kimball 1m07.4149s; **13** Jones 1m07.5832s; **15** Hildebrand 1m07.6931s; **17** Daly 1m07.7977s; **19** Pigot 1m07.8442s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Bourdais 93; **2** Hinchcliffe 74; **3** Pagenaud 71; **4** Dixon 70; **5** Newgarden 59; **6** Castroneves 51; **7** Jones 48; **8** Hunter-Reay 46; **9** Sato 43; **10** Andretti 36.



World Endurance warriors return

Audi has departed the field, but there are still plenty of battles to look forward to as the pinnacle of endurance racing heads to Silverstone this weekend



Insurance Turn



WEC

2017 WEC PREVIEW

➔ **P40** Audi's withdrawal leaves Toyota to take the fight to Porsche as it bids for a hat-trick of WEC titles and Le Mans crowns
"We should be in a stronger position than last year, but Porsche are still the ones to beat"
Toyota driver Anthony Davidson



➔ **P42** New limits on tyre usage will make double-stinting a necessity for the first time in both LMP1 and GTE Pro
"The new tyres are as quick as last year but also able to do a double stint"
Michelin director of motorsport Pascal Couasnon

➔ **P46** A new breed of more powerful LMP2 machine is going to be dramatically faster in the corners and on the straights
"The gap to the P1s has been almost halved – that's a massive step forward"
Jackie Chan DC Racing driver Oliver Jarvis



➔ **P48** A Balance of Performance system in GTE Pro will equalise the cars automatically on a race-by-race basis
"The idea is to create better racing; hopefully in the back half of the season it will all be very close"
Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK team principal George Howard-Chappell

CALENDAR

DATE	CIRCUIT
April 16	Silverstone (GB)
May 6	Spa (B)
June 17/18	Le Mans 24 Hours (F)
July 16	Nurburgring (D)
September 3	Mexico City (MEX)
September 16	Austin (USA)
October 15	Fuji (J)
November 5	Shanghai (PRC)
November 18	Bahrain (BAH)

Toyota ready to strike back

After two difficult years in the World Endurance Championship, the Japanese giant is looking like a real threat to Porsche ahead of the Silverstone opener this weekend

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

[@gazzasportscars](#)



Toyota may have been the moral winner at the 2016 Le Mans 24 Hours, and it may have taken the title fight down to the wire in Bahrain. Yet in reality it wasn't a consistent contender for race victories in last year's World Endurance Championship. This year's contest, which begins at Silverstone this weekend, could – and perhaps

even should – be different as the Japanese manufacturer attempts to prevent Porsche claiming a hat-trick of WEC titles and Le Mans crowns.

The 2014 WEC champion arguably has more to gain than its sole factory rival in LMP1. More to gain because it is younger in some of the key technologies it has adopted in Porsche's wake. What's more, a series of rule changes for '17 could play into Toyota's hands.

Toyota has reworked the TS050 HYBRID introduced last season, while Porsche has again updated the second-generation 919 that first raced in 2015, year two of its return to top-flight endurance racing. There must be more to gain for Toyota, not necessarily in terms of development of the chassis and its aerodynamics, but undoubtedly when it comes

“There must be more to gain for Toyota with development of its V6 and hybrid systems”

to the TS050's petrol-powered V6 engine and hybrid systems.

The decision to switch from the normally aspirated V8 – first of 3.4 and then 3.7 litres – used since Toyota's sportscar comeback at this level in 2012 was made late. The original plan had been to shift to a turbocharged engine in '17, but a disaster of a weekend at Spa in '15 set in process an evaluation that resulted in the plan being brought forward 12 months. The green light wasn't given to the new engine until just after Le Mans that year, yet the new V6 fired up for the first time in September.

Toyota also abandoned the super-capacitor energy-storage system used since 2012 and moved to a lithium-ion battery last year. That means it followed the technological lead taken by Porsche from '14 in two key areas.

And that's why Toyota Motorsport GmbH technical director Pascal Vasselon suggests there is “more scope for progress, possibly more than Porsche, because we are newer in technologies such as small-capacity turbo engines”.

That progress includes building an all-new version of the 2.4-litre twin-turbo direct-injection V6. Because development of the original was rushed, there were “several new ideas that we wanted to incorporate into the new engine”, says racing hybrid project leader Hirotake Murata at the marque's Higashi-Fuji technical centre in Japan. He reckons only “a few small bolts” are shared between the 2016 and '17 engines.

A particular emphasis has been placed on the combustion chamber, which includes an increase in the compression ratio. Both efficiency and power have been increased, according to Murata. The hybrid systems on the car have also been improved.

“We have redesigned the battery and the front motor,” explains Murata. “The front motor-generator unit is smaller and lighter and the main change on the battery is increasing the high-voltage limit. By increasing the voltage, you increase the power.” >>



CHANGE THAT COULD AFFECT THE RACING

THE NEW TYRE REGULATIONS won't mean slower racing in LMP1 this year. That's the message from Michelin.

The French firm's motorsport boss, Pascal Couasnon, insists that its development programme has resulted in tyres that "are as quick as last year but also able to do a double stint". That was the challenge Michelin set itself "and we were equal to it", he says.

Couasnon believes that the new rules will not affect the show. Some of the drivers aren't quite so sure. Porsche's Neel Jani is one of them.

"We've got to see how it goes, but LMP1 until now has been a category where you could really go for it," says the reigning champion. "My friends and neighbours used to say, 'Boy, you guys race like it's a 20-minute sprint'. My fear is that

"Part of the skill of being a racing driver is looking after your tyres"

this won't be good for the spectacle. If you get a flatspot early in a stint, you are going to be in trouble."

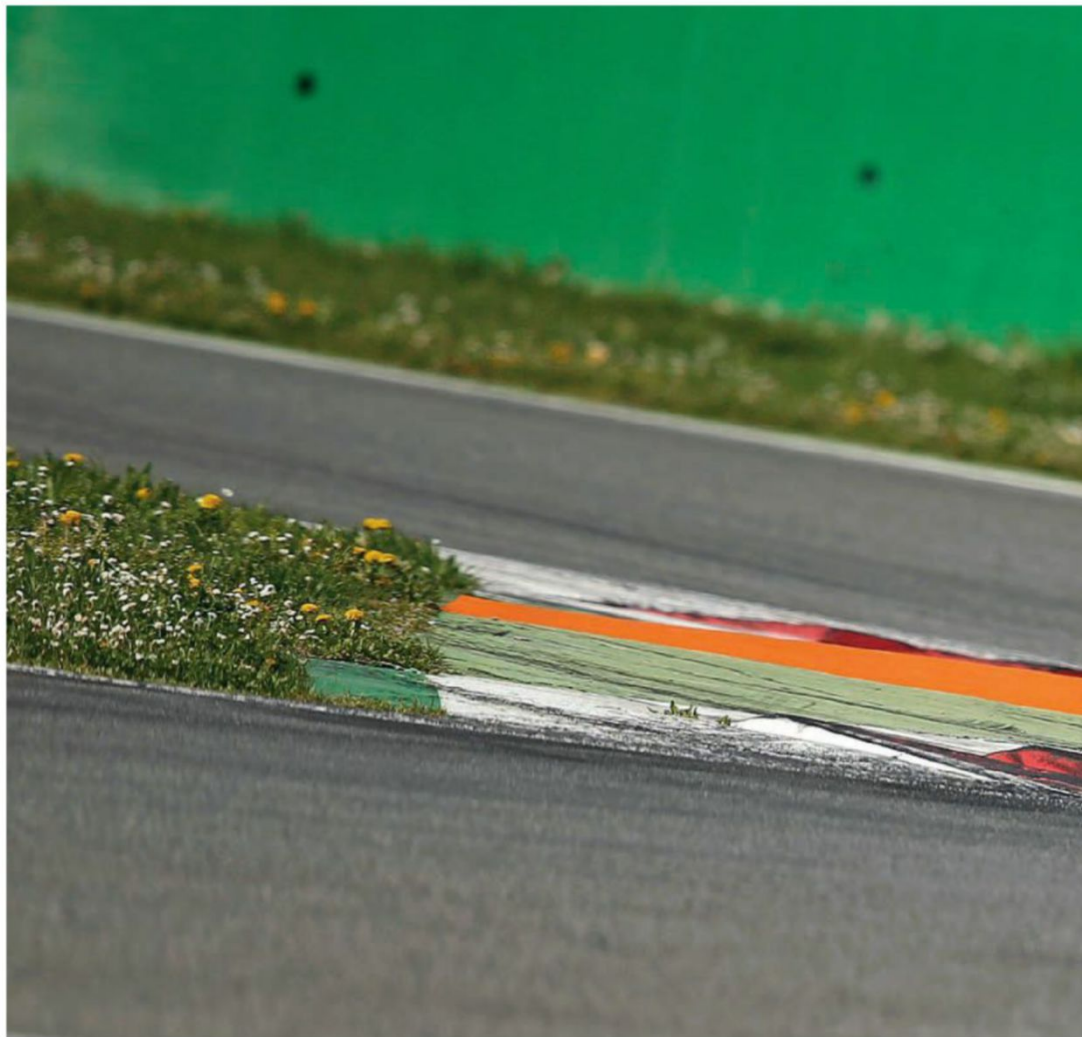
Toyota's Anthony Davidson reckons such risks are all part of the game. "Part of the skill of being a racing driver is looking after your tyres and you should be rewarded if you are good at it," he explains. "The new rules will make you conscious about picking up flatspots, but weighing up the risks when you are overtaking another car is part of the job."

What isn't clear is how the teams will adapt to the new tyre rules and what strategies they'll employ. Will they leave the tyres on the cars and do what might be termed traditional double stints? Or perhaps the tyres will come off, be cleaned and then swapped from one side to the other when they go back on the car...



Jani hopes rule changes won't hurt spectacle

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Kobayashi celebrates Toyota's 2016 Fuji win

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Porsche is tilting for third title in a row; this is 2016

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But Porsche has not been idle in development of the powertrain in the latest 919 either. LMP1 team principal Andreas Seidl reveals that a “big step has been made on the [two-litre V4] combustion engine in efficiency and power”. He concedes, however, that “the development steps on the hybrid side are getting smaller – you simply reach a plateau”.

Toyota has the ability not just to make strides in terms of its hybrid hardware, but also how to fully exploit it. By its own admission it was behind the game last year in getting the most out of its systems over one lap in qualifying. It put particular emphasis on this during the official pre-season test at Monza – the so-called ‘prologue’ – and ended up with a time that impressed even Porsche.

Changes in the aerodynamic regulations for 2017, which have raised the splitter at the front by 15mm and decreased the height of the diffuser at the rear by 50mm, could also have worked in Toyota’s favour. Last year it produced a car with ultra-low downforce for Le Mans and this had a knock-on effect on the high-downforce car it ran in the six-hour WEC races. This, according to Vasselon, “used most of the elements of the Le Mans package”, which left it short of downforce elsewhere. Witness that this version of the TS050 was at its most competitive at Fuji and Spa, the two circuits requiring the least downforce.

“The starting point of the regulations did not generate the gap [between the two configurations] we had last year,” explains Vasselon. “We do expect that our high-downforce aero package will be better suited to the [six-hour] WEC races, whereas last year we clearly had a deficit because our Le Mans development was quite extreme.”

“The new regulations, I would say, better suit our resource limitations. All the development we were doing for Le Mans last year was really hurting the high-downforce

version of the car. As we are not able to put a lot of resources into a high-downforce package, we had to live with a baseline car that was conceived to shed drag.”

His use of the word ‘resources’ is significant. Further regulation changes for 2017 limit each manufacturer to two aero kits and have reduced the number of windtunnel hours allowed to each manufacturer per calendar year from 1200 to 800. Vasselon suggests that Porsche has “less resource limitation” – though you’ll find plenty of people within the German marque who will privately dispute that – that allows it to develop bespoke bodywork for multiple aero kits.

A further regulation change for 2017 that may or may not help Toyota is a sporting one. The per-car limitation on tyres for qualifying and the race has been reduced from six sets to four, plus two joker tyres that can be introduced into the allocation at any point. The two extra sets allowed at the high-wear Shanghai and Bahrain circuits have also been removed in the latest rules.

Toyotas have traditionally been light on their tyres since the marque entered the LMP1 arena. The Toyota Gazoo Racing squad claimed its only WEC victory last year when it double-stinted Kamui Kobayashi in the #6 car at the end of the Fuji race in October. And the decision to double-stint Sebastien Buemi at the end of the opening hour at Spa in May gave it a lead it would hold until engine failure in the fourth hour.

This year, doing a double on a set of Michelins will be the norm courtesy of the new rules. Vasselon isn’t sure whether the new tyre rule will be of benefit to Toyota, though he is happy to say that his team is “not afraid of it”. Rather, it is “looking forward to the challenge”.

The latest cars, even with new aero rules, are almost as fast as their predecessors – both manufacturers are saying that on the basis of their respective winter test programmes.

“We should be slower, but not a lot slower,” says Vasselon. >>

Despite new aero rules, the 2017 cars are almost as fast as their predecessors



Le Mans-spec Toyota was tested at Monza; high-downforce set-up will be at Silverstone

“The regulations are there not necessarily to make us slower, but to slow down the progress.”

The new aero rules have taken with one hand, but also given something back to the designers with another. The removal of the requirement to have legality vanes or panels covering suspension components when viewed from above has offered new freedoms. Combined with highly scalloped sidepods – at least on the Le Mans cars unveiled at Monza – this has given the new cars a distinctive look.

Toyota has further raised – as well as narrowing – the nose of the TS050 on both variants of the car. (There are no photos yet of the high-downforce version we’ll see at Silverstone, but its official launch presentation revealed a similar set-up.) John Litjens, LMP1 chief project leader, calls it a “continuation of a trend” and points out that the most extreme example was last year’s final iteration of the Audi R18 e-tron quattro.

“Audi went quite extreme, and for sure we looked at what was possible,” he explains. “We could not go as high as we might have done because we are using the same monocoque as last year.”

The Porsche has a new nose, too, but the major change in the look of the car is more bulbous wheelarches. The

thinking behind this move hasn’t been revealed by the German manufacturer, which has been less forthcoming about its 2017 challenger than its rival.

Seidl gave an unilluminating response when questioned about the wheelarches: “Based on the new regulations we have had to rethink some of our decisions of the past regarding aero development. It gave overall better performance for the package, so we went in this direction.”

Porsche claims that 60-70% of the components are new on the latest 919. It has also put particular focus on making the car more user-friendly for the driver. That has included a push to prevent the accumulation of spent rubber that upsets the aero balance. “We have worked hard on these things, because at the end of the day driveability is everything,” says Seidl.

Another development on the Porsche is the introduction of captive wheelnuts *a la* Formula 1, with the aim of saving seconds in the pits. The nuts are loosely held within the rim and locate on the hub as the wheels are hauled into place.

Both manufacturers appear to be confident of the reliability of their 2017 contenders. Porsche believes it has a reliable car for the six-hour races, while there are, says Seidl, “some open points, minor stuff, for Le Mans”. Vasselon, meanwhile, reckons



Porsche cagey on reason for bigger wheelarches



LAT IMAGES

Toyota had a “good winter”, pointing out that the new car has completed nearly 35,000km.

Drawing any conclusions from the Monza test is difficult, particularly when it comes to Silverstone. Toyota ended up fastest, but it placed more emphasis on trying qualification simulations than Porsche. The Japanese make undertook multiple qualifying runs across the two days of the test, while Porsche only gave Neel Jani and Earl Bamber a shot at a time at the start of Saturday’s night session.

Porsche finally answered the big unanswered question of the off-season when it announced on Monday that it would race its 919s in low-downforce configuration at both Silverstone and Spa. Toyota insists that its commitment to chasing the WEC crown means there can be no sacrifice of points at the opening race by running in Le Mans trim, which would be less competitive on a track on which high-speed corners proliferate. Porsche, on the other hand, has decided to play the long game by bringing its low-downforce car.

The new rules limiting each manufacturer to two body kits per season – down from last year’s three – lock in the specification after an aero configuration is homologated ahead of its first race appearance. That means the ‘sprint’ version of the TS050 cannot be developed in any major sense for the remainder of the season.

“We have managed our resources in a way that we focus on developing and testing our Le Mans aerodynamics until the third race of the season is over,” said Seidl in a Porsche statement. “This means low downforce for the benefit of low drag and this unavoidably will be a disadvantage in Silverstone.”

That decision isn’t so much about a focus on Le Mans as a focus on the final six rounds of the championship that begin with the Nurburgring event in mid-July. Porsche can leave its high-downforce design in the windtunnel for the best part of another three months. Given that Porsche has traditionally run in Le Mans trim at Spa, it will be sacrificing just one race in order to maximise its chances over the final six. And it can only be a relatively small sacrifice in terms of points lost given that there are now just four factory P1s.

Porsche’s move effectively turns Silverstone into a phoney war. It would be wrong to suggest that it turns Toyota into automatic winners, but it makes them odds-on favourite on the presumption that one or other of the TS050s goes through the race without problems. A victory for the Japanese manufacturer would, however, mean little in terms of the big picture of the championship. ❄

LMP1

PORSCHE LMP TEAM

Porsche 919 Hybrid

- #1 Neel Jani/Andre Lotterer/Nick Tandy
- #2 Timo Bernhard/Earl Bamber/Brendon Hartley

The Porsche factory squad – now with the LMP tag in its official team title – has a different look to last season with three new full-season drivers. Longtime Audi man Lotterer and 2015 Le Mans winner Tandy line up alongside Jani after his fellow 2016 world champions Marc Lieb and Romain Dumas were dropped at the end of last year. Bamber, another of the ’15 Le Mans-winning squad, takes the retired Mark Webber’s place alongside former champions Bernhard and Hartley. There’s again no third car for Le Mans – the cost-cutting move for last year remains.



TOYOTA GAZOO RACING

Toyota TS050 HYBRID

- #7 Mike Conway/Jose Maria Lopez/Kamui Kobayashi
- #8 Anthony Davidson/Sebastien Buemi/Kazuki Nakajima
- #9 Stephane Sarrazin/Yuji Kunimoto/Nicolas Lapierre

The line-up in the #8 car remains unchanged for a third season, while three-time World Touring Car champion Lopez comes in alongside Kobayashi and Conway in the other full-season car in place of Sarrazin. The Frenchman steps down to lead the squad in the third car for Le Mans and Spa – a first for Toyota in its current top-line sportscar programme. He joins up with reigning Super Formula champion Kunimoto and Lapierre, who has made a late return to Toyota more than two years after being dropped in the wake of back-to-back incidents at Le Mans and Austin.

BYKOLLES RACING TEAM

ENSO CLM-NISMO P1/01

- #4 Robert Kubica/Oliver Webb/TBA

Kubica makes his full-season circuit return with the ByKolles squad, six years after the rallying crash that ended his promising F1 career. The German-based team is back for a fourth season with its existing chassis design, now dubbed the ENSO CLM and powered by the NISMO-badged Nissan twin-turbo V6 that was found in the front of the Japanese firm’s short-lived GT-R LM. Its programme started badly. The package ran very briefly at Monza before a failure forced the team to go home early.





The baby class grows up

Faster, more powerful new P2s are 'a massive step forward' and could increase the gaps between the 'pros' and the 'ams'

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

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Emmanuel Collard is a former overall polesitter for the Le Mans 24 Hours. But, believe it or not, the stalwart of the French enduro should lap the Circuit de la Sarthe faster – much faster – this year at the wheel of an LMP2 car than he did aboard the LMP1 Pescarolo he propelled to the top of the timesheets in 2005. The new breed of P2 machinery for 2017 is that quick.

The Pescarolo-Judd C60H (above) posted a time 3m34.715s in Collard's hands to claim pole a dozen years ago. The likelihood is that the fastest of the P2 runners will be lapping a full eight seconds quicker than that. The increased performance comes courtesy of more power to the tune of 100bhp from the one-make Gibson V8, more downforce and wide front tyres.

Simulations suggest that the new P2s will be a full 10 seconds a lap quicker around the 8.47 miles of the Circuit de la Sarthe than their predecessors. Pole last year was a 3m36.6s set by Rene Rast in the Jota-run G-Drive ORECA 05, so times deep into the 3m20s can be expected. Qualifying for last year's WEC opener at Silverstone was wet, but a best lap of the weekend of 1m48.9s should be bettered by some margin. The new P2s were three seconds a lap quicker than their predecessors in testing at the Motorland Aragon in Spain.

"These cars are a massive step forward," says former Audi LMP1 driver Oliver Jarvis, who has segued into P2 with Jackie Chan DC Racing after the German manufacturer ended its involvement in the championship. "The gap to the P1s has been almost halved and taken them out of the way of the GTEs on the straights. This is exactly what the championship needed."

Jarvis isn't alone in eulogising over the latest P2 machines. "Awesome" is how Matthieu Vaxiviere describes them, and he's just stepped out of a Formula V8 3.5 into the TDS Racing ORECA. "Unbelievable" is team-mate Collard's verdict.

"The pro drivers get out of these cars with big smiles on their faces," says Vincent Beaumesnil, sporting director at WEC promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest. "And the silver-rated drivers have given us fantastic feedback, which is actually the more critical point."

Beaumesnil's mention of the so-called 'amateur' driver, mandated in each line-up, is pertinent. Faster, more powerful P2 cars could change the dynamic in the class by increasing the gaps between the 'pros' and the 'ams'.

"These cars are a lot less plug-and-play than what we had before," says Alex Brundle, who lines up in the other ORECA fielded by the British Jota Sport squad under the name of Hollywood action hero Chan. "You really have to attack from the moment you hit the brake pedal to the moment you turn in. And if you screw up mid-corner, because all the extra power is in the top end, you're going to lose a lot of time."

The WEC P2 grid is made up entirely of ORECA chassis, though each of the other three constructors licensed to build cars to the new regulations – Dallara, Onroak via the Ligier brand and Riley/Multimatic – will be represented at the Le Mans 24 Hours in June. The ORECA domination is largely based on inertia. All the competing teams already owned ORECA 05s, which could be updated to 07 spec or, like Rebellion, had an ongoing relationship with the French organisation.

Some suggest that budgets are on the up, though the jury's out on that, and probably will be until the end of the season. ❄

P2

VAILLANTE REBELLION ORECA-Gibson 07

- #13 Nelson Piquet Jr/Mathias Beche/David Heinemeier Hansson
- #31 Bruno Senna/Nicolas Prost/Julien Canal

The top LMP1 privateer in the short history of the reborn WEC steps down a division for the new season to field a pair of ORECA's under the Rebellion Vaillante banner. Senna is the star winter signing by a team that could be ahead of the game after contesting the IMSA enduros at Daytona and Sebring.

CEFC MANOR TRS RACING ORECA-Gibson 07

- #24 Jean-Eric Vergne/Jonathan Hirschi/Tor Graves (pictured, left)
- #25 Vitaly Petrov/Simon Trummer/Roberto Gonzalez

The Manor sportscar squad run by the bosses of the defunct Formula 1 team of the same name returns for a second P2 season in the WEC with new backing and new title to match after a disjointed first campaign. Ex-F1 drivers Vergne and Petrov lead a line-up including team regular Graves and Trummer.

G-DRIVE RACING ORECA-Gibson 07

- #26 Alex Lynn/Roman Rusinov/Pierre Thiriet

The Russian entrant, a stalwart of the WEC P2 scene since 2013, has put together an operation under the umbrella of the French TDS squad after parting with the Jota team with which it was a three-time class winner last year. Lynn and G-Drive prime mover Rusinov are joined by TDS's regular silver Thiriet.

TDS RACING ORECA-Gibson 07

- #28 Emmanuel Collard/Matthieu Vaxiviere/Francois Perrodo

TDS finally steps up to the WEC after a series of successful ELMS campaigns that yielded the 2012 title and 11 class or outright victories over six seasons. Reigning WEC GTE Am champions Collard and Perrodo are rejoined in the TDS ORECA by 2015 Formula Renault 3.5 series runner-up Vaxiviere, who co-drove with them in the WEC in 2014 in a ProSpeed Porsche.

SIGNATECH ALPINE MATMUT ALPINE Gibson A470 (ORECA)

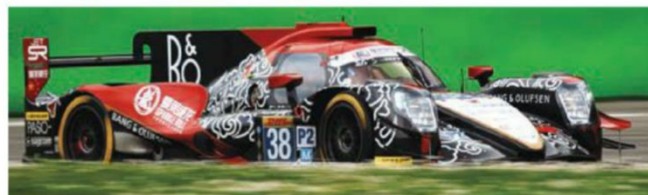
- #35 Nelson Panciatici/Pierre Ragues/Andre Negrao
- #36 Nicolas Lapierre/Gustavo Menezes/Matt Rao

Signatech defends its WEC P2 title with two strong cars. Lapierre returns to lead the line-up, though misses Spa and Le Mans after his recall to Toyota, while Menezes is no longer the secret weapon that he was after being upgraded from silver to gold status. The #35 car misses Silverstone so the team can focus its limited resources in terms of spares on the lead entry.

JACKIE CHAN DC RACING ORECA-Gibson 07

- #37 Alex Brundle/Tristan Gommendy/David Cheng
- #38 Oliver Jarvis/Ho-Pin Tung/Thomas Laurent

The Chinese DC Racing squad fronted by Hollywood star Chan has shifted allegiance from Signatech to Jota for an expanded, two-car WEC attack. Jarvis continues his prototype career after Audi's withdrawal in an ultra-strong car alongside sometime F1 tester Tung and former world karting champion Laurent, who as a silver-rated driver could be described as the Menezes of 2017.



Stop the arguing, start the fighting

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

🐦 @gazzasportscars



FORD



FERRARI

The constant bickering over the Balance of Performance parameters is set to become a thing of the past in GTE Pro. A new system, known as the automatic BoP, comes into force in the World Endurance Championship this year, with the twin aims of taking politics out of the equation and making the racing closer in the first season in which a full FIA world title will be awarded to the class winners.

The BoP is the means by which the different cars – front and mid-engined, turbocharged and normally aspirated – competing in GTE are equalised. Controversy has never been far away, but it reached new heights in the WEC last season in the first year of a new breed of GTE car that was meant to make setting the BoP both easier and fairer. That's where the idea for the automatic BoP came in.

The manufacturers have formulated the new system together with the rulemakers, the FIA, and WEC promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, for the six-hour WEC races. The Le Mans 24 Hours will have its own BoP owing to the unique demands of the circuit. A mathematical tool has been created

that will adjust the performance of the cars automatically on a race-by-race basis by adding or removing weight and adjusting engine power by tweaking the air restrictors (for normally aspirated cars) and boost levels (for the turbos).

The idea is to create an entirely objective system that is also transparent. The automatic BoP works, says a document issued by the FIA, "without human interpretation or decision-making".

The algorithm hasn't been published and appears unlikely to be. That doesn't matter, according to Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK team principal George Howard-Chappell.

"The important thing is that it is transparent to the manufacturers so they know what they are getting," he says. "There's no point in publishing it, because it is complex and not something you could work out on the back of a fag packet."

The new BoP employs more data than its predecessors. A total of 60% of the race distance is taken into account, including, it is understood, the two fastest stints by each make of car. That's significant now that only four sets of tyres are allowed per car, which will make double-stinting part of the game. Other parameters include performance in a straight line and the different sectors of a lap.

The question is whether it will work.

Greatly differing car philosophies in GTE have made Balance of Performance a hotly debated topic



GTE PRO



“Everyone has tried really hard to make something that will work,” says Howard-Chappell, “but ultimately we don’t know whether we have been successful until we see it in action.”

The new system will take time to achieve its goal, he reckons. That’s inevitable because the system has to start somewhere: any inequalities in the so-called starting BoP will take time to be ironed out because adjustments, which don’t begin until the third six-hour race at the Nurburgring in July, are relatively small. They are capped at 20kg and 10kW (13.5bhp) respectively.

“Hopefully by the back half of the season, it will all be very equal,” adds Howard-Chappell. “It might take a couple of seasons to truly work and there might have to be tweaks.”

Sandbagging would be very dangerous, according to Howard-Chappell. Part of the reason for that are new tyre rules that limit the cars to four sets for qualifying and the race.

“If someone is pissing off into the distance you have no way of knowing whether they are on a double stint or single-stinting,” he explains. “You couldn’t risk someone getting away, because the WEC races are so competitive that you’re never going to get it back. You could only manage the situation if you are in front. You’d have to be very brave to try to manipulate the system.” ❄

AF CORSE

Ferrari 488 GTE

#51 James Calado/Alessandro Pier Guidi/Lucas di Grassi*

#71 Sam Bird/Davide Rigon/Miguel Molina*

Ferrari defends its manufacturers’ crown without talisman driver Gianmaria Bruni. Marque stalwart Pier Guidi gets a factory deal for the first time as his replacement. * Le Mans 24 Hours only

FORD CHIP GANASSI

Ford GT

#66 Andy Priaulx/Harry Tincknell/Billy Johnson

#67 Olivier Pla/Stefan Mucke/Pipo Derani

Ford’s UK-based WEC squad, which will again be joined by Ganassi’s US arm, retains its four full-season drivers. Johnson and Derani join for Le Mans and the first two WEC rounds.

PORSCHE GT TEAM

Porsche 911 RSR

#91 Richard Lietz/Frederic Makowiecki/Patrick Pilet*

#92 Michael Christensen/Kevin Estre/Dirk Werner*

Porsche returns to the GTE Pro ranks with a factory team after a year’s sabbatical. It used that time to build an all-new 911 that retains little or nothing from its predecessor. * Le Mans 24 Hours only

ASTON MARTIN RACING

Aston Martin Vantage GTE

#95 Nicki Thiim/Marco Sorensen/Richie Stanaway

#97 Darren Turner/Jonny Adam/Daniel Serra

Now with full backing from Aston Martin, AMR defends its drivers’ and teams’ titles with a tweaked line-up. Adam contests the full season for the first time.

SPIRIT OF RACE Ferrari 488 GTE

#54 Miguel Molina/Francesco Castellacci/Thomas Flohr

The AF Corse offshoot runs a single car for a line-up that includes DTM refugee Molina for all the races bar Le Mans.

CLEARWATER RACING Ferrari 488 GTE

#61 Matt Griffin/Keita Sawa/Weng Sun Mok

A Le Mans debutant in 2016, this Singapore team has two-time Macau GT winner Sawa on its roster for a full-season campaign.

DEMPSEY-PROTON RACING Porsche 911 RSR

#77 Matteo Cairoli/Christian Ried/Marvin Dienst

Proton runs an old-style RSR under the banner of actor Patrick Dempsey. Supercup star Cairoli leads the line-up.

GULFRACING Porsche 911 RSR

#86 Ben Barker/Nick Foster/Mike Wainwright

Former Aussie Porsche Carrera Cup winner Foster joins Barker, now gold-rated, and team owner Wainwright.

ASTON MARTIN RACING Aston Martin Vantage GTE

#98 Pedro Lamy/Mathias Lauda/Paul Dalla Lana

A trio that has taken eight class wins over the past two seasons returns in pursuit of that elusive GTE Am title.

GTE AM



The old-school Thai

Alexander Albon is a no-frills, down-to-earth racer. Now, after his breakout season in 2016 to finish second in GP3, he graduates to Formula 2 with ART Grand Prix

By Marcus Simmons, Deputy Editor

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The breakthrough in a less-than-meteoric career came last season when he claimed the runner-up spot in the GP3 Series, and now Alexander Albon stands one rung away from the top of the single-seater ladder. What's more, this talented racer – who's only hovered around the radar of most followers of this branch of the sport over the past few years –

enters the FIA Formula 2 Championship, which kicks off this weekend in Bahrain, with top team ART Grand Prix.

It was with ART, of course, that the Anglo-Thai gave team-mate Charles Leclerc an uncomfortably close run in GP3. Everyone knows how good Leclerc is – some reckon he should have graduated straight to Formula 1 this year – but Albon has been more of an unknown quantity. Including, it appears, to the 21-year-old himself.

“I think you can speak to anyone who's close to me and they'll say I'm not a driver with unbelievable self-confidence,” he offers, “but I'd say I'm always trying to improve myself. I know this year with ART that if I keep my head down and keep working on what I need to improve, I'm sure we can fight for victories and good results. But if you'd have said I'd be fighting for the GP3 championship in the last race, I wouldn't have believed you.”

That's typical of Albon, in spite of the contradictory evidence. KTR boss Kurt Mollekens, with whose team Albon flourished in Formula Renault 2.0 in 2014, speaks very highly of him – and don't forget KTR is also the squad that produced Stoffel Vandoorne. Albon expressed mild shock when, as a result of these performances, he was selected as a McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist. There had been no ‘vote-for-me’ social-media campaign, and he qualified by virtue of the fact that, despite racing under the Thai flag, he also holds a British passport. In the Award, won by George Russell, Albon was

highly impressive. In his season of European Formula 3 in '15 there was usually nothing to choose between him and fellow rookies Russell and Lance Stroll, despite the fact that Albon was with a team (Signature) that hadn't competed in the category for three years.

Definitely a contender, then. Even so, Albon is modest to the point of self-deprecation, slightly awkwardly carrying his six-foot-one frame, eschewing the ‘look-at-me’ tweeting of his contemporaries working out in the gym. Instead, he's a lovely, down-to-earth fella, highly popular with virtually everyone he works with. And building up an ever-stronger reputation as a driver.

Diehard tin-top fans of the 1990s will already be familiar with his family. Albon's father Nigel and uncle Craig were the men to beat in the Renault 5 Turbo series in the early '90s, and Nigel had a season in the British Touring Car Championship in '94 with a privateer Renault 19. After that, Nigel became a leading competitor in Asian motorsport. “The first time I went to Macau was to watch my dad,” says Alexander. “He was in the Carrera Cup, and he was actually leading the race until he got a puncture. Which is what he says, but I actually think he hit the wall...”

Racing fever had already struck the youngster: “My first few words were ‘Ferrari’, ‘Lambo’ and ‘horst’ – because I couldn't pronounce ‘exhaust’! I was mad about Schumacher – my whole bedroom from ceiling to floor was red. Then my dad bought me a kart for my birthday, and I'd drive in a figure of eight between bricks. From there, we went to Rye House, my local track, and I started racing with my dad as mechanic.”

Albon worked through the karting ranks and, partly thanks to his Thai ancestry, was picked up as a Red Bull Junior: “I was introduced to Chalerm [Yoovidhya, whose father Chaleo introduced the drink in Thailand and went into partnership with Dietrich Mateschitz]. I stayed with them pretty much until single-seaters, and they helped us out financially.” >>



Albon is definitely a contender in F2 with top team ART

LAT IMAGES



Battling with George Russell (#10) in F3 in 2015

SUER.PHOTO

“The tests have gone pretty well. And I’m amazed at how close the times have been”

He describes 2012, his debut season in cars with EPIC Racing in the F1 Renault Eurocup, as “a pretty terrible first year. Our team was just a bit under budget and being one of the youngest is always going to be difficult. Back then I didn’t really have anyone to share data with, and in your first year you really need that. It was a really tough year.”

At this point Albon split with Red Bull, and problems had struck his family. “It really was the rock bottom of my life,” he confesses. “I thought that was it and my racing career was over. So I’m very thankful to everyone, and to KTR for giving me the opportunity to bounce back and redeem myself.”

During his time at the Belgian team in 2013 and ’14, Albon made great strides. After signing up to the Gravity management company, he raced in the colours of the Gravity-affiliated Lotus F1 team as a Lotus junior. Gravity is no more now, but the company’s Gwenael Lagrue still guides Albon’s career alongside his full-time role as head of the Mercedes F1 driver-development scheme.

Albon finished third in the Eurocup points in 2014, and he graduated to the F3 European Championship alongside Gravity/Lotus stablemate Dorian Boccolacci the following season. The Signature team they raced with hadn’t competed in F3 since ’11, and there was the odd preparation setback (gear ratios were put in the wrong way round in Monza qualifying, causing Albon to buzz the engine and cause his withdrawal from the weekend owing to the series’ engine-change grid-penalty system).

“I was happy with the year,” he says. “We were fighting with George and Lance the whole time, and basically we were a rookie team so we would be going to a track and really fighting in free practice and being nowhere, and then come to qualifying and just about get there. Full credit to the team, because they were up against teams who’d been doing it for years. Sometimes we really showed our pace; we were just quite unlucky sometimes. It was a really good learning experience.

“But I still wasn’t sure where I was in terms of myself. So when I moved into GP3, it was with the best and most



LAT IMAGES

experienced team on the grid [ART]. And I had a really quick team-mate [Leclerc], so you think, ‘This is it – this is the year where you can be hero or zero’.

“In the first tests I struggled and I thought I had a lot of work to do. But the season started quite well and then I had a bit more confidence in myself. You always expect to do well, but there’d always been a bit of self-doubt – you get apprehensive before the year. And it turned out to be a really good year for me.”

Albon rose above his status in the perceived pecking order to properly challenge Leclerc. He believes Spa is where he really lost the title. Coincidentally, this followed straight on from a return to F3 in the Masters race at Zandvoort with Hitech GP, as he geared up for a planned Macau Grand Prix assault. Could the readjustment to GP3 have set him back at Spa? He’s not saying but, with the GP3 title going down to the wire in Abu Dhabi the weekend after Macau, his plan to race in Macau was shelved.

Even before that GP3 finale, it was a poorly kept secret that Albon would graduate to GP2 (or F2 as it is now) with ART to partner McLaren-Honda protege Nobuharu Matsushita. “If GP3 went OK but not amazing I’d have stayed for another year,” he explains, “but we said if we were fighting at the top we’d make the move to GP2.

“The tests have gone pretty well. And I’m amazed at how close the times have been. You’ve got the top teams [ART, Prema, DAMS] but Rapax have been really quick, and so have Arden and Russian Time. It’s the seventh year of this generation of car and I think that brings the gap down.”

Does the experience of the Pirelli tyres from GP3 help? “It’s similar in terms of the way you drive,” he answers. “I’d say it’s a little bit more extreme in F2; we’ve come from Bahrain just now and the race sims are unbelievable with the tyre deg! But the way you handle the tyres or the way you overtake, that’s all pretty much the same as GP3. And because of that it’s been going quite well.”

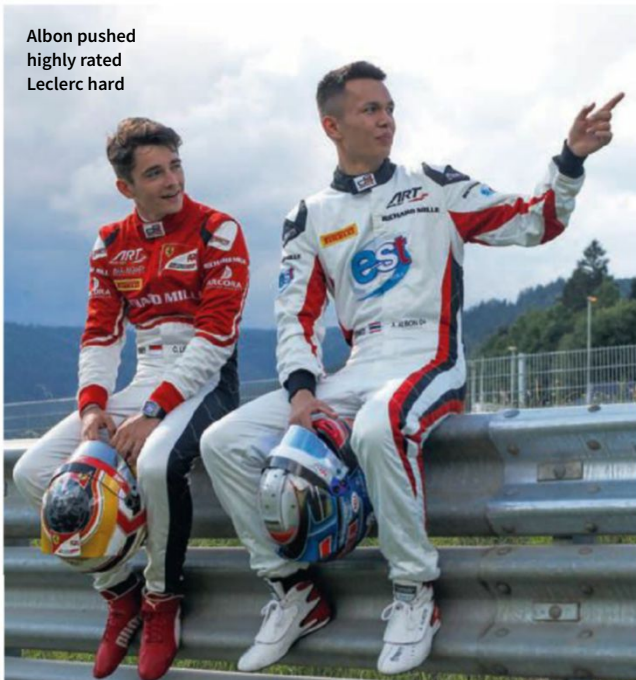
Matsushita, the rapid Japanese who has yet to turn his speed into much in the way of concrete results over two years in GP2, is a good team-mate, reckons Albon: “He has the experience and he knows how to drive, and he’s really strong. There are just little things you can learn, from the procedures to the way he goes about it.”

Don’t underestimate Albon. Remember that his solo F3 season came in an ultra-competitive environment against Stroll and Antonio Giovinazzi (both of whom have made F1 debuts this year), men-most-likely-to-get-to-the-top Leclerc and Russell, and the ultra-versatile Felix Rosenqvist.

“It was just unbelievable, that year – you knew you were racing against such talented drivers and it’s cool to see where they are now,” he acknowledges. But, in the meantime, there’s the small matter of family pride. As you read this, Albon will be in Bahrain, but before he flew out there was a planned karting contest against his dad and uncle, “just to prove, once and for all, who’s the quickest Albon!” ❄

Albon was on pole at Hockenheim last year, but had lost the GP3 championship lead by the end of the weekend

Albon pushed highly rated Leclerc hard



LAT IMAGES

LECLERC AND ROWLAND HOTTEST F2 TIPS

THE SPOTLIGHT AS THE inaugural FIA Formula 2 Championship – or 13th ‘GP2’ season – kicks off in Bahrain is upon reigning GP3 champion Charles Leclerc and 2015 Formula Renault 3.5 dominator Oliver Rowland (below).

Ferrari junior Leclerc has joined Prema Racing, which took the category by storm in its debut season last year, taking a one-two in the drivers’ title with Pierre Gasly and Antonio Giovinazzi, and scooping the teams’ crown. Rowland, after a disappointing maiden full GP2 campaign with

MP Motorsport, has switched to the multiple title-winning DAMS, which itself seeks to bounce back from a tough 2016.

Alongside them are drivers who are good enough to triumph on their good days: Leclerc’s Ferrari stablemate Antonio Fuoco was up-and-down in GP3 but is quick, while Nicholas Latifi has a sharp turn of speed in him and remains for a second season with DAMS.

ART duo Nobuharu Matsushita and

Alexander Albon – both of whom are capable of running at the front – were locked in to their seats quite early in the winter. And with Prema, DAMS, ART and Racing Engineering (Louis Deletraz and Gustav Malja) settled, the keys to the driver market became Norman Nato, Jordan King and Luca Ghiotto.

Nato was chosen for patronage under the Indonesian Jagonya Ayam scheme alongside Sean Gelael to run at Arden, leaving Russian Time and MP Motorsport

vying for King and Ghiotto. The Brit settled for MP alongside Formula 3 graduate Sergio Sette Camara, and immediately afterwards Ghiotto was announced at Russian Time to partner Artem Markelov. Nato, King, Ghiotto and Markelov are all GP2 race winners, so all are contenders in 2017.

Don’t rule out Rapax, the team that fielded Pastor Maldonado to the 2010 title. Veteran Johnny Cecotto Jr and McLaren’s GP3 graduate Nyck de Vries are both rapid, if short on budget.

CALENDAR

DATE	CIRCUIT
April 15-16	Bahrain (BRN)
May 13-14	Barcelona (E)
May 26-27	Monte Carlo (MC)
June 24-25	Baku (AZ)
July 8-9	Red Bull Ring (A)
July 15-16	Silverstone (GB)
July 29-30	Hungaroring (H)
August 26-27	Spa (B)
September 2-3	Monza (I)
October 7-8	Jerez (E)
November 25-26	Yas Marina (UAE)

ENTRY LIST

NO.	DRIVER	TEAM	NO.	DRIVER	TEAM	NO.	DRIVER	TEAM
1	Charles Leclerc (MC)	Prema Racing	8	Alexander Albon (T)	ART Grand Prix	16	Nabil Jeffri (MAL)	Trident
2	Antonio Fuoco (I)	Prema Racing	9	Oliver Rowland (GB)	DAMS	17	Sergio Canamasas (E)	Trident
3	Louis Deletraz (CH)	Racing Engineering	10	Nicholas Latifi (CDN)	DAMS	18	Nyck de Vries (NL)	Rapax
4	Gustav Malja (S)	Racing Engineering	11	Ralph Boschung (CH)	Campos Racing	19	Johnny Cecotto Jr (V)	Rapax
5	Luca Ghiotto (I)	Russian Time	12	TBA	Campos Racing	20	Norman Nato (F)	Arden International
6	Artem Markelov (RUS)	Russian Time	14	Sergio Sette Camara (BR)	MP Motorsport	21	Sean Gelael (RI)	Arden International
7	Nobuharu Matsushita (J)	ART Grand Prix	15	Jordan King (GB)	MP Motorsport			



Who can beat Prema?

With six European titles on the trot, the Italian Formula 3 juggernaut is hot favourite to provide the 2017 champion. But three drivers will be at the forefront of those trying to prevent that

By Marcus Simmons, Deputy Editor

🐦 @MarcusSimmons54

Callum Iltott and Maximilian Gunther are joint favourites for this season's Formula 3 European Championship, which kicks off this weekend at Silverstone. Both have two seasons of F3 experience under their belts, and Iltott joins 2016 runner-up Gunther at Prema Powerteam for what will be a fascinating intra-team power struggle.

You have to go all the way back to 2010 – when highly rated '17 F3 racers Lando Norris and David Beckmann were just 10 years old! – to find the last year Prema

didn't provide Europe with its F3 champion. Over a six-year spell, Roberto Merhi, Daniel Juncadella, Raffaele Marciello, Esteban Ocon, Felix Rosenqvist and Lance Stroll have all brought the silverware home to the Prema workshop in Grisignano di Zocco.

But Iltott and Gunther – and team-mates Mick Schumacher and Guan Yu Zhou – certainly won't have it all their own way in 2017. With the new aerodynamics part of the mandatory F3 update kit to the trusty Dallara chassis, along with a ban on windtunnel testing and some areas of development, this is potentially the best opportunity for Prema's rivals to break the team's hegemony. We picked out the three most likely contenders...

Gunther, the 2016 runner-up, will be tough to beat





JOEL ERIKSSON

WHY HE'S A THREAT Superb 2016 season ended with the F3 rookie title, and he was a thorn in the side to overall champion Lance Stroll. BMW is grooming him for the DTM, but in the meantime he stays in F3 with Motopark.

You've been around Motopark since you were very young because of your brother Jimmy's racing. Is it a case of feeling very comfortable there?

We had some options to choose some teams with Mercedes engines. But what I can say is I'm really happy to work with Motopark [which uses Volkswagen power] and I trust them 2000%. Motopark is more like a family for us because we've stayed there since 2009 when my brother was starting Formula Renault with them. I feel really comfortable. At the end of last season we were quite close to Stroll, so I'm not sure I'm worried that much about Prema's pace.

How do you think the testing has gone?

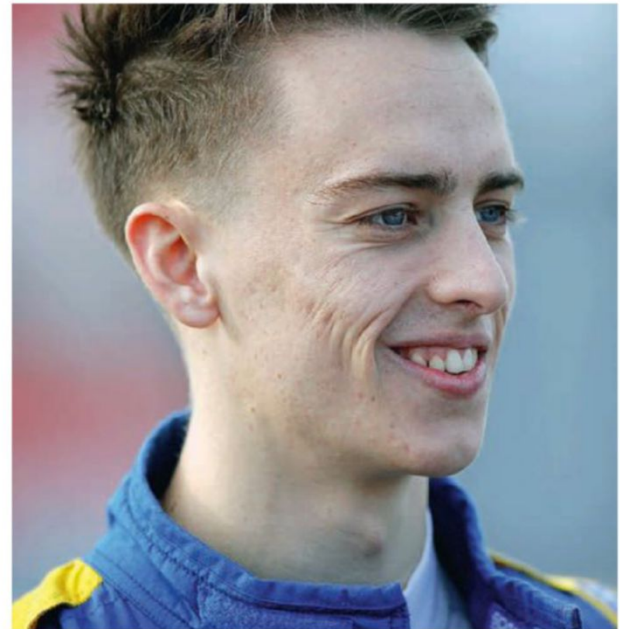
I would say it felt really good. We set up a plan for each day, we ran through the plan, we know where we are standing. But pacewise it was actually really good all the time. You never know how much ballast everyone is running, how much fuel and blah blah blah etc, but that's normal in motorsport.

Your team-mates this year aren't very experienced and it's clear you'll lead the team on your own. Does that make things more difficult, or does being the clear focus for success at the team bring positives?

Actually that's a good point because last year all the four Motopark drivers were close to each other. Everyone could try things, because we knew it would work for the other driver as well. But now it's a big problem, because if I'm half a second quicker than the other driver, then when he's testing something we never know if it's going to work or not. Of course it makes life harder. But actually we did a lot of running, we managed to test everything we wanted to test, so from our side we feel really ready.

The first round is at Silverstone, where you've never even tested. Does this mean it will be a tougher event for you, and would a podium finish be regarded as a good start before you move on to tracks you know?

I would absolutely say so. My goal for the season is to win the championship, but I know it's not so realistic to say I will be the fastest immediately on a new track to me. There are a lot of British drivers in the championship, so they've raced there before. But of course we're going to work for it and we're going to fight until the last race.



JAKE HUGHES

WHY HE'S A THREAT Dived into F3 with Carlin at the end of last season from GP3, and looked like he was born to drive F3 cars. Snatched rookie honours from George Russell in Macau, and now replaces Russell at Hitech GP.

How has the testing been going?

It's been really positive. There are a lot of new regulations in terms of the new car and the downforce settings. For most of the testing it's been working with the engineers basically, trying to get some numbers, just to work out what works best in terms of the new aero platform. I trust that all the guys at the workshop are working through that as we speak.

How do you rate Hitech as a team?

Extremely highly. There are a lot of resources at the team so what we need we can get, and there are a lot of clever people. Last year they were very impressive from the outside to me. I think the only thing they were missing was the consistency. It's not completely new this year, but it does change things a little bit to have new wings and floor. So I see it as an opportunity – I'm sure the guys do as well – to try to overtake Prema.

So despite Ilott's and Gunther's two years in F3, are you looking at them as realistically beatable?

Yeah, definitely. But I never really target anyone else. I don't see the point. I'm always driven by self-performance and our performance as a team. I'm a big believer that if you're constantly improving and if you keep growing then you'll get the result that you want. I'm sure Prema has a very strong driver line-up and obviously a very strong car and pedigree, but I wouldn't have come into Formula 3 with Hitech if I didn't think I could win it.

You're viewed as the most likely guy to lead Hitech, but you have some good team-mates. Is that helping all of you?

Yes. I think people will be quite surprised by us as a team this year. In testing, especially in the private testing, the four of us were all extremely close, probably closer than some people would expect.

The first round is at Silverstone, where you've excelled throughout your career. How much of a boost is that?

Macau is my favourite track, but Silverstone is my favourite permanent track. After Abu Dhabi GP3, the first time I tested with Hitech was at Silverstone in December. It was the first time I'd driven a Formula 3 car around Silverstone on high downforce and it was mighty impressive! To drive it was absolutely stunning, so I'm really looking forward to it. >>



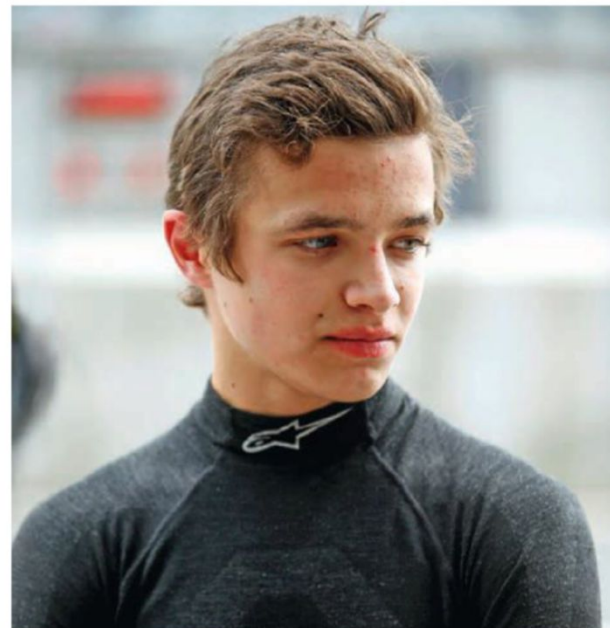
JOEL ERIKSSON



JAKE HUGHES



LANDO NORRIS



LANDO NORRIS

WHY HE'S A THREAT Carlin's British motorsport golden boy last year won two Renault titles, the Toyota Racing Series and the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award. And now he's a McLaren F1 junior.

You drove a Prema F3 car when you tested for two days at Vallelunga; so what are your impressions compared to Carlin?

Two days isn't a lot really. You obviously get to know the people, and you get to have a feeling for what their car is like. But you don't go up against the others, so it's hard to know where their strong points really are compared to other teams. There are differences in the feeling of the car compared to what I'd driven - in some ways they were good and in some ways they were slightly worse than what I'd driven, and at that time I'd only driven with Carlin. So it's hard to give a real explanation of where they're better.

Carlin had a tough time in 2016, but do you feel the form from your first FIA F3 races at Hockenheim and Macau - where Antonio Felix da Costa won - progressing through the testing?

Yeah. Doing those last two races was more of a chance to just get used to the weekend, get used to how everything works, obviously more time in the car. For our team it was probably not so much trying to get a good result, but try to get good preparation coming into this year as well. During last year, the drivers they had possibly took the car in some slightly wrong directions. We've had to redo all the testing and see how the car reacts to set a new baseline. It does feel like it's a revitalising start for the whole team.

You've also had Jake Dennis testing with you. How useful has that been and would you like to see him joining you at the team for some races?

Through all the testing he's been very good. He has a very good amount of experience; he was very fast, especially when he was at Prema. We mainly wanted him to come and do the testing to in some ways really push the whole team, help give another overview of the car. It's another guy to split the testing between, and he's a guy who can give very accurate feedback. He doesn't just help with the team and the car, he's very good on areas of driving.

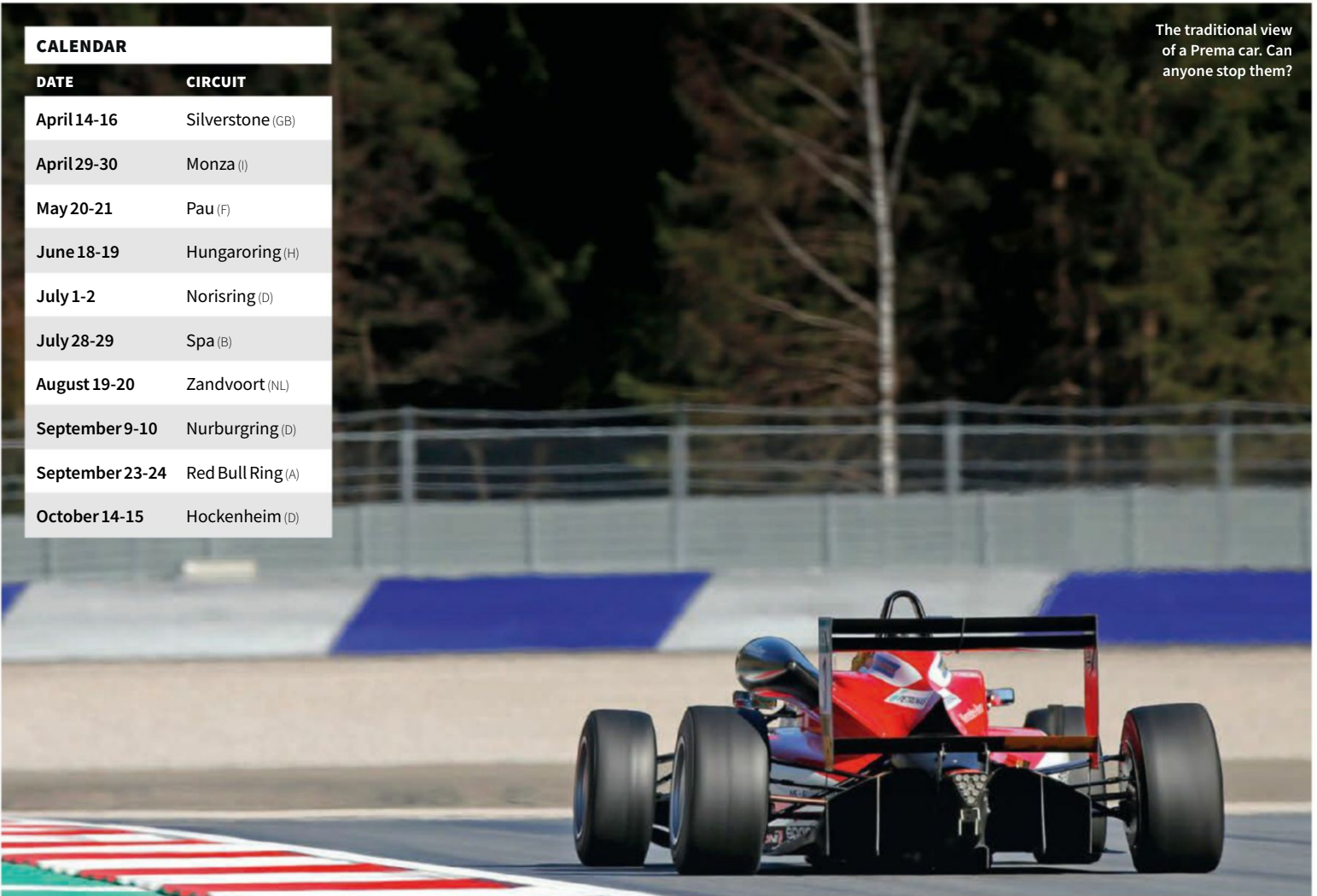
The first round is at Silverstone. It wasn't on the calendar last year, but Carlin is traditionally monster-quick there and always gets a win. Does that give you a boost?

Obviously it gives me confidence, knowing that the team is now stronger than it pretty much ever has been. From some of the tests we've done the car's been quicker, so I'm sure the handling could change - the right-left at Becketts could be all flat. I'd like to go in with an open mind, but I've got confidence that we can go out and have a win or a pole - that would be a great start.

CALENDAR

DATE	CIRCUIT
April 14-16	Silverstone (GB)
April 29-30	Monza (I)
May 20-21	Pau (F)
June 18-19	Hungaroring (H)
July 1-2	Norisring (D)
July 28-29	Spa (B)
August 19-20	Zandvoort (NL)
September 9-10	Nurburgring (D)
September 23-24	Red Bull Ring (A)
October 14-15	Hockenheim (D)

The traditional view of a Prema car. Can anyone stop them?



EIGHT THINGS TO WATCH AT SILVERSTONE

- The Schumacher name returns to Silverstone, with Michael's son Mick making his F3 race debut with Prema Powerteam after graduating from German and Italian Formula 4.
- Among Schumacher's rivals is Adrian Newey's boy Harrison, entering his second F3 season with Van Amersfoort Racing. Newey Jr seems to have made a big step forward in winter testing, and also won the MRF Challenge in India during the off-season. Once again he has another son of a famous name alongside him: Pedro Piquet.
- The VAR line-up is an intriguing one. It's fair to say there are no title favourites here, but reigning German F4 champion Joey Mawson and 16-year-old German David Beckmann are highly rated talents. Beckmann in particular is a very spectacular driver.
- Lando Norris's fellow rookie Carlin team-mates Jehan Daruvala (who is a Force India junior) and Ferdinand Habsburg have both raced at Silverstone in Formula Renault 2.0 so could go strongly here. But Habsburg won't

want to repeat his 2015 Eurocup shunt there – check it out on YouTube.

- Hotly tipped Honda protege Tadasuke Makino has his first European race with Hitech GP after a year in Japanese F3. Also in the Hitech line-up is 2015 Italian F4 champion Ralf Aron – the Estonian, who is mentored by '07 British F3 title winner Marko Asmer, was a race winner as a Euro F3 rookie but has never raced at Silverstone.

- Another driver affiliated to an F1 team is China's Guan Yu Zhou. The Ferrari-backed teenager enters his second season and has switched to Prema.

- Silverstone can produce decent racing in F3, especially if the weather or early-lap shuffling shakes up the competitive order. The new aero gives the car more downforce (potentially bad for racing), but is more consistent (potentially good).

- Due to the WEC timetable, F3 races at some odd times this weekend: 1555 on Friday; 1100 on Saturday; and 0900 on Sunday.

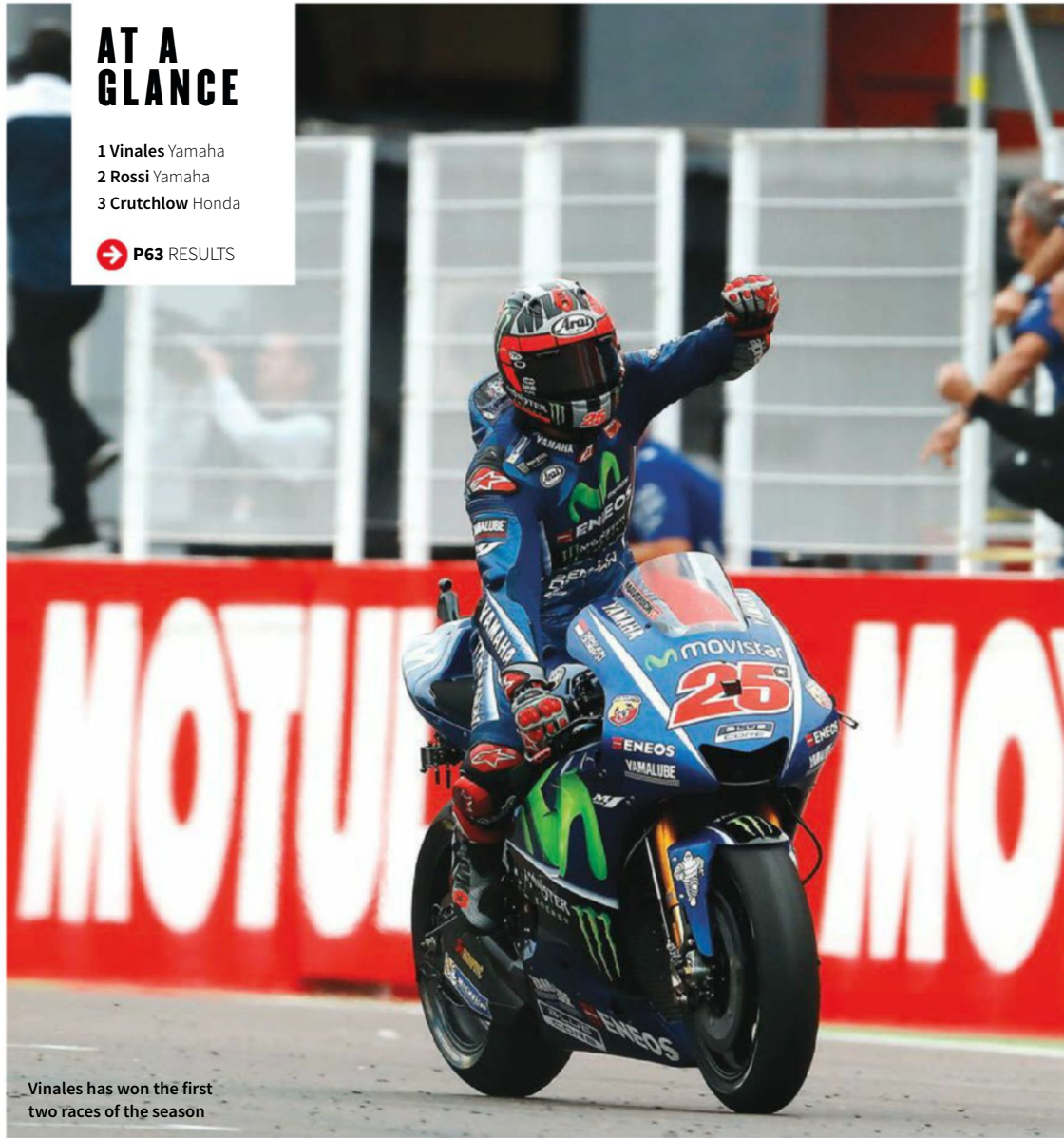
ENTRY LIST

NO.	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR
3	Maximilian Gunther (D)	Prema Powerteam	Dallara-Mercedes
8	Guan Yu Zhou (PRC)	Prema Powerteam	Dallara-Mercedes
25	Mick Schumacher (D)	Prema Powerteam	Dallara-Mercedes
53	Callum Irott (GB)	Prema Powerteam	Dallara-Mercedes
7	Ralf Aron (EST)	Hitech GP	Dallara-Mercedes
11	Tadasuke Makino (J)	Hitech GP	Dallara-Mercedes
34	Jake Hughes (GB)	Hitech GP	Dallara-Mercedes
99	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Hitech GP	Dallara-Mercedes
1	Joel Eriksson (S)	Motopark	Dallara-Volkswagen
33	Marino Sato (J)	Motopark	Dallara-Volkswagen
47	Keyvan Andres Soori (D)	Motopark	Dallara-Volkswagen
5	Pedro Piquet (BR)	Van Amersfoort Racing	Dallara-Mercedes
17	Harrison Newey (GB)	Van Amersfoort Racing	Dallara-Mercedes
55	David Beckmann (D)	Van Amersfoort Racing	Dallara-Mercedes
96	Joey Mawson (AUS)	Van Amersfoort Racing	Dallara-Mercedes
21	Jake Dennis (GB)	Carlin	Dallara-Volkswagen
27	Jehan Daruvala (IND)	Carlin	Dallara-Volkswagen
31	Lando Norris (GB)	Carlin	Dallara-Volkswagen
62	Ferdinand Habsburg (A)	Carlin	Dallara-Volkswagen

AT A GLANCE

- 1 Vinales Yamaha
- 2 Rossi Yamaha
- 3 Crutchlow Honda

→ P63 RESULTS



Vinales has won the first two races of the season

Vinales does what Rossi

MOTOGP
RIO HONDO (RA)
APRIL 9
ROUND 2/18

REPLACING JORGE LORENZO WAS NOT supposed to be easy, for Yamaha or for the man stepping into his MotoGP garage. But Maverick Vinales is making it look just that.

Vinales asserted himself as a star during his two seasons with Suzuki, before topping all four winter tests with his new team and winning the Qatar season opener from pole after recovering from a slow start.

In Argentina, he made it two from two and became the first Yamaha rider to win the opening two grands prix since three-time 500cc world champion Wayne Rainey in 1990. Even Lorenzo did not manage that in nine seasons. Valentino Rossi has not done that in 12 attempts.

The young Spaniard was quickest, and comfortably, in Friday practice and then second on Saturday morning, before the rain arrived. That had been a question mark with Suzuki — whether he was a factor in its wet-weather woes. Vinales qualified sixth, and while that was 1.706

seconds slower than Marc Marquez, he was half a tenth ahead of noted rainmaster Rossi on the same package.

Vinales and Rossi glided up to third and fourth early on the first lap, and Vinales then passed Cal Crutchlow for second, as Marquez bolted to lead by 2.2s after three tours.

However, Marquez crashed at Turn 2 on lap four, a fall he described as “really strange”. Marquez insisted he was not pushing too hard, that he simply settled into a rhythm earlier than his pursuers, although Crutchlow reckoned his Honda stablemate “pushed like an animal”.

Marquez’s demise gave Vinales a lead he would not relinquish. He did not waltz away from Crutchlow and Rossi, but added to his advantage with little increments to win by 2.9s.

“It’s difficult to believe you can start like this,” Vinales admitted. “All of the pre-season in the front, two victories in a row is something incredible, gives us a high motivation.

“We have to keep on the right way, that motivation and still working really hard. We know we have a good bike but we can improve.

“Austin [the next round, where Marquez has a perfect record] is a good track for us, I think



MGP

and Lorenzo could not

there we can improve our bike a lot. We are going to try to work and try still to make another step to try to be more competitive.”

Crutchlow spent most of the race battling with Rossi for second, managing a warning light on the dash of his LCR Honda. Rossi eventually got past with seven laps to go, but third marked not only Crutchlow’s first podium since his Phillip Island victory last October, but also his first finish.

For Rossi, second was another super-human recovery in his 350th world championship start. He felt like he was “in big, big trouble” in practice again with the front end of the 2017 Yamaha, but left Argentina with two podiums from two starts and second in the championship.

Marquez was not the only frontrunner to strike trouble. His Honda team-mate Dani Pedrosa had an almost-identical Turn 2 crash mid-race while fourth, which he attributed to losing the front end over bumps.

In his second start with Ducati, Lorenzo didn’t even make it that far. Starting 16th, a by-product of missing out in Friday afternoon’s practice session that ultimately settled the 10 automatic Q2 participants and a wet qualifying, he tagged

the rear of Andrea Iannone’s Suzuki at the first corner and crashed. Iannone later took a ridethrough penalty for jumping the start, which he felt was harsh.

Lorenzo, though, was encouraged by having made a riding-position change on Saturday, which indicated that lowering his seat in his first test at Valencia last November was a mistake and was hurting his efforts to turn the Ducati. Team-mate Andrea Dovizioso fared little better, collected by Aleix Espargaro at Turn 1 on lap 15, while seventh. Espargaro was on the move on his Aprilia, which lacks one-lap pace but does not shed any rear grip over a race.

The net result of the mayhem was that third through to 13th consisted entirely of satellite riders, with Alvaro Bautista the lead Ducati in fourth, ahead of Tech3 Yamaha rookies Johann Zarco and Jonas Folger. Bautista’s team-mate Karel Abraham started to qualify second on Aspar’s 2015 Ducati but dropped to 10th.

It also meant that the third factory bike home was a KTM, which scored points in its second full MotoGP weekend, with Pol Espargaro and Bradley Smith finishing 14th and 15th.

MITCHELL ADAM

Lexus in crushing GT display

SUPERGT
OKAYAMA (J)
APRIL 9
ROUND 1/8

Ryo Hirakawa and Nick Cassidy kicked off the 2017 Super GT season with victory in their TOM’S Lexus LC 500 at Okayama. The pole-claiming Honda NSX-GT of Takashi Kobayashi and Tomoki Nojiri stopped on the formation lap, which meant third-placed starter Cassidy led when he passed the Team Le Mans-run car of Kazuya Oshima at the hairpin.

Once Cassidy handed over to Hirakawa, the Japanese driver became embroiled in an exciting battle with Andrea Caldarelli, but Hirakawa drove smartly and managed to pull clear. Last year’s championship-winning duo Heikki Kovalainen and Kohei Hirate recovered from Kovalainen’s qualifying error to rise from ninth on the grid to the final podium slot. James Rossiter hauled his Lexus into rostrum contention after starting fifth, but team-mate Kazuki Nakajima went off during his stint and fell to fifth behind Yuji Tachikawa and Hiroaki Ishiura.

The polesitting Honda was not the only NSX to stop with electrical trouble, and their dramas allowed a sextet of Lexuses to head the field at the flag. The next-best manufacturer was Nissan, for which Ronnie Quintarelli and Tsugio Matsuda claimed seventh in their NISMO GT-R, 10 seconds behind the sixth-placed Lexus.

JIRO TAKAHASHI

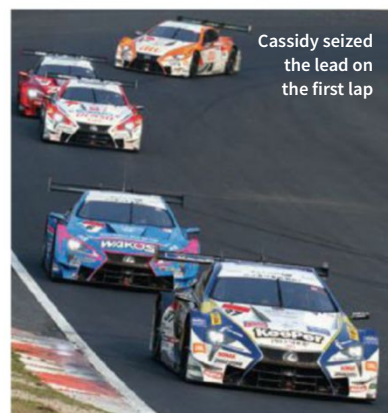
RESULTS

1 Ryo Hirakawa/Nick Cassidy (Lexus LC 500)

81 laps in 2h12m39.626s; 2 Kazuya Oshima/Andrea Caldarelli (Lexus) +1.503s; 3 Heikki Kovalainen/Kohei Hirate (Lexus); 4 Yuji Tachikawa/Hiroaki Ishiura (Lexus); 5 Kazuki Nakajima/James Rossiter (Lexus); 6 Yuhi Sekiguchi/Yuji Kunimoto (Lexus). **Points**

1 Hirakawa/Cassidy 20; 2 Oshima/Caldarelli 15;

3 Hirate/Kovalainen 11; 4 Ishiura/Tachikawa 8; 5 Nakajima/Rossiter 6; 6 Kunimoto/Sekiguchi 5.



LAT IMAGES

Monteiro led
Honda's charge
in Africa



Marrakech is a Honda Type-R place

WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
MARRAKECH (MA)
APRIL 9
ROUND 1/10

IT SEEMS ODD THAT AFTER THREE years of domination by Citroen, the first race since its exit as a works outfit should result in... domination, albeit by one of its former World Touring Car Championship rivals.

Honda has pedigree in Marrakech; while its podium lockout at the Moulay El Hassan circuit last year was erased from the record books thanks to the disputed legality of its flat floor, it had been the pacesetter that weekend and was always likely to perform well.

Even so, its authority throughout the Marrakech weekend came as something of a surprise given all the pre-season talk that the WTCC was set for an ultra-tight title fight. But right from the get-go, Honda was fastest. Practice one? Tiago Monteiro led the way. Second session? Norbert Michélsz. Qualifying went largely the same way, with Michélsz

fastest in the first session and Monteiro topping the second as both progressed to the Q3 shootout.

Nestor Girolami – now a permanent driver for the Volvo outfit after a one-off appearance in 2016 – then loosened that stranglehold, putting his S60 between the two Hondas on the main race grid with an excellent Q3 lap. Michélsz was the man disappointed in third, but Monteiro was imperious as he claimed pole by almost a quarter of a second.

Girolami was unable to repeat his feat in the race, though. His getaway on the formation lap was inauspicious, and while he did launch more effectively at the start of the race proper, Michélsz was still able to slither up the inside on the run to Turn 1 and slot in to second.

That, as it happened, was pretty much that for race action, though Michélsz was an ever-present fixture in Monteiro's mirror. A safety car in the middle of the race did bunch the pack up, but Monteiro went some way towards securing victory by catching Michélsz napping at the restart, bolting at the penultimate corner.

AT A GLANCE

RACE 1

- 1 Guerrieri Chevy
- 2 Bjork Volvo
- 3 Bennani Citroen

RACE 2

- 1 Monteiro Honda
- 2 Michélsz Honda
- 3 Girolami Volvo

➔ P63 RESULTS



Guerrieri won the opener after Coronel error

Michélsz did appear to have slightly better pace, but remained in one-two formation – a result that this year looks set to stand in the record books.

Girolami avoided losing another position by fending off home favourite Mehdi Bennani in his Sebastien Loeb Racing Citroen C-Elysee at the first corner, and stayed close enough to the Civics throughout to claim a maiden WTCC podium. Bennani crossed the line in fourth, but only after he'd tagged Girolami's team-mate Nicky Catsburg on lap one, and was later handed a two-second penalty by the stewards, which demoted him to sixth.

Further back, Rob Huff's first weekend back with Munnich Motorsport was far from ideal. He missed first practice because the seatbelts in his Citroen C-Elysee were out of date and, while he did secure fourth in qualifying, a collision with Honda's Ryo Michigami in race one broke his steering arm. He later recovered to ninth in race two after the team had repaired that breakage.

Monteiro's victory stole the show, but he wasn't the first winner of the year – that honour instead went to Esteban Guerrieri, who claimed a surprise victory on just his third WTCC start. Guerrieri only started the opening reversed-grid race from the front row thanks to penalties for the RC Motorsport Lada of Yann Ehrlacher and Michigami. But he played the waiting game behind early leader Tom Coronel and was best-placed to pick up the pieces when the Dutchman went off to claim victory in his Campos Racing Chevrolet Cruze.

JACK COZENS



LAT IMAGES

Victory proves Johnson's Worth

NASCAR CUP
TEXAS MOTOR SPEEDWAY (USA)
APRIL 9

ROUND 7/36

JIMMIE JOHNSON ARRIVED AT A REPAVED and reconfigured Texas Motor Speedway with one top-10 finish from the opening six races of the NASCAR Cup season. So he was in good spirits in Fort Worth after passing Joey Logano early on and then resisting a charging Kyle Larson to earn his first victory of the 2017 campaign.

"I guess I remembered how to drive; and I guess this team remembered how to do it," said Johnson (who now has as many career wins at Texas as he does Cup titles) over his team radio as he took the chequered flag.

Larson had had come through from the tail of the field. Early race leader Logano finished third,

ahead of Kevin Harvick and Dale Earnhardt Jr, who earned his first top 10 of the season. Ryan Blaney won the first two stages of the race and led the most laps (148) but ended up 12th after sliding through his pit stall on his final pitstop of the race.

JIM UTTER

RESULTS

1 Jimmie Johnson (Chevrolet SS) 334 laps in 3h24m18s; 2 Kyle Larson (Chevy) +0.340s; 3 Joey Logano (Ford Fusion); 4 Kevin Harvick (Ford); 5 Dale Earnhardt Jr (Chevy); 6 Brad Keselowski (Ford); 7 Jamie McMurray (Chevy); 8 Martin Truex Jr (Toyota Camry); 9 Chase Elliott (Chevy); 10 Kurt Busch (Ford).

Playoff qualifying 1 Keselowski 274/2 wins; 2 Larson 315/1; 3 Truex 275/1; 4 Johnson 190/1; 5 Ryan Newman 163/1; 6 Kurt Busch 151/1; 7 Elliott 298; 8 Logano 243; 9 Ryan Blaney 224; 10 Kyle Busch 211; 11 McMurray 209; 12 Clint Bowyer 204; 13 Harvick 198; 14 Trevor Bayne 164; 15 Erik Jones 159; 16 Denny Hamlin 151.

Shunt makes for no Plains sailing

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
SYMMONS PLAINS (AUS)
APRIL 8-9
ROUND 2/14

FABIAN COULTHARD BROKE THROUGH FOR DJR Team Penske's first points-paying win in Tasmania, on a weekend when a 12-car pile-up stole the headlines.

Coulthard's win was the only one that counted. Shane van Gisbergen did cross the line first on Saturday, but given there were only three laps of racing, series officials elected not to award points.

The culprit was a huge second-lap pile-up that took out a third of the field on the spot, as spray and sunshine put visibility at a premium and Coulthard tangled with Rick Kelly at Turn 3.

Kelly's baulked Nissan Altima then kick-started a chain reaction that took out Kelly himself, Garth Tander, Todd Kelly, Scott Pye, James Courtney, Nick Percat, Tim Slade, Taz Douglas, Alex Rullo, James Moffat, Tim Blanchard, Will Davison and Simona de Silvestro.

Davison was the worst affected. His Tekno Holden Commodore hit the passenger door of Kelly's car at full speed. He was transported to hospital with a suspected fractured vertebra.

After a massive rebuild effort only Davison, Kelly, Douglas, and Courtney didn't make the grid on Sunday. Coulthard won after damp conditions caught out Chaz Mostert midway through.

From there the Kiwi cruised to a first points-paying win for Penske, leading home team-mate Scott McLaughlin and Triple Eight driver Jamie Whincup. Van Gisbergen recovered to ninth after being slapped with a 15-second penalty for tangling with Todd Kelly.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Shane van Gisbergen (Holden Commodore) 4 laps in 54m29.0032s; 2 Jamie Whincup (Holden) +0.3952s; 3 Craig Lowndes (Holden); 4 David Reynolds (Holden); 5 Chaz Mostert (Ford Falcon); 6 Jason Bright (Ford). **Race 2 1 Fabian Coulthard (Ford)** 76 laps in 1h23m36.5118s; 2 Scott McLaughlin (Ford) +0.6906s; 3 Whincup; 4 Lowndes; 5 Reynolds; 6 Cameron Waters (Ford). **Points 1 van Gisbergen 384**; 2 Coulthard 364; 3 Whincup 333; 4 McLaughlin 330; 5 Waters 312; 6 Mostert 309.



Coulthard was a cause of the race-one shunt

LAT IMAGES

IN BRIEF

PIRELLI WORLD CHALLENGE

Alvaro Parente proved the driver to beat (yet again) as the PWC made its way to Long Beach. The McLaren driver set a track record in qualifying, then headed Patrick Long (Porsche) and Bryan Sellers (McLaren) in the race, which was briefly halted when a fire hydrant broke and flooded the track.

VLN

Porsche drivers Richard Lietz and Frederic Makowiecki won the second VLN race of the year after last-lap drama. Christopher Mies passed Makowiecki, but then his Audi R8 LMS slowed with a fuel shortage. That allowed Makowiecki to win from the Haribo Mercedes-AMG GT3 (Maxi Gotz/Uwe Alzen/Lance David Arnold) and the WRT Audi of Nico Muller, Robin Frijns and Marcel Fassler.

BLANCPAIN GT ASIA

Mitch Gilbert defeated GP2 refugee Raffaele Marciello in the battle of the single-seater converts as SRO's latest initiative, the Blancpain Asia GT Series, kicked off at Sepang. Gilbert and his OD Racing Audi team-mate Aditya Patela won the opening race from Marciello/Hunter Abbott (Mercedes), then charged from eighth to second in race two behind the Anthony Lu/Davide Rizzo Audi.

JAPANESE FORMULA 4

Formula Renault convert Ukyo Sasahara kicked off his move home with victory in the Okayama opener. Sasahara, a Honda Formula Dream protege, claimed second in race two behind Yuki Tsunoda. Last year's champion Ritomo Miyata took pole for both races but fell to second and sixth.

US FORMULA 4

Timo Reger won twice on his series debut at Homestead. Reger won the first and third races of the day, and shadowed Raphael Forcier in the second. Poleman Benjamin Pederson finished behind Reger in race one but registered a P11 and a DNF in the remaining encounters.

MOTO2

Franco Morbidelli continued his perfect start to the Moto2 season at Termas de Rio Hondo. Morbidelli controlled the race, running ahead of Marc VDS team-mate Alex Marquez. While Marquez closed to within half a second, he had a highside getting on the power at Turn 7 on the last lap, crashing and handing second to KTM's polesitter Miguel Oliveira and third to Thomas Luthi.

MOTO3

Joan Mir came from 16th on the grid to make it back-to-back wins. Mir established himself in the lead pack and then moved in front in Argentina, holding off Brit John McPhee, who passed Jorge Martin earlier on the last lap. The result was a repeat of the podium in last month's Qatar opener.

Herberth rides again at the Ring

24 HOUR SERIES
REDBULL RING 12 HOURS (A)
APRIL 7-8
ROUND 3/7

THE HERBERTH MOTORSPORT Porsche of Daniel Allemann and Robert and Alfred Renauer won the Red Bull Ring 12 Hours to make it two victories out of three starts in the 2017 series.

Initially, the Scuderia Praha Ferrari, which Matteo Malucelli had qualified on pole position, held the initiative. But the Italian, along with team-mates Josef Kral and Jiri Pisarik, slipped to third in the rain-hit opening three-and-a-half hour segment of the race on Saturday. Ultimately, the Ferrari's race came to an end when Pisarik crashed at the first corner after a brake failure.

By that time the Herberth Porsche was in control of the race, winning by a clear five laps from the A6 Am-class Grasser Motorsport Lamborghini Huracan of Milos Pavlovic, Christoph Lenz and Roberto Pampanini.

The A6 Pro Grasser Lamborghini of Christian Engelhart and Rolf and Mark Ineichen had led at the end of the Saturday segment, but retired on Sunday with an engine failure. This was after a lively battle between Robert Renauer and Engelhart in the early stages of the second chunk of the race. The Grasser car lost the lead just before the five-hour mark when Allemann passed Mark Ineichen through the double-right at the end of the lap.

The final podium position went to the Renault R501 of Frederic Fatien, Jordan Gregor and Bassam Kronfli.

RESULTS

1 Daniel Allemann/Robert Renauer/Alfred Renauer (Porsche 911 GT3 R) 415 laps;
2 Milos Pavlovic/Christoph Lenz/Roberto Pampanini/Mark Ineichen (Lamborghini Huracan GT) -5 laps;
3 Frederic Fatien/Jordan Gregor/Bassam Kronfli (Renault RS01); 4 Michael Kroll/Chantal Kroll/Roland Eggmann/Kenneth Heyer/Christiaan Frankenhouet (Mercedes-AMG GT3); 5 Robert Lukas/Marcin Jedlinski/Patrick Eisemann (Porsche); 6 Johannes Kirchoff/Gustav Edelhoff/Elmar Grimm/Ingo Vogler (Audi R8 LMS).



The Herberth Porsche won by five laps



Taylors leave it late to claim Long Beach win

IMSA SPORTSCAR
LONG BEACH (USA)
APRIL 8
ROUND 3/12

RICKY AND JORDAN TAYLOR HAVE developed quite an affinity for the famed Long Beach street circuit in California.

After narrowly missing out on pole position one year ago, Ricky made amends this time around aboard his father Wayne's Cadillac DPi-V.R, comfortably eclipsing his own qualifying record from 2015. The following day, younger brother Jordan snatched the lead from Ryan Dalziel in the closing stages of an incident-filled 100-minute race to secure their third win in a row at Long Beach and maintain their perfect start to this year's IMSA championship.

No fewer than five full-course cautions dulled the aesthetic appeal of the new breed of DPi cars' debut on the West Coast, but at least the race concluded with the longest spell of green-flag racing (albeit only 20 minutes). The Mazdas of Tristan Nunez and Tom Long provided some stiff opposition by running a close second and third before their only pitstops. An air-jack problem on Long's car resulted in Joel Miller losing a lap before he was able to resume in it, but Jonathan Bomarito finished a solid third in the sister car.

The other star among the Prototype field was the Tequila Patron ESM Onroak-Nissan of Scott Sharp and Dalziel, whose two-stop strategy worked in their favour as Dalziel took the lead at the final restart. The Scotsman even set the fastest lap of the race as he resolutely held off the Cadillac challenge until, with five laps remaining, he was baulked by some slower traffic onto Shoreline Drive, which enabled Taylor to storm through into the lead.

Russian/South African pair Misha Goikhberg and Stephen Simpson also drove well to finish fourth for JDC/Miller Motorsports.

A typically tight GTLM battle unfortunately lost the Risi Ferrari on the very first lap when Toni Vilander struck the wall heavily in Turn Five following contact with Ed Brown's DPI Nissan.

Polesitter Jan Magnussen and Antonio Garcia fought back from being delayed in the same incident, only to be cruelly robbed of victory at the final corner when Garcia became hopelessly blocked by three GTD cars that had tangled.

Ironically, having fallen victim to an almost identical melee one year ago, Corvette team-mate Tommy Milner was able to locate a path through the carnage and claim the win.

Cooper MacNeil and Gunnar Jeannette headed a one-two finish for Mercedes in the GTD class, with Ben Keating and Jeroen Bleekemolen second.

JEREMY SHAW

RESULTS

1 Ricky Taylor/Jordan Taylor (Cadillac DPi-V.R) 63 laps in 1h40m37.481s; 2 Scott Sharp/Ryan Dalziel (Nissan Onroak DPI) +6.349s; 3 Tristan Nunez/Jonathan Bomarito (Mazda RT24-P); 4 Stephen Simpson/Mikhail Goikhberg (ORECA 07); 5 Tom Kimber-Smith/Will Owen (Ligier JSP217); 6 Tom Long/Joel Miller (Mazda). **GTLM 1 Oliver Gavin/Tommy Milner (Chevrolet Corvette C7.R)**; 2 Ryan Briscoe/Richard Westbrook (Ford GT) +1.830s; 3 Kevin Estre/Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche 911 RSR); 4 Bill Auberlen/Alexander Sims (BMW M6 GTLM); 5 Antonio Garcia/Jan Magnussen (Chevy); 6 Patrick Pilet/Dirk Werner (Porsche). **GTD 1 Cooper MacNeil/Gunnar Jeannette (Mercedes-AMG GT3)**; 2 Ben Keating/Jeroen Bleekemolen (Mercedes) +7.492s; 3 Christina Nielsen/Alessandro Balzan (Ferrari 488 GT3); 4 Patrick Lindsey/Jorg Bergmeister (Porsche 991 GT3 R); 5 Wolf Henzler/Jan Heylen (Porsche); 6 Scott Pruett/Sage Karam (Lexus RCF GT3). **Points 1 J Taylor/R Taylor 105**; 2 Christian Fittipaldi/Joao Barbosa 89; 3 Goikhberg/Simpson 82; 4 Dalziel/Sharp 81; 5 Dane Cameron/Eric Curran 79; 6 Bomarito/Nunez 76. **GTLM 1 Dirk Muller/Joey Hand 91**; 2 Garcia/Magnussen 89; 3 Westbrook/Briscoe 82; 4 Werner/Pilet 82; 5 Giancarlo Fisichella/Toni Vilander 82; 6 Gavin/Milner 78. **GTD 1 Keating/Bleekemolen 98**; 2 Balzan/Nielsen 77; 3 Daniel Morad/Michael Christensen 75; 4 Heylen 72; 5 Andrew Davis/Lawson Aschenbach 70; 6 Jeff Segal/Oswaldo Negri Jr 70.

RESULTS ROUND-UP

MOTOGP

ROUND 2/18, TERMAS DE RIO HONDO, APRIL 9 (25 LAPS - 74.658 MILES)

1	Maverick Vinales (E) <i>Yamaha</i>	41m45.060s
2	Valentino Rossi (I) <i>Yamaha</i>	+2.915s
3	Cal Crutchlow (GB) <i>LCR Honda</i>	+3.754s
4	Alvaro Bautista (E) <i>Aspar Ducati</i>	+6.523s
5	Johann Zarco (F) <i>Tech3 Yamaha</i>	+15.504s
6	Jonas Folger (D) <i>Tech3 Yamaha</i>	+18.241s
7	Danilo Petrucci (I) <i>Pramac Ducati</i>	+20.046s
8	Scott Redding (GB) <i>Pramac Ducati</i>	+25.480s
9	Jack Miller (AUS) <i>Marc VDS Honda</i>	+25.665s
10	Karel Abraham (CZ) <i>Aspar Ducati</i>	+26.403s
11	Loris Baz (F) <i>Avintia Ducati</i>	+26.952s
12	Tito Rabat (E) <i>Marc VDS Honda</i>	+41.875s
13	Hector Barbera (E) <i>Avintia Ducati</i>	+42.770s
14	Pol Espargaro (E) <i>KTM</i>	+43.085s
15	Bradley Smith (GB) <i>KTM</i>	+43.452s
16	Andrea Iannone (I) <i>Suzuki</i>	+46.219s
R	Andrea Dovizioso (I) <i>Ducati</i>	14 laps-accident
R	Aleix Espargaro (E) <i>Aprilia</i>	14 laps-accident
R	Dani Pedrosa (E) <i>Honda</i>	13 laps-accident
R	Sam Lowes (GB) <i>Aprilia</i>	11 laps-gearbox
R	Alex Rins (E) <i>Suzuki</i>	11 laps-ankle injury
R	Marc Marquez (E) <i>Honda</i>	3 laps-accident
R	Jorge Lorenzo (E) <i>Ducati</i>	0 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 107.290mph. Fastest lap Vinales 1m39.694s, 107.837mph.

QUALIFYING 2

1 Marquez 1m47.512s; 2 Abraham 1m48.275s; 3 Crutchlow 1m48.278s; 4 Petrucci 1m48.908s; 5 Pedrosa 1m49.008s; 6 Vinales 1m49.218s; 7 Rossi 1m49.272s; 8 Espargaro 1m49.323s; 9 Baz 1m49.630s; 10 Bautista 1m49.724s; 11 Folger 1m49.825s; 12 Iannone 1m50.725s.

QUALIFYING 1

1 Pedrosa 1m49.235s; 2 Rossi 1m49.421s; 3 Dovizioso 1m49.488s; 4 Zarco 1m49.916s; 5 Redding 1m50.048s; 6 Lorenzo 1m50.310s; 7 Miller 1m50.319s; 8 Espargaro 1m50.673s; 9 Smith 1m50.676s; 10 Rabat 1m50.910s; 11 Barbera 1m51.058s; 12 Lowes 1m51.199s; 13 Rins 1m52.340s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Vinales 50; 2 Rossi 36; 3 Dovizioso 20; 4 Redding 17; 5 Crutchlow 16; 6 Folger 16; 7 Miller 15; 8 Bautista 13; 8 Marquez 13; 10 Zarco 11; 10 Pedrosa 11; 12 A Espargaro 10; 13 Petrucci 9; 14 Baz 9; 15 Abraham 8; 16 Rins 7; 17 Barbera 6; 18 Lorenzo 5; 19 Rabat 5; 20 P Espargaro 2; 21 Smith 1.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Yamaha 50; 2 Ducati 33; 3 Honda 29; 4 Aprilia 10; 5 Suzuki 7; 6 KTM 2.



Rossi was second in 350th world championship start

WTCC

ROUND 1/10, MARRAKECH (MA), APRIL 9

RACE 1 (20 LAPS - 36.922 MILES)

1	Esteban Guerrieri (RA) <i>Campos Racing</i> · Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1	31m30.426s
2	Theo Bjork (S) <i>Polestar Cyan Racing</i> · Volvo S60 Polestar TC1	+0.654s
3	Mehdi Bennani (MA) <i>Sebastien Loeb Racing</i> · Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+1.289s
4	Nicky Catsburg (NL) <i>Polestar Cyan Racing</i> · Volvo S60 Polestar TC1	+1.921s
5	Norbert Michelisz (H) <i>Honda Racing Team JAS</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	+2.201s
6	Tiago Monteiro (P) <i>Honda Racing Team JAS</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	+2.803s
7	Tom Chilton (GB) <i>Sebastien Loeb Racing</i> · Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+14.032s
8	Tom Coronel (NL) <i>ROAL Motorsport</i> · Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1	+20.390s
9	Nestor Girolami (RA) <i>Polestar Cyan Racing</i> · Volvo S60 Polestar TC1	+20.858s
10	Aurelien Panis (F) <i>Zengo Motorsport</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	+21.950s
11	Daniel Nagy (H) <i>Zengo Motorsport</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	-3 laps-suspension
R	John Filippi (F) <i>Sebastien Loeb Racing</i> · Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	5 laps-accident damage
R	Rob Huff (GB) <i>Munnich Motorsport</i> · Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	3 laps-steering
R	Ryo Michigami (J) <i>Honda Racing Team JAS</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	2 laps-suspension
R	Yann Ehrlacher (F) <i>RC Motorsport</i> · Lada Vesta WTCC	0 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 70.311mph. Fastest lap Nagy 1m24.513s, 78.638mph.

GRID FOR RACE 1

1 Coronel; 2 Guerrieri; 3 Chilton; 4 Bjork; 5 Catsburg; 6 Bennani; 7 Huff; 8 Michelisz; 9 Girolami; 10 Monteiro; 11 Nagy; 12 Filippi; 13 Michigami; 14 Ehrlacher; 15 Panis.

RACE 2 (23 LAPS - 42.460 MILES)

1 Monteiro 34m00.997s; 2 Michelisz +0.751s; 3 Girolami +2.120s; 4 Catsburg +3.702s; 5 Chilton +4.519s; 6 Bennani +4.847s; 7 Bjork +5.073s; 8 Coronel +6.363s; 9 Huff +7.658s; 10 Michigami +12.197s; 11 Filippi +20.402s; 12 Ehrlacher +22.035s; 13 Guerrieri +22.308s; 14 Nagy +42.880s; 15 Panis 4 laps-suspension.

Winner's average speed 74.893mph. Fastest lap Guerrieri 1m23.624s, 79.474mph.

QUALIFYING

Q3 1 Monteiro 1m21.792s; 2 Girolami 1m22.031s; 3 Michelisz 1m22.097s; 4 Huff 1m22.309s; 5 Bennani 1m22.412s.

Q2 Monteiro 1m21.822s; Michelisz 1m21.959s; Girolami 1m22.075s; Bennani 1m22.536s; Huff 1m22.568s; 6 Catsburg 1m22.692s; 7 Bjork 1m22.797s; 8 Chilton 1m22.813s; 9 Guerrieri 1m23.228s; 10 Coronel 1m23.479s; 11 Ehrlacher; 12 Michigami.

Q1 Michelisz 1m22.161s; Catsburg 1m22.271s; Monteiro 1m22.462s; Huff 1m22.601s; Girolami 1m22.704s; Bjork 1m22.720s; Bennani 1m22.744s; Chilton 1m23.176s; Guerrieri 1m23.220s; Coronel 1m23.628s; Nagy 1m23.799s; Filippi 1m24.043s; 13 Panis; 14 Michigami; 15 Ehrlacher.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Monteiro 43; 2 Michelisz 36; 3 Catsburg 28; 4 Bennani 26; 5 Guerrieri 25; 6 Bjork 25; 7 Girolami 25; 8 Chilton 19; 9 Coronel 8; 10 Huff 4.



Guerrieri won on his second WTCC outing

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White was one of the GT4 drivers to speak out after penalties



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SILVERSTONE 24 HOURS

Creventic admits to mistakes in Silverstone 24H organisation

ORGANISERS OF THE SILVERSTONE 24 HOURS HAVE admitted that mistakes were made in this year's event after a number of GT4 class drivers were angered by Creventic's rules regarding target lap times.

Part of the event's regulations was a 'minimum reference lap time' rule that stipulated drivers would be given a 30-second penalty every time they exceeded the target time. A number of drivers were penalised because of this and hit out at organisers.

In a statement to Autosport, Creventic admitted that lessons can be learned from the race held earlier this month. It read: "To enhance the competition, we decided to allow GT4 cars with the intention to make a BoP to ensure cars from the TCR class, as the top touring car class, could compete at an equal level with GT4 cars for the overall win.

"Creventic hoped imposing a minimum lap time would discourage teams to enter cars that can do lap times considerably faster than this minimum lap time and thus to keep competition at an equal level and a homogeneous field.

"After the event Creventic admits to having made mistakes, and further ones were made during attempts

to repair some of the mistakes made earlier. Drivers could (and should) have read the regulations, and if not, they should have been informed by their teams. However, clearly it is our responsibility to have rules that are clear and easy to follow.

"We regret the fact that our ideas did not work out in the way we expected. We will do our best to offer a racing experience with a fair competition in an enjoyable way.

"Just trying to regulate that with refuelling limitations might be too simple, however it remains one of the options we are looking at."

Drivers were angered by the rule, which they claimed prevented GT4 cars from challenging TCR entries.

"I am a racer and will always be one – to get penalties for being outside your target sector times is just ridiculous," said Colin White, who finished second in class after another car was switched to the GT4 division during the race.

"You need a computer in the car to work it out and a secretary to deal with the paperwork for the penalties."

Last year's victor Martin Short added: "I knew it was going to be bad, but this was worse than I had expected and it's just penalties that stopped us beating TCR cars."

ADMITTING THAT YOU'VE made a mistake is never easy.

Admitting a mistake in the face of public criticism when you are an international race series organiser is even harder. But that's what Creventic has done after controversy in the GT4 class of its Silverstone 24 Hours event earlier this month. Full marks to it for that.

Its statement is incredible. Creventic admits errors were made with its 'minimum reference lap time' that sparked GT4 drivers to complain about being unable to race and being handed complicated penalties. Forcing drivers to complete slower lap times should be questioned.

Like the South African Global Touring Cars series did after its inaugural meeting this year, the organiser has held its hands up and acknowledged its problems.

This is something more clubs and organisers should do. Rather than ignoring the issue, refusing to comment or denying there's a problem, there should be more recognition of concerns. That would benefit everyone.

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FORMULA JUNIOR

Ex-Hulme Brabham to race in the UK

THE FORMULA JUNIOR BRABHAM BT6 IN which Denny Hulme made his name will race in Britain this season with new owner Mark Shaw.

Chassis number nine was a works car raced by 1967 world champion Hulme during the 1963 season, and seven major wins in Europe helped him to secure a place in Brabham's Formula 2 team for 1964.

The car was shipped to Australia at the end of the 1963 season and stayed in Australia and New Zealand for 53 years until being sent back to the UK over the winter.

Although it spent 30 years in storage, it has been raced in Australian historic events since 2001 by its former owner Ed Holly. It arrived in the UK with a twin-cam engine but is now being

fitted with a fresh Geoff Richardson Engineering Formula Junior engine.

Former F3 and F3000 racer Shaw returned to racing last season in Historic FFord with the Speedsport team and bought the Brabham for a move into FJunior. His plan is to contest selected high-profile races and he will take the car to Laguna Seca in August after a first race outing at Silverstone in May. In May 1963, Hulme won the FJunior race at the Silverstone International Trophy meeting.

The Speedsport team is now preparing the original and famous car ready for testing.

"The Brabham is a wonderful piece of motor racing history," said Speedsport managing director Mike O'Brien. "We're absolutely

delighted to be looking after the car and working with Mark again this season."

• Ford powerhouse of the 1960s Terry Drury Racing returned to victory lane at Donington last Saturday when Jack Drury, 31, won the HSCC/HRSR Historic Touring Car round in a Falcon Sprint similar to that raced by his father.

"We're lucky to have our dad around, so hopefully can re-ignite his team, which achieved so much in racing, rallying and rallycross," said Jack Drury.

Now 78, Drury Sr – who last competed in the mid-'80s – has taken out a new MSA race licence and may share Graeme Kersley's TDR Lotus Cortina at the Donington Historic Festival.

FIA MASTERS

Thornton and Lyons split wins in Masters

TOP QUALIFIER GREG Thornton (Lotus 91/5) and Michael Lyons (Williams FW07B/c) won the opening rounds of the FIA Masters Historic F1 championship at last weekend's Barcelona's Espiritu de Montjuic event.

Both hit problems in the other leg, Lyons stopped by a broken throttle linkage on Saturday and 2013 champion Thornton (right) pitting with an oil leak during Sunday's sequel.

Loic Deman (Tyrrell 010) displaced Thornton in race one but lost out in traffic.

Steve Hartley (Arrows A4) and Tyrrell 010 driver Andy Wolfe were the respective podium finishers. Max Smith-Hilliard (Shadow DN5) bagged a Pre-'78 class double.

Smith-Hilliard and Nick Padmore (Chevron B19) scored the first outright win for the former's Forza team, seeing off a bunch of quick Lola T70s in the busy FIA Masters Sportscar encounter.

Chris Beighton/Simon Hadfield (Ford Mustang) won the Pre-'66 Touring Car race.



GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Wilmot in U-turn for Ginetta seat

BRITISH TOURING CAR SQUAD TEAM HARD will expand to a two-car line-up for the remainder of the Ginetta GT4 Supercup season after signing Andy Wilmot.

The ex-BTCC racer had been due to compete in the Mini Challenge but will now switch to the Ginetta series instead, starting with the Donington Park races this weekend.

He has driven for Team Hard before, competing with the squad in the VW Cup and briefly in the BTCC in 2013.

Team boss Tony Gilham said: "Andy is a very capable driver as we have seen over the years.

"A brief shakedown before entering his first full race weekend is somewhat jumping in at the deep end but, as a racing driver, that makes the challenge all the more appealing."



BRITISH GT

Barwell worried after GT tyre changes

THE BARWELL LAMBORGHINI BRITISH GT team says its chances at the Oulton Park season opener will be hit by changes to its tyre size and the new Pirelli compound.

For 2017 the Lamborghini Huracan's frontal tyre size has been upped from 660mm to 680mm. At the same time, Pirelli has replaced its older DHC range of GT tyres with the new construction DHD, aimed at widening the peak grip window and making the rubber more friendly for amateur drivers.

"Lamborghini wanted to align its tyres with the [sister brand] Audi R8, but it's backfired a little as it's made the front-end of the car very strong but upset the rear," said Barwell's Mark Lemmer. "Right now the car is imbalanced as the change has affected the geometry a lot."

Pirelli's Matteo Braga said: "Our new tyres are a direct response to requests from drivers and manufacturers. We have to produce a tyre that works for all cars, circuits, temperatures and races – for amateurs and professionals."

BRITISH F3

Brazilian completes Double R line-up

DOUBLE R RACING HAS completed its BRDC British Formula 3 Championship line-up with Brazilian Guilherme Samaia.

The 20-year-old has domestic success to his name, having claimed the Brazilian F3 Light title in 2015 before finishing runner-up in the main class last season.

Samaia has no European experience but has sampled the Tatuus-Cosworth F3-016, and joins Jamie Chadwick and Harry Hayek at Double R – which last year ran Matheus Leist to the F3 crown.

"I have raced in Brazil with the Dallara F308 car and now I face an entirely new challenge with the British F3 car," said

Samaia. "I have a lot to learn. It's my first time in Europe and the tracks, the car and climate are all new to me."

Double R team principal Anthony Hieatt added: "He's got a fair level of experience but the competition is more than it was in Brazil. He's done four or five days of testing and should be a frontrunner."



MODIFIED SALOONS

Opinions split on Mods restrictors

BRITISH AUTOMOBILE RACE CLUB South Eastern Centre-run Modified Saloons drivers are divided on new restrictor regulations introduced for this season.

The championship, which held its second meeting at Snetterton last weekend, has introduced a new 50-millimetre restrictor in place of the old 58mm example in an attempt to slow down the quickest Class A cars.

But competitors like reigning champion Rod Birley claim the restrictors have created more

work and cost for drivers to be competitive.

"What we've got to do is change the turbo, inlet manifold, exhaust manifold, intercooler, throttle body and then you have to have it remapped, so you're probably looking at £4-5k for a regulation change, which most of us can't afford. It's killed it," he said.

Co-ordinator Ken Angell said the change could be costly, but other drivers – including 2016 runner-up Malcolm Wise – were less critical of the introduction of restrictors.

IN BRIEF



CONCERNS OVER CODE 60 FORD USAGE

Drivers and team owners in the BRSCC National Formula Ford 1600 Championship have raised concerns at the introduction of Code 60. The rule, used during last weekend's event at Brands Hatch, requires drivers to slow down to 60km/h when the Code 60 flag is shown in the event of a crash or incident on the circuit. Concerns were raised in the drivers' briefing as Formula Ford cars do not have speed-limiters and few have speedometers.

INCH PLANS TO END MINI SEASON EARLY

Mighty Minis frontrunner Louise Inch intends to compete in just two more rounds. Inch missed out on victory in the opening race of the season by 0.013 seconds last month at Silverstone, but said she is set to compete in only July's and August's Brands Hatch Castle Combe's meetings.

SUMPTER IN PORSCHE RETURN WITH 996

Former British GT racer Mark Sumpter will return to the Porsche Club Championship in a 996 C2, a car he raced in the late 1990s. "I was looking to build a Cayman, then heard Piers Masarati was selling his 996 and did a deal subject to [former team-mate] Mike Jordan having a look at it," said Sumpter, who won the 2011 Porsche title. "Mike said 'you do know it's your old 996 race car?'"

BRAZILIAN MAURILLO IN LATE JEDI DEBUT

Formula Jedi had a late entrant at Brands last weekend, with Maurillo Rodrigues flying from Brazil to make his racing debut. Rodrigues, a recently qualified doctor, shook down a car at Bruntingthorpe last Wednesday before a test at Brands on Friday. He was eighth on his debut.

DOUBLE R HITS OUT AFTER ENGINE WOES

Double R boss Anthony Hieatt hit out at Ford and tuners Sodemo after an opening British Formula 4 weekend blighted by engine troubles. Linus Lundqvist failed to finish any of the three races at Brands Hatch thanks to suspected engine woes. "There was a complete lack of engine support from Ford to try and solve the problem," said Hieatt. Championship promoter Sam Roach said: "All of this is under investigation – Sodemo and the team are working to find the cause of the problem."





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Anniversaries at Donington and Combe

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@autosport](#)

FORMULA FORD CHASSIS FROM THE GENRE'S FIRST six seasons – 55 cars representing 17 marques – made a stunning sight as the Historic Sports Car Club's Historic Championship got under way in the category's 50th anniversary year at Donington Park last Saturday.

Exemplary driving, scintillating wheel-to-wheel racing and the tightest finish of the afternoon demonstrated precisely why the world's most successful junior single-seater class remains so popular. The cars might no longer be under £1000 ready to race as they had to be in 1967, but factor in inflation (a family house in a London overspill town was well under 10 grand then, remember?) and it's still accessible.

In stark contrast to modern racing, Alexis, Beattie, Brabham, Cooper Chinook, Crossle, Elden, Ginetta, Jamun, Jomo, Kvantti, Lola, Lotus, Macon, Merlyn, Nike, Palliser and Titan machinery hit the track for the first of eight rounds (plus the Silverstone Classic) run in association with tyre supplier Avon and supported by resurgent Radio Caroline. The camaraderie in the paddock built as teams arrived on Friday afternoon. By Saturday the atmosphere was buzzing at the Jimmy's Iced Coffee-fuelled race hub, where teams congregated for socials either side of the Q-heat and points-paying final. This was Formula Ford at its very best. Long may it continue.

Talking of the paddock, it hasn't taken long for the hand of MotorSport Vision boss Jonathan Palmer to be evident in its presentation. JP, who won Donington's round of the European F2 championship en route to the title with Ralt-Honda in 1983, famously doesn't do scruffy. Now the visionary behind the Wheatcroft family's legacy, he and Kevin Wheatcroft have

masterminded a plan to rejuvenate the old place, on which MSV has taken a 21-year lease. The whole paddock has been resurfaced, as well as key sections of the track, notably between McLeans and Coppice where the compression over the vehicular access tunnel – legacy of the ill-starred Simon Gillett 'deal' that crippled the venue – has been graded out. More improvements will follow, to benefit all customers.

I was among the large throng that attended the opening car meeting at Donington on May 28, 1977, when the late Tom Wheatcroft, who had visited the park as a lad pre-war, realised his ambition to reopen it for racing. I've been very fortunate to race there too; indeed it's the only circuit on which I've scored five wins (in Argo JM6, Austin A40, AC Cobra, Lola T294 and Caterham 7), so it will always be a personal favourite.

Forty years on, with the museum 'Wheatie' created to house his racing car collection still as much a mecca for enthusiasts from all over the world as the undulating estate is for festival-goers, it is certainly being turned around by MD Christopher Tate and his staff with investment erasing years of blight.

Another place I adore is Castle Combe, which I first visited in 1967, a decade before that momentous Donington reopening. This season thus brings up my half-century at the ultra-friendly Chippenham venue. I will be in the commentary box next week for Easter Monday's season-opener, known as Howard's Day since '13 when the sport lost Howard Strawford, the Welsh wizard who took on authority with a rugby scrum's tenacity and saved the circuit against the odds.

Thankfully, it continues in his spirit, providing superb club racing for competitors and spectators alike. 🍷



GREENWOOD DEBUTS RARE BEATTIE

Stephen Greenwood gave his rare Beattie chassis its HSCC Historic Formula Ford debut at Donington last weekend. It's one of a short run of cars made by renowned suspension expert Chas Beattie in West London. Greenwood retired from the 31-car heat, having climbed to 19th in the thick of a multi-car battle.



TANNER-WOOD'S IMPROVEMENT

Plymouth solicitor Pippa Tanner-Wood, daughter of Clubmans ace Clive Wood, made an impressive Classic Clubmans debut in Dave Facer's B-Sport Mallock Mk16 at Donington, having not seen the circuit before. Her lap times tumbled by eight seconds in the race, to within five of champion Barry Webb's best.



MICHAEL EYES GOODWOOD BID

Series debutant Costas Michael's pace in a Sunbeam Alpine in last Saturday's Historic Road Sports race attracted attention at Donington. The Enfield-based Greek Cypriot sees the unusual mount as a stepping stone to greater things. "I have a Lotus 11 and a Jaguar E-type, so a Goodwood invitation is my goal," he said.

ALL PICS: WALKER



DONINGTON
HSCC APRIL 8

Grant pips O'Brien at the last in Historic

IRON NERVE AND GEAR CHOICE decided a stunning Historic Formula Ford championship opener in last Saturday's HSCC season curtain-raiser, as Callum Grant outfoxed Michael O'Brien in the final chicane to win a Merlyn Mk20 drag race to the flag by 0.057 seconds, the closest finish of a glorious afternoon.

O'Brien forged alongside double champion Grant plunging through Hollywood for the last time and nosed ahead in the Craner Curves just before yellows covering spinner Tim Brise's car at the Old Hairpin.

"I saw the flags waving and let him have it, which left me one chance," said Grant. "Having pressured Michael into carrying too much speed into the chicane, which I knew he was taking in third, he got out of shape. I was using second, so had better acceleration out."

Ex-Formula Palmer Audi champ Richard Tarling kept both in sight, despite soaring water temperature in his Jamun, while O'Brien's team-mate Cameron Jackson fought back from a wishbone failure in qualifying to regain fourth. The chase also embroiled 2013 champion Sam Mitchell and Benn Simms, who enjoyed countless exchanges.

HFF chairman Andrew Mansell had the honour of leading the 50th anniversary season's opening lap. From row three,

Mansell found the traction to fire his Merlyn Mk11A inside poleman Ross Drybrough's Mk20 to claim the apex at Redgate in the qualifying heat. A moment dropped him to third, however, whereupon Sussex dental implant guru Drybrough made his victorious break, chased home by Chris Sharples.

Brise, racing for the first time in 42 years, brought his ex-Jono Baines Merlyn home a spirited sixth, behind the rare Macon of Roy Siergiejew and on-form Roger Arnold. A couple of fine six-car battles entertained in mid-field, Ali Langridge scrapping well on her second outing in the Team Tortuga Lotus 61.

Jack Drury – son of 1960s Ford racer Terry – stepped up boldly from the

O'Brien (right) applauds Grant after nailbiting finish

BMW Compact Cup and hurled his Falcon Sprint to a remarkable Historic Touring Car victory. Drury hung the thundering V8's tail out stylishly, usurping fellow debutant Ben Winrow, whose Alan Henderson Racing Cortina Lotus started from pole. Winrow chased in vain with Kiwi Warren Briggs (Mustang) who was penalised 30 seconds for continuing transponder issues. Paul Pheysey was promoted to the podium in his AHR-run ex-Andy Wolfe Cortina.

Marches dominated the Derek Bell Trophy race, but leaders Jamie Brashaw (F5000 73A) and Mark Dwyer (F2 742) were excluded for passing the pack behind a pace car that had not picked them up. Local man David Shaw was thus declared the winner in the howling ex-Rolf Stommelen F1 Eiffelland March 721. Gaius Ghinn and Paul Smith (Ralt RT3s) topped the Classic F3 section, while Dastle pilot Adrian Langridge aced the 1600cc quartet, shaking off Glenn Eagling's Team Modus Ensign.

Deployed while erstwhile Guards Trophy leader Hugh Colman's Chevron B8 and Paul Castaldini's Jaguar E-type coupe were recovered, the safety car had less impact on the enduro, despite Charlie Allison diving for the pits as his Chevron was being sought. Allison fought back past 'SteveSpeed' team-mate



Drury muscled his Falcon past Winrow's Cortina



FF opener

Phillip Nelson (B8) to win, with Andrew Hibberd on his tail in the Lotus 23B started by father Michael.

The GT section was won brilliantly by MGB graduate and some-time US Reynard driver Dominic Barnes, who held off a snarling TVR Griffith pack comprising Mark Hales (finishing for Peter Thompson), Mike Gardiner (relayed by Dan Cox) and John Spiers on his first Guards outing in an AC Cobra.

The Historic Road Sports lead duel was defused when Will Plant, driving dad Richard's Morgan +8 '11 MOG' for the first time, overshot the chicane and slewed sideways to make the deceptively quick right-left. Faced with T-boning Plant, John Davison spun his newly built Lotus Elan in avoidance, while Peter Shaw threaded his S1 through to second behind Plant. Davison salvaged third, while former Lotus designer father Barry dirtied his Elan in a late excursion.

The 70s Road Sports round resembled a motorised snakes and ladders, such were the top protagonists' changing fortunes. Early leader Charles Barter repassed Jim Dean (Lotus Europa) in muscular fashion at Redgate, only to knock his Datsun 240Z's ignition master switch off and fall behind again. The frustrated Barter eroded a four-second deficit to repeat the earlier move, then



retaliated instantly when the 2015 champion returned the compliment on the penultimate lap.

Last year's Historic FF2000 champion Andy Park celebrated his engagement by outrunning 2012-'13 champ Nelson Rowe. When Rowe slithered onto the grass exiting the chicane – following a safety car intervention to retrieve Jennifer Ridgway's 'Parmalat' Reynard from the gravel – Tom White pounced in his Osella, but Nelson breached stout resistance to retrieve second.

The concurrent URS Pre-'83 FF2000 set raced without top qualifier Anthony Hancock, whose Van Diemen RF82 maddeningly conked out on its way to the grid. Chris Lord, Chris Levy and Jon Finch were locked together throughout in sister cars, finishing in that order.

Classic Clubmans maestro Mark Charteris shone in qualifying and duly took victory in his Philspeed-prepared Mallock. Pursuer John Harrison's engine failed late on, promoting Alan Cook and David Wale to second and third.

Stranded by a flat battery in practice, Clive Wood led the FF1600-engined jostlers from the back inside a lap, fell to third in a squabble embroiling Sports 2000 invitee Roger Waite, then wriggled back to win.

MARCUS PYE

Park leads the busy FF2000 pack into Redgate

RESULTS

HISTORIC FF1600 (16 LAPS) 1 Callum Grant (Merlyn Mk20A); 2 Michael O'Brien (Merlyn Mk20) +0.057s; 3 Richard Tarling (Jamun T2); 4 Cameron Jackson (Merlyn Mk20); 5 Sam Mitchell (Merlyn Mk20); 6 Benn Simms (Jomo JMR7). **Fastest lap** Grant 1m16.695s (92.90mph). **Pole** O'Brien. **Starters** 32.

QUALIFYING HEAT (15 LAPS) 1 Ross Drybrough (Merlyn Mk20AS); 2 Chris Sharples (Palliser WDF1) +1.707s; 3 Andrew Mansell (Merlyn Mk11A); 4 Roy Siergiejew (Macon MR8); 5 Roger Arnold (Merlyn Mk20); 6 Tim Brise (Merlyn Mk20).

FL Sharples 1m19.456s (89.67mph).

CW Ali Langridge (Lotus 61). **P** Drybrough. **S** 31.

HRSR HISTORIC TOURING CARS (15 LAPS)

1 Jack Drury (Ford Falcon Sprint); 2 Ben Winrow (Ford Lotus Cortina) +5.213s; 3 Paul Pheysey (Cortina); 4 Graham Pattle (Cortina); 5 Peter Hallford (Ford Mustang); 6 Warren Briggs (Mustang).

CW Winrow; Barry Sime (Morris Cooper); Richard Belcher (Cortina); Simon Benoy (Hillman Imp); Robyn Slater (Ford Anglia); Roger Godfrey (Morris Cooper S); Roger Cope (Jaguar Mk1). **FL** Drury 1m24.212s (84.60mph). **P** Winrow. **S** 20.

DEREK BELL TROPHY/CLASSIC F3 (16 LAPS)

1 David Shaw (Eifeland March 721); 2 Paul Campfield (Chevron B24) +18.519s; 3 Martin Bullock (Chevron B17C); 4 Martyn Donn (Lola T760); 5 Gaius Ghinn (Ralt RT3); 6 Paul Smith (Ralt RT3).

CW Campfield; Bullock; Donn; Ghinn; Jon Finch (Van Diemen RF82); Adrian Langridge (Dastle Mk12). **FL** Jamie Brashaw (March 73A) 1m05.180s (109.31mph). **P** Brashaw. **S** 19.

GUARDS TROPHY (26 LAPS) 1 Charles Allison

(Chevron B8); 2 Michael & Andrew Hibberd (Lotus 23B) +1.047s; 3 Phillip Nelson (Chevron B8);

4 Nick Thompson/Sean McClurg (Chevron B6); 5 Dominic Barnes (AC Cobra); 6 Peter Thompson/Mark Hales (TVR Griffith). **CW** Hibberd/Hibberd; Barnes; Brian Casey (Lenham P69); Rob Wainwright/Nick Pancisi (Lotus Elan S1); Mark Russell (Jaguar E-type); Andrew Bentley (MGB). **FL** Allison 1m16.550s (92.97mph). **P** Allison. **S** 38.

HISTORIC ROAD SPORTS (15 LAPS) 1 Will Plant

(Morgan +8); 2 Peter Shaw (Lotus Elan S1) +5.002s; 3 John Davison (Elan S1); 4 Bob Rowe (Elan S3); 5 Colin Sharp (Triumph TR5); 6 Barry Ashdown (Elan). **CW** Shaw; Sharp; Costas Michael (Sunbeam Alpine); Dick Coffey (Turner Mk1); Paul Rayment (MGB).

FL Davison 1m21.560s (87.36mph). **P** Davison. **S** 17.

70s ROAD SPORTS (14 LAPS) 1 Charles Barter

(Datsun 240Z); 2 Jim Dean (Lotus Europa) +11.673s; 3 Iain Daniels (Europa); 4 Robert Gate (Jaguar E-type); 5 Mark Leverett (Lotus Elan); 6 Steve Skipworth (Europa). **CW** Dean; Gate; Jonathan Wagstaff (Alfa Romeo GTV); Chris Fisher (MG Arkley);

Tim Hayes (Alfasud Sprint). **FL** Barter 1m24.252s (84.56mph). **P** Barter. **S** 32.

HISTORIC FF2000/URS FF2000 (15 LAPS)

1 Andrew Park (Reynard SF81); 2 Nelson Rowe (Reynard SF79) +5.839s; 3 Tom White (Osella FAF); 4 Benn Simms (SF77); 5 Graham Ridgway (SF79); 6 Andrew Storer (SF79). **CW** White; Chris Lord (Van Diemen RF82); Jan Langdon (SF78); John Stapleton (Tui BH2). **FL** Park 1m12.464s (98.33mph). **P** Park. **S** 30.

CLASSIC CLUBMANS (18 LAPS) 1 Mark Charteris

(Mallock Mk20/21); 2 Alan Cook (Mk20/21B) +47.062s; 3 David Wale (Mk20/21); 4 Steve Chaplin (Phantom P79); 5 Mike Lane (Mk18); 6 Clive Wood (Mk20B). **CW** Wood; Roger Waite (Royale S2000M).

FL Charteris 1m09.013s (103.24mph). **P** Charteris. **S** 17.

BRANDS HATCH
BRSCC APRIL 8-9

Williams denied hat-trick by race three clash

LUKE WILLIAMS WAS LEFT TO RUE a missed opportunity for a hat-trick of wins in the BRSCC Formula Ford 1600 Championship at Brands Hatch, having collided with rival Stephen Daly while battling for the lead in an action-packed third encounter.

There was drama from the moment the lights went green in the opening race, as a dramatic crash between Rory Smith and Archie Hine at Paddock Hill brought out a red flag.

At the restart, polesitter Williams led to the finish despite nursing a misfire in the closing stages. In the second race, he again took his Firman RF16 to victory, this time passing Neil MacLennan after falling behind the Cliff Dempsey Racing Ray driver off the line.

Williams lined up eighth for the reversed-grid finale, but after mistakes from others and some opportunistic passes in the hectic opening five laps, he found himself second behind Daly. Five laps later, Williams dummied on the outside of Daly's Ray GR10 into Paddock Hill before cutting back on the inside, but the Irishman fought back and found the inside line – as well as the grass – on the run up to Druids.

Neither driver backed off, making a collision inevitable. Williams spun into retirement, Daly headed to the pits with a puncture, and both drivers blamed each other for the incident.

This left Luke Cooper – who had suffered right-front suspension damage at the start – to inherit the lead, which he maintained to the flag to score his first win in more than four years.

Rob Boston was another driver unable to find his third win of the weekend, having taken two victories in the Mazda MX-5 SuperCup. A slow getaway once a



Code 60 had been withdrawn scuppered any chance for him to win the third race, with Jack Harding getting the jump and claiming victory after finishing runner-up in the previous two races.

Mazda MX-5 racing ace Will Blackwell-Chambers was delighted after taking a hat-trick of wins, having withstood immense pressure from Neil Fisk in the opening two races.

In the three combined Mazda MX-5 Championship and MX-5 SuperCup B races, Jeremy Crook, Ben Short and Colin Bysouth took wins respectively.

Danny Harrison won on his Fiesta Championship debut, after a first-lap crash eliminated frontrunners Ian Wilson and David Nye. An early Code 60 flag halted the action for several laps, but Harrison kept his cool to win by a comfortable four seconds.

Samuel Watkins scored his first ever senior podium after a late pass on Lewis Kent for second place. Kent then picked up his maiden senior win in race two after a brake issue forced earlier winner Harrison to retire. Watkins finished second again, with brother Joshua claiming his first podium in third.

Behind, Nye made superb progress to finish seventh from the back of the field.

Simon Horrobin won a closely fought third race from Samuel Watkins, who

Williams led Daly into Druids, but the pair would come to blows later in the third round

pipped Kent on the line to complete a trio of podiums. Race-one winner Harrison climbed from 30th to 10th before retiring with overheating issues.

In the Fiesta Junior series, James Hillery claimed his maiden win following a tense battle with Jack Davidson in race one, with James Waite following the pair home in third. In the second race, Davidson soaked up pressure throughout from Nicholas Reeve to take the flag, with Hillery adding to his earlier win with another podium finish in third.

Dan Clowes took victory in the first Formula Jedi race, after a long battle with defending champion Rob Sayell. Lee Morgan started from pole but was eliminated in a first lap clash with Paul Butcher. After a brief Code 60, Sayell caught Kris Prosser and Stuart Abbott napping at the restart and pounced to move up from fourth to second. Sayell closed in as the laps ticked down, but Clowes held firm to take a narrow win.

In race two, Prosser scored his first victory in the series, after Morgan retired from the lead with an engine failure two laps from the end. It was a bitter pill to swallow for Morgan, who had fought his way through the field to take the lead with a stunning move on Prosser at Paddock Hill. Bryony King took her first podium finish in the series in second, with Butcher completing the podium in third.

Thomas Grindall won the HRDC Academy race, after a close battle with Steve Jones. The pair were largely unchallenged at the front, finishing half a minute clear of third-placed James Wood.

Father and son Mike and Andrew Jordan lapped the entire field in their Austin A40 to claim a dominant victory in the Historic Touring Greats race.

Martin Walsh claimed back-to-back wins in the GTi Production series, ahead of James Howlison and Paul Blackburn.

STEFAN MACKLEY & ROB WATTS



Kent (left) and Harrison each took a victory

[P88 FULL RESULTS](#)



McCarthy fights back for BCV8 glory

RUSSELL MCCARTHY DESCRIBED A hard-fought victory as his “best race ever” as Donington hosted the MGCC BCV8s.

Starting from pole in the first of two races, McCarthy dropped back to fourth, but regained a spot on the podium as Tom Smith retired and James Wheeler pulled into the pits with overheating brakes. A loose rocker cover meant he finished a distant second behind Neil Fowler.

In the second race, Fowler took the lead at the start, but was forced into retirement. McCarthy one again bogged down off the line, having installed a line lock in response to being penalised for creeping on the grid last year. McCarthy and Wheeler battled throughout, passing each other repeatedly although both had car problems, but it was McCarthy who ultimately came out on top. There was never more than a second between the pair, prompting Wheeler to say: “To race like that is why we come here.”

The MG Trophy races were closely fought between Doug Cole, Graham Ross and Ross Makar, with veteran Cole hunting the other two down in the first race. He eventually found his way past Ross as the Scot missed a gear coming out of the Roberts chicane while distracted by a backmarker.

Ross made amends later that afternoon. A set-up change he described as “a shot in the dark” paid off as he passed his rivals while setting several quick laps to eke out a small advantage.

Youngster James Ashton predicted he would take his first victory in the MG Metro Cup this year, but admitted he was surprised to achieve it at the first meeting of the season.

Ashton made a good start to lead, but a safety car neutralised the field through the middle part of the race. Undeterred, he kept his head down and set a number of fastest laps in the remainder of the race to secure the win.

Lee Connell, Mike Williams and older brother Andrew Ashton battled for second, with Williams and the elder Ashton swapping places right up to the flag.

Attrition was a factor in the Cockshoot Cup race, as leader Ray Collier and Philip Standish retired early on. Howard Hunt took over at the front, but he too hit problems, leaving Ashley Woodward and Philip Bowden – in his first ever race – to contest the win in their ZS 180s.

Bowden twice got ahead, but Woodward used his experience to squeeze the newcomer out at Redgate, regaining the advantage before the flag fell a lap early owing to a stranded car at McLeans. Woodward’s victory was all the sweeter since his MG wouldn’t even start until the team traced a temperature sensor failure at 10pm the night before.

Simon Cripps won the 40-car Equipe GTS race on his first outing in his MGB Roadster. He was helped by a timely safety car for oil on track after mistakenly stopping before the pit window opened, the initial race leaders failing to take advantage and falling down the field.

Alan Brooke couldn’t be caught in either of the MG Cup races despite the best efforts of David Mellor, while Stephen Collier comfortably won the MG Midget & Sprite Challenge ahead of Richard Wildman.

JAMIE HOWLETT



Russell McCarthy fought back from a slow start to win his BCV8 duel with James Wheeler

Doug Cole edged out Graham Ross for MG Trophy win

RESULTS

MGCC BCV8 CHAMPIONSHIP (BOTH 15 LAPS)

1 Neil Fowler (MGB GT V8); **2** Russell McCarthy (GT V8) +47.381s; **3** Ollie Neaves (GT V8); **4** Johnnie Wheeler (GT V8); **5** Jim Bryan (GT V8); **6** Howard Grundon (GT V8). **Class winners** Neaves; Grundon; Paul Rayment (MGB Roadster). **Fastest lap** McCarthy 1m17.224s (92.25mph). **Pole** Tom Smith (GT V8).

Starters 19. **RACE 2 1** McCarthy; **2** James Wheeler (GT V8) +0.422s; **3** Neaves; **4** Jonnie Wheeler; **5** Bryan; **6** Oliver Wardle (GT V8). **CW** Neaves; Benjamin Tovey (Roadster); Barbak Farsian (Roadster). **FL** McCarthy 1m17.626s (91.78mph). **P** McCarthy. **S** 15.

MG TROPHY (BOTH 15 LAPS) 1 Doug Cole (ZR 190);

2 Graham Ross (ZR 190) +0.323s; **3** Ross Makar (ZR 190); **4** Jason Burgess (ZR 190); **5** Gary Wetton (ZR 190); **6** Jack Roberts (ZR 170). **CW** Roberts; Matthew Turnbull (ZR 160). **FL** Cole 1m20.826s (88.14mph).

P Makar. **S** 33. **RACE 2 1** Ross; **2** Cole +2.498s; **3** Makar; **4** Wetton; **5** Robin Walker (ZR 190); Burgess. **CW** Paul Luti (ZR 170); Turnbull.

FL Ross 1m21.179s (87.76mph). **P** Cole. **S** 33.

MG METRO CUP (12 LAPS) 1 Jack Ashton (Rover

Metro GTI); 2 Lee Connell (Rover Metro) +6.825s; **3** Mike Williams (Metro); **4** Andrew Ashton (Metro GTI); **5** Tony Connell (Metro); **6** Tony Howe (MG Metro Turbo). **FL** J Ashton 1m26.398s (82.46mph).

P Dick Trevett (Metro Turbo). **S** 20.

MGCC COCKSHOOT CUP (13 LAPS)

1 Ashley Woodhead (ZS 180) +0.269s; **2** Philip Bowden (MGB Roadster); **4** Brian Butler (MGF VVC); **5** Mike Peters (Midget); **6** Keith Egar (Midget). **CW** Butler; Peters; Ian Wright (Midget). **FL** Ray Collier (ZR 190) 1m23.628s (85.19mph). **P** Collier. **S** 21.

EQUIPE GTS (25 LAPS) 1 Simon Cripps (MGB

Roadster); 2 Brian Arculus (Lotus Elite) +1.179s; **3** Robin Ellis (Elite); **4** Andrew Bentley (Roadster); **5** David Beresford (Roadster); **6** Ivan Hayward (TVR Grantura MkIII). **CW** Arculus; John Andon (Triumph TR4); Paul Kennelly (Austin Healey 100/M). **FL** Brian White (TR4) 1m26.745s (82.13mph). **P** White. **S** 40.

MG CUP (BOTH 14 LAPS) 1 Alan Brooke (Rover **Metro GTI); 2** David Mellor (MG ZR 170) +5.737s; **3** Ed Davies (MG ZR); **4** Richard Buckley (MG ZR 170); **5** Peter Burchill (MG ZS 180); **6** Dan Jones (MG ZR 170). **CW** Mellor; Paul Lind (MG ZR). **FL** Brooke 1m25.173s (83.64mph). **P** Mellor. **S** 32.

RACE 2 1 Brooke; **2** Mellor + 4.694s; **3** Davies; **4** Buckley; **5** James Darby (MGB GT); **6** Iain Dowler (ZR 160). **CW** Mellor; Lind. **FL** Brooke 1m25.083s (83.73mph). **P** Brooke. **S** 30.

MG MIDGET & SPRITE CHALLENGE (15 LAPS)

1 Stephen Collier (Midget); **2** Richard Wildman (Midget) +8.045s; **3** Edward Reeve (Midget); **4** Peter Kennerley (Midget); **5** Richard Bridge (Austin Healey Sprite MkII); **6** Paul Campfield (Sprite MkI). **CW** Kennerley; Campfield; Andy Southcott (Lenham Sprite); Dean Stanton (Sprite MkI). **FL** Collier 1m20.009s (88.94mph). **P** Collier. **S** 18.



SILVERSTONE
BRSCC APRIL 8-9

Zamparelli shines on Britcar debut

DINO ZAMPARELLI AND MIKE WILDS grabbed a late victory in the first Britcar Endurance race, after Javier Morcillo and Manuel Cintrano's Mosler had led for the majority of the 50-minute contest.

Morcillo led initially, only losing first place briefly to Calum Lockie's GT3 Ferrari during the driver changes. Wilds had been fourth behind Adam Wilcox's Aston Martin, but an early stop to hand his Ferrari 458 Challenge over to Zamparelli left the Carrera Cup ace plenty of time to usurp his rivals.

Cintrano retained second from the closing GTE Ferrari of Ross Wylie/Witt Gamski, while Johnny Mowlem/Bonamy Grimes in another Ferrari ousted Wilcox/Nigel Hudson for fourth.

Lockie and Wilcox left the rest in their wake at the start of the two-hour race, as Wilds headed the rest in a distant third. The lead pair were also last to pit for the handover, which for a while left them two laps clear of the rest.

However, it wasn't to last. After taking over from Grimes, Mowlem was on a charge and already closing in when Hudson received a drivethrough penalty.

Therefore, Mowlem/Grimes secured the win, but Hudson/Wilcox still held on to second, with Marc Brough/Charlie Hollings' Ferrari the only other unlapped runner in third. Lockie/David Mason dropped to fourth at the finish.

Edward Moore's Ginetta G50 won the Sprint Class, which was flagged off after 50 minutes.

Anthony Reid proved to be the star turn again for PW Racing Team Trooper in the Fun Cup four-hour opener. The former British Touring Car racer took over the car he shared with Paul



Wighton/Harry Mailer/Jake Rattenbury for the final stint, with the team having run in the lead group from the start.

Former champions Racelogic started well, with Julian Thomas joined by Paul Denyer and Jon Tomlinson, but lost a lap during the only safety car period.

Andy Bicknell/Marcus Clutton's DespatchBay.com car led into the final hour, until Bicknell's engine lost power in the closing laps. Chris Hart's Track Torque 2Rent Dominos car took over at the front from Wighton, before Tim Wheeldon caught and passed them both for Team Honeywell and handed Neil Plimmer the lead for the final stint.

"If it had been anyone else but Reidy we would have won that," reflected Plimmer after giving best on the Hangar Straight seven laps from home.

Henry Dawes took over from Hart and almost snatched a late second, while Team Lane Roofing Evo, MAK Racing and Driver61.com completed the top six.

Ed Hayes made it five wins out of five this season with a treble in the Toyo Tires Porsches. A tardy start left him with work to do in race one, however, coming from fourth to oust Richard

Zamparelli marked his category debut with a race one victory alongside Mike Wilds

Avery for the lead on the Hangar Straight at mid-distance.

Avery retained second from the closing Adam Southgate.

Avery led into Abbey in race two, but Hayes shot around the outside at Stowe to seize the advantage on lap three. With an oily Avery pulling off and Garry Lawrence pitting with damage, Southgate and Nick Hull completed the podium.

Once reversed-grid poleman Alex Stocker had lost his moment of glory, Hayes battled his way ahead of Southgate again within four laps to take win number three over Southgate and Lawrence, while Pip Hammond also took three dominant 924 class wins.

There was a double victory for Anthony George's 33 in the Alfa Romeos. Chris McFie's Fiat Punto and Ray Foley's 147 GTA both led before George took control and Foley slowed with overheating, dropping to third behind McFie. A huge scrap in the Twin Spark class went in favour of James Browning's 147.

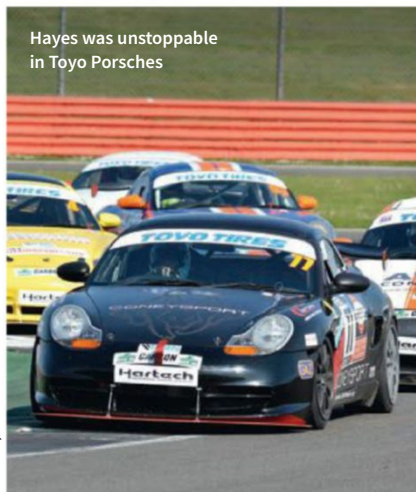
McFie followed George to the flag in race two, with brother Simon completing the podium in another Punto.

Defending Sports 2000 champion Michael Gibbins dived ahead of Tom Stoten exiting the Vale on lap three to take his first win of the weekend in his MCR. Paul Trayhurn's Gunn vacated third with a spin at Abbey when the rear wing broke, handing the place to Nick Bacon.

It was lights to flag for Gibbins in race two, with Stoten a clear second again. Bacon ousted Tim Tudor for the third and retained the place, despite taking the flag in the pitlane with engine maladies.

James Gornall started his BMW Compact Cup title defence with a double win. He had Steven Dailly as a constant shadow in both races, while Ian Jones pursued them after initially leading the start of race two.

PETER SCHERER



Hayes was unstoppable in Toyo Porsches



George edged McFie's plucky Punto in Alfas



RESULTS

BRITCAR ENDURANCE (43 LAPS)

1 Mike Wilds/Dino Zamparelli (Ferrari 458 Challenge); 2 Javier Morcillo/Manuel Cintrano (Mosler MT900) +21.221s; 3 Witt Gamski/Ross Wylie (458 GTE); 4 Bonamy Grimes/Johnny Mowlem (458 Challenge); 5 Adam Wilcox/Nigel Hudson (Aston Martin Vantage GT3); 6 Calum Lockie/David Mason (458 GT3). **Class winners** Morcillo/Cintrano; Marc Brough/Charlie Hollings (458 Challenge); Edward Moore (Ginetta G50); Sam Allpass/Clint Bardwell (BMW M3 E46 GTR); Neil Garnham (BMW E92); Kevin Riley (MT900); Marcos Vivian (Ginetta G40); Daniel Woodard/David Birrell (Mini JCW Challenge). **Fastest lap** Morcillo 1m04.704s (102.98mph). **Pole** Morcillo/Cintrano. **Starters** 31.

RACE 2 (95 LAPS) 1 Grimes/Mowlem; 2 Wilcox/Hudson +9.758s; 3 Brough/Hollings; 4 Lockie/Mason; 5 Wilds/Zamparelli; 6 Gamski/Wylie. **CW** Wilcox/Hudson; Simon Rudd/Tom Barley (Ginetta G55 GT4); Allpass/Bardwell; Woodard/Birrell. **FL** Lockie 1m04.689s (103.00mph). **P** Wilds/Zamparelli. **S** 22.

SPRINT CLASS (39 LAPS) 1 Edward Moore (Ginetta G40); 2 Paul Calladine (G50) -1 lap; 3 Rick Nevinson/Sean Cooper (Porsche Cayman GT4 Clubsport); 4 Kevin Riley (Mosler MT900); 5 Rob Baker/Jonathan Swan (Smart ForFour); 6 Roland Hopkins/Matthew Sleight (VW Golf). **CW** Nevinson/Cooper; Riley; Baker/Swan. **FL** Moore 1m10.376s (94.68mph). **P** Moore. **S** 7.

FUN CUP (167 LAPS) 1 PW Racing Team Trooper (Paul Wighton/Harry Mailer/Jake Rattenbury/Anthony Reid); 2 Team Honeywell (Tim Wheelon/Neil Plimmer) +2.539s; 3 Track Torque 2Rent Dominos (Chris Hart/Henry Dawes); 4 Team Lane Roofing Evolution (Chris Weatherill/Nigel Griffiths/Geoff Fawcett); 5 MAK Racing Ltd (Stuart Hall/Michelle Hayward/Chris Webster); 6 Driver61.com (Scott Mansell/Richard Baxter). **FL** Nigel Greensall (CCS Media) 1m20.109s (83.17mph). **P** Team Lane Roofing Evolution. **S** 32.

TOYO TIRES PORSCHE (ALL 16 LAPS) 1 Ed

Hayes (Boxster); 2 Richard Avery +4.977s; 3 Adam Southgate; 4 Garry Lawrence; 5 Alex Stocker; 6 Kevin Molyneux. **CW** Pip Hammond (924); Andrew Baker. **FL** Hayes 1m15.543s (88.20mph). **P** Hayes. **S** 17. **RACE 2 1 Hayes**; 2 Southgate +11.964s; 3 Nick Hull; 4 Stocker; 5 Andrew Porter; 6 Molyneux. **CW** Hammond; Baker. **FL** Hayes 1m15.610s (88.12mph). **P** Hayes. **S** 18. **RACE 3 1 Hayes**; 2 Southgate +6.963s; 3 Lawrence; 4 Hull; 5 Molyneux; 6 Stocker. **CW** Hammond; Baker. **FL** Hayes 1m16.596s (86.99mph). **P** Molyneux. **S** 16.

ALFA ROMEO (ALL 15 LAPS) 1 Anthony George (33 16v); 2 Chris McFie (Fiat Punto) +22.686s; 3 Ray Foley (147 GTA); 4 James Browning (147); 5 Simon Cresswell (156); 6 Michael Tydeman (156). **CW** Foley; Browning; McFie. **FL** George 1m20.308s (82.96mph). **P** George. **S** 18. **RACE 2 1 George**; 2 C McFie +2.257s; 3 Simon McFie (Punto); 4 James Ford (156); 5 David Messenger (156); 6 Tom Hill (156). **CW** C McFie; Ford; Ian Brookfield (155). **FL** George 1m20.671s (82.59mph). **P** George. **S** 16.

SPORTS 2000 (26 LAPS) 1 Michael Gibbins (MCR); 2 Tom Stoten (Gunn TS11) +9.573s; 3 Nick Bacon (TS11); 4 David Houghton (MCR); 5 Giles Billingsley (MCR); 6 Tim Tudor (MCR). **CW** Billingsley; Peter Needham (Tiga SC86); Jonathan Loader (SC80); Mike Fry (Lola T86/90); David Pegley (Lola 06/90). **FL** Gibbins 1m07.379s (98.89mph). **P** Gibbins. **S** 35.

RACE 2 (20 LAPS) 1 Gibbins; 2 Stoten +3.261s; 3 Bacon; 4 Tudor; 5 Houghton; 6 Billingsley. **CW** Billingsley; Pegley; Fry; Simon Aldworth (Lola T492); Kevin Clifford (Shrike P16). **FL** Gibbins 1m07.719s (98.39mph). **P** Gibbins. **S** 29.

BMW COMPACT CUP (7 LAPS)

1 James Gornall; 2 Steven Dailly +0.761s; 3 Ian Jones; 4 James Nutbrown; 5 Giles Dawson; 6 Matthew Parkes. **FL** Gornall 1m23.019s (80.26mph). **P** Gornall. **S** 32.

RACE 2 (11 LAPS) 1 Gornall; 2 Dailly +5.878s; 3 Jones; 4 Dawson; 5 Nutbrown; 6 Owen Hunter. **FL** Gornall 1m23.436s (79.86mph). **P** Gornall. **S** 29.

ROCKINGHAM

BARC APRIL 8-9

History repeats itself for Primett at Rockingham

TWELVE MONTHS AFTER recording a double victory in both Pre-66/Pre-83 Touring Car races at Rockingham at the wheel of his trusty Ford Escort Mk1, Stephen Primett repeated the feat again last weekend, despite the best efforts of Andrew Harrison to stop him in his Jaguar XJS.

Starting fourth in race one, Primett worked his way up to the front by Deene on lap two, but Harrison continued to keep the pressure on, while Mark Cholerton and Stephen Cripps battled for third.

Cripps eventually got ahead on lap five, but Harrison's hopes of doing something similar on Primett ended when an incident at Deene involving Keith Wright's Morris Minor brought the race to a premature end.

Primett made a slow start in race two, but made amends with a superb pass around the outside of Harrison at Chapman. Cholerton completed the podium, snatching third from Mark Osborne's Triumph Dolomite yards from the finish.

Dale Gent matched Primett's success in the pair of Classic Thunder, VTEC and BOSS encounters in his Subaru Impreza. Dan Stringfellow was second each time in his BMW M3, ahead of Colin Wells in his similar E46 model.

Wells was absent from the two Kumho BMW Class A races, both of which yielded fewer than 10 starters. Ollie Taylor secured a double win, but not before steering issues had sidelined James Macintyre-Ure in race one. Robert Davidson took both wins in the pair of races run separately for Class B, C and D competitors.

There was also a small entry for the pair of Pickup Truck events, but there was no shortage

of entertainment. Mark Willis won the opener after a thrilling race-long duel with Scott Bourne, the pair having broken away early from the chasing pack.

In race two, Bourne survived a tangle with Lea Wood to come home third behind Willis, who was narrowly denied a double by Paul Poulter as they sprinted to the line. Less than a second covered the first seven home.

Not to be outdone, the youngsters in the Junior Saloon series races provided plenty of their own excitement. An audacious move at Deene on the opening tour helped Ethan Hammerton leapfrog front row starters Gordon Mutch and Will Dyrdal at the start of race one on his way to recording his second win of the season.

Mutch and Hammerton enjoyed a close tussle in the second race too, until Hammerton's optimistic move from around the outside of Deene handed Mutch his first win in the category, ahead of Dyrdal and Finlay Robinson.

AJ Owen proved uncatchable in his Honda Civic Type R in both Pre-03 and VW contests. Despite worries over his Ford's gearbox, Simon Beament powered through from the seventh row of the grid to claim second in race one. The Honda Accord of Phil Wright was Owen's closest challenger in race two and finished second.

Equally unbeatable was the BMW M3 of Karl Cattliff in the two Pre-93/Pre-05/SMART races. Craig Jamieson's Ford Sierra RS Cosworth claimed second in both events despite an unscheduled pitstop in response to a black and orange flag.

MARK LIBBETER

➔ P88 FULL RESULTS



Primett's Escort dominated in Corby

SNETTERTON
BRSCC APRIL 8-9

Beardwell breaks his duck

SEVERAL OF THE CATERHAM categories had undergone a rebrand over the winter, but the iconic racing cars still managed to put on a show of breathless wheel-to-wheel racing on Snetterton's opening Caterham weekend of the year.

This was typified in race one of the all-new Seven 310R category, in which a three-car scrap for the win ended in a comedy of errors. Steve McCulley hit eventual winner James Beardwell at the last corner of the final lap, causing both drivers to spin onto the Senna straight. Lee Bristow was the next driver down the road and also spun in avoidance.

It then became a race to start engines and regain composure for the dash to the line. Despite the antics, the trio crossed the line in the same formation in which they arrived at Murrays, albeit with the gap to fourth-placed Gordon Sawyer significantly reduced. "When I got going, I wasn't entirely sure if I even had a back end," joked Beardwell, who celebrated not only the inaugural race win in the new championship, but the first of his career.

Race two was a less calamitous affair, but one that went down to a photo finish, with Bristow beating McCulley by just 0.007 seconds.

The Caterhams had been utilising the advantage gained by the tow on the long straights throughout the weekend and this was evident no more than in race one of the Supersport Championship. Timothy Dickens, 2015 Tracksport champion, had been third coming onto the final straight but in using the double tow, claimed the victory ahead of Mike Evans and Ben Tuck.



Beardwell (74) was a first-time winner in Seven 310Rs after contact with McCulley

It was the exact same podium in race two, with Dickens reflecting on his weekend as "a great way to start the year and build confidence" following a below-par performance in 2016.

Just one second separated the top four in the first Seven 420R race, a classic Caterham spectacle that featured countless lead changes throughout the 30 minutes. Honours eventually went to 2016 runner-up Lee Wiggins, ahead of William Smith and Danny Winstanley. Having begun the last lap three-abreast, it could have gone to any one of them.

Race two went the way of Winstanley, sixth in the championship last year, who managed to build a large enough gap to break the tow to second-placed Wiggins.

Poleman Anthony Taylor admitted he'd been tentative in his first lap of the Roadsport opener. Following a poor start, Taylor was collected by Gary Smith at Coram and forced to retire, allowing Tom John, Jay McCormack and Pete Walters to jostle for the race win. Irishman McCormack got the job done in race one, but couldn't make it a double on his birthday weekend, as Peter Spencer beat

him to the line by 0.051s in race two.

Colombian driver Daniel Quintero drove a composed race from pole to win the first race of the Seven 270R campaign. It was a closer affair in race two, with four cars in contention for the win, although that was reduced to three when Quintero received a five-second penalty for exceeding track limits. The #88 car had finished second on track behind Russ Olivant, but the penalty pushed him back to fourth behind Alan Cooper and Rob Watts.

Gaining seat time was the name of the game in the three non-championship races of the OSS Trophy. Richard Wise was twice the victor on his first time out in the Chiron LMP, but a melted crank sensor in race one meant his car stuttered to a standstill on the final lap, gifting Mark Abbott a win in his Radical.

Lewis Smith relished the chance to race around a circuit better suited to his Vauxhall Tigra in the Intermarque Championship, taking the chequered flag on both occasions. "We come here and are quick, and go to Rockingham and dominate. But at Brands we just seem to lack something. Here there are a lot more entries and exits [than Brands], which is where we excel," said the Billericay-based driver. Malcolm Blackman, who took both wins in the Brands opener, had to settle for a distant second in both races.

Sharing the grid with the Intermarque Championship were the Modified Saloons. With championship leader Dale Gent opting to race elsewhere over the weekend, reigning champion Rod Birley completed a clean sweep.

James JJ Ross bounced back from a forgettable first outing at Brands Hatch in the Tin Top Championship. The 2015 Fiesta champion made it two unchallenged wins in his Vauxhall Astra VXR ahead of the Honda Civic Type R of Daniel Fisher, but despite his dominance, admitted he had struggled for consistent power.

DOM D'ANGELILLO



Wise was on the front foot in non-champ OSS races

RESULTS

CATERHAM SEVEN 310R (BOTH 14 LAPS) 1 James Beardwell; 2 Steve McCulley +2.658s; 3 Lee Bristow; 4 Gordon Sawyer; 5 Lee Collins; 6 Alexander Koeberle.

Fastest lap McCulley 2m10.494s (81.90mph).

Pole Bristow. **Starters** 20. **RACE 2 1 Bristow;**

2 McCulley +0.007s; 3 Collins; 4 Barry Moore; 5 Beardwell; 6 Koeberle. **FL** Sawyer 2m10.021s

(82.20mph). **P** Beardwell. **S** 20.

SUPERSPORT (13 LAPS) 1 Timothy Dickens;

2 Mike Evans +0.027s; 3 Ben Tuck; 4 Christian Szaruta;

5 Chris Hutchinson; 6 Henry Heaton. **FL** Dan Gore

2m10.439s (81.93mph). **P** Alistair Weaver. **S** 26.

RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Dickens; 2 Evans +0.694s; 3 Tuck;

4 Heaton; 5 Gore; 6 Hutchinson. **FL** Dickens 2m10.605s

(81.83mph). **P** Dickens. **S** 25.

SEVEN 420R (BOTH 15 LAPS) 1 Lee Wiggins;

2 William Smith +0.298s; 3 Danny Winstanley; 4 Jack

Sales; 5 Tom Eden; 6 Matt Dyer. **FL** Stephen Nuttall

2m02.654s (87.14mph). **P** Smith. **S** 28.

RACE 2 1 Winstanley; 2 Wiggins +1.119s; 3 Nuttall;

4 Sales; 5 Smith; 6 Eden. **FL** Nuttall 2m03.803s

(86.83mph). **P** Wiggins. **S** 28.

ROADSPORT (BOTH 9 LAPS) 1 Jay McCormack;

2 Tom John +0.363s; 3 Pete Walters; 4 Peter Spencer;

5 Eric Tiv; 6 Ben Wilson. **FL** Tiv 2m14.494s (79.46mph).

P Anthony Taylor. **S** 36. **RACE 2 1 Spencer;** 2 McCormack

+0.051s; 3 John; 4 Wilson; 5 Walters; 6 Caroline Everrett.

FL John 2m14.516s (79.45mph). **P** McCormack. **S** 35.

SEVEN 270R (BOTH 14 LAPS) 1 Daniel Quintero;

2 Alan Cooper +0.655s; 3 Rob Watts; 4 Russ Olivant;

5 Andrew Perry; 6 Ardash Radia. **FL** Olivant 2m12.024s

(80.95mph). **P** Quintero. **S** 19. **RACE 2 1 Olivant;** 2 Cooper

+0.200s; 3 Watts; 4 Quintero; 5 Alex Jordan; 6 Perry.

FL Quintero 2m12.430s (80.70mph). **P** Quintero. **S** 19.

OSS TROPHY (11 LAPS) 1 Mark Abbott (Radical

PR6); 2 Graham Hill (PR6) +2.085s; 3 Lee Torrie

(Radical SR3); 4 Simon Tilling (PR6); 5 Richard Stables

(PR6); 6 Andy Chittenden (SR3). **Class winners** Adam

Dale (PR6); Richard Fearn (SR8); Max Windheuser

(Spire GT3). **FL** Richard Wise (Chiron LMP) 1m28.830s

(98.20mph). **P** Wise. **S** 17. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Wise;**

2 Abbott +10.305s; 3 Hill; 4 Torrie; 5 Tilling;

6 Stables. **CW** Abbott; Fearn; Windheuser.

FL Wise 1m49.989s (98.06mph). **P** Wise. **S** 17.

RACE 3 (11 LAPS) 1 Wise; 2 Abbott +2.766s; 3 Tilling;

4 Hill; 5 Torrie; 6 Stables. **CW** Abbott; Fearn; Windheuser.

FL Wise 1m49.871s (97.27mph). **P** Wise. **S** 17.

INTERMARQUE/MODIFIED SALOONS (BOTH 8

LAPS) 1 Lewis Smith (Vauxhall Tigra); 2 Malcolm

Blackman (Tigra) +22.974s; 3 Anthony Bennett

(Caterham R300); 4 Keith White (BMW Z4);

5 Mike Thurley (Tigra); 6 Mark Fuller (Mercedes SLK).

CW Bennett; Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC);

Paul Adams (Ford Focus RS); David Cowan (BMW

M3 E46); Riku Garner (Renault Clio). **FL** Smith

1m59.026s (89.79mph). **P** Smith. **S** 21.

RACE 2 1 Smith; 2 Blackman +6.376s; 3 White;

4 Thurley; 5 Steve Burrows (Peugeot 206); 6 Fuller.

CW Birley; Tony Skelton (Clio); Cowan; Sean

Fairweather (Ford Sierra RS Cosworth). **FL** Smith

1m59.894s (89.14mph). **P** Reuben Taylor (206cc). **S** 20.

TIN-TOPS (BOTH 7 LAPS) 1 James JJ Ross

(Vauxhall Astra VXR); 2 Daniel Fisher (Honda Civic

Type R) +11.793s; 3 Matthew Turner (Renault Megane);

4 Robert Hosier (SEAT Leon); 5 Trevor Collar (Type R);

6 Glen Rossiter (Mini Cooper S). **CW** Fisher; Mikey Day

(Citroen Saxo); Rod Birley (Ford Puma).

FL Ross 2m13.160s (80.26mph). **P** Ross. **S** 15.

RACE 2 1 Ross; 2 Fisher +6.645s; 3 Hosier; 4 Turner;

5 Collar; 6 Day. **CW** Collar; Day; Birley. **FL** Ross

2m14.104s (79.69mph). **P** Ross. **S** 14.



KNOCKHILL
SMRC APRIL 9

'Wee Pat' aced the Knockhill opening round

Paterson picks up where he left off

JOHN PATERSON BEGAN THE DEFENCE of his Scottish Legends title in convincing style by securing maximum points in the opening round at Knockhill.

The three-time champion won the first two heats comfortably before inheriting victory in the final after a time penalty for on-the-road winner Dave Hunter.

'Wee Pat' produced a remarkable defensive effort to take an anticlimactic first heat, as key rivals Hunter and Ivor Greenwood both suffered misfortune. Hunter's engine picked up problems on the penultimate lap, while Greenwood received a 10-second penalty for a grid offence.

Squeezed out wide at Duffus on the first lap, Paterson ought to have had things a whole lot tougher at the start of heat two. But somehow Paterson found himself back at the head of the pack next time around and eased away to beat Greenwood by 1.8s, with Hunter third.

The reversed grid for the final meant Paterson had to work back through the field from 10th. By the end of lap one, he was second behind Hunter, which became the net lead when the latter was penalised post-race.

Ross Martin and Seb Melrose gave Graham Brunton Racing a double one-two in the opening Scottish Formula Ford 1600 races. Martin led the early stages of race one from pole, but Melrose made an audacious move into the hairpin approaching mid-distance to grab the lead. One lap later, Martin hit the front on entry to Clarks and built a lead he would never lose en route to victory from Melrose and Matt Chisholm.

Light rain prior to the start of race two wasn't enough to change the result, with

Martin again leading home Melrose in another one-two. Behind the dominant duo, Clay Mitchell completed the podium.

Wayne MacCaulay lived up to his Scottish Fiesta title favourite status by taking a lights-to-flag victory in the opening race, beating Barry Farquharson by little over a second. Peter Cruickshank prevailed in an exciting race-long tussle with Reis Robertson to hang on for third.

MacCaulay backed up his morning triumph with victory in the second race, which was red-flagged due to heavy crashes for Nick Forsyth and Philip Liddle. Both were unharmed.

Robert Drummond took his Ford Escort Cosworth to double victory in the opening round of the Scottish Saloon and Sports Cars Championship. Kenneth McKell was Drummond's nearest rival and bagged a brace of second places.

Reigning Scottish BMW champion Gary Clark was untroubled on his way to two easy victories, beating David McNaughton in each. The star of the meeting was newcomer Frazer Huntly, who made a series of mesmerising overtakes on his way to two third places.

Morgan Murray was denied a clean sweep of Mini Cooper Cup victories after colliding with Robbie Dagleish in the final race. Dylan O'Donnell headed Ian Munro and John Duncan, while Hannah Chapman took class honours.

Alex Montgomery in the MGB GT V8 and Bruce Mitchell in the Lotus Europa shared the Scottish Classic Championship wins.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

➔ **P88 FULL RESULTS**



Dwyer's Lola pounced to take BOSS victory

MONDELLO PARK
IMRC APRIL 8-9

Dwyer's day of days in BOSS

DONAL GRIFFIN AND FERGUS Faherty enjoyed a tremendous battle in the BOSS Ireland contest, but ultimately it was Peter Dwyer who took the victory.

Griffin led the grid away but Faherty immediately sliced his F3 machine by at Southside corner. Undeterred, Griffin blasted his Reynard back into the lead on the main straight. As the pair continued to swap places, Dwyer charged up to join them and, despite a pitlane start, grabbed the lead on the final tour for an amazing victory. In race two, Griffin coasted to a halt on lap four and Dwyer was unable to reel in Faherty, who cruised to the win.

Polesitter Rod McGovern was an early leader in the first SEAT Supercup race and managed to hang on to the lead despite the best efforts of Barry English and Erik Holstein. In race two, English got the jump to lead McGovern away, the pair soon joined by Jonathan Fildes. English had to use every trick in the book to hold back McGovern for his first win, with impressive novice Sam Mansfield third after Fildes' exclusion.

When Patrick Dempsey spun in Ginetta Junior, Cameron Fenton grabbed his chance and cruised to his first win. In race two, Fenton led away for the double, with Dempsey again spinning, but recovering to second.

Bernard Foley in his MGB GT was in command of the HRCA field, despite Steve Griffin's best efforts in the modsport Midget. Race two was similar, with Griffin a little closer this time.

Dave Maguire made no mistakes to take the Fiesta ST race one win, with Michael Cullen second. In the

second race, Kevin Doran was denied victory when team-mate Shane McFadden outdragged him out of the final corner.

Peter Barrable pipped poleman Alan Dawson in the early stages of the opening Irish Supercar bout, but an ominous smoke trail eventually followed him into the pits, with Dawson easing away for the win ahead of Bob Cameron. In race two, Dawson was unchallenged with Philip Jones next up and Cameron just beating Rob Savage to third.

Poleman Shane Rabbitt and Martin Duffy used the traction of their rear-wheel-drive machines to lead the ITCC grid away. As Rabbitt consolidated his lead, Ulick Burke's Honda Integra usurped Duffy's M3, but the pair were later excluded for technical infringements, handing Keith Campbell's VW Corrado second. Pa Hudson made a tardy start from Production pole but easily powered by Richard Kearney and Adrian Dunne to take the class win.

Second time around, Rabbitt once again streaked away from the rest, with Burke and Campbell battling for second until the latter had a hairy spin exiting the Esses. Undeterred, Campbell charged back to relieve Burke of second and was perfectly placed to inherit the win when Rabbitt ground to a halt late on.

Mark O'Donoghue took the first Zetec Fiesta race with ease but had to work much harder in race two. O'Donoghue and Owen Purcell traded the lead until the latter put a wheel off coming into the Esses. Purcell's moment allowed Darren Lawler to attack, with Purcell just holding onto the place by a hundredth of a second at the flag.

LEO NULTY

RESULTS

BRANDS HATCH BRSCC

NATIONAL FORMULA FORD 1600

(18 LAPS) 1 Luke Williams (Firman RF16); 2 Neil MacLennan (Ray GR14) +0.127; 3 James Roe Jr (Van Diemen RF99); 4 Jamie Thorburn (Ray GR15); 5 Josh Fisher (RF99); 6 Jake Byrne (Ray GR13). **Class winners** John Svensson (RF99); David Cobbold (Van Diemen RF89). **Fastest lap** Williams 50.356s (86.35mph). **Pole** Williams. **Starters** 26. **RACE 2 (16 LAPS) 1 Williams;** MacLennan +0.622s; 3 Roe Jr; 4 Fisher; 5 Thorburn; 6 Luke Cooper (Swift SC16). **CW** Henry Chart (Van Diemen RF022); Cobbold. **FL** Stephen Daly (Ray GR10) 50.568s (85.99mph). **P** Williams. **S** 30.

RACE 3 (16 LAPS) 1 Cooper; 2 Roe Jr +0.113; 3 Byrne; 4 Joshua Smith (Firman RF16); 5 David McArthur (RF89); 6 Thorburn. **CW** Vincent Jay (GR10); Cobbold. **FL** Byrne 50.853s (85.51mph). **P** Daly. **S** 29.

MAZDA MX-5 SUPERCUP RACE 1A (22 LAPS) 1 Rob Boston; 2 Jack Harding +1.000s; 3 Tom Roche; 4 Luke Herbert; 5 James Blake-Baldwin; 6 Liam Murphy. **FL** Roche 55.442s (78.43mph).

P Harding. **S** 33. **RACE 2A (22 LAPS)**

1 Boston; 2 Harding +1.920s; 3 Roche; 4 Herbert; 5 Murphy; 6 Paul O'Neill. **FL** Harding 55.625s (78.17mph).

P Boston. **S** 33. **RACE 3A (21 LAPS)**

1 Harding; 2 Herbert +1.210; 3 Boston; 4 Jonathan Greensmith; 5 Roche; 6 Murphy. **FL** James Blake-Baldwin 55.998s (77.65mph). **P** Boston. **S** 33.

MAZDA MX-5 CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

1A (10 LAPS) 1 Will Blackwell-Chambers; 2 Michael Fisk +0.273s; 3 Samuel Smith; 4 Paul Tucker; 5 Stuart Symonds; 6 Simon Baldwin. **FL** Fisk 57.770s (75.27mph). **P** Blackwell-Chambers. **S** 34. **RACE 2A (21 LAPS)**

1 Blackwell-Chambers; 2 Fisk +0.114s; 3 Baldwin; 4 Tucker; 5 Oliver Allwood; 6 Charlie Burge. **FL** Martin Tolley 57.931.

P Blackwell-Chambers. **S** 34. **RACE 3A**

(21 LAPS) 1 Blackwell-Chambers; 2 Allwood +3.209s; 3 Baldwin; 4 Smith; 5 Patrick Lay; 6 Tucker. **FL** Sam Gendy 57.811s (75.22mph). **P** Blackwell-Chambers. **S** 34.

MAZDA MX-5 CHAMPIONSHIP & MX-5 SUPERCUP RACE 1B (21 LAPS)

1 Jeremy Crook (Mk3); 2 Andy Coombs (Mk3) +5.182s; 3 Alex Miller

(Mk3); 4 Duncan Harris (Mk3); 5 Ian McDonald (Mk3); 6 Nick Le Doyen (Mk1).

CW Le Doyen. **FL** Crook 57.300s

(75.89mph). **P** Crook. **S** 24. **RACE 2B (21 LAPS) 1 Ben Short (Mk3);** 2 Steve Dolman (Mk3) +25.790; 3 Jim Hart (Mk3); 4 Gregg Catton (Mk3); 5 Aldo Riti (Mk3); 6 Colin Bysouth (Mk3). **CW** John Langridge (Mk1). **FL** Short 56.230s (77.33mph). **P** David Willoughby (Mk3).

S 28. **RACE 3B (20 LAPS) 1 Bysouth;** 2 Simon Orange (Mk3) +6.003s; 3 Crook; 4 Willoughby; 5 Harris; 6 Brian Trott (Mk1). **CW** Trott. **FL** Bysouth 57.009 (76.27mph). **P** Crook. **S** 24.

FIESTAS (17 LAPS) 1 Danny Harrison

(Fiesta ST); 2 Samuel Watkins (ST) +4.084s; 3 Lewis Kent (ST); 4 Lee Dendy-Sadler (ST); 5 Simon Horrobin (ST); 6 Joshua Watkins (ST). **CW** Jamie White (Zetec S); John Bateman (Si); Sean Banks (Zetec). **FL** Nathaniel Gollin 55.799s (77.93mph). **P** Harrison. **S** 34.

RACE 2 (21 LAPS) 1 Kent; 2 S Watkins +4.009s; 3 J Watkins; 4 Horrobin; 5 Ryan Beck (ST); 6 Jamie Going (ST). **CW** White Tim Bennett (Si); Banks. **FL** Jack Youhill 54.302s (80.08mph). **P** Harrison. **S** 12.

RACE 3 (19 LAPS) 1 Horrobin;

2 S Watkins +0.967s; 3 Kent; 4 Nye; 5 J Watkins; 6 Beck; **CW** White; Bennett; Banks. **FL** Horrobin 56.212s (77.36mph). **P** Kent. **S** 34.

FIESTA JUNIOR (19 LAPS) 1 James

Hillery; 2 Jack Davidson +0.604s; 3 James Waite; 4 Nicholas Reeve; 5 Matthew Greenwood; 6 Warwick Daden. **FL** Davidson 57.270s (75.93mph). **P** Davidson. **S** 15.

RACE 2 (17 LAPS) 1 Davidson; 2 Reeve

+0.486s; 3 Hillery; 4 Waite; 5 Lochlan Bearman; 6 Greenwood; **FL** Reeve 57.476s (75.65mph). **P** Hillery. **S** 13.

FORMULA JEDI (17 LAPS) 1 Dan

Clowes; 2 Robert Sayell +0.628s; 3 Kristian Prosser; 4 Stuart Abbott; 5 Michael Watton; 6 Bryony King. **FL** Morgan 45.301s (95.99mph).

P Morgan. **S** 12. **RACE 2 (19 LAPS)**

1 Prosser; 2 King +13.146s; 3 Paul Butcher; 4 Sayell; 5 Clowes; 6 Dax Ward; **FL** Watton 45.892s (94.75mph). **P** Rodriguez. **S** 12.

HRDC TOURING GREATS/TC63

SERIES (44 LAPS) 1 Mike Jordan/Andrew Jordan (Austin A40 Speedwell); 2 Rob Myers/Michael Caine (A40 Speedwell) -1 lap; 3 Glenn



Daly takes an innovative line exiting Druids

ROUND-UP

Pearson/James Dorton (Jaguar Mk1); 4 Gavin Watson (Alfa Romeo Giulietta Ti); 5 Tom Shepherd (Giulietta Ti); 6 Alistair Dyson (Ford Zephyr Mk2). **FL** Jordan/Jordan 59.936s (72.55mph). **P** David Alexander/Richard Fores (Alfa Romeo Sprint GT). **S** 34.

HRDC ACADEMY/A-SERIES

CHALLENGE (28 LAPS) 1 Thomas Grindall (MG W&P GT); 2 Steve Jones (Mini Cooper S) +2.621s; 3 James Wood (MG Midget); 4 Matthew Moore (Austin A40); 5 Richard Longdon (Austin Cooper S); 6 Steven Dunne (Austin A35 Speedwell). **FL** Grindall 1m00.124s (72.32mph). **P** Jones. **S** 23.

PRODUCTION GTI MK2 & MK5

(21 LAPS) 1 Martyn Walsh (Mk5); 2 James Howlison (Mk5) +2.003s; 3 Paul Blackburn (Mk5); 4 Altay Ali (Mk5); 5 Chris Webb (Mk2); 6 Paul Burt (Mk2). **CW** Webb. **FL** Walsh 56.521s (76.93mph). **P** Howlison. **S** 18. **RACE 2 (16 LAPS)** 1 Walsh (Mk5); 2 Howlison (GTI Mk5) +0.986s; 3 Blackburn (Mk5); 4 Ali (Mk5); 5 Webb (Mk2); 6 Dan Gibbs (Mk2). **CW** Webb (Mk2). **FL** Howlison 56.295s (77.24mph). **P** Walsh. **S** 19.

ROCKINGHAM BARC

PRE-66 & PRE-83 CLASSIC TOURING CARS (6 LAPS)

1 Stephen Primett (Ford Escort Mk1); 2 Andrew Harrison (Jaguar XJS) +1.085s; 3 Stephen Cripps (Escort Mk2 RS2000); 4 Mark Cholerton (Escort); 5 David Hall (Vauxhall Firenza Droopsnot); 6 Simon Jeffs (Alfa Romeo Alfusad Trofeo). **CW** Harrison; Jeffs; Neil Bray (Mini Cooper); Tony Preston (Morris Minor); Luc Wilson (Austin A40); Freddie Brown (Hillman Imp); Samuel Goodwin (Ford Fiesta). **FL** Harrison 1m36.091s (72.68mph). **P** Harrison. **S** 21.

RACE 2 (10 LAPS) 1 Primett; 2 Harrison +6.209s; 3 Cholerton; 4 Mark Osborne (Triumph Dolomite Sprint); 5 Peter Winstone (Escort Mk1); 6 Jeffs. **CW** Harrison; Jeffs; Bray; Mike Haynes (Ford Capri); Preston; Goodwin; Wilson; Brown. **FL** Harrison 1m35.848s (72.86mph). **P** Primett. **S** 21.

CLASSIC THUNDER, VTEC & BOSS (9 LAPS) 1 Dale Gent (Subaru Impreza); 2 Dan Stringfellow (BMW E92 M3) +4.355s; 3 Colin Wells (BMW E46 CSL); 4 Piers Reid (E46 M3); 5 Ilsa Cox (SEAT Leon Cupra Cup); 6 Michael Cull (BMW M3 E36). **CW** Stringfellow; Robert Burkinshaw (Honda Integra); Neil Wrenn (Honda Civic); Chris Baker (Ford Escort Mk3); Chris Brown (Ford Fiesta XR2); Richard Askham (Jaguar XJR); Jason Evans (Civic Type R); Sam Bedford (Integra). **FL** Gent 1m25.397s (81.78mph). **P** Stringfellow. **S** 28.

RACE 2 (11 LAPS) 1 Gent; 2 Stringfellow +3.171s; 3 Wells; 4 Reid; 5 Mathew Evans (E46 M3); 6 Steve Putt (Mazda RX-7). **CW** Stringfellow; Burkinshaw; Wrenn; Brown; Baker; Askham; Ben Dewen (BMW 323i); Evans. **FL** Gent 1m25.848s (81.35mph). **P** Gent. **S** 27.

KUMHO BMW CLASS A (BOTH 14 LAPS)

1 Ollie Taylor (E90 M3); 2 James Card (M3 E46) +21.174s; 3 Lucky Khera (M3 E92); 4 Roger Lavender (E46 M3); 5 Ian Goodchild (M3 WTCC); no other finishers. **FL** Taylor 1m27.215s (80.07mph). **P** Taylor. **S** 8. **RACE 2** 1 Taylor; 2 Card +9.867s; 3 Khera; 4 Balginder Sidhu (M6); 5 Goodchild; no other finishers. **FL** Taylor 1m29.492s (78.04mph). **P** Taylor. **S** 7.

CLASSES B, C & D (BOTH 13 LAPS)

1 Robert Davidson (M3); 2 John Bradburn (M3 E36) +3.432s; 3 Russell Dack (E46 Compact); 4 Chris Cheverall (M3 E36); 5 Giuseppe Callari (318is); 6 Kevin Denwood (E46 Compact). **CW** Dack; Callari; Gareth Montgomery (323i). **FL** Davidson 1m32.221s (75.73mph). **P** Davidson. **S** 15. **RACE 2** 1 Davidson; 2 Bradburn +1.308s; 3 Cheverall; 4 Montgomery; 5 Denwood; 6 Callari. **CW** Montgomery; Denwood; Callari. **FL** Davidson 1m34.344s (74.02mph). **P** Davidson. **S** 14.

PICKUP TRUCKS (30 LAPS) 1 Mark Willis; 2 Scott Bourne +0.201s; 3 Paul Poulter; 4 Charlie Weaver; 5 Lea Wood; 6 Paul Tompkins. **FL** Willis 40.240s (132.31mph). **P** Antony Hawkins. **S** 9. **RACE 2 (30 LAPS)** 1 Poulter; 2 Willis +0.062s; 3 Bourne; 4 Mel Collins; 5 Hawkins; 6 Wood. **FL** Michael Smith 40.466s (131.57mph). **P** Wood. **S** 9.

JUNIOR SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP (10 LAPS)

1 Ethan Hammerton; 2 Gordon Mutch +0.562s; 3 Will Drydal; 4 Lydia Walmsley; 5 Sam Kirkpatrick; 6 Sean Thomas. **FL** Hammerton 1m42.496s (68.13mph). **P** Mutch. **S** 15. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS)** 1 Mutch; 2 Drydal +1.575s; 3 Finlay Robinson; 4 Kirkpatrick; 5 Thorburn Astin; 6 Liam Thompson. **FL** Hammerton 1m43.094s (67.74mph). **P** Mutch. **S** 15.

CLASSIC VW & PRE-03 TOURING CARS (10 LAPS) 1 AJ Owen (Honda Civic Type R); 2 Simon Beament (Ford Escort RS2000 Maxi) +18.712s; 3 Ross Craig (Civic Type R); 4 Phil Wright (Honda Accord Type R); 5 Mark Shepherd (Volkswagen Golf GTI Mk3); 6 Chris Adams (Golf). **CW** Craig; Shepherd; David Payne (Golf Mk4); Nick Sanderson (SEAT Leon Supercopa). **FL** Beament 1m34.829s (73.64mph). **P** Owen. **S** 22. **RACE 2 (8 LAPS)**

1 Owen; 2 Wright +11.224s; 3 Beament; 4 Craig; 5 Sanderson; 6 Shepherd. **CW** Wright; Sanderson; Shepherd; Payne. **FL** Owen 1m33.361s (74.80mph). **P** Owen. **S** 22.

PRE-93, PRE-05 TOURING CARS & SMART (BOTH 10 LAPS) 1 Karl Cattliff (BMW M3 E36); 2 Craig Jamieson (Ford Sierra RS Cosworth) +5.367s; 3 Simon Ward (Vauxhall Astra GTE 16V); 4 Andrew Sheraton (BMW 325i E30); 5 Neil Bray (MG ZR); 6 Steve Barber (Renault Clio 182). **CW** Ward; Sheraton; Bray; Barber; Craig Langley (Peugeot 206 GTI); Alan Palmer (Smart ForTwo). **FL** Cattliff 1m33.196s (74.93mph).

P Cattliff. **S** 20. **RACE 2** 1 Cattliff; 2 Jamieson +1m18.537s; 3 Sheraton; 4 Bray; 5 Barber; 6 Stephen Field (Saab 9000). **CW** Sheraton; Bray; Barber; Langley; Palmer; Mark Bloomfield (Smart ForTwo). **FL** Cattliff 1m32.456s (75.53mph). **P** Cattliff. **S** 20.

KNOCKHILL SMRC

SCOTTISH LEGENDS (9 LAPS)

1 John Paterson (Ford Coupe); 2 Ryan McLeish (Ford Coupe) +2.962s; 3 Steven McGill (Ford Coupe); 4 Billy Watt (37 Ford); 5 Ivor Greenwood (Ford Coupe); 6 Gerard McCosh (Ford Coupe). **CW** McCosh; Jordan Hodgson (Ford Coupe). **FL** Greenwood 1m00.10s (67.98mph). **P** Colin McNeill. **S** 15. **RACE 2 (8 LAPS)** 1 Paterson; 2 Greenwood +1.877s; 3 David Hunter; 4 McGill; 5 McLeish; 6 McCosh. **CW** McCosh; Hodgson. **FL** Paterson 59.822s (74.91mph). **P** McCosh. **S** 15.

RACE 3 (10 LAPS) 1 Paterson; 2 Hunter +0.354s; 3 Greenwood; 4 McGill; 5 McLeish; 6 Watt. **CW** McCosh; Hodgson. **FL** Paterson 59.538s (73.53mph). **P** Gary Falconer. **S** 15. **SCOTTISH FORMULA FORD 1600 (12 LAPS)** 1 Ross Martin (Ray GR17); 2 Sebastian Melrose (GR14) +1.528s; 3 Matthew Chisholm (Van Diemen RF00); 4 Kenneth Cowie (GR09); 5 Jordan Gronkowski (Van Diemen JL012K); 6 Michael McPherson (GR14). **CW** Melrose; David Hourie (RF99). **FL** Martin 55.380s (80.86mph).

P Martin. **S** 12. **RACE 2 (14 LAPS)** 1 Martin; 2 Melrose +1.661s; 3 Clay Mitchell (GR13); 4 Gronkowski; 5 Neil Broome (GR17); 6 Hourie. **CW** Melrose; Hourie. **FL** Martin 55.380s (80.86mph). **P** Martin. **S** 12.

SCOTTISH FIESTAS (12 LAPS)

1 Wayne MacCaulay (ST); 2 Barry Farquharson (ST) +1.062s; 3 Peter Cruickshank (ST); 4 Reis Robertson (ST); 5 Philip Liddle (ST); 6 Stephen Ward (ST). **CW** Graeme Cuthbert (XR2). **FL** MacCaulay 1m02.352s (72.10mph). **P** MacCaulay. **S** 11. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS)** 1 MacCaulay; 2 Farquharson +1.543s; 3 Cruickshank; 4 Ward; 5 Aiden Ward (ST); 6 Cuthbert. **CW** Cuthbert. **FL** MacCaulay 1m02.623s (71.94mph). **P** MacCaulay. **S** 10.

SCOTTISH SALOONS & SPORTSCARS (11 LAPS) 1 Robert Drummond (Ford Escort Cosworth); 2 Kenneth McKell (Mitsubishi Lancer E8) +13.860s; 3 Andrew Morrison (SEAT Leon Eurocup); 4 Alastair Baprie (MGB GT V8); 5 Thomas McIntyre (Subaru Impreza); 6 Alan Doncaster (Lancer E6 RS). **CW** Morrison; Baprie; Oliver Mortimer (Mini Cooper R53); Andrew Paterson (BMW E36 318i). **FL** McKell 56.886s (80.18mph). **P** Drummond. **S** 14.

RACE 2 (12 LAPS) 1 Drummond; 2 McKell +1.631s; 3 McIntyre; 4 Baprie; 5 Morrison; 6 William Robson (Ford Focus RS). **CW** McIntyre; Morrison; Mortimer. **FL** Drummond 54.431s



Owen was man to beat in his Civic at Rockingham

(83.04mph). **P** Drummond. **S** 12.

SCOTTISH BMWs (12 LAPS)

1 Gary Clark; 2 David McNaughton +1.888s; 3 Frazer Huntly; 4 Cliff Harper; 5 Douglas Simpson; 6 Steven Goldie. **CW** Huntly. **FL** Clark 1m03.029s (71.67mph). **P** Clark. **S** 13. **RACE 2 (13 LAPS)** 1 Clark; 2 McNaughton +4.386s; 3 Huntly; 4 Goldie; 5 Simpson; 6 Lee Elrick. **CW** Huntly. **FL** Clark 1m02.998s (64.38mph). **P** Clark. **S** 13.

MINI COOPER CUP (9 LAPS)

1 Morgan Murray; 2 Dominic Wheatley +0.747s; 3 Robbie Dalgleish; 4 Ian Munro; 5 Dylan O'Donnell; 6 Michael Courts. **CW** Wheatley; Hannah Chapman. **FL** Murray 1m03.075s (71.29mph). **P** Murray. **S** 20. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS)** 1 Murray; 2 Wheatley +0.573s; 3 Dalgleish; 4 Courts; 5 Munro; 6 O'Donnell. **CW** Wheatley; Chapman. **FL** O'Donnell 1m03.064s (71.36mph). **P** John Duncan. **S** 20. **RACE 3 (11 LAPS)**

SCOTTISH CLASSICS (BOTH 12 LAPS)

1 Alex Montgomery (MGB GT V8); 2 Alastair Baptie (Fiat X1/9) +11.924s; 3 Bruce Mitchell (Lotus Europa TC); 4 Ian Blacklin (Ford Capri); 5 Calum McRae (TVR 350i); 6 William Conway (Mini Clubman GT). **CW** Baptie; Mitchell; Blacklin; McRae. **FL** Harry Simpson (Ginetta G4R) 59.210s (72.81mph). **P** Montgomery. **S** 10. **RACE 2** 1 Mitchell; 2 Baptie +1.067s; 3 Blacklin; 4 McRae; 5 Longstaffe; no other finishers. **CW** Baptie; Blacklin; McRae. **FL** Baptie 1m00.429s (73.54mph). **P** Montgomery. **S** 7.

MONDELLO PARK IMRC

BOSS IRELAND FORMULA LIBRE (13 LAPS)

1 Peter Dwyer (Lola T95/50 F3000); 2 Donal Griffin (Reynard 90D) +0.701s; 3 Fergus Faherty (Dallara F3); 4 Colm Hynes (Reynard 88); 5 Derek Daly (Tatuus F Renault); 6 Jordan Kelly (Tatuus). **FL** Dwyer 54.240s (76.30mph). **P** Griffin. **S** 7. **RACE 2 (16 LAPS)** 1 Faherty; 2 Dwyer +17.138s; 3 Hynes; 4 Kelly; 5 Daly; 6 John Stewart (Mygale M12). **FL** Faherty 55.177s (75.00mph). **P** Faherty. **S** 7.

SEAT SUPERCUP IRELAND (12 LAPS)

1 Rod McGovern; 2 Barry English +2.419s; 3 Erik Holstein; 4 Jonathan Fildes; 5 Sam Mansfield; 6 Brian Berry. **FL** McGovern 58.614s (70.60mph). **P** McGovern. **S** 7. **RACE 2 (15 LAPS)** 1 English; 2 McGovern +0.673s; 3 Mansfield; 4 Berry; 5 Shane Murphy;

no other finishers. **FL** McGovern 59.088s (70.04mph). **P** McGovern. **S** 7.

GINETTA JUNIOR IRELAND (11 LAPS)

1 Cameron Fenton; 2 Patrick Dempsey +15.299s; 3 Christopher Grimes; 4 Robbie Parks Jr; 5 Megan Campbell; no other starters. **FL** Dempsey 1m06.706s (62.04mph). **P** Dempsey. **S** 5. **RACE 2 (13 LAPS)** 1 Fenton; 2 Dempsey +11.783s; 3 Parks; 4 Campbell; no other finishers. **FL** Dempsey 1m07.417s (61.38mph). **P** Dempsey. **S** 5.

HRCA HISTORICS (12 LAPS)

1 Bernard Foley (MGBGT V8); 2 Steve Griffin (MG Midget) +6.277s; 3 Clive Brandon (Lotus 47); 4 Tommy Doherty (Ford Capri); 5 Liam Ruth (Midget); 6 Wolfgang Schnitger (Midget). **FL** Foley 1m03.499s (65.17mph). **P** Foley. **S** 12. **RACE 2 (14 LAPS)** 1 Foley; 2 Griffin (Midget) +6.115s; 3 Brandon; 4 Schnitger; 5 Seamus Hobbs (Midget); 6 Eyre Massy (Porsche 924). **FL** Foley 1m03.743s (64.92mph). **P** Foley. **S** 11. **FIESTA ST (9 LAPS)** 1 Dave Maguire; 2 Michael Cullen +1.489s; 3 Shane McFadden; 4 Hugh Grennan; 5 Kevin Doran; 6 Tom Fahy. **FL** Cullen 1m06.685s (62.06mph). **P** Maguire. **S** 20.

RACE 2 (13 LAPS) 1 McFadden; 2 Doran +0.046s; 3 Mick Fitzgerald; 4 Maguire; 5 Fahy; 6 Cullen. **FL** Maguire 1m06.680s (62.06mph). **P** Fahy. **S** 20. **SUPERCAR (12 LAPS)** 1 Alan Dawson; 2 Bob Cameron +4.172s; 3 Philip Jones; 4 Robert Savage; 5 Ray Finnegan; no other finishers. **FL** Dawson 59.979s (69.00mph). **P** Dawson. **S** 6.

RACE 2 (16 LAPS) 1 Dawson; 2 Jones +13.611s; 3 Cameron; 4 Savage; 5 Finnegan; no other finishers. **FL** Dawson 1m01.074s (67.76mph). **P** Dawson. **S** 5.

IRISH TOURING CARS (13 LAPS)


1 Shane Rabbitt (Mazda RX-7); 2 Keith Campbell (VW Corrado) +12.262s; 3 Pa Hudson (Honda Integra); 4 Adrian Dunne (Citroen Saxo); 5 Richard Kearney (Peugeot 106); 6 Daniel Faherty (Honda Civic). **CW** Hudson. **FL** Rabbitt 1m00.880s (67.98mph). **P** Rabbitt. **S** 10. **RACE 2 (15 LAPS)** 1 Campbell; 2 Ulick Burke (Honda Integra) +5.605s; 3 Martin Duffy (BMW M3); 4 Hudson; 5 Dunne; 6 Kearney. **CW** Hudson. **FL** Campbell 1m00.803s (68.06mph). **P** Campbell. **S** 9. **FIESTA ZETEC (10 LAPS)** 1 Mark O'Donoghue; 2 Owen Purcell +2.650s; 3 Alan Watkins; 4 Barry Barrable; 5 Roy Tobin; 6 Darren Lawler. **FL** O'Donoghue 1m11.632s (57.77mph). **P** O'Donoghue. **S** 20. **RACE 2 (13 LAPS)** 1 O'Donoghue; 2 Purcell +4.813s; 3 Lawler; 4 Watkins; 5 Tobin; 6 Adam Johnston. **FL** Johnston 1m11.846s (57.60mph). **P** O'Donoghue. **S** 20.

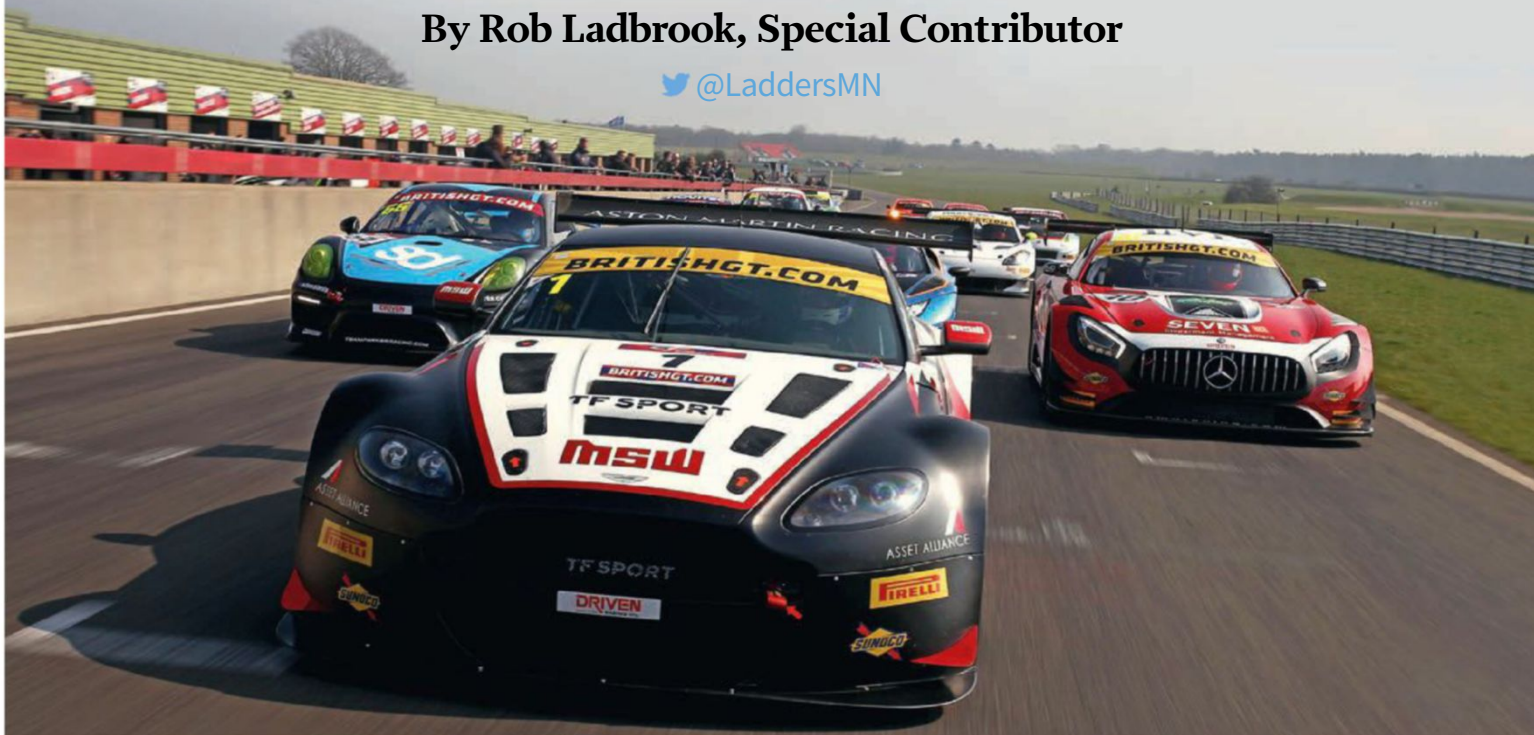
BRITISH GT 

Chasing the status quo in GT3

There were reports that GT3 was dead in the UK, but the grid looks similar to 2016. And that's a win for Britain's top sportscar series

By Rob Ladbrook, Special Contributor

 @LaddersMN



After a winter of speculation and uncertainty, it's safe to say that reports of the death of GT3 in Britain have been greatly exaggerated. The biggest news from this season's British GT entry list is that... there's no news. And that's a very good thing. There were rumours of five-car GT3 grids, and of drivers and teams turning away from the series, but none has rung true. The initial entry of 12 for the class hasn't set the world alight, but it's a solid core and the quality at the front makes this one of the hardest championships in recent years to call.

Consistency is the theme, with the top four crews from last year returning unchanged. Reigning champions Derek Johnston and Jonathan Adam are back with an unaltered TF Sport-run Aston Martin, as are Mark Farmer and Jon Barnes. Phil Keen and Jon Minshaw return in their Barwell Lamborghini, and Rick Parfitt Jr and Seb Morris are back with the Team Parker Bentley.

Picking a winner from this group is tough enough, but add a factory Ferrari for series returnees Duncan Cameron and Matt Griffin, a Lamborghini for British Touring Car convert Sam Tordoff and Liam Griffin, a second Bentley for Ian Loggie and

Callum Macleod, and a brace of completely refettled Ginetta GT3s, and things look very competitive.

"I think this year is probably the tightest to call," says factory Aston star Adam, who will split his British GT campaign with a World Endurance Championship GTE programme. "I think everybody has upped their game over the winter.

"This championship will be won and lost on consistency. Last year we won the title, but we didn't have the consistency of results in the middle of the year and this season I think we'd lose the championship if that happened again.

"The top three last year were all in different marques, so it's a very tight playing field. But we're in good shape with a strong package and it's Derek's third year in the car, and he's only getting quicker. The level of the championship keeps growing."

For the Bentley crews, continuity is a big factor. Last year Stuart Parker's team was brand new to the marque. It had some M-Sport support, but needed to find its own way with set-up. All four drivers are now familiar with the cars, and so is the squad.

"Last year we really gelled as a team," says Parker. "We made a few breakthroughs with the car, but the biggest gains were just us and the drivers understanding it better. We're definitely in this to win it as we've got the data and the drivers to do it."

One thing the crews have to get on top of is the new Pirelli

Title-winning TF Sport Aston crew returns and heads a competitive 2017 field

ENTRY LIST

GT3

DRIVERS	TEAM/CAR
Derek Johnston/Jonathan Adam	TF Sport · Aston Martin Vantage GT3
Liam Griffin/Sam Tordoff	Barwell Motorsport · Lamborghini Huracan GT3
Ian Loggie/Callum Macleod	Team Parker Racing · Bentley Continental GT3
Mark Farmer/Jon Barnes	TF Sport · Aston Martin Vantage GT3
Parker Chase/Charlie Robertson	Century Motorsport · Ginetta G55 GT3
Duncan Cameron/Matt Griffin	Spirit of Race · Ferrari 488 GT3
Jack Mitchell/James Littlejohn	Macmillan AMR · Aston Martin Vantage GT3
Lee Mowle/Ryan Ratcliffe	AmD Tuning · Mercedes-AMG GT3
Rick Parfitt Jr/Seb Morris	Team Parker Racing · Bentley Continental GT3
Jon Minshaw/Phil Keen	Barwell Motorsport · Lamborghini Huracan GT3
Harry Gottsacker/Nathan Freke	Century Motorsport · Ginetta G55 GT3
Richard Neary/Martin Short	Team Abba with Rollcente Racing · Mercedes-AMG GT3

GT4

Richard Marsh/Gareth Howell	In2 Racing · McLaren 570S GT4
Marcus Hoggarth/TBC	In2 Racing · McLaren 570S GT4
Mike Newbould/Michael Caine	Team Hard · Ginetta G55 GT4
William Phillips/Jan Jonck	Macmillan AMR · Aston Martin Vantage GT4
Steve Fresle/Jacob Mathiassen	Century Motorsport · Ginetta G55 GT4
Alex Reed/David Pittard	Lanan Racing · Ginetta G55 GT4
Richard Taffinder/Martin Plowman	UltraTek Racing/RJN · Nissan 370Z GT4
Tim Eakin/Kelvin Fletcher	UltraTek Racing/RJN · Nissan 370Z GT4
Stuart Middleton/William Tregurtha	HHC Motorsport · Ginetta G55 GT4
David Pattison/Joe Osborne	Tolman Motorsport · McLaren 570S GT4
Akhil Rabindra/Dean MacDonald	Garage59 · McLaren 570S GT4
Matt Nicoll-Jones/Will Moore	Academy Motorsport · Aston Martin Vantage GT4
Matt Chapman/Sam Webster	Team Hard · Ginetta G55 GT4
Nick Jones/Scott Malvern	Team Parker Racing · Porsche Cayman Clubsport GT4
Adam Balon/Adam Mackay	Track Club · McLaren 570S GT4
TBC/TBC	GPRM · Toyota GT86 GT4
Sandy Mitchell/Ciaran Haggerty	Garage59 · McLaren 570S GT4
Anna Walewska/Mike Simpson	Century Motorsport · Ginetta G55 GT4
Graham Johnson/Mike Robinson	Optimum Motorsport · Ginetta G55 GT4



tyre, which features a different compound – and size at the front for some cars – aimed at making the rubber more consistent.

As British GT's highest profile convert this year, Tordoff has even more to adapt to. He called time on his BTCC career after finishing second in last year's title race, preferring to chase a paid career in GTs. He'll dovetail his British campaign with a European Blancpain GT attack in a Strakka Racing McLaren.

"This year is all about learning for me," he says. "It probably would have been beneficial to race the same car in both championships, but that chance wasn't there. But both cars are mid-engined and rear-wheel drive and both are new-generation GT3 cars with lots of mid-corner aero, so they are relatable.

"They make BTCC cars feel so slow. The speed is the biggest thing to adjust to. Liam and I have known each other for years; we like many of the same things on set-up, so that should be promising for the year ahead."

If the stability in GT3 comes as a surprise for some, what won't is that GT4 is once again brimming. A total of 19 cars are on the entry, but expect that number to rise for the bigger-capacity circuits such as Silverstone and Spa.

Ginetta has upgraded its long-serving G55, adding traction control, ABS, and an extra 33bhp to the Ford engine. That's good news for reigning champions Graham Johnson and Mike

Robinson, who return with Optimum Motorsport to defend their crown. Coincidentally, the shift in age bracket within GT4 is also highlighted here by the fact that Johnson and Robinson are the oldest pairing, at a combined age of just 76.

In the other corner comes a raft of younger crews. Ciaran Haggerty and Sandy Mitchell add up to just 37 in the Garage 56-run Black Bull McLaren 570S GT4, while HHC's rapid Ginetta Junior rivals Will Tregurtha and Stuart Middleton combine to only 34.

McLaren is the big gainer this year, with six cars entered after running just Haggerty and Mitchell in 2016 to develop the GT4. The car is now the finished article and, as GT4 has become more fashionable, sales of the 570S have skyrocketed.

That's good news for crews like Richard Marsh/Gareth Howell in the In2 Racing entry and Adam Balon/Adam Mackay in the Track Club-entered machine.

GT4's strength is also displayed by a handful of top GT3 drivers dropping down. Joe Osborne shares a McLaren with David Pattison for Tolman, while former GT3 champion and BTCC man Michael Caine has joined Team Hard to share a Ginetta with Mike Newbould.

GT4 will certainly play a key role in British GT's future, but it hasn't deposed its bigger brother just yet. ✨

Top: BTCC convert Tordoff will cut his GT teeth in a Lamborghini; Middle: champion Adam reckons it'll be a tight fight; Bottom: upgraded G55 boosts Johnson and Robinson's GT4 title defence

BRITISH F3 

A title fight to define British F3's future?

Enaam Ahmed and Toby Sowery
are ones to watch this season

By Jack Cozens
Special Correspondent

 @JHCozens



There's a lot at stake for the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship this season. It's had the luxury of a first experimental year – both with a new car and a new name after its last-minute status upgrade in 2016 – that ultimately proved a resounding success, but 2017 needs to provide a strong foundation for the health of the championship in years to come.

For much of the winter, then, the situation could have looked far more auspicious, as driver announcements trickled through while rival categories such as Formula Renault – from which two drivers will join the Renault Sport Academy this year – had 20 entries before the end of January.

Even so, it was difficult to understand quite what the limiting factor on F3 signings was, particularly given the strength of the 2016 competition and the continued affordability of the championship (a promise organisers MSVR and Jonathan Palmer have done a fine job of keeping) relative to other series on the junior single-seater ladder.

Entries have picked up, to the extent where a suitably

stocked grid is in place, but more impressive – and reassuring, from the championship's perspective – is the quality of the top end of the field. As was the case in 2016, half a dozen drivers could be in contention. And of those, it's two of last year's leading lights that stand out.

In the blue corner, Carlin's Autumn Trophy champion Enaam Ahmed was the natural choice to install as the man to beat as soon as his full season move to the team was confirmed. The 17-year-old was a race winner with Douglas Motorsport last year and finished fifth in the standings, but he insists a second year in the championship was necessary.

"I went into last season with the aim of winning but I made quite a lot of errors," he says. "I was pretty quick, but couldn't string it together and that's why I needed a second year.

"There was no point in me moving on and not having won anything – in my view too many people do that. I want to do the second year to try and win it.

"Last year I was driving all-out, but not in rational ways. This year, my approach is a lot more rational. I know how to dominate races from karting. The best way to do that, I've found, is to only go for wins and poles – my full focus is to go for as many as I can."

Ahmed and Sowery were among the leading lights of last year's championship

CALENDAR (BRITISH GT AND F3)

DATE	CIRCUIT
April 15-17	Oulton Park
April 29-30	Rockingham
May 27-28	Snetterton
June 10-11	Silverstone
July 7-8	Spa (B)
August 5-6	Brands Hatch
August 26-27	Snetterton*
September 23-24	Donington Park

*Standalone F3 round

ENTRY LIST

DRIVER	TEAM
Jamie Chadwick	Double R Racing
Harry Hayek	Double R Racing
Gilherme Samaia	Double R Racing
Enaam Ahmed	Carlin
Cameron Das	Carlin
James Pull	Carlin
Toby Sowery	Lanan
Aaron Di Comberti	Lanan
Petru Florescu	Douglas Motorsport
Callan O'Keeffe	Douglas Motorsport
Ben Hingeley	Fortec Motorsport
Nicolai Kjaergaard	Fortec Motorsport
Manuel Maldonado	Fortec Motorsport
Jeremy Wahome	Chris Dittmann Racing
Omar Ismail	Chris Dittmann Racing
Tristan Charpentier	Chris Dittmann Racing
Jordan Cane	Hillspeed with CDR
Chase Owen	Hillspeed with CDR
Nick Worm	Hillspeed with CDR



British F3 pack has grown in recent months



ALL PICTURES BY

In the red (and white) corner, McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist Toby Sowery – back for a second season with Lanan Racing – might have superseded Ahmed as favourite, following his decision to rejoin the series.

While Sowery's return appeared to be a late deal, the 20-year-old has been busy testing with the squad (something he was unable to do in 2016) and enters the season far better prepared to string a title challenge together.

"I like having the credibility of being a favourite," he says. "We've always been an underdog, so it's nice for that to turn around. When we were good last year, we were *really* good – we just needed to switch it on a bit more.

"Everyone's unique to their own environment and Lanan aren't a Carlin or a Fortec. They don't have massive warehouses and 80 people to work on a car.

"They've got more respect for each other than the bigger teams do. There's no lack of talent on the mechanical side or the preparation or the engineering; it's just the lack of seat time that's hampered us [previously]."

And what of their thoughts on one another?

"He's a very fast driver," says Ahmed of Sowery. "Judging by pre-season, Lanan are looking very strong. I expect Toby will

be our strongest rival this year; he's going to be there the whole time – he's just really quick."

"Enaam was consistently at the front and now he's signed for the most highly respected team on the grid," says Sowery. "[But] some of the other drivers have gone well in pre-season testing as well so it's difficult to pick."

Aside from those two, Douglas Motorsport might have lost Ahmed to Carlin but it's once again pieced together an impressive line-up. British F4 graduate Petru Florescu has obvious speed (although he will miss three rounds through clashing Euroformula Open commitments), while for its second signing Callan O'Keeffe, 2017 marks perhaps a final chance to kickstart his career.

With Ahmed's Carlin team-mates James Pull and Cameron Das also in the picture, Ben Hingeley returning after a strong end to 2016 and Double R – which took Matheus Leist to the title last year – offering a joker in the pack having added Guilherme Samaia to its line-up late in the day, the prospect of an open championship fight is alive and well.

It might have taken some time to come together, but the 2017 British F3 season looks set to be a second strong year since the series' rebirth. ✨

Double R Racing's Samaia (centre) and Douglas Motorsport's O'Keeffe (above)

WHAT'S ON



Land of sporting giants

THIS IS A SPECIAL YEAR FOR FERRARI as the 'prancing horse' becomes a 70-year old, albeit still with a spring in its step.

It is within the year of this round anniversary that the Italian supercar empire decided to open its first European theme park. It's not the very first pleasure palace to carry the Ferrari name,

though — the state-of-the-art Ferrari World opened in Abu Dhabi in 2010.

Ferrari Land, as the new place is called, isn't quite an independent entity, but a part of Port Aventura — a well-established theme park located 70 miles south of Barcelona that has been in place for over two decades. Two years and

Ferrari Land is a subset of the existing Port Aventura rather than a park in its own right

€100million after Sebastian Vettel laid the first brick on the construction site, the complex now accommodates a whole new area dedicated to Ferrari.

Once inside, a LaFerrari-inspired silhouette of a building emerges as the centrepiece, but the real thrill is offered by the structures high above — the Red Force and the Thrill Towers.

Unlike Abu Dhabi's Formula Rossa, which is a classic looping roller coaster with twists and turns, the Red Force is a vertical accelerator, meaning it launches passengers forwards and then towards the sky. It may be a record-breaking ride, reaching 112 mph in five seconds, taking thrill-seekers as high as 367 feet and letting you find out what 4G feels like, but the whole experience lasts only 18 seconds. A ride on one of the piston-like structures that either shoots you up or takes you there gently just to drop you



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down – Thrill Towers – is even shorter.

But is it anything like F1? Scuderia's stalwart test driver and local man Marc Gene says that the speed and acceleration of the Red Force can give you an idea of what an F1 driver is going through in his 'office'. He compares the moment when the carriages are being launched with going through Eau Rouge – "the nicest corner in the world" as he describes it.

It's not the rides, though, but the simulators that are the most motorsport-relevant feature of Ferrari Land. Eight semi-professional pods, designed with input from Gene, offer experience that seems well-tailored for the general public. With several driver aids available, it's neither too demanding nor too arcade, and seatbelts that tighten up under braking add immersiveness.

While exploring Ferrari Land, an inevitable question springs to mind – what would the great Enzo Ferrari make of this all? His son Piero assures us that 'il Commendatore' would be happy seeing the brand "moving closer to people", but doubts remain in some quarters.

There's also a feeling that Ferrari Land is being opened a few years too late. Fernando Alonso is no longer a Scuderia driver and one of two grands prix held in this part of Spain is a thing of the past now. Gene disagrees, saying "Ferrari is bigger than any driver" and he's certainly right, but a scenario where Alonso turned up to open Ferrari Land on the back of his brilliant drive from 11th on the grid to victory on the streets of Valencia (as in 2012) would have had more impact here.

You could also say Ferrari Land doesn't embrace the brand's enthusiasts, it simply targets the masses – the majority of whom aren't old enough to drive.

Perhaps it would be a good idea to offer tickets as a package with passes for the Spanish Grand Prix, which takes place just an hour and half away. Such a move would certainly help to create a real link between the theme park and the sport.

PIOTR MAGDZIARZ



HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube SPECTACULAR SUPERCARS SHUNT

Search for Massive crash red flags Race 3 at the Tyrepower Tasmania SuperSprint

Twelve cars were involved in this pile-up in last Saturday's Supercars race at Symmons Plains. Will Davison was briefly hospitalised after suffering a suspected fractured vertebra following his Holden's 36G impact with Rick Kelly's Nissan.

WEC SILVERSTONE
BT Sport ESPN/Motorsport.tv
Sunday 1130/1145

With wins shared between Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton in the opening two rounds of the F1 season, it's likely that most eyes will be on proceedings in Bahrain this weekend. But there's plenty more to keep an eye on – most notably the World Endurance Championship season opener at Silverstone. Audi's exit at the end of 2016 was a blow, but with Toyota and Porsche still in the LMP1 ranks, the prospect of a head-to-head battle remains an intriguing one.

TV PICK OF THE WEEK

LAT IMAGES

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Rd 3/20
Bahrain International
Circuit

April 16
WATCH ON TV
Live Sky Sports F1,
Sunday 1530;
Channel 4, Sunday 1450
Radio BBC Radio 5 Live,
Sunday 1530

FORMULA 2

Rd 1/11
Bahrain International
Circuit
April 15-16

TCR INTERNATIONAL

Rd 2/10
Bahrain International
Circuit
April 15-16
WATCH ON TV
Delayed Motorsport.TV,
Saturday 1900 and
Sunday 2220



UK MOTORSPORT

SILVERSTONE

April 14-16
World Endurance
Championship,
European Le Mans Series,
Formula V8 3.5,
FIA European Formula 3
WATCH ON TV
Live WEC BT Sport ESPN,
Sunday 1130; Motorsport.
tv, Sunday 1145

Live ELMS Motorsport.tv,
Saturday 1415

Live FV8 3.5 BT Sport
ESPN, Saturday 1130,
Sunday 0930

Live F3 fiaf3europe.com

DONINGTON PARK TOCA

April 15-16
BTCC, F4, Carrera Cup,

Renault Clio, Ginetta GT4,
Ginetta Junior

WATCH ON TV
Live ITV4, Sunday 1045

OULTON PARK BRITISH GT/BRDC F3

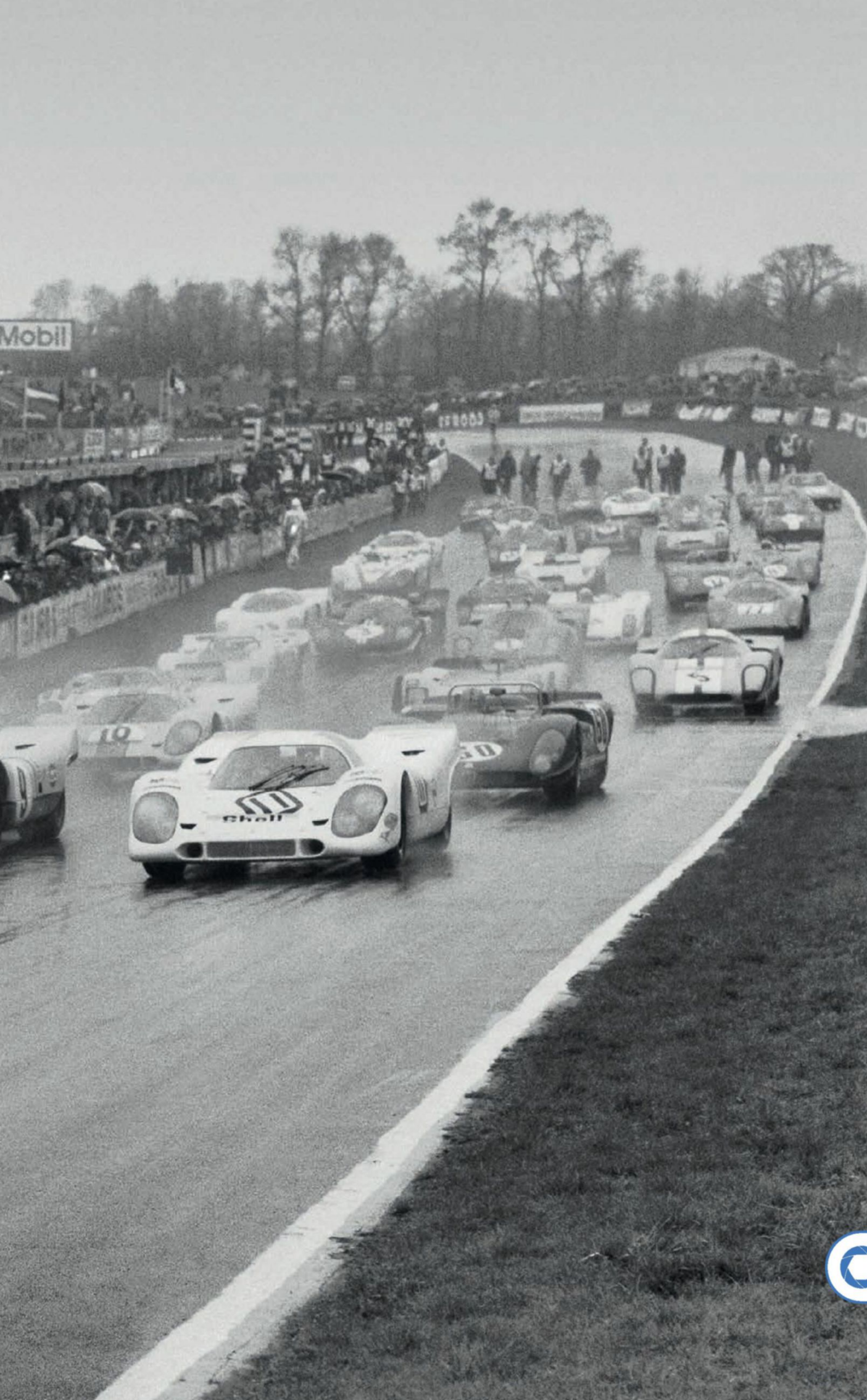
April 15, 17
GT, F3, Ginetta GT5, VW,
Mini Challenge, Northern
Saloon and Sports

WATCH ON TV
Live Front Runner TV,
Monday 1045

OULTON PARK CASTLE COMBE CCRC

April 17
FF1600, GT, Mini Miglia,
Mini Seven, Saloons, Hot
Hatches, Ferrari Classic,
Track Attack





FROM THE ARCHIVE

The Jacky Ickx/Jackie Oliver Ferrari 512S nudges ahead of the polesitting sister car of Chris Amon/Arturo Merzario at the start of the 1970 BOAC Brands Hatch 1000Km. The #1 Ferrari was hampered by wiper problems in the torrential conditions, finishing in eighth place. The #2 car was fifth. The race was won in dominant style by the #10 Pedro Rodriguez/Leo Kinnunen Porsche 917K after a wet-weather masterclass from the Mexican.



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MATT BEER

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RALLYCROSS ON ITS KNEES AT LYDDEN HILL

“You don’t even watch motorsport. You just read books about it.” Frustratingly, the scoffing classmate with the Paul Radisich British Touring Car Ford Mondeo pencil tin was right. A mid-teens motorsport epiphany left a lot of catching up to do and, in a family without a car in a small Dorset town with scant public transport, it was happening via Autosport reading, Duke Video’s back catalogue, second-hand books and bombarding any satellite-dish owners who regularly frequented my dad’s restaurant with blank VHS tapes labelled with Eurosport live race times.

Several years elapsed between motorsport growing from passing interest to life-dominating obsession, and finally making it onto a spectator bank by tagging along on my Kentish uncles’ regular Lydden rallycross trips. I didn’t care that I was watching the British Rallycross Championship at its lowest ebb, the finale of a pitiful two-round 1996 ‘season’ dominated with ease by Will Gollop. This was proper, raw, real live motorsport. And I loved it even more than I’d loved it on paper.

The floodgates were open. Now I wasn’t just badgering people about Eurosport taping, I was badgering dad’s customers for lifts to any race going (handily his breakfast regulars turned out to include future BARC Formula Renault and BTCC Production class race winners and an Autosport national desk staffer’s dad) and I was persuading my rallycross-loving extended family that they’d love BPR Global GT too (they really didn’t, sorry uncle Colin).

There’s a direct, life-transformative line running from the silent, spindly 15-year-old geek boy dwarfed by his own massive hair and glasses returning from Lydden and declaring “rallycross is BRILLIANT!” to my gran, through the motorsport-interest-generated friendships behind my sixth-form confidence growth and my underage drinking debuts, to Autosport national reporting (starting with rallycross, appropriately), teenage office freelance on a fledgling Autosport.com, to eventual staffer status, to creating the Autosport Academy with its focus on training via in-paddock national motorsport reporting. Motorsport friendships have rescued otherwise unbearable times. And they wouldn’t have existed without the personality overhaul inspired at the top of Hairy Hill as Gollop blitzed a Superfinal 21 years ago. 🍷

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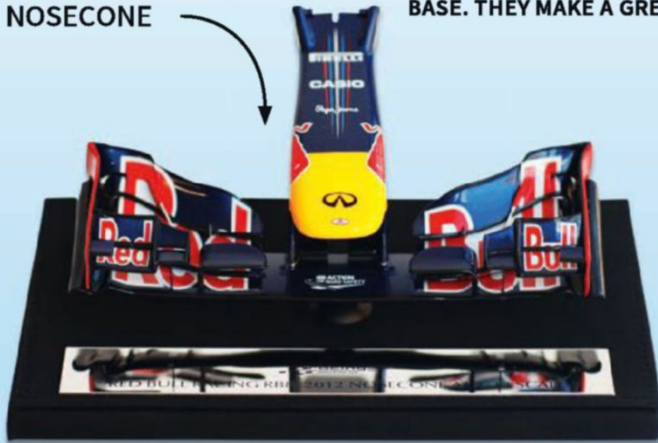
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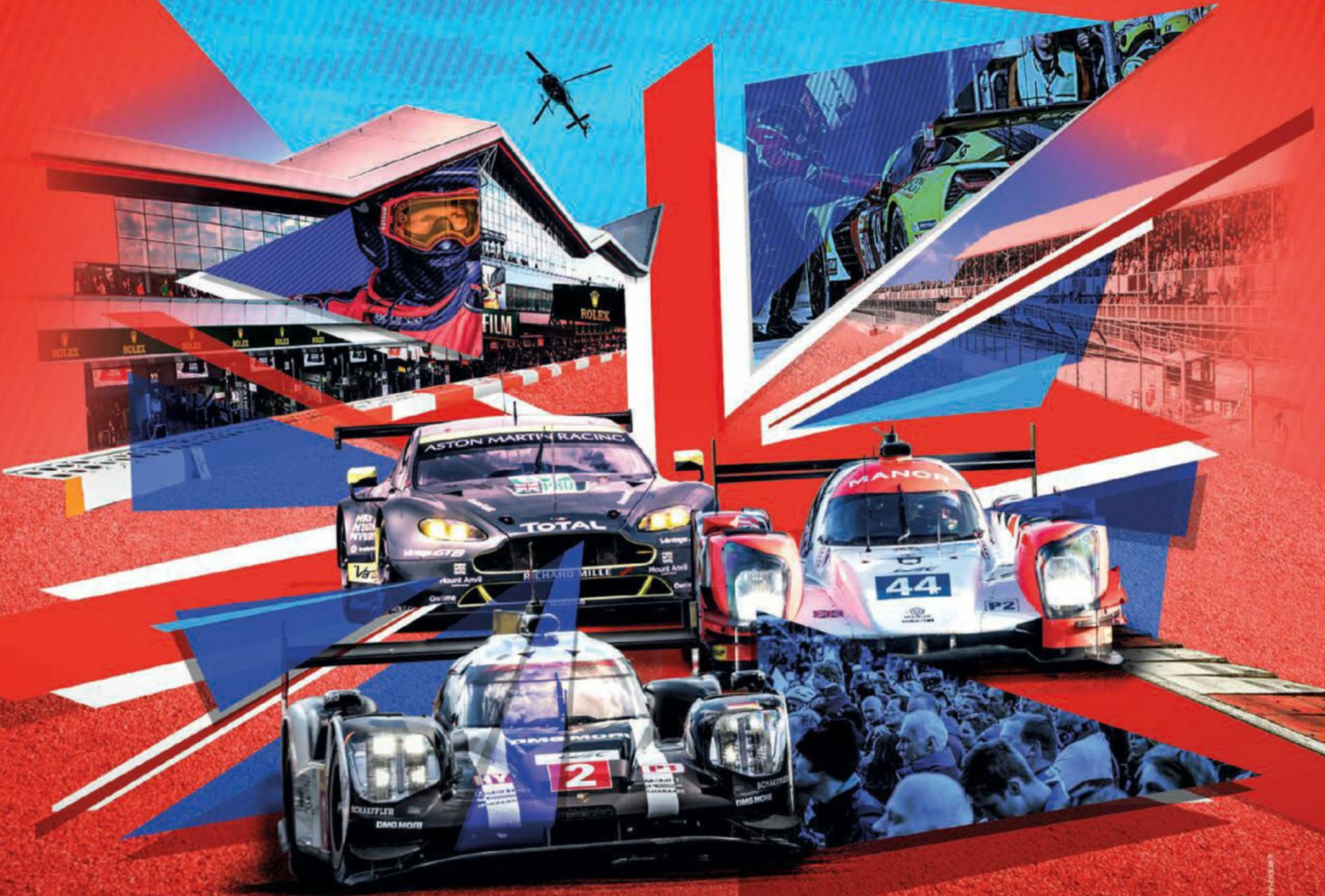
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