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Hamilton steps up another gear in France

Given Ferrari's pace in Bahrain and Canada, Mercedes really shouldn't have made it this far through 2019 undefeated, but there was no doubt about who was on top last weekend. Even team-mate Valtteri Bottas couldn't keep Lewis Hamilton in sight as the five-time champion scored his 79th Formula 1 victory.

Hamilton now has a 36-point lead in the world championship, after eight rounds. To put that into perspective, he was 29 behind Nico Rosberg at this stage in 2014 (the year of his first Mercedes title), 10 ahead on his way to the 2015 crown, 24 behind Rosberg during his failed 2016 campaign, 14 behind Sebastian Vettel in 2017 and 14 ahead last year. In other words, nobody has outscored Hamilton from this stage of the season during the hybrid era.

The only time Hamilton has had a similar lead (in percentage terms) was 2007. He was 14 points ahead of Fernando Alonso and 22 ahead of eventual champion Kimi Raikkonen (when a win was worth 10), but there's probably not much solace for Hamilton's rivals to take from his rookie campaign more than a decade ago!

As Edd Straw points out in our French Grand Prix report on page 16, the other worrying thing for everyone else is that it seems only now that Hamilton is truly getting into his stride this season. Even if Bottas can address the last chinks in his armour (such as tyre management) and Ferrari can get its act together, it seems incredibly unlikely that Hamilton will allow a sixth crown to slip away. Michael Schumacher's records of 91 wins and seven world titles look more and more vulnerable.

But it's not all doom and gloom for those wanting to see a true fight at the front of F1. As Scott Mitchell shows on p14, Honda is making some remarkable efforts to catch up. It could be that Red Bull and Max Verstappen will provide Hamilton with his sternest test in 2020. Their progress is a crucial subplot this year.



Kevin Turner
Editor

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NEXT WEEK
4 JULY

The Austrian GP, and Goodwood Festival of Speed preview feature next week



SUTTON
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IMAGES

RENAULT LOOKS PAST HULKENBERG

FORMULA 1

Renault is looking beyond current driver Nico Hulkenberg as it mulls over its 2020 Formula 1 driver line-up.

Hulkenberg has raced for the works team since 2017 and played a key role in its rise up the grid, beating his team-mates over the two full seasons completed so far and finishing seventh in the drivers' championship last year.

He has scored 128 of the 211 points Renault has managed since he joined in 2017 and those efforts have been key to Renault finishing sixth and fourth in the constructors' championship in the seasons Hulkenberg has raced for the team.

Renault team boss Cyril Abiteboul said: "We need to give credit to that, but also we need to look at the options, like everyone is doing, like I'm sure Nico is doing."

"Things are open for him and for us, but there is also an option in place so that we can possibly continue our journey together."

"We will see, probably after the summer break will be the right time to sit down, discuss it on the basis of fact and desire also."

Hulkenberg was joined at Renault for 2019 by ex-Red Bull driver and multiple race winner Daniel Ricciardo. The Australian has a deal for next season, whereas Hulkenberg's arrangement expires after 2019.

"The situation is clear," said Abiteboul. "We

have a two-year contract with Daniel. Nico's contract, the initial term is coming to an end at the end of this year.

"There is some mechanism of options – which I'm not going to disclose the details [of] – that can kick in. It's maybe that we continue our journey with Nico."

"Nico has delivered for the team, clearly, and if you look at where we were when Nico joined us and where we are today, it's crazy the change to the team, to the buzz."

"Clearly the drivers are no stranger to that, it's not just engineers."

Renault was linked with a loan deal for Mercedes protege Esteban Ocon before signing Ricciardo last year. However, Mercedes boss Toto Wolff was left unhappy when Renault went back on an apparent verbal agreement to run his team's reserve driver.

Asked if he would hold negotiations with Abiteboul over loaning Ocon out again, Wolff said: "One thing is for sure, I like Cyril, but in order to become a gentleman with a handshake he needs to restore his gentleman's image."

"We're looking at all options. Esteban is a hot topic. He's one of the most promising young drivers and he deserves to be in F1. We can see that with the interest he generates for next year. I'm very optimistic that we'll see him in an F1 car next year."

Ocon hopes his future will be sorted "very, very soon" in his bid to return to a race seat.



ERG FOR 2020

He lost his Racing Point drive following the takeover of the Force India team by a consortium led by Lawrence Stroll, whose son Lance moved across from Williams to partner long-time Force India driver Sergio Perez for this season.

Mercedes has the option to continue partnering Lewis Hamilton with two-time 2019 race winner Valtteri Bottas at its works team next year. Ocon would have to fight Perez/Stroll for a return to Racing Point, while Williams (the other Mercedes-engined team) currently has rising star George Russell and Robert Kubica, with well-backed Formula 2 points leader Nicholas Latifi on its books as well.

Renault's previous interest means Ocon's immediate future may not be restricted to Mercedes-engined teams, which should boost his chances. Ocon said he can "only be relaxed" as his management and Wolff work to get him a drive.

"Our goal, not only mine, is to get back in the car as soon as possible," Ocon told Autosport.

"At the moment my whole management, including Toto, is working for me to get back in a race seat next year and I think discussions are already starting.

"I think [getting the plans confirmed] as soon as possible, that would be great. That would be the best. I hope my future will be sorted very soon.

"I trust the people around me to do a good job and that's the only thing I can do."

SCOTT MITCHELL



No more Alonso F1 outings

FORMULA 1

McLaren does not intend to put Fernando Alonso back in its 2019 Formula 1 car, even though he is now free of other commitments.

Alonso is a McLaren ambassador and took part in a Pirelli tyre test with the team in Bahrain earlier this year. However, although he is available now that his Indy 500 project has finished and his Toyota World Endurance Championship stint is at an end, McLaren said it is not considering Alonso for Friday running at races or a future tyre test.

"We have no plan to put Fernando back in the Formula 1 car at McLaren," said team principal Andreas Seidl. "We are very happy with Lando [Norris] and Carlos [Sainz Jr]. They are doing a great

job and they're the future for us – and that is also my focus.

"But he [Alonso] is still a member of McLaren, an ambassador for McLaren, and I think there will be a discussion in the future with potentially other racing projects."

McLaren has also agreed a deal with Renault for Sergey Sirotkin to become its reserve driver for the remainder of the 2019 campaign.

Renault still has first option on the ex-Williams man, should it need to replace either of its drivers.

Seidl explained that this move does not affect Alonso and McLaren's relationship, and was made for practical reasons, because "it is not possible for Fernando to be here at every race and be reserve driver".

JONATHAN NOBLE

Hamilton: F1's 2021 vision needs serious changes

FORMULA 1

Lewis Hamilton says Formula 1's 2021 overhaul is "nowhere near where it needs to be" and requires "serious changes".

Discussions over a major rules change started last April, but teams still have concerns over the latest proposals and a summit in Paris two weeks ago – at which Hamilton, Nico Hulkenberg and Grand Prix Drivers' Association head Alex Wurz represented drivers – shuffled the deadline to finalise the rules back to October.

Hamilton said "it was encouraging that they allowed us to be there", but was critical of the situation F1 is currently in.

"I'm hoping they'll continue to have us there, a couple of us drivers each time," said Hamilton.

"They've extended the decision of making the rules. I think they need to, because they are nowhere near where it needs to be in my opinion. They've got to make serious changes to the decisions they've already made for what 2021 should be."

SCOTT MITCHELL

Ford teases with new hypercar based on GTE Pro challenger



WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Is Ford dropping hints that it is about to jump into the hypercar concept class of the World Endurance Championship?

The release of a teaser image of what Ford is describing as an “ultra-high-performance supercar”, and talk from its Multimatic team about new challenges that lie ahead, might suggest so.

The news that the American manufacturer will unveil a new car, which is clearly based on the Ford GT, at the Goodwood Festival of Speed next

month and buoyant talk from Multimatic about its future follows Ford’s admission that it is evaluating turning its GTE Pro contender into a hypercar.

Back in April, Ford global motorsport boss Mark Rushbrook admitted that the shift in the hypercar regulations to allow road-based machinery might open the door to its participation.

Ford isn’t revealing any details of the new car just yet. But Multimatic, which developed both road and race versions of the GT, has suggested that the UK-based race squad that ran the cars in the WEC

has a new project in the offing.

“We now move on to a bigger and even more difficult challenge,” said Multimatic motorsport boss Larry Holt on the end of its WEC programme with the Le Mans 24 Hours earlier this month. “I know that we will excel.”

Toyota, meanwhile, has offered a glimpse of how its hypercar racer will look. It will field a prototype in the WEC, but it will be styled after a forthcoming road car known as the GR Super Sport that is now up and running in Japan.

GARY WATKINS

TCR regs to continue in World Tourers

WTCR

TCR regulations look set to remain in use in World Touring Cars after WTCR promoter Eurosport Events and the WSC Group behind the rules concept agreed provisionally to extend the series’ current lifespan.

A statement announced Eurosport would “remain promoter of the flagship global TCR category”, which succeeded the

ailing World Touring Car Championship last year.

Eurosport said it will now approach the FIA to begin discussions about formally prolonging the WTCR agreement, which was initially limited to the 2018 and 2019 seasons.

The length of the new agreement has not been disclosed, but FIA circuit championships director Frederic Bertrand said earlier this year the

governing body’s preferred option was to make the series – which prohibits the direct involvement of manufacturers – sustainable for a five-to-10-year period.

Eurosport’s partnership with WSC will also extend to cover E TCR, WSC’s electric touring car category that is scheduled to launch in 2020. Eurosport has been appointed as that category’s promoter.

JACK COZENS





Hyundai call-up for Breen

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Craig Breen will join Thierry Neuville and Andreas Mikkelsen to drive a third Hyundai World Rally Car in Finland.

Ahead of the 1-4 August event, Breen and co-driver Paul Nagle join Hyundai's pre-event test and will also compete on Rally Estonia, a fast and jump-filled loosener for Jyväskylä.

Breen, who lost his Citroën seat (above) at the end of last season, has competed in Finland nine times and finished third in a DS 3 WRC in 2016.

"I am chuffed to be given this chance to join Hyundai Motorsport for Rally Finland,

and to get back in a World Rally Car," said Breen. "It's been a long and patient wait, having to watch everyone else drive this year.

"Finland is the rally I've done most in the WRC so I hope I can bring something to the Hyundai team.

"I am getting plenty of seat time before Finland. It will remain a challenge but one I'm ready to grasp with both hands."

Hyundai increased its lead at the top of the makes' race to 44 points with a double podium last time out in Sardinia, but Finland will be the team's biggest test so far; it is yet to register a top-three on the season's fastest rally.

DAVID EVANS

Oulton WRC route revealed

WRC

World Rally Cars will be sliding through Old Hall corner for the first time in October after circuit boss Jonathan Palmer confirmed the route for the Oulton Park stage at this year's Rally GB.

Britain's round of the WRC is back at the Cheshire track for the first time since 1993 and Palmer outlined his plans for the 2.5-mile test at last week's official Rally GB launch in Liverpool.

Palmer said: "We'll use Lodge corner, through Old Hall and down to Cascades. From there we're onto a bit of gravel then we come back onto Oulton Park's own rally stage.

"The cars will be really supple and really moving around – they're going to be exciting to watch. We'll really be able to see the talent being demonstrated



here. And, because we're the first stage of the event, hopefully none of the cars will have broken down or crashed before they get here!"

Oulton Park is the first race track on the itinerary since Silverstone in 1999.

Palmer said: "I'm a great fan of rallying and we're really looking forward to seeing the sport back... it's going to be one hell of an evening."

The Liverpool start will be the first time that Rally GB has begun in England since it visited Cheltenham, two decades ago.

DAVID EVANS

IN THE HEADLINES

McLAREN PLANS NEW WINDTUNNEL

The McLaren Formula 1 team is to build an all-new windtunnel at its Woking factory to address the car's fundamental lack of downforce. The board has signed off the construction to replace McLaren's current tunnel, which will be removed, and once it is functional the team will stop using Toyota's facility in Cologne. It is estimated that the project will take around two years, and it will also be used by other parts of the company.

BAT COMMITTED TO F1 BRANDING

McLaren sponsor British American Tobacco has reaffirmed its commitment to its original Formula 1 branding plans after Autosport learned that Philip Morris could remove its Mission Winnow campaign from the Ferrari F1 and Ducati MotoGP teams. The Mission Winnow logo might not return for the remainder of the season in the wake of heightened scrutiny on whether tobacco companies are using their scientific initiatives as a backdoor route to get around anti-cigarette advertising rules.

F1 GAME GETS TRANSFER MARKET

The 2019 instalment of the official Formula 1 video game, set for a 28 June release date, will allow drivers to switch teams during the career mode for the first time in the series. During the game the real-world drivers will transfer based on their performances, in the same way players have been able to throughout the Codemasters F1 franchise. Most, but not all, switches will take place at the end of a season.

NASCAR TRUCK DRIVER BANNED

NASCAR Truck Series title contender Johnny Sauter was suspended for the Gateway race last weekend after crashing into Austin Hill at Iowa Speedway in the previous round. A few laps after the incident, Hill retaliated by pushing Sauter into the wall. Sauter will remain eligible for the series playoffs so long as he remains within the top 20 of the current standings – in which he is currently 10th overall after serving his ban.

ELECTRIC MOTO HAS TEST RACE

MotoE World Cup held its first test, including a simulated qualifying and race at Valencia, since the entire electric bike series paddock was destroyed by fire in March. The incident forced the campaign's start to be postponed until July. Italian firm Energica rebuilt all 18 Ego bikes ahead of a three-day test. In the simulation race, former grand prix rider Eric Granado held off polesitter Hector Garzo to win. Ex-LCR Honda rider Randy de Puniet suffered two high-side crashes, in which he injured his ankle and elbow. He was the only rider not to finish the seven-lap race.



F2 rules loophole allows reprimanded driver to compete

FORMULA 2

The FIA will investigate a rule that allowed banned Formula 2 driver Mahaveer Raghunathan to see out the Paul Ricard round.

MP Motorsport driver Raghunathan amassed his 12th penalty point of the F2 season during last weekend's feature race for infringements during three virtual safety car periods.

The penalty points system was introduced in Formula 1 in 2014, and was also adopted by its feeder series. The regulation states that the ban will be in force for the next round, and not the next race – a stipulation F1 did not need to make because it races once per weekend.

That meant Raghunathan was allowed to contest Sunday's race, in which he finished 18th.

Until now, no driver had accrued the 12 points that would lead to a ban.

"It is something that we had a long chat about last night [Saturday] and this morning [Sunday]," said FIA race director Michael Masi.

"I don't think it is a loophole, it is an unintended consequence. They were designed for an F1 event with one race, not two.

"So yeah, it is one of those [things] that we had a long chat about, but he was allowed to participate today and it is

something we will look at with the steering group and go from there, which is how those regulations were formed."

Rookie Raghunathan has been criticised, especially on social media, because he has struggled to get up to speed in the category. In qualifying, his smallest deficit to pole this season is 2.660 seconds, which he managed at Barcelona, where he had tested during pre-season.

He has also been accused by other drivers of defending too aggressively at times. His driving came under scrutiny in Monaco when he appeared to hold up Jack Aitken during qualifying and the feature race.

As the series races this weekend in Austria, Raghunathan's ban has left his team with little time to replace him and had not announced a second driver when Autosport went to press.

JACK BENYON

RAGHUNATHAN'S PENALTY POINTS	
Bahrain	Completed extra lap after race finished at full speed
Baku	Failed to stop for weigh bridge in practice, passed a car before the control line on a safety car restart in race two
Monaco	Crashed into Jack Aitken, 20s added to race time
Paul Ricard	Infringed three virtual safety car procedures

Nissan accepts twin-motor ban

FORMULA E

The FIA's ban on twin-motor powertrains in ABB FIA Formula E is to try to ensure competitive parity between the teams in the future, according to Nissan e.dams bosses Jean-Paul Driot and Michael Carcamo.

The ban was announced at the recent FIA World Motor Sport Council meeting and was only expected to impact on the Nissan squad, which was widely assumed to be the only FE team using such a set-up.

At the Swiss E-Prix in Bern last weekend, the team publicly acknowledged for the first time that this was the case.

"For competitive reasons, we wanted to hold as much information [back before]," said Carcamo. "But it's true, I believe we have one of the most innovative packages on the grid today, which uses a twin-motor solution."

Nissan does not have long to adapt to the FIA's decision for 2019-20. Carcamo explained that "there were always people looking at [a single motor]"; but, in short, Nissan will have to produce a fresh powertrain design that uses a single motor.

The hardware must then be homologated by the FIA before the end of August – although it is understood that extensions can be requested – and be ready to race in Saudi Arabia in November.

Driot suggested that the FIA had decided to act after "some lobbying was done" by rival outfits, but explained that his team accepted the decision in the best interests of the electric championship.

"They have decided this kind of solution was a little bit difficult for them because we were quite strong on the track," said Driot. "In order to balance everyone, they decided that we will have to go back to one [motor]."

"We were surprised because we were homologated by the FIA at the beginning of the season. But, apparently, this solution was a little bit too innovative. It's difficult – [with] only one team out of the championship doing this, it was easier to tell us to go back to one [motor] than to tell the others to have the same solution like Nissan has done."

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



F1 AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX PREVIEW

2018 POLE POSITION
Valtteri Bottas 1m03.130s

POLE LAP RECORD
Valtteri Bottas 1m03.130s (2018)

RACE LAP RECORD
Kimi Raikkonen 1m06.957s (2018)

UK START TIMES

Friday 28 June
FP1 1000
FP2 1400

Saturday 29 June
FP3 1100
QUALIFYING 1400

Sunday 30 June
RACE 1410

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SKY SPORTS F1
BBC RADIO 5 LIVE

HIGHLIGHTS
CHANNEL 4 1900

TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP

Drivers		Constructors	
1	Hamilton187	1	Mercedes338
2	Bottas151	2	Ferrari198
3	Vettel111	3	Red Bull137
4	Verstappen100	4	McLaren40
5	Leclerc87	5	Renault32



RACE STATS

Previous winners

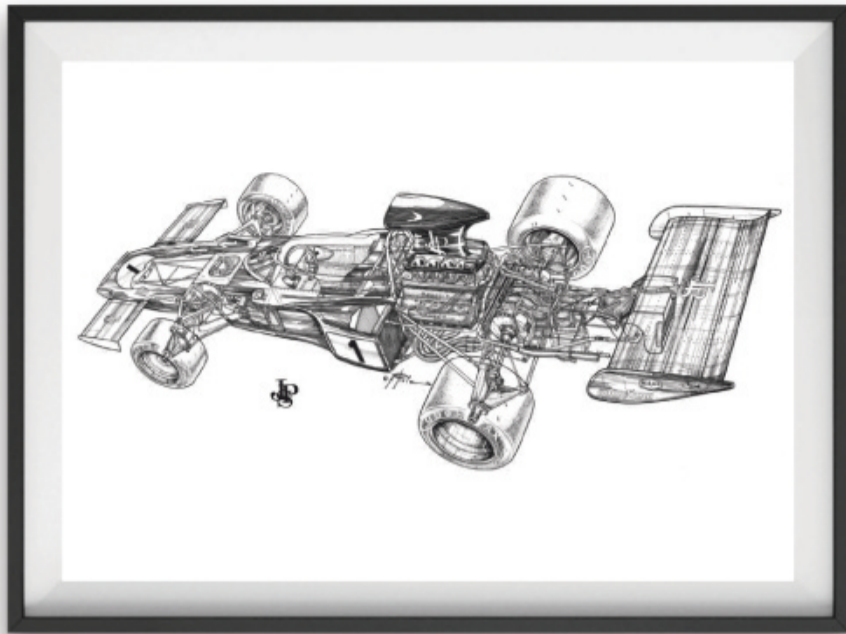
2018	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2017	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2014	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2003	M Schumacher	Ferrari
2002	M Schumacher	Ferrari
2001	David Coulthard	McLaren
2000	Mika Hakkinen	McLaren
1999	Eddie Irvine	Ferrari



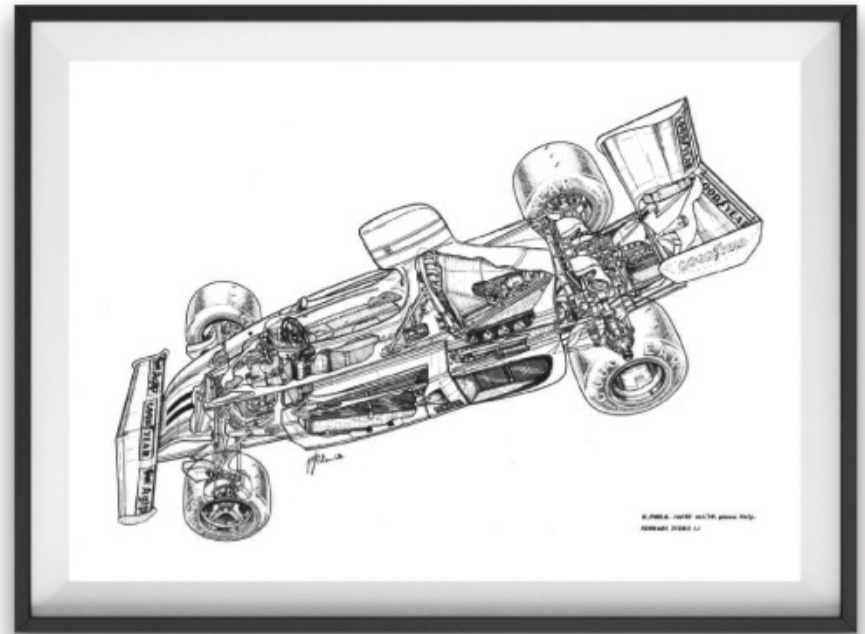
Red Bull Ring masters

Average points per Austrian GP from the current F1 drivers. Raikkonen's tally includes races at the A1-Ring, adjusted to current points system.

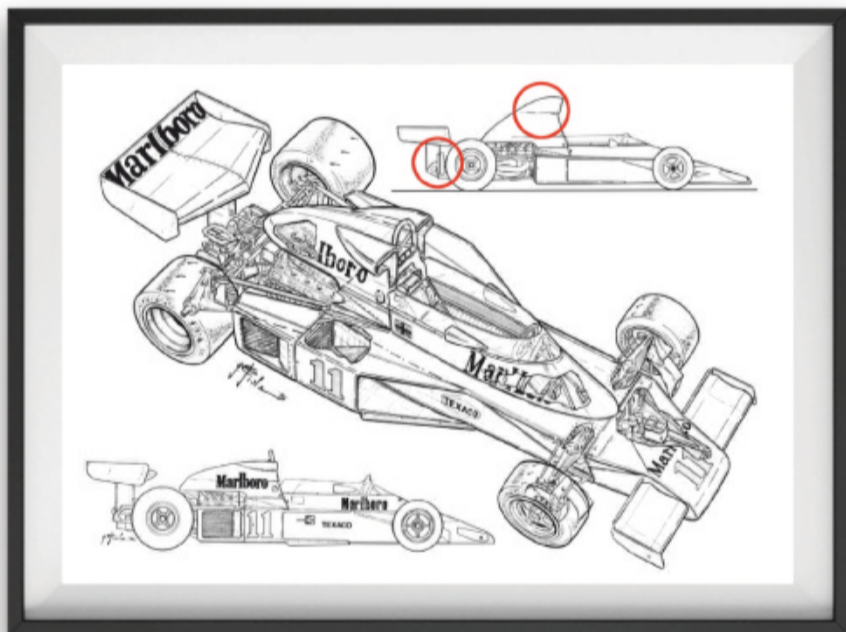
Hamilton	14.60
Verstappen	11.75
Bottas	10.40
Raikkonen	9.25
Vettel	9.00
Ricciardo	6.00
Grosjean	5.20
Perez	4.40
Magnussen	4.00
Hulkenberg	2.00



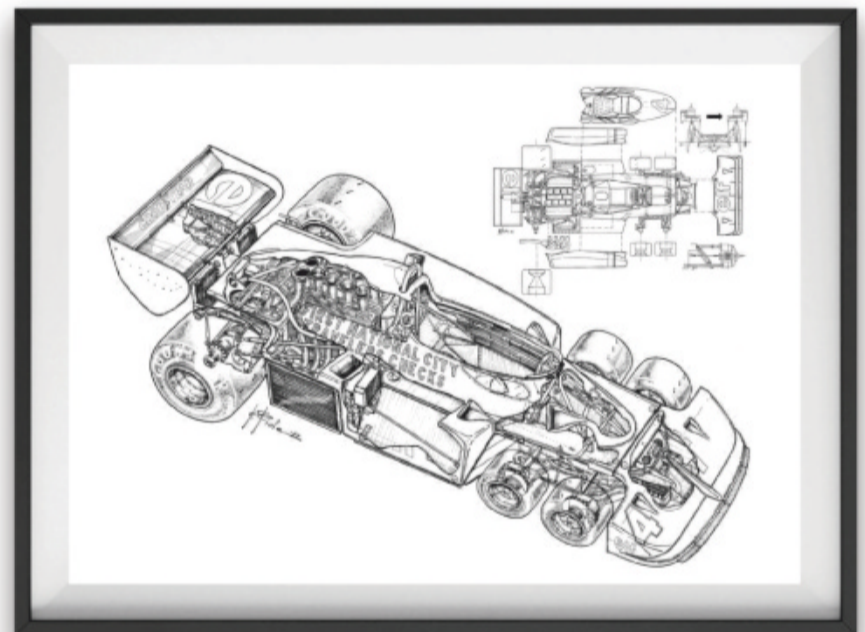
LOTUS 72 - 1971



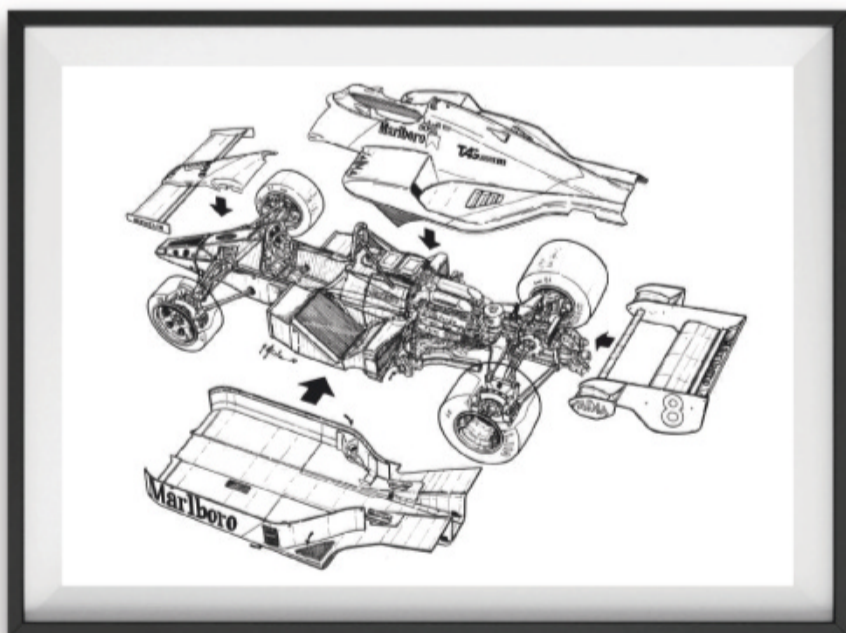
FERRARI 312B3 - 1974



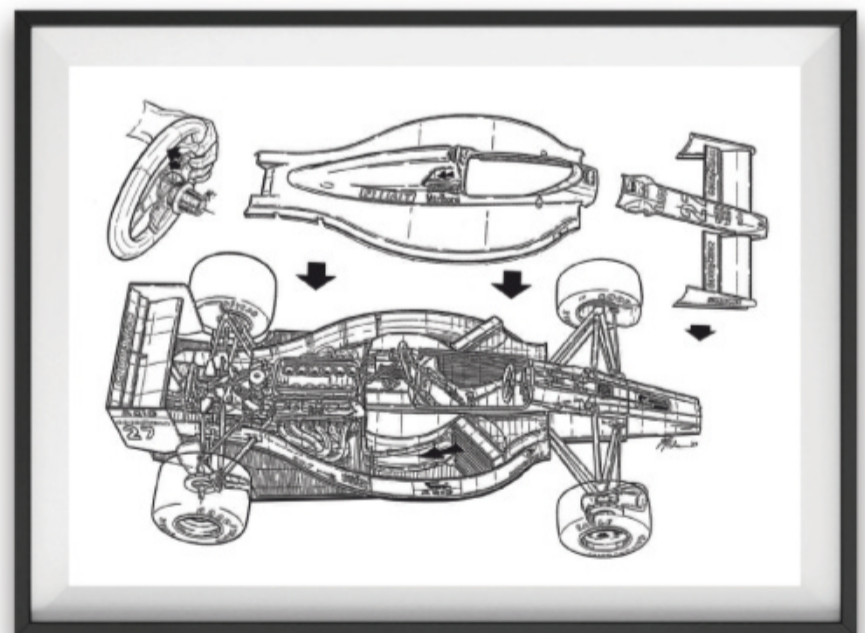
McLAREN M23 - 1976



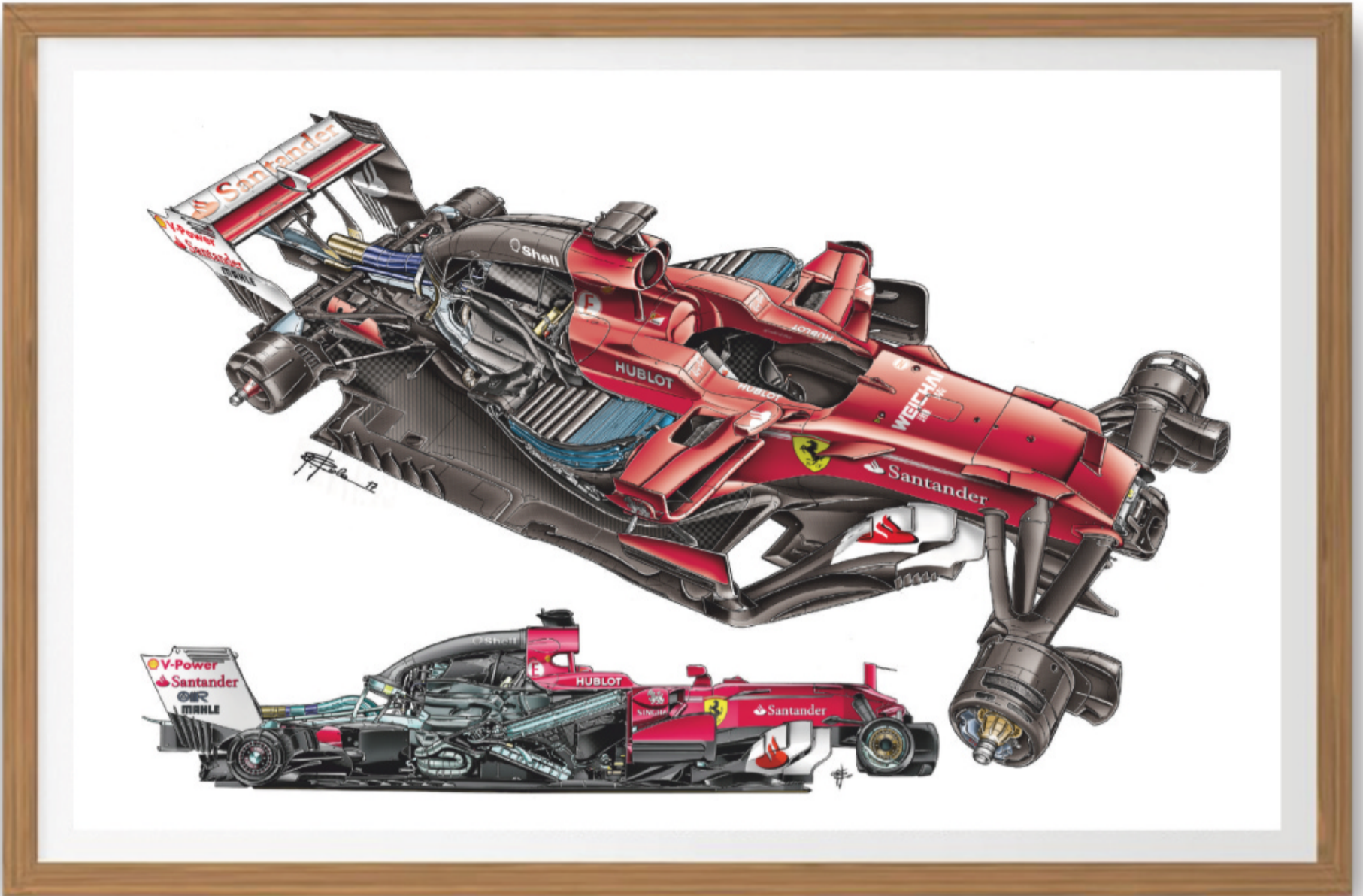
TYRRELL P34 - 1977



McLAREN MP4/2 - 1984



FERRARI 640 - 1989



FERRARI SF70H

THE ART OF



RACING

DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA



FERRARI LOOKS AT 'NEXT STEPS' WITH NEW WINGS

So far in 2019, Ferrari has had to take a back seat to Mercedes – watching the Silver Arrows storm to every victory in an irrepressible display of dominance.

Although its engine is strong, the SF90 has not been a match for the W10 through the corners, so Ferrari arrived in Paul Ricard with a new aerodynamics package: fresh front and rear wings and a new floor appeared in first practice.

The target was not necessarily to provide an immediate turnaround in performance. According to team principal Mattia Binotto, it was “important for the next steps” to set and evaluate a new development course.

Post-practice, the experimental new floor was removed, but the front and rear wings remained. New endplates for each offered a different approach to working the airflow.

At the front, the endplate featured a small fin on a newly flattened footplate, aiming to provide more guidance outwards along the top at the expense of squashing the vortex produced underneath. The endplate also had a small rectangular cut-out, a common addition (or rather, a common subtraction) across the grid. That gives a little more space for the airflow in the top corner of the wing to spill outwards and combine with any vortices produced.

At the rear, the mass of strakes at the bottom of the endplate had been clipped off. This is a tactic Renault tried for Canada, and seems to allow for a little extra airflow expansion at the rear – making more use from the low-pressure zone produced inside and aft of the diffuser.

“The data we got is matching what we were expecting,” said Binotto, “so in that respect we



FERRARI'S OLD-SPEC ENDPLATE

are happy. The reason why at least we are keeping some of the components on the car.

“We know it is not sufficient for what we are looking for but, as I said, it was important for us to understand at least the direction and we got relevant data for that.”

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

RENAULT'S HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Renault team principal Cyril Abiteboul promised a “substantial” upgrade, something special for its home race.

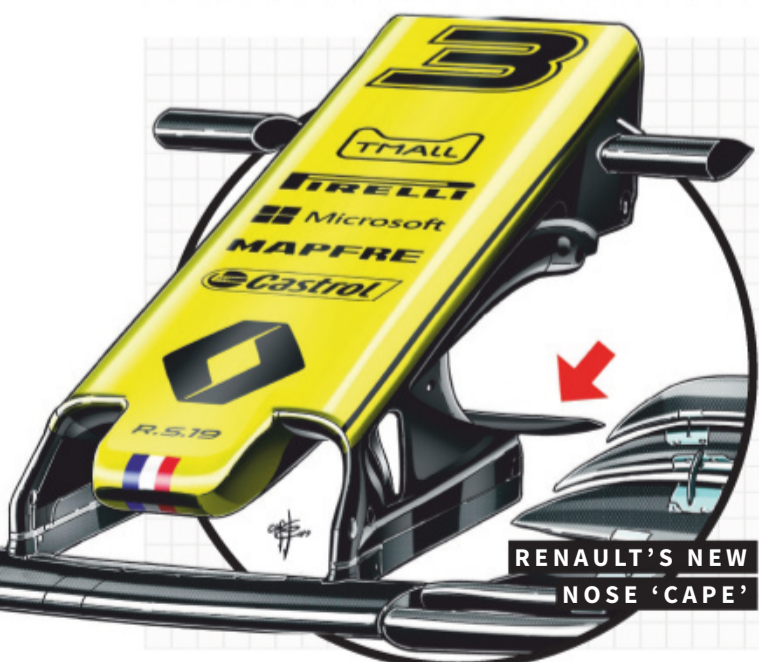
Daniel Ricciardo got access to a brand new B-spec internal combustion engine, which he used to good effect throughout the weekend. The Australian broke into Q3 and finished seventh on the road before receiving two penalties (see page 24).

Renault made its aerodynamic upgrades available to both drivers: a new nose featured a Mercedes-inspired cape section to trim off

any lift produced at the front. With the cape, the airflow is forced to take a longer path under the nose section, producing a lower-pressure concentration on the underside to sharpen up the front end.

A new bargeboard package also appeared, as Renault continues to seek aerodynamic gains with its RS19. So far, the developments to the car have gradually brought the team into play in the midfield, after a disappointing start to the 2019 season.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE





McLaren's new road to recovery

Progress so far this season shows an F1 giant rediscovering its mojo and making significant gains, but there's a long way to go on the journey to rejoin the elite teams

EDD STRAW

Last year's French Grand Prix was a nadir for McLaren. It had the second-slowest car at Paul Ricard, while off track it was on the brink of a reshuffle of personnel in an attempt to get back on the right path. New low points followed as the season went from bad to worse, with 'baked in' aerodynamic limitations rendering development attempts largely futile.

This year's French GP was a high point. Lando Norris was only 0.009 seconds slower than Max Verstappen's Red Bull in qualifying, and McLaren would have taken a '1-2' in the midfield battle but for him being shuffled back from seventh thanks to Daniel Ricciardo's last-lap move at the chicane. It's the third time in eight races that McLaren has prevailed in 'Class B' and, while its points tally – 40 – is identical to the same stage last season, there is evidence that the team has eliminated one of its big weaknesses of 2018 and turned it into a strength.

Over last season, taking each car's fastest individual lap of every race weekend and expressing it as a percentage that can then be averaged out, McLaren was 2.923% off the pace. Even if you calculate the 2018 figure based on the first eight races before McLaren's season slid into oblivion, the deficit was still 2.512%. This year, that figure is 1.796%. That equates to a gain of 0.644s over a hypothetical 90-second lap.

In France, the car's performance was even stronger, 1.244%

“McLaren appears to have got a handle on the car. The MCL34 is making genuine steps”

off the pace. McLaren beat the Renault works team, including Ricciardo with his engine upgrade, both in qualifying and the race. And while Renault's Nico Hulkenberg was surprised McLaren wasn't as strong in the race as it was in qualifying, his grid position meant Sainz could control the midfield contest.

This season has proved McLaren's trackside strength remains and, even when it's struggled in qualifying, its race pace has usually been good enough to get into points contention. Part of that is down to getting the tyres to work well in races and, while some rivals suggest it might be more by luck than judgement, any team making the Pirellis work deserves the benefit of the doubt. It all adds up to a formidable race team.

What is most encouraging about McLaren is it doesn't appear to have run into the developmental wall of 2018. Last year's car had

fundamental aero problems and suffered from rear-end instability. In testing and at times early this season there were signs of a milder instability, but McLaren appears to have got a handle on the car and new parts have helped. The MCL34 is making genuine steps.

“In China, in the long corners we were nowhere,” said Sainz. “Here we've done a good step, which probably means the upgrade from Spain has worked well. We still know we need to improve in low-speed corners, so when we go to low-speed tracks we will need to bring a few upgrades to be best of the rest. But high-speed and medium-speed, we have decent pace. This track [Paul Ricard], this surface, also suits us well. So we cannot relax and assume we are going to be fourth fastest because Renault also had very good pace.”

As Sainz points out, there is still work to be done to make the car a stronger all-round package. But the technical team, now under the leadership of James Key, is making progress both in terms of aerodynamic and mechanical development. This means the lessons of last year have been learned. Improving in low-speed corners will be another key test, as one of the factors McLaren struggled with was the impact of steering angle on the aero with significant lock on, so pace on slower tracks will also be revealing, even though it was still good enough to be best of the rest in the race in Monaco.

Last year, McLaren generally had to crank up the rear wing to compensate for the fact that it didn't have the expected aero load in corners, adding drag. That was a problem it carried throughout the season, but there's no sign of it this year. In fact, aero efficiency is reckoned to be a strength, as shown by a comparison to the performance of the Renault works team.

What's important is that McLaren is making gains. Since it was last a championship challenger in 2012, when it had a fast car but was operationally questionable and too unreliable, McLaren has slid a long way off the standards set by F1's elite teams. But good understanding, as well as budget, technology and quality personnel, underpins everything and the steps made this year suggest this is growing within McLaren.

In the short-term, McLaren still needs to improve its car to have a shot at being consistently best of the rest. For the long term, it needs to make significant strides to match the downforce levels of the big three teams, and the decision to rebuild its windtunnel in Woking rather than using Toyota's facility in Cologne is a statement of intent.

For now, the key is to eliminate the limiting factors that were preventing McLaren even being a strong midfielder. Based on what we've seen so far, McLaren is now on the right track even if there is a long way to go given how far one of F1's great teams had fallen. ❄️

➔ P24 STORIES OF THE FRENCH GP



(Jet) blades of glory

Inspiration from trick tech inside a Honda aircraft engine is providing fresh impetus in the Japanese manufacturer's search for performance

SCOTT MITCHELL

Neither Honda nor Red Bull has been shy to admit that more engine performance is needed to fight Mercedes for wins and titles. The high of Max Verstappen's podium on the first start for a Red Bull-Honda back in Australia in March has faded a bit, as the partnership grapples with the reality that the goalposts have been moved. Again.

Honda has made undeniable progress since Toyoharu Tanabe (trackside) and Yasuaki Asaki (at Sakura) took charge of the project at the end of 2017, following the collapse of the manufacturer's relationship with McLaren. The quest for further gains will not cease, as evidenced by the curious story that emerged ahead of the French Grand Prix weekend. Honda's latest upgrade has its roots in the company's jet-engine technology.

Honda has not strapped a jet engine in the back of the RB15. However, the expertise that went into the Formula 1 engine's revised turbocharger is more than just a funky bit of crossover. It has facilitated significant technology breakthroughs.

The F1 research and development team at Sakura has been working with their jet-engine counterparts for two years and this collaboration paved the way for a major step forward with the reliability of Honda's MGU-H when it introduced its Spec 3 engine last year. Asaki then suggested during a meeting of Honda bosses that a collaboration on the turbine side would also be beneficial.

“A little voice inside my head asked, ‘Honda has a jet?’ Yes, a six-seat light business jet”

Though the technology Honda has utilised is a closely guarded secret, Autosport understands that part of the inspiration from Honda's HF120 jet engine is a change in the internal blades' design.

Before digging into that, perhaps it's worth rewinding. When this first emerged, before speaking to Tanabe, a little voice inside my head asked, 'Honda has a jet?' – so you're forgiven if you were not aware either. Yes, little voice, Honda has a six-seat light business jet. The award-winning HA-420 HondaJet. Its engine, the HF120, is the result of a development programme that began with a small turbofan in 1999. And where the HF120 crosses over with Honda's F1 engine, the RA619H, is its turbine technology.

The jet engine has two turbines, a smaller high-pressure component with single crystal blades producing lower fuel burn and a larger, low-pressure, counter-rotating turbine. These

contribute to a lighter, more fuel-efficient and more reliable product, which operates in an intense environment at high altitude. But its internal design is what has been important for F1. Autosport understands that part of the inspiration taken from Honda's HF120 jet engine for the F1 project is a change in the design of the blades inside the components.

So, why does all this matter? The short answer is because of the complex nature of the contemporary V6 turbo-hybrid F1 engines, and (until now) an enduring Honda weakness. A contemporary V6 turbo-hybrid F1 engine requires a turbocharger and MGU-H that spins at up to 125,000rpm. Honda has previously struggled to get both components to reliably operate at that intensity. As well as being a reliability risk, that deficiency has cost it overall engine performance and limited the quality of its energy recovery.

A turbo's basic requirement is to make the engine's combustion process more efficient by compressing the air before it enters the combustion chamber, which boosts the amount of oxygen being pushed through and means more of the fuel experiences complete combustion. While that is a vital interaction with the performance of the traditional V6, the turbo also has a crucial two-way relationship with the MGU-H. The MGU-H converts heat from exhaust gases into electrical energy, which powers the MGU-K but can also be stored – and unlike the MGU-K it is not limited to how much energy is recovered per lap during a race.

Crucially, the MGU-H also functions in the other direction, by controlling the speed of the turbo. That means it can spin up the turbo immediately on throttle, which means quicker air compression and the elimination of the usual lag of a turbo engine. This impacts the engine's driveability.

The overall effect of a high-efficiency turbo is an optimised engine package that has widespread benefits. Honda was satisfied with the reliability and calibration of its new jet-inspired engine in France, having already outlined that it would not trigger a dramatic performance step. More importantly, it seems, is the foundation it gives Honda to push for performance.

As Red Bull's previous engine supplier Renault found at the start of this season, there is little reward pursuing performance when reliability is compromised. However, Honda's work has elevated its own reliability well beyond the levels McLaren experienced.

Red Bull and Honda have had to be patient for this upgrade. The nature of such an internal crossover means executing an idea was a long-term project. Upgrades will arrive when they are ready and worthwhile. Honda clearly believes this was exactly that, and it will encourage Red Bull to be patient as it eyes a more complete package for 2020. In the meantime, internal crossover within Honda is unlikely to cease as it bids to catch Mercedes and Ferrari, and prove Red Bull was right to put its trust in Japan instead of France. ✎

YOUR SAY

While I accept it was an honest mistake, there should be a penalty when you've ruined three other riders' races, to act as a deterrent against future reckless moves

JAMES SINGLETON

Riders should be penalised for spoiling a race

I find myself in disagreement with Paul De Neys (Your Say, 20 June) in regard to Jorge Lorenzo not being given a penalty for the pile-up he caused at Catalunya. Lorenzo spoiled the race for the fans, who were denied an exciting battle for the win, and likely ended any remaining championship hopes Andrea Dovizioso had for this year.

While I accept it was an honest mistake, there should be a penalty when you've ruined three other riders' races, to act as a deterrent against future reckless moves. After all, not every yellow card awarded in football is for deliberately dangerous tackles – often it's just a case of poor judgement, but it's still a yellow card. In this case, Lorenzo should have been given a grid drop for the next race, at least. Either way, Marc Marquez owes his team-mate a pint or two!

James Singleton
Derbyshire

Remembering Robin Herd

It was good to see the brilliant obituary for Robin Herd last week. As it pointed out, he had considerable influence in the motorsport industry throughout his working life.

I was at school with him. A small group of us, including Robin, belonged to a motoring society that met every few weeks to talk about anything to do with cars and racing. Another member of the group was Alan Rees, who later set up March Engineering with Robin (and also Max Mosley and Graham Coaker).

I have followed, and in a small way been involved in, motorsport all my life, so have been well aware of Robin and all his achievements. He was a great man.

Ian Walding
Lydbrook, Glos

Fighting Alonso's corner

I would normally assume that letters sent into Autosport are written by people who read the magazine, but it seems not in the case of Phil Oakes' Alonso critique last week. Mr Oakes is correct that Alonso did not deliver a championship with Ferrari,



but fails to remember that in 2010 (above) and 2012 he dragged a car that was nowhere near the best in the field to take both titles to the last race, purely due to his 'never give up' approach. In 2007, if Alonso screwed Lewis Hamilton's championship, then the same accusation must be levelled at Hamilton. As for screwing McLaren, yes maybe the first time, but the second?

Mr Oakes needs to read David Malsher's excellent autopsy from Autosport's 23 May edition on Alonso's failed Indy bid to understand that this was a McLaren failure, not an Alonso one. Remember what he did on his IndyCar debut in 2017 at the same venue with a team that understood what it takes to win at the Brickyard. Love him or loathe him, no one can deny that Fernando Alonso is a true great of our sport.

Nick West
Kettering

It takes allsorts to fill an F1 schedule

To all those who trip-out their annual complaint that Monaco has no place in modern F1, do they really think the liquorice allsort monstrosity that is Paul Ricard is preferable?

Graeme Innes-Johnstone
Elland, West Yorks

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HONE

HAMILTON DOMINATES FRENCH GRAND PRIX

Another virtuoso performance from the world champion amply demonstrated how hard his rivals must work to catch up

EDD STRAW

PHOTOGRAPHY



**motorsport
IMAGES**





Mercedes and Lewis Hamilton reigned supreme in the French Grand Prix, a race that was ostensibly straightforward and fitted in with the pattern that we've seen almost continuously since the start of 2014. But sometimes the less obvious trends are the more important ones, and what was exposed in the beating Paul Ricard sunshine were some subtle, but significant, storylines.

As a race, the French Grand Prix was not a thriller, with Hamilton dominating and only denied a sixth 'grand slam' of his career by the narrowest of margins thanks to Sebastian Vettel taking a free pitstop late on and nabbing fastest lap. So it's legitimate to ask why anyone should do anything beyond shrugging their shoulders at another Mercedes victory parade? But as always, in the detail there are always significant things to learn.

First, it reveals much about the world championship battle. The chances of Ferrari hitting a run of form strong enough to get back into contention are desperately slim given Vettel lags 76 points behind Hamilton. So realistically it's down to the revitalised Valtteri Bottas to take the fight to Hamilton.

At Paul Ricard, he was simultaneously so near to doing so and yet so far, falling back in the race thanks to an old weakness that needs to be tackled. Bottas has made great strides with his qualifying pace

to the point where, on average, the gap has only been 0.061 seconds this season. But when it came to the crunch in Q3, after Bottas had edged Hamilton on single-lap pace up to that point, it was the world champion who nailed it with two laps good enough for pole. His second attempt was compromised by having to correct a wind-induced rear-end snap in the penultimate corner, but he was still almost three tenths faster than Bottas – who was struggling in the gusty conditions.

When Bottas has got ahead of Hamilton on Sunday this year, he has won, so the start was always going to be the main flashpoint between the pair. But Hamilton led away with Bottas too far back to attack, giving him an advantage of just over a second over his team-mate at the end of the first lap.

For the next 13 laps Hamilton was, on average, 0.147s quicker and built up a lead of 2.995s. But in the next eight complete laps, taking us to the start of Bottas's in-lap, that average rose to 0.575s to extend the gap to 7.598s. Even though traffic played a part, Hamilton's tyre-management advantage was clear.

"In the beginning when tyres were fresh, there was no issue keeping up with him," said Bottas. "My issue was keeping the front tyres in a good state. Halfway through the stint, my front tyres were starting to be finished and the gap started to build. That was the difference to Lewis: he was quick and efficient on the tyres and that's how he made the gap."



Hamilton seamlessly converted pole position into the race lead

ETHERINGTON

“VALTTERI HAS SHOWN GREAT PACE ON A SINGLE LAP. I THINK HE’S RAMPED UP HIS GAME TREMENDOUSLY. NOW THE SECOND WEAKNESS HE NEEDS TO ATTACK IS TYRE MANAGEMENT” TOTO WOLFF

Bottas was under no real threat from Charles Leclerc at this stage, but Mercedes called the second-placed car in at the end of lap 23 for its stop to prevent the risk of it falling into the clutches of the Ferrari, which had stopped two laps earlier. Hamilton went a lap longer before he pitted to change from the mediums he, and all of the top eight, started on to take hards. All of this added up to Bottas being just over 11s behind once things had shaken out.

“Valtteri has shown great pace on the single lap,” said Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff. “I think he’s ramped up his game tremendously from last season to this. Now the second weakness he needs to attack is the tyre management. He’s very aware of where he needs to improve.

“There are tracks where he is as strong as Lewis or stronger when it’s not rear or slip-limited. And on the tracks where that is more of a factor he just needs to change the driving style a little and that is not trivial for a racing driver – but he has all the abilities to do that.”

Bottas was now out of touch. Hamilton simply needed to manage the gap, and although he and the team were concerned about the shallow but distinct front tyre blistering that led him to fear a blowout, that’s exactly what he did. At the end of lap 46 of 53 the gap back to Bottas was much the same at 12.536s.

The waters were muddied by what proved to be a tricky run to the end for Bottas. A misfire set in and cost him time in the final seven laps on top of the concerns about the front Pirellis. Then the brevity of the virtual safety car caused by Alex Albon skittling a bollard at Turn 1 compounded the problem.

“The VSC period was much shorter than anticipated and he lost a few seconds being positive on his delta time,” said Wolff. “So it was simply that he was caught out by the shortness of the VSC.”

This meant Bottas started the final lap with Leclerc suddenly within DRS range. He held firm, taking the chequered flag less than a second clear and 18s behind Hamilton.

“We were suffering with some front tyre blistering in the last stint, so we were a little bit concerned and just wanted to be on the safe side so we would definitely make it to the end without any failure on the front tyre,” said Bottas. “I had to take care a lot of the fronts in many of the corners and maybe being on the conservative side, losing some big chunks of time just by managing. In the end, that’s why it >>>

Leclerc led
Ferrari's challenge
after Vettel fell short
in qualifying



became a bit close with Charles. After the VSC, we struggled to restart the tyres and lost some temperature.”

Hamilton had no such pressure, which brings us to the second significant point of his burgeoning form. This year has mirrored the previous two in that Hamilton has started the season struggling a little by his own lofty standards and then built up an unstoppable head of steam. Earlier this year, he described his performances as “average” but there were hints that the French GP was the weekend on which he really clicked with the car.

If he really has cracked it – and we can’t be sure of that based on one weekend at a circuit that was always going to play to the strengths of Mercedes – then Bottas might not see him for dust. Hamilton is an all-time great whose incredible feats behind the wheel can be appreciated even if you find it predictable, and it could be that he’s just getting started for the year. This was Hamilton at his best; even the minor problems he faced in the race didn’t slow him down.

“It was relatively eventful,” said Hamilton. “Something broke in my seat, like one of the seat stays. As I was going through one of the corners, all of a sudden the thing kind of dropped and was moving around a little bit.

“The start was good, then the first couple of laps with the tyres was not so easy. After that, I got into my rhythm and it was quite comfortable. I was not expecting the medium tyre to go as far as it did. They stopped me too early, I could have kept going for at least another five, maybe even 10 laps. Then I got onto the next tyre, which felt good initially but then I got a lot of graining.

“But I was working on my craft, continuing to learn about this track, where you can and can’t push, where you save, where you don’t save. With that, I started finding more and more time and every time Valtteri and Charles put a good time in, I was a tenth or two ahead.”

Leclerc led the line single-handedly for Ferrari in the race after Vettel’s disappointing qualifying performance. He comfortably had the legs of Red Bull driver Max Verstappen, who held off the feisty Carlos Sainz Jr on the first lap then settled into fourth place. Initially, it seemed Leclerc might be held within undercut range, but under instructions to press on he had built up an advantage of six seconds when Verstappen pitted at the end of lap 20.

The gap at the finish was 16 seconds on a weekend where Verstappen and the Red Bull weren’t entirely at one with each other despite the Honda V6 and turbocharger ‘Spec 3’ upgrades that delivered a little extra performance.

Vettel could only recover to fifth after starting seventh thanks to a dismal Q3 session. He picked off Lando Norris into the chicane on lap five for sixth before dispatching Sainz with a pure DRS pass two laps later. But by then he was already more than 15s off the lead and almost eight seconds behind Verstappen.

For the next 12 laps he was on average 0.430s a lap quicker than the Red Bull driver, and closed the gap to around three seconds by the time Verstappen made his stop. With no chance of an overcut pass, Vettel went longer – partly in the hope of safety car intervention – but that came to an end when he flat-spotted the front-left and he called himself into the pits at the end of lap 25.



Vettel was so far out of touch that he pitted late to secure fastest lap

PORTLOCK



Resurgent McLaren took 'Class B' honours despite late Norris woe

HONE

“I COULDN'T DISCHARGE THE BATTERY COMPLETELY OTHERWISE IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A BIT SAFER TO GET FASTEST LAP. IT SHOWS HOW MUCH PACE MERCEDES HAVE IN HAND” SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Verstappen was then able to inch away from Vettel on the hards, which condemned Vettel to fifth place. What was clear from mid-race was that fastest lap could be his for the taking, but it was not the foregone conclusion it appeared to be when we first heard the radio message telling him to go to “Plan F” (for fastest lap), late on.

After the briefest of VSC interruptions, Vettel peeled into the pits at the start of the penultimate lap. Hamilton attempted to defend the fastest lap point on the last lap, banging in a time 0.956s quicker than anything he had done previously – on hard Pirellis on their 29th time round Paul Ricard. But Vettel had fresh softs and a clear track, so even with what he later described as a “small battery issue” on that lap he was able to take it by 0.024s.

“It was really tight,” said Vettel. “I don’t know if we had a problem. I couldn’t discharge the battery completely otherwise it should have been a bit safer to get the fastest lap. But it also shows how much pace they have in hand, if they want to then they just go a lot faster.”

It was a chastening event for Ferrari. A raft of upgrades was introduced at the start of the weekend, but only the new front and rear wings, and the brake ducts, were kept for the race. It was another blow in a season of disappointments for the Scuderia.

The top five were in a class of their own, and the second Red Bull of Pierre Gasly was absent without leave from the scrap at the front. He finished 11th on the road (10th after post-race penalties were applied), compromised by being one of only two drivers – along with Alfa Romeo’s Antonio Giovinazzi – to have to use soft Pirellis to make Q3. But his first stint, which lasted 17 laps, was less of a problem than the >>



QUALIFYING

TEE

Heading into Q3, Valtteri Bottas was a slender favourite for pole position, having outpaced Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton through the first two stages of qualifying and enjoyed the edge on performance runs in free practice. But come the first runs in the crucial top-10 shootout, Hamilton banged in a lap 0.157 seconds quicker than Bottas to take first blood.

Bottas, under pressure, responded with a scrappy second lap slower than his first, allowing Hamilton to consolidate and extend his advantage to 0.286s. But it could have been so much more, had Hamilton not been caught by a gust of wind at the penultimate corner.

“The second run, I was on for one of the best laps I have done for a long time,” said Hamilton. “I was up four and a half tenths coming into the second-to-last corner but it’s really gusty out there and I just lost the back end – through that or going too quick.”

Bottas was also troubled by the blustery wind that made life particularly difficult for him through the chicane. That, combined with having no tow and pushing too hard in the final sector to make up the gap, meant his second Q3 run was a write-off.

Charles Leclerc was happier than a man 0.646s off the pace would usually be. After recent Q3 troubles he felt he put in a good lap despite also struggling in the chicane. But there was no way he was going to do better than third given the pace disadvantage of Ferrari. And he was far better off than team-mate Sebastian Vettel.

Vettel had abandoned his first Q3 run after a missed upshift into fourth gear exiting the chicane left him bouncing off the rev limiter. On the second attempt, he struggled during the turn-in phase, using more steering lock than team-mate Leclerc and battling to get the car into the apexes. The result was seventh, eight tenths off the other Ferrari.

That left Max Verstappen to take fourth, barely holding off the McLarens of Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz Jr that bossed the midfield runners throughout the weekend.

Daniel Ricciardo was eighth, and behind him were the only two drivers to set their times on soft tyres in Q2 rather than the mediums – Pierre Gasly and Antonio Giovinazzi. The Italian put in a superb late Q2 lap to outpace his Alfa Romeo team-mate Kimi Raikkonen for the third time in five attempts.

“I WAS ON FOR ONE OF THE BEST LAPS I HAVE DONE FOR A LONG TIME BUT IT’S GUSTY OUT THERE”

SUTTON



TRACKSIDE VIEW

Taking to a green circuit in high track temperatures is challenging in normal circumstances. But the 20 F1 drivers participating in Paul Ricard's first free practice session faced an additional challenge thanks to what amounted to a patchwork track surface.

The entire circuit was resurfaced ahead of last year's return of the French Grand Prix. At the start of 2019, various corners were relaid, mainly in the first and last sector. But after the Blancpain Endurance GT race on 1 June, further patches were then put down. It was this last act that created the problem.

"We came here in February to measure the roughness of the patches to find out if they were different from the original," explained Pirelli racing manager Mario Isola after Friday's running. "The micro and macro roughness were not too different. But then they put in some other patches, mainly in the centre of the corners and this asphalt is quite different. It's a lot smoother with more bitumen and more oil, so the level of grip is different. It's less grippy than the rest of the circuit."

This partly explains the unusual behaviour of the cars. Early on, Ferrari duo Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc have the circuit to themselves. Watching from Turn 5,



the right-hander towards the end of the first sector, we see both have moments where the rear gets away from them. But it's nothing too serious, not compared with when others hit the track later on.

Several drivers have the rear step out mid-corner while cruising on out-laps. Kimi Raikkonen struggles to keep his Alfa Romeo pointing in the right direction lap after lap, and Carlos Sainz Jr, early in his run, has the rear let go late

and is forced into a wild ride over the exit kerb. Everyone is sliding, struggling, with many seemingly having the rear go when they get onto the new patch of asphalt.

Daniil Kvyat is the only one to lose it completely, spinning early on in his run. "It's low grip in general," Kvyat says later. "Compared to other more classic tracks like Barcelona or Red Bull Ring, you fell less grip here. The new patches also have an influence on how the car is

behaving so it takes a bit of time getting used to. Luckily you can throw the car around without any consequences, so it's OK. It was very dusty there. I wasn't even pushing too much on that lap and the rear just stepped out."

As the weekend progresses and the track rubbers in, the difference in grip levels becomes less of a problem. But it adds an extra dimension to an underrated circuit.

EDD STRAW



Some areas of the track had been resurfaced, offering uncertain grip

“GREAT DRIVERS MAKE THE EXCEPTIONAL LOOK MUNDANE AND SO DO GREAT TEAMS”



struggle for pace that left him unable to avoid being jumped by the long, hard-shod, first stints of Kimi Raikkonen and Nico Hulkenberg.

This left the way clear for McLaren, having an outstanding weekend, to take ‘best of the rest’ with Carlos Sainz Jr. The Spaniard made a great start to get past Norris and then challenged Verstappen through the first sector of the opening lap before settling in to what was a comfortable ‘Class B’ win. The only downside for McLaren was a hydraulics problem for Norris that contributed to him sliding from seventh to 10th on the final lap thanks to Daniel Ricciardo’s attempt to pass him at the chicane. Ricciardo ran deep and, in rejoining the track, forced Norris off it. This allowed Raikkonen, Ricciardo and Hulkenberg past.

Ricciardo then went off again on the drag to Signes while passing Raikkonen. That gave him seventh, but after the race he was justifiably given two five-second penalties, one for each offence. This relegated him to 11th behind Gasly and handed Raikkonen seventh place.

These last-lap antics would have been a dot in the rear-view mirror of Hamilton, who was more than a lap ahead. And this brings us to the third point. Mercedes dominating may be predictable but, just as Hamilton’s virtuosity should be celebrated, so should the feats of what is now beyond question one of grand prix racing’s greatest teams in terms of sustained success over a period of six seasons.

It’s not the fault of Mercedes that Ferrari can’t make a fight of it this year, and has squandered the opportunities that it has had the potential to benefit from, and the Silver Arrows is a team with no

weakness. Great drivers make the exceptional look mundane and so do great teams. Ferrari hasn’t had a bad season, it’s just that its imperfect one is made to look that way by Mercedes.

“What would you do if you were in our shoes?” rejoined Wolff when the question was put to him that this had been a ‘boring’ race. “You would continue to push relentlessly for performance. It’s what we do in all areas. Equally, the fan in me sees races that are less enjoyable to watch.”

The French GP may have been one of those races, but that doesn’t mean the brilliance of team and driver cannot be appreciated and enjoyed. Just because it might look easy, it doesn’t mean it is easy, and Wolff, Hamilton and their team deserve to be celebrated not just down the line when the history books are digested, but today when in their pomp.

As for the championship fight, Bottas has done a commendable job this season and will still improve. But the most ominous thing for him is that Hamilton, already well ahead, is settling into his stride. That could make the five-time world champion unstoppable. ❄

NEXT F1 REPORT

AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX 4 JULY ISSUE

The Red Bull Ring presents a very different prospect to flat, fast Paul Ricard. But just one week after the French GP, can Ferrari pull something out of the bag?

Ricciardo gets double penalty after dramatic last lap

The battle for the final four points positions in the French Grand Prix was shaken up by a dramatic last lap, as well as twin five-second penalties for Daniel Ricciardo that led to him being relegated from seventh on the road to 11th, behind Pierre Gasly.

Lando Norris had control of seventh place throughout the race after slipping behind McLaren team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr at the start, but came under pressure in the second stint as a hydraulics problem set in. This allowed Ricciardo, Alfa Romeo driver Kimi Raikkonen and the second Renault of Nico Hulkenberg to close in and start the last lap just behind him.

Ricciardo used the DRS to get a run on Norris into the chicane and attempted to outbrake him around the outside. He ran just off the track in the middle of the corner, and in rejoining forced Norris to go off the track in avoidance. This allowed Raikkonen to pass both, with Ricciardo also emerging ahead.

Ricciardo then closed on Raikkonen on the run to the Signes right-hander, but moved off track to the right of the circuit as he passed him. Ricciardo completed the move and took seventh on the road, but was penalised for both incidents. In the case of the Norris move, he was punished for leaving the circuit and rejoining unsafely, while for the

Raikkonen pass he was punished for gaining a lasting advantage when he left the track.

“I did all I could to stay on the track,” said Ricciardo of the Norris move. “You can see there’s a shiny line which is full of grip, anything off that is literally like marbles. I have no regrets whatever happens, because it’s the last lap and it’s never my style to sit back and be the conservative one in battle.”

The penalties promoted Raikkonen to seventh place, although he had to hold off Hulkenberg. The German had passed Norris on the run out of the chicane, then went to the outside of Raikkonen into Signes while the Alfa Romeo driver was being passed by Ricciardo. He was unable to make that move stick, and Norris then attacked Hulkenberg into the following right-hander and came close to retaking the position. The three took the chequered flag in that order, although Hulkenberg moved up to eighth and Norris ninth after the penalties.

“We had a hydraulic problem around 20 laps from the end, which was getting worse,” said Norris. “The car was getting very difficult to drive, quite unpredictable, the braking was really inconsistent, upshifts/downshifts were terrible, the power-steering started to go, something with the traction and the diff started to go – a whole load of problems.”



Sainz wins ‘Class B’

Carlos Sainz Jr took his second ‘Class B’ victory of the season with a strong drive to sixth place as McLaren led the midfield pack at Paul Ricard.

Sainz struggled on Friday and qualified a tenth of a second behind team-mate Lando Norris, but made a great start and challenged Max Verstappen for fourth place through the opening sector of the first lap. He then settled into fifth, rightly avoiding losing time when Sebastian Vettel demoted him to sixth on the run to the chicane on lap seven.

From there, he held sixth place to the end, as initial pressure from Norris faded when the second McLaren picked up a worsening hydraulic problem.

“I did what I had to do at the start, which was gain a couple of positions, had a bit of a fight with Max, which is always fun, and then once I was in P6 I just controlled the whole race,” said Sainz. “The team executed it brilliantly with a good strategy.”

“I was alone the last 10 laps and did a 1m34.6s in the last lap, which felt really good. When you have pace in hand and can show it whenever you want, it reminds me of World Series by Renault when I was winning some races with that bit of pace margin.”

Perez left puzzled by first-lap reprimand

Racing Point driver Sergio Perez was left baffled by a five-second penalty for going off-track at the start of the French Grand Prix.

Perez was punished for seemingly gaining an advantage on the opening lap, despite going around the outside of the Turn 3 bollard as instructed by the officials.

The Mexican, who started 14th, said “I don’t understand” why the penalty was applied, because he felt

“I did what I’m supposed to do”.

However, the key indiscretion was that Perez rejoined ahead of cars that had been in front of him when he entered the corner.

“That was part of a discussion that was actually had following Monaco at a drivers’ meeting”, explained FIA race director Michael Masi. “The drivers requested that they need to be behind effectively who they entered [the corner behind].”





Russell's unseen overtake

George Russell finished last in a Formula 1 race for the first time despite pulling off a superb unseen pass on Robert Kubica, after damaging his front wing following a wheel-to-wheel fight with his team-mate earlier on.

Russell outqualified Kubica again but started at the back because Williams had to fit a new Mercedes energy store and control electronics to his car after a problem in final practice.

Kubica led the back-of-the-field battle early on but Russell mounted a major attack to the outside into the fast right-hand Signes sweep. He ran wide after a side-by-side moment and hit

a polystyrene board with the left side of his front wing.

Russell continued to hassle Kubica after that incident, and got ahead with a second "hairy" attempt on the outside at Signes, but had to make a second pitstop to change his front wing after identifying a potential problem.

"From my side, I felt no difference, but the team were seeing some issues," said Russell.

"It was good fun. I wanted to do it fairly and properly on track. The first attempt I went wide and damaged the front wing, second attempt I made it stick and it was quite a hairy move, but that was the highlight of my race."

Q&A

GUNTHER STEINER HAAS TEAM PRINCIPAL



Haas had a dreadful weekend in France, with Kevin Magnussen finishing 17th and Romain Grosjean retiring late on from 16th. The drivers said the car didn't feel too bad but just lacked grip and pace.

Apparently you have said this was the team's worst weekend in F1?

Absolutely, in the four-year history this was our worst weekend all in all. In the race, we struggled. What is bizarre for me is a car that was good enough to qualify sixth and seventh at the first race, then sixth in Monte Carlo, and is all of a sudden second-last. Don't ask me why it is, I don't know. We need to find out. It's very disappointing

because ending up in this situation and not having an understanding is the worst thing of all.

How was the debrief – pretty depressing?

It's not depressing, it's realistic. I'm not getting depressed, I'm getting... anger is the wrong word. For me it's a challenge, it's not a positive one, but we need to get out of this. In racing, the day you give up, you stay where you are.

You need to get the anger out, and just keep on working. That is what I told the guys – you need to work a lot more now than you did before, because now we are in trouble.

There's no point to wait for something coming up, you need to go back now and understand why we are where we are. And then, once you know why you are where you are, then you can find solutions.

Is this the first time this year where it's not felt like a tyre-related problem?

It's a combination of a lot of things. If the tyre gets into a certain temperature window and it doesn't work anymore, you compromise your set-up because of the tyre. I'm not trying to blame only the tyre but, because I think the window is so small, you compromise your way around the car and then you get slow. The thing is, a lot of other people have similar behaviours of the cars, which I find strange. We are by far the worst off, but a lot of people come to me and say, 'Have you

got the same?' Yeah, we have got the same thing.

Is there anything different that you can try in Austria?

We will try, whatever we have available. I don't think we need to be radical – again, in the situation we are in, two races ago we qualified sixth. There must be something.

Is it a good or bad thing for you to have a race next weekend when you have such problems?

No difference. You cannot change it anyway, so why should I even speculate and speak about it?



20 Russell #63 1m32.789s		18 Kubica #88 1m33.205s		16 Grosjean #8 1m31.626s		14 Perez #11 1m30.738s		12 Raikkonen #7 1m30.533s	
	19 Kvyat #26 1m31.564s		17 Stroll #18 1m31.726s		15 Magnussen #20 1m31.440s		13 Hulkenberg #27 1m30.544s		11 Albon #23 1m30.461s

FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m32.738s
2	Bottas	1m32.807s
3	Leclerc	1m33.111s
4	Verstappen	1m33.618s
5	Vettel	1m33.790s
6	Gasly	1m34.091s
7	Norris	1m34.110s
8	Sainz	1m34.261s
9	Ricciardo	1m34.540s
10	Albon	1m34.804s
11	Perez	1m34.809s
12	Hulkenberg	1m34.810s
13	Stroll	1m35.063s
14	Kvyat	1m35.326s
15	Magnussen	1m35.410s
16	Raikkonen	1m35.522s
17	Giovinazzi	1m36.102s
18	Latifi	1m37.147s
19	Kubica	1m37.172s
20	Grosjean	1m37.620s

WEATHER 25C, sunny

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m30.937s
2	Hamilton	1m31.361s
3	Leclerc	1m31.586s
4	Vettel	1m31.665s
5	Norris	1m31.882s
6	Verstappen	1m32.049s
7	Sainz	1m32.432s
8	Gasly	1m32.448s
9	Raikkonen	1m32.677s
10	Magnussen	1m32.789s
11	Giovinazzi	1m32.973s
12	Ricciardo	1m33.020s
13	Albon	1m33.023s
14	Hulkenberg	1m33.081s
15	Kvyat	1m33.254s
16	Perez	1m33.300s
17	Grosjean	1m33.591s
18	Stroll	1m33.884s
19	Russell	1m34.614s
20	Kubica	1m35.195s

WEATHER 26C, sunny

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m30.159s
2	Hamilton	1m30.200s
3	Leclerc	1m30.605s
4	Vettel	1m30.633s
5	Verstappen	1m31.538s
6	Gasly	1m31.599s
7	Norris	1m31.654s
8	Ricciardo	1m31.802s
9	Sainz	1m31.887s
10	Raikkonen	1m31.943s
11	Hulkenberg	1m32.023s
12	Giovinazzi	1m32.171s
13	Albon	1m32.178s
14	Grosjean	1m32.385s
15	Magnussen	1m32.400s
16	Perez	1m32.491s
17	Kvyat	1m32.540s
18	Stroll	1m32.678s
19	Kubica	1m33.902s
20	Russell	1m39.987s

WEATHER 25C, sunny

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1	Hamilton	187	1
2	Bottas	151	1
3	Vettel	111	2
4	Verstappen	100	3
5	Leclerc	87	3
6	Gasly	37	5
7	Sainz	26	6
8	Raikkonen	19	7
9	Ricciardo	16	6
10	Hulkenberg	16	7
11	Magnussen	14	6
12	Norris	14	6
13	Perez	13	6
14	Kvyat	10	7
15	Albon	7	8
16	Stroll	6	9
17	Grosjean	2	10
18	Giovinazzi	0	11
19	Russell	0	15
20	Kubica	0	16

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Mercedes	338
2	Ferrari	198
3	Red Bull	137
4	McLaren	40
5	Renault	32
6	Racing Point	19
7	Alfa Romeo	19
8	Toro Rosso	17
9	Haas	16
10	Williams	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	5	3	Bottas
Vettel	6	2	Leclerc
Gasly	1	6	Verstappen
Ricciardo	6	1	Hulkenberg
Grosjean	2	5	Magnussen
Norris	5	3	Sainz
Perez	8	0	Stroll
Raikkonen	4	3	Giovinazzi
Albon	2	4	Kvyat
Russell	8	0	Kubica

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying or had a serious technical problem

WINS

Hamilton	6
Bottas	2

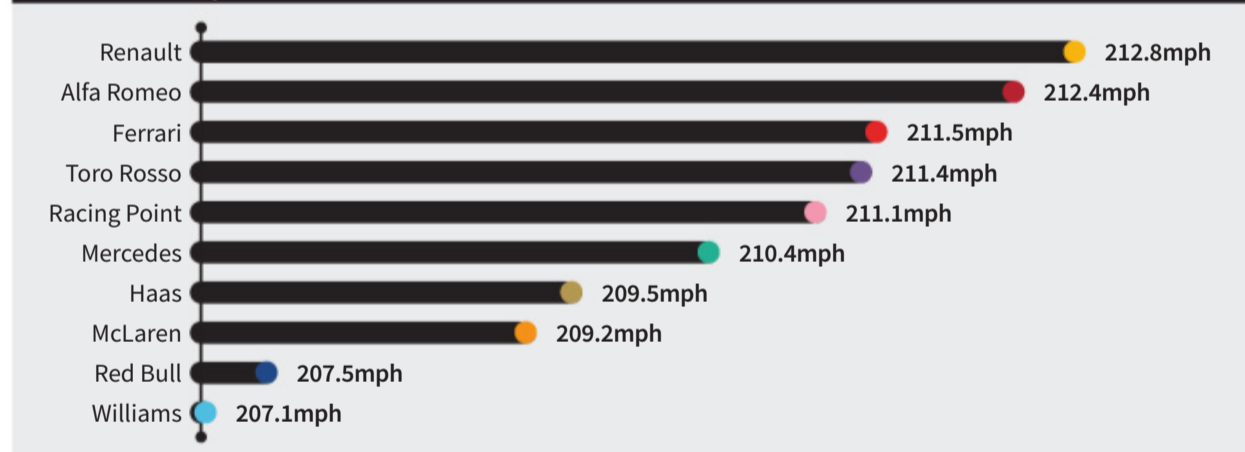
FASTEST LAPS

Bottas	2
Gasly	2
Leclerc	2

POLE POSITIONS

Bottas	3
Hamilton	3
Leclerc	1
Vettel	1

SPEED TRAP (QUALIFYING)



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m30.550s
2	Hamilton	1m30.609s
3	Leclerc	1m30.647s
4	Hulkenberg	1m30.865s
5	Ricciardo	1m30.954s
6	Perez	1m30.964s
7	Raikkonen	1m30.972s
8	Norris	1m30.989s
9	Sainz	1m31.073s
10	Vettel	1m31.075s
11	Gasly	1m31.152s
12	Magnussen	1m31.166s
13	Giovinazzi	1m31.180s
14	Verstappen	1m31.327s
15	Albon	1m31.445s
16	Kvyat	1m31.564s
17	Grosjean	1m31.626s
18	Stroll	1m31.726s
19	Russell	1m32.789s
20	Kubica	1m33.205s

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m29.437s
2	Vettel	1m29.506s
3	Hamilton	1m29.520s
4	Leclerc	1m29.699s
5	Norris	1m30.019s
6	Verstappen	1m30.099s
7	Sainz	1m30.319s
8	Ricciardo	1m30.369s
9	Giovinazzi	1m30.408s
10	Gasly	1m30.421s
11	Albon	1m30.461s
12	Raikkonen	1m30.533s
13	Hulkenberg	1m30.544s
14	Perez	1m30.738s
15	Magnussen	1m31.440s

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m28.319s
2	Bottas	1m28.605s
3	Leclerc	1m28.965s
4	Verstappen	1m29.409s
5	Norris	1m29.418s
6	Sainz	1m29.522s
7	Vettel	1m29.799s
8	Ricciardo	1m29.918s
9	Gasly	1m30.184s
10	Giovinazzi	1m33.420s

WEATHER 25C, sunny





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STARTING GRID



RACE RESULTS ROUND 8/21 (53 LAPS - 192.44 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	1h24m31.198s	53	Mu, Hn
2	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+18.056s		Mu, Hn
3	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+18.985s		Mu, Hu
4	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	+34.905s		Mu, Hn
5	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Ferrari	+1m02.796s		Mu, Hn, Sn
6	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	McLaren-Renault	+1m35.462s		Mu, Hn
7	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		Mu, Hn
8	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Renault	-1 lap		Hn, Mu
9	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Renault	-1 lap		Hn, Mu
10	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Red Bull-Honda	-1 lap		Mu, Hn
11	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	Renault	-1 lap		Su, Hn
12	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Racing Point-Mercedes	-1 lap		Mn, Hn
13	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Racing Point-Mercedes	-1 lap		Hn, Mn
14	Daniil Kvyat (RUS)	Toro Rosso-Honda	-1 lap		Hn, Mn
15	Alexander Albon (THA)	Toro Rosso-Honda	-1 lap		Mn, Hn
16	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		Su, Hn, Mn
17	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		Mn, Hn
18	Robert Kubica (POL)	Williams-Mercedes	-2 laps		Mn, Hn
19	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-2 laps		Mn, Hn, Mn
R	Romain Grosjean (FRA)	Haas-Ferrari	44 laps-withdrew		Hn, Mn

FASTEST LAPS

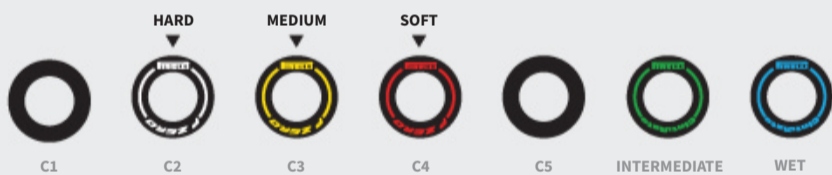
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Vettel	1m32.740s	-	53
2	Hamilton	1m32.764s	+0.024s	53
3	Bottas	1m33.586s	+0.846s	43
4	Leclerc	1m33.828s	+1.088s	40
5	Verstappen	1m34.162s	+1.422s	38
6	Sainz	1m34.561s	+1.821s	52
7	Hulkenberg	1m34.754s	+2.014s	45
8	Ricciardo	1m34.873s	+2.133s	47
9	Stroll	1m34.924s	+2.184s	44
10	Raikkonen	1m34.950s	+2.210s	46
11	Perez	1m35.014s	+2.274s	42
12	Albon	1m35.029s	+2.289s	51
13	Giovinazzi	1m35.115s	+2.375s	50
14	Gasly	1m35.150s	+2.410s	42
15	Norris	1m35.197s	+2.457s	47
16	Kvyat	1m35.225s	+2.485s	43
17	Grosjean	1m35.691s	+2.951s	42
18	Magnussen	1m35.692s	+2.952s	50
19	Russell	1m35.830s	+3.090s	51
20	Kubica	1m36.608s	+3.868s	50

WEATHER 25C, sunny

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 136.61mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 140.92mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

F1 DRIVER

NICHOLAS LATIFI replaced Russell at Williams

from the back of the grid due to additional power unit elements used

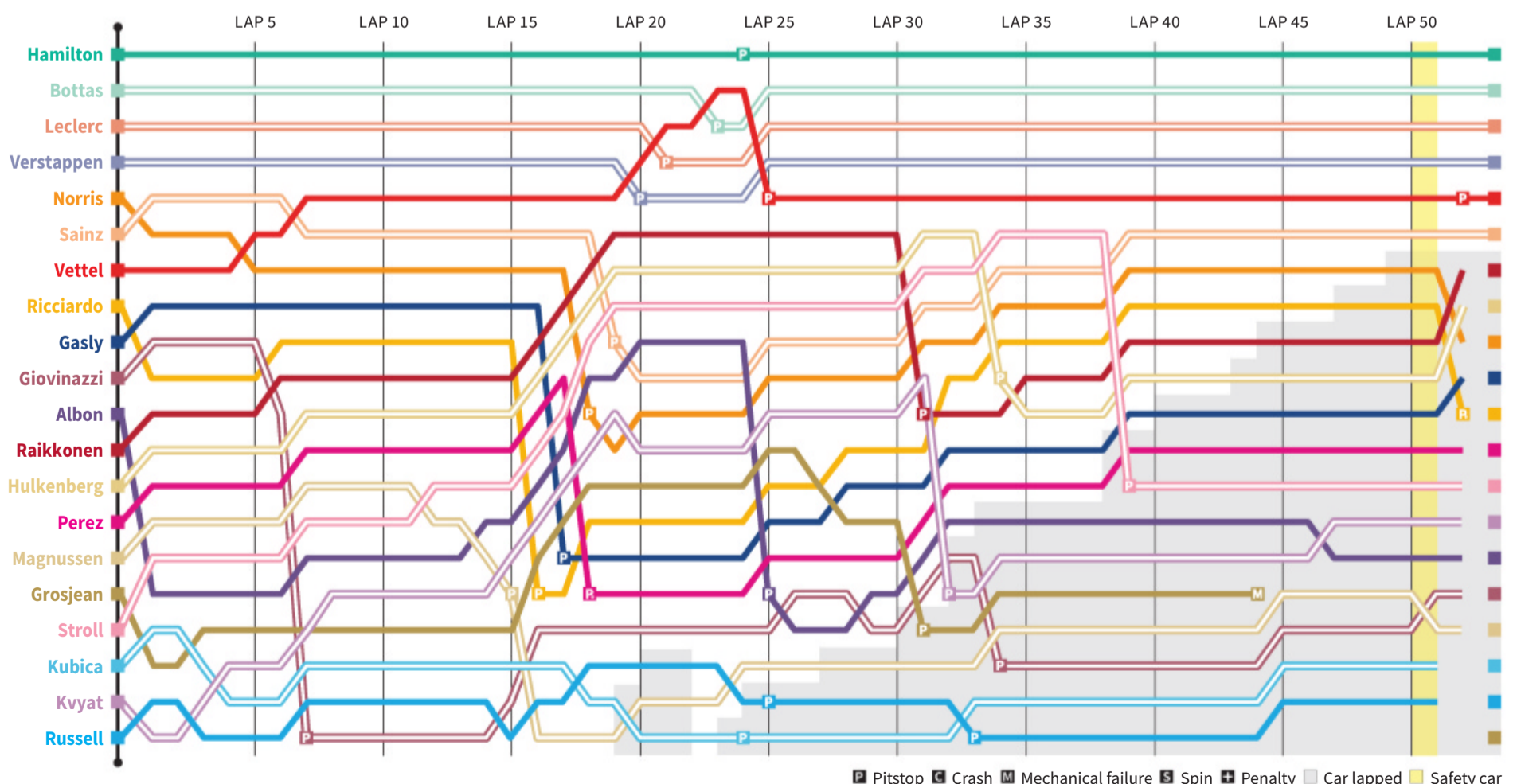
GRID PENALTIES

KVYAT Required to start from the back of the grid due to additional power unit elements used
RUSSELL Required to start

RACE PENALTIES

PEREZ Five-second penalty and one licence point for leaving the track and gaining an advantage**RICCIARDO** Five-second penalty and two licence points for failing to rejoin the track safely. Another five-second penalty and one licence point for leaving the track and gaining an advantage

LAP CHART What happened, when



PINNACLE OF PERFECTION ELUDES THE FORMULA 1 PACK IN FRANCE

No one shone brightly enough at Paul Ricard to deserve full marks in our ratings, although the McLaren drivers stand out for their double-nine score

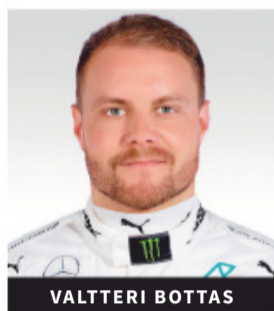
EDD STRAW

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

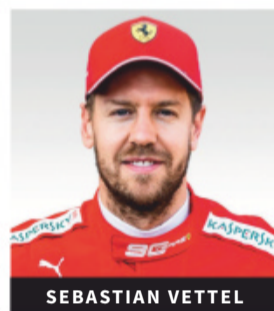
9 It wasn't until Q3 that Hamilton hit his stride, demolishing Bottas with two laps good enough for pole – but it could've been even better had he not lost the rear end at the penultimate corner to a gust of wind. Exemplary in the race, he had the advantage on Bottas for pace and tyre management.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

7 Was favourite for pole heading into Q3 before Hamilton found a new turn of pace, and struggled to adapt to the conditions on his second run. Fell out of touch with Hamilton in the race as he struggled to make the mediums last as well in the first stint, but did well to keep Leclerc at bay.

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

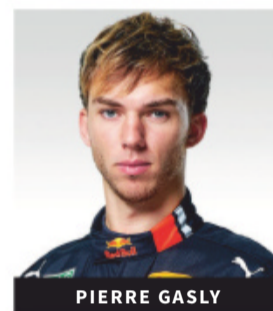
6 Didn't look entirely happy with the Ferrari and in qualifying struggled to get the nose into the corners. That cost him on his second Q3 run after a missed upshift ruined his first. Cleared the McLarens early on but his bid to run long was ruined by a lock-up, ensuring he'd finish no better than fifth.



CHARLES LECLERC

9 Needed to turn in a good Q3 performance, and did just that to put the Ferrari about where it should have been given the deficit to Mercedes. His race was lonely, but he delivered the pace needed to get out of undercut reach of Verstappen and was there to hassle Bottas when he hit trouble.

RED BULL



PIERRE GASLY

4 With Red Bull struggling, Gasly fell into the clutches of the midfield and had to use softs, unlike the top eight, to ensure he made it into Q3. His soft stint in the race was decent enough, but he was jumped by those running long and only managed to score a point thanks to Ricciardo's penalty.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

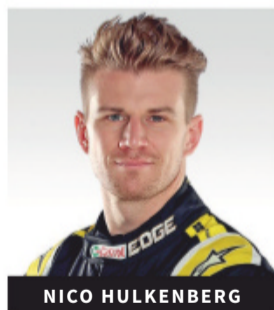
8 A tough weekend for Verstappen, who had McLarens at his heels in qualifying and on the first lap. But, while the package didn't have the pace to challenge Leclerc, he did well in the second stint to ensure he wasn't under pressure from Vettel, finishing with the best possible result.

RENAULT



DANIEL RICCIARDO

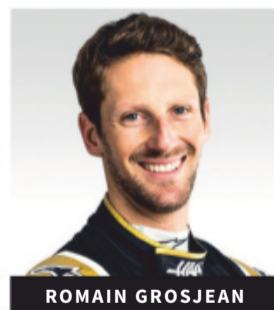
8 With the Renault engine upgrade, led the line for Renault and did a good job to make Q3 after using medium tyres in Q2. Slipping behind soft-starters Gasly and Giovinazzi cost him early on, but he was able to attack Norris late on. Finished seventh but two track limits incidents cost him.



NICO HULKENBERG

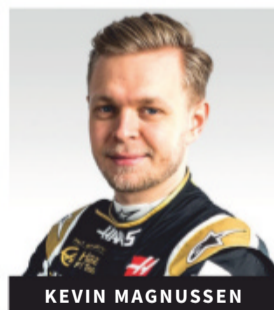
8 Didn't run the Renault engine upgrade to avoid penalties and failed to make Q3, but this was down to a rear lock-up into the chicane on his second Q2 lap caused by a brake-by-wire glitch. He drove a good race after starting on hards to end up eighth, but he couldn't find a way to get past Raikkonen.

HAAS



ROMAIN GROSJEAN

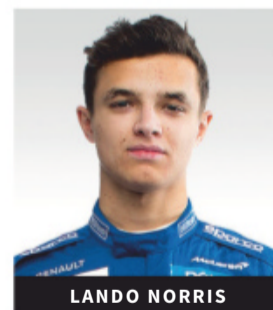
7 The weekend started badly when he flat-spotted his set of mediums in FP2 and couldn't join Magnussen in Q2 come qualifying. Considering the team's inability to make the car work, he was happy with his race performance despite being ordered to retire from 16th late on.



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

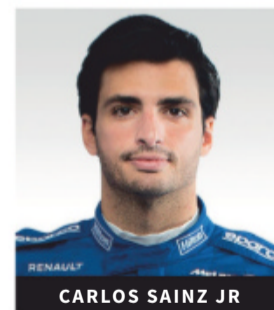
7 Making it through to Q2 was the limit of what the Haas could achieve in qualifying. No chance of points, although he didn't manage to extract quite as much from the car as Grosjean did. Picked up 16th place when Grosjean retired, but then fell back a spot with three laps to go.

MCLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

9 Impressed on Friday, and backed that up by taking 'Class B' pole, 0.104s quicker than Sainz. Slow start let Sainz past, although early in the second stint he felt he was being held up before hydraulics problems set in. Was on course to hold seventh before Ricciardo's attack forced him off track.



CARLOS SAINZ JR

9 Unusually for 2019, struggled on Friday – not helped by some set-up experiments – and ended up a tenth behind Norris in qualifying. But he nailed the start and briefly threatened to pass Verstappen on the first lap before settling into a commanding lead of 'Class B'.



RACING POINT



SERGIO PEREZ

7 Banged in a great lap in Q1 and started 14th, which should have put him at least in contention to steal a point despite his team's struggles. Turn 3 lock-up led to him cutting the track and, although he rejoined around the mandatory bollard, a five-second penalty meant no chance of points.



LANCE STROLL

6 Looked to be having a decent weekend until Perez's fast lap in Q1 left him three-quarters of a second behind. Ran long in the race after starting on the hard tyres and felt that had he been brought in earlier he would have had a chance to attack the minor points finishers. A tough weekend.

ALFA ROMEO



KIMI RAIKKONEN

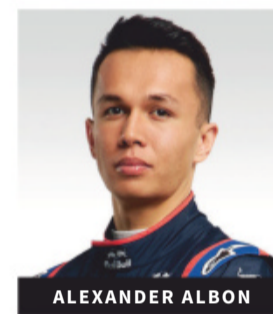
8 Looked all at sea in FP1, but made great progress through practice and qualified 12th. Was just over a tenth off Giovinazzi, but this allowed him to start on hards and run long, holding off Hulkenberg in the closing stages to finish eighth on the road. This became seventh after Ricciardo's penalty.



ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

7 Q2 performance was stellar and, although his Q3 lap was ruined by the rear snapping in the windy penultimate corner, the Alfa wasn't quick enough to do better than 10th. Was one of two drivers forced to start on softs, so had to stop too early to make it to the end without a second visit to the pits.

TORO ROSSO



ALEXANDER ALBON

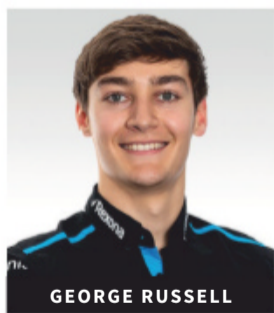
6 Despite not running Honda's 'Spec 3' upgrade, he only just missed Q3 – no bad thing given he avoided starting on softs. Race was compromised by running off track at Turn 1, then being inconvenienced by Perez. Points were unlikely, and he was ultimately overhauled by Kvyat.



DANIIL KVYAT

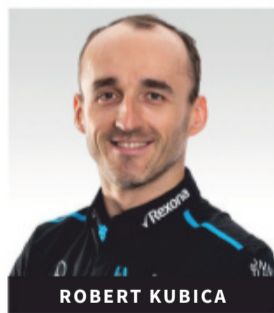
8 After taking the 'Spec 3' upgrade and the resulting penalties, qualifying was always going to be a write-off, but was surprised with his pace and almost accidentally knocked Albon out in Q1. Starting at the back, he passed the Williams and Haas drivers and later dispatched his team-mate.

WILLIAMS



GEORGE RUSSELL

7 Missed FP1, and most of FP3 to an ERS failure that also earned him a grid penalty, but showed good pace in qualifying. Made a bold attempt to pass Kubica but was forced wide and hit a marker bollard. Damage to his front wing forced a second stop to change it when running ahead of Kubica.

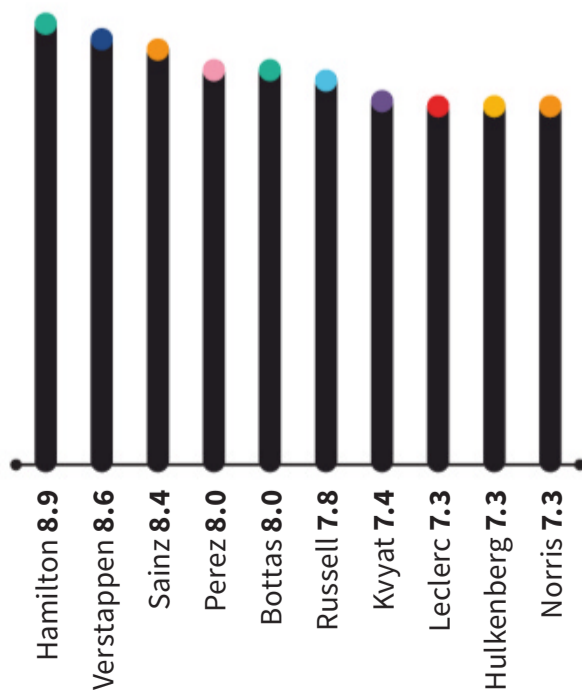


ROBERT KUBICA

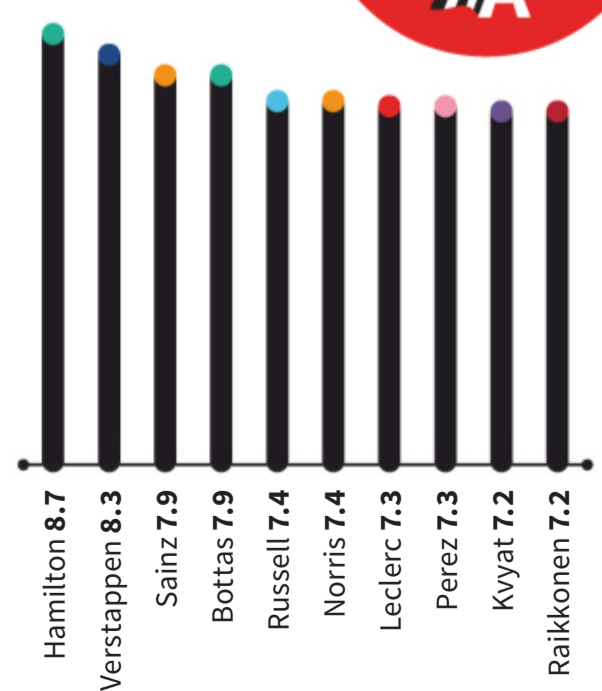
7 Was much happier with the feel of the Williams than he had been in Canada, but was still 0.416s off Russell in Q1. Had a feisty start, briefly leading Grosjean before giving Russell's move at Signes short shrift. His pace was decent in the race, despite some rear tyre management troubles.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS

AUTOSPORT'S RATING AFTER ROUND 8



READERS' RATING AFTER ROUND 8



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MICHELIN

DS AUTOMOBILES
FORMULE 1
TECHEETAH

TOTAL

DS AUTOMOBILES



J. E. VERGNE



TE

Vergne has eyes on title-double prize

Sixteen drivers arrived in Bern with a chance of winning the championship. That number has now been halved as the DS Techeetah man dominated

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

It wasn't meant to be this way. After eight different drivers had won the first eight races of the 2018-19 ABB FIA Formula E championship,

there was supposed to be a host of hopefuls heading to New York and the season finale with a shout of winning the title, the first of the electric championship's Gen2 era.

But now, there is an overwhelming favourite. Even with the usual caveats and clichés – 'anything can happen in Formula E!' – DS Techeetah driver Jean-Eric Vergne has one hand on the championship trophy after his win in the inaugural Swiss E-Prix, held in Bern last weekend.

Vergne has now amassed 130 points after taking his third win of the campaign. His nearest rival, Audi's Lucas di Grassi, is on 98, with just the two races in Brooklyn remaining and a maximum of 58 points available. Remarkably, 16 drivers had arrived in Bern within mathematical title contention. That Vergne has reduced that to eight, with most now clinging to the remotest of hopes, shows just how good he was in the de facto capital of Switzerland.

The way he went about sealing the Bern win was similar to his triumph in Monaco. On a track that was, among many other things (see page 32), very tight and difficult to overtake on, nailing qualifying was vital. And just like in the principality last month, Vergne leapt from the regularly damned group one of title contenders in qualifying and claimed the top spot on the grid (although it was actually Nissan e.dams driver Oliver Rowland who topped qualifying in Monaco before he lost out to a grid penalty).

Vergne was unstoppable in group one. Despite running towards the rear of the five-car train (but not at the back after he had put in a firm pass on Robin Frijns during his final warm-up lap) he stormed to the top of the group and was only deposed by Mitch Evans in the final overall group >>

NO LIKELY RETURN TO BERN



BAGNALL

Formula E is used to squeezing itself into the confines of a city, but the new track at Bern was special and challenging in its own unique ways.

For a start, there was an indoor paddock at the BernExpo complex, but this was 800m from the pitlane. To get the cars to the track for each session, the teams either had their drivers trundle down to the remote pitlane – which featured smaller satellite tent garages to house engineering and repair equipment – at a reduced speed or they were pushed by the mechanics. DS Techeetah was the sole team to take this latter approach ahead of the race, “because every bit of energy you can save, you try to”, explained team boss Mark Preston. Once out of the BernExpo complex, the cars had to cross a live road once traffic – including trams – had been temporarily halted.

With the cars taken care of, then came the people, with varying methods applied around the squads. Some hired vans or small trucks, loaded the mechanics in the back and drove down, while others had

bikes (electric and regular) or scooters (again, high and low tech were on display), with some team members simply walking. “It created a few headaches,” said Jaguar team boss James Barclay. “But you just had to get your planning right.”

With a Swiss race missing from next season’s calendar, it appears unlikely that FE will return to Bern. This thinking is reinforced by the local promoter’s decision to rebrand the race as the Swiss E-Prix, rather than last year’s Zurich E-Prix, so it can be used elsewhere in the future.

It would be a shame to lose the layout, though. The steeply undulating 14-turn course was a riveting challenge for the drivers – Lucas di Grassi described it as “akin to Oulton Park and Macau and Pau”.

But the race was not universally popular with local residents. Although Formula E calculated that 130,000 people visited on race day, a small protest ahead of the event caused considerable damage to the track’s signage. The build also ran late, forcing Friday’s shakedown session to be delayed.



SBLOXHAM



Massa is first in a train of cars cutting the chicane to avoid first-lap crash chaos

qualifying reckoning. In superpole he went one better, claiming first place with a 1m18.813s. So far, so simple.

But it was anything but easy in the race. Although, considering how chaotic things got at the first corner, Vergne’s start was straightforward. He shot off the line faster than Evans, who had to see off the advances of home hero Sebastien Buemi on the run to the super-tight Turns 12-14 chicane complex, which formed the first corners of the race with FE again employing an offset start/finish line arrangement.

After being bested by Evans at the first corner, Buemi appeared to briefly lose momentum going through the second part



Vergne waits ahead of Evans in the pitlane during the race’s red-flag period



BAGNALL

of the chicane and behind him all hell broke loose. Mahindra Racing's Pascal Wehrlein, Maximilian Gunther (Dragon Racing) and Envision Virgin Racing driver Sam Bird were all in close formation fighting over fourth, and whatever went on there ended with Wehrlein buried in the barriers, his car blocking the track for the pack behind.

In the background to this, Jerome d'Ambrosio (Mahindra) careered into the back of Robin Frijns and tipped the second Virgin driver around, leaving him pointing the wrong way as the rear of the field charged towards the first corner.

Vergne, Evans and Buemi were clear, but with the track effectively blocked on both

sides at the chicane it seemed inevitable that the red flags would fly. They did, but not before a train of lucky cars headed by Felipe Massa and including title contenders di Grassi and Antonio Felix da Costa had squeezed between their stationary rivals, cut the chicane (taking care to stop in turn to avoid a penalty) and leaped up the order.

They had made it all the way down the track's hill to the Turn 4 left that housed the podium before the race was stopped for over 40 minutes. The delay was to allow Wehrlein and co the chance to escape and return to the pits for repairs and to remove Frijns' machine, the rear end of which was too badly damaged for him to continue.

The FIA opted to reset the order to the starting grid, using the rule that states 'the order will be taken at the last point at which it was possible to determine the position of all cars', which in this case was the start. This, as will become clear later, incensed di Grassi and others, but allowed Wehrlein, Gunther and Bird the chance to have another go, this time behind the safety car.

When the race *finally* got properly under way, Vergne attempted to pull clear of Evans. But he could not shake off the Jaguar driver. As the top two kept Buemi at bay with a small advantage, Evans mounted his charge. In the early stages, he harried Vergne, looking to the outside of the deceptively tricky fast downhill right of Turn 3 – where Bird brilliantly passed Gunther on lap 10 of what would be a 31-lap race – on more than one occasion. The

left-hand Turn 9 at the end of the run from the attack mode activation straight was also a popular passing place, and one where many drivers had had trouble in practice and qualifying. In fact, the track's tricky nature led to an extraordinary number of lock-ups around the 1.7-mile course throughout the day.

On lap 12, Evans rolled the dice and took his first attack mode activation. With the bare minimum of time lost due to the zone being placed on a straight, he was all over Vergne using the 225kW mode. At Turn 3 and the long left-hand climb of Turn 6 on the next tour he pushed the leader hard, but was rebuffed. The pair made the slightest of contacts at Turn 7 – all very FE, and harmless really – before Vergne was able to shoot into the attack mode zone himself and pull slightly clear with the power settings levelled. Wehrlein stopping with a lack of drive and triggering a full course yellow period paused the fight.

But it wasn't over. Evans, who seemed to have a slight edge on energy usage throughout, again went on the offensive by taking his second attack mode on lap 17, but in similar spirited fashion to his early driving, Vergne's defence held when his rival charged again down the hill into Turn 3 and again on the climb. Like before, Vergne was able to make it to the attack mode zone just ahead and negate Evans' advantage.

By this stage, Buemi and Bird had closed in on the leaders, making it a four-way scrap for the win. But with >>>



BAGNALL

IN THE HEADLINES



SBLOXHAM

DA COSTA GETS REAL

Another driver having “to be realistic” about their title prospects is Antonio Felix da Costa. The BMW Andretti driver (above) qualified 20th, and felt Lucas di Grassi backing up the group one pack meant he wasn’t fully prepared for his 250kW flying effort. From the back, he raced well to 12th, but is now looking towards securing third in the championship instead of a maiden title.

UNLUCKY 13 FOR ROWLAND

Oliver Rowland failed to finish after he ran wide and clipped a barrier late-on, damaging the suspension on his Nissan e.dams car and forcing his retirement. The British driver had been running 13th, where he had qualified.

BIRD’S UPBEAT

Sam Bird’s late slip may have cost him fourth on the road, but the Envision Virgin Racing driver was nevertheless pleased with his performance in Bern. Following a run of frustrating results that led to him slipping out of realistic title contention, he rebounded last weekend to reach superpole and take the fastest-lap point, even if he is now mathematically out of the hunt.

FRIJNS PUNTED OUT

Robin Frijns has been a regular group one contender since his Paris win, but ninth on the grid in Bern meant he was vulnerable in the pack, and his race was over well before the first corner thanks to Jerome d’Ambrosio, the Mahindra Racing driver picking up a drivethrough penalty for his punt.

PENALTIES APLENTY

Jose Maria Lopez was disqualified from 13th for going over 200kW, and da Costa was given a five-second penalty for briefly speeding during the FCY, although he remained 12th with Lopez’s DQ. Edoardo Mortara was handed a five-place grid drop for the next race after clattering into Alexander Sims. Mortara retired soon after the incident.

Vergne’s performance displaying all the hallmarks of his defence-led masterclasses in Punta del Este and Paris last season, as well as his win in Monaco last month, it seemed the reigning champion would hold on.

Then came the rain. It had looked as if Bern would avoid being drenched before the chequered flag flew – and it would have done were it not for the red flag – but the final three laps were thrilling. With the eastern half of the track soaked and the rest slippery on the problematic all-weather FE tyres, any slip from Vergne would give Evans the chance to and steal the win.

The leaders slipped and wrestled – Bird went deep at Turn 9 and gifted Andre Lotterer fourth – but Vergne held on despite a nail-bitingly close run to the line. He won by just 0.160 seconds ahead of Evans and Buemi, with Lotterer leading Bird and Gunther home.

“The team helped me massively, they did a good job,” said Vergne. “They gave me a fantastic car with the preparation beforehand. The car they gave me today was amazing – in qualifying and the race.”

But last Saturday’s display is just part of the reason Vergne’s standings lead is now so commanding. The results of his nearest rivals did the rest.

Di Grassi held the momentum coming to Bern after his Berlin triumph on Audi’s home turf. But things went disastrously for the 2016/17 champion in qualifying. At the head of the train in group one, he “underestimated” how bad the track would be and found himself gripless, only above da Costa in the group one order and down in 19th on the grid.

Although he was able to skip through the first corner chaos, the FIA’s call to reset the order to the grid placings meant he had a tough task in the race. But, perhaps channeling the fury he, Massa and da Costa had displayed to the FIA officials in the pitlane when news of the reset order came through, he fought his way up to 10th at the flag with a series of impressive passes. Only Massa’s robust defence in the rain on

STALEY



Winner last time out di Grassi didn’t have a good event, but is still runner-up in the points

the final lap – where di Grassi was squeezed towards the outside wall approaching Turn 9 – stopped him gaining another point.

But in the end, di Grassi was bumped up the order, as a post-race penalty boosted Vergne further still and deflated Lotterer’s title charge. Lotterer hadn’t quite been able to match his team-mate in qualifying and had started eighth on the grid, which is still a solid result from group one. But that meant he was caught up in the first-corner melee – only able to see “Sam Bird’s ass, that was my view!” – and he sustained minor front-end damage.

With the usual red flag procedure of heading to the pitlane in his mind once he’d been able to reverse out of Bird’s posterior, Lotterer came in. But the track blockage meant the leaders and di Grassi’s soon to be not so merry band of chicane-cutters had in fact been told to stop at the startline, only moving to the pits when more of the first-corner cars were clear.

DS Techeetah told Lotterer to leave the pits and rejoin the pack, even though that meant passing the red light at the pitlane



Vergne’s winning margin over Evans was just 0.160 seconds

SBLOXHAM

Lotterer broke his nose on
"Sam Bird's ass", battled back,
but then copped a penalty



BATHIE

exit. He did so and copped a 22s post-race penalty as a result, dropping him from fourth to 14th in the final results – elevating many of those behind him on the road – and from second in the standings and a 32-point gap to Vergne to fourth and 44 points adrift.

It left Lotterer downbeat after he'd also produced a battling display to rise up the order and pressure Bird into his late mistake.

Although Vergne's position seems so well set in the standings, it is indeed foolish to write off anybody in FE. After all, Audi produced a memorable comeback to deprive Techeetah of the teams' title in the last campaign. "From our point of view, we go to New York on maximum attack," said team boss Allan McNish. "That's simply it – there's no other option."

Even Vergne is approaching the finale with an attitude that nothing is done yet, although he does concede that winning a double title would be "the biggest achievement of my career".

"It's a good lead," he said. "It's bigger than last year, but I'm not thinking about it too much."

If only everyone else could take that approach now that what had once been a title battle royale has become stunted and points to a likely second consecutive Vergne coronation. ❄️

RESULTS ROUND 11/12, BERN (CHE), 22 JUNE (31 LAPS – 53.314 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Techeetah / DSE-Tense FE19	1h25m26.873s
2	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar / Jaguar I-TYPE 3	+0.160s
3	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Nissan e.dams / Nissan IM01	+0.720s
4	Sam Bird (GBR)	Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE05	+2.996s
5	Maximilian Gunther (DEU)	Dragon Racing / Penske EV-3	+4.625s
6	Daniel Abt (DEU)	Audi Sport Abt / Audi e-tron FE05	+6.930s
7	Alex Lynn (GBR)	Jaguar / Jaguar I-TYPE 3	+9.972s
8	Felipe Massa (BRA)	Venturi / Venturi VFE-05	+12.310s
9	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Audi Sport Abt / Audi e-tron FE05	+13.073s
10	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	HWA / Venturi VFE-05	+13.386s
11	Alexander Sims (GBR)	BMW / BMW iFE.18	+14.714s
12	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	BMW / BMW iFE.18	+18.917s
13	Jerome d'Ambrosio (BEL)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M5Electro	+21.872s
14	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	DS Techeetah / DSE-Tense FE19	+23.106s
15	Tom Dillmann (FRA)	NIO / NIO 004	+40.084s
16	Oliver Turvey (GBR)	NIO / NIO 004	+46.622s
17	Gary Paffett (GBR)	HWA / Venturi VFE-05	+1m22.512s
EX	Jose Maria Lopez (ARG)	Dragon Racing / Penske EV-3	+14.271s
R	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Nissan e.dams / Nissan IM01	21 laps-suspension
R	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M5Electro	11 laps-lost drive
R	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Venturi / Venturi VFE-05	5 laps-accident damage
R	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE05	0 laps-accident damage

Winner's average speed 37.435mph. **Fastest lap** da Costa 1m21.240s, 75.721mph.

SUPERPOLE 1 Vergne 1m18.813s; 2 Evans 1m19.120s; 3 Buemi 1m19.164s; 4 Wehrlein 1m19.168s; 5 Gunther 1m19.371s; 6 Bird 1m19.536s.

QUALIFYING 1 Evans 1m18.897s; 2 Vergne 1m19.232s; 3 Wehrlein 1m19.265s; 4 Buemi 1m19.310s; 5 Gunther 1m19.325s; 6 Bird 1m19.435s; 7 Abt 1m19.554s; 8 Lotterer 1m19.585s; 9 Frijns 1m19.591s; 10 Lynn 1m19.608s; 11 d'Ambrosio 1m19.613s; 12 Massa 1m19.638s; 13 Rowland 1m19.670s; 14 Lopez 1m19.714s; 15 Vandoorne 1m19.719s; 16 Paffett 1m19.804s; 17 Sims 1m19.908s; 18 Mortara 1m20.023s; 19 di Grassi 1m20.034s; 20 da Costa 1m20.081s; 21 Dillmann 1m20.506s; 22 Turvey 1m20.551s.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Vergne 130; 2 di Grassi 98; 3 Evans 87; 4 Lotterer 86; 5 da Costa 82; 6 Frijns 81; 7 Buemi 76; 8 Abt 75; 9 Bird 69; 10 d'Ambrosio 65.

NEXT REPORT

NEW YORK
18 JULY ISSUE

The Big Apple hosts Formula E's 2018-19 season finale – can Jean-Eric Vergne make history by lifting a second crown in succession?

Rossi sends Penske back to the drawing board

Andretti Autosport currently has a clear edge at road circuits, as Alexander Rossi proved with a dominant win

DAVID MALSHER

PHOTOGRAPHY 

Team Penske is testing at Mid-Ohio next week – and it's just as well, because it appears there is much work to be done by the team on both its road and street-course packages.

While Will Power deserved to win at Austin in March but lost out to Colton Herta, his pole and dominance of the first two thirds of that race may now be seen as a genius driver at work, rather than a sign of strength by the team. The Penske Dallara-Chevrolests weren't on the pace at Barber Motorsports Park in April, were thoroughly trounced at Long Beach a week later by Alexander Rossi and Andretti Autosport – and then the same thing happened again last weekend at Road America.

In a race with no yellows, Rossi's advantage was seen to its full extent. He passed the chequered flag more than 28 seconds ahead of Power, which meant he was almost 0.5s per lap faster over 55 laps of the beautiful and demanding 4.014-mile track just outside Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin.

The warning signs were there in qualifying. Power was third on the grid, 0.38s from pole, with team-mate Josef Newgarden starting beside him but a further 0.23s in arrears. Rookie sensation 19-year-

old Herta had taken pole in the Harding Steinbrenner Racing Dallara-Honda, which made him the youngest pole-winner in IndyCar history. Alongside him was semi-team-mate Rossi, with whom he shares technical information, as HSR utilises prominent Andretti staff.

Had Ryan Hunter-Reay not been blocked on his first flyer in qualifying and then made an error on his second, and had Marco Andretti not lost two tenths at one corner on his quali run, there could have been three AA cars and one semi-AA car in the Firestone Fast Six. Michael Andretti's team had an edge on road and street courses last year, and appears to have stretched its advantage in 2019.

Naturally, no one within the squad will give away the secret, but from the outside Andretti cars appear phenomenally forgiving, for no matter how often Rossi and Herta brutalised their steeds over kerbs through practice and qualifying, and no matter what angle they landed, they could keep the throttle down and rescue them without straying into the scenery. Chip Ganassi Racing's Scott Dixon appeared to try a similar approach and twice on Friday ended up well off course. By qualifying, he had found a

decent set-up – though not one that would allow him to trouble the top two – but after setting a time that would have allowed him to graduate from Q1, his Honda expired, and so he was consigned to 12th on the grid. His troubles wouldn't end there.

Rossi was not to be denied at the start, muscling around the outside of Herta at Turn 1, staving him off through Turn 2 and into 3, and then pulling clear down to Turn 5. Had Harding Steinbrenner not made the odd (but not unique) choice of starting Herta on used reds, when Firestone's softer alternate compound had already proven to be less durable than a year earlier and far less durable than the primary, this drop to second would not have been so damaging. However, sliding around in the wake of Rossi accelerated Herta's tyre degradation and, after initially staying within two seconds of the leader and pulling five seconds ahead of third-placed Power, Herta started falling back into the clutches of the Penske driver.

On lap 11, Rossi's lead over Herta was out to eight seconds, and Power was within a second of the Harding Steinbrenner car. Into lap 13, Power was sizing up his prey and, down to the tight left-handed Turn 5





Rossi was in a class of his own, with a winning margin of almost half a minute

at the bottom of the hill, he pulled far enough ahead on the outside that he could squeeze Herta onto the inside kerb to stop the rookie from deliberately running him out wide. Second changed hands.

Herta made his first stop next time by, as did Newgarden and the third Penske of Simon Pagenaud, who had qualified only 16th but had made fine progress since the start to climb to seventh, aided by Hunter-Reay punting Dixon into a spin at Turn 5 on the opening lap. Sadly Herta's stop was calamitous, the fuel nozzle not initially engaging with the buckeye, and he wound up ninth once everyone had stopped.

Newgarden was the main beneficiary from that first round of stops. He had fallen behind both Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing cars at the start, but deposed Takuma Sato at the start of lap two. (The Japanese driver's loss of momentum opened the door for James Hinchcliffe to send his Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports Dallara-Honda down the inside at Turn 3, where the pair rubbed and Sato ended up on the grass on the outside and fell to 12th.) But Newgarden had found Rahal a tougher nut to crack. However, by stopping a lap earlier than the RLLR car – resplendent in

a throwback livery to dad Bobby Rahal's 1994 colour-scheme – and then delivering a very strong out lap, Newgarden was right on Rahal's tail and on warm tyres when the RLLR car emerged from pitlane. Down into Turn 3, Rahal had no choice but to make way for the 2017 champion. He lost out to Hinchcliffe, too, who had stopped two laps earlier and was now into fourth.

Behind this quintet, a great fight was brewing, as Herta, pursued by the Ganassi cars of Felix Rosenqvist and the recovering Dixon, as well as Hunter-Reay (all of whom had started on blacks but were now on the red alternates) was closing in on sixth-placed Pagenaud. On lap 21, Herta made his move, almost duplicating the one performed on him by Power. He braked later, squeezed Pagenaud onto the inside kerb, but the steering wheel appeared to slip out of Simon's hand and he went straight on into the run-off on the exit of the turn, pushing Herta with him. Rosenqvist and Dixon delightedly swept past the pair of them, to grab sixth and seventh places.

Yet the irrepressible Herta was back past Dixon within five laps as the reigning champion's reds started to give up, and both of these two would jump Rosenqvist

at the next round of stops.

Up front, Rossi's lead had reached almost 20s after those second stops, a gap accentuated slightly by Power having to take a defensive line when Newgarden tried to do what he had done to Rahal earlier and jump him by pitting a lap earlier. Newgarden was feisty, but Power was flawless on cold tyres, even when an overboost penalty through the Carousel allowed Newgarden to start drawing alongside into Canada Corner, Turn 12. Once Power's rubber warmed up, he set his fastest lap of the race and pulled a 2-3s gap that he maintained to the end.

The order among the frontrunners remained static until the next round of stops, with Rossi out in his own world, Power clear of Newgarden, who in turn was keeping Hinchcliffe and Rahal at bay. Herta also joined that train pursued by the Ganassi cars of Dixon and Rosenqvist, along with Pagenaud and Hunter-Reay.

At the third round of stops, Rahal stayed out a lap longer than the four cars ahead and he made it work: with a strong in-lap and a great stop, he emerged ahead of Hinchcliffe. Herta had also stayed out an extra lap and he too came out ahead of the Arrow SPM car, but it was close, and Hinchcliffe's >>

Super-rookie Herta started from pole, but couldn't hold on to the place for long



ROSSI'S 2020 VISION

For now, Alexander Rossi is set to become a free agent at season's end, and he had attracted the attention of Roger Penske long before The Captain hired him as third driver in his IMSA programme for the endurance races.

Originally the assumption was that he would replace Simon Pagenaud, who had disappointed for 14 months, but then the Frenchman won the Indianapolis 500 by a nanosecond – from Rossi. That probably saved Pagenaud from being released or consigned to Acura sportscars, and therefore should Penske still wish to grab Rossi, it will mean running four cars next year.

His current boss Michael Andretti is eager to retain Rossi, but the NAPA sponsorship

on the #27 car is the least lucrative of the primary backers on the four Andretti cars, and it's unclear whether Honda – big fans of Rossi – can bridge that shortfall.

Still, given that Rossi left the Penske cars in his dust at Road America, as he did at Long Beach in April, Autosport asked him if this latest result would enter his considerations for 2020. He replied: "I have no considerations." None whatsoever? "No," came the response.

Autosport then asked him if the decision was in someone else's hands, and he smiled and said: "It's in God's hands." Asked if that god was Roger Penske, Rossi smiled and shook his head.

warm tyres allowed him to dive inside Herta at Turn 3 to reclaim fifth. Not for long though: Herta was the only driver in the top eight to grab fresh reds for this final stint, and so his grip (temporarily) was superior and he passed Hinchcliffe on lap 45 to take fifth, and move onto Rahal's tail.

Rahal was simultaneously attacking Newgarden and trying to defend from the green-and-white challenger in his mirrors, and under braking for Turn 5 on lap 47, he switched from the inside to the middle of the track, forcing Herta on his outside to skate over the flat but slippery kerbing and run long, locking his wheels. That reduced the life expectancy of his 'reds' and, although Herta moved back onto Rahal's gearbox within a couple of laps, he fell away again, towards the Hinchcliffe-Dixon duel for sixth.

At the start of the penultimate lap, Herta ran wide out of Turn 1, and Hinchcliffe (with only six seconds of push-to-pass) got by him into Turn 3. Herta, with 13s of precious P2P left, retook his rival down to Turn 5 on the outside, and an opportunistic Dixon followed him through to snatch sixth. Such was Hinchcliffe's loss of momentum on the inside line that up the short stretch to Turn 6 Rosenqvist blasted past him too.

Dixon's used primaries weren't in great shape, but were still good enough to allow him to pressure Herta, who was now out of push-to-pass, as well as on lifeless rubber. When the HSR car ran wide out of the final turn at the end of lap 54, Dixon drafted and boosted past to claim fifth on the last lap. Herta then gamely held off Rosenqvist, but could not carry enough momentum through Turns 1 and 3, and the second Ganassi car slipped by on the run down to Turn 5.

Still Herta's pain wasn't over, as he





MILLER

ran wide at Turn 11 to allow Hinchcliffe through to claim seventh.

Herta could console himself a little by knowing he had beaten one Penske – Pagnaud was also on reds in that final stint and trailed home 6s in arrears – but the Californian’s fastest lap of the race was 1s faster than that of runner-up Power. At the very least, a podium finish had slipped away. But had Herta run fresh alternate compound tyres in the first stint and then primaries for the rest of the race, which was clearly the right way to go, and even had he not suffered that disastrous first pitstop, it’s hard to imagine he could have beaten Rossi.

At least for him that can remain an imponderable. For the Penske drivers, the reality is stark.

“I actually never saw [Rossi],” said Power. “It felt like I was in my own race with Josef. That’s all we had. It was a very clean day for us – good start, no mistakes, a reasonable car... If Alex wasn’t in the race, I would have said I had a good car. But he was in the race.”

And he now lies just seven points behind championship leader Newgarden. And four of the remaining races are on road or street courses. And one of those, the finale at Laguna Seca, is worth double points. Team Penske is well aware there is work to do. 🏆

NEXT REPORT

TORONTO 18 JULY ISSUE

Can Rossi maintain his momentum and finally overtake Newgarden at the top of the standings?



BURKE

Rahal’s car harked back to his dad’s classic livery from 1994

RESULTS ROUND 9/16, ROAD AMERICA (USA), 23 JUNE (55 LAPS – 220.770 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	1h39m40.4743s
2	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+28.4391s
3	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+31.8443s
4	Graham Rahal (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+33.4094s
5	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+39.1173s
6	Felix Rosenqvist (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+41.7825s
7	James Hinchcliffe (CAN)	Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports / Dallara-Honda	+45.5520s
8	Colton Herta (USA)	Harding Steinbrenner Racing / Dallara-Honda	+47.6935s
9	Simon Pagnaud (FRA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+53.8945s
10	Takuma Sato (JPN)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+58.9047s
11	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+1m01.0878s
12	Sebastien Bourdais (FRA)	Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser Sullivan / Dallara-Honda	+1m03.9724s
13	Marcus Ericsson (SWE)	Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports / Dallara-Honda	+1m17.7859s
14	Spencer Pigot (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1m19.6032s
15	Jack Harvey (GBR)	Meyer Shank Racing with Arrow SPM / Dallara-Honda	+1m42.2456s
16	Max Chilton (GBR)	Carlin / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1m46.5309s
17	Patricio O’Ward (MEX)	Carlin / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
18	Zach Veatch (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
19	Santino Ferrucci (USA)	Dale Coyne Racing / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
20	Matheus Leist (BRA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
21	Tony Kanaan (BRA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
22	Ed Jones (GBR)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
23	Marco Andretti (USA)	Andretti Herta Autosport / Dallara-Honda	18 laps-mechanical

Winner’s average speed 132.894mph. **Fastest lap** Herta 1m45.0774s, 137.521mph.

Q3 1 Herta 1m42.9920s; 2 Rossi 1m43.1693s; 3 Power 1m43.3749s; 4 Newgarden 1m43.6036s; 5 Rahal 1m43.8076s; 6 Sato 1m43.8790s.

Q2 Herta 1m42.6546s; Rossi 1m42.8437s; Newgarden 1m43.0069s; Power 1m43.1357s; Sato 1m43.2292s; Rahal 1m43.2373s; 7 Bourdais 1m43.2989s; 8 Pigot 1m43.3083s; 9 Hinchcliffe 1m43.3814s; 10 Andretti 1m43.3945s; 11 Jones 1m43.5162s; 12 Dixon no time.

Q1 – GROUP 1 Rossi 1m42.4586s; Power 1m42.9432s; Newgarden 1m43.1285s; Jones 1m43.2421s; Hinchcliffe 1m43.4428s; Andretti 1m43.4452s; 14 Veatch 1m43.4488s; 16 Pagnaud 1m43.4764s;

18 Rosenqvist 1m43.5038s; 20 Leist 1m43.8570s; 22 Chilton 1m43.8745s; 23 Kanaan 1m44.4183s.

Q1 – GROUP 2 Herta 1m42.4555s; Sato 1m43.1804s; Pigot 1m43.2338s; Bourdais 1m43.3078s; Dixon 1m43.3634s; Rahal 1m43.3877s; 13 O’Ward 1m43.6061s; 15 Hunter-Reay 1m43.6980s; 17 Ericsson 1m43.8913s; 19 Harvey 1m44.6179s; 21 Ferrucci 1m49.3060s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Newgarden 402; 2 Rossi 395; 3 Pagnaud 341; 4 Dixon 308; 5 Power 294; 6 Sato 292; 7 Hunter-Reay 271; 8 Rahal 244; 9 Hinchcliffe 216; 10 Rosenqvist 209.



Nyck's new clothes shorten title odds

FORMULA 2
PAUL RICARD (FRA)
22-23 JUNE
ROUND 5/12

Who would have thought that a set of accidentally discarded overalls might have such a profound effect on the shape of the Formula 2 championship?

After the second round of the season in Baku, ART Grand Prix driver Nyck de Vries learned that his laundry bag had inadvertently been deposited in the bin. For Barcelona and Monaco he had to borrow FIA Formula 3 racer David Beckmann's overalls, bedecked in different sponsors and the wrong national flag (Beckmann's German flag as opposed to de Vries's Dutch colours), making for an unusual podium ceremony – more than once, as it turned out. A fifth place, back-to-back wins and a seventh since that wardrobe malfunction had enabled de Vries to start a title challenge before heading to France.

Although de Vries insisted that he isn't superstitious, in his first race weekend since Baku with his own suit he struggled to “extract the maximum from the package” in qualifying and started fourth. Had he lost the magic touch?

But there's an air of certainty around the Dutchman at the moment. Driving for the first time in a race since a heavy crash ended his Le Mans 24 Hours a week earlier, he got

a demon start and leapt into the lead. After an early red flag – caused by Sean Gelael cannoning into the side of his Prema team-mate Mick Schumacher on the first lap – the only real question for de Vries came at the pitstops when he lost the lead to an undercut from Jack Aitken. But de Vries dispatched Aitken at Turn 8 on his out-lap.

“It was an important point in the race to take over control quickly,” he said.

From there on in it was a question of consolidation for the leader as battles erupted behind. Sergio Sette Camara looked to be on the right track after a tricky start to the season, but after starting from pole he fell behind de Vries and Aitken. He recovered second on the penultimate lap to score valuable points for DAMS.

Guan Yu Zhou continued to live up to his tag as the best rookie of the season, taking fourth after qualifying second in his Virtuosi Racing-prepared car. His hapless team-mate Luca Ghiotto – describing his season as “like a comedy film” – started 14th and led a portion of the race on the hard compound tyre. Then on the softs his steering went heavy and he was involved in a crash with Juan Manuel Correa, which led to a second successive weekend devoid of points. He now trails de Vries by 54, despite arguably being the fastest driver of 2019.

Zhou's fellow Renault Formula 1 junior Anthoine Hubert has been as impressive as Zhou in the rookie stakes. He drives for an improving Arden team, which is still struggling for pace in qualifying and with the accuracy and speed of its pitstops.





De Vries celebrates feature race glory



A third podium finish in as many meetings for Zhou

RESULTS ROUND 5/12, PAUL RICARD (FRA), 22-23 JUNE RACE 1 (30 LAPS – 108.941 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	ART Grand Prix	1h15m35.425s
2	Sergio Sette Camara (BRA)	DAMS	+8.388s
3	Jack Aitken (GBR)	Campos Racing	+9.775s
4	Guanyu Zhou (CHN)	Virtuosi Racing	+20.153s
5	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	DAMS	+22.599s
6	Jordan King (GBR)	MP Motorsport	+24.131s
7	Juan Manuel Correa (USA)	Sauber Junior Team by Charouz	+28.668s
8	Anthoine Hubert (FRA)	Arden	+29.959s
9	Nobuharu Matsushita (JPN)	Carlin	+32.820s
10	Giuliano Alesi (FRA)	Trident	+39.757s
11	Tatiana Calderon (COL)	Arden	+1m19.371s
12	Mahaveer Raghunathan (IND)	MP Motorsport	-1 lap
R	Luca Ghiotto (ITA)	Virtuosi Racing	24 laps-accident
NC	Louis Deletraz (CHE)	Carlin	22 laps-master switch overheated
R	Callum Ilott (GBR)	Sauber Junior Team by Charouz	13 laps-accident
R	Dorian Boccia (FRA)	Campos Racing	1 lap-electrics
R	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Prema Racing	0 laps-accident
R	Sean Gelael (IDN)	Prema Racing	0 laps-accident
R	Ralph Boschung (CHE)	Trident	0 laps-stall
R	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	ART Grand Prix	0 laps-stall

Winner's average speed 86.472mph. Fastest lap de Vries 1m44.584s, 124.953mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Camara 1m43.024s; 2 Zhou 1m43.344s; 3 Aitken 1m43.401s; 4 de Vries 1m43.453s; 5 Ilott 1m43.565s; 6 Latifi 1m43.650s; 7 Matsushita 1m43.763s; 8 Schumacher 1m43.768s; 9 Boccia 1m43.812s; 10 Gelael 1m43.895s; 11 Deletraz 1m44.025s; 12 Correa 1m44.120s; 13 Boschung 1m44.371s; 14 Ghiotto 1m43.983s (three-place penalty for causing a collision in the previous race); 15 Hubert 1m44.612s; 16 King 1m44.882s; 17 Calderon 1m47.006s; 18 Raghunathan 1m48.374s (three-place penalty for leaving the track and gaining an advantage in the previous race); 19 Mazepin; 20 Alesi (required to start from the pitlane for causing a collision).

RACE 2 (21 LAPS – 76.271 MILES)

GRID FOR RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1, with top eight finishers reversed.

1 Hubert 37m19.524s; 2 Correa +2.202s; 3 Zhou +4.220s; 4 Aitken +6.131s; 5 Camara +7.788s; 6 Latifi +10.795s; 7 Deletraz +13.122s; 8 Ilott +15.407s; 9 Matsushita +16.200s; 10 de Vries +17.688s; 11 King +21.094s; 12 Ghiotto +26.254s; 13 Boccia +27.068s; 14 Alesi +31.977s; 15 Boschung +33.601s; 16 Mazepin +33.853s; 17 Gelael +34.431s; 18 Raghunathan +1m13.453s; 19 Calderon -3 laps; R Schumacher 14 laps-rear mechanical.

Winner's average speed 122.604mph. Fastest lap Matsushita 1m44.702s, 124.813mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 de Vries 121; 2 Latifi 109; 3 Aitken 85; 4 Camara 80; 5 Zhou 76; 6 Ghiotto 67; 7 Hubert 65; 8 Correa 36; 9 Deletraz 36; 10 King 34.



For the second round in succession, Hubert won the sprint race

Hubert was 18th in practice and 15th in qualifying after a water pump broke, but drove up to eighth in the feature to be on pole for the reversed-grid race.

Aitken ran him close early on but, once Correa attacked and passed Aitken, Hubert was able to build a gap to win his home event and a second successive sprint race following his Monaco success. It means he sits a brilliant seventh in the points. By comparison, his team-mate Tatiana Calderon is yet to score. While she has had bad luck, reigning GP3 champion Hubert has been exceptional.

Behind him, Correa held on for the Sauber Junior Team's best result of the season ahead of Zhou, who took a third podium in as many weekends.

Aitken, whose 2018 woes looks well behind him with new team Campos, was fourth and is 36 points behind de Vries in third, while Sette Camara fought off DAMS stablemate Nicholas Latifi for fifth.

Latifi had no trouble adapting back to the F2 car after his Williams F1 practice outing, but admitted Sette Camara was the better of the team's two drivers this weekend. However he was happy that an 'off' event had still yielded a fifth and a sixth.

De Vries continues to remain coy and dismisses talk of trophies in favour a day-to-day approach. But right now, he appears to be the driver with momentum.

JACK BENYON



Daruvala had to wait until the podium before rehydrating

PORTLOCK
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IMAGES

Prema's F3 clean sweep proves thirsty work

FIA FORMULA 3
PAUL RICARD (FRA)
22-23 JUNE
ROUND 2/8

“Spit! Spit!” Failing the weigh-in because of a glass of water would have been a bizarre way to lose a race but, as has been the case with every FIA Formula 3 race so far this season, Prema Racing was on hand to guide its driver to the correct result. After entering the ‘green room’ following his first feature race win of the season, Jehan Daruvala took a swig before he had been weighed. Team boss Rene Rosin was there to command him to expel it and ensure the win was safe and secure.

Prema would maintain its 100% record of F3 wins after two rounds, but it was HWA that nailed qualifying and took its first single-seater pole position

with Jake Hughes. The Brit looked assured in the lead for the opening laps, but Daruvala was soon knocking on the door and he was quickly joined by Prema pals Marcus Armstrong and Robert Shwartzman, along with Pedro Piquet.

On lap nine of the 20, Daruvala wrestled first from Hughes, setting off a chain reaction that turned the race on its head. At this point the Prema cars appeared to lose tyre performance, while Hughes felt racey.

On the run to Turn 8, Hughes dived to the inside of Shwartzman but outbraked himself on the marbles and clashed with Armstrong, who entered the corner from the outside.

“In hindsight, I should have backed out,” said Hughes, whose race ended there. “It’s my mistake. Sorry to the team. We should have scored some good points today.”

Shwartzman was left to take second, while Piquet scored Trident’s first podium of 2019. Shwartzman has revelled in the new F3 car, admitting the old European F3 machinery took him longer to get on top of last year.

While Armstrong got a slow getaway in race two and fell to 25th (although he did fight back strongly to take sixth at the end of the race), Shwartzman settled in well and worked his way past Saturday’s fifth-place finisher Bent Viscaal and Piquet to run behind polesitter Alex Peroni and Yuki Tsunoda. Tsunoda fancied the win having driven his Red Bull-backed, Jenzer Motorsport-run car to seventh from 27th on Saturday, and pushed hard to take the lead.

Again the action area was Turn 8. On the straight on lap nine of 20, Tsunoda edged Peroni off the track while defending – the Australian had to abort the corner and he flew straight on. The only problem was that Shwartzman had passed both of them and was entering the corner from the outside as Peroni careered towards him.

Luckily, Shwartzman adjusted his line and avoided contact, allowing him to take a brilliant victory and a 12-point championship lead.

Daruvala passed Piquet for second late on, but Piquet retook the place on the penultimate lap to set the podium order. Tsunoda was penalised to ninth.

JACK BENYON



Shwartzman kept Prema's 100% record in the sprint race

MOTORSPORT IMAGES/PORTLOCK

Volkswagen ends its barren WTCR run on home turf

WTCR
NURBURGRING (DEU)
21-22 JUNE
ROUND 5/10

Expanding to a four-car set-up with Sebastien Loeb Racing, which included bringing in Johan Kristoffersson and some of the might behind his two World Rallycross titles, inevitably meant big things were expected of Volkswagen and its 2019 World Touring Car Cup programme.

So insipid showings at the opening three rounds, partly as a consequence of struggles with TCR's common ECU and subsequent compensation-weight changes after ditching the control part, made the brand's return on the first half of the season an underwhelming one.

Back at the scene of a record-breaking run with its I.D. R electric car, VW finally had cause for WTCR celebration. It was fitting, too, not only that its first 2019 win should be scored by its star driver Kristoffersson, but that its double victory came on home soil at the Nurburgring Nordschleife.

WEEKEND WINNERS

FIA FORMULA 3

PAUL RICARD (FRA)

Race 1 Jehan Daruvala

Prema Racing

Race 2 Robert Shwartzman

Prema Racing

WTCR

NURBURGRING (DEU)

Race 1 Norbert Michelisz
 BRC Hyundai N Squadra Corse
 (Hyundai i30 N TCR)

Race 2 Johan Kristoffersson
 SLR (Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR)

Race 3 Benjamin Leuchter
 SLR (Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR)

INDY LIGHTS

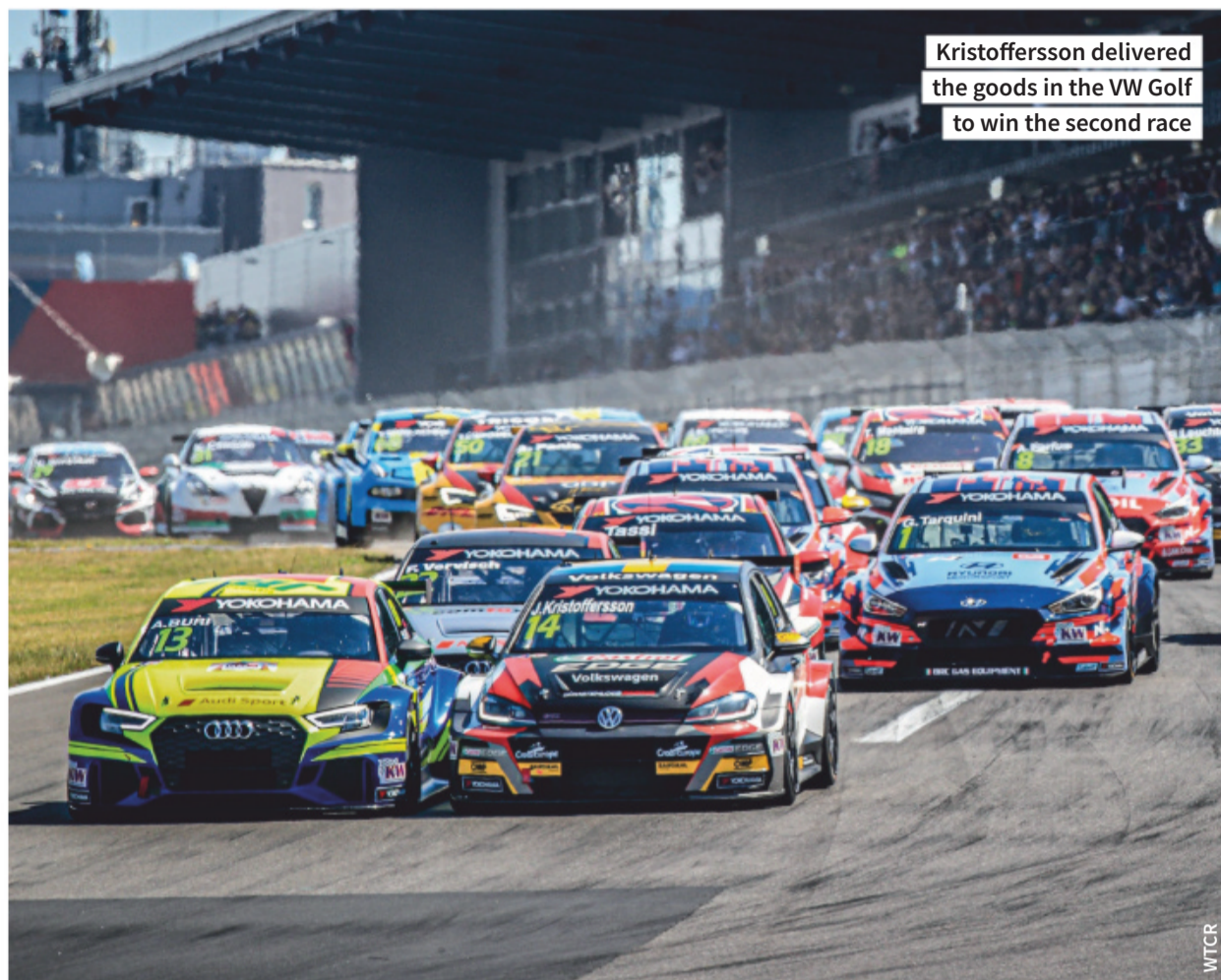
ROAD AMERICA (USA)

Race 1 Ryan Norman
 Andretti Autosport

Race 2 Rinus van Kalmthout
 Juncos Racing

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Kristoffersson had to resist two bids for the lead in the reversed-grid race on the grand prix loop – one into the first corner from wildcard entrant Antti Buri, and another from the Comtoy Audi of Frederic Vervisch at Dunlop – but, once ahead, he quickly broke the tow. The Swede was three seconds clear ending lap two but didn't let up, beating Vervisch to the chequered flag by 5.108s.

There was more to come for VW, though, as Benjamin Leuchter duly converted a maiden pole position into his first victory. Leuchter too had to resist a first-corner attack, but also faced a much stronger test of his mettle in the following laps – which included a breathtaking defence of the lead.

Esteban Guerrieri stayed with Leuchter on the first run on the Nordschleife, and got a mega tow onto the Dottinger Hohe. The points leader had the nose of his Honda Civic Type R ahead as the two entered Tiergarten, but Leuchter held firm through the sequence of left- and right-handers.

A resulting loss of momentum made Guerrieri easy prey for Vervisch on the finishing straight. Although Leuchter was never far up the road, this moment gave

him enough of a break to secure the win.

Even if some of the shine was taken off that result because Rob Huff couldn't take up his second-place starting slot, after a clash with Gabriele Tarquini while disputing third in race two, VW motorsport director Sven Smeets's claim this was a "perfect weekend" was hard to argue with.

Guerrieri might not have won, but two podiums and a sixth-place finish helped him extend a healthy advantage in the points as his nearest challengers faltered. The Argentinian already has more points in 2019 than he'd managed nine rounds into last season, as a consistent approach continues to pay dividends.

His edge might have been a little less, had Hyundai's title prospect Norbert Michelisz not retired from the finale following a significant whack from Vervisch at Turn 1.

Michelisz, who has outscored every other driver over the past 10 races, added to his run a first victory of 2019 in the opener. He beat polesitter Guerrieri to move into second overall, but his failure to score in race three leaves him 45 points adrift at the season's halfway point.

JACK COZENS





Audi scores shock win as Porsche's speed proves costly

NURBURGRING 24 HOURS 22-23 JUNE

One slow zone. That was the turning point of the Nurburgring 24 Hours when, at around 0900 last Sunday, race leader Laurens Vanthoor failed to reduce speed for a Code 120 area approaching a Code 60 zone. Clocked at 172km/h (107mph), he copped a penalty of 5m32s and cost Manthey Racing a second win in a row. Instead, the Team Phoenix Audi R8 LMS of Dries Vanthoor/Frank Stippler/Frederic Vervisch/Pierre Kaffer took the win in a car that seemed to find

new pace in the last 90 minutes.

Vanthoor, along with team-mates Kevin Este, Michael Christensen and Earl Bamber, looked impregnable for most of the race. Este was a hero early on, relieving Black Falcon Mercedes gun Dirk Muller of the race lead in hour six, despite Muller edging him on to the grass along the Dottinger Hohe. Este never lifted and emerged ahead. Once in the lead, the yellow Porsche 911 GT3-R built its lead and was looking invincible until Sunday morning and Vanthoor's faux pas. The penalty, which some thought draconian, wasn't arrived at lightly: it took several hours

for the officials to check data and onboard footage to confirm that Vanthoor had erred.

With the penalty served, Vanthoor was given driving duties. 'You got us into this mess,' Porsche seemed to say, 'so you get us out of it.' He rejoined with two stints remaining and 45s to make up and the gap indeed closed to Vervisch, but not by enough. The margin was around 35s when Vanthoor gave way to Este and the younger Vanthoor, Dries, relieved Vervisch. The final hour or so became a puzzle: from where had the Audi found the pace? Este set the fastest lap of the race in pursuit, but could do nothing about Vanthoor,

TOP 10 RESULTS NURBURGRING 24 HOURS, 22-23 JUNE (157 LAPS - 2475.76 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	CAR	TIME
1	Pierre Kaffer /Frank Stippler /Frederic Vervisch /Dries Vanthoor	Audi R8 LMSGT3	24h08m14.647s
2	Earl Bamber /Michael Christensen /Kevin Este /Laurens Vanthoor	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-1 lap
3	Maximilian Buhk /Hubert Haupt /Thomas Jager /Luca Stolz	Mercedes-AMG GT3	-1 lap
4	Markus Winkelhock /Christopher Haase /Marcel Fassler /Rene Rast	Audi R8 LMSGT3	-1 lap
5	Otto Klohs /Lars Kern /Dennis Olsen /Matteo Cairol	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-2 laps
6	Peter Dumbreck /Stef Dusseldorp /Alexandre Imperatori /Jens Klingmann	BMW M6 GT3	-2 laps
7	Fabian Vettel /Philip Ellis /Luca Ludwig /Jules Szymkowiak	Mercedes-AMG GT3	-2 laps
8	Jeroen Bleekemolen /Vincent Kolb /Kim-Luis Schramm /Stippler	Audi R8 LMSGT3	-3 laps
9	Thomas Mutsch /Felipe Fernandez Laser /Franck Mailleux /Andreas Simonsen	SCG 003c	-3 laps
10	Tom Coronel /Mitsunori Takaboshi /Tomonobu Fujii /Tsugio Matsuda	Nissan GT-RGT3	-3 laps





Few spotted the Audi's stealthy rise to the fore after its subdued start

AUDI



Vanthoor was slapped with a massive 5m32s penalty for speeding

PORSCHE

whose car was barely in the top 10 at the end of the opening hour and was a footnote for much of the race. And yet in the final hour it became a different car. D Vanthoor won the biggest race of his life and didn't put a wheel wrong under pressure.

If the Phoenix Audi perhaps lucked into a win, as usual others fell into trouble. The BMW assault was history before 2100 on Saturday after the Schnitzer-run M6 of Augusto Farfus was tagged into a spin by Timo Scheider at the first corner and crashed. The Rowe Racing cars fell by the wayside, one with suspension problems and the other a damaged radiator, while qualifying-race winner David Pittard was running fourth in the second hour until he suffered a water leak and spun on his own fluid. His Walkenhorst Racing car was out.

Mercedes looked strong early on as the polesitting Black Falcon AMG GT3 of Maro Engel/Dirk Muller/Manuel Metzger/Adam Christodoulou led, but when a backmarker turned across Christodoulou three laps into his first night-time stint, the resulting chassis damage led to the car's retirement. Up stepped the HTP Motorsport-run car of Maxi Gotz/Raffaele Marciello/Lance David Arnold/Christian Hohenadel until Sunday lunchtime. Marciello had clobbered a GT4 Porsche Cayman and, perhaps, weakened the left front corner as Gotz, three laps into his



The BMW M6 GT3 of Farfus was tagged into a spin in first-lap melee

TIPLER

stint, found the car reluctant to turn right and he smashed into the wall at Hohe Acht. He was out on the spot with broken suspension.

Even the second Manthey Porsche wasn't immune. A short first stint and subsequent pitstop gave Frederic Makowiecki the race lead but a puncture dropped him to 35th place. The fightback came to an end in the night when Richard Lietz collided with a backmarker at Schwalbenschwanz. That helped the Frikadelli Racing Porsche of Mathieu Jaminet/Sven Mueller/Romain Dumas/Matt Campbell up the order; it was lying second after Gotz's demise, but a puncture and subsequent damage put the car out.

A puncture also did for the other competitive Audi. The Land Motorsport car had coped with Rene Rast being shoved on to the grass at Dottinger Hohe by Gabriele Piana (Black Falcon Mercedes), but when Kelvin van der Linde suffered a tyre failure, the damage forced him to park rather than continue his journey to the pits.

In truth, Porsche lost this race and no brotherly love can hide Laurens Vanthoor's knowledge that he goofed. Phoenix, though, proved that speed alone doesn't win races, especially around the Nordschleife.

DAVID ADDISON

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BMW M2 COMPETITION

Yamamoto is unstoppable amid drama

SUPER FORMULA
SUGO (JPN)
23 JUNE
ROUND 3/7

Reigning Super Formula champion Naoki Yamamoto stretched his championship lead with a crushing weekend-long performance on the fast and scenic sweeps of Sugo.

Dandelion Racing star Yamamoto took a stunning pole position, and started the race on the soft red tyre. This was capable of doing the whole race distance at Sugo, with the harder Yokohama even more durable – but slower. Yamamoto was one of seven to start on the red, and stretched out an advantage over the weekend’s surprise package, Red Bull Junior Lucas Auer in his B-Max with Motopark car. Tomoki Nojiri (Team Mugen) led a sextet who pitted at the end of lap one to get off the harder tyres, and now the race became a time battle between Yamamoto and Nojiri.

Nojiri had lost this by the time the late-stoppers pitted. Now Yamamoto could cruise to the finish, while Auer was jumped at the stops by Nakajima Racing’s Tadasuke Makino, who had pitted just behind him. But Makino had no grip on his new reds, and slithered across the grass at pit exit, then had several offs before pitting again.



A few laps later Nojiri made a dive at Turn 1 on Auer, but outbraked himself and went into the gravel, causing a safety car. That promoted early pitters Kamui Kobayashi (KCMG) and Nick Cassidy (TOM’S), who’d enjoyed a frantic race-long battle, to third and fourth, bringing Toyota engines into play on what had been a weekend of Honda domination.

With Kobayashi and Cassidy on reds, could they threaten Yamamoto and Auer at the restart? The verdict was delayed when backmarker Sho Tsuboi lost control at the green, causing another safety car. On the final restart, Kobayashi made a brilliant outside pass on Auer at Turn 4 to take

second, but had no answer to Yamamoto. Cassidy took fourth, just fending off the Nakajima car of Alex Palou.

Auer wasn’t the only on-form B-Max/Motopark racer: Harrison Newey ran a strong fourth, ahead of Palou, before losing a front-wing plane. His race ended when a problem with refuelling put him out during his stop. Fellow Brit Dan Ticktum had a nightmare, finishing a lap down in 15th after winning a long fight with fellow struggler Artem Markelov.

MARCUS SIMMONS

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Truex wins duel of the Toyotas

NASCAR CUP
SONOMA (USA)
23 JUNE
ROUND 16/36

Martin Truex Jr’s triumph at Sonoma meant that he not only equalled Kyle Busch’s tally of four NASCAR Cup victories in 2019, but also matched his career sum of road course wins. And it was none other than Truex’s Joe Gibbs Racing team-mate Busch who posed the greatest threat to his chances.



The race became a duel between the two in the closing stages, with Busch’s Toyota – battle-scarred with nose damage after an earlier clash with Ryan Blaney – running three-lap younger tyres in the closing stages as he aimed to close an eight-second gap to leader Truex. Busch rapidly reduced the margin to two seconds, before his progress stalled and Truex held on for victory.

The pair were in a class of their own, ending up 33 seconds clear of the Penske Ford of Blaney, who finished third having inherited the spot from Chase Elliott after an oil pressure problem on his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet.

But it was Matt DiBenedetto who left California with a smile as wide as the Sonoma mountains, as the Leavine Family Racing Toyota driver secured his first top-10 finish of the season and a career-best fourth.

KYRAN GIBBONS

WEEKEND WINNERS

SUPER FORMULA
SUGO (JPN)
 Naoki Yamamoto
 Dandelion Racing (Dallara-Toyota SF19)

JAPANESE FORMULA 3
SUGO (JPN)
 Race 1 Ritomo Miyata
 TOM’S (Dallara-Toyota)
 Race 2 Toshiki Oyu
 Toda Racing (Dallara-Toda)

NASCAR CUP
SONOMA (USA)
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FIA F3 and Regional F3 are here in Europe, but the knock-on effect has been a fragmentation of single-seater racing into too many series competing against each other

MARCUS SIMMONS

When Jean Todt stated in his manifesto for a second term of FIA presidency that he wanted a MotoGP-style ladder of single-seater racing at Formula 1 events, he changed the course of junior motorsport in Europe. Back then, in 2013, there was a neat equilibrium. GP2 and GP3 supported F1, the FIA Formula 3 European Championship ran with the DTM as a parallel series to GP3, both feeding into GP2. Renault had its successful Formula Renault 3.5 category, plus its FR 2.0 pyramid of Eurocup, ALPS and Northern European Cup, and these in turn fed drivers into F1. There were some renegade series, but these generally had the less-well-financed drivers and weren't really taking drivers away from the major categories.

GP2 was renamed FIA Formula 2 for 2017, GP3 was effectively redubbed FIA F3 for 2019, and we have lost FIA F3 European,

FR 3.5, and the FR 2.0 ALPS and NEC series. So far so streamlined; just as many were calling for. But alongside this has come the introduction of the Formula Regional European Championship and BRDC British F3, a big boost in the profile of Euroformula Open, and a new lure from Japan to European talent resulting in drivers heading east to race in Super Formula and Japanese F3. Furthermore, while the FIA F4 initiative has been vastly successful across the world, it is very expensive in some countries – with their budgets exhausted, more and more talents from the super-competitive German and Italian series are stepping straight from F4 not into a higher category of single-seater, but GT or touring car racing in a bid to turn professional sooner. At the next level up, too many series are competing for an ever-diminishing pool of drivers.

The crisis at present is at the third tier, triggered by the launch of the FIA F3 Championship and the governing body's Regional F3



category in Europe. In 2017 the F3 European Championship teams agreed, in consultation with the FIA, that the new route forward should be an abandoning of the category's open-competition philosophy to go the one-make route. This was done to stop a costly development arms race, but it drove the category into the open arms of F2 and GP3 promoter Bruno Michel, who unsurprisingly was chosen to run the new FIA F3 Championship. When those F3 teams made their one-make decision in 2017, they could not have known that Michel would choose just three of them – Prema, Carlin and Hitech GP – for his GP3-superceding series.

Those who were not chosen by Michel – Motopark and Van Amersfoort Racing – pinned their colours to what was eventually named Formula European Masters (FEM). This was the planned continuation series for the old FIA F3 European Championship cars run by Formel 3 Vermarktungs, the subsidiary of the DTM-promoting ITR that had organised European F3 from the start of the Euro Series in 2003.

This came up against a number of major obstacles. The first was that the Spanish-based Euroformula Open (EFO), which had run for many years with the spec Piedrafita-built Toyota engine powering the current Dallara F3 chassis, opened its gates for 2019 to the Spieß (formerly Volkswagen) and HWA Mercedes units that had

been used in Euro F3 since the new engine regulations were introduced in 2014. Now drivers could race the same cars, with the same engines, as they could in FEM, but on a better range of circuits than they would get supporting the DTM.

The second obstacle was the introduction of Regional F3 to Europe. When the FIA introduced what was then called F3 Light as a concept in 2016 – a laudable bid to bridge the gap between F4 and FIA F3 – one team boss was moved to tell Autosport: “What do they need to do that for? We’ve already got Euroformula Open.” Regional F3 was successfully introduced to Asia in 2018, less successfully to the US in the same year, and the next step was an FIA-certified European series for 2019. Renault Sport went public in July last year with its plan to ditch the historic FRenault Eurocup and bid to become the FIA's Regional F3 choice, with the Tatuus T-318 chassis powered by a turbocharged Megane engine. But its plan was torpedoed in October when the FIA plumped for the Italian federation's presentation, using the Tatuus with Alfa Romeo power – the same combination as used in Asia. Snubbed by the FIA, Renault went ahead anyway with its new formula, and kept the Formula Renault Eurocup name.

The Italian-run series, known as the Formula Regional European Championship, is said to have been pushed at the FIA by Ferrari. >>



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But Prema boss Rene Rosin, who is running the Ferrari Driver Academy's 2018 Italian F4 champion Enzo Fittipaldi among his three-car Regional team, denies this. "It was not supported by Ferrari," says Rosin. "It was supported by the [FIA] Single Seater Commission, and the Italian delegate was Massimo [Rivola, then in charge of the Ferrari Driver Academy]."

Prema sold its old F3 cars to EFO team Teo Martin Motorsport. Other squads found interest slow in an FEM series that had lost Pau, Hungaroring, Zandvoort, Spa, Silverstone and the Red Bull

"WITH THIS UNCERTAINTY AROUND DIFFERENT CATEGORIES IT WAS DIFFICULT TO CLOSE THE LINE-UP"

Ring from its Euro F3 days and gained less-inspiring venues Zolder, Assen and Lausitzring (plus the glorious Brands Hatch, but it's almost impossible to overtake there).

"One of the reasons was the new FIA F3 with its 30 drivers," says VAR boss Frits van Amersfoort. "They struggled to find 30, and that's why it messed up the market even more." Double R Racing principal Anthony 'Boyo' Hieatt, who joined the EFO field for 2019 but was also open to competing in FEM, says: "I registered an interest in it, but we had not one phone call. It would have been great to join that series without the FIA being in charge, but it's expensive. Olly Oakes [Hitech boss] told me he had drivers and could I run them, but it came to nothing."

When FEM was cancelled in late March, Motopark and Fortec Motorsport switched to EFO, while VAR – the only other team with a confirmed driver – went to FRegional. Even Motopark, top of the tree in FEM with Prema no longer in the 'traditional F3' arena, struggled to fill its team. "There was all this uncertainty around different categories so it was really difficult to close the line-up," says Motopark boss Timo Rumpfkeil. "There were a few categories contacting us to move in their direction, but in the end I like the concept of the current F3 car, and we could keep them running in EFO for another year. Our customers wanted to drive the Dallara because that was the best for their talents."

"Everyone told me that GT Sport [EFO's promoter] was a good organiser who listened to the teams' interests and worked with them to make it better," adds Hieatt. "I never enjoyed being in an FIA championship."



Formula Regional series omits 'F3' from moniker

FORMULARREGIONAL

Japanese F3 is also connected to EFO, as it too continues to use the old-spec F3 Dallara. Three drivers from European F3 – race winners Sacha Fenestraz and Enaam Ahmed, plus Ameya Vaidyanathan – moved there for 2019, along with FRenault Eurocup podium topper Charles Milesi. So too did Motopark – in conjunction with the established B-Max team, it is running Fenestraz, Ahmed and Vaidyanathan. "The Yokohama is a really good tyre and it's a good sidestep for a clear career opportunity," points out Rumpfkeil. "If you run in the top three there you are very close to a paid drive for the future. This is something that is not guaranteed in FIA F3."

Trevor Carlin, whose team is running in EFO and is assisting the YTB line-up of Milesi and Yoshiaki Katayama in Japanese F3, says: "We sent a chief mechanic and a race engineer [James Goodfield, from Carlin's Euro F3 team] and we've given them technical support. It seems to be going well."

While Motopark and Carlin remain loyal to the old F3, Prema switched its parallel programme to FRegional as well as FIA F3. The FRegional Tatuus-Alfa in this series, at 650kg minimum weight, is 70kg heavier than the old-spec Dallara – thanks in part to the steel halo. But budgets are €300,000 cheaper. "It was a logical evolution to merge F3 and GP3 together," claims Rosin. "There was not the market to have the two championships sustained at that economy level. If you consider what happened in 2013 [when British F3 collapsed and European F3 mopped up the UK teams], somebody suffered then, some were unhappy, but there was no market for two championships. >>



Euroformula Open's profile is on the rise

FOTOSPEEDY

MOTORSPORT IMAGES/MAUGER



Prema boss Rene Rosin

“The Regional car is a good car, and it’s the same as used in Formula Renault and will be used in Toyota Racing Series [in New Zealand] – the only change is the powertrain. And you can do a lot of mileage.”

“It’s a lot heavier, which makes it more difficult to drive,” says van Amersfoort. “But they’re running the car in W Series, Formula Renault, New Zealand, so we just have to accept it. It’s not a bad car – a little heavy, but apart from that it’s solid. And a heavy car seems to be the way to go in the future...”

One criticism of the Tatuus from its inaugural season in Asian F3 was that the steering was very heavy, but Rosin points out “mileage is limited in Asia, but because of the mileage we do in Europe we discovered what was wrong and changed some parts”.

A mere 10 cars entered the opening round at Paul Ricard, but this expanded to 14 next time out at Vallelunga. “The first year

“PEOPLE SAY THINGS NEED TO CHANGE TO EVOLVE – TRUE, BUT NEVER FORGET THE BASICS”

is difficult but it will get stronger,” says Rosin. “And there is a need for this intermediate category because the jump from FIA F4 to FIA F3 is way too big.”

But why is it not called European Regional F3? Autosport enquiries yielded little other than unconfirmed reports that Liberty owns the rights to the F3 name in Europe for a substantial period of time. An internet check on ownership of F3 trademarks reveals some within FIA ownership. When the FIA was asked for clarification, it stated: “Having the top three tiers of FIA single-seater competition together at the same [F1] events is an important part of the learning process and makes it easier than ever for fans to follow the careers of the sport’s rising stars. In order to establish the pyramid it was important to ensure there was no confusion, so for that reason we have given clarity to the F3 space by simply having one championship that has Formula 3 in its title.” Even so, FRegional would surely be better promotable if the F3 name could be used.

“[In] the paddock, they call it F3!” laughs van Amersfoort. “What a mess, and it’s such a shame that the FIA is a brilliant composer of this big mess. Sorry to say it, but that’s the way it is.”

The equivalent Renault series has done much better in 2019, but still grids have dropped off from the 30-car fields of yore to roughly 20 – and, of course, it has the jewel in the crown of a Monaco GP support round. The car weighs in 15kg heavier than the Regional equivalent at 665kg, but it’s 81kg more than its predecessor, which since its introduction in 2013 had been one of the best training cars



FOTOSPEEDY

in Europe. Renault tried to keep its secondary NEC series going using the old chassis, but, says Fortec Motorsport boss Richard Dutton: “It was very hard to sell. It would have been like doing the old BARC Renault series [which ran for many years for previous-generation cars] but I don’t think there are enough drivers around.”

Fortec pulled out of Renault for 2019 after 18 years of huge success in the category. “The ladder was perfect – you won the Eurocup and you got help from Renault to move up to FR3.5,” says Dutton. “The new Regional F3 and Eurocup cars are a bit of a joke – they’re big. And I don’t think it’s a formula to teach drivers. I felt [what Renault did to go ahead anyway with its plans] was a kneejerk thing. The FIA snubbed them, and they said, ‘We don’t need the FIA. We’ll do it on our own.’ But I might look at it in the future.”

“The FIA have got Formula Regional really wrong. You can see by the numbers – without Prema there wouldn’t be a Formula Regional. And Renault rushed their car – it only came out a couple of weeks before the first test. But if Renault continue with it, it’ll be a good car eventually.”

Fortec is one of the teams in the parallel UK-based BRDC British F3, using a much-modified Tatuus F4 chassis with Cosworth power. “There are a few drivers who would have done Renault who think it’s more value for money,” points out Dutton. “It’s now £250-275k, much more affordable than it ever has been.”

It has also evolved into something of a path to EFO, with last year’s champion and runner-up Linus Lundqvist and Nicolai



PORTLOCK motorsport IMAGES

Launch of FIA F3 helped spark single-seater confusion



DALLARA 320

New car continues
the philosophy
of the old F3



Kjaergaard graduating with Double R and Carlin respectively, and Billy Monger with Carlin. “I think that will continue,” says Carlin. “Before that it was people like Colton Herta and Cameron Das [making the same step]. You either choose the FIA ladder and get superlicence points [required to race in F1], or go where the best cars and the best training are and learn your trade that way. If you want to do British F3 and EFO, it’s a fabulous path.”

“It’s one of the best-value championships in the world, and the best-run championship I’ve ever been in,” asserts Hieatt. “It’s an outpost on its own and all the better for it. Compared to Regional it’s half the price – and it’s much more than half the car.”

So what next? Dallara is building a 320, with titanium halo, to continue the philosophy of the old F3. It will be used in EFO and, in all likelihood, Japanese F3, which is set to change its name to Super Formula Lights for 2020. But it’s too late to keep this formula at the Macau Grand Prix, which will run for the FIA F3 cars. In doing so, the intrigue of the Japanese teams taking on the Europeans has been wiped out.

“We believe most of the teams share the same feeling as us – extremely disappointed with the recent announcement [from Macau],” says TOM’S principal Susumu Koumi, whose team has won the Macau GP in its F3 era more times than any other. “Our chief engineer, Jun Yamada, told me, ‘What a pity – such a historic event and important race for us’”

It was TOM’S driver Sho Tsuboi who was struck by VAR’s

Sophia Florsch during the horrific shunt at Lisboa in the 2018 running. Simple maths indicates that the force of a similar crash in the FIA F3 car would be substantially greater. Mass times velocity equals momentum, and last year’s winner Dan Ticktum’s top speed just before Lisboa without a tow was 267km/h (165mph) in his 580kg car. The new cars are 690kg with a projected top speed of 300km/h (186mph). That gives a momentum 33.7% greater.

“The impact would be massive [in the new car], but when you look at the wreckage of Sophia’s car you can see that the halo would have protected her,” says van Amersfoort. “Barry Bland [the late former Macau GP coordinator] introduced F3 cars to Macau in 1983, and at the time it was a wonderful idea, but we shouldn’t forget that those early F3 cars had 24mm air restrictors and 190bhp. Now they’re going to race there with more than 300bhp. Is that wise?”

Carlin, who will be in Macau with his FIA F3 team, adds: “I’m slightly concerned about the speed, because the terminal velocity is going to be massive. From what I’ve heard they [the FIA] have done some simulations and said it’s fine. But they’ve obviously never stood at the side of Mandarin or Lisboa.”

Even without Macau, many say the new old-school Dallara 320 will be the ideal training ground for driver excellence. “I know there are various opinions on this category, but remember why it lasted so many years with the basic concept – a nice little lightweight, nimble ‘analogue/non-high-tech’ car with a two-litre engine,” says Koumi. “To me, it has been the best training tool for not only up-and-coming drivers but also mechanics and engineers. Nowadays the majority say things need to change to evolve – true, but never forget the spirit and basics.”

“All the drivers love the Dallara – it’s light, very well constructed and built with not many compromises,” says Hieatt. “It’s super-reliable and it’s cost-effective to run. Also, the EcoBoost F4 engine we run has a fuel consumption 25-33% higher than the HWA F3! We regularly do test days of over 500km and it’s where drivers hone their skills, compared to four laps on Pirellis [in FIA F3]. People will wake up to the new F3 being the emperor’s new clothes.”

But there’s a problem, indicating the plight in which single-seater sport finds itself. Even those in rival series would probably say the old-spec Dallara F3 car is the best to produce driving excellence, and the 320 will continue that. But for what? One insider at this level of the sport, who did not want to be named, says: “For developing a driver, for sure this car is the best. But preparing for bullshit... I don’t know. When you see these heavy shitboxes in F2 and F1, maybe we don’t need that old philosophy of F3 cars anymore...” ❄



BRDC British F3 uses
modified F4 chassis

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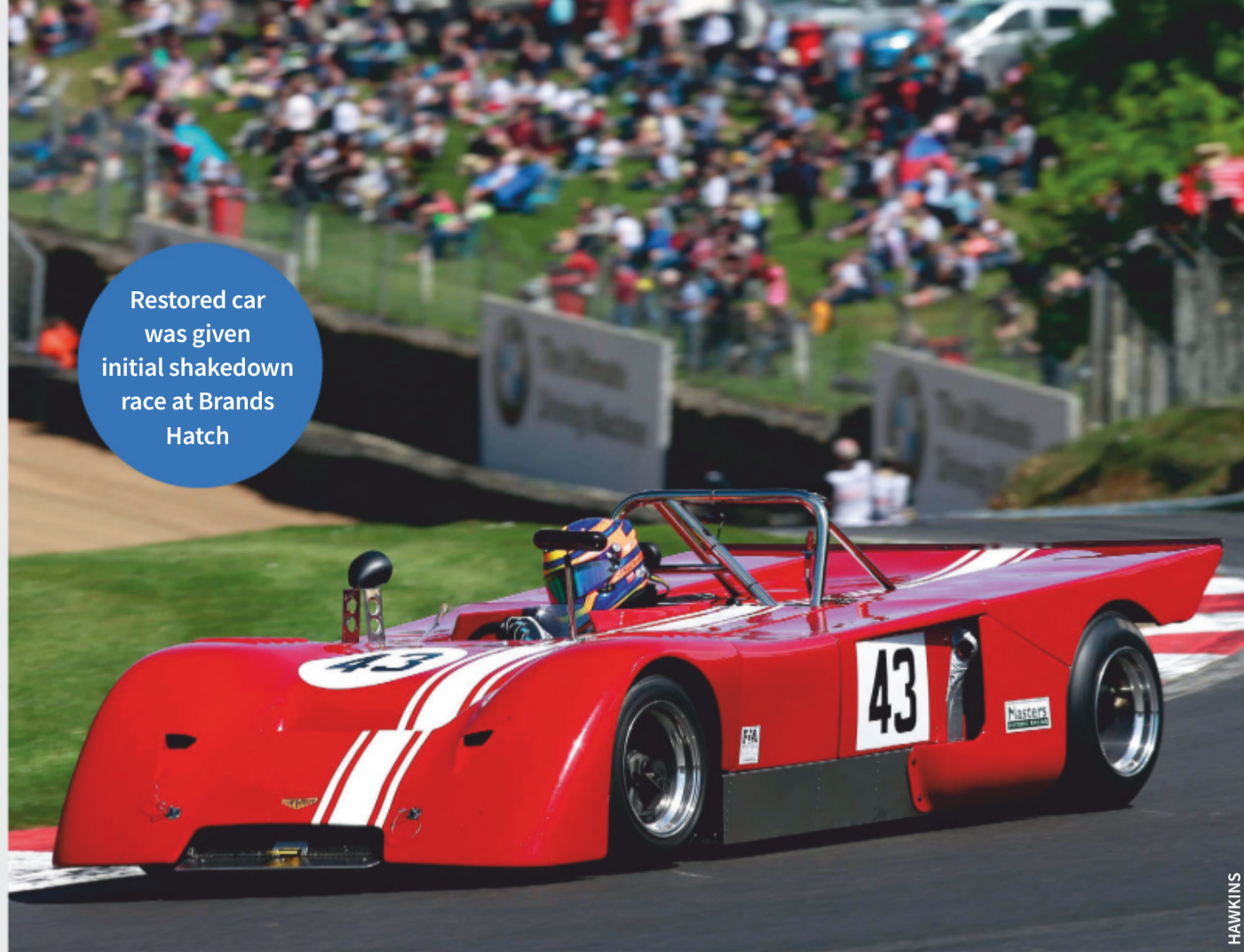
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HAWKINS

BRADSHAW SET TO RACE CHEVRON B19 AT CLASSIC

HISTORICS

Former single-seater and Porsche Carrera Cup GB racer Tom Bradshaw hopes to be a frontrunner in the FIA Masters Historic Sports Car Championship in a Chevron B19 recently restored by former Chevron engineers.

Bradshaw's father John bought the two-litre sports-racing car last November and it was rebuilt by Steve Sheldon and Neil Bailey at Red Rose Racing. A recent shakedown race at Brands Hatch was hampered by brake issues but the FVC-engined car showed great promise and Bradshaw hopes to be a contender at the Silverstone Classic in late July.

"It went to Jo Siffert when it was new in 1970. It came to us from Sweden and hadn't been run since the early 1990s," said Bradshaw Sr, who has always wanted to own a B19.

"For a man from Bolton, this is an iconic car," added Bradshaw, who comes from the same Lancashire town as Chevron. "I went to see [Chevron founder] Derek Bennett at his works when I was 20 to get some bits for an Elan I was building. I learned to hang glide with him."

Later, Chevron founder Bennett died in

a hang gliding accident and the company folded.

"It's a gorgeous car but we've still got a bit of work to do and we wanted to spend some time getting it right," Bradshaw added.

After the Classic, the plan is to race it at the Nurburgring, Zandvoort and Spa in the summer and Bradshaw Sr will race it with his son too.

Bradshaw Jr, who was the 2008 Formula Palmer Audi runner-up, is a previous winner of the Carrera Cup GB scholarship and last competed in the Porsche category in 2015.

More recently he has been racing in historics and shared a 1965 Porsche 911 with Le Mans 24 Hours winner Richard Attwood at the Classic last year and in the Guards Trophy at the Oulton Park Gold Cup.

- The Historic Sports Car Club's Thundersports Series has received a strong initial response to the newly announced races at the Silverstone Classic. In two weeks, the first 30 entries have already been confirmed. With a grid capacity of 50 cars, the HSCC is hoping to have more than 40 competitors.

PAUL LAWRENCE



Tom Bradshaw is targeting the Silverstone Classic

JEP



Bradshaw Jr has shared Porsche with Attwood

JEP

Tilley to make F1 debut in Lotus at Brands Hatch

HGPCA

Reigning Classic Formula Ford 1600 champion Benn Tilley is to race a Formula 1 car for the first time at this weekend's annual Historic Sports Car Club Legends of Brands Hatch Superprix event.

The 19-year-old will race Paul Smeeth's ex-Team Lotus 18 in the Historic Grand Prix Cars Association's Pre-'66 double-header, among the best fields of the meeting.

Chassis '373' is the car in which then six-time world motorcycle champion John Surtees – who had made his four-wheeled racing debut at Goodwood five months previously – led the 1960 Portuguese GP.

Tilley, who has raced a Lotus 23B sportscar to date this season, enjoyed a short acclimatisation run in the 2.5-litre Climax FPF-powered 18 at Blyton Park, close to his Lincolnshire home, earlier this month.



Classic FF1600 champ has tested Lotus 18

AUSTIN



Surtees led the 1960 Portuguese GP in Lotus

motorsport IMAGES

The offer from Smeeth, who loaned Tilley the 1962 Lotus 22 in which he finished a class-winning second in the 2017 UK Formula Junior championship, will showcase the car (a winner with previous owner Michael Schryver), which is for sale.

"It's a wonderful opportunity thanks to Paul," said Tilley. "Who wouldn't want to race a famous F1 Lotus on the Brands Hatch GP circuit? The engine has a lot more torque than I'm used to, but the chassis is well balanced. I'm looking forward to it."

Other rivals will include the similarly powered Brabhams of Silverstone winner Barry Cannell (BT11) and Jon Fairley (BT11/19), Pau victor Peter Horsman (Lotus 18/21) and Sir John Chisholm (ex-Jim Clark/Innes Ireland Lotus 18). Perennial dark horse Andy Middlehurst is likely to match the best in Australian John Bowers' shrill 1500cc Climax V8-engined Lotus 25.

Tilley's fellow FFord racer Richard Tarling will also be on the grid, getting another shot in the Alfa Romeo-engined Assegai.

MARCUS PYE



HISTORICS Olly Bryant gave an ex-Trans-Am/IMSA Ford Mustang a run out at Donington Park last week, following its arrival in the UK. "It's a Roush 750bhp V8 GTS1 and I'm taking it up the hill at the Goodwood Festival of Speed," he said. The car had a demo run recently at Dijon and raced in the Daytona 24 Hours in 1995 with Puerto Ricans Wally Castro, Roly Falgueras, Axel Rivera, Manolo Villa and Biagio Parisi, finishing 16th. The car is also eligible for the Masters Legends series. **Photograph by Peter Scherer**



JEP

Famous Sierra RS500s to go head-to-head

HISTORICS

Two famous Ford Sierra RS500 Cosworths will go head-to-head in the Dunlop Saloon Car Cup at Brands Hatch this weekend.

Michael Lyons will have his first race in the ex-Eggenberger 1989 Spa-winning car (above) now owned by Peter Sturgeon, while Carey McMahon has brought his ex-Tony Longhurst Bathurst car (below) to Europe.

The Eggenberger car has been raced recently by period driver Gianfranco Brancatelli, but now Lyons will race the car after a shakedown test at Silverstone. The Longhurst car, starting a mini European tour, was built to win the 1990 Bathurst 1000 but retired with engine failure. Joining them will be a third RS500, Mark Wright's example.

However, the series is expected to feature a very small entry since the event clashes with a number of other historic meetings in Europe.

● Also in action at Brands Hatch this weekend will be John Hutchison. The competitions manager for the MG Car Club will make his single-seater debut in Formula Junior. Hutchison has raced extensively in sportscars but will now follow his parents John and Sarah into single-seaters with an Envoy after a successful test at Snetterton.

PAUL LAWRENCE





Top team boss calls for National FF1600 to return to Knockhill

MOIR

FORMULA FORD 1600

Leading Formula Ford team boss Kevin Mills has called for Knockhill to return to the National FF1600 calendar after his squad attended the Scottish round last weekend.

Mills's drivers Neil MacLennan and Michael Macpherson scored three podiums – and MacLennan won both races.

Knockhill was removed from the National calendar following complaints about last year's meeting, which used the circuit's reversed configuration. In the third race there was an incident where the safety car was stationary on the other side of a blind crest on the pit straight, with the field approaching unsighted at full speed.

But Mills thinks that the Scottish track's

regular layout is perfect for FFord.

"I honestly believe we should've been here for the National this year," he said. "The two boys wanted to come back and race at their home circuit, but [the National series] should be coming here."

"It's a Formula Ford track; right size, right width, difficult to overtake but you can make it happen – it's that sort of track."

"If it's good enough for British Touring Cars it's good enough for anyone."

Mills also defended the dwindling Scottish FF1600 grids, claiming "numbers everywhere are really bad this year".

Eight cars began the season, but that included a one-off entry from Jamie Thorburn, so the number fell to seven for the following meeting.

But the guest KMR appearances, plus a late deal for Citroen C1 racer Glen Alcock, boosted last weekend's grid to nine cars.

"It doesn't really matter how many cars there are, as long as there are two or three fast ones at the front," Mills said. "We had a similar situation at Castle Combe last year – the grid fell a little bit but the racing was still really good."

Scottish points leader Jordan Gronkowski welcomed the extra competition, but thinks it is "unrealistic" to expect big teams to commit to racing at Knockhill as they prioritise the National series.

LUKE BARRY

Young dominates Clio Cup Open races in France

CLIO CUP

Renault UK Clio Cup points leader Jack Young dominated the two Clio Cup Open races that supported the French Grand Prix at Paul Ricard last weekend, winning each one by more than 20 seconds.

The 17-year-old MRM driver repeated last year's success at the French circuit, when he won November's Clio International Final.

Young started both contests from pole and escaped clear as the rest of the 44-car field

squabbled behind.

"We got penalised last week [in the UK Clio Cup race at Croft] for a jump start, so I made sure not to do it this week!" said a delighted Young after the opening win.

"I just did a Colin McRae-style start, got away and then they started battling. From then on it was quite an easy one – I kept a gap and kept pushing to the end.

"There are so many people who have come up to me already just congratulating me – it's just unbelievable.



I think I'm just overwhelmed with the publicity it's brought."

Young's team-mate Brett Lidsey started alongside him on the front row, but was given a penalty for contact in race one and suffered engine issues

in the second encounter.

But there was further British success in the opener as Westbourne driver Ben Colburn finished third.

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Optimum to investigate GT3 Aston pit fire at Donington Park

BRITISH GT

Optimum Motorsport is investigating the cause of a pit fire that forced Bradley Ellis and Oliver Wilkinson's Aston Martin Vantage into an early exit at Donington Park.

The Silver Cup frontrunners had been third in the outright standings heading into the weekend, and were running third after Wilkinson's opening stint prior to the pitstops, when the team put out a flash fire before sending Ellis on his way.

However, the flames reignited and, with Optimum's garage near the pit entry, Ellis had to drive almost the full length of the pitlane before stopping at the pit exit.

"There's a lot of equipment under the

rear of the car, like the fuel and oil lines, so we need to investigate exactly what happened," said Ellis.

"I just know I saw a load of black smoke and had to get out pretty quickly."

Team boss Shaun Goff said the damage was fortunately "not too bad" and that the team is planning to take the car to the Goodwood Festival of Speed next week, before heading on to the next British GT round at Spa.

"Thank God, Bradley is unharmed, and everyone else around it, and the car is only slightly damaged," he said. "I don't like DNFs, but we'll try to take the positives out of the weekend and look forwards."

JAMES NEWBOLD

DAVID BECKETT 1936-2019

OBITUARY

With his spectacular handlebar moustache, David Beckett, who died of leukaemia last week, was a delightful old-school character who competed with distinction on two and four wheels and lived in a time warp.

Dairy engineering took Beckett to Kenya for four years, during which he raced a Cooper MkII 500 and won the 1961 East African Safari Rally – a 3400-mile slog over three and a half days – with fellow Britons John Manussis and Bill Coleridge in a Mercedes-Benz 220SE.

Back in the UK, Beckett raced the ex-Ray Brightman Lister Costin BHL 125 through the 1960s with a Jaguar engine,

surviving a fiery accident on Ireland's fearsome Dunboyne road circuit. Later he owned BHL 121, the ex-John Ewer prototype Lister-Chevrolet, then Costin-Nathan GT and Nerus Silhouette sportscars in the 1980s and 1990s. Again his luck deserted him, the Nerus being badly damaged in Dublin's Phoenix Park.

Beckett restored a magnificent collection of motorcycles, including Manx Nortons, and enjoyed off-road riding, habitually on Christmas days in Surrey's hills.

Fondly remembered by all who knew him, David is survived by Sylvia, his devoted wife of 50 years, and daughter Annette.

MARCUS PYE

IN THE HEADLINES

JRM APPEAL DROPPED

JRM has decided not to contest its disqualification from the Silverstone 500 British GT round earlier this month, after initially announcing its intention to appeal. Seb Morris and Rick Parfitt lost their third-place finish after their Bentley Continental was found to be underweight.

WALKER TO JOIN F4 FIELD

British karting graduate Alex Walker has joined the JHR Developments squad to contest the remainder of the British Formula 4 season, with the exception of the Knockhill round. Walker, a finalist in last year's Ginetta Junior scholarship, intends to use the races as a learning experience ahead of a full season in 2020.

RODDISON STAYS UNBEATEN

Paul Roddison maintained his 100% winning record in Mazda MaX5 at Brands Hatch last weekend. Ian Loversidge put the favourite under pressure but couldn't find a chink in Roddison's armour.

SPARROW NOT ON SONG

This year's 2CV championship won't be decided until the Snetterton 24 Hours season finale after defending champion Pete Sparrow dropped a valve while leading at Brands Hatch last weekend. Sparrow was heading Nick Crispin by more than 100 points, but the mechanical woe put him out while Crispin took third. Sparrow went on to win a closely fought race two.

JACKSON'S THREE AT SPA

Dominik Jackson earned victory in all three Radical Challenge races at Spa last weekend, the reigning champion back in his SR3 RSX after a run in Historic Formula Ford 1600 earlier this month. Jackson completed the Belgian treble for the second year in succession, and has returned to the top of the standings over Jerome de Sadeleer as a result.



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The shock of the new

The national racing scene is a crowded marketplace, but that hasn't stopped some clubs and promoters launching niche series – with mixed results

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Launching a new championship into what is already a crowded marketplace isn't easy. For this year, 13 fresh series were announced to join the over 170 already in existence. And the contrasting fortunes of some of these categories last weekend makes it a perfect time to assess how their first few months have been.

But before doing that, there's a very important point to be made. Autosport has long argued there are too many championships in UK club racing, but that certainly doesn't mean we are opposed to new ideas. In fact, it's crucial that clubs keep their offerings updated and continually explore different options rather than becoming set in their ways with the same portfolio of championships year after year.

And some clubs are doing that very well. Take the Scottish Motor Racing Club and its new C1 Cup series. Surprisingly, racing a C1 has proved to be one of the most popular forms of motorsport in the UK this century and the SMRC wanted to expand that north of the border, running sprint races at Knockhill.

Things started modestly with 11 cars for the opening round but, by last weekend, that had grown to 18 and the target is 20 for the next round. What's more, the affordable series has introduced many new drivers into the sport – exactly as intended.

Another series filling its niche perfectly is the Ferrari Challenge UK. Twenty cars were in action at Snetterton last weekend for the

“EnduroKa has found there's sufficient space in the market to run alongside C1s”

second round – proving that, despite the relatively expensive price tag, the formula is right and it bodes very well for the future.

But not everything has been quite so successful. The new Touring Car Trophy series Stewart Lines has created had just eight cars at Donington Park last weekend – and that's despite having merged with the ailing TCR UK series.

The addition of Renault UK Clio Cup frontrunner Max Coates and VW Cup title contender Mark Wakefield – who combined racing a Cupra TCR with his Volkswagen duties – boosted numbers a little, but, for now, these are one-off entries. Although it's still early days for the series, it does seem there's little demand to race that type of machinery in sprint races outside of the British Touring Car Championship (although a number of TCR cars have been competing in Britcar Endurance).

However, it's fared better than some of the new series. The Series Elite category, featuring Jaguar Project 8 saloons driven by entrants aged over 40, was supposed to have its third round at Brands Hatch last weekend. But, just like its season-opening Brands event, it was cancelled – this time due to “niggling issues” with the electronic software on the Jaguars. And just four cars were in action at the one event that has actually taken place.

It's difficult to see the market the series is aiming for, given that the Jaguar doesn't have the appeal of the Ferrari 488s in the Ferrari Challenge and many other potential competitors would already be competing in categories such as the GT Cup.

Another British Automobile Racing Club series which postponed a round was the UK Sports Prototype Cup. This series, which features the new Revolution prototype as well as Radicals, was due to be in action at Oulton Park but the round was rescheduled owing to the clashing Radical event at Spa. Numbers have been modest in the other rounds so far but this is a category with an eye very much to the future as Revolution expands.

Other clubs have taken a more pragmatic approach and launched their new categories as sub-classes within existing series – and have done very well. The 750 Motor Club's 116 Trophy featuring mini-enduros for the small BMWs has had between 11 and 12 cars in Roadsports and there have been eight or nine of the Ma7da Locosts (upgraded versions of the original Locosts) in Sport Specials. The Classic Sports Car Club has also had between four and 11 Mazda RX-8s for its RX-8 Trophy running in New Millennium. It's certainly sensible for these to have ‘soft’ launches (although the 750MC's Civic Type R Trophy did get 10 cars for a standalone race) and the signs are encouraging.

All of MotorSport Vision's new offerings have got off to good starts too. EnduroKa has found there's sufficient space in the market to run alongside the C1s, despite being a similar concept, and has attracted grids in the mid-20s. The new Super Cup that takes the top cars from the Trackday Championship has been in the mid-teens and the Focus Cup for centrally run diesel Fords has had around a dozen entries.

But one of the new categories is yet to get off the ground. Sonny Howard's Wildcat Sprint Car series' launch has sensibly been postponed to allow Howard to concentrate on the Super Silhouettes category first, after taking over the management of the old Intermarque series.

It's still early days for all these categories but some have already marked themselves out as ones to watch for the future, while others have got off to shaky starts. How many will become an established feature of the club racing world remains to be seen. ❄

➔ P73 COATES TRIES TCR



Second TF Sport Aston Martin acted as rear gunner against Balfe McLaren

Adam and Davidson make amends with victory

**DONINGTON PARK
BRITISH GT
22-23 JUNE**

TF Sport pair Jonny Adam and Graham Davidson became the fifth different British GT winners this season in the championship's first of two visits to Donington Park, finally scoring a maiden series win for the new Aston Martin Vantage after their near miss at Silverstone.

Adam's tangle with a GT4 car just three minutes from the end a fortnight ago – which resulted in a DNF and the loss of at least 27 points – still weighed heavily on both Scots, but they managed the perfect response to double their seasonal points tally in one hit.

A second pole in as many rounds, with Davidson topping the Am session, was converted into an early lead that never seriously came under threat in the race, despite worsening brake problems that left Adam clinging on at the end from Rob Bell's Balfe Motorsport McLaren. Given the late drama of Silverstone, the overwhelming emotion in the TF camp at the finish was relief, especially for Davidson, who came into the weekend staring down a 54-point deficit to championship leaders Phil Keen and Adam Balon.

"Everything went to plan," Davidson said. "I'm very determined, I know what we need to do, the team know it, it's just going through the motions now of delivering the results. I do believe that we have the ability

to keep it up the front and get the points we need. Hopefully our bad luck is now past."

That Bell never quite got close enough to challenge Adam was partly thanks to the second TF Sport Aston Martin of Nicki Thiim. Fighting back after two spins by Mark Farmer left the car way down the order, Thiim unlapped himself from Bell then dutifully sat behind Adam, under strict instructions not to pass his team-mate or cause him to lose time.

"As soon as [Thiim] passed me, I thought, 'I'm in trouble here because he's a rear gunner,'" said Bell. "And he did what he should have done, which meant I was always in his dirty air rather than Jonny's. It just made it harder, but I don't want to dwell on that, they won fair and square. That

MULTIMATIC BACK ON TOP IN GT4 WITH PRIAULX AND MAXWELL

Seb Priaulx and Scott Maxwell reclaimed the GT4 championship lead, becoming the season's first double winners on a day when their Multimatic Motorsport Ford Mustang was seemingly impervious to the woes happening all around them.

Pole starter Maxwell lost out on the first lap to the McLarens of Josh Smith (Tolman Motorsport) and pre-event points leader Callum Pointon (HHC), but soon repassed Pointon and was right on the tail of Smith when contact with "a yellow Lambo" at the Esses broke the McLaren's left-front suspension.

With Smith and James Dorlin retiring from

the lead for the second successive race, Maxwell inherited top spot from Jacob Mathiassen's Century Motorsport BMW, which then emerged from the pits ahead in the hands of Mark Kimber. But, despite his best efforts, karting graduate Kimber was unable to hold off Priaulx's charge, the Mustang carrying more speed through the Esses and completing the move at the Melbourne Hairpin with 15 laps to go.

"We rolled off the trailer with a strong car and we were competitive from the get-go, so definitely we earned it," Maxwell said. "We had the pace and we executed well with no mistakes. Hopefully we can keep the momentum going."

Kimber was easily maintaining second from Pointon's team-mate Dean Macdonald until a brake disc failure sent him straight on at Coppice in the dying minutes, promoting the HHC McLaren to second despite a 20-second post-race penalty for taking an unfair advantage.

That would have dropped them behind the Steller Performance Audi of Sennan Fielding and Richard Williams, which had been in third, but a fuel problem half a lap from home consigned Williams to 13th.

"We probably could have won that," rued Steller team boss Gary Blackham. Despite lacking the pace of the sister car, Jordan Collard and Lewis



wasn't why we lost the race."

Adam had been struggling to slow the car down, particularly at the Esses, and almost threw it away with six minutes to go when he went in too hot and ran over the grass on the exit, allowing Thiim through. That put Bell right onto his bumper but, while Adam was able to nip past Michael Broadhurst's GT4 Mercedes in the Craner Curves, Bell got stuck behind until the exit of Coppice due to yellow flags and ended his charge.

"It was tricky because you're trying to pass traffic under braking but the pedal is changing all the time," Adam said. "Rob looked very fast in sector three, especially on the braking where we were struggling, but I just managed to use the traffic in the right places which gave me the gap."

Second still marked the best result for the new McLaren 720S GT3 after a problem with the door thwarted its victory hopes late on at Silverstone. Once past front-row starter Michael Igoe's WPI Motorsport Lamborghini, Shaun Balfe showed strong pace to whittle Davidson's advantage down from nine seconds to a little over two by the pitstops. Leading Silver Cup entrant Ollie Wilkinson had followed Balfe past Igoe with a bold outbraking manoeuvre into the Melbourne Hairpin, but had slipped 14s back from the McLaren when his Optimum Motorsport Aston Martin caught fire during the handover to Bradley Ellis and retired.

A 10s success penalty for Igoe's team-

mate Dennis Lind meant Barwell's Jonny Cocker – in for Sam De Haan – thus took third after the pitstops. Lind steadily caught him, but a grassy moment at the Old Hairpin late on thwarted the Dane's hopes of snatching a second successive podium.

Barwell boss Mark Lemmer reckoned Davidson's and Balfe's pace was such that third and fourth was the maximum possible result so was not displeased with Keen's recovery to fifth after Balon – who started fourth – got "beaten up" in the early stages.

He had dropped back to ninth before tangling with Alex Toth-Jones's GT4 Aston Martin at the Melbourne Hairpin, so Keen was needed to dispatch Ben Green's BMW and Seb Morris' Bentley to limit the damage, but the sister crew trail only by 8.5 points.

After its dream comeback at Silverstone, RAM Racing landed back to earth with a bump and was never a factor after qualifying, when Callum Macleod spun off at the Esses and couldn't set a time. From the back of the grid, Ian Loggie was hit with a stop/go penalty for spinning JM Littman's BMW at Goddards, had to make another unscheduled stop for a puncture before serving the 20s success time during the handover to Macleod and finished a lowly 10th.

JAMES NEWBOLD

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DONINGTON PARK BRITISH GT RESULTS

GT3

(79 laps) **1 Jonny Adam/Graham Davidson (Aston Martin Vantage)**; 2 Rob Bell/Shawn Balfe (McLaren 720S) + 3.417s; 3 Jonny Cocker/Sam De Haan (Lamborghini Huracan EVO); 4 Dennis Lind/Michael Igoe (Lamborghini); 5 Phil Keen/Adam Balon (Lamborghini); 6 Ross Gunn/Andrew Howard (Aston Martin). **Fastest lap** Nicki Thiim (Aston Martin) 1m27.948s (101.81mph). **Pole** Adam/Davidson. **Starters** 15. **Points** **1 Keen/Balon 104**; 2 Cocker/De Haan 95.5; 3 Adam/Davidson 72.5; 4 Bradley Ellis/Oliver Wilkinson (Aston Martin) 51; 5 Igoe 49.5; 6 Thiim/Mark Farmer (Aston Martin) 47.

GT4

(73 laps) **1 Sebastian Priaulx/Scott Maxwell (Ford Mustang)**; 2 Dean Macdonald/Callum Pointon (McLaren 570S) +28.853s; 3 Lewis Proctor/Jordan Collard (McLaren); 4 Billy Johnson/Chris Hoy (Ford); 5 Tom Canning/Ash Hand (Aston Martin Vantage); 6 Martin Plowman/Kelvin Fletcher (Aston Martin). **FL** Johnson 1m36.181s. (93.10mph). **P** Priaulx/Maxwell. **S** 25. **Points** **1 Priaulx/Maxwell 90.5**; 2 Macdonald/Pointon 82; 3 Proctor/Collard 70.5; 4 Plowman/Fletcher 64; 5 Canning/Hand 57.5; 6 Scott Malvern/Nick Jones (Mercedes-AMG GT4) 49.5.



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Proctor took third for Tolman, ahead of Pro-Am winners Billy Johnson and series returnee Sir Chris Hoy, who rebounded from gearbox problems on Saturday to cap a splendid double for Multimatic.

Vaulting up the order with a 26s short pitstop relative to the Silver cars, Johnson made the crucial pass on Martin Plowman's Beechdean Aston Martin at Redgate. The Beechdean car had led Pro-Am comfortably in the hands of Kelvin Fletcher after the demise of Silverstone winner Nick Jones' Mercedes with a holed radiator, but a delay getting into its box exacerbated its 15s penalty carried over from Silverstone.

JAMES NEWBOLD





More mixed fortune for Hoggard in F3 title battle

DONINGTON PARK
MSVR
22-23 JUNE

“Mainly good” was Johnathan Hoggard’s apt summary of his BRDC British F3 Donington Park weekend as he took assured lights-to-flag wins in two of the three races. But he didn’t finish the reversed-grid affair after a clash with Ayrton Simmons.

The upshot is he has trimmed the gap to Clement Novalak at the top of the table, from 36 points to 28, when he might have torn a chunk from it. Still, he was satisfied with his meeting’s work wherein he put his Snetterton clash-related slump behind him.

“There was nothing I could really do [in the Simmons clash] – scoring no points was a bit hard,” said Hoggard. “We had it all to make up in race three, which we managed to do and mainly dominate the weekend.”

Fortec racer Hoggard now has four wins this season – Novalak has two, along with three other podium visits – and insists his form reflects old-fashioned desire.

“We all just really want it so much, me and the team,” Hoggard said. “They’ve been doing a really good job with setting the car up the past few weekends and rounds, it’s just been a case of getting the results and putting it all together.”

Simmons got a five-place grid penalty for the Hoggard clash, and was disqualified from the same race for a separate contretemps with Kris Wright. But he had the grace to admit his race was “messy”. And race three was little better for him as he dropped out early after losing drive. He remains third in the table, but has lost ground.

He did, however, give Hoggard by far his strongest legitimate challenge of the

weekend, chasing him hard in the first race and finishing a close runner-up. Simmons therefore looked on the bright side.

“To be a tenth [0.166s] off pole is really good, and then our pace in race one was really good,” Simmons said. “I think we had the best race car out there, just a shame that we couldn’t get past Johnathan.

“It’s a bit tricky in a reversed-grid [race]; you sometimes get tangled up. There’s some stuff I’ve learned for sure...”

Points leader Novalak, a paragon of consistency this year, took three fourth places at Donington. It disguised an evolution as his weekend went on, though, as he was struggling with oversteer initially.

“All in all we had some good pace, we developed the car in the right direction, especially for when we come back [to Donington] in September,” the Carlin driver explained.

“This weekend the most important [thing] was being consistent, obviously my other title contenders weren’t, so it definitely paid off.”

Lanan’s Josh Mason meanwhile bagged the reversed-grid win, which he said “felt like a proper win”, after taking the spoils in a truncated race behind the safety car in Silverstone’s rain last year.

Nathan Harrison won both Mini Challenge JCW races. He held off a late charge from his championship rival James ‘Jiggy’ Gornall in race one, then dealt similarly with Dan Zelos in a drizzly race two after rising from sixth on the reversed grid to lead by the end of lap one.

Scott McKenna followed up his



DONINGTON PARK WEEKEND WINNERS

BRDC BRITISH F3

Race 1 (12 laps) 1 Johnathan Hoggard; 2 Ayrton Simmons +0.618s; 3 Kiern Jewiss; 4 Clement Novalak; 5 Ulysse De Pauw; 6 Neil Verhagen.

Fastest lap Hoggard 1m25.379s (104.87mph).

Pole Hoggard. **Starters** 16. **Race 2 (12 laps)**

1 Josh Mason; 2 Pavan Ravishankar +0.525s;

3 Manuel Maldonado; 4 Novalak; 5 Benjamin Pedersen; 6 Hampus Ericsson. **FL** Novalak

1m25.574s (104.63mph). **P** Ravishankar. **S** 16.

Race 3 (12 laps) 1 Hoggard; 2 De Pauw +4.004s;

3 Sasakorn Chaimongkol; 4 Novalak; 5 Nazim Azman; 6 Jewiss. **FL** Hoggard 1m25.454s

(104.67mph). **P** Hoggard. **S** 16. **Points** **1 Novalak**

288; 2 Hoggard 260; 3 Simmons 210; 4 Verhagen

176; 5 Maldonado 172; 6 De Pauw 171.

MINI CHALLENGE - JCW

Races 1 & 2 Nathan Harrison

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

Race 1 Scott McKenna

Race 2 Gordie Mutch

Race 3 Josh Malin

GINETTA RACING DRIVERS CLUB

Races 1 & 2 Michael Kidson

VOLKSWAGEN RACING CUP

Race 1 Mark Wakefield (Golf)

Race 2 Rob Allum (Golf)

OSS CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1, 2 & 3 Patrick Sherrington (MCR Sport)

TCR UK/TOURING CAR TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Max Coates (Cupra TCR DSG)

For full results visit:

tsl-timing.com

Silverstone Ginetta GT5 success breakthrough with another at Donington, prevailing in a frenzied race-one scrap with Geri Nicosia. Nicosia thought he'd won race two, but was disqualified for a technical breach with his bonnet which gifted victory to Gordie Mutch. Josh Malin held off Mutch to win race three, in which Nicosia rose from the back to seventh.

Michael Kidson won both GRDC races while his title rival Mark Sansom could only take two eighth places. Sansom had taken race one pole but was "swamped" in the opening turns, then spun at McLeans on lap two.

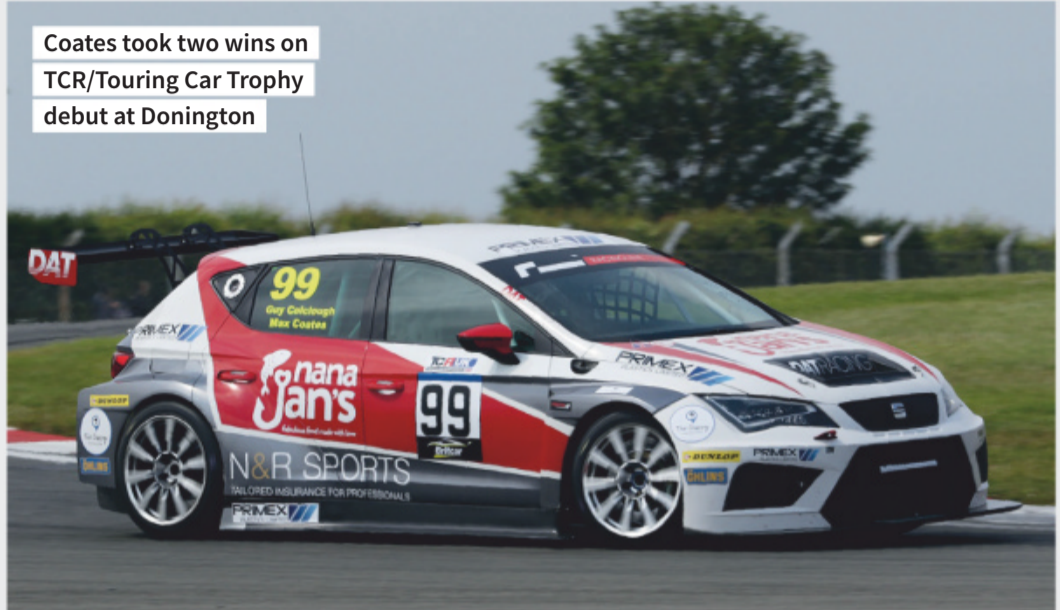
Mark Wakefield won the opening Volkswagen Racing Cup race, taking the lead at half distance when early leader Josh Coggan lost pace with an engine problem. Rob Allum won the reversed-grid race two after a late fight with Martin Depper.

Patrick Sherrington won all three OSS Championship races in his MCR Sport, making it six wins in a row. Mike Jenvey looked set to win race one but had to retire. He sat out the other races because his Jenvey-Gunn TS6 had dropped a valve.

GRAHAM KEILLOH

BUSY WEEKEND FOR COATES AS HE TAKES THREE WINS

Coates took two wins on TCR/Touring Car Trophy debut at Donington



Max Coates is most commonly spotted on the British Touring Car Championship support bill, as a Renault UK Clio Cup frontrunner. But since last year he's also driven a Cupra TCR in the Britcar Endurance Championship, paired with Guy Colclough for DAT Racing. However, last weekend at Donington Park he added another category when, again with the Cupra, he joined the TCR UK grid for the first time. And he won both races.

What's more, Coates and Colclough had driven the car in Britcar the previous day - at Oulton Park, winning their class in the opening race in Cheshire too. "A mega weekend," Coates enthused. "You couldn't ask for any more."

To make matters even more frantic, they had extra work from dropping out of Oulton's second race with fuel pressure problems. "It was tight last night and this morning," Coates admitted. Colclough added: "We're here at the circuit today through the kindness of Tim Docker, who lent us a part from his car."

Coates's first Donington win was also dramatic since it looked like he'd have to give best to long-time leader Lewis Kent. But Kent ran short of fuel, letting Coates by at the final corner. The pair were in a close fight in race two as well, but that was resolved when Kent dropped out with a rear suspension breakage.



Clio racer was also Britcar class winner

Coates's pace came despite having a DSG gearbox rather than a sequential, and ceding around 60-70kg to rivals. It was even the first time Coates had driven on Donington's Grand Prix configuration.

"Honestly we didn't really know [how competitive we'd be]," Coates said. "The only thing that gave us a tell-tale sign was that yesterday at Oulton Park we did a time that would have been good enough to put us P2 [when TCR visited last month]. So we knew that on balance we were somewhere near the pace, we just didn't know how near."

"I got introduced to Guy last year and we started doing a little bit of Britcar and coaching together," Coates said of how the arrangement came about.

"Guy was very keen to support Stewart [Lines] with the [TCR] championship, and he was keen to support me, so he said, 'There's a car there, let's go and do it, see how we get on'"

Colclough says he's "a big fan of TCR" and drove the car in TCR's season-opening round. "The cars are relatively inexpensive and they're very reliable, and it gives me an opportunity to race a very fast car and be able to compare myself with professional racers," he said.

Coates is also open to further TCR appearances. "Naturally I'd like to do some more rounds with this when either Britcar or Clio Cup don't clash," he said. "Maybe for something next year."

Certainly from adding his three wins from Oulton and Donington to two Clio Cup triumphs at Croft the previous weekend, Coates is aiming high, and Oulton's Clio meeting is yet to come: "Hopefully we can make it seven wins next weekend..."

GRAHAM KEILLOH



Bailey and Schulz share Britcar spoils with Humphries

Ferrari 488 Challenge duo comfortably won the first Britcar race

**OULTON PARK
BARC
22 JUNE**

“When the more experienced drivers are out in the first stint, you open yourself up if there’s an early safety car.”

Those were the musings of Britcar Endurance race one winners Paul Bailey and Andy Schulz following their 44-second victory over the Praga R1T drivers Tim Gray and Grant Williams. The team, as always,

opted to send the less experienced Bailey out in the Ferrari 488 Challenge first.

Despite losing places to the more experienced drivers early on, once Bailey handed over the reins to Schulz, it was order restored as the Ferrari comfortably earned its first win since Brands Hatch. But the pair’s earlier observation turned out to be disappointingly accurate, in race two as an early safety car – combined with pit strategy – handed victory to lone driver Ian Humphries (Porsche 991 GT3).

The Saker of Chris Hart was the early leader, extending his advantage to over 12 seconds after only five laps, but it was neutralised when Guy Colclough’s Cupra TCR stopped on track, necessitating a safety car. While teams with two drivers had to wait until the allotted pit window, individual drivers could pit at any time and Humphries did exactly that, returning to the track only 30 seconds behind Hart with all the cars ahead yet to stop.

Once they did so, it became a sprint to

MacLennan doubles up and cruises to FF1600 victories

**KNOCKHILL
SMRC
23 JUNE**

Jordan Gronkowski extended his championship lead in Scottish Formula Ford at Knockhill, but was edged to both race victories by guest entrant Neil MacLennan.

Gronkowski qualified just 0.018 seconds behind MacLennan, but was mugged by MacLennan’s Kevin Mills Racing team-mate Michael Macpherson off the line and then harried by Neil Broome as 2016 champion MacLennan stretched his legs. After fending off Broome’s challenge, Gronkowski began to hunt down Macpherson and latched himself onto his gearbox with just a

couple of laps remaining, nosing his Van Diemen up the inside at the hairpin.

But Macpherson used the cutback and pulled alongside Gronkowski down the main straight, only for Gronkowski to copy the opening-lap move that Macpherson had pulled on him around the outside of Duffus Dip to seal second spot. Broome profited too while Macpherson was off line to take third. The second race was more straightforward as MacLennan gently pulled away from Gronkowski.

A bulging grid of 18 cars contested the Scottish C1 Cup, as Kieren Preedy and guest entrant Lewis Grant scored a win apiece. Paul Donkin made the trip up north and dominated the opening race from pole position, but was later disqualified for using an incorrect specification of tyre. Preedy



KMR driver was class of FF1600 field

MOIR

inherited the win after a strong defensive drive kept him ahead of Finlay Brunton.

Brunton was runner-up again in the second race, despite a fantastic move around the outside of Duffus that allowed him to lead early on. Grant made a similarly good start from fourth and began to hound Brunton as the laps ticked by, eventually making a move stick into Duffus that paved the way for the race win.

Robbie Dalgleish and Michael Weddell shared the victories in three aggressive Scottish Mini Cooper Cup races. Dalgleish made a committed move around the outside



Winstanley dominated in his Caterham Superlight

cut the deficit to Humphries. Hart's team-mate Steve Harris couldn't maintain the pace, finishing a distant fourth, leaving the experienced Schulz and Ben Clucas (Porsche 997 GT3) to begin closing the 1m04s gap to the leader. Despite a 4s per lap advantage, it wasn't enough to overturn Humphries' advantage, with Clucas finishing 3.8s behind.

"My team kept telling me P1, but I didn't know if it was in class or overall as my radio is bloody rubbish," said Humphries following his first victory of the season. "I'm really happy, but as a single driver we have the advantage of pitting whenever we can."

While Clucas couldn't take the race win, he did manage to hold off Schulz to narrowly earn second ahead of the championship-leading Ferrari. "I know Andy [Schulz] quite well and we've done some driver training together, but haven't done much racing and that was a great scrap," Clucas said.

MG Trophy frontrunner Adam Jackson made a rare MG Owners Club



Jackson took victory in MG Owners Club race

Championship appearance. The Leeds-based driver stuck his ZR on pole and comfortably sealed the race one victory. Second-placed Simon Kendrick's F couldn't keep up with Jackson for the entirety, falling off the pace late on, but narrowly managed to hold off Steve McDermid in third.

It looked like a similar result was on the cards in race two until Jackson retired when a suspected frayed battery cable caused the race-one winner to keep losing power. This handed the victory to Kendrick, who celebrated his first overall race win of the season. A 7s advantage over McDermid had been quashed to just 0.5s by the final lap.

"Another lap or two and he would have definitely had me," said Kendrick.

In the only CNC Heads Sports/Saloon Car championship race of the day, two-time Caterham 420R champion Danny Winstanley dominated proceedings in his Caterham Superlight despite a 10s jump start penalty. He explained he was using the one-off race to test slick tyres.

DOM D'ANGELILLO



Paterson dominated in Scottish Legends

of Butcher's to overtake David Sleigh and win the opener, but dropped back to third in race two as Weddell took charge.

Contact with Craig Blake had pushed Dagleish down to fifth but, after passing Mark Geraghty at the hairpin, he closed up to the battling Sleigh and Vic Covey Jr to steal third from Sleigh on the final turn.

The final race produced a breathless showdown between Dagleish, Weddell and Sleigh that eventually swung in Dagleish's favour when he muscled his Cooper up the inside at the hairpin. Weddell was forced wide into the gravel and had to give best,

but managed to snatch second from Sleigh at the hairpin on the next lap.

John Paterson was unstoppable as he won all three Legends races. Dominating the opening heat, he sold David Hunter a dummy at the hairpin in heat two before using the supreme slipstream effect to blast from last to first in the final.

Alastair Baptie qualified last in the Classic Sports and Saloons as his MGB's bonnet pins "stopped working", but surged from 13th to fourth off the line before reeling in John Kinmond for the opening race win. He bested Kinmond from pole in the following encounter.

Ron Cumming returned to Scottish Motor Racing Club action in his Nemesis Kitcar and simply drove away from Paul Brydon's BMW M3 silhouette in the opening Sports and Saloons race. But Cumming didn't start the second race, leaving the path clear for Brydon to win a race of attrition.

LUKE BARRY

WEEKEND WINNERS



OULTON PARK BRITCAR ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Race 1 Paul Bailey/Andy Schulz (Ferrari 488 Challenge)

Race 2 Ian Humphries (Porsche 991 GT3 Cup, above)

MG OWNERS CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

Race 1 Adam Jackson (ZR)

Race 2 Simon Kendrick (F VVC)

CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOONS

Danny Winstanley (Caterham Superlight)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

KNOCKHILL

SCOTTISH FORMULA FORD 1600

Races 1 & 2 Neil MacLennan (Spectrum)

SCOTTISH CITROEN C1 CUP

Race 1 Kieren Preedy

Race 2 Lewis Grant

SCOTTISH MINI COOPER CUP

Races 1 & 3 Robbie Dagleish

Race 2 Michael Weddell

SCOTTISH LEGENDS

Heats 1, 2 & Final John Paterson

SCOTTISH CLASSIC SPORTS & SALOONS

Races 1 & 2 Alastair Baptie (MGB GT)

SCOTTISH SPORTS & SALOONS

Race 1 Ron Cumming (Nemesis Kitcar)

Race 2 Paul Brydon (Solution F BMW M3)

SCOTTISH MINI COOPER S & FIESTAS

Races 1 & 2 Oly Mortimer (Mini, below)



For full results visit: speedhive.mylaps.com

FINISHING STRAIGHT

IN THE MEDIA • HAVE-A-GO HERO • ARCHIVE • QUIZ



MUDDYING THE PURISTS' PI

While we all love motorsport, there's no denying that it's become full of over-regulation, stewards' enquiries and talk about 'the show'. But what if 'the show' was the sport itself?

Monster truck events have been a staple in the US for decades, with regular stadium shows across the country drawing in crowds of tens of thousands. What's more, 70% of the audiences are millennials, tapping into a market where mainstream motorsport is arguably floundering.

Until relatively recently, it's been treated by Brits as an odd colonial import. This year, leading monster truck show *Monster Jam* undertook its first UK 'tour', taking in Manchester and Coventry alongside its now regular Cardiff event at the Principality Stadium.

The mere thought of a monster truck show being regarded as a genuine motorsport might leave motorsport purists wanting to tear this page out of the magazine. But stick with it.

Alx Danielsson has participated in 'proper' motorsport, having climbed the single-seater ladder as far as a test with the Renault Formula 1

team. In recent years he's competed in sportscars, rallycross, and NASCAR. He's also a *Monster Jam* regular on its European tours, making the move after a series of appearances to promote it in his native Sweden, where it's hugely popular.

"It's rock and roll. It's fun for everyone," Danielsson says of the show's enduring popularity. "It aims towards the family. It's entertainment, it's in the city, and you can see everything all the time.

"The kids like it because they've got faces and characters and they manage to present the drivers with the trucks as some kind of franchise heroes. The parents go with their kids and they enjoy it because it's just so different.

"You'll get 20-30,000 at a UK show. A lot of those that like pure racing may not want to go, but if they do they'll have fun because it's so extreme."

Danielsson's move to monster trucks is an unusual one. Most drivers in the discipline have worked as mechanics or moved from off-road racing. Nevertheless, despite it being 'a show', and the drivers' backgrounds being varied, the competition is professional and fierce.



CTURE

The US staple is making its way over to UK shores, tapping into a young audience

WILDE

“It’s hard to explain how good these drivers are because there’s nothing to compare them with, but they’re good at everything,” Danielsson says. “They could be stunt drivers, they could do rallycross reasonably well.

“From a spectator point of view, it’s a show. But for us – the drivers and mechanics – we are racing, but we’re racing with hippos that are on steroids. It’s hard but we’re doing everything we can.”

Events comprise racing – a sort of Race Of Champions-like competition on mirrored courses – as well as multiple judged elements, including the popular freestyle competition. The judged element works via a crowd vote, where fans input a score on a website from their phones.

The combination of real competition and fan interactivity engages, and although you could argue that some will always vote for their favourites regardless, Danielsson still feels it’s a fair competition overall, and everyone takes it seriously.

“The cream rises to the top anyway, the guys that win deserve it.”

DOMINIK WILDE


youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom


Autosport explains the reasons behind the finalisation of the major changes to the Formula 1 regulations planned for 2021 being delayed until October, as well as looking at whether the outcome will be watered down. **Go to bit.ly/2021delay**

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Misano, Italy
29-30 June

Livestream

Motorsport.tv, Sat 1400,
Sun 1400

Austrian Grand Prix
Formula 1 World
Championship
Round 9/21

Red Bull Ring, Austria
30 June

Live Sky Sports F1,
Sun 1230

Highlights Channel 4,
Sun 1900, Sky Sports F1,
Sun 1800

Formula 2
Round 6/12

Red Bull Ring, Austria

29-30 June
 Live Sky Sports F1,
Sat 1535, Sun 0955

FIA Formula 3
Round 3/8

Red Bull Ring, Austria
29-30 June

Live Sky Sports F1,
Sat 0915, Sun 0840

Porsche Supercup
Round 3/9

Red Bull Ring, Austria
30 June

Live Eurosport 2,
Sky Sports F1, Sun 1110

Blancpain GT World
Challenge Europe
Round 2/5

Misano, Italy

29-30 June

Livestream

Motorsport.tv, Sat 1400,
Sun 1400

IMSA SportsCar
Round 6/12

Watkins Glen, USA

30 June

Super GT
Round 4/8

Buriram, Thailand

30 June

Livestream

Motorsport.tv, Sun 0800

NASCAR Cup
Round 17/36

Chicagoland, Illinois, USA

30 June

Live Premier Sports 1,
Sun 1930

European Rally
Championship

Round 4/8

Rally Poland

28-30 June

Highlights Eurosport 1,
Sat 2300, Sun 2300

MotoGP

Round 8/19

Assen, Netherlands

30 June

Live BT Sport 2,
Sun 1230

Highlights BT Sport 1,
Sun 2000

UK MOTORSPORT

Oulton Park BARC

29-30 June

BTCC, F4, Porsche Carrera
Cup, Renault Clio, Ginetta
GT4, Ginetta Junior

Live ITV4, Sun 1130

Donington Park VSCC

29 June

HRDC Academy, Allstars,
A-Series Challenge,
Pre-'66 Touring Cars,
Touring Greats, VSCC races

Brands Hatch HSCC

29-30 June

HGPCA, Dunlop Saloons,
Jaguar Challenge, Guards
Trophy, Historic FF1600,
70s Road Sports, Historic
Road Sports, XL Aurora,
Formula Junior

Thruxton BARC

29-30 June

Trucks, Kumho BMW,
Mighty Minis, Classic
FF1600, Clubmans

Snetterton BRSCC

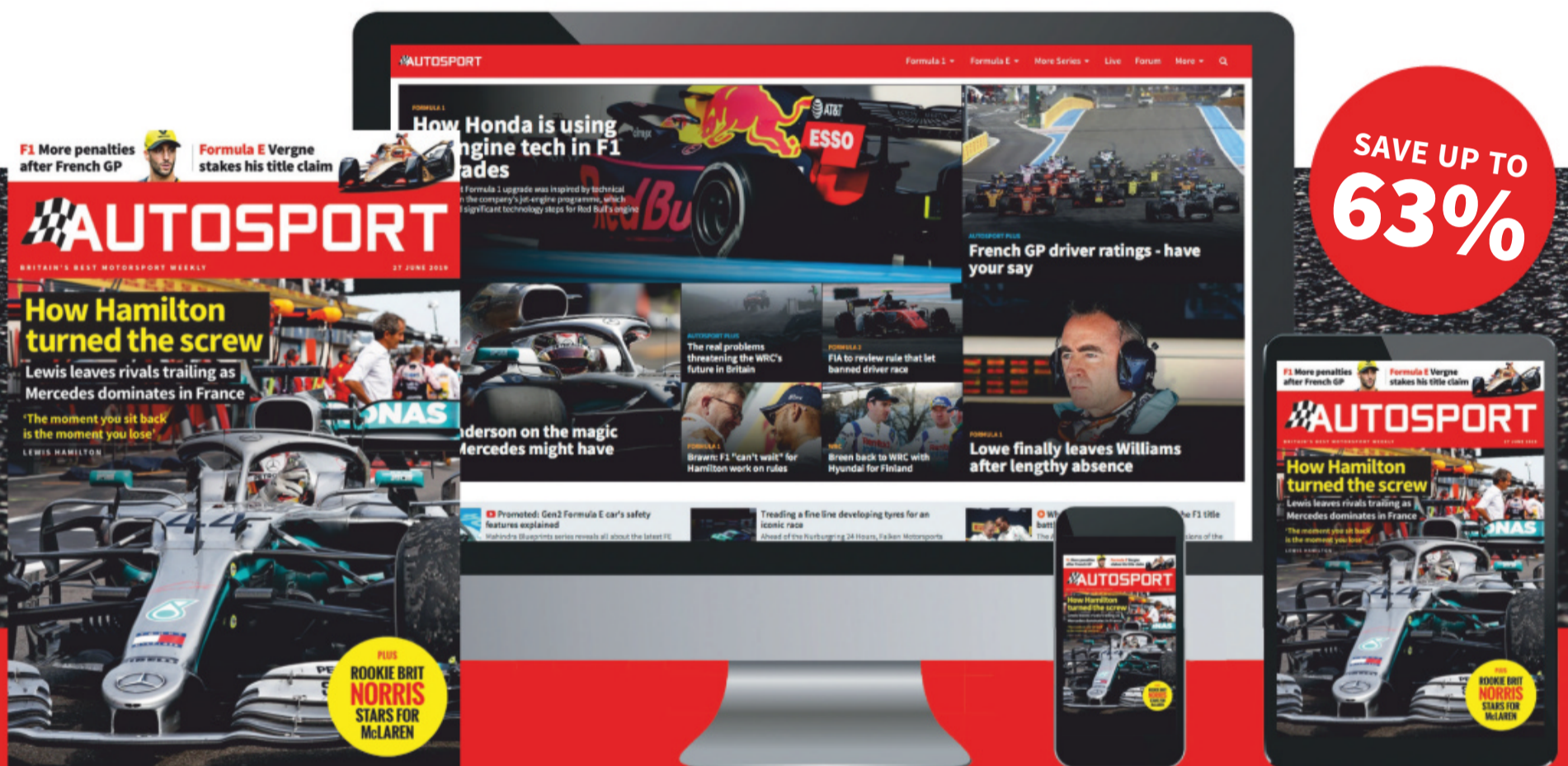
29-30 June

Caterham Seven 420Rs,
310Rs, 270Rs, Roadsport,
Academy, Mazda MX-5s,
Production GTI

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SARAH FISHER

The one-time poster child of the IRL enjoyed a fleeting taste of Formula 1

JAMES NEWBOLD

Imagine if, at this year's US Grand Prix, McLaren gave a test to IndyCar's most popular driver in full view of the world media. In 2002, that actually happened.

Looking back on her three laps of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Kimi Raikkonen's back-up McLaren MP4-17, Indiana native Sarah Fisher admits she never got close to sampling the full potential of a car "that was capable of things beyond my imagination at that time", and is at pains to point out that it "wasn't a test, I can tell you that much".

She had never raced a road course in her career, so the former dirt-track racer with one IRL pole and two podiums to her name – both on ovals – was an unlikely candidate to become the USA's first 'Formula 1 driver' since Michael Andretti in 1993.

But the then 21-year-old wasn't about to turn down a high-publicity demonstration

“THE McLAREN WAS CAPABLE OF THINGS BEYOND MY IMAGINATION AT THAT TIME”

set up by mutual sponsor TAG Heuer.

Now a mother of two after stepping out of the cockpit in 2010, Fisher is grateful for the opportunity, however brief.

"It was much more than three laps at Indy," she says. "I got to see what it was all about and what it could be, but I didn't really get to drive it, because I had a lot of pressure to take care of it.

"Still, it was just a really neat opportunity to see the inside of that world and what the cars would be capable of doing."

Fisher didn't disgrace herself come the test, and benefited from the advice of David Coulthard – "what a nice person, he took the time to give me a run-down on what to do" – and Williams driver Juan Pablo Montoya, an Indy 500 rookie with Fisher in 2000.

"Juan said, 'When you brake, as soon as you get off the brake you're going to go another 100 feet and brake again!' I was like, 'Really?' But it was true!" she laughs. "The capabilities of those cars were just phenomenal, I needed way more than three laps to even find a remote limit."

But one of Fisher's favourite memories was a meeting with Ron Dennis, when she came to the factory for a seat-fitting. "I went to his office and he had Steve Kinser's outlaw sprint car on his desk. How cool is that? I instantly felt at home with him, we had a great conversation about that." ❦





MOTTA

TIRELLI

CAMPORIO

Carrboro

WORLD RALLY

2



FINISHING STRAIGHT

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Just north of Perugia, Carlos Sainz backs his patched-up Toyota Celica GT4 out of service on the 1990 Sanremo Rally. The Spaniard's roll on the St Martino in Colle test – the last gravel road before the event headed back around the coast to Sanremo – cost him two minutes, but it wouldn't stop him from clinching third and celebrating a maiden World Rally Championship title a day later, with two rounds of the series to spare. Sainz concluded his successful 1990 campaign with a first Lombard RAC Rally win.

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McKLEIN
PHOTOGRAPHY



WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN?

WHO IS THIS?

This fun-loving racer had a brief stint at the top table but probably should have enjoyed even greater success.

From a famous wine region, he was a national star in his early days but a huge accident curtailed his progress. He returned as part of a world-famous academy and mastered the opposition when it mattered.

A disappointing stint in the second tier prompted a change of fortune in a burgeoning new rival. There was a small positive of infinitesimal quantity, and when he doubled up he was discovered as a diamond in the rough and helped to develop the next generation of star maker.

He was given a chance as a super-sub, but it was a temporary shot, and his true calling would come over a greater distance. He also represented his country, and put in a starring role in a cameo in a dying series.

He was set for an electrifying coda before being undone by his demons.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS Who, what, where, when James Courtney, Jaguar R2 test, Monza, Italy, July 2001. Who is this? Teo Fabi. On this day 1) Skip Barber. 2) Maurice Trintignant, Stirling Moss. 3) Misano. 4) Alberto Valerio. 5) Yannick Dalmas, Derek Warwick, Mark Blundell. Name the helmet Tomas Scheckter.

ON THIS DAY

1 Which grand prix team started from its first and only ever Formula 1 pole position on this day in 1999?

2 It's Nico Rosberg's birthday. Where and when did he score the first of his 23 world championship grand prix wins?

3 Which track held the French Grand Prix on this day in 1965?

4 Four Swiss drivers lined up for the Battersea Formula E race on this day in 2015. Name them.

5 Marcus Ericsson scored his maiden GP2 win on this day in 2010 in Valencia. Who was he driving for?

NAME THE HELMET



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX

Can Max halt the Mercs at Red Bull's 'home' race?

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