



FORMULA 1 SEASON PREVIEW 2015

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**LEWIS
HAMILTON?**

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> RICCIARDO
> ALONSO
> BOTTAS
THE RIVALS
RATED

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WALKER**
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TO GET
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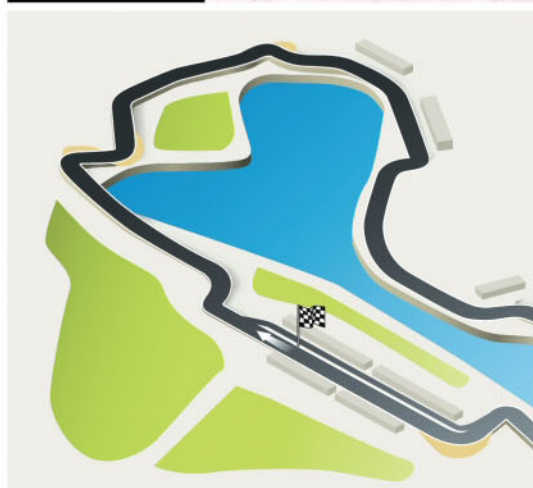
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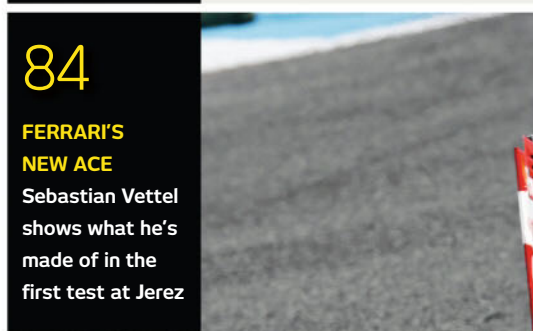
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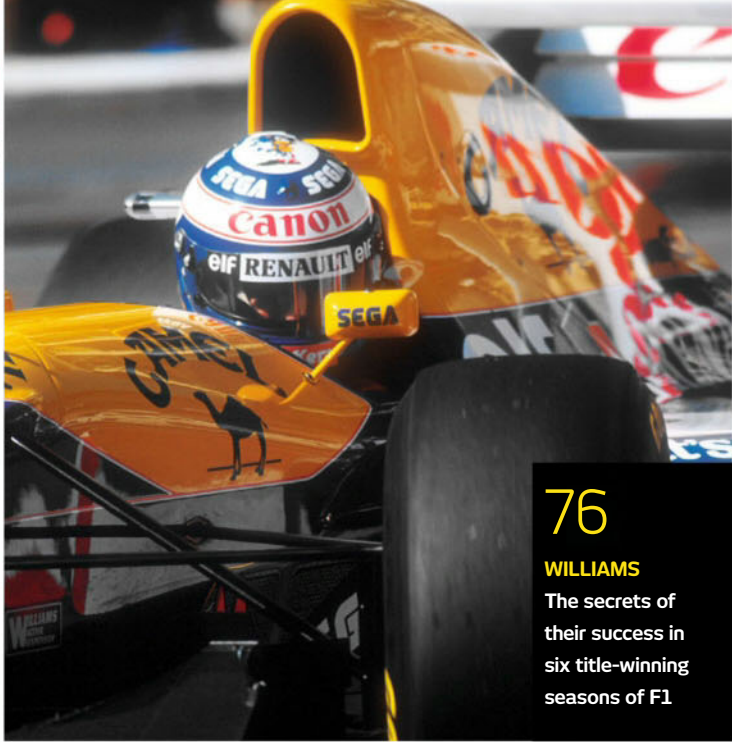
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Meet Red Bull's Daniil Kvyat and Daniel Ricciardo



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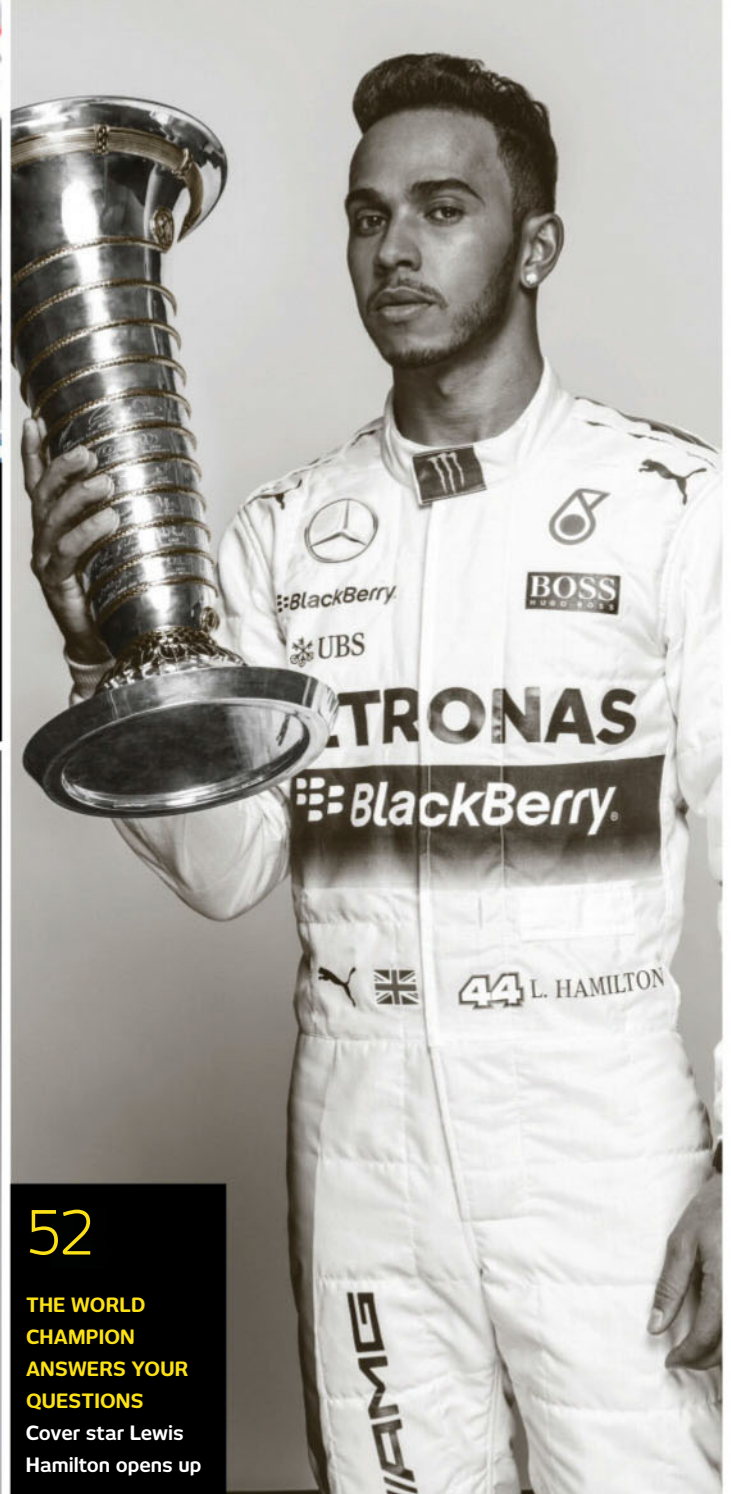
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FERRARI'S NEW ACE
Sebastian Vettel shows what he's made of in the first test at Jerez



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WILLIAMS

The secrets of their success in six title-winning seasons of F1



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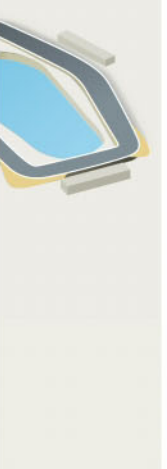
THE WORLD CHAMPION ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

Cover star Lewis Hamilton opens up

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ALONSO AT McLAREN

Has enough water passed under the bridge for him to make a fresh start?



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DAMON HILL
F1 Racing's new columnist explains what makes F1 such a very human endeavour





Ignition / Anthony Rowlinson / 03.15

The 'haves' have it...

"It's like pre-revolutionary France" was the sage observation made by one seasoned contributor to *F1 Racing* as he gauged the mood of the Jerez pre-season paddock. The 'haves', he explained, were better funded and more confident of their standing as big beasts in the F1 jungle than at any time in recent memory. In this category we might place Mercedes, Ferrari, McLaren, Williams, Red Bull and – thanks to their association with the wealthy mothership – Toro Rosso.

So far so good. But what of the 'have nots', who we must classify as Lotus, Force India, and Sauber? Each of these valiant battlers has emerged from the winter in better shape than they left 2014: Lotus have a car and engine package that will allow their drivers to perform; sponsor-light Sauber look 'testing-quick'; and Force India, new car unseen as we went to press, at least have the comfort of fresh Mexican funding (see p102).

But how healthy are they *really*? Sauber are heavily reliant on the cash brought in by Marcus Ericsson and highly rated rookie Felipe Nasr (see p122) to fund their exploits; the true nature of Lotus's finances remain opaque, while Force India, despite a bank-balance boost, have been struggling to get their new chassis ready in time for Melbourne (see 'F1 Insider', p24).

Six robust teams; three struggling and two non-starters (unless the remnants of Marussia are exhumed by a City-backed, Graeme Lowdon-led consortium). This presents a tricky message for a sport with global reach and expansionist intent. For even as it grows and

reaches ever further from its Euro-heartland (Mexico this year, Azerbaijan and possibly Qatar in 2016), F1 seems to be in danger of pricing itself beyond the reach of all but the very wealthiest participants.

Sure F1 has always been a sport through which cash has sluiced fast and loose, but now, without the backing of a global corporation, or, in Williams' case, strength built upon decades of achievement and, lately, root-and-branch reform of internal working practices, there seems to be less and less room for the little guy.

And even an often-callous sport like F1 *should* care about the diminution of the grid, for what is victory without opposition to beat? No discredit to Mercedes, or, before them, Red Bull for achieving dominance, but is that *really* what sport is for – crushing the opposition or squeezing them so hard that participation becomes unsustainable? Remember the excitement of 2012 when Sauber battled for victories and podiums? Or 2013 when Lotus were often the closest challengers to a fleet Red Bull? It seems unlikely that either will have much hope of getting on terms with Lewis and Nico this season.

It doesn't have to be this way, though, as regular readers of this magazine (and, in particular, of Dieter Rencken's Power Play column, p37) will know. A more equitable distribution of revenues would help guarantee the existence of the smaller players and the livelihoods of those who work for them, while enriching the show and maintaining F1's cherished heritage of constructor-participants. Will that happen? Don't hold your breath.

More likely, alas, a message of 'let them eat cake'.

Follow Anthony on Twitter: @Rowlinson_F1



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Perou

The man who pushed the button on our cover star

The photographer anointed by Lewis Hamilton for this month's front cover has shot 'em all. Check out www.perou.co.uk to see the evidence...



Peter Windsor

Expert analysis of the 2015 championship contenders

On page 42, Peter Windsor applies his laser insight to the men dreaming of taking down the 2014 champ – and explains how each one could beat Lewis Hamilton



Andrew Benson

BBC Sport's chief F1 writer tries arguing with himself

Will Fernando Alonso's return to F1 be a triumph or a disaster? The BBC's Andrew Benson offers up both sides of the argument for us (p92)



Damon Hill

Exclusive insight from the 1996 F1 world champion

Our returning columnist (he last wrote for *F1 Racing* when driving for Arrows in 1997) can explain exactly what it feels like to race – and win – in F1 (p35)



Thanks to Nicola Armstrong, Lorenzo Bellanca, Idoia Bilbao, Hanspeter Brack, Steve Cooper, Ben Cowley, Russell Day, Lyndsey Fairburn, Ross Gregory and FMG, Will Hings, Akiko Itoga, Bradley Lord, Adrian Myers, Georg Nolte, The legendary Perou for his patience, Rodrigo Sanchez, Marleen Seilheimer, Katie Tweedle, Fabiana Valenti, Tabatha Valls Halling



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Parade

Still looking good Having caused a stir as the first 2015 F1 car to appear in public – on the cover of *F1 Racing*, naturally – the Williams FW37 was more low key in testing, despite Valtteri Bottas's ever-spectacular style. Williams didn't need to grab more publicity by going for times, instead quietly racking up the laps. Their 2015 hopes look as good as their car did on our cover....

Where Jerez, Spain **When** 4.53pm, Sunday 1 February 2015

Photographer Lorenzo Bellanca

Details Canon EOS-1DX, 600mm lens, 1/250th at F14





Parade

No looking back Fernando Alonso glances in the rear-view mirror of his McLaren-Honda, but his thoughts are firmly on what lies ahead. He's moved on from his past struggles and his focus now is on returning McLaren-Honda to the top step of the Formula 1 podium

Where Jerez, Spain

When 09.15am, Tuesday 3 February 2015

Photographer Steven Tee/LAT

Details Canon EOS-1DX, 200mm lens, 1/160th at F2.8



Parade

Warning light The ever-tacturn Kimi Räikkönen isn't the type to get caught up in the hyperbole surrounding pre-season testing, even when his Ferrari team has set the pace throughout.

Räikkönen's upbeat assessment – "We have something to work with," he opined – will serve as a warning to Ferrari's rivals

Where Jerez, Spain **When** 08.47am, Tuesday 3 February 2015

Photographer Glenn Dunbar/LAT

Details Canon EOS-1DX, 600mm lens, 1/250th at F4





NEW McLAREN 20



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F1 INSIDER

NEWS ■ OPINION ■ ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS

The story behind Ferrari's testing pace

Blistering speed suggests smoke and mirrors, but their engine's looking pretty good

Did Fernando Alonso leave Ferrari at exactly the wrong time? That was the tantalising question thrown up by the first pre-season test. *F1 Racing* closed for press just before the final two tests in Barcelona, but the opening salvo of 2015 in Jerez generated plenty of intrigue, much of it surrounding Alonso's former team.

Ferrari racers Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Räikkönen set fastest times on three of the four days at the Spanish track, and Felipe Nasr's Ferrari-engined Sauber set the pace on the fourth. In itself, this does not mean anything as F1 pre-season testing times are a notoriously unreliable guide to true pace because there are no constraints on what teams can do to their cars. For example, Räikkönen set the pace for Ferrari on the opening day of testing last year.

But while reigning champions Mercedes had an enormously impressive test, completing some 25 per cent more laps than any other team and lapping consistently and quickly throughout, even Nico Rosberg admitted that Ferrari's pace had been "an eye-opener".

Yet the conclusion of many was that Ferrari's speed, for all the consistency with which Vettel and Räikkönen topped the times, cannot have been real. For one thing, it just did not add up. Ferrari are fresh from their least competitive





Reigning world champions Mercedes proved to be solidly impressive in testing, making the most of sessions to put in 25 per cent more laps than any other team, while lapping quickly and consistently

season in over 20 years. For another, the laps were not just fast, they were suspiciously fast.

No team did a race simulation run in Jerez, which would have given a relatively accurate guide to pace. But averaging out the lap times of all the teams should give a more accurate picture than headline lap times, because that irons out the wrinkles to a degree. Ferrari's average lap time was 1.5 seconds quicker than that of any other team, while Red Bull, Mercedes and Williams, who were next up, were all separated by less than 0.1secs.

The reason seems clear: Ferrari focused only on short runs, presumably without much fuel. Mercedes, by contrast, concentrated on long runs of between 30 and 40 laps. What's more, it seems both Vettel and Räikkönen set fastest times on the soft tyre, which Mercedes, Red Bull and Williams did not use. But despite scepticism as to what Ferrari were up to, and what it meant in terms of their potential, there is genuine reason to believe they have made a step forward.

The main reason for optimism at Maranello is the power unit. According to sources within the team, Ferrari have improved their engine to the tune of 50bhp already, and that could increase to 80bhp by the start of the season. Given that their power deficit to Mercedes last year was reputedly around 40bhp, that would put Ferrari's engine in the same ballpark as the Mercedes this year – even if the reigning world champions add the 50-60bhp they are reputed to have found.

As for the car itself, it looks to be a light upgrade of last year's, although Räikkönen, who struggled badly with the 2014 machine, claimed in Jerez that it was a major improvement.

"It's a lot different," said Räikkönen. "It's a new car and you usually know if the car is going to be good or not good. This year is a completely different story to last year. It's a positive start and I had a good feeling straight away."

Alonso's new team, meanwhile, had a torrid time in Jerez, with McLaren-Honda completing the lowest mileage of any team by far. Alonso and Jenson Button alternated in the car throughout the test, and completed only six laps each on the first two days as the car repeatedly suffered from electrical issues.

McLaren completed 79 laps by the end of the test, but further reliability problems with the new Honda engine meant Alonso did not manage a dry lap time and Button was nearly seven seconds off the pace. That meant it was not possible to ascertain where McLaren are. There were, though, small reasons for optimism.

Alonso, who was positive about the car, set a purple sector time while lapping on intermediates at the same time as Nico Rosberg's



Ferrari's average lap time was 1.5secs quicker than their rivals', but they put in short runs with soft tyres and, presumably, low fuel

NEWS DIGEST

The month's big stories at a glance

6.1.15 The FIA unveils a new superlicence points system, ensuring aspiring racers complete at least two years in junior single-seaters to qualify for F1 **9.1.15** It is confirmed that Spain and Austria will host the two in-season test sessions on 10 May and 21 June this year, after each country's respective grand prix **20.1.15** GP2 Series champion Jolyon Palmer is named the Lotus F1 Team's reserve driver. The role will include outings in several Friday practice sessions during the season

20.1.15 Robert Manzon, the last survivor of the first F1 world championship season in 1950, dies aged 97. The Frenchman was best known for his valiant efforts for the cash-strapped Gordini team



28.1.15 British GP3 Series champion Alex Lynn is appointed Williams test driver **4.2.15** Ex-Red Bull man Rob Taylor is named chief designer for Haas F1 team **5.2.15** Caterham's administrators announce the team's assets will be auctioned in March

Mercedes, to whom he did not lose much ground. Also, the Honda engine was operated well below maximum power throughout the test, and there are further iterations of it to come for the second and third tests.

As for the rest, Red Bull's test was hampered by problems with the Renault engine – just as it was in 2014, although not to the same extent.

Williams operated under the radar, as they did in practice sessions last year, but looked to be in decent shape. Lotus, who have switched from Renault to Mercedes engines this year, have made a step up after a dire 2014. And Sauber's headline-grabbing pace was almost certainly due to their desire to attract more sponsors.



NEWS

New McLaren design ace imparts flavour of Red Bull

Peter Prodromou, formerly Adrian Newey's right-hand man, gives the McLaren MP4-30 an Alonso-pleasing familiar new look

Fernando Alonso spent a considerable amount of time at the Jerez test deep in conversation with McLaren's new chief engineer, Peter Prodromou, the team's star signing from Red Bull.

Prodromou worked as Adrian Newey's right-hand man for the best part of two decades, first at McLaren and then at Red Bull, after Newey

insisted Prodromou come with him as part of the package when he joined the Milton Keynes-based team in 2006.

As such, Prodromou knows all the secrets that have made the Red Bull cars so competitive over the past six years, as well as those of the race-winning McLarens of the early- to mid-2000s.

Alonso tried to secure a drive with Red Bull during the summer of 2014, and got a long way down the line with team boss Christian Horner and Newey, only for Red Bull boss Dietrich Mateschitz to insist they take Toro Rosso's Daniel Ricciardo, a graduate of the energy drink firm's driver development scheme.



Alonso (left) wanted to get his hands on a Red Bull, and Prodromou (right) was only too happy to oblige

But the signs are that Alonso has now effectively got his hands on a Red Bull, only one that has been built by McLaren. There are Red Bull signatures all over McLaren's MP4-30. These start at the front wing, which has a very similar multi-element design aimed at consistent stable downforce. This replaces the type of wing favoured by McLaren over the past couple of years, which had fewer elements and created more downforce, but was more prone to instability-inducing stall.

The top nose shape is also similar to that of last year's Red Bull, and the shrink-wrapped per bodywork – what McLaren call their 'size zero' car – is shaped like a Red Bull, only more tightly wrapped around what is clearly a very neatly and carefully designed Honda engine.

Alonso was very positive about the new McLaren's behaviour in Jerez, more so than Jenson Button, who found its balance not quite to his liking. If the Honda engine is any good, will it also show a Red Bull-style winning turn of pace? It would hardly come as a surprise.

QUIZ

F1 Mastermind

Your chosen specialised subject: the world's greatest sport

SEASON-OPENERS

- Q1** Which circuit hosted the opening round of the first world championship season in 1950?
- Q2** Bahrain has hosted the season-opener twice. Which driver won both of those races?
- Q3** Which Ferrari driver shared his victory with Juan Manuel Fangio at the 1956 season-opener in Argentina?
- Q4** Sebastian Vettel has won the opening race of the season only once. In which year did he do so?

- Q5** Which two American street circuits have both hosted season-opening grands prix?
- Q6** What links Nigel Mansell and Kimi Räikkönen's wins in the 1989 and 2007 season-openers?
- Q7** Jim Clark took two wins in season-opening races, at which two South African circuits?
- Q8** Jenson Button has won the first race of the year twice. In which seasons did he do so?

- Q9** Jody Scheckter won the 1977 season-opener, securing which team victory on their debut?
- Q10** Which Swiss track hosted the opening rounds of the 1951 and 1952 seasons?
- Q11** Which circuit has hosted the most F1 season-opening races?
- Q12** Lewis Hamilton qualified on pole for last year's season-opener. Which driver joined him on the front row of the grid?

- Q13** Mario Andretti took the first F1 win of his career in the opening race of which year?
- Q14** Only two drivers have ever won the season-opening race for three years in a row. One of them is Michael Schumacher. Can you name the other?
- Q15** The Netherlands has hosted the season-opening race just once. At which circuit did the grand prix take place?

Answers 1 Silverstone 2 Fernando Alonso 3 Luigi Musso 4 2011 5 Long Beach, Phoenix 6 Won on their Ferrari debut 7 East London, Kyalami 8 2009, 2012 9 Wolf 10 Bremgarten 11 Melburne 12 Daniel Ricciardo 13 1971 14 Graham Hill 15 Zandvoort

Honda can develop engines in-season

FIA relaxes stance and allows Honda some flexibility over engine development to keep pace with their rivals



McLaren-Honda have won their fight to be allowed to develop their engine during the 2015 season, having initially been told that they were not allowed to do so.

In-season engine development has been a hot topic since it became clear early in 2014 that Mercedes held an advantage over their rivals, but that the rules banning in-season development prevented their rivals from doing anything about it.

Post-season, Renault and Ferrari persuaded the FIA to let them apply the permitted number of developments – split into 32 ‘tokens’ defining parts of the engine – during the season, not before the season as originally intended. This was due to Ferrari’s discovery of a loophole, which did not define a homologation date for engines for any year beyond 2014.

In making that ruling, the FIA initially said 2015 newcomers Honda were not allowed any in-season development, just as the other manufacturers were not allowed in-season development in their first year of competition with the new engines.

Honda argued this was unfair on a number of grounds. First, that they were prevented from developing their engine

Honda were initially told they could not develop their engine during their first season back in F1

in 2015 but their rivals were not. Second, that the lack of a homologation date also applied to them. Third that they were being forced to use four engines per driver in 2015, whereas their rivals had used five in 2014. And fourth, that the ruling held them to 2014 regulations in terms of in-season development in 2015, but they were restricted to the same 25 tokens of development in 2016 as other suppliers.

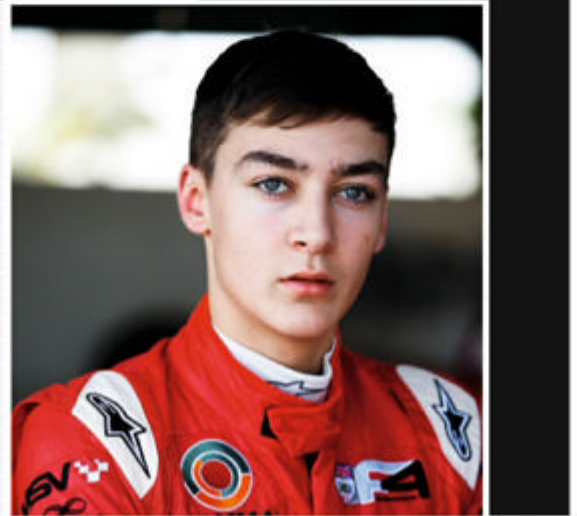
After Honda’s management flew over from Japan to discuss the issue with the FIA, a compromise was agreed. This was that Honda could have the same number of development tokens as the average of what the other manufacturers had left unused at the start of the season.

McLaren chief executive Ron Dennis objected to that, too, saying Honda should be allowed the same number of tokens as the supplier who had used the least tokens by the first race. He later backed down.

Power units are split into components, each assigned differing values of tokens totalling 66. The number of tokens teams can change will reduce each year.

YOUNG GUNS

George Russell



Finding the stars of tomorrow, today

George Russell is 17 and comes from King’s Lynn in Norfolk. He won the 2014 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award and will drive for Carlin in European Formula 3 this year.

Who is he?

The double CIK-FIA European karting champion graduated to single-seaters in 2014, with a twin campaign in Formula Renault ALPS and the UK-based BRDC F4 Championship. He finished fourth in Renault, and took the title in BRDC F4 after a tense three-way battle with Arjun Maini and Raoul Hyman.

What’s he been doing recently?

His title win secured him a spot in the final six of the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award, designed to promote rising British stars. Russell was named the youngest-ever winner of the prize (he turned 17 on 15 February this year) at the Autosport Awards in December, securing a £100,000 prize and a test in a McLaren F1 car. Encouraging tests with Carlin and Mücke led him to pursue a drive in F3.

How good is he?

You have to be talented and mentally strong to win the McLaren Autosport BRDC shoot-out, which features two days of intense competition in Formula 2 single-seaters, a McLaren sportscar and a Mercedes DTM touring car. Russell also dominated the second race of a one-off outing in the Renault Eurocup season-finale at Jerez. He beat more experienced rivals including McLaren-backed Nyck de Vries.

Will we see him in F1?

You’d probably expect a driver who has just turned 17 to need a couple of seasons in F3 to adjust to the level of competition. But new Toro Rosso signing Max Verstappen has shown that isn’t always the case. And Russell did race against – and occasionally beat – Verstappen in karting.

NEWS

Extra power and bigger tyres are on their way

F1 Strategy Group propose new ways to improve the sport's spectacle – but not everyone agrees on the best way forward

Formula 1 bosses are pushing ahead with plans to change the rules to make cars more dramatic in the near future.

A series of proposals have been submitted by the rule-making Strategy Group for technical chiefs to consider and then report back on. These focus on making the cars and rear tyres wider, and making the engines more powerful.

F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone and Red Bull team principal Christian Horner are pushing for a return to the V8 naturally aspirated engines last used in 2013. All other teams are opposed to this, and want to stick with the new turbo hybrid engines, technology similar to that being pursued by road-car manufacturers.

F1 chiefs have set a target of 1,000bhp for the engines. The current engines already produce in the region of 840-880bhp, so the extra power could be achieved relatively easily and cheaply by increasing the revs used and adjusting the fuel-flow rate. This would also go

some way to satisfying Ecclestone's desire for louder, more dramatic-sounding engines.

The date for the introduction of these rules has not yet been set. Some are pushing for 2016, but others feel that this could increase costs and risk damaging the 2015 season, since teams would freeze development to focus on their new designs. A more likely solution is that the changes will be introduced for 2017.

Cars will increase their width from 1,800mm to 2,000mm, the size they were in 1997. At the same time, front wings will be widened and rear wings made bigger. Rear tyres will be widened to increase mechanical grip, and the new tyre supplier for 2017 – when Pirelli's contract ends – will be decided by a tender process, with all interested manufacturers invited to apply and present ideas.

Teams have discussed increasing the size of wheels from 13 inches to 18 or even 20 inches. But there has been no agreement on this so far.

PHOTOS: ALASTAIR STALEY/LAT; STEVE ETHERINGTON/LAT; LAT; ARCHIVE: FERRARI

PROPOSED CHANGES TO CURRENT CARS



1 New rules could lead to the return of bigger rear wings, as seen on F1 cars from the mid-1980s

3 Power could be increased to 1,000bhp in a nod to the eye-wateringly powerful but popular turbos of the '80s

5 Bigger front wings would add downforce (and would also be easier to knock off when cars are racing)

2 Huge rear tyres added flair to seventies racers, and could reappear in the not too distant future

4 New tyre rules could lead to F1 adopting low-profile tyres more in line with modern road cars

6 Wide-track Formula 1 cars last ran in 1997, but could be set to make a return from 2017 onwards

F1 BANTER

PASSNOTES

Your essential F1 briefing #12 Ronspeak



Name Ronspeak
Age Indefinite
Appearance
 In long, frequently complex, sentence form

Here's a new word for you: 'reciprocant'.

Say what? Don't try to pull the wool over my eyes – I can't stand people who cheat at Scrabble.

Would I do that to you? It's merely a classic example of our favourite literary subset in Formula 1: Ronspeak.

I might have known. In what context was this verbiage adumbrated?

"We were perhaps the reciprocant of a climate that F1 had at the time; what took place was relatively trivial in reality, but heavily amplified – and everyone got pretty bruised by it."

A prime cut of Ronspeak if ever I heard it. But what the deuce was he on about?

He's trying to apply more soothing unction to the wounds of 2007, saying that he and Fernando Alonso will rub along much better this time around now that Ron is "mellower" and Fernando is "more mature".

Y'know, 2007 was a long time ago. Why keep harping on about it? And what is a 'reciprocant' anyway – something out of *Blade Runner*?

Good question. It's not even in the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*. 'Reciprocal' and 'reciprocate' are, deriving from the Latin *reciprocus* which means "Having, or the nature of, and alternate forwards and backwards motion."

It's no clearer. Perhaps he meant 'recipient'.

Ah yes. From Middle French, "One who or that which receives."

We need to go more lowbrow. *Urban Dictionary*?

"Noun; describing one whom is either unwilling or incapable of returning a favour, goodwill or other expression of kindness."

They just made that up. Anybody else?

***The Century Dictionary*: "Noun; the contravariant expressing the condition of tangency between the primitive quantic and an adjoint linear form."**

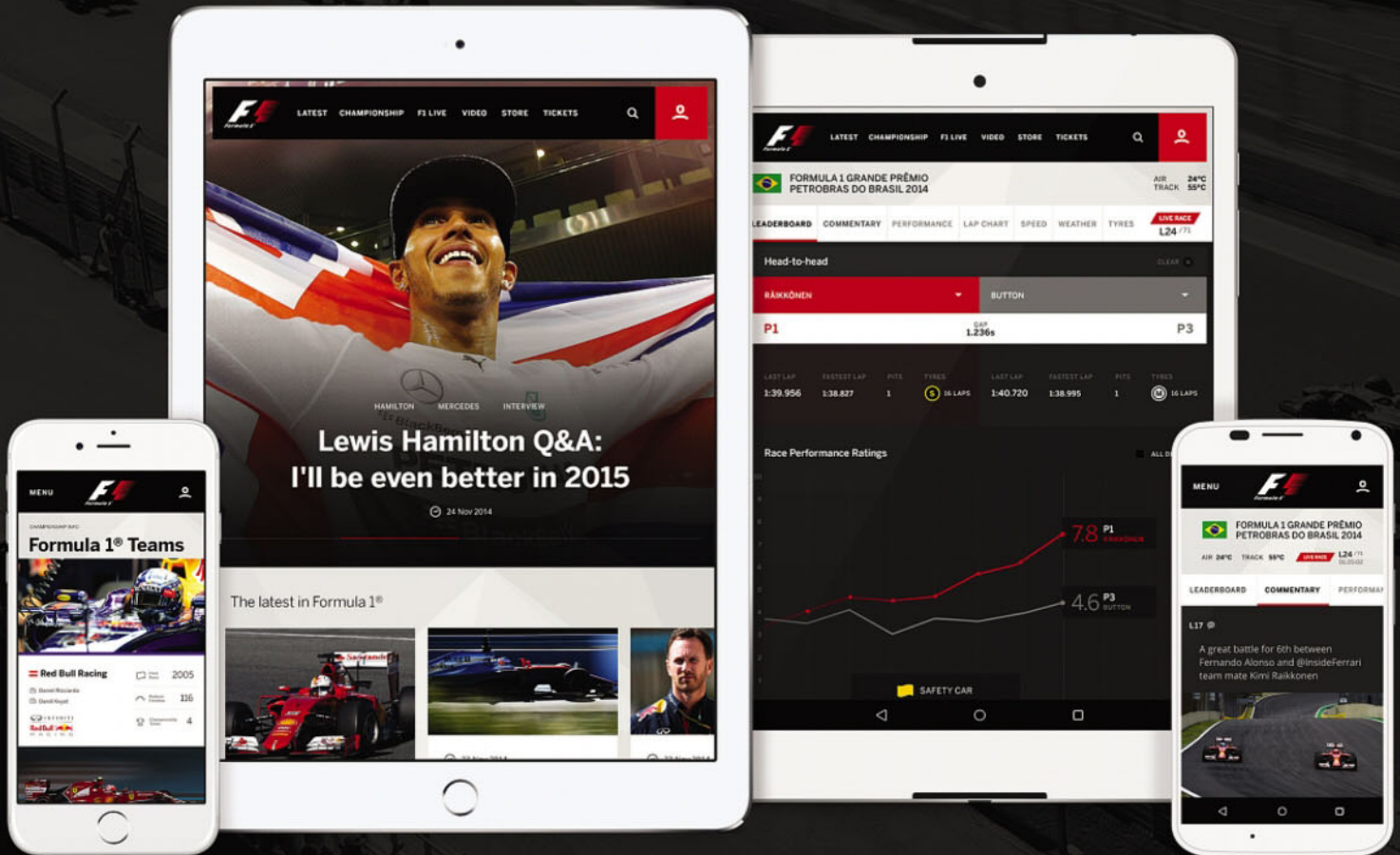
Seems to me that the definition of this word is somewhat fissiparous, abstruse and recherché.

Definitely sub-optimal. Fancy some cake?

Do say: Oh, how reconditel!

Don't say: What is this stultiloquence?

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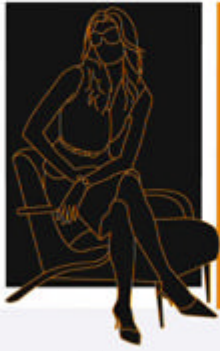
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COLUMN



THE DRIVER'S WIFE

Where did the glamour go?

I'm back, baby!

And not before time, I know. That was a long, dark, cold off-season. Three-and-a-half spotlight-free months aren't good for anyone. From Abu Dhabi to Melbourne with not a sliver of limelight. I'm decidedly Vitamin-D-deficient.

I'd like to get it on record that cost-cutting sucks. Formula 1 and 'low key' go together like fashion and flat shoes or supermodels and cellulite. It's just wrong.

Usually, *Amor* does a bit of testing somewhere warm and soulless, and I do the pre-season prep, which is no small feat. It involves planning, design and, most importantly, innovation. I mean, did Madonna stay that successful for that long with the same look every year? She was the first to realise that talent is only one part of it.

Then comes that pre-season break in the clouds, the exciting teaser for all that the season promises to the international pack of image-hungry media. The only time I ever really put my foot down was when *Amor* wanted to move to that team that has only ever favoured garage launches. What on earth can they possibly understand about Formula 1, I quite rightly pointed out?

Okay, so maybe I sound just a little bit bitter, but Formula 1 is all about glamour, show and aspiration. A car launch should be the big beginning, the explosion of light and kick-ass music just before the first model appears on the catwalk. It's not just about the car, it's the whole shiny new package. And that package happens to include me!

But now, even the top teams are doing online launches. Who do they think they are fooling?! Wow, you are so technologically cutting-edge you are using the internet! So 2001. I just did a virtual reality underwear fashion show – now that's exciting. Saving money is so unsexy.

Like, this year, it's all about more elegant noses. But if you only show the car, you've missed the point, that's only one nose. (Dr Prashar actually dared to invoice me as his work wasn't showcased to the international media pack).

It means *Amor's* new, fashion-forward look is reduced to comments about his 'weird beard'. It's not supposed to be judged by itself, it's the whole package. It's a look not a beard, for God's sake!

I've a job to do and this lack of spotlight is not making it easy. So Melbourne, up your wattage and check your back-up generators, my nose and I are on our way!

God bless you, especially those of you who crave a return to Cirque du Soleil splendour.

Beijos

Adriana

NEWS

Why Force India missed bulk of tests

Concern about team's readiness for Melbourne mounts as they're forced to miss first two tests

Force India are facing a challenging start to the 2015 season. A series of supply delays and other issues have meant that their new car won't run until the final pre-season test.

The team missed the first test in Jerez, and as *F1 Racing* went to press, deputy team principal Bob Fernley admitted the new VJM08 would not make it to the second test either. The team were due to run a 2014 car in that test at Barcelona, which started on 19 February, while work continued in the factory to ready the new car for the final test, which begins on 26 February.

Force India's timetable has been slipping as the year has progressed. Initially, they said they would make it to the first test, but only with their 2014 car. They said the 2015 VJM08 would run at the second test.

Then they pulled out of the first test altogether and said the new car was "likely" to miss the second. Their troubles have led to reports that they

will struggle to make the first grand prix of the year in Australia, although the team insists there is "no doubt" they will make the race.

Asked on 6 February whether he could confirm that Force India would compete in Melbourne and beyond, Fernley said: "Yes. From the information I have today, I do. The question for me is only how much of the third test we will participate in."

While Force India's longer-term prospects have been boosted by an extra influx of Mexican backing from Carlos Slim (see p102), Fernley says the team's preparations have been hit by two problems.

There was a delay in finalising their new deal to use Toyota's windtunnel in Cologne, because Toyota first had to make sure that Caterham would not be able to fulfil their contract to use it. Second, due to the demise of Caterham and Marussia at the tail-end of the 2014 season, Fernley says that suppliers have "not been able to afford to give us the credit terms we've had and enjoyed in the past".

Force India at their 'launch' in February, when they had to use a 2015-liveried car from last year



PHOTO: SAM BLOXHAM/LAT



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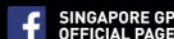
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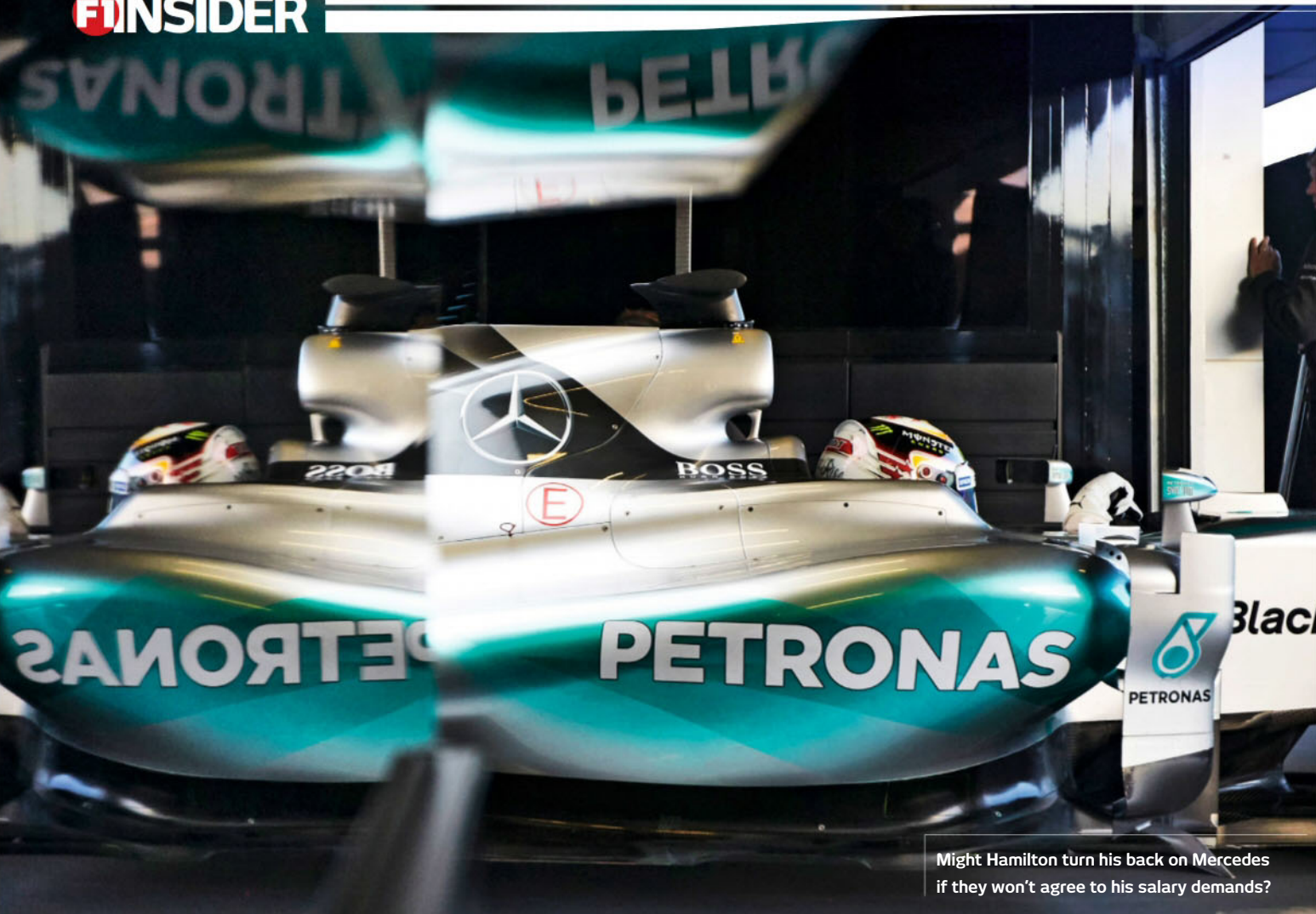


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Artiste line-up subject to change



Might Hamilton turn his back on Mercedes if they won't agree to his salary demands?

PHOTO: STEVE ETHERINGTON/LAT

NEWS

Hamilton and Mercedes begin contract talks

You'd expect the reigning drivers' champion to stick with the reigning constructors' champion. But it may not be so simple...

The 2014 world champion Lewis Hamilton has begun negotiations over a new contract that could keep him at Mercedes beyond 2015.

On the surface, a new deal seems a formality. Hamilton says he wants to stay and the team say they want to keep him. And there are no available alternatives who are anywhere near approaching the calibre of Hamilton.

The only person who fits that description is Fernando Alonso. But he is under contract for three years at McLaren and, according to chairman Ron Dennis, there are no get-out clauses. Daniel Ricciardo, who impressed in 2014, is locked into Red Bull for some time, according to team principal Christian Horner.

And Sebastian Vettel is a less appealing prospect, having been demolished by Ricciardo in 2014, and now having a three-year deal with Ferrari.

But things are not as simple as they seem. For one thing, Hamilton and Mercedes had agreed they would wait until the 2014 championship was over before starting talks, to avoid disrupting his campaign. But nothing happened until the first pre-season test in February. So negotiations could continue throughout 2015.

Talks will not be plain sailing. Hamilton has just taken a dominant world title win and knows that his global impact for Mercedes' brand far outstrips that which any other driver could provide, with only Alonso coming close.

On those grounds, he could ask for a pay rise to take him above the £20m salary, plus bonuses, he has been receiving. Mercedes, meanwhile, are keen to keep costs down and will want to keep the money the same, if not reduce it a bit.

At the same time, having split with XIX Entertainment, Hamilton is handling the talks himself, a prospect he describes as a "huge challenge", while adding that he is "Thirty now. I am my own man, I know my worth".

Then there is the matter of whether Alonso really is locked in at McLaren. If the team struggle, will he be able to resist the opportunity to drive a Mercedes assuming it is still on winning form? Alonso earns £25.9m a year with McLaren, but it's claimed he would have signed with Mercedes for half of that last autumn.

Wolff, then, has a strong negotiating position. If Hamilton has too many demands, Wolff can make an offer and say "Take it or leave it – and if you leave it, Alonso will sign for £13m." But if Hamilton finds himself on the way to another title, might he fancy a new challenge? Perhaps at Ferrari, where Kimi Räikkönen will be out of contract? This could prove interesting.



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NEWS

Marussia still fighting to make 2015 F1 grid

Now using the name 'Manor' the struggling team have found new backers – but may not get their 2015 car ready in time



Marussia say the Strategy Group agreed they could use their old car for the first part of 2015

Caterham's hopes of returning to F1 in 2015 are all but over, barring a last-minute miracle. There is, however, still a genuine possibility that Marussia could return to the grid.

The remaining assets of the Caterham F1 team will be sold via a series of auctions scheduled to begin in March. Administrator Finbarr O'Connell said he was still in talks with two interested buyers, but hopes of striking a deal are slim.

Marussia, though, have found an investor and were scheduled to come out of administration on 19 February after finalising a company voluntary agreement (CVA). This is where the creditors accept a write-down of their debt and it's the first step to liquidating the company and reconstituting its assets into a new business.

They have reverted to their original team name of Manor, but matters are complicated by their need to use their 2014 car if the team is to race from the start of the season, and the fact that teams' contracts mean they can miss only three races in one calendar year.

Marussia's 2015 chassis has been designed and is already in production, but would not be ready until part-way through the season. Only a Herculean effort and a lot of extra financing could get it finished in time for the team to compete in Bahrain, the fourth race of 2015.

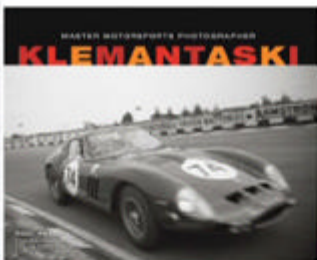
It was Marussia's belief that they had an agreement from the Strategy Group, dating from early January, that they could use their 2014 car with modifications and without the need to meet some key safety changes, as an interim measure. This plan foundered at a Strategy Group meeting in early February, when Force India vetoed Marussia's use of a 2014 car. Deputy team principal of Force India Bob Fernley said this was because Marussia's presentation was "out of order" in its lack of substance.

Marussia president Graeme Lowdon hit back, saying Marussia had not made a presentation to the Strategy Group because they had not been asked to. He claimed they already had a letter approving their plan to start 2015 with an old car.

While the dispute has been disturbing for Manor's new backers, they still plan to race in 2015. Manor do need the approval of all the other teams if they are to use their old Marussia this year, but they say they are working on this.

Fernley says his veto had nothing to do with money. But Force India are struggling financially and if Marussia don't race in 2015 their prize money from 2014 will be split between remaining teams, giving each one a useful extra £4million.

F1 STUFF

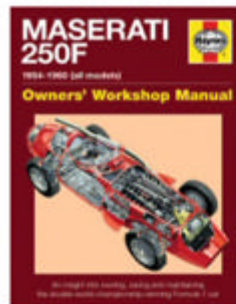


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Pat Symonds explains
THE SCIENCE BEHIND...
**The rule changes
 for 2015**

F1 TECH

After all the new rules in 2014, presumably there are fewer changes for 2015?

There are far fewer than last year, but there have been some changes that have kept us extremely busy over the past few months as we built the 2015 cars. Some changes have been trivial and some of the rewording has simply improved the semantics of regulations that were no longer expressing the true desire of the regulators.

When do you get notice of regulation changes?

Regulations are discussed at length by both the F1 Strategy Group and the various working groups that advise the FIA, so there is a long gestation period as wording is brought to maturity, during which the teams are aware of potential changes. But our first sight of the published 2015 regulations was in late June 2014. That is not to say that there were no changes after that, but any technical regulation that is changed after 30 June for application the following year needs the unanimous agreement of the teams. In normal circumstances the FIA World Motor Sport Council hold a meeting in early December and approve the final version of both the Technical and Sporting Regulations.

Are any of the changes visual?

For 2014, the rules governing the geometrical limitations at the front of the chassis were changed with a view to lowering the nose for safety reasons. The resulting designs took advantage of the rather loose constraints to maintain the aerodynamic benefits associated with high noses. The results were aesthetically disastrous, so the dimensional restrictions have been tightened and the opportunity taken to revise and improve crash-test criteria. These more prescriptive regulations should produce a better-looking car, with the bulk of the nose genuinely 75 to 80mm lower than last year, but the added controls will increase the similarity of appearance of the different marques.

Also on the monocoque, the Zylon panels that resist intrusion into the cockpit area have been extended as a step towards increasing the protection of the driver's head.

Haven't new rules on increased driver head protection been brought in at short notice after Jules Bianchi's crash at Suzuka last year?

They have. This was first discussed in mid-October. By this stage, chassis tooling was already being made but the F1 community worked together to produce changes to the rules that would be achievable by modification to existing designs that ensured some worthwhile improvements were made to safety. There will be further changes in 2016.

Has the lower nose affected performance?

It has reduced downforce significantly. Indeed, the previous high noses were introduced for no reason other than improved aerodynamic performance. A lot of the work that the aerodynamicists have been involved in over the summer has been to try to recoup those losses.

What about the development of power units?

The dominance of the Mercedes power unit and the financial hardships experienced by many teams this year has caused that development process to be questioned, but there is a desire to allow for improvements year on year even if at a diminishing rate. The real argument has centred on when the 2015 development process must be completed, and the latest interpretation from the FIA suggests that allowable modifications may be introduced at any time during 2015.

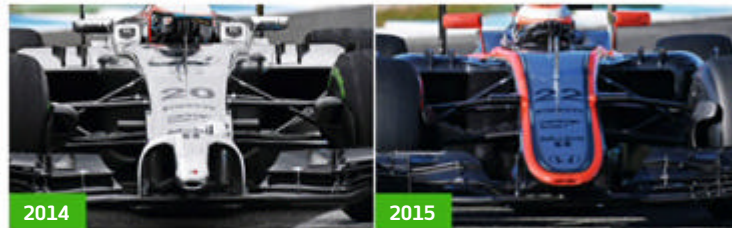
Are there any changes to the fuel limits?

Not for 2015. The idea some years ago was to reduce the amount of fuel allowed in a race year

by year to force development teams to chase ever greater efficiency. At the moment that is on hold.

What about changes to Sporting Regulations?

There are plenty of these and they range from changes to the penalties applied for sporting infringements to the introduction of the Virtual Safety Car. This is a system whereby a sector time profile is enabled on the cars by Race Control to



regulate speeds prior to, or instead of, a Safety Car. Unusually, some changes published in June have since been rejected by the Strategy Group.

So no double points and no standing starts after a Safety Car period then?

No. Both proposals have been canned for 2015.

Will the number of engines available be reduced?

Yes. The rules had always intended that the number of engines per driver be reduced from five in 2014 to four in 2015. It won't be easy to achieve the increased life requirement but I expect all manufacturers will have made a lot of progress in their reliability in time for 2015.

Are cost-saving measures being introduced?

The need for cost reduction is on the agenda of most teams, but there is an element whose privileged financial position gives them a competitive advantage that they are unwilling to relinquish. There has, however, been a 17 per cent decrease in aerodynamic research, which will reduce the number of in-season upgrades. **F1**

PHOTOS: ALASTAIR STALEY/LAT; ANDREW FERRARO/LAT



Following on from 2014's much-derided noses, new regulations will ensure the bulk of the nose is genuinely 75-80mm lower for a more aesthetically pleasing look



PETER WINDSOR

RACER'S EDGE

Authority, wit and intelligence
from the voice of *F1 Racing*

Only Toro Rosso actually gave us a good old-fashioned 'new car launch' this year – even if theirs was in a Jerez pitlane surrounded by enough Tensa barriers to protect a President. The rest of 'em just posted a few generic pics on the internet of what may or may not have been a real car with trite little comments like: "We've made alternations to the design for added performance."

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for the internet. I think it's the greatest invention since the Lotus 33B. How it is happening in the world of the F1 teams, though, is not how I perceive it to be happening in the rest of the world – or how Generation Y would like it to happen even if they know what an F1 car was or is.

The internet is about raw information that's out there, without any of the fluff that shrouds TV network protocol or socio-political boundaries. Some 80 per cent of the world's population now watch "TV" on mobile devices – which means that "TV" is now head to head against new channels of information to which we have instant access.

The world has changed, but the F1 teams have ignored this. The internet is perceived by them as a new way to control information in the belief that 2million webpage impressions (from a race-viewing TV audience of 25m)

Use the internet to share, not hide

featuring external pics only of a new car – plus a few platitudes – will satisfy Generation Y and, much more importantly, 'tick the box' with their sponsors.

This is wrong. The teams may think that F1 is only about whether Fernando has grown a beard or Lewis is wearing a new earring; the reality of F1 is that it is the only form of motorsport in the world that requires a team to design and build their own car even to enter. It's about the great teams – in today's terms about Ferrari, Mercedes, McLaren, Red Bull, Williams and some of the others. Ferrari fans don't care whether their car is driven by an Alonso or a Vettel. What they care about is Ferrari.

Understanding the cars, knowing the cars, is the soul of F1. Always has been. There are plenty of branches of motorsport out there doing an excellent job of focusing only on the drivers; the technology is the unique selling point of the F1 teams.

And with every passing year, they go out of their way *not* to talk about details of their cars, *not* to expose their engineers to informed questioning and *not* to share the passion that makes a Ferrari fan a Ferrari fan. They believe they're protecting their technology; they are paranoid about some other team possibly benefitting in some way from something they have created.

Which is nonsense, of course. For one thing, every self-respecting team these days has access to details of their rivals' cars the instant the garage doors are raised. For another, if even the FIA find it difficult to keep abreast of F1 team engineers, what chance for the rest of us? Most of the F1 people I know are intelligent enough to be able to talk about their technology without giving away secrets. Problem is, their 'media managers' – or the managers of their media managers – believe in not sharing technology at anything other than very basic levels. Their goal, as I say, is to control the



"The trend now is *not* to explain the details and to hope the fans will love the show nonetheless"



Of all the teams this year, only Toro Rosso (below) have provided a “good old-fashioned ‘new car launch’, as they used to take place in the days of Tyrrell (above). These days, the norm is a few photos on the internet and a vague sentence about ‘improvements’ that hide more than they reveal



information. “We’ve altered the design for added performance,” is a 2015 throwaway.

F1’s future growth now rests almost entirely on its ability to confront a Ferrari with a Mercedes with a Red Bull with a McLaren. And the more F1 standardises its cars with templated power units, wings and chassis dimensions, the more it needs to tell the public *why* a Ferrari is different from a Mercedes or a Red Bull. It’s a show, for Pete’s sake. And the technology is a major part of it. The good news is that the internet is there to impart it – and that FOM are now beginning to embrace it.

And yet the teams, as we’ve seen with this year’s spate of new car ‘launches’, still treat the internet as an excuse for shutting garage doors. Post a picture or two. Stay away from real people asking real questions. Job done.

Let me give you some idea of how it should be... and of how it was:

“Well, here it is,” said Ken Tyrrell. “Our new F1 car. Derek Gardner and his team designed it and Roger Hill and the boys built it and they’re all here for you to talk to. For my part, I’d just like to thank Elf, Ford and Goodyear for their support and to say how delighted I am to be racing this year with Jackie Stewart and François Cevert. Feel free to ask the team any questions you like, but when you’re taking detailed pictures of the car please take care not to touch the mirrors or wings. Jackie and François will be joining us for a sandwich lunch so there’ll be plenty of time to talk to them. Thanks again for attending and enjoy.”

From such days were born the Legend of Tyrrell. It was also thus at Ferrari, where Enzo loved to talk about his cars, and at Lotus, Williams and Brabham, where Patrick Head never sidestepped a question, Colin Chapman always wanted you to ask him more and Gordon Murray explained even the most complicated of details in plainspeak.

They understood that F1’s lifeblood was underlining the differences between Lotus and Tyrrell, Ferrari and Brabham, McLaren and Williams. They understood that it wasn’t only about ‘brand’ or ‘merchandise’; it was about what made the cars work – or not work – explained in ways the public could understand.

Now the F1 trend is *not* to explain the details – and to hope blindly that hundreds of millions of fans will love the F1 show nonetheless. It’s a big ask. Competition from other sports is now huge and traditional F1 money supplies are drying up.

It’s time to bring F1 technology to the global platform – for the teams to employ the internet for what it can give the fans, not for what it can be used to withhold. 🏁

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DAMON HILL

KING OF THE HILL

Cockpit savvy from the 1996 world champ, exclusively in *F1R*

Not long now and the show will be back on the road. By the time the April issue of *F1 Racing* goes on sale, the top step of the F1 podium in Australia will have been occupied by a driver, whose identity we're all eager to discover. The driver's team, who have painstakingly crafted his car over an unimaginable amount of hours, will be left looking up at the podium, adoring and celebrating him, the hero of the hour. The car will be rolled away to be deconstructed and reconstituted for the next race, where it will slavishly perform its function again – or not. Such is the fickle nature of machinery.

Man and machine. The car or the driver? I hear this one all the time. But remember, the car does not build itself. It is a physical manifestation of the sum total of all our learning invested in a device designed to enable its driver to get 'there' first. It is a means to an end, and the end is to put a man on the top of the podium. When we celebrate the driver we are acknowledging something deeply human. Yes, he is purposefully different from us, he has done a rare thing, he has 'the right stuff', we want him to be exceptional. But he is one of us, too. He is what we can be, maybe not in our own lives, but in the life of man. Indirectly

Formula 1 celebrates human achievement

we put him there, all of us, or, at least, we are 'extras' in the most extraordinary epic movie of all time. Whichever way, that is how we do it. We put a man on a pedestal. Like a deity.

And, if we are honest, some of them behave like they are a deity too – your columnist excepted, of course. Or did I get a little 'pumped up'? Perhaps I did. But perhaps that's what you wanted, a man who could fly, slay dragons, defeat the foe? Well, confidence is a wonderful thing. You have to have some confidence, and also a sense that you belong there, even that this place is rightfully yours.

My point is this. Before we get lost in engine tokens and virtual Safety Car rights and wrongs, and ticket prices and the lack of volume or the ugly-is-the-new-beautiful noses, and who-said-what-about-whose-girlfriend... why do we even care?

By way of an answer to this, I want to propose a statement: F1 is about which *driver* becomes Formula 1 world champion. Not who has the best car.

Now, I can feel the hierarchy twitching. 'They'd be nothing without us'; 'They're like busses – another one will be along in a minute'; 'They're spoilt overpaid selfish playboys'; 'We, the teams, built this show. The driver is an employee of the team, pure and simple.'

And yes, the drivers have an awful lot of people to thank and things to be thankful for. But, like I said, the people need a hero, a 'person', a personality, someone with whom they can identify; someone to talk to, to interview, to photograph, to worship, a kind of 'famous friend'.

Christian Horner said recently that the drivers were the stars of the show. But what does this mean? Does it mean the show wants them to perform on demand, like mindless puppets, for the glorification of the sport

and its other agendas? Or does it mean that he recognises this fundamental point: that nobody cares about a product, whether it is a car or a man. We care only about the people we care about and, in the context of F1, this overwhelmingly means the drivers. If F1 were a ballet, it would be the drivers doing the dancing. On ice, a lot of the time.


Last year Lewis Hamilton was voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year. This means that (in the UK at least) his personality, coupled with his achievements – 'The Hamilton Story' if you will – was the most compelling and successful sporting saga of the year.

And there is something very special about Formula 1 drivers. Just ask Frank, Ron, Bernie



"When we celebrate the driver we are acknowledging something deeply human. Indirectly we put him there"

or Christian. Drivers are special people when they're at the top of their game (and hell to be around when it's going badly). They glow; they exude some special gift, almost seeming to hold magical powers over us. And only they know what it is like to have that power, to feel those feelings, to experience the pure sense of satisfaction that comes from winning a Formula 1 grand prix.

They have another rare insight, too. They know what it is like to actually wring every last ounce of performance out of the car, this multi-million dollar investment, this 21st-century arrowhead. And that, I can assure you, is one of the best things about being a Formula 1 driver. We get to drive the car – as fast as we can. We're lucky and we know it. Clap your hands. 

"F1 is about which *driver* becomes Formula 1 world champion. Not who has the best car"

PORTRAIT: BENJAMIN WENCHENJE; PHOTO: SAM BLOXHAM/LAT



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DIETER RENCKEN

POWER PLAY

The stories F1's bigwigs would rather you didn't know...

When it comes to business, cash is king. All the more so in F1, in which teams face fluctuating income streams, with peaks and troughs influenced by previous results, sponsor stability and unbudgeted costs created by the sport's ferocious rate of development.

So, where possible, teams operate 'on tick', with their image and F1's glitzy reputation proving sufficient security to open vast lines of credit, whether for coffee or carbon fibre. Sure, some teams proved terrible payers (one estimated their indebtedness by weighing piles of unpaid invoices) but in the main the kudos attached to supplying F1 teams with widgets invariably outweighed the inherent risks.

Then came the economic crisis and the overall tightening of credit lines, from the banks downwards. Still F1 seemed immune, mainly because teams were about the only guys in town pressing ahead with capital expenditure despite global contraction. They could be relied upon, even if payments stretched to a hundred-and-plenty days...

The fly in the grease was F1's 2013-2020 bilateral agreements – erroneously referred to as 'Concorde Agreements' after previous contracts that outlined F1's covenants – which rewarded larger teams (those with the funds

Liquidity is essential to all teams' futures

to manufacture entire cars in-house) while disproportionately disadvantaging those in most need of external sourcing.

Overnight, rumours sprang up of teams not meeting payroll, or gas bills being in arrears. F1 being F1, such woes were immediately broadcast to the wider world: in one instance, internal memoranda sent to team personnel advising them salaries were delayed landed in the hands of rivals within five minutes and were on the internet 30 seconds later.

This set in motion a vicious 'run' not dissimilar to that experienced by banks: sponsors and suppliers got edgy about their investments, and thus sought reassurances before making the next payments, resulting in further slippages as pressure on cash flow (and thus performance) tightened. Still the situation was manageable. Until commercial rights holder Formula One Management publicly shared the financial woes affecting the back-end. Lines of credit immediately disappeared for those in most need of financial sympathy.

The result was predictable, as borne out by the administrations of Caterham and Marussia, with the latter's perfectly illustrating the point: at last count Marussia owed £30m to creditors and lacked the liquidity (and credit) to travel to the final three races, even though they were

Marussia and Caterham: two failed teams who had everything needed to go racing... except cash



due at least that from the share of 2014's 'pot' – revenues divided up by all qualifying teams.


Non-appearance caused potential sponsors and investors to shy away. Who, after all, would sink millions into a sinking ship? This further tightened the noose. Thus two teams with all facilities required to go racing in a sport turning over well over a billion pounds a year face extinction through lack of cash flow.

The fall-out has been horrendous: suppliers have been forced to downsize, or have gone into liquidation. Two brothers, each of whom supplied one of the two extinct teams, are on the brink of losing their respective houses after a combined 30 years in the business, while various small businesses on the creditors list reported bleak Christmases. Vital links in the supplier chain stand on the verge of collapse.

The top end, too, has been hit: Ferrari and Renault are each owed around £15m for engines, while one blue-chip team said they had been asked by long-standing suppliers for cash upfront for services – not because said business did not trust the team, but because other (F1) customers had reneged on payments such that said supplier was unable to meet commitments and was in danger of closing. Had the team not acquiesced, a crucial link in F1's supply chain would have been lost...

Worse, sponsors and suppliers view the sharp end with jaundiced eyes, wary that depleted grids will further reduce the sport's diminishing global popularity and set further teams on a downward spiral. To succeed, F1 must not only be successful, it must be seen and be said to be successful.

In no other business sector would principals so readily and openly criticise their supplier base – and, in purely business terms, teams are vendors to the commercial rights holder, which packages their services into a marketable entity – yet for more than two years now, FOM has denigrated its primary suppliers, suggesting some sort of strategy may be in place to reduce grids to just eight teams of three cars each.

In the process, the commercial rights holder risks reducing the stability of F1 by overlooking the basic tenet that liquidity is oxygen to businesses large and small. So the message is clear: be careful what you wish for, FOM... 

“When FOM shared financial woes affecting the back-end, lines of credit disappeared”

PORTRAIT: BENJAMIN WENCHENJE, PHOTO: ALASTAIR STALEY/LAT

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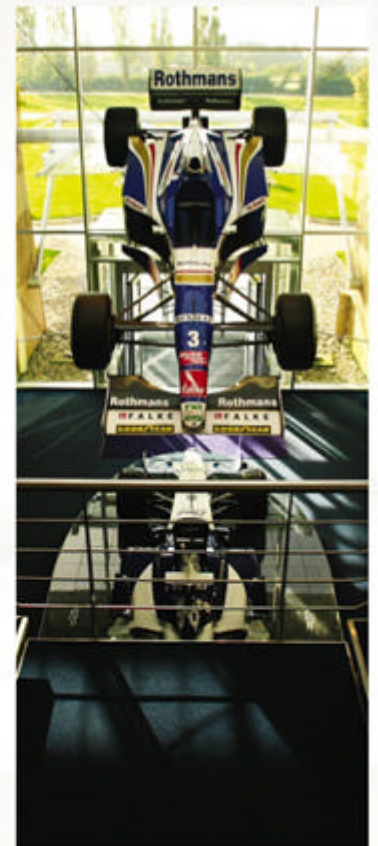
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Ayrton Senna	200	80	40	120	30	130	200
Piers Courage	100	60	40	80	30	120	140
Alan Jones	50	15	12	24	12	40	60

CIRCUIT GALLERIES

Circuit Gallery A

Silverstone	30	n/a	22	n/a	n/a	20	30
Monaco	50	28	26	32	28	40	50
Hockenheim	12	10	10	n/a	12	10	14
Monza	28	14	14	14	12	20	28

Circuit Gallery B

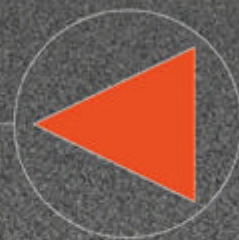
Estoril	50	32	26	32	24	50	50
Jerez	40	24	26	32	24	40	50
Barcelona	50	32	26	32	26	40	50
Trophy Room (hospitality room only)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	70	100



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Now that was a car



No. 36 The Renault RE30B

A qualifying bullet that missed the target too often in turbo times



WORDS STUART CODLING PICTURES JAMES MANN

Renault had started the turbo revolution in 1977, and proved the technology worked by winning the dramatic French Grand Prix in 1979. But by the beginning of the 1981 season, they had won just three more races. Four victories to show for four years of competition, and with Ferrari now having hopped on board the turbo bandwagon – soon to be followed by BMW – something had to be done.

The Renault RE20 was quick enough to win races in 1980 but it lacked reliability, so designer Michel Tétu created an all-new car built up around aluminium honeycomb and lightened with carbon-fibre elements. New blood arrived in the form of Alain Prost, and a more powerful version of the twin-turbo V6 engine was introduced. But development of the new car was held up by confusion over the FIA's attempts to curb ground-effect aerodynamics.

To combat the increase in cornering speeds, the FIA had banned the sliding side-skirts most teams used to seal in and accelerate the underbody airflow. For the '81 season those skirts had to be fixed, and the cars held to a minimum ride height of 60mm. This would have been an effective solution – had Brabham's Gordon Murray not invented a hydropneumatic system that kept his cars at regulation height when measured in the pits, but let them run lower at speed.

There were the inevitable protests, but soon everyone else followed suit. When the RE30 made its debut at Monaco, six races in, Renault team manager Jean Sage sighed, "We are the last to cheat, you see..."

The new car did not immediately deliver on its promise, partly down to bad luck: Prost had gearbox trouble throughout qualifying at


Monaco and then suffered damage in a startline knock with Andrea de Cesaris. Meanwhile, team-mate René Arnoux crashed in both qualifying and the warm-up and had to revert to the RE20B.

Once the RE30 was dialled in, it proved highly competitive, albeit more in the hands of Prost than Arnoux. In front of the home crowd at Dijon-Prenois Arnoux claimed pole but it was Prost who took best advantage of the changing conditions to win.

If the victory in France owed something to good fortune, Prost's subsequent wins at Zandvoort and Monza were thoroughly deserved, and Arnoux scored a strong second in Austria. Renault finished the season third in the constructors' standings.

Tétu and aerodynamicist Jean-Claude Migeot revised the car over the winter with the aim of making it more reliable and aero-efficient, aided by the FIA's temporary capitulation in the ground-effect war. Now that sliding skirts were legal again – with the fixed ones, teams had to run the suspension so stiff that the cars were rendered almost undrivable – the RE30B needed only a very basic front wing. But the biggest change was in the engine room, thanks to a sophisticated new fuel-injection system that yielded another 50bhp, taking peak output close to 600bhp. But with this came new problems.

The RE30B was 1982's qualifying weapon of choice, setting pole in ten of the 16 races. And yet the drivers rounded out the year with just two wins apiece, thwarted largely by engine trouble.

New rules rendered the RE30 family obsolete, but its successors were no better and Renault withdrew as a works team at the end of 1985. 



RENAULT RE30B TECH SPEC

Engine	Renault Gordini EF1
Layout	1.5 litre V6 turbo
Brakes	Vented steel discs
Fuel	Elf
Gearbox	5 speed Hewland manual
Weight	605kg



CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

Forget the politics, the bickering for cash and privilege, the noise about noise, the fretting over fan numbers. Why? Because F1 2015 is about one thing and one thing only: can anyone beat Lewis Hamilton?

WORDS PETER WINDSOR

ILLUSTRATIONS HELLOVON / WWW.HELLOVON.COM

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Lewis Hamilton **THE HAMMER**

THE REIGNING WORLD CHAMPION.
WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH (AND
IT WILL) YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS

Nobody can dispute Lewis Hamilton's ownership of the 2014 world drivers' championship.

Nobody, that is, but Nico Rosberg, who outqualified his team-mate 12-7 over the course of the season. And while Nico may still be wondering why or how it all went wrong on race days, Lewis, despite the confidence that comes from winning two world championships, certainly still has areas he needs to work on in 2015. If he can qualify on pole, his Sunday afternoons will be that much easier.

Lewis blew potential pole laps in Canada and Austria in 2014 by making errors under hard braking – mainly because he convinced himself this was an area in which he would always have the advantage over Nico. Maybe that was the case in karting or F3, but in 2014 (Russia aside) Nico was brilliant under braking. Fact. And Lewis instead tended to find advantages over Nico where he perhaps wasn't expecting it, amid the frenetic race variables with his basic use of the steering, throttle and brake pedals. The final result, as it turned out, was never about braking super-late.

Look out, then, for Lewis returning to one-lap braking basics in 2015 (or as basic as brake-by-wire can ever allow the driver to be). He'll also need to tidy up some of his corner exits, as typified by Turn 12, Junção, at Interlagos, where Nico's feel for the right rear was also a weekend benchmark.

Nico is likely to remain Lewis's biggest threat this year, but a host of rivals will be gearing up to try to stop the Brit. →

Nico Rosberg **THE THINKER**

THE DRIVER WHO PROCESSES INFORMATION LIKE NO OTHER IS CAPABLE OF UNLOCKING A TITLE-WINNING STRATEGY



The best way to assess Nico's chances for 2015 is to consider why he wasn't victorious in 2014, a year in which he drove a winning car for a winning team. Yes, there were mechanical failures: Nico would have won the British GP and could have scored more points in Canada and Singapore but for ERS and wiring-loom issues. But Lewis was afflicted just as badly, so Nico should not rely on this philosophy.

Quick though Nico was on Saturday afternoons, when he was at least as fast as Lewis over a season and certainly less error-prone, his weak moments came in the races, often in the second stints when there was less grip. He also faltered in what you could call 'straight racing conditions'. He spent too many laps behind Jean-Eric Vergne's Toro Rosso in Hungary – another day when he should have won; and then there were the second- and first-lap errors in Belgium and Russia... not forgetting, too, the incident in Q3 at Monaco (and all its ramifications).

No driver is perfect, so at this point I should put the above paragraph into the full context of Nico's excellence in the Australian, Monaco, Canadian, Austrian, British, German and Brazilian GPs. On all of those days – Monaco Q3 aside – he drove like a champion.

His prospects for 2015 are coloured by two elements: one, beating Lewis; and, two, how much pressure the opposition will impose upon Mercedes. Perversely, Nico's chances of winning the world title will be enhanced if Mercedes' advantage is smaller. If Williams, Red Bull and Ferrari can take a few wins, there will be more in the mix to distract and perhaps hurt Lewis. And don't forget that Lewis will be without Jock Clear, who, although he is moving to Ferrari in 2016, will this year assist Riccardo Musconi (who used to work with Nico and on simulations) ease into his new role with Lewis. If things get tight, expect Nico to be the more robotic of the two drivers

– a heavy points-scorer on difficult days and a winner when the cards fall favourably. A harder season for Nico would be another straight-out fight with Lewis, with the opposition still half a lap behind.

Nico must prepare for both eventualities while capitalising on what he did so well in 2014 – to wit, his precise corner phases from rotation to exit. He can't assume Lewis will make as many mistakes in qualifying – and he can't afford any more braking errors on Sundays. Nico uses a slightly more extensive brake balance steering wheel map than Lewis and needs to maximise those parameters within the race day variables. As intelligent as Nico is, the answer for him is less simulator work: don't skimp on the set-up stuff but ease away from the full race simulations. In other words, less brain programming and more capacity for 'feel'.



Daniel Ricciardo **THE HONEY BADGER**

LIKE HIS EMBLEM, A SMILING EXTERIOR BELIES THE STEEL AND FEROCITY THAT LIES WITHIN. UNDERESTIMATE HIM AT YOUR PERIL. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

Daniel finds himself in nirvana in 2015: there are zero downsides to his year and there is also zero pressure. All he has to do is enjoy what still might be the best team in F1 and to take his driving to an even higher level. The rest is out of his hands. Renault may or may not be able to close the power gap to Mercedes; the RB11 may or may not have an advantage in this first year of a semi-retired Adrian Newey.

There isn't even any pressure from the driver in the other car. Daniil Kvyat is fast, and will admirably play the role in which

he has been cast, but he won't be a Nico to Mercedes' Lewis. That's exactly what drivers of Daniel's stature secretly crave, even if they always tell the world that the man on the other side of the garage is for the most part irrelevant.

Based on 2014, and the Renault improvements that must now be expected following the relaxing of the in-season update rules, you'd have to predict that Red Bull will win at least four races – perhaps even five. That won't be easy, but then Daniel Ricciardo emerged last year as an outstanding driver – a driver who not only knows how to pace a race but also how to pass

the guy in front. No one passes Fernando Alonso on a re-start... no one except Daniel Ricciardo (Austin, Turn 1). That's worth a huge amount to any team – and Red Bull are perfectly placed to maximise Daniel's ability. He has the depth of character to sustain his performance level and he will be intensely loyal to the people who gave him a chance.

So it's down to the car and its engine – and to politics. Certainly this year's version of the team will be very different from any of the Newey-dominated Red Bulls we've known – but then all things must pass. High on Daniel's list

of priorities, therefore, will be to remain close to Adrian, even if Adrian isn't at races and spends only the occasional day at the factory. Second, Daniel must use the combined muscle of Dr Helmut Marko and Dietrich Mateschitz to maximise Renault's use of mid-season upgrades. Michael Schumacher engineered Bridgestone priority treatment at Ferrari in 2002 by pulling political strings; and so, in this engine-dominated F1, it must be with Daniel, for his on-track brilliance alone will not be enough to beat the all-round power of Mercedes over a 20-race season. →

Sebastian Vettel

THE SCARLET ACE

THIS DAZZLINGLY FAST FIGHTER PILOT HAS FOUR, BUT STILL HUNGERS FOR MORE

Having followed, virtually to the word, the advice we gave them three months ago in *F1 Racing*, Ferrari

should win plenty of races in 2015. They are now structured correctly; Sebastian Vettel is remotivated; and the James Allison car (aero- and chassis-wise) will be quick. The big question, as with the Renault teams, is how much power will Ferrari have at their disposal?

Thus Seb joins them at just the right moment. The dirty work is over, thanks to intelligent decision-making by Ferrari's latest team principal, Maurizio Arrivabene, and the only way is up. Nor will Seb need to devote too much time to traditional Ferrari politics. With Allison in charge, Ferrari's new era should run as efficiently as the Red Arrows – with English, no doubt, as the predominant lingo.

In leaving Red Bull, Seb implied he was dealing with the difficulties of 2014 in the most efficient way – by expunging them. By mid-2014 he had no answer to the superior race pace of Daniel Ricciardo.

He'd never been similarly troubled at any stage in his career and his reasoning was that the more he worried, the worse it was going to get. So he cut the Red Bull ties and immersed himself in the biggest team of them all: Ferrari.

I doubt that Seb will have anything like the same problems with Kimi Räikkönen. Kimi is still fast, still very much a touch-and-feel driver, but even on a good day



he is now a couple of tenths away from his McLaren-best. So Seb will be under no real pressure to learn from the results of 2014, which could be a bad thing since last year highlighted style flaws that until then had remained disguised.

With the RB10 still generating huge downforce at the front, but with the new regs dumbing the rear, Seb in 2014 was not as manipulative with the back end as

Daniel, Lewis or Fernando. This was probably due to the quality of the Newey cars he'd raced since 2007, and the way he was perfectly able to extend the straights with them, in the knowledge that the back end would invariably take a one-movement rotation. Then there was the human factor: Seb entered 2014 with four world championships behind him. Some sort of slump was inevitable.

The Ferrari will be less pointy and Seb now knows what it's like not to win a title: he'll be a better driver for it. He proved in 2014 that he will race wheel-to-wheel with anyone on the grid – that he's a racer up there with Fernando. For 2015 expect a win and a bundle of points – assuming, of course, that Ferrari, like Renault, can maximise horsepower with their bonus mid-season upgrade tokens.

These are interesting times for both Fernando Alonso and his new team, McLaren. I guess the last time 12 engineers were laid off in one day – as they were at McLaren in December – was

probably when Eddie Jordan was selling up back in 2004. Not even Ferrari, at their scapegoating worst, have been so steely. Hence the pervading atmosphere of fear down at the MTC this winter. Who will be next? What did the 12 do wrong? I gather that the mantra at

Woking at present is that talent is more important than experience. Interesting, as I say.

It's also intriguing to see the perennial Ekrem Sami – a sort of Adrian Newey of sponsorship procurement – now working alongside Martin Reiss, an Eric

Boullier commercial man from Lotus F1. This reflects McLaren's ongoing search for 2010-13 market-value title sponsorship, and underlines the changes taking place in the team. This power struggle will reflect the one in the garage, where Fernando's Ferrari engineer, Andrea Stella, will now rub shoulders with the likes of Phil Prew. And there are the matters of Honda Power and Alonso Presence – mini earthquakes in their own right, but in 2015 just parts of a heaving conglomerate.

So what can Fernando expect? The personnel count behind the Honda engine programme is currently relatively small (much smaller than he would have seen at Ferrari) and he'll be surprised that Honda have chosen Milton Keynes as their UK base and not somewhere closer to McLaren. The Abu Dhabi 2014 test engine hadn't run with the ERS installed prior to those abortive first days, so one problem followed another.

The car was designed by former Red Bull man Pete Prodromou, but only to a point: it's his front wing, but the chassis was signed off by Tim Goss before Pete could start the real work. Another neat irony, given Ron Dennis's disdain for the Toyota F1 team: McLaren will keep using the Toyota windtunnel in Cologne for aero tests.

Fernando will just do his thing. He won't try to change the methodology of McLaren or Honda, but you will see him extracting 100 per cent from the car at any given moment. He will take the short-term view: if it doesn't work out he'll be off to a quicker car for 2016; if there's lots of pace and lots of promise then he'll stay. He's fortunate, after all, to have a McLaren-Honda to drive: gazumped by Vettel at Ferrari, rejected by Red Bull, Fernando was for a few weeks actually looking at temporary retirement. He wouldn't have wanted to return to Woking on Ron's terms but it's done now.

Maybe, magically, the new car will be a Merc out of the box... →

Fernando Alonso THE SAMURAI

AN INDOMITABLE
WARRIOR WHO BRINGS
THE BUSHIDO SPIRIT
TO FORMULA 1



Valtteri Bottas

THE FLYING FINN

HEIR APPARENT TO THE FINNISH MANTLE AND KEEN TO FORGE HIS OWN LEGEND

Valtteri Bottas need do nothing more than he did in 2014. The wins will come: Williams-Mercedes are too punchy for it all to slip away.

The difficult thing, of course, will be to sustain a margin over his team-mate, Felipe Massa, something he must do if he is to graduate to the level of the Hamiltons, Ricciardos and Alonsos. Valtteri must outqualify Felipe over a season and also outrace him – as he did in 2014. Felipe, though, is now very different from the driver who left Ferrari chastened and a little desperate. He finished 2014 on a high, and that momentum will carry him through at least to Melbourne – and probably beyond if the Williams is quick.

It's important for Valtteri not to lose concentration if the year begins in Felipe's favour. It's unlikely he will, but there's no accounting for what pressure will do. Valtteri has so far proved himself immune to outside forces and I think the group around him – Jonathan Eddolls, Didier Coton, Mika Häkkinen, Toto Wolff – will continue to protect those walls. Valtteri needs to be

prepared in case Felipe becomes the first Williams winner since Pastor Maldonado. His knock-out punch would have to come at the next race, where – more than ever – he'll need to outqualify Felipe and then beat him on the Sunday.

He has the technique to do so. Even in GP3 Valtteri showed a deftness of touch above the F1 average; and in 2014 he honed that into Lewis-like management of changing conditions. His economy of movement is compelling, particularly at low-speed change-of-direction corners and also into medium-speed turns.

Like Felipe, Valtteri had to spend 2014 down- and up-shifting with heavy load on the rear tyres (thanks to Williams' short gear ratios) – but his ability to manipulate straight lines where Felipe was still loading the car in time became a Bottas trademark. Williams are retaining their own gearbox casing and internals for 2015 and it's a fair bet that they'll stretch the ratios a bit and that this little source of Bottas expression will in the main fade away. The better the car, in other words, the harder it will be for Bottas to dominate a quick and

reflexy driver like Felipe. That's why he'll be under so much pressure.

Bottas is now accomplished in traffic, too, with a racer's sense for what's next; and then there was the moment he outmuscled Fernando Alonso on the opening lap of the US GP. No longer the quiet rookie, in Austin Valtteri arrived as a racing driver – potentially a great one. **F1**

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GO FIGURE

As we enter the seventh F1 season to end in a five, we look back at the previous six...

23



the number of titles won in total by the six world champions of these years: Fangio (1955), Clark (1965), Lauda (1975), Prost (1985), Schumacher (1995) and Alonso (2005)



58%



The increase in miles raced over a season from 1955 (2085.32) to 2005 (3590.28)



2



circuits, **Monaco and Monza**, have held races in all six seasons

5,455

The total number of laps raced in the 82 GPs in those years



FOUR

drivers who started the 2005 season will also line up on the grid in Australia:
Jenson Button, Fernando Alonso, Kimi Räikkönen and Felipe Massa

Cesare Perdisa, 22



ELEVEN

Louis Chiron, 55



of the 48 drivers who competed in 1955 were aged under 30. The youngest was Cesare Perdisa at 22; the oldest was Louis Chiron, who began the season aged 55

1

maximum score, in 1965, when **Jim Clark** won six of the first seven GPs. Only the top six scores counted



This season will be the **31st** time that the **Australian GP** is held. It first ran in 1985



NINE YEARS



after **Niki Lauda's** second world title in 1975, he won his third in 1984

26

A full grid of 26 cars last appeared at the **1995 Monaco GP**

41

The number of lead changes in the **1965 Italian GP** – an all-time F1 record

The combined age of the youngest driver pairing in **F1 history, this season:** Toro Rosso's Max Verstappen and Carlos Sainz Jr

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

Lewis Hamilton

The newly minted double world champion takes time out from his 2015 preparations to exclusively answer your questions about his title defence, Nico Rosberg – and MC Hammer

WORDS JAMES ROBERTS PORTRAITS PEROU

It's a cold, dark midwinter afternoon and the sleepy market town of Brackley is going about its daily business. Few of its good denizens will have noticed the new sign placed at the entrance to Reynard Way – portal to Brackley's most rock-star residents. It reads 'Mercedes AMG Formula One Team: 2014 world champions'.

Inside the foyer of team HQ, formerly home to BAR-Honda, then Brawn GP, the Mercedes F1 W05 Hybrid is the centrepiece of a new reception layout. A couple of floors up, engineers quietly toil at their CFD screens, seeking a new performance edge. A couple of doors down, the world champion suddenly appears, looking refreshed and relaxed after a winter away from racing. Lewis Hamilton is primed and ready for another gruelling campaign. He picks up the February issue of *F1 Racing* and studies intently the Williams FW37 that features on its cover. "It looks like they've copied our suspension," he

muses, noting details of the nose and the front wishbones. "Ha, we've changed that now!"

Lewis will begin a new season in a little over a month, his aim being to claim back-to-back titles. But before that, there's the small matter of answering your questions to attend to...

Congratulations on becoming world champion. Did it feel different to when you first won it in 2008?

Jessica Kelsey, UK

Yeah. This championship was better because I've been in a much happier place. When I was younger – I don't really remember 2008 very well – I wasn't really my own man. My dad was a big driving force. Now I stand on my own two feet, pay my own bills, look after myself and make my own decisions. I make my choices on my own, in terms of how I prepare and approach things and the sacrifices I make. Do's and don'ts

are what got me to win that championship. And that's something to be really proud of.

How have you been celebrating your world title?

John Herbert, UK

I've not been celebrating it, to be honest. Right after the last race I had a lot of appearances and interviews and I didn't really go out until the New Year. Then I went skiing and snowboarding and that was great fun – that was my reward.

For you personally Lewis, what would it mean to equal your hero, Ayrton Senna, by winning three world titles?

Dave Armstrong, Canada

It would be very cool. I've always wanted to emulate Ayrton, having read all the books about him and watched the videos. Growing up, targeting the three world championships →



YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

– that was the special number. Michael Schumacher succeeded further, but when I was young the greats had scored three. I'm hoping that I can win one more championship to get to three and make it onto that list of greats. People say that I'm 'a great', but I don't feel I ever could be considered a great until I'm at least in that zone – and that's one more championship. Then at least I'd feel like I had reached the minimum standard. Beyond that is another level.

Given that you've partnered both of them, how do you think Jenson Button will cope with Fernando Alonso at McLaren?

Bill Allen, UK

Jenson is a very easy-going guy. He's very talented and hard-working. I'll be as interested as anyone to see how he does. Fernando is obviously very quick, but I think Jenson will be fine. He'll do everything he can to beat him.

F1R: You've been there, so you know how much fun it is!

LH: Yeah, I've been up against both of them and there are pros and cons to both drivers as there are with everyone.

Why do you think Nico had a slight edge over you in qualifying last season?

Christopher Moore, Switzerland

[Drums his fingers on the table while working out how to respond] I think in qualifying last

year a lot of it was what people didn't see – which is how little time you have and how few changes you are able to make to the car. If you go down the wrong path it's very difficult to step back because there are so many different engineering paths to choose.

Last year, for the first time I probably got it wrong more times than in the past. The track is green at the start of the weekend and you can't predict exactly how it's going to progress, so in P1 you make some changes. Then into P2 those changes are not relevant so the car's crap. Then what do you do? Do you go back to start from the beginning, or do you change?

So there were some races where I got a little lost with my engineers and after P3 we were undoing all the changes or making other changes that meant, set-up wise, I was going into qualifying blind. Also, I knew it wasn't the optimum. But there were other times when the poles I got meant I was on the right path – but that's something I'm going to improve this year.

Which of your Christmas presents did you like the most?

Kaz Theuri, UK

I didn't really get a lot of Christmas presents and I'm not a big fan of receiving gifts. I would rather someone spent their money constructively and not on me. For example, if someone sponsored an animal or a child, or donated it to charity.

Last Christmas I had my cousins and family over and it brought me great joy to watch the children enjoying their presents. I did get a couple of things I liked; my mum got me a cool Beats Pill speaker. And, like everyone else, I got loads of cologne and shower gel. I've got so much of that stuff, thanks to all the hotels I stay in I don't need any more!

Is *U Can't Touch This* by MC Hammer now one of your favourite songs?

Peter Smith, UK

It's never been one of my favourite songs, it's just that when I was a kid, as a Hamilton, people used the nickname 'Hammer' and 'Hammerhead shark' and my engineer used to say to me: "It's time to push," and I'm like: "Dude, I'm already pushing, so WTF?!" So instead I'd say, "Tell me it's Hammertime when it's really time to go", because when I was growing up and going to clubs, my friends used to have 'Hammertime' as a catchphrase as it's related to MC Hammer's dance. And when he says 'Hammertime' it's time to go – that's when he did the crab walk.

Why did you choose to race with number 44 on your car this year, rather than with the prestigious number one?

Albert Hofman, Holland

I know that the number one is meant to be my number this year. I know that's my position, →



What advice did Niki Lauda offer you regarding the title showdown?

Andrew Larmour, UK

Niki is often in the garage, but he never gave me advice about the title. He normally gives me advice about my personal life. For example, he's into planes so he advises me on any problems I might have with running mine because he's so clued up about that sort of stuff. He's also a good go-to individual – he always wants to know what's not being done: areas of the car or team that can be improved. So when I've talked to Toto and Paddy, Niki can be another voice. And because he's a former driver, he knows what I'm talking about because he has that experience of driving grand prix cars.





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YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

but 44 means so much more to me. I want to win the championship and be at the top. But 44 is what I started with [he used the number in karting] and it has been most loyal to me my whole life. No one else has had it. No one else has shared it – so it's personal to me. Vettel and Alonso and all the recent champions have had number one, which has been shared around. But 44 is unique to me.

How do you motivate yourself when things go disastrously wrong?

Chris Farr, UK

I don't need to motivate myself when things go wrong; the motivation is already there within me. I'm always carrying my two chains around with me, and when I put them in my pocket and then pull them back out later they are usually tangled up. I find that how I deal with difficult issues is similar to how I tackle the problem of untangling my chains. You can either get angry and frustrated by trying to pull them apart, or you can be meticulous and think about it and carefully detach them – and that's what I always do. So when I work with my engineers I apply the same approach. I take a step back and try to observe everything with a calm approach. Also I do my best to try to motivate the people around me – I don't get angry and frustrated and pull them down. I always attempt to make it positive.

What music do you listen to on race day?

Michael Bragg, USA

I listen to lots of different music. I listen to The Weekend or Kayne West. There's usually one track that I tend to get into in the week of the race and then I spend most of the weekend listening to just that one song. Often I'll put the music I'm listening to up on Spotify and then people can go online and see what stuff I have.

Now the season is over and you won. So tell us: do you think Nico did it on purpose in qualifying for the Monaco Grand Prix?

Jonny Popper, UK

I'm not going to answer that one. There's no point talking about things in the past like that.

Can you see yourself back in a McLaren one day?

Jason Sultana, Malta

Personally, I can't. F1 drivers don't have a really long career, and while I never say never I feel like I've had a long stretch at McLaren. I raced there from 2007 to 2012 and I was there from the age of 13 on their young driver scheme. I feel like I

What sort of a coping mechanism did you use on the Saturday night of the British Grand Prix last season?

Elizabeth Jones, UK

I didn't have a coping mechanism, I basically had to do whatever I could to take my mind off things. If you think about things you dwell on them and stay in that place. So I had chicken fajitas and egg-fried rice – my favourite meal. My sister came round with the two dogs and we went for a long walk over the fields. They were filthy afterwards, so I put them in the bath and washed them. That was therapeutic and fun. I watched some TV and spent some time talking to my dad. Over time I've built a coping mechanism of getting over things quickly. In the past it would take days. Although that might not have been the case if I'd lost the championship!



Lewis races to victory at Silverstone, having qualified sixth – the lowest start he has ever converted to a win

achieved everything I needed to there. I'm in this new phase now. After that – who knows? But you can never say never.

How did you celebrate your 30th birthday?

Dominika Bojar, Poland

Friends took me to Vegas for two days... which was pretty dangerous!

Are you tempted to do what Nico Hülkenberg is doing this year and have a go at Le Mans? And if not now is it something you'd like to try in the future?

Ian Wright, UK

Not really, no. I quite like Le Mans, but it's not something that draws me and I've never thought that one day I *have* to do it. I don't know why it is, but it might be because I'd be sharing the car

with people. I like to drive my own car: I don't want to share it. If I do Le Mans, then I'd want to drive it for 24 hours – which you can't do!

Who do you think will win the championship this year?

Maja Tyrbo, Sweden

Silly question [discards card] – that's what I'm working towards.

Will you be using your old yellow helmet this season? Please do!

Ruben Reynolds, Norway

No, I'm going to keep my white helmet. Mainly because the yellow doesn't suit this car, it doesn't look good with it. I still have the same base design, but it just doesn't look good. I tried to design another helmet in yellow, but it wasn't →



YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

right. It didn't have the swag with the outfit I've got. If I have a black suit one day, then I'll go back to yellow.

You've driven for McLaren and Mercedes, two big marquee names in motorsport. Is there a desire within you to drive for Ferrari in the future?

Wong Yew Liang, Singapore

I like Ferrari road cars, but over the course of my career I haven't ever had a dying feeling to drive

for Ferrari. Senna was my favourite racer and he drove for McLaren, so naturally that was the car I really wanted to drive. But I was also inspired by watching videos of Fangio in his Silver Arrows and I really wanted to drive that car, too. But naturally a red car is a beautiful car and I can never say never. Would it be weird to have never driven the red car that so many others have in their careers? I just don't know. But Senna never drove one, so I don't think it would be too bad if I didn't.

If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?

Saf Ghouri, UK

I'd want to be Superman. I want to be able to fly. Superman flies into space and beyond – that's what I want to do [laughs].

Do you feel you can talk openly about your faith? Keep up the positive inspiration!

Darren Ormrod, UK

Yes, absolutely. It's the way I approach it. Everyone has their own opinions. What anyone else believes or cares about is up to them. Everyone has the freedom of choice. That's the great thing we have in life. I would never push what I believe onto other people and I'm also very respectful of other religions. It's never been a problem. There is a certain way I feel about my religion and what it's done for me. I get a lot of positives from it.

How many tattoos do you have – and will you be adding any more to celebrate your second world championship?

Anna Francis, UK

I don't have any to celebrate winning the world championship, but I've been planning – for a long time now – to get another tattoo. I have one big sleeve, one full back, two on my chest and I have more coming. →



"I like Ferrari road cars, but I haven't ever had a dying feeling to drive for Ferrari. Senna never drove one, so I don't think it would be too bad if I didn't"



Lewis in his Merc and Kimi in his Ferrari: "I was inspired by watching videos of Fangio in his Silver Arrows"

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YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS



During the race weekend there isn't very much allocated time for drivers to be able to interact with their fans. How do you feel about that situation and what could be done to improve it?

Chantal Permentier, Holland

The fan interaction is great; the fans totally make the racing weekend what it is. And what I really love is all those people who have saved up and travelled so far just to be at the races. It's moving when you meet these people around the globe and they give me so much energy and motivate me throughout the year. I love it and I wish that there was more time for it. I get pulled away from signing sessions and there are still more people in the queue, but you have to

get back to the engineering and you can't satisfy everyone. I would love to meet more people and connect with them. That's what I am trying to do with all my social media stuff, to bring the fans closer to my life and allow them to spend some time with me.

You've said in the past that it was great to race against Michael Schumacher. How did his accident affect you?

Ricky Goshawk, Singapore

What happened to Michael is a constant reminder of how fragile life is. You really do have to cherish every moment, because you never know when something might happen to you or a loved one. If I ever have any fear in life,

it's of that unknown moment that will come at some stage perhaps. I keep Michael and his family in my prayers and I keep in contact with his people, too.

If you were in a plane that was going down and you owned two parachutes but you were travelling with Nico Rosberg and Fernando Alonso, who would you give the other parachute to – or would you take both parachutes with you?

Rob Derbyshire, UK

I would wear one. I'd let the other two fight over the second one. I'd then jump out and if one of them was falling without a parachute... I'd grab them and help them!

Who's your most influential hero?

Jeff Blutman, Australia

Muhammad Ali. And probably above him would be Nelson Mandela.

After winning the world championship with Mercedes in 2014, what is your future with the team beyond 2015?

Joe Filletti, Malta

Hopefully to have a long future with Mercedes. To be continued...

Who has been your toughest rival during your career in Formula 1 so far?

Giorgos Zouppouris, Cyprus

[Drums table] As far as I can remember, Fernando has been my toughest competitor so far. But if I knew then what I knew now, would it have been as hard? I don't know. He was a two-time champion whereas I had no experience and I beat him. But what I learnt in that year from him, is that in terms of natural talent he is definitely the best. 🙌

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NICO ROSBERG:

A T O



A is for ART Grand Prix
The team for whom Nico Rosberg drove when he won the inaugural GP2 Series title in 2005.

B is for Barcelona
The Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya is where he first drove an F1 car. He had a run in a Williams-BMW FW24 in 2002 as a prize for winning the Formula BMW title.

C is for Chinese Grand Prix
Rosberg scored his first pole and win at the 2012 Chinese Grand Prix, making him the first German to take victory in a German car.

D is for Dual nationality
Nico races under a German licence, but also has Finnish nationality through his dad, Keke.



E is for Eight grand prix wins
That's the number of victories he's scored in F1 so far – one in 2012, two in 2013 and five last season.

F is for Fresh vegetables
Rosberg is a keen gardener, and grows a range of vegetables. His wife Vivian does most of the cooking, but he dabbles in baking.



The Mercedes racer's push for the 2014 title proved he has what it takes to be champion. Here we present an A to Z of the man most likely to deny Lewis Hamilton back-to-back crowns

WORDS JAMES ATTWOOD
PORTRAIT ADRIAN MYERS

G is for Grove
The Oxfordshire town is home to the Williams team, with whom Rosberg spent his first four years in F1, claiming two podiums.



H is for Hamilton, Lewis
Rarely have two drivers' careers been entwined for as long as Nico and Lewis. In 2000 they were karting team-mates in Team MBM.com. Fourteen years on, they reunited at Mercedes, battling for the F1 championship.

I is for Imperial College, London
Rosberg was offered a place studying aeronautical engineering here, but turned it down to pursue his racing career instead.

J is for Jules Rimet Trophy
To celebrate Germany's 2014 World Cup win, Nico planned to wear a helmet featuring his national flag and the Jules Rimet Trophy – until FIFA forced him to change it.

K is for Keijo Erik 'Keke' Rosberg
Nico's dad won the title for Williams in 1982. He was also Nico's first boss: Team Rosberg ran Nico in Formula BMW and F3.

L is for Les Combes
The corner at Spa where Nico and Lewis made contact at last year's Belgian Grand Prix. The clash led to Rosberg being punished by his Mercedes team.

M is for Monaco
Rosberg has lived in the Principality for most of his life, and is also fairly handy at driving an F1 car there – he won the Monaco Grand Prix in 2013 and 2014.

N is for Nine F1 seasons
The number of seasons Nico had completed by the end of 2014. His stats: 166 starts, eight wins, 26 podiums, 15 poles and 887.5 points.



O is for One
That's the number of wheels on a unicycle, of which Rosberg is a proficient rider. He is also a skilled juggler.

P is for Pep Guardiola
The coach of Bayern Munich, Nico's favourite football club, who guided the squad to the Bundesliga title in his first full season.

Q is for Qualifying
Despite Lewis Hamilton's reputation for single-lap speed, Rosberg was the man to beat on Saturdays in 2014. He outqualified Lewis 12-7, and won the first F1 Pole Position Trophy with 11 poles.

R is for Ross, Tony
Rosberg's long-time race engineer. They teamed up at Williams, with Ross following Nico to Mercedes in early 2011.



S is for Six
For his permanent car number, Nico picked 'six', which is the lucky number of both his wife and his dad, Keke. Rosberg Sr won the 1982 crown in car number six.

T is for Toyota
Rosberg was powered by Toyota engines for three of his four seasons with Williams. He claimed his first podium with the Japanese unit at the 2008 Australian GP.

U is for U2
The Irish band's 1987 hit 'Where the Streets Have No Name' is Rosberg's preferred karaoke number. He wheeled out his act at the Mercedes F1 team's Christmas party: the evidence is on YouTube.

V is for Vivi's Creamery
An upscale ice cream parlour on Ibiza, opened last year by Nico Rosberg's wife, interior designer Vivian Sibold. The Rosbergs own a home on the Mediterranean island.

W is for Wiesbaden
The German city where Nico was born. It is also the birthplace of tennis star John McEnroe, whose father was stationed there with the United States Air Force.

X is for XXX
That's 30 in roman numerals, Lewis's age in January. Rosberg, who isn't 30 until 27 June, tweeted: "You are old now, so hopefully it will be easier for me this year."

Y is for Yas Marina
The home of the Abu Dhabi GP is where Rosberg's 2014 title bid finally ended, after he was slowed in the race by an electrical issue.

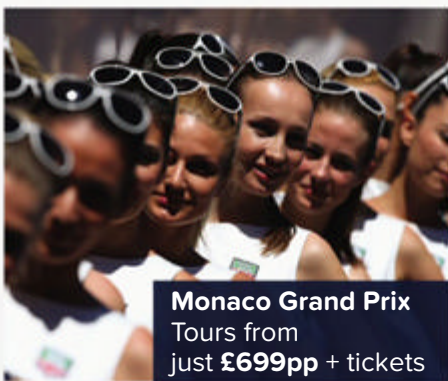
Z is for Zetsche, Dieter
The proud owner of a fine moustache, Dieter Zetsche is also chairman of Daimler AG and head of Mercedes-Benz cars. That makes him Rosberg's ultimate boss. 🏎️

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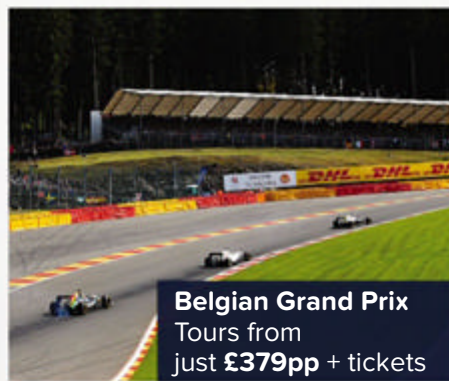
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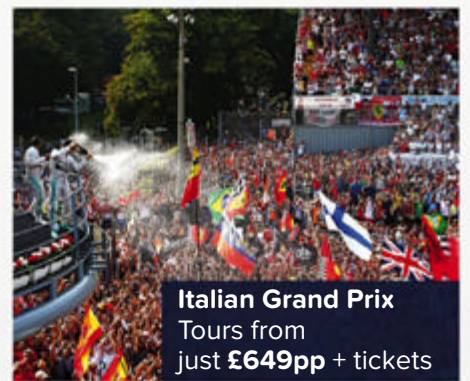
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	Points 1,582	Performance director Mark Ellis
	Drivers' titles 3	
	Constructors' titles 1	

F1 RACING SAYS...

Twelve months ago Mercedes were the favourites to win the 2014 championship, but no one expected them to dominate in quite the way they did. Eleven one-two finishes and a whopping 701 constructors' championship points netted the Brackley-based team both titles. It was a great credit to their management, Toto Wolff and Paddy Lowe, that they allowed both Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg to fight it out on track. Despite the headaches that caused within the team, it was brilliant for the fans watching worldwide.

The question now is whether Rosberg can pick himself up and come back to attack an ultra-confident Lewis, as there's no doubt that Mercedes will be *the* team to beat in 2015. If anything, their rivals should be more fearful as their engine department admit they have plenty of room to improve. It's hard to see beyond another title double for them this year.

DRIVERS

Car number	44	Car number	6
LEWIS HAMILTON (GBR)		NICO ROSBERG (GER)	
Born 7 January 1985 (age 30)		Born 27 June 1985 (age 29)	
Place of birth Tewin, UK		Place of birth Wiesbaden, Germany	
Height/weight 1.75m/66kg		Height/weight 1.78m/67kg	
Race engineer Peter Bonnington		Race engineer Tony Ross	
Twitter @LewisHamilton		Twitter @nico_rosberg	
F1 HISTORY		F1 HISTORY	
Debut Australia 2007		Debut Bahrain 2006	
Races started 148		Races started 166	
Previous team McLaren		Previous team Williams	
Wins 33		Wins 8	
Poles 38		Poles 15	
Fastest laps 20		Fastest laps 9	
Points 1,486		Points 887.5	
Drivers' titles 2		Drivers' titles 0	
2014 position 1st		2014 position 2nd	

RESULTS IN 2014

Position 1st

Points 701

1st 16

2nd 13

3rd 2

Points scoring races 19

Pole positions 18

Fastest laps 12



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DOWNHILL WITH THE THE DANS

F1 Racing braved a trip down the snowy ski slopes of, er, Milton Keynes to find out why Red Bull believe their fortunes are on the up this year – despite the exit of four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel

WORDS STUART CODLING

PICTURES MARK THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES

Two Dans in one team? You're not alone in thinking this might get a little confusing.

"Dan? Dan!" The TV producer's call to arms echoes across the broad, snow-dusted slopes of the Milton Keynes Snozone. Two heads snap around in unison. "Eh? Uh? Ah?"

Red Bull's two Dans – Daniel Ricciardo and Daniil Kvyat – stand together before the world's media for the first time, wrapped warm against the chill of this stately indoor pleasure dome. Behind them, the artificial slope rises semi-regularly to a distant peak, garlanded with miniature trees and an inflatable Red Bull-branded arch to form a short slalom course. In one corner an open-top Hummer blasts out popular urban beats; in another, a lady in a dirndl dispenses steaming mugs of cream-topped hot chocolate and miniature chicken schnitzels from an Alpine-themed cart. It is as if we've been transported inside some Red Bull-themed novelty snow globe – one that is, no doubt, ready to be shaken up so the glittering fragments can swirl.

"We've already got it worked out," says Kvyat confidently. "Danny [points to himself] and Daniel. Christian [Horner, Red Bull team principal] said, 'I'm tired of this already! We need to work something out about the names...' But as you can see, there's still a bit of confusion sometimes."

After a season that fell short of their lofty recent standards, Red Bull will hope that getting the message through to the right driver will be the least of their challenges. It's not as if Danny and Daniel are strangers to one another, or that Kvyat is a newcomer; before grabbing the Toro Rosso drive in 2014, he raced in GP3 for Arden, the team founded and owned by Horner. →

"I'm excited about driving again," says Kvyat. "Dan and I have known each other for five or six years as part of the Red Bull Junior Team, although we haven't worked together on the track. He's a nice guy, but he'll push hard. He proved that last year. We'll both be trying to bring a strong and positive energy to the team."

"It's going to make me feel old [Kvyat is 20], which is weird, because I still feel really young," laughs Ricciardo, who is 26 this July. "But I'm looking forward to it. I've watched him for quite a few years; when I was doing World Series by Renault he was doing Formula Renault 2.0, so we'd be racing on the same weekends and sometimes do a warm-up together."

"I've always related to his driving style; we've got a few things in common. He's got good car control. So now I'm looking forward to what we can do in the same car. Although he's young, he can bring a lot to the team. I think we'll gel."

"What could go wrong?" says Horner. "They're both very quick, both products of the Junior Team, and they've both come up the same way Sebastian [Vettel] has."

Ah, Sebastian. No longer part of the team but so imprinted on his former team's psyche that his name bubbles to the surface almost involuntarily. But, since he remains the most successful Red Bull junior alumnus, and a testament to the effectiveness of 'driver advisor' Dr Helmut Marko's ruthlessly up-or-out methodology, why not?

"There's going to be an exciting dynamic within the team," continues Horner. "It's impossible to put too many rules and regulations down – they know what's expected of them, and it's my job to support them and get the best out of them. We just let them get on with the job..."

Time to hit the slopes. Underfoot, the snow is crunchy, with a granular edge, like that of a ski resort that hasn't had a fresh dump of the white stuff for a few days. Luckily the button lifts in the MK Snozone act less savagely than their Alpine counterparts and elevate us all – Horner, Kvyat and Red Bull ambassador David Coulthard with skis, Ricciardo with a kind of sawn-off sledge – to the summit with nary a stumble.

"I've only skied once in my life," admits Ricciardo. "I picked it up pretty well, but it was about 12 years ago – so, yeah, the sledge. I thought I'd play safe... I used to be a member of the gym here. I came to train here for about three years so I was always looking over the ski dome. You can see the window there..."

Kvyat is an experienced skier – his father was a ski instructor – and after an strong year at Toro Rosso, he won't be taking a rookie role at Red Bull



"I'VE BEEN WORKING TOWARDS THIS MY WHOLE LIFE. I'M HUNGRY FOR IT, BUT I'M STLL LEARNING"

He points, and, sure enough, there in a double-glazed eyrie can be seen the denizens of the Nuffield Health Gym, scurrying on their treadmills. Was he not tempted, in all those years, to join the snow-based fun in a venue currently ranked tenth out of 36 'activities' in Milton Keynes on TripAdvisor – indeed, as a Red Bull-sponsored 'dude', surely participation in extreme sports was compulsory?

"Yeah, er, I – no! It was one of those things where you live somewhere, it's always, like, 'Yeah, we'll do it one day,' but you keep saying

it and you never do it. One day someone came flying down, went straight through those red catch fences at the bottom and got a total faceful. As much as I was laughing I was thinking, 'Yeah, I shouldn't even try that.' It put me off a bit."

"When I lived here I was a bit out of town, in a forest where I could go mountain biking. I'd go there after a race and just switch off entirely. And I miss that a bit, but after five years of living in MK it was time to move on."

Mountain biking is a subject best not broached within his team-mate's earshot – Kvyat had what is anecdotally described as 'a big one' late last year which left him with a pair of black eyes. With a public appearance at the FIA Awards around the corner, he sought to cover up with a pair of Jackie Onassis-spec sunglasses.

"Yeah," giggles Ricciardo, "he rocked up to the FIA awards in those massive sunglasses and everyone thought, 'Well! Didn't take him long with Red Bull to go all Hollywood!'"

At the top, we slip through the timing gate in turn for a run at the slalom course. Kvyat sweeps elegantly between the trees, unfazed by the presence of cameras. Horner and Coulthard essay cautious first runs. Ricciardo just bombs down the course with a loud whoop on his sliver of green plastic. My turn. How do you ride a snowboard again? The edge of the 'board hisses as it cuts through the granular snow. Gathering speed now, we zig and zag around the first trees.

The trick to turning a snowboard is to lean forwards. Easy to say, harder to put into practice when every instinct is telling you to do the opposite. The hiss becomes a loud scrape as we miss one turn entirely and pop over the top →





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Ricciardo's playing safe and sticking with his sled. He's built up a reputation for just getting on with it – and his results speak for themselves

of a banked 'berm' on to an icier area. Wobble. Fall over. Get up. Wobble. Fall over again. The commentary on the PA has turned to mockery as with feigned nonchalance I cross the finishing line. Kvyat is already relishing another go.

"I enjoyed that," he says, "but I used to be better. My father was a ski instructor so I learnt when I was five. He gave me a good baseline, but I don't have the time to practise any more.

He turns to a cameramen. "Can you go down behind me this time? I want to set a time..."

Ever the competitor. Having a more experienced team-mate – Jean-Eric Vergne – gave him a benchmark at Toro Rosso, but the transition to Red Bull's senior team brings further expectation. Whereas Toro Rosso are the driver incubator in which talent is encouraged to shine, their purpose is to score points rather than to win races. Now he's part of a team that has an almost Villeneuve-like *rage* to win.

"Last year was the biggest change in terms of mental approach," he says, "because for the past eight or nine years of my career I was winning races, or I had a car that was capable of winning races, whereas last year we weren't fighting for wins. You have to be happier with smaller things.

"I DON'T GET TOO DISTRACTED BY OTHER STUFF. I JUST DRIVE AND HAVE FUN"



So I've been working towards this my whole life, and there's nothing better than working with a team with capabilities like this. I'm hungry for it. Nothing in my approach has really changed over the winter, but of course I'm still learning."

There have been major changes at Red Bull over the past few months, from Adrian Newey stepping back from the technical front line, to the supposed number-one driver casting his lot with Maranello. Some drivers might sense an opportunity to perform a grab for that coveted number one status – especially with a young hotshot about to be installed in the garage next door. But then again, Dan Ricciardo has established himself as one of F1's premier exponents of quietly getting on with the business of controlling what can actually be controlled and letting everything else wash over him.

"I haven't really thought about anything other than getting back in the car," he says. "Adrian came to the winter tests and is planning to come to the first few races, so he'll still be around quite a bit. But, yeah, a few more people are stepping up now – taking on some bigger roles, I guess.

"I try not to put too much weight on myself, whether I'm the next person to lead the team and that sort of thing. I just try to do what I've got to do in the car and hopefully that converts into results. I'll build good relationships around me and see what eventuates from that. I don't get too distracted by the other stuff. I just drive and have fun. It worked for me last year."

The personnel surrounding Ricciardo will be largely the same for 2015, though performance engineer Gavin Ward is moving to a factory role in the aerodynamics department. Kvyat will take on a shaken-up version of Sebastian Vettel's crew led by Gianpiero Lambiase, formerly race engineer for Sergio Pérez at Force India. Vettel's race engineer Guillaume 'Rocky' Rocquelin was due for promotion to a new role as head of track engineering anyway, in a move announced last summer before Vettel's departure. This is not a team in flux, but one that's been strategically renewing itself over the winter.

"I'd have been happy for last season just to keep on going," says Ricciardo. "We'd been doing so well. Still, it was good that when we got the break I was, like, completely switched off. But I just want to get back behind the wheel now."

The names and times of everyone who tackled the slalom course have been written on a whiteboard at the bottom of the slope. Amusingly, there is only one spelling of 'Dan'. 📌

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In conversation with **Christian Horner**

Red Bull's team principal reflects on the challenges of 2014 and explains why F1 needs to provide more bang for less buck

INTERVIEW STUART CODLING **PORTRAIT** CLIVE MASON/GETTY IMAGES

What did you learn over the course of 2014?

You are always learning in Formula 1 and obviously a lot of lessons have been learnt over the past 12 months, particularly in terms of the new regulations and power units. Everything that we've seen from Renault reassures us they have made good progress over the winter. Obviously we've evolved the chassis, but we had a very good chassis and hopefully we've managed to improve on that for this year.

Do you think having a season where things didn't go all your own way made you a better team?

Last year was arguably one of our best achievements. Compare our starting point to our finishing point: we were unable to do more than three laps at the first test without the car breaking down, yet we won three races, finished second in the constructors' championship and third in the drivers'. It was a huge achievement by the whole team and we continue to evolve. We're never complacent; we always look to improve and learn from our experiences.

And you still have other teams trying to poach your technical staff, which is a compliment in a way...

It's part of the game, isn't it? Every year approaches are made. It's no secret that our staff are our biggest asset, so it's only natural that others come knocking on doors. But we have a very low staff turnover and a very happy workforce. They enjoy working for Red Bull, they enjoy working for what Red Bull stands for, so we've had an extremely high retention of staff over the years.

You were outspoken about the costs of the power units last year. Where do you stand on talk of adapting engines to 1,000bhp? Would that be good for F1 or will it just hit you in the pocket as a customer?

The prospect of 1,000bhp engines is eye watering and extremely appealing and everyone would love to see it. But we have to do it responsibly. It could add €20-40million to the cost of engines, which would be passed on to the teams. We need to avoid that. We need to generate more horsepower for less money, and that's achievable if we're all on the same page.

How would that happen though, because with the Strategy Group, some teams have a say and others don't. At the end of 2014, some teams who didn't have a say were beginning to mention boycotts...

I don't think anyone would complain about more horsepower for less money. I don't think any of the smaller teams would complain about

FACTFILE

Date of birth 16 November 1973

Place of birth Leamington Spa, UK

Team Red Bull Racing

Role Team principal

2013 Leads Red Bull to a fourth straight championship double with Sebastian Vettel

2010 Vettel seals Red Bull's first drivers' title. The team also collects the constructors' crown

2009 Red Bull scores a first F1 win with Sebastian Vettel in China

2005 Appointed team principal of Red Bull Racing

1997 Retires as a driver. Founds Arden Formula 3000 team

that. And that's what we have to achieve. If budgets continue to increase for the manufacturers, how long will they hang around? Only one of them can win. F1 has to give a return on investment and if that becomes disproportionate because the spend is too high, manufacturers will inevitably question their involvement. So it's down to us to ensure they stick around and it's down to us to entice new manufacturers into the sport. We can do this if we are responsible with costs, in terms of getting the costs of development down and the appeal up.

Is F1 providing enough return on investment, because a few teams lack sponsors at the moment? Are enough new people putting their money in?


Yes and no. Formula 1 is attracting more sponsors and partners, and good, strong brands. But we need to do a better job of bringing in more sponsors and partners. Since the tobacco money left, there hasn't been an influx from any other area and we still need to attract new money and new commercial partners. That perhaps means looking at things slightly differently: making the sport more accessible, making the drivers more accessible, making some of the commercial aspects more accessible.

Will that require a full buy-in from other teams?

Will everyone have to make their drivers more accessible?

It is the responsibility of all the teams in Formula 1 to do that. The drivers are the stars and they need to be accessible to the fans, because their personalities need to shine through. What Formula 1 has been very bad at, is that it has shut all the drivers away from the public and hasn't given behind-the-scenes access. That's something we need to do better as a sport, so people can identify with the drivers they want to support.

We almost need more cars to put the drivers in. I know it's not Red Bull's job to act as a charity, but could more have been done to help the two teams that have fallen out? Or should Formula 1 be a pure meritocracy?

Red Bull did all we could to support them – certainly Caterham, to whom we supplied gearboxes free of charge at the final race, to give them a chance to try to find a buyer. Red Bull already fields four cars, so that's a big proportion of the grid that they fund. We need to attract investors and sponsors and commercial partners into F1 to fund the teams. We need to do a better job, collectively, to bring more income into the sport, not just through FOM and TV revenues, but through commercial sponsorship. 



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COMPANY	TEAM HISTORY	KEY PERSONNEL
Name Red Bull Racing Limited	Founded 2004	Chairman Dietrich Mateschitz
Chassis RB11	First GP Australia 2005	Team principal Christian Horner
Engine Renault Energy F1-2015	Races started 184	Chief technical officer Adrian Newey
Website infiniti-redbullracing.com	Wins 50	Chief engineering officer Rob Marshall
Twitter @redbullracing	Poles 57	Chief engineer, car engineering Paul Monaghan
	Fastest laps 44	
	Points 2,865.5	
	Drivers' titles 4	
	Constructors' titles 4	

F1 RACING SAYS...

Last year's Canadian GP was a defining moment in the history of Red Bull Racing. Daniel Ricciardo celebrated his first grand prix win (of which he's destined to score many more) while the team also announced that the best technical brain in F1, Adrian Newey, was stepping down from his day-to-day role. It was a painful year for the reigning champions, who struggled with a problematic Renault power unit and an off-form Sebastian Vettel, who's since departed for Ferrari.

Ricciardo was the standout performer last year and should continue that great form into 2015 – but how much of a front-of-the-grid force will the RB11 be, given Newey's reduced input? And will Renault be able to mount a threat to runaway leaders Mercedes in the engine stakes? Alongside Ricciardo is the inexperienced Daniil Kvyat, recently promoted from Toro Rosso. It's a big step for the young Russian, but he is remarkably unfazed.

DRIVERS

Car number	3	Car number	26
DANIEL RICCIARDO (AUS)		DANIIL KVYAT (RUS)	
Born 1 July 1989 (age 25)		Born 26 April 1994 (age 20)	
Place of birth Perth, Australia		Place of birth Ufa, Russia	
Height/weight 1.80m/64kg		Height/weight 1.75m/58kg	
Race engineer Simon Rennie		Race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase	
Twitter @danielricciardo		Twitter @Dany_Kvyat	
F1 HISTORY		F1 HISTORY	
Debut Britain 2011		Debut Australia 2014	
Races started 69		Races started 19	
Previous teams Toro Rosso, HRT		Previous team Toro Rosso	
Wins 3		Wins 0	
Poles 0		Poles 0	
Fastest laps 1		Fastest laps 0	
Points 268		Points 8	
Drivers' titles 0		Best result 9th	
2014 position 3rd		2014 position 15th	

RESULTS IN 2014

Position 2nd

Points 405

1st 3

2nd 1

3rd 8

Points scoring races 18

Pole positions 0

Fastest laps 3



DOUBLE



After years of struggle, a revitalised Williams returned to the sharp end of the grid in 2014. Now they face a bigger challenge: to fight for drivers' and constructors' championships. We spoke to key figures from the team's previous six title doubles, to find out how they did it

WORDS JAMES ATTWOOD
PICTURES LAT ARCHIVE

VISIONS

1980



Chassis/engine

FW07/FW07B

Ford Cosworth

Drivers

Alan Jones (1st)

Carlos Reutemann (3rd)

Wins

6

Other podium finishes

12

Pole positions

3

Points

120



Alan Jones: “I just seemed to have an affinity with the FW07. I could wring its neck and Patrick Head and I were able to tune it to pretty well match every circuit. It fitted me like a nice suit. I used to drive flat-out all the time, even in testing on a cold Tuesday afternoon at Donington Park.

“I’ve got to say, Frank and Patrick were the two best guys I drove for, bar none. At one race I said I thought an engine was down on power and of course they didn’t have the telemetry then that they do today. Frank said: ‘You’re the driver and if you think it’s down on power we’ll change it.’ That was the sort of bloke he was to drive for. That inspired confidence and hopefully I delivered for him. It was a two-way street.”

Patrick Head (Williams co-founder): “In 1980, we ran an upgraded FW07B in practice at the first race in Argentina, but we had aerodynamic problems and converted the car back to FW07 spec for the race. After a complete rejig, the true FW07B raced at Zolder.

“The main opposition was Nelson Piquet. Brabham were very much a single-car team, employing a paying driver in the second car, so they weren’t in contention for the constructors’ championship. A number of wins were squandered because of unreliability and driver errors. The penultimate race in Canada was a showdown between Jones and Piquet, but it went Jones’s way following a failure of Piquet’s engine.”

1987



Chassis/engine

FW11B-Honda

Drivers

Nelson Piquet (1st)

Nigel Mansell (2nd)

Riccardo Patrese (13th)*

Wins

9

Other podium finishes

9

Pole positions

12

Points

137

* Did one race as a stand-in for the injured Mansell

Nelson Piquet: “After Frank Williams had his road-car accident [in 1986], everything turned to shit. Me and Mansell should have been working together to develop the active suspension, but it turned into a big fight. I tried to leave mid-season. In 1987 it was just ridiculous. He would always take these crazy risks. In those days you had to conserve the tyres, the fuel and the brakes and it was important to take it easy to get to the finish.

“I had a big accident early in 1987. I didn’t want the team to take me out of the car so I lied, but I actually lost my depth of vision. That’s why I was so bloody slow and why Mansell was quicker than me the rest of the season.”

Peter Windsor (Williams manager of sponsorship and public affairs in 1987): “Honda were at their responsive and creative best in 1987, and Patrick Head was in total command at Didcot, managing not only the B-version of the excellent 1986 car but also Honda development.

“We had great sponsors and two very fast drivers. Nelson was number one but Frank had neglected to tell Nigel that he was number two. Nelson was polished and savvy; Nigel was a belligerent artist. Thus we tiptoed between the two. Nelson won on points – but the title, on pace, should have been Nigel’s: a broken exhaust cost us nine points at Monaco and a loose wheel nut a certain one-two in Hungary.”



1992



Chassis/engine

FW14B Renault

Drivers

Nigel Mansell (1st)
Riccardo Patrese (2nd)

Wins

10

Other podium finishes

11

Pole positions

15

Points

164

Nigel Mansell: “The key factor was teamwork, with everyone pulling the same way, together with the leadership and dedication of the whole team. It was the happiest time and the happiest time with my team-mate Riccardo Patrese, not just because of the successes but because there was no rank. We just concentrated on reliability and getting the job done.”

“The atmosphere was truly fantastic. When I un-retired to drive for Williams in 1991 and ’92 it was because Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna had turned down the drive because they felt that neither the team nor the car were competitive enough for them. I actually had written into my contract that it must be fun and enjoyable. And that is what it was.”

David Brown (Mansell’s race engineer in 1992): “You can have the best car in the world, but if it is not reliable you are wasting your time. Mentally, Nigel was in very good shape, determined and driving well. He seemed to get better every time he drove the car.”

“Because of the amount of testing we had done pre-season, Nigel was familiar with what the car felt like and how to get a lap time out of it. It seemed to suit the way he drove it. It was a car you needed to be aggressive with. If a driver could exploit it, which Nigel was able to do, it would go even faster. He was able to exploit the full potential, whereas other people, who didn’t have his driving style, wouldn’t have been able to.”



1993



Chassis/engine

FW15C-Renault

Drivers

Alain Prost (1st)
Damon Hill (3rd)

Wins

10

Other podium finishes

12

Pole positions

15

Points

168



Alain Prost: “The ambience within the team that year was absolutely fantastic, but the season was a little tricky because of the fight with Ayrton and all the politics.”

“I wouldn’t say the ’93 car was an easy car to drive, because it’s never easy. It wasn’t the best car in terms of feedback because of the active suspension, and I could not set the car up the way I was used to.”

“The season-opener in South Africa was my best win for Williams because I’d had a sabbatical in 1992 and it was my first race back. I was third at one stage, but ended up winning the race and that was very important for me, Williams and the Renault people. It gave them confidence that I was back.”

Ann Bradshaw (Williams press officer, 1985-1996): “This was a happy year. We’d come off the back of a championship-winning year, so it was great to see from the first race that the car was still ultra-competitive. We had two new drivers, but neither felt like a ‘new boy’. Damon had been our test driver and Alain, as a triple world champion, had nothing to prove.”

“Alain had a reputation for being political and Williams was not a political team – but we need not have worried. From the day he walked into the team, he never showed any sign of that. The drivers got on well and we had the perfect technical pairing of Patrick Head and Adrian Newey, who were devoid of egos and had a very direct way of dealing with drivers.” →



1996

Damon Hill: “Championship doubles don’t just suddenly turn up. Some sort of momentum has been built up before they happen: something is right. The ingredients are already right and it’s just a question of the combination.”

“That year the engine was good. The aerodynamics were good and the packaging. We had a good sponsor and we had good continuity of personnel. So we had everything that we needed.”

“The car that year, the FW18, was quick out of the box. When it hit the road it was the most sublimely beautiful thing that I have ever had to drive. It fitted me like a glove.”

Richard West (Williams commercial director 1992-1996): “When I rejoined the team in late 1992 Nigel Mansell was off to the US and the sponsors were not happy to see the world champion going overseas. The commercial platform was unstable, so Frank and I sketched out a strategy and eventually brought Rothmans on board.”

“What made us so dominant in the 1990s was our focus: Frank’s pressure on all of us to perform to our best 365 days per year and the motivation of the fantastic group of mechanics, machinists, PR, marketing and design people, who all understood we were there to do one thing. Win.”

Chassis/engine

FW18-Renault

Drivers

Damon Hill (1st)

Jacques Villeneuve (2nd)

Wins

12

Other podium finishes

9

Pole positions

12

Points

175



Williams

1997



Chassis/engine

FW19-Renault

Drivers

Jacques Villeneuve (1st)

Heinz-Harald Frentzen (2nd)

Wins

8

Other podium finishes

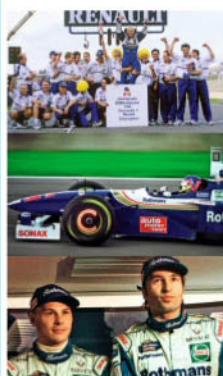
7

Pole positions

11

Points

123



Jacques Villeneuve: “We got a bunch of good points early on in the season, but there weren’t very many people taking points away from Michael Schumacher, so we couldn’t really build up a huge lead.”

“Throughout most of the year it was really a tyre battle – who was choosing the tyres, Michael or me? At some races we managed to put the emphasis on tyres we knew would blister on the Ferrari, and when it was Ferrari’s turn they picked tyres they knew we couldn’t warm up.”

“It got to the point where it looked as though they would win the championship easily. We just fought back race after race. I’ve always been good as the underdog.”

Frank Williams (in November 1997): “The public sees only the top two per cent of the work undertaken at each grand prix. The planning and preparation that represents the vast majority of our effort might not have the superficial glamour of the race weekend, but it is of fundamental importance.”

“That said, I don’t want to take anything away from Villeneuve. He got the job done in a manner that should not be diluted by its controversial conclusion. He showed self-belief, and a maturity that is the hallmark of any champion.”

“The 1997 season gave us our hardest-fought set of titles and our most valued. Only 1980, our first championship with Alan Jones, offered the same emotional charge.”



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PHOTOS: GLENN DUNBAR/LAT: WILLIAMS

WILLIAMS
MARTINI RACING

Station Road, Grove, Oxfordshire, OX12 0DQ, UK

COMPANY	TEAM HISTORY	KEY PERSONNEL
Name Williams Grand Prix Engineering Limited Chassis FW37 Engine Mercedes-Benz PU160B Hybrid Website williamsf1.com Twitter @WilliamsRacing	Founded 1975 First GP Argentina 1975 Races started 630 Wins 114 Poles 128 Fastest laps 133 Points 3,081 Drivers' titles 7 Constructors' titles 9	Team principal Sir Frank Williams Deputy team principal Claire Williams Group CEO Mike O'Driscoll Chief technical officer Pat Symonds Head of performance engineering Rob Smedley

F1 RACING SAYS...

In case you needed reminding, Williams managed to scrape together a meagre five world championship points in 2013, their absolute nadir in terms of performance. Last year they scored 320 points and finished third in the constructors' championship. One major benefit was the Mercedes power unit, but a decent car was the result of key organisation changes and a realignment of procedures following a strong recruitment drive.

As they head into 2015 with a bolstered technical team and two exciting drivers, you would expect Williams to have another decent year. If there was one thing missing from their 2014 season, it was an elusive grand prix victory. It was clear, given their poor 2013 season, why they were conservative in races: they wanted points more than outright glory. Their aim for 2015 will be to go one step further and reach that rostrum summit. And if you fancy a flutter, you'll get longer odds on Bottas achieving it first.

DRIVERS

Car number	19	Car number	77
FELIPE MASSA (BRA) Born 25 April 1981 (age 33) Place of birth São Paulo, Brazil Height/weight 1.66m/59kg Race engineer Dave Robson Twitter @MassaFelipe19 		VALTTERI BOTTAS (FIN) Born 28 August 1989 (age 25) Place of birth Nastola, Finland Height/weight 1.73m/70kg Race engineer Jonathan Eddolls Twitter @ValtteriBottas 	
F1 HISTORY Debut Australia 2002 Races started 210 Previous teams Ferrari, Sauber Wins 11 Poles 16 Fastest laps 15 Points 950 Drivers' titles 0 2014 position 7th		F1 HISTORY Debut Australia 2013 Races started 38 Previous teams N/A Wins 0 Poles 0 Fastest laps 1 Points 190 Best result 2nd 2014 position 4th	

RESULTS IN 2014

Position 3rd

Points 320

1st 0

2nd 3

3rd 6

Points scoring races 19

Pole positions 1

Fastest laps 2

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RED LETTER DAY

Seb Vettel needed to give his new Ferrari guys something to write home about after a poor 2014 and a turbulent off-season. And boy, did he deliver...

WORDS PETER WINDSOR

PHOTOS STEVEN TEE/LAT;
GLENN DUNBAR/LAT & LORENZO BELLANCA

We stand on the short straight at Jerez

between Turns 7 and 8 – between two quick left-handers, in other words, without much perspective but at least with an inline view of the entry to Turn 8, fast and cambered as it is. The afternoon is crisp and clear. The Tio Pepe man atop the tower adds a semi-human silhouette to the line of hills beyond; we curse again that we've forgotten our sunscreen. For an hour or two, even in the cold, February air, you can feel your skin burning.

"Vettel!" We catch a glimpse of red on the far side of the circuit. Now we can hear the Ferrari engine slipping through the gears. Sixth, seventh... and then sixth-fifth-fourth-third-second for the hairpin. A slowish out-lap.

He bursts past. The red and black car with the elegant, long tapered nose. The white helmet. The very un-Red Bull helmet.

The engine note lifts us through the rest of the lap. We picture the car on every corner; and then the car is on the short straight behind the pits... up to seventh... and then down to second again. Six-five-four-three-two, with a pause between the three and the two. Very Seb Vettel. →



The rain starts to fall and it's time to have some fun. There are new intermediates to try – and there's a new car to dominate further. He plays with the rear, feathering the throttle on oversteer out of Turn 1. He is quick... but there's no real yardstick. Only Max Verstappen is out there, also stretching the limits.

He cruises back to the garage. The engine is cut. They push him back. He unclips the belts. The car is streaked with rain lines. And suddenly he hears them clapping. Someone is patting him on the back. The entire Ferrari team have burst into spontaneous applause. He removes his helmet and his mask. He looks around – first at his engineers, then at everyone at the back of the garage. They're all clapping. He laughs and tells them, as he would, that they're only happy because he brought back the car in one piece.

This is Seb's world, now, this new world of Ferrari. Everything is a pleasure. James Allison. His guys. His seat in the engineering room. He stays in the new Puma racesuit, writing in his black notebook because it sinks in deeper when you write it down and sometimes stays out there in the middle of nowhere when you use a computer. It's important not to let the moment grow into something bigger. Deep inside, though, he is elated. The Ferrari move was *right*. →

“Seb manages 1min 20.984secs. It's a massive number. A thunderbolt. Something is moving at Ferrari”

This time he hits eighth on the main straight – but for no more than a second. Now he is accelerating out of the hairpin towards us. Flat into Turn 7 – and now we see him, out there on the rumble strip, kicking up dirt with the right rear, flashing a spark or two. Then he dives into eight. Our heads swivel as if jerked by a pulley. Down one gear... then a dive into the corner... down another... the back end of the red car moves just a tad... and now he's out, accelerating hard again, changing up, hard on the throttle, accelerating towards nine. Out of sight.

Fastest time of the day: 1min 22.620secs. Sidestep Marcus Ericsson's 1min 22.777secs (soft tyres, empty fuel) and you have Seb quickest on day one by half a second. Nico Rosberg is second – also on the medium tyre.

Day Two. The sun has gone. Seb is out early, eager to put in as much mileage as possible before the rain. Still he runs the medium Pirelli. He has a front end and he has an engine that responds. And there is a balance to the car – a back end that doesn't feel as if it's detached. Already it feels like home.

He completes some runs. There's fuel only for a few more laps. Three new sets of mediums.

The car seems shrouded in grip. He brakes later into Turn 1 – and the car takes it. The front's glued; the rear's in line. He pushes further into Turn 2, the tight right-hander, and the car feels the same. He's on a lap.

This time he manages 1min 20.984secs. It's a massive number; a thunderbolt. Something is moving at Ferrari.





Nine men have won the world championship driving a Ferrari. Here's how their careers at the Scuderia compare

Ferrari's champions



Alberto Ascari
Races: 27
Wins: 13
Other podiums: 4
Pole positions: 13
Titles: 2 (1952, '53)



Juan Manuel Fangio
Races: 7
Wins: 3
Other podiums: 2
Pole positions: 6
Titles: 1 (1956)



Mike Hawthorn
Races: 35
Wins: 3
Other podiums: 13
Pole positions: 4
Titles: 1 (1958)



Phil Hill
Races: 31
Wins: 3
Other podiums: 13
Pole positions: 6
Titles: 1 (1961)



John Surtees
Races: 30
Wins: 4
Other podiums: 9
Pole positions: 4
Titles: 1 (1964)



Niki Lauda
Races: 57
Wins: 15
Other podiums: 17
Pole positions: 23
Titles: 2 (1975, '77)



Jody Scheckter
Races: 28
Wins: 3
Other podiums: 3
Pole positions: 1
Titles: 1 (1979)



Michael Schumacher
Races: 179
Wins: 72
Other podiums: 44
Pole positions: 58
Titles: 5 (2000, '01, '02, '03, '04)



Kimi Räikkönen
Races: 71
Wins: 9
Other podiums: 17
Pole positions: 5
Titles: 1 (2007)

Ferrari



In truth, he does look different. The Pumas are a little baggier than the Alpinestars. And he's the first to admit he needs a tan to bring out the best in his new team colours. The white helmet with the red lettering is another step away from the dazzle of the Red Bull era. Call it retro – because Ferrari's also about retro. The museum, the history... and that little Berlinetta he bought a couple of years ago, now perfectly restored.

Michael arrived at Ferrari and changed it to an international-spec F1 team run with Teutonic efficiency; Seb wants to be a part of a Ferrari that's still a little chaotic, still Ferrari. He wants it to win but he doesn't want to *change* it. It's why he climbed the old Monza banking a few years ago. He'd been lucky enough to do so much winning, so quickly, that he needed to smell what had come before – needed to understand that he's here now because of what *they* did then.



“Not only did Seb want to drive a Ferrari, he wanted to gain respect from the biggest F1 players of them all”

Back in Italy, the Jerez performance dominates the headlines. Can Ferrari win again soon with Sebastian Vettel? What is this new alchemy? Kimi Raikkonen provides some of the answers: on his first day in the car he, too, is quick in the wet and then quicker than all the medium-tyre runners in the dry. On the last day, a slow, windy day, with the track rubber washed clean by more rain, Kimi is quickest: 1min 20.841 on the soft tyre – a fraction faster than Seb.

No matter. Seb is long since back at base, working on Barcelona. None of this hanging-around-and-watching-the-other-guy (as Valtteri Bottas hangs around at Williams, watching Felipe Massa); the arrival at Jerez was complete.

Which is what it's all about if you want to make it at Ferrari. Think of Michael and his highly-disciplined number twos. Kimi didn't do that first time round, but then he was working within the momentum that still remained from Michael. Fernando did, but made the mistake of also splitting the garage. And now Seb is doing it – except Seb is doing it with real Ferrari taste and flair, as created by Maurizio Arrivabene, the genius from Philip Morris who now runs the race team. Who knows if Ferrari changed the parameters for that 1min 20.984secs? The point

is that Seb is now Ferrari's anointed one – and he is responding to the call.

Thus you see more clearly why he suddenly made the jump: he entranced Red Bull's Dietrich Mateschitz long before he won his first world championship, but by 2014, with that back end of the RB10 driving him mad, and Daniel doing the job, it's as if all the cards had been played. Not only did he want to drive a *Ferrari*: he wanted to drive a new era of support and to gain respect from the biggest F1 players of them all. It would require everything he had learned until now and it would be the biggest test of his life.

So that was what we saw in Jerez: we saw this amazing prodigy, this four-time champion, using every conceivable angle to maximise his impact. It helped that the car is fast. It helped that he has the rational brain of James Allison and the astute leadership of Arrivabene around which to work. And it helped, I think, that his team-mate is Kimi Räikkönen. From where Kimi was in 2014, Jerez was a huge step forwards. Kimi uniquely would have been oblivious to Seb's first two days. Kimi doesn't do politics. Kimi's a perfect 'team-mate'.

So the entrance was made and a new Ferrari era is upon us. Call it Seb's time: a 1min 20.984sec lap of Jerez on a grey Monday in February. 🏁

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2015

Brands Hatch - Oulton Park - Snetterton - Cadwell Park

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4/5 April	British Touring Cars
11/12 April	Truck Racing
17-19 April	MCE British Superbikes
9/10 May	Blancpain GT Series (GP)
23/24 May	Masters Historic Festival (GP)
7 June	American SpeedFest
21 June	TunerFest (South)
28 June	Mini Festival
11/12 July	HSCC Historic Superprix (GP)
17-19 July	MCE British Superbikes (GP)
1/2 August	British GT/BRDC F4 (GP)
15/16 August	Lotus Festival (GP)
12/13 September	Supercar Challenge (GP)
10/11 October	British Touring Cars (GP)
16-18 October	MCE British Superbikes (GP)
7/8 November	Truck Racing & Fireworks

SNETTERTON

29 March	Masters Race Day
31 May	Retro Kings
19-21 June	MCE British Superbikes
8/9 August	British Touring Cars
22/23 August	British GT/BRDC F4
19/20 September	Truck Racing
27 September	The Snetterton Vintage Festival

CADWELL PARK

29 March	Stage Rally
25 April	Modified Live Show
7 June	Vintage Sports Car Festival
27/28 June	HSCC Wolds Trophy
25/26 July	Cadwell International Classic
21-23 August	MCE British Superbikes
15 November	Stage Rally



Please note all dates are provisional and subject to change

OULTON PARK

4 & 6 April	British GT/BRDC F4
2-4 May	MCE British Superbikes
6/7 June	British Touring Cars
11 July	TunerFest (North)
18 July	Vintage Sports Car Festival
31 July/1-2 Augus	CarFest North
8 August	Mini Festival
29/31 August	The Oulton Park Gold Cup
4-6 September	MCE British Superbikes
7 November	Stage Rally & Fireworks



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PHOTOS: GLENN DUNBAR/LAT: FERRARI

SCUDERIA
FERRARI

Via Abetone Inferiore n. 4, 41053, Maranello, Italy

COMPANY	TEAM HISTORY	KEY PERSONNEL
Name Ferrari SpA	Founded 1929	President Sergio Marchionne
Chassis SF15-T	First GP Monaco 1950	Team principal Maurizio Arrivabene
Engine Ferrari	Races started 889	Technical director James Allison
Website formula1.ferrari.com	Wins 221	Chief designer Simone Resta
Twitter @ScuderiaFerrari	Poles 207	Power unit director Mattia Binotto
	Fastest laps 230	
	Points 5,834.5	
	Drivers' titles 15	
	Constructors' titles 16	

F1 RACING SAYS...

It's all change at Ferrari for 2015, in so many different respects. There is a thread of continuity in that James Allison remains in place as the Scuderia's technical director – although even he knows that patience is running out. If this year's car isn't a grand prix winner, then he too will be skating on thin ice.

Ferrari enter the new season with their third team principal in 12 months and one of the very best driver line-ups in the sport. Four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel departed Red Bull at the end of last year to take up this new challenge. So can he emulate his hero Michael Schumacher and succeed where Fernando Alonso failed, by winning the world championship in a red car? He's accompanied by his friend Kimi Räikkönen, who despite being one of the fastest drivers in the sport, struggled somewhat last year. Things in Maranello need to improve – *pronto*. **F1**

DRIVERS

Car number	5	Car number	7
SEBASTIAN VETTEL (GER)		KIMI RÄIKKÖNEN (FIN)	
Born 3 July 1987 (age 27)		Born 17 October 1979 (age 35)	
Place of birth Heppenheim, Germany		Place of birth Espoo, Finland	
Height/weight 1.76m/58kg		Height/weight 1.75m/62kg	
Race engineer Riccardo Adami		Race engineer Dave Greenwood	
Twitter N/A		Twitter N/A	
F1 HISTORY			
Debut USA 2007		Debut Australia 2001	
Races started 139		Races started 211	
Previous teams Red Bull, Toro Rosso, BMW-Sauber		Previous teams Lotus, McLaren, Sauber	
Wins 39		Wins 20	
Poles 45		Poles 16	
Fastest laps 24		Fastest laps 40	
Points 1,618		Points 1,024	
Drivers' titles 4		Drivers' titles 1	
2014 position 5th		2014 position 12th	

RESULTS IN 2014

Position 4th

Points 216

1st 0

2nd 1

3rd 1

Points scoring races 18

Pole positions 0

Fastest laps 1

TRIUMPH OR TRAGEDY?

Will Fernando Alonso's gamble with McLaren-Honda set him up for title number three or end in Shakespearean tragedy? **Andrew Benson** offers up an examination of his prospects in two acts

T H E R I G H T P L A C E
T H E R I G H T T I M E

*Nothing is stronger
than an idea whose
time has come*

Victor Hugo



Fernando Alonso is no fool. He must have seen some potential in McLaren-Honda to convince him it was worth turning his back on Ferrari and committing his future to a team he fell out with so spectacularly eight years ago.

Why else would he do it? Okay, Ferrari are in turmoil, and it is clear it will be some time before they will be in any position to do what Alonso wants – which is to win championships. But even so, even with the worst engine in Formula 1, Ferrari were a better competitive proposition for most of 2014 than McLaren, who had the best.

Alonso's decision to move on was made during the summer break, so it cannot have been based on any realistic hope of getting a Mercedes seat. The meltdown between Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg at Spa, which had some believing for a while that their partnership was no longer viable, had not happened at that stage.

And even if Alonso later felt emboldened by the events of Belgium, is it realistic to suggest →



A C A U T I O N A R Y T A L E

*Pride goeth before
destruction, and
a haughty spirit
before a fall*

Proverbs 16:18



Ron Dennis hates beards, and Fernando Alonso knows it. Yet there was Alonso at the official announcement that he had signed for McLaren-Honda for 2015, sporting the luxuriant facial growth he'd been cultivating over the course of several months.

So did Alonso do it just to annoy his new boss? It's quite possible – even though Dennis and Alonso have been at pains to insist that they have resolved their differences over the 18 months or so it took to convince arguably the world's greatest driver to risk it all on silver and white for the next three years.

It could easily have been Alonso's little joke, a way for him to underline his own status in this newly reformed marriage of convenience. For let us not fool ourselves – that is exactly what this arrangement is. For all the broad smiles and embraces in the official photos that accompanied McLaren's announcement of their 2015 driver line-up, very few were deceived. →

McLAREN HONDA

he would he have quit Ferrari with nothing else lined up, in the vague hope of the Mercedes driver pairing becoming untenable?

Of course not. Alonso must have based his decision on the possibilities open to him at McLaren, a team to which, at the age of 33, he has turned for what may well be his last shot at winning that third title he so craves.

McLaren's sales talk, initiated by former team principal Martin Whitmarsh nearly two years ago and continued by Eric Boullier, who in effect succeeded him, must have been pretty damn good. But it would take more than fancy words to convince Alonso to throw in his lot with McLaren. More than the chance to realise a childhood ambition and become the man who wins the title for the second iteration of McLaren-Honda, as his childhood hero Ayrton Senna did the first. More, even, than the reputed £26.3m salary he will earn at the behest of Honda.

Alonso, remember, is a man who lives to win, who has suffered endless torments these past

few years as Sebastian Vettel, a man he considers less talented than him, romped to four world titles in the best car. In two of those years (2010 and 2012), Alonso so nearly beat him to it, despite the inferiority of his own equipment. He wants nothing in the world more than to win that elusive third title, and it is to McLaren-Honda he has turned to help him do it.

The sales pitch was indeed good – and that's because it was founded on substance that suggests that this is, as Alonso puts it, "the moment that everything is going up" at McLaren.

For a start, their design department is now led by Peter Prodromou, who worked alongside Adrian Newey on those Red Bulls Alonso has coveted in recent years. Red Bull's former head of aerodynamics and Newey's right-hand man for a decade or so both there and at McLaren beforehand, Prodromou was recruited last year and started work in September.

Not only does he bring with him all those Red Bull secrets, but he *has* to be good to have been

trusted so much for so long by one of the greatest designers Formula 1 has ever known. Prodromou's new job title is chief engineer and, in theory, that would make him subordinate both to technical director Tim Goss and director of engineering Matt Morris. But Boullier has made it very clear that he sees Prodromou as the main man.

Equally, after two years of producing comparatively poor cars, McLaren recognised that something was very much awry in their engineering department, and Boullier spent much of 2014 shaking the tree and trying to put it right. So the chassis should be good, at least.

Then there's the engine. Honda have signed a ten-year contract with McLaren and are funding not only the design, development and build of the engine itself, but are also making a significant financial input to the team. So there can be no doubt about their commitment.

Honda enters the new turbo hybrid era of F1 with years of expertise in regenerative technology from its road-car division – an area in which Ferrari admit they are well behind. →

ACT 1

ACT 2

Dennis and Alonso profess to have grown with experience and regret what went wrong between them eight years ago. But no one believes that McLaren's domineering chairman will not start to wind up his demanding new driver sooner or later. After all, this is what Dennis seems to do with everyone he works with.

Alonso knows this only too well, after the tumultuous year they spent together in 2007, when Dennis's refusal to honour his promise that Alonso would get priority status at McLaren led to a row that spiralled out of control.

So what is Alonso – who wants nothing more than to win that third championship – doing back at McLaren? For the past two seasons, their cars have been shockingly bad, given their heritage and resources. And they have just started a new relationship with an engine supplier that is bound to take time to get right.

Could it be that Alonso, as several F1 insiders who know him well will tell you, has been badly advised for the best part of a decade now? The last good career choice he made, these people say, was in leaving Renault for McLaren at the end of 2006, just as the team that took him to two world titles were about to start their decline.

Since then, he has got them all wrong, starting with the way he conducted himself at McLaren in 2007, and the choice he made about where to go when it became clear he could not stay. With offers from Honda, Toyota and Red Bull also on the table, Alonso decided to go back to Renault as a staging post for a future move to Ferrari. It seemed a sensible enough call at the time, when Ferrari were still a major winning force. But, with hindsight, it was the wrong choice.

Alonso's Red Bull talks foundered on their insistence upon a two-year deal when he wanted to sign for only one. And so his chance to lead the dominant period they subsequently enjoyed, and possibly win as many as five further world titles, was gone.

Alonso made the mistake of ignoring the sport's recent history. Had he studied it more closely, he would have realised that the story of the previous 15 years of F1 had pretty much been about Ross Brawn versus Adrian Newey. Instead, he looked at the current results of the teams he was choosing from, not at what had created them, and chose Ferrari, who were already post-Brawn and about to begin the rapid decline that Alonso has experienced from the inside.

Brawn has left F1 now, and Newey was not available to Alonso. In any case, judging by current results is actually not the mistake he has made this time; no one would have signed for McLaren in 2015 based on the team's performance last season. This time, he has looked at potential, and gone for what he hopes is the right call. But that does not mean to say he has not made another error.

The logical decision to make for 2015, in Alonso's shoes, was surely to stay at Ferrari. He had hoped to find a place at Mercedes, but when it became clear that was not available for this season, surely the sensible thing to do was to stay put and watch and hope.

Knowing Lewis Hamilton's contract would expire at the end of 2015, and that discussions about extending it may well hit difficulties over Hamilton's salary, would it not have been more sensible for Alonso to wait another season at Ferrari and see if a Mercedes drive became available in 2016? After all, McLaren-Honda would still have been available to him then, and logic suggests that Ferrari, for all the turmoil at Maranello, must be a better place to be in 2015 than Woking. →



Alonso wants nothing
in the world more than
to win that elusive
third title, and it is to
McLaren-Honda
he has turned to help
him do it



2014

“When a father gives to his son, both laugh; when a son gives to his father, both cry”

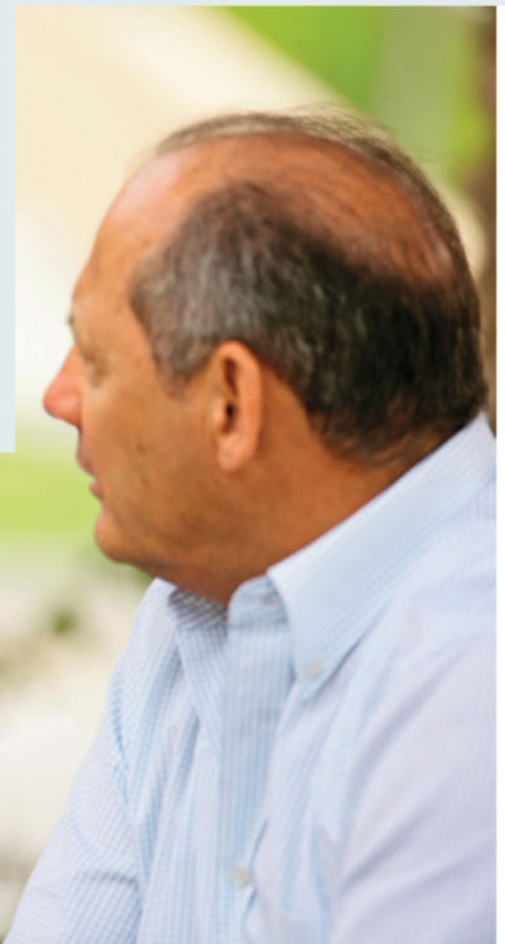
Jewish proverb



2008

“Something is rotten in the state of Denmark”

William Shakespeare, Hamlet



PHOTOS: LORENZO BELLANCA/LAT; DREW GIBSON/LAT; MCLAREN



And entering a year late gives Honda a crucial advantage. They were aiming at a known target, while Mercedes, Renault and Ferrari were shooting in the dark pre-2014. And they have won a crucial victory in persuading the FIA that it was only fair to allow them to do some in-season development, even if it is less than their rivals could do between 2014 and their final engines this season.

And, when this article was written before the start of pre-season testing, the signs were already looking pretty good. Last autumn, the Honda engine was producing figures on the dynamometer that were not far off the actual performance of the Mercedes, with three months development still to come before its specification was frozen on 28 February.

Okay, the car that ran the engine in the post-season Abu Dhabi test managed only five laps over two days, but teething problems are inevitable and can be overcome – just look at the mess Red Bull were in during pre-season testing in 2014, only for Daniel Ricciardo to stick the car on the front row at the Australian Grand Prix.

Honda's extensive research and development base in Japan has clearly made a significant

impact on Alonso, who remarked: "I visited in Japan the Honda facilities – and of course the McLaren facility as well – and I really feel that both are putting everything together to start a new successful partnership like the one that they had in the past.

"They know each other and what they need to succeed. Especially with Honda in Japan, I was very, very impressed with how they commit to the new project. The professionalism and determination I saw there was outstanding."

Even the impressive salary Alonso has apparently secured is a reason to believe that things are going in the right direction. Yes, McLaren needed to make a statement at the start of their relationship with Honda with a high-profile signing – and statements don't come much bigger than signing Fernando Alonso. And yes, Honda were desperate to have him; they had tried to sign Alonso to drive for their own team as far back in 2008.

But surely no one would pay that sort of money if they didn't think that sooner rather than later, they would be able to give the guy a car to match his talent. Just imagine the trouble it would cause if they don't.

Alonso himself says: "I am here to win, but not to win the first day. I am here to win in a long-term relationship. If we need to go through a period of understanding and learning of how this new era of F1 is working, I am here for that and I am committed to working together with the team to wait for our moment."

But don't be fooled into thinking that means Alonso believes he is heading into another year of famine. When asked last December what level of performance would be good enough for him in 2015, he said: "We can never say we won't win the world championship. Who knows? But we have to be realistic, knowing the deficit on the chassis side last season.

"A reasonable level of competitiveness would be to fight for podiums and hopefully win races. That would be a good sign for our future. But we'll see what might develop if we can manage to have a good winter and have a little bit of luck.

"We saw this season – with the big advantage Mercedes had, we didn't expect that Ricciardo could fight for the championship. We need to put ourselves in a good position and then it is up to me and Jenson."

Doesn't sound too worried, does he?

ACT 1

ACT 2

"You could argue we are setting ourselves up for an almighty fall. Domination takes time, but it is what we are about. It is what sets us aside from people who just win races"

Ron Dennis

Following Dennis's coup over the winter of 2013-14, and the ousting of Whitmarsh, who started the ball rolling with Alonso, it has been Boullier who has worked most closely with Alonso to persuade him that McLaren-Honda is the right place to be. Much will have been made of the structural problems Boullier found there, and the actions he has taken to resolve

them. Much, too, of the progress of the Honda engine on the test bed. And, among the most important, the signing of former Red Bull head of aerodynamics Peter Prodromou as chief designer by another name.

Tim Goss is still technical director, but Prodromou is clearly going places at McLaren and, in the event of any argument over design philosophy between the two, it is hard to imagine Boullier siding with Goss. That may be a good thing. But what have McLaren got in Prodromou? Yes, he has been Newey's trusted lieutenant for a decade. But is he an ideas man – someone who can lead with the spark of genius and create the features that make the difference, in the way his mentor could? Or was he simply the best guy at turning Newey's drawing-board ideas into reality in the modern age of computer-aided design?

Likewise Honda. In the autumn of 2014, McLaren insiders were claiming that Honda's new turbo hybrid V6 was already pretty close to a 2014 Mercedes. But so it should have been. After all, Honda had the numbers and knew what to aim for. Is it not a concern that their engine was not already better than Brixworth's finest? *Nearly* as good as just won't cut it in 2015, for

Mercedes had already found at least another 50bhp by last autumn.

Even so, before the new McLaren car ran in earnest in pre-season testing, there was no shortage of confidence in McLaren's public statements about the Honda project. "The key word is ambition," Dennis said in December. "In 1988 we were well aware of the tremendous power and technology within Honda. What we achieved then and what Mercedes achieved this year is exactly what our objective is for the future, which is domination.

"You could argue we are setting ourselves up for an almighty fall. Domination takes time, but it is what we are about. It is what sets us aside from people who just win races."

That is just the sort of archetypal Dennis hubris that gets right up people's noses. Twenty-six years have passed since McLaren-Honda's domination of 1988. In the intervening period, Honda have had another period in Formula 1, with conspicuously less success. And McLaren are far from what they were back then.

You know what they say about pride, don't you? It comes before a fall.
Andrew Benson is BBC Sport's chief F1 writer





In conversation with

Jenson Button

He's kept his McLaren seat for 2015, but now has a new engine and a new team-mate to contend with

INTERVIEW JAMES ROBERTS **PICTURE** STEVEN TEE/LAT

The installation of the new Honda engine meant you did very few laps on your first day in the car. But given what Red Bull and Renault went through last year, does that give you encouragement for this season?

There is no reason for my spirits not to be high. I am with a great team, a great partnership, and there is a lot to look forward to. But I can't give you figures or positions for where we are going to finish in certain races, or in the championship, because none of us know. The whole team have done a good job of getting the car to the first test and if you look at the car itself in lots of areas it is a step on from last year. It looks good in many ways; in terms of packaging of the engine, it is great. Now we have to add mileage.

How is it to work with Honda in F1 again?

Last time we worked together it didn't finish well because they pulled out of F1, but that did lead to the championship in 2009. I spent some time at the start of the year at Honda's R&D plant in Sakura, and a lot of the guys there were saying congratulations for 2009. I said it is obviously a difficult situation for me to be in – I won the championship with a different engine in the back. But they said they still feel they have a connection with building up that team. We didn't get the results together in 2007 and 2008, but we also had some very good times, such as our win in Hungary in 2006. We need to build on that together because there is a lot of unfinished business.

Are they taking a different approach this time round?

Yes. It is different from last time because then it was Honda as a team who were spending time and effort trying to take the car in a certain direction; they were more than just an engine manufacturer. So this is very different. But I like their philosophy. I like the way they go racing and they will give everything to be strong.

How much are you relishing working with Fernando Alonso this year?

Every driver wants a competitive team-mate. You are in the same equipment and it is always good to see what someone else can do with the car. We all drive differently. We all have positives to the way we are as drivers, and we all have weaknesses, too. It's interesting to find out what those strengths and weaknesses are. Fernando is a double world champion. He has been around for almost as long as I have in the sport, and racing

FACTFILE

Date of birth 19 January 1980

Place of birth Frome, Somerset

Team McLaren

Role Racing driver

2010-present Races for McLaren in F1 and breaks the record for the most GP starts of any British driver

2009 Becomes world champion with Brawn GP, taking six wins en route to the drivers' crown

2003-2008 Races for the Brackley-based Honda team and manages to score a solitary victory, in the rain at the 2006 Hungarian GP

2001-2002 Endures two disappointing seasons with Benetton-Renault

2000 In his second ever F1 race for Williams, becomes the youngest driver (at 20) to score a championship point

1998-1999 Wins the Formula Ford title and finishes third in British F3

1989-1997 Wins various karting championships

for many different teams you pick up so much along the way. It is a massive benefit for this team, having both of us here. I want the best guy alongside me and I have always said I would really like Fernando as a team-mate, and now here we are. It is a good partnership and I feel we will work very well together.


Is Honda's situation comparable to what the other manufacturers faced at the beginning of last season?

They have their targets and they understand what other people are getting out of their engines but it is not like this engine has been driven for the past three years. As we know in F1, the cars are just about ready by the first day of winter testing. Everything arrives at the last moment because you are trying to get everything out of the car and engine before you arrive at that test, so I'm sure it baffles a lot of people when you see a car turn up at the first test and drive out of the door at 11am not 9am – why couldn't you just start two hours earlier? It is because you are always trying to maximise the winter and arrive at the first test with the best possible package, and that is why sometimes it starts a little bit late.

Had you hoped for more mileage in the first test?

I had no expectations. I didn't think we'd pound round for lap after lap. Even the team who won the title last year had a great first day, but a problem on the second day. I don't think Mercedes' power unit is greatly different from last year and they still have issues, so I didn't expect us to do a huge number of laps. You don't come into the first test thinking like that. You think you're going to have issues and you're going to solve them. That's what testing is all about.

Do you have memories of the last McLaren-Honda era?

I haven't watched it back too much, but watching the *Senna* film you see a lot of that era from his point of view. I was growing up in that time, between eight and 12 years old, and there are a lot of happy memories of Alain and Ayrton going at it, fighting at the front, 1.5 seconds quicker than everyone else in the McLaren-Honda. It's nice to be a part of the new era of McLaren-Honda. It's exciting, but we all know things take time. The atmosphere in the whole team is very good: it's one team with one goal. It's not been the easiest start to the season, but it's a very complicated power unit. We will get our heads around it. 

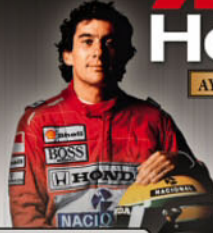
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McLAREN -HONDA



McLaren Technology Centre, Chertsey Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 4YH, UK





COMPANY	TEAM HISTORY	KEY PERSONNEL
Name McLaren Racing Limited Chassis MP4 30 Engine Honda RA615H Website mclaren.com Twitter @McLarenF1	Founded 1963 First GP Monaco 1966 Races started 761 Wins 182 Poles 155 Fastest laps 152 Points 5,013.5 Drivers' titles 12 Constructors' titles 8	Group chairman and CEO Ron Dennis Honda motorsport chief Yasuhisa Arai Racing director Eric Boullier Chief operating officer Jonathan Neale Technical director Tim Goss Director of design and development Neil Oatley

F1 RACING SAYS...

It took McLaren a long time to decide which driver they would retain alongside Fernando Alonso for 2015. In the end Jenson Button was given a reprieve, while Kevin Magnussen is confined to reserve-driver duties. Alonso is probably happier that he hasn't got a young hotshoe to contend with as his team-mate – the last time he was at McLaren in 2007 that didn't play out so well for him. With that in mind, it's quite remarkable that Alonso is at the team at all, but after five fruitless years at Ferrari – and all seats already taken at Mercedes and Red Bull – the reality is that he didn't have any other choice.

As Honda return to F1, it will be fascinating to see how they perform relative to the competition. Last year was a dire one for McLaren given their high expectations. Racing director Eric Boullier must return them to winning form. Anything else will be failure.

DRIVERS

Car number 14	Car number 22
 	 
FERNANDO ALONSO (ESP)	JENSON BUTTON (GBR)
Born 29 July 1981 (age 33)	Born 19 January 1980 (age 35)
Place of birth Oviedo, Spain	Place of birth Frome, UK
Height/weight 1.71m/68kg	Height/weight 1.82m/72kg
Race engineer Andrea Stella	Race engineer Tom Stallard
Twitter @alo_oficial	Twitter @JensonButton
F1 HISTORY Debut Australia 2001 Races started 234 Previous teams Ferrari, Renault, McLaren, Minardi Wins 32 Poles 22 Fastest laps 21 Points 1,767 Drivers' titles 2 2014 position 6th	F1 HISTORY Debut Australia 2000 Races started 266 Previous teams Brawn, Honda, BAR, Renault, Benetton, Williams Wins 15 Poles 8 Fastest laps 8 Points 1,198 Drivers' titles 1 2014 position 8th

RESULTS IN 2014

Position 5th

Points 181

1st 0

2nd 1

3rd 1

Points scoring races 16

Pole positions 0

Fastest laps 0



A PLACE IN THE SUN

Nothing lights up an F1 team like more money, so will a cash injection from Force India's Mexican backers bring them out of the shade?

WORDS JAMES ROBERTS

PICTURES SAM BLOXHAM/LAT & FORCE INDIA



THIRTY MILES NORTH OF MEXICO CITY

lie the ancient ruins of Teotihuacán, at the centre of which is an enormous stone structure. This is the Pyramid of the Sun, constructed around 2,000 years ago, and steep steps carved into its rock lead you to the summit, 65 metres up. The reward for this gruelling climb is a stunning view across the Valley of Mexico.

At its peak a handful of wide-eyed tourists mingle with contemplative backpackers. Unbeknown to any of them, a Formula 1 driver sits among the sightseers, taking in the magnificent view.



After the workout in the hot afternoon sun, there is not a bead of sweat on the ultra-fit racer as he surveys all below him. Wearing aviator shades, Nico Hülkenberg is smiling and relaxed. The attention isn't on him this week, it's his team-mate Sergio 'Checo' Pérez who is soaking up the adulation of his home crowd. But it's particularly apt that Hülkenberg has made the effort to reach the Teotihuacán summit, since Force India are also gearing themselves up to reach new heights this coming season; a new force in the sport could soon be upon us.

A DAY LATER

and both Force India drivers have left the tranquillity of the countryside and are back in bustling Mexico City, which is to host a grand prix in 2015 after an absence of 23 years. With traffic buzzing in all directions and buildings adorned with colourful mosaics and graffiti, this is a vibrant city that is welcoming, friendly and very keen to have top-flight motor racing return. Some 21million people live in Mexico City and close to its historic centre, the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez is undergoing a facelift.

But first comes a trip to the other side of town. Both Hülkenberg and home hero Checo are visiting the spectacular Soumaya Museum, which contains more than 65,000 pieces of art – most of them owned by one of the world's richest men, Mexican business magnate Carlos Slim. Among the items on display this warm January morning is the 2015 Force India – not the actual car that will race in the world championship, this season, but a 2014 machine clad in new-for-2015 livery.

The 2015 Force India carries Slim's Telmex branding, reflecting the company's sponsorship of Sergio Pérez. And holding a lavish launch in Mexico City is a clear indication that this team has received a significant cash injection, which some insiders are conservatively estimating at an extra £20million a year.

Force India's Nico Hülkenberg (left) pays a visit to the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacán (above left) as part of the team's official 2015 car launch



The livery launch is being broadcast online around the world and team owner Vijay Mallya addresses the assembled crowd – perhaps appropriately – from alongside Rodin's famous sculpture *The Thinker*. By the way, if there were ever any doubt, this is an original. The sculpture looks down on Vijay and the glistening silver, black and orange Force India, as if contemplating the team's prospects for the coming year.

Last year, the little Silverstone-based outfit finished sixth in the constructors' standings with their best-ever points haul. But despite the fact they started so well (remember Checo's Bahrain podium?), the opposition closed the gap and points were harder to achieve by season's end.

By the time the US GP rolled round, Force India had grown vociferous in their concerns



A Mexican driver and the return of the Mexican GP have brought Force India Mexican sponsorship and strong support for 2015



Force India

about the rising costs for smaller teams, anxious to avoid the fate that befell Marussia and Caterham. But, since then, during the off-season, they have managed to secure Esteban Gutiérrez's backing from Sauber (the other Mexican F1 driver on the 2014 grid is now confined to simulator work at Maranello) and have taken a seat on the all-important F1 Strategy Group.

Increased investment has already had a significant effect on the team ahead of the new season. There's been a boost in staffing (Tom McCullough from Williams; Tim Wright from Caterham), a doubling of the CFD capability (from 15 to 30 teraflops), and, crucially, they will now use Toyota's impressive windtunnel facility in Cologne, which will hopefully solve the aero problems inherent in last year's VJM07.

This extensive windtunnel testing is the reason the 2015 machine isn't yet ready to be shown off – Force India are currently unlikely to make the second test according to autosport.com. What's more, the delay in getting windtunnel parts onto the car means that, realistically, the major updates might not appear until as late as the Spanish Grand Prix in May.

"I think it's going to be a mirror image of 2014 for us," says technical director Andrew Green. "We want to put the performance on as the season develops and to be really strong in the second half of the season."

"The use of the windtunnel in Cologne is a significant step up for us. We've been trying to shoehorn a 50 per cent model into the windtunnel in Brackley. But that was →

"We want to put on performance as the season develops and be really strong by the second half of the season"

Andrew Green, technical director



originally designed for a 25 per cent model, so we were limited in what we could do. Using Cologne has really opened up what we are capable of achieving.”

When the VJM08 does appear, Green reveals that the car will have refined sidepods (thanks to the additional refinements in the cooling of the Mercedes-Benz power unit), new front suspension and a hydro-mechanical rear suspension that will give the team’s trackside engineers a new avenue in exploring set-up change. He’s also expecting a power improvement from Mercedes.

All of this suggests that Pérez and Hülkenberg should be in possession of a strong car by the time of the Mexican Grand Prix, which is currently scheduled for the last weekend of October. A day after the livery launch, *F1 Racing* accompanies a small number of invited media outlets to take a look at the construction work being done to revive the old circuit.

In the early morning sun, dazzling rays of light shine through the trees on the start/finish

straight just as they do at Monza. And, like its Italian counterpart, the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez (which is named after the legendary Mexican racers, brothers Pedro and Ricardo) is situated in a park, so when driving out onto the track you catch glimpses of joggers and goalposts as the local folk make good use of the public space. But unlike Monza, Mexico’s very fast, long, right-handed final corner has been emasculated. The notorious Peraltada corner has given way to a new, slow, twisty section – as per the Champ Car race that took place here from 2002 until 2007.

That part of the track will run through a former baseball stadium that will house 25,000 people (total capacity at the track is expected to be 110,000) and they will have easy access from the city since the park is served by two metro stations. The loss of the Peraltada will be saddening to many, but Pérez insists he can’t wait to turn his VJM08 into the stadium section and see 25,000 fans rise to their feet, cheer and wave flags. He’s got a point. →

Unused by F1 for 23 years, the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez, set in a public park, has been extensively redeveloped for 2015



“The VJM08 will have refined sidepods, new front suspension and hydro-mechanical rear suspension”



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THE REVISED CIRCUIT

Name Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez

GPs held 15 (1963-1992)

Corners 17

Estimated top speed 203mph

Average lap time 1min 15secs

Average speed 126mph

Lap length 2.67 miles

Number of new pit garages 33

Capacity 110,000

Paddock areas 22,720m²

Date of 2015 race 1 November

Estimated cost of upgrade £163-196million



PHOTO: LAT ARCHIVE

During our visit, a lot of work was still to be completed, including most of the new track layout and the pit buildings. But according to circuit architect Hermann Tilke's on-site representative, Christian Epp, there was no cause for concern.

"Everything is going to plan," says Epp. "Sixty per cent of the pit-building structure is almost finished and we've completed 99 per cent of the demolition of the old pits, which we had to take down to build new ones. New buildings will go up next month, so we're attacking on five or six different areas at the same time."

With the heritage of the old circuit, a Mexican driver on the grid, and the enthusiasm of the motorsport-mad locals, a definite sense of anticipation is building. Pérez's father, Antonio, says fans started queuing at the circuit at 5am, just to try to catch a glimpse of Checo. At home, he has become a hero.

You sense that the influx of money from Carlos Slim is just the beginning for Force India. If Pérez performs strongly, then expect more Mexican companies to emerge and want to associate themselves with Formula 1. This is a growing economy: private and public investment

have provided the \$250-300million required to upgrade the circuit and with a five-year deal agreed, they all expect to see a decent return on their investment.

Sporting director of Force India, Andy Stevenson has been with the team since they went by the name of Jordan. "The return of the Mexican Grand Prix is a fantastic thing for us," he explains. "We have a lot of sponsors and partners from the country and having a driver from Mexico makes the return of the race especially important for us."

"The last time I came to Mexico, it was at the last Formula 1 race there in 1992 with Jordan. I remember the atmosphere over the weekend was just amazing. Since then, the city has definitely matured and improved. It's an incredibly busy and vibrant place, but everything seems to be so much more organised than I remember it. The traffic is still busy, but it's much more polite and you don't hear as many horns blasting. I seem to remember it being far more chaotic in the early 1990s."


The one problem that hasn't been resolved is the foundations of the city. When you tour around its historic centre, you can't help noticing

The formidable Peraltada as it was in 1992. The exhilarating high-speed corner has now been redesigned into a safer, slower, twisting section

that some of the oldest buildings are sinking. One cathedral leans into the ground at the heavy bell-tower end. The site of the capital in the Valley of Mexico was formerly a lake, so the ground isn't firm and is liable to subsidence. As a result, when F1 last raced here, the Mexico City circuit was notoriously bumpy. Following exhaustive research, special volcanic rock will be laid down before the layers of asphalt in a bid to prevent the track surface from shifting.

None of this concerns Pérez, who is beaming from ear-to-ear. For a country starved of a Formula 1 star for years, the speedy 25-year-old is attracting a new-found fan base, particularly among the younger generation.

"This is almost a dream come true, I'm happy that after so many years I'm finally going to be racing in my own country again, and to have a race here at the end of October will be amazing," says Pérez. "I'm so proud that my country is going to host this race."

The Mexican Grand Prix will undoubtedly be a sell-out and Force India must ensure they deliver results if they want to hold onto this new national hero. If you have backing from one of the world's richest men and his country's president – then we'd suggest, Vijay, that you keep them all very happy. And the only way to do that is to move on up. 

"To have a race here will be amazing. I'm so proud that my country is going to host this race" **Sergio Pérez**



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PHOTOS: FORCE INDIA



SAHARA FORCE INDIA FORMULA 1 TEAM



Dadford Road, Silverstone, NN12 8TJ, UK

COMPANY	TEAM HISTORY	KEY PERSONNEL
Name Sahara Force India Formula 1 Team Limited Chassis VJM08 Engine Mercedes-Benz PU160B Hybrid Website forceindiaf1.com Twitter @ForceIndiaF1	Founded 2007 First GP Australia 2008 Races started 131 Wins 0 Poles 1 Fastest laps 3 Points 491 Drivers' titles 0 Constructors' titles 0	Team principal and managing director Vijay Mallya Deputy team principal Robert Fernley Chief operating officer Otmar Szafnauer Technical director Andrew Green Sporting director Andy Stevenson


F1 RACING SAYS...

It was credit to the small, hard-working crew at Silverstone that Force India were able to outperform the might of McLaren in the first part of 2014. The VJM07 was a decent car that, combined with the strong Mercedes power unit, allowed Sergio Pérez to score a season-high podium finish in Bahrain. Unfortunately, the underfunded team couldn't afford to maintain an aggressive upgrade programme, and lost out as the season unfolded. Continuity will play a big part as they head into 2015 with the same team members, but they are already behind schedule and it's reported they are unlikely to make the second test.

Pérez and Hülkenberg finished ninth and tenth respectively in 2014, and for Pérez it was a reprieve after a disappointing season at McLaren. If Force India can take more than one podium in 2015, it'll be an achievement. For now, race wins are still some way off. 📌

RESULTS IN 2014	Position 6th	Points 155	1st 0	2nd 0	3rd 0	Points scoring races 17	Pole positions 0	Fastest laps 1
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DRIVERS

Car number 27	Car number 11
	
	
NICO HÜLKENBERG (GER)	SERGIO PÉREZ (MEX)
Born 19 August 1987 (age 27)	Born 26 January 1990 (age 25)
Place of birth Emmerich, Germany	Place of birth Guadalajara, Mexico
Height/weight 1.84m/74kg	Height/weight 1.73m/63kg
Race engineer Bradley Joyce	Race engineer Tim Wright
Twitter @NicoHulkenberg	Twitter @SChecoPerez
F1 HISTORY Debut Bahrain 2010 Races started 76 Previous teams Sauber, Williams Wins 0 Poles 1 Fastest laps 1 Points 232 Best result 4th 2014 position 9th	F1 HISTORY Debut Australia 2011 Races started 74 Previous teams McLaren, Sauber Wins 0 Poles 0 Fastest laps 3 Points 188 Best result 2nd 2014 position 10th



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Toro Rosso's decision to sign a 17-year-old rookie, who has just a single season of car racing experience, has been controversial. But those who have worked with Max Verstappen are convinced he is a mega-talent with the X factor needed to thrive in Formula 1

THE MAX FACTOR

WORDS MARCUS SIMMONS

PORTRAIT MARKUS BERGER/RED BULL

Just under ten years ago, on 3 April 2005, Dutch racing hero Jos Verstappen arrived at the Emmen kart track in North Holland for his son Max's first races. Aged just seven years and six months, little Max, the youngest driver in the field, won both of them.

Ten years on, Max is a bright, friendly and super-talented young man on the verge of turning into a global superstar in Formula 1 with Toro Rosso. He's the youngest – and therefore most controversial – driver ever to enter the sport's elite.

"Since a very young age I would say he's been not taught, but *conditioned* by Jos to be a racing driver," says Timo Rumpfkeil, boss of the Motopark team that gave Max his first Formula 3 test – as recently as December 2013. "It's like when you have a puppy and he is only going to be a guard dog – you train him that way."

That's not to say that Verstappen Jr has been forced into this by pushy parents. It's more that this is all he's ever known. His father tackled 107 F1 races, while his mother, Belgian Sophie Kumpen, →

“HONESTLY, I KNOW DRIVERS NEED A BIT OF EXPERIENCE, BUT HE IS INCREDIBLE. HE LEARNS IN HALF THE TIME OF THE OTHERS”

Giancarlo Tinini, Verstappen's karting team boss

was a karting superstar. Her father, Paul, has run a successful race team for many years, and Sophie's brother (Max's uncle), meanwhile, is one of Belgium's leading GT racers.

“It was normal for Max to do it – he *had* to,” remembers Jos. “He was asking for it himself. He was four and a half years old and at that age you just go to the track, start the engine and do some laps. But you can see from the age of six that they start to develop driving skills. Max was always the fastest driver on the track, keeping up with drivers three or four years older than him.”

Verstappen Sr has been ever-present at his son's side since those fledgling steps: “In the first four years, I think we did about 60 or 65 races – once he finished third, and the rest he won.” Even when Max moved to the factory CRG team, based near Lake Garda in northern Italy, Jos was taking the kart home between races, running the engine on his own dynamometer and bench-testing the chassis. This was classic dad-and-lad bonding: “I did about 400,000 kilometres in a



▼ Max with Toro Rosso team boss Franz Tost, having become F1's youngest driver

▼ F3 victory at the Norisring in Germany in 2014 – Max won ten races, finishing third overall



▲ First practice at the 2014 Japanese GP: Max put in 22 laps, and was just 0.5secs off Daniil Kvyat



Mercedes van, with Max sleeping in the back – hard work, but a very nice time!”

CRG boss Giancarlo Tinini describes Verstappen, who spent three years with his team, as: “really aggressive, really intelligent. Whenever he passed to a different category he learned the new systems straight away, like a guy with much more experience.”

Tinini supported Max's bypassing of Formula Renault to go straight into F3 in 2014 – “F3 is halfway between karting and F1. It's more or less the same driving style” – and believes he will flourish in F1. “It will be no bother for him – Max is Max,” he says. “Honestly, I know drivers need a bit of experience, but he is incredible. He learns in half the time of the others.”



▲ With his father Jos Verstappen, who has supported him throughout his racing career

Shortly before his 16th birthday, Verstappen Jr had his first test in a car, at a wet Pembrey circuit in Wales with Dutch-owned Formula Renault team Manor MP Motorsport. Tony and Sarah

PHOTOS: CHARLES COATES/LAT; ANDY HONE/LAT; GLENN DUNBAR/LAT; ANDREW FERRARO/LAT; PETER FOX/GETTY IMAGES; XPB/CCLAT; LAT ARCHIVE

MAX VERSTAPPEN:
COUNTDOWN TO F1

30 September 1997: Max Verstappen is born in Hasselt in Belgium, two days after Jacques Villeneuve's final F1 win.



Spring 2002: Has his first outing in a kart, aged four and a half. By this point, Jenson Button has already started his third Formula 1 season.



3 April 2005: Wins his first kart race at Emmen. Fernando Alonso is simultaneously celebrating victory at the Bahrain GP with Renault.



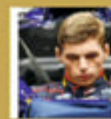
3 November 2010: Verstappen claims the first of his many World Karting titles; Sebastian Vettel is still 11 days shy of his first F1 crown.



26 January 2014: Enters his first car race, at Sebring, USA, in the Florida Winter Series, one day before Toro Rosso unveil their 2014 challenger.



18 August 2014: Max is signed by Toro Rosso for the 2015 season of F1. He is 16 years, 10 months and 19 days old at the time of signing.



10 January 2015: Passes the theory part of his driving test, letting him drive on roads, supervised. Has his Toro Rosso seat fitting days later.

Shaw are the British engineering brains behind the team, and Tony was also on hand back in 2001 when Lewis Hamilton had his first run in a Renault. "There aren't many top-line karters like them who you get to see first time in a car," says Tony Shaw. "Lewis ran at Mallory Park – he was pretty attacking I have to say, and shunted it! But he took to it easily and Max did as well.

"Sarah and I were stood there next to Jos. He did his out-lap and the next time through we thought, 'That's unbelievable!' We had to turn to Jos and ask if it was really Max's first time in a car. Jos was pooping himself because he didn't want Max to make a mistake and lose confidence. He's tested with us a couple of times since then [to learn tracks for upcoming F3 races] and set some incredible times. He's just a dream really."

Manor MP were one of many teams hoping to sign Max for a season in Formula Renault, but his maiden F3 test readjusted the Verstappens'

horizons. "It was immediately clear that he was a special case," says Rumpfkeil. "The only other driver I could compare him to was Valtteri Bottas [who won the Renault Eurocup title with Motopark in 2008].

"For him, F1 is the right step. He's ready for it: the faster the car goes the better he will be, because that's where he can make a bigger difference. I have no doubt that he will succeed."

Rumpfkeil was another to lose out on signing Max, who went to the Dutch Van Amersfoort Racing team for European F3 in 2014. He finished third in the championship, taking ten wins. Team boss Frits van Amersfoort, who also ran Jos in his rookie season in cars, in 1992, says: "We hoped to have him in the top ten at the end of the season but quickly had to adjust this!

"I find it difficult to describe Max in a few sentences. You get these guys telling you they're racing drivers, but I'm sorry boys, you aren't: you

think your phone's important, your girlfriend, going to the disco..."

Actually, Max does have a girlfriend. And, naturally, she's a successful karter: American Sabré Cook. Then there are his days off, when Max and Jos take Max's little sister Victoria to the kart track to teach her the ropes...

"For Max there's only one thing and that's racing," says van Amersfoort. "It's hard for another guy of that age to understand it, but he's been focused on it his whole life."

Van Amersfoort also believes Verstappen will thrive in F1, but says there are potential pitfalls: "I have not the slightest doubt he will be okay, but the problem is the whole PR show. There are a lot of snakes there, people who don't want you to have success. That's his biggest threat. But, when you have the speed, the rest comes."

And that's been evident since that day at Emmen, almost a decade ago. 🏁



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SCUDERIA TORO ROSSO



Via Spallanzani, 21, 48018, Faenza, Italy

COMPANY	TEAM HISTORY	KEY PERSONNEL
Name Scuderia Toro Rosso SpA Chassis STR10 Engine Renault Energy F1-2015 Website scuderiatororosso.com Twitter @ToroRossoSpy	Founded 2005 First GP Bahrain 2006 Races started 166 Wins 1 Poles 1 Fastest laps 0 Points 199 Drivers' titles 0 Constructors' titles 0	Owner Dietrich Mateschitz Team principal Franz Tost Technical director James Key Chief designer mechanical/system Matteo Piraccini Chief designer composites/structures Paolo Marabini

F1 RACING SAYS...

Take two drivers with a combined age of 37, who have never raced in a grand prix before, and drop them into a season-long Formula 1 campaign. This is the daunting prospect faced by the Toro Rosso team in 2015. No wonder experienced sporting director Steve Nielsen has moved to Williams over the winter...

Joking aside, it might not be as foolish a proposition as it looks on paper. Just 12 months ago the team gave Daniil Kvyat his F1 debut, and he was a revelation – and is now driving for the senior Red Bull team. Anyone who's ever worked with Max Verstappen will tell you he's the real deal (as they have on p112 of this issue) and Carlos Sainz Jr (son of the world rally legend) has also been putting in impressive performances in the junior categories. Their goal this season is to stay out of trouble, aim for Q3, and try and secure a point or two in an attempt to prove themselves.

DRIVERS

Car number	33	Car number	55
MAX VERSTAPPEN (NED)		CARLOS SAINZ JR (ESP)	
Born 30 September 1997 (age 17) Place of birth Hasselt, Belgium Height/weight 1.80m/67kg Race engineer Xevi Pujolar Twitter @MaxVerstappen3		Born 1 September 1994 (age 20) Place of birth Madrid, Spain Height/weight 1.77m/66kg Race engineer Marco Matassa Twitter @carlosainz	
F1 HISTORY Debut Australia 2015 Races started 0 Previous teams N/A Wins 0 Poles 0 Fastest laps 0 Points 0 Best result N/A 2014 position N/A		F1 HISTORY Debut Australia 2015 Races started 0 Previous teams N/A Wins 0 Poles 0 Fastest laps 0 Points 0 Best result N/A 2014 position N/A	

RESULTS IN 2014

Position 7th

Points 30

1st 0

2nd 0

3rd 0

Points scoring races 10

Pole positions 0

Fastest laps 0



Hey, Pastor! Where's your head at?

Tongue firmly in cheek, *F1 Racing* ponders what might be going on within the cranium of this misunderstood race-winner...

WORDS ROBERT HOLMES



I feel the need... the need for speed

Pastor was little more than a year old when *Top Gun* was released in cinemas in March 1986. Nevertheless, like Tom Cruise's Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell, he feels a certain need... Pastor has said that if he hadn't been a racing driver, he'd have liked to be a jet fighter pilot because he "loves speed". Self funding is always an option – he could even get hold of one of *Top Gun*'s original props to practice with. The USS Ranger, the carrier used as a location in the film, was decommissioned in 1993 and could soon be scrapped unless a saviour is found.

Herbie goes bananas

Formula 1 drivers typically travel around in the fastest, most stylish sportscars and other luxury machinery, but Pastor isn't ashamed to admit that his first car was a gold-coloured Volkswagen Beetle – not the front-engined 1990s reboot, but one of the original models with the rear-mounted air-cooled engine. The car ceased manufacture in Germany in the 1970s but remained a mainstay of the South American market, fed by factories based in Mexico and Brazil. Production finally ended in 2003.



Action man

Pastor expresses a preference for action movies and cites Ridley Scott's 2000 swords 'n' sandals epic *Gladiator* as a favourite. Does he identify with the titular warrior played by Russell Crowe, driven to exact vengeance against the tyrannical Roman state? Or perhaps it's because the opening quote speaks to his reputation for getting in the wars: "At my signal, unleash hell!"



At your convenience


We all get caught short on occasion, and if Pastor is planning any visits to his native country, he must pack toilet paper. The slump in worldwide oil prices has clobbered petro-economies such as Venezuela, and there are shortages of all manner of basic items, leading to a thriving black market for toilet roll. Recently the government has banned people from queuing outside shops overnight – citing the potential for civil disorder – and seized control of a toilet-paper factory.

The bulldog breed

Fittingly for a driver who prides himself on his courage and tenacity, Pastor owns three British bulldogs: Samson, Bianca and Evita. But unlike fellow bulldog fancier Lewis Hamilton, Pastor doesn't bring his pooches to grands prix.



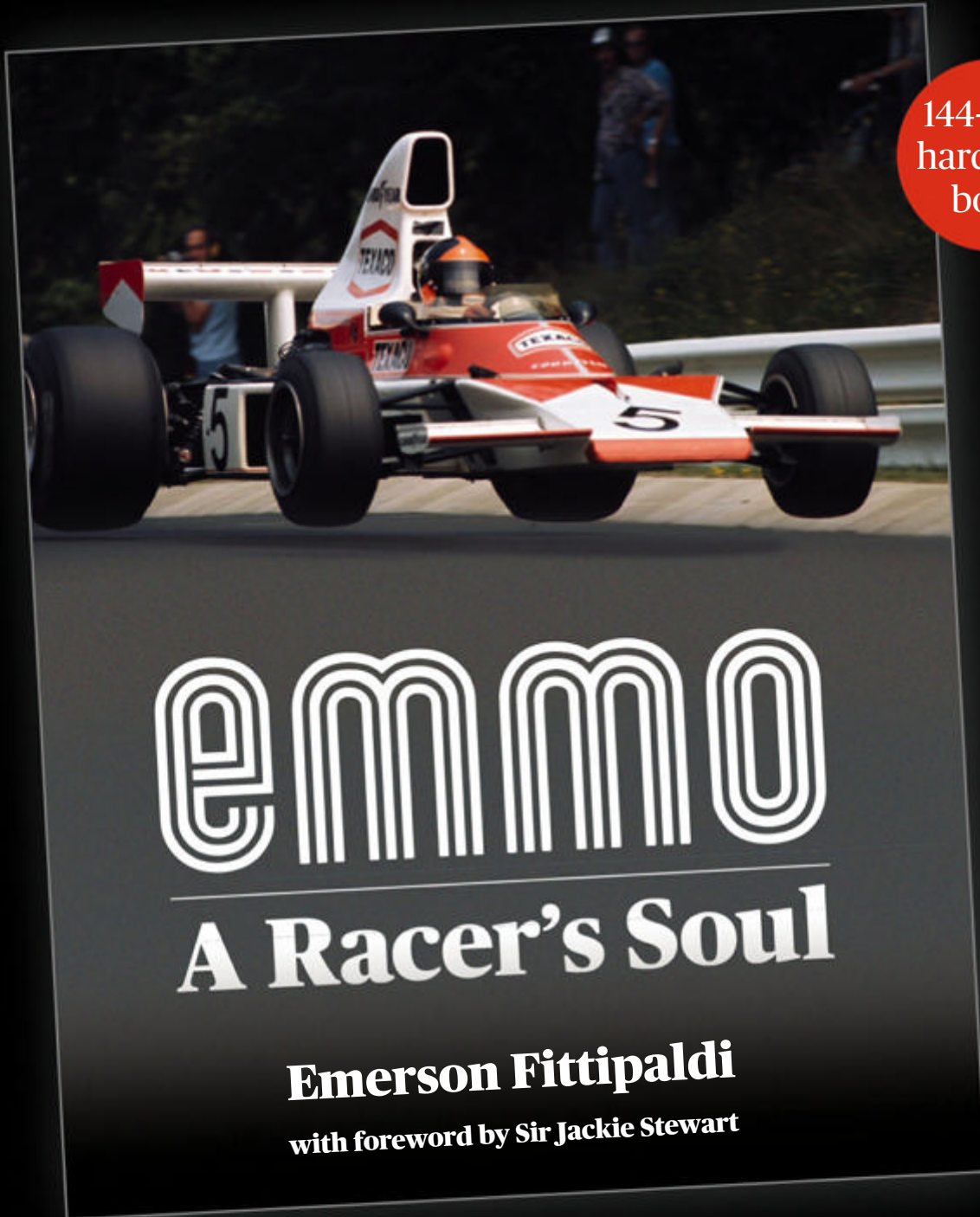
Making a hash of it

A recent Twitter Q&A brought amusing results. The Prayer Network has also used the #AskPastor hashtag. Was some bemused ecclesiast checking in to answer questions such as "Should they make F1 a non contact sport"? 



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LOTUS F1 TEAM



Whiteways Technical Centre, Enstone, Oxfordshire, OX7 4EE, UK

COMPANY	TEAM HISTORY	KEY PERSONNEL
Name Lotus F1 Team Limited Chassis E23 Hybrid Engine Mercedes PU106B Hybrid Website lotusf1team.com Twitter @Lotus_F1Team	Founded 1952 First GP Monaco 1958 Races started 587 Wins 81 Poles 107 Fastest laps 76 Points 1,996 Drivers' titles 6 Constructors' titles 7	Team principal Gerard Lopez Chief executive officer Matthew Carter Deputy team principal Federico Gastaldi Technical director Nick Chester Trackside operations director Alan Permane

F1 RACING SAYS...

This is another team who have been stymied by cash-flow problems over the past couple of seasons. Pastor Maldonado's millions from Venezuelan state oil firm PDVSA have helped eased the pressure, but the current dive in oil prices is now squeezing margins. Lotus have been forced to cut both staff and resources, something that was largely responsible for their poor form in 2014, where they could manage only a meagre ten points – and this from a team who were winning races just two years ago.

Having a Renault power unit compromised their track time and reliability last year and the winter switch to the championship-winning Mercedes engine should contribute to a better level of performance level this season. Both Pastor Maldonado and Romain Grosjean remain at the team and both can shine on their day – but they will find it hard to stay motivated or committed if the E23 is as bad as last year's machine. **F1**

DRIVERS

Car number	8		Car number	13
ROMAIN GROSJEAN (FRA)			PASTOR MALDONADO (VEN)	
Born 17 April 1986 (age 28) Place of birth Geneva, Switzerland Height/weight 1.8m/71kg Race engineer Julien Simon Chautemps Twitter @RGrosjean			Born 9 March 1985 (age 29) Place of birth Maracay, Venezuela Height/weight 1.73m/63kg Race engineer Mark Slade Twitter @Pastormaldo	
F1 HISTORY Debut Europe 2009 Races started 64 Previous team Renault Wins 0 Poles 0 Fastest laps 1 Points 236 Best result 2nd 2014 position 14th			F1 HISTORY Debut Australia 2011 Races started 76 Previous team Williams Wins 1 Poles 1 Fastest laps 0 Points 49 Drivers' titles 0 2014 position 16th	

RESULTS IN 2014

Position 8th

Points 10

1st 0

2nd 0

3rd 0

Points scoring races 3

Pole positions 0

Fastest laps 0



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VISOR DOWN

F1's newest rookie is barely a fortnight away from starting his very first grand prix. We met up with Brazilian **Felipe Nasr** to find out how he's been preparing for his Formula 1 debut

WORDS JAMES ROBERTS

PICTURES GLENN DUNBAR/LAT

As the cars line up on the Melbourne starting grid on Sunday 15 March, look out for a deep-blue-and-yellow machine, probably towards the rear of the field. As he rolls the newly liveried Sauber into position, Felipe Nasr will pull down his visor and look up at the five red lights on the starting gantry. This will be the realisation of a dream held since the day he first raced a kart, aged seven. He will become the 31st Brazilian to start an F1 grand prix.

Each stage in Nasr's career has been a stepping stone to the top of the sport – and now he's at the summit. The boy from Brasilia caught the racing bug from his uncle, Amir Nasr, who first came to Europe to race in Formula Ford in the 1980s. Amir returned to Brazil and with his three brothers (including Felipe's father), established a racing team that's been successful in single-seaters, stock cars and touring cars.

In 2009, Felipe Nasr made the long journey to Europe and started winning races, taking the Formula BMW Europe title on his first attempt. He was then schooled through British F3, first with Räikkönen Robertson Racing (he's managed by Steve Robertson) and then Carlin. After winning the British Formula 3 championship in 2011, he graduated into GP2 with Carlin and has even taken part (twice) in the Daytona 24 Hours sportscar race. Last year, Nasr combined GP2 with a reserve-driver role at Williams, making appearances in Friday practice sessions.

"Throughout my career I've been building up my character and experience," says Felipe at the first pre-season test in Jerez. "It takes time. Ever since I first came to Europe to do Formula BMW, everything has been building up to this moment. I've been learning and preparing for F1. Understanding how I come to a racing weekend, the hours in the simulator, the training – everything to become more experienced."

On the 2015 Australian Grand Prix starting grid, it will be an all-new driver line-up at Sauber with 22-year-old Nasr partnering 24-year-old former Caterham driver Marcus Ericsson. And Nasr has already been impressed by what he's seen at the Swiss team's Hinwil base.

"I went to Sauber before Christmas to meet everyone from the design office to the engineers at the factory and I was impressed by the size of their facility and windtunnel," continues Felipe. "It has been a good winter as I've prepared myself mentally and physically for the new season and I can't wait to get behind the wheel."

Splitting his time between Brazil and Miami, Nasr has been working on an intensive

fitness regime, no doubt impressing Sauber's experienced physio Josef Leberer.

"Each morning I'm in the gym, working with weights, concentrating on a different part of the body each day, be that upper body or arms or legs," says Felipe. "In the afternoons I focus on cardio by running, cycling or swimming. I've been karting over the winter to keep me sharp."


Sauber have ditched their traditional white-and-grey (with a red flash) colours for a royal-blue-and-yellow scheme in deference to Nasr's primary sponsor Banco do Brasil. The millions arriving in sponsorship will be much appreciated by the cash-strapped team and it has been an association that Nasr has worked hard to foster.

"Originally Banco do Brasil sponsored sports including volleyball, tennis and beach soccer but they wanted to get into motorsport back in 2011," he says. "They came to us and now we've been working together for four years. They believe in me and getting to F1 is the realisation of our dream. I've also had other sponsors that have been with me since the beginning of my career and I've been able to bring them all to Formula 1."

"Now I've got to this stage, I'm focusing on Melbourne. I don't know the circuit, but I feel ready as a driver to perform. I still have a lot to learn, but being at grands prix with Williams last year has stood me in good stead for the season to come. I can't wait for it all to begin."

Forty-two days will have passed between the first day of the Jerez test and the opening race of the season in Melbourne. Six weeks until Felipe is sitting on the starting grid waiting for those five red lights to come on. When they go out, it will herald an explosion of noise and colour as the long-awaited new season bursts into life. How will Felipe feel as he sits on the starting grid about to race for the first time in Formula 1?

"It's the moment I've been thinking about," he says with a grin as wide as Bernie Ecclestone's wallet. "But I can't tell you how I'm going to feel. I can only answer that after the race..."



CV

Full name
Luiz Felipe de Oliveira Nasr

Born
Brasilia, Brazil

Date of birth
21 August 1992

2015
F1 debut with Sauber

2014
Williams reserve driver

2012-14
GP2 with DAMS and Carlin

2011
British F3 champion

2009
Formula BMW Europe champion

2008
Formula BMW America

Pre-2007
Karting

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SAUBER
F1 TEAM

Wildbachstrasse 9, 8340, Hinwil, Switzerland

COMPANY	TEAM HISTORY	KEY PERSONNEL
Name Sauber Motorsport AG Chassis C34 Engine Ferrari Website sauberf1team.com Twitter @SauberF1Team	Founded 1970 First GP South Africa 1993 Races started 381 Wins 1 Poles 1 Fastest laps 5 Points 774 Drivers' titles 0 Constructors' titles 0	President of the board of directors Peter Sauber Team principal and CEO Monisha Kaltenborn Operations director Axel Kruse Chief designer Eric Gandelin Head of aerodynamics Willem Toet

F1 RACING SAYS...

In 2014, Sauber suffered with a badly designed chassis, which was late in construction and also very heavy. Matters were made worse by the fact that the Ferrari power unit was also problematic: those two elements conspired to give the team their worst season in their two decades of Formula 1. Both Adrian Sutil and Esteban Gutiérrez failed to score a single point last season, and it's no surprise that both have now left the team.

But the roots of all Sauber's problems are financial, and it was inevitable that this year they'd have no choice but to hire two drivers who bring plenty of budget with them: Marcus Ericsson (formerly of Caterham) and Brazilian Felipe Nasr (stepping up from GP2 with Banco do Brasil sponsorship). Early form from winter testing suggested improvements had been made from 2014, but the team are still likely to face a challenging season. How they'd welcome a big-bucks backer...

DRIVERS

Car number	9	Car number	12
MARCUS ERICSSON (SWE)		FELIPE NASR (BRA)	
Born 2 September 1990 (age 24) Place of birth Kumla, Sweden Height/weight 1.74m/64kg Race engineer Eric Schuivens Twitter @Ericsson Marcus		Born 21 August 1992 (age 22) Place of birth Brasilia, Brazil Height/weight 1.74m/71kg Race engineer Craig Gardiner Twitter @FelipeNasr	
F1 HISTORY		F1 HISTORY	
Debut Australia 2014 Races started 16 Previous team Caterham Wins 0 Poles 0 Fastest laps 0 Points 0 Best result 11th 2014 position 19th		Debut Australia 2015 Races started 0 Previous team Williams (test driver) Wins 0 Poles 0 Fastest laps 0 Points 0 Best result N/A 2014 position N/A	

RESULTS IN 2014

Position 10th

Points 0

1st 0

2nd 0

3rd 0

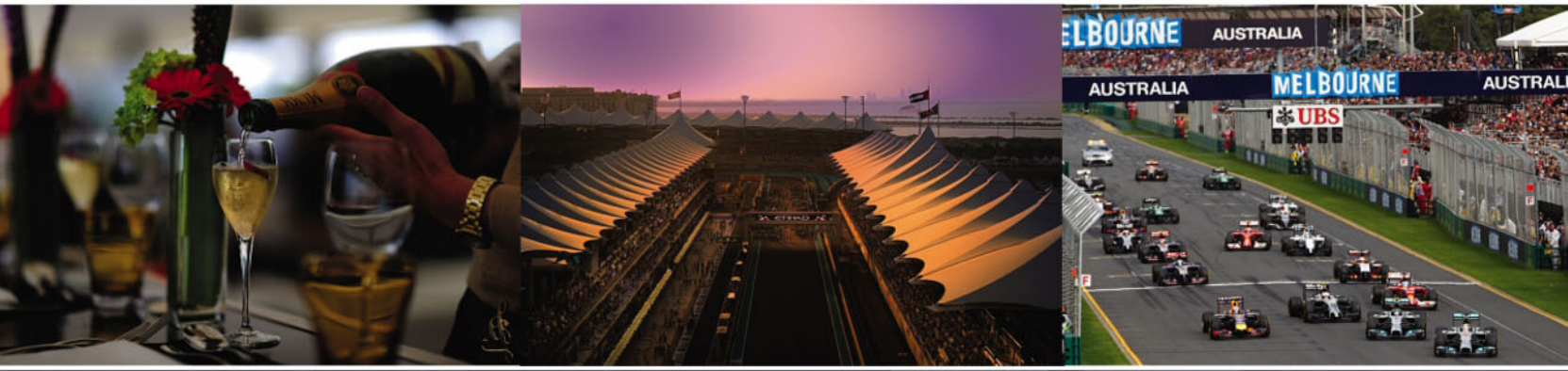
Points scoring races 0

Pole positions 0

Fastest laps 0



Barcelona, Monaco, Singapore, Abu Dhabi ...



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2015 CIRCUITS

THE TRACKS... THE STATS



01 Australian GP



02 Malaysian GP



03 Chinese GP



04 Bahrain GP



05 Spanish GP



06 Monaco GP



07 Canadian GP



08 Austrian GP



09 British GP



10 German GP*



11 Hungarian GP



12 Belgian GP



13 Italian GP



14 Singapore GP



15 Japanese GP



16 Russian GP



17 US GP



18 Mexican GP



19 Brazilian GP



20 Abu Dhabi GP



CIRCUIT ILLUSTRATIONS: ALAN ELDRIDGE. PHOTO: STEVEN TEE/LAT. *VENUE TBC

Circuits



AUSTRALIA

ROUND 1/20

MELBOURNE, 13-15 MARCH

RACE DATA

Circuit name
Melbourne Grand Prix Circuit
First GP 1996
F1 races held 19
Laps 58
Circuit length
3.295 miles
Race distance
191.117 miles
Direction Clockwise
Winners from pole 8
Race start (UK time) 5am

LAST YEAR

Winner
Nico Rosberg
Margin of victory
26.777secs
Fastest lap
1m 32.478s, N Rosberg
Race leaders 1
Pitstops 34
Overtakes 29



Why I love...

ALBERT PARK

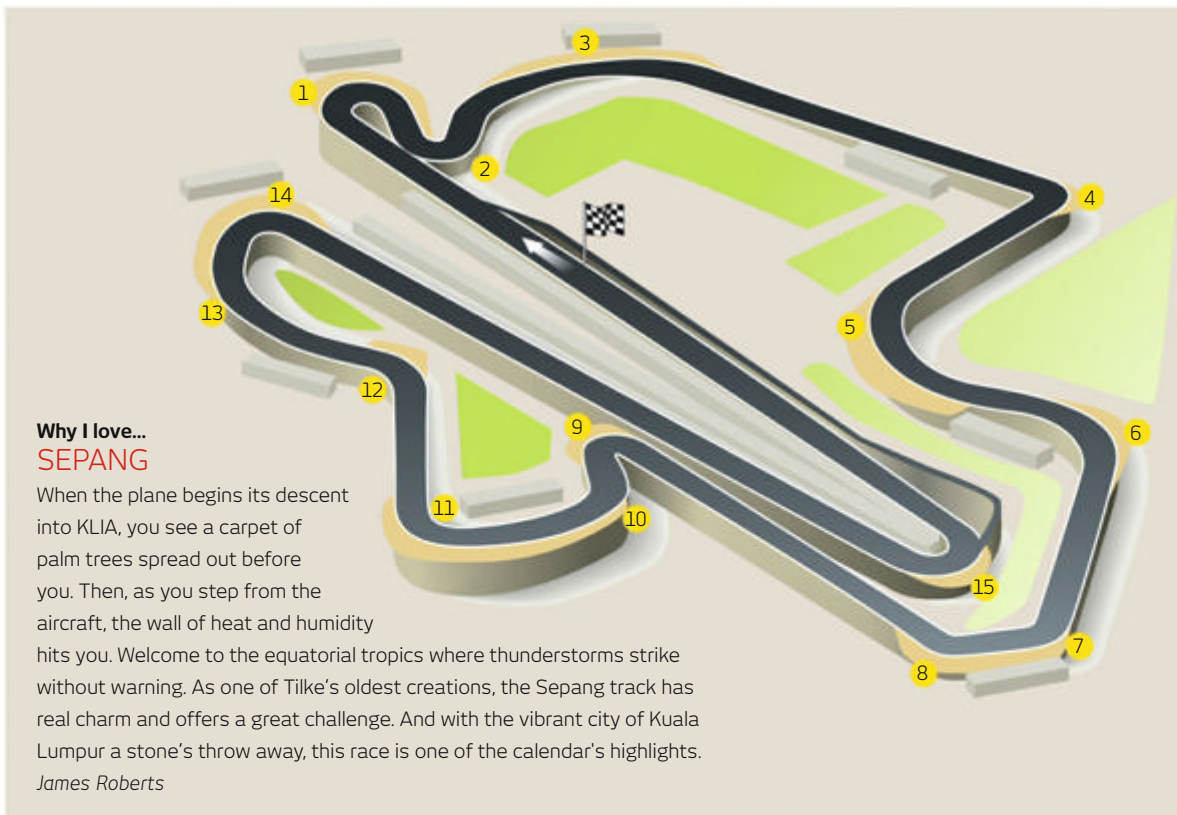
F1 just wouldn't be F1 without the Australian Grand Prix. Through a grim Euro winter, the prospect of cheekily seductive Melbourne warms the very cockles. The Albert Park track itself is nothing special, but this race is all about atmosphere: the tingle of anticipation, the first answers to questions posed all winter long. And - who knows - maybe the birth of a new superstar or a new story that will run and run.
Anthony Rowlinson



MALAYSIA

ROUND 2/20

KUALA LUMPUR, 27-29 MARCH



RACE DATA

Circuit name
Sepang International Circuit
First GP 1999
F1 races held 16
Laps 56
Circuit length
3.444 miles
Race distance
192.878 miles
Direction Clockwise
Winners from pole 9
Race start (UK time) 8am

LAST YEAR

Winner
Lewis Hamilton
Margin of victory
17.313 secs
Fastest lap
1m 43.066s, L Hamilton
Race leaders 1
Pitstops 55
Overtakes 20

Why I love...

SEPANG

When the plane begins its descent into KLIA, you see a carpet of palm trees spread out before you. Then, as you step from the aircraft, the wall of heat and humidity hits you. Welcome to the equatorial tropics where thunderstorms strike without warning. As one of Tilke's oldest creations, the Sepang track has real charm and offers a great challenge. And with the vibrant city of Kuala Lumpur a stone's throw away, this race is one of the calendar's highlights.
James Roberts



CHINA

ROUND 3/20
SHANGHAI, 10-12 APRIL

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Shanghai International Circuit

First GP 2004

F1 races held 11

Laps 56

Circuit length

3.387 miles

Race distance

189.558 miles

Direction Clockwise

Winners from pole 6

Race start (UK time) 7am

LAST YEAR

Winner

Lewis Hamilton

Margin of victory

18.062 secs

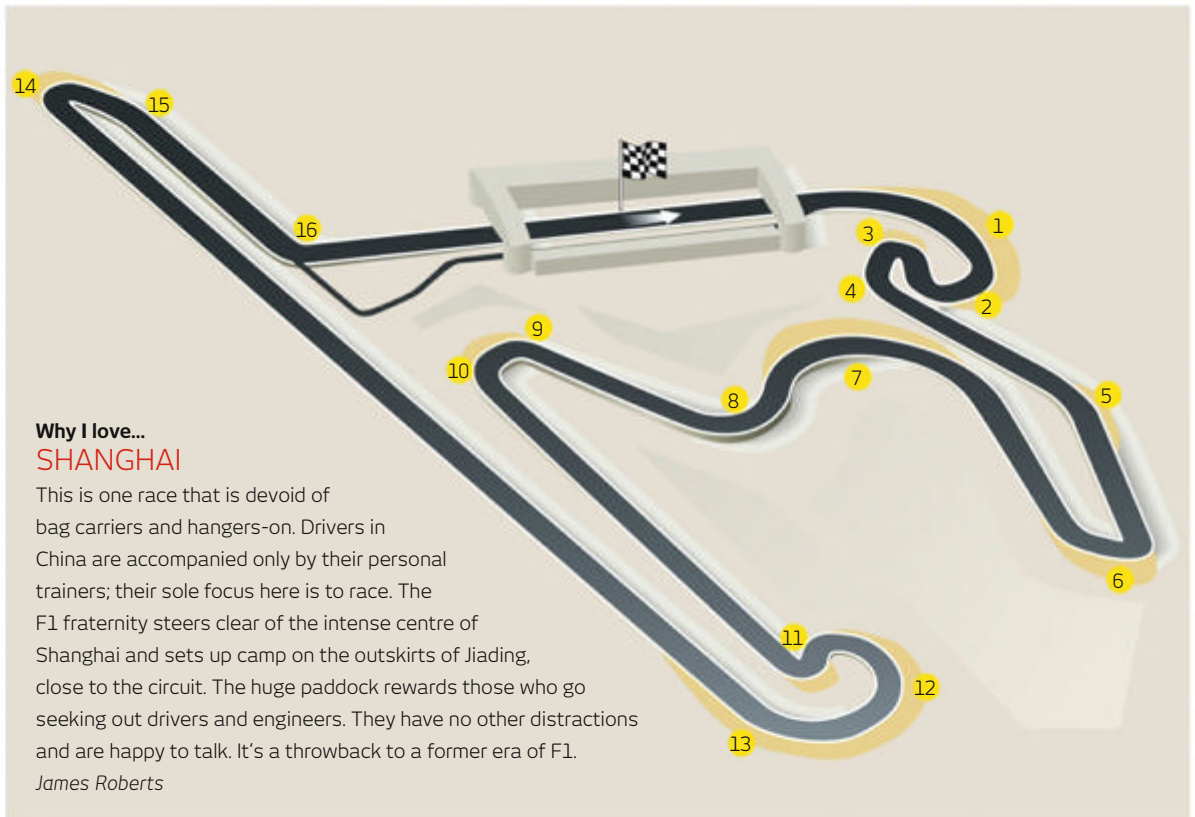
Fastest lap

1m 40.402s, N Rosberg

Race leaders 1

Pitstops 45

Overtakes 24



Why I love...

SHANGHAI

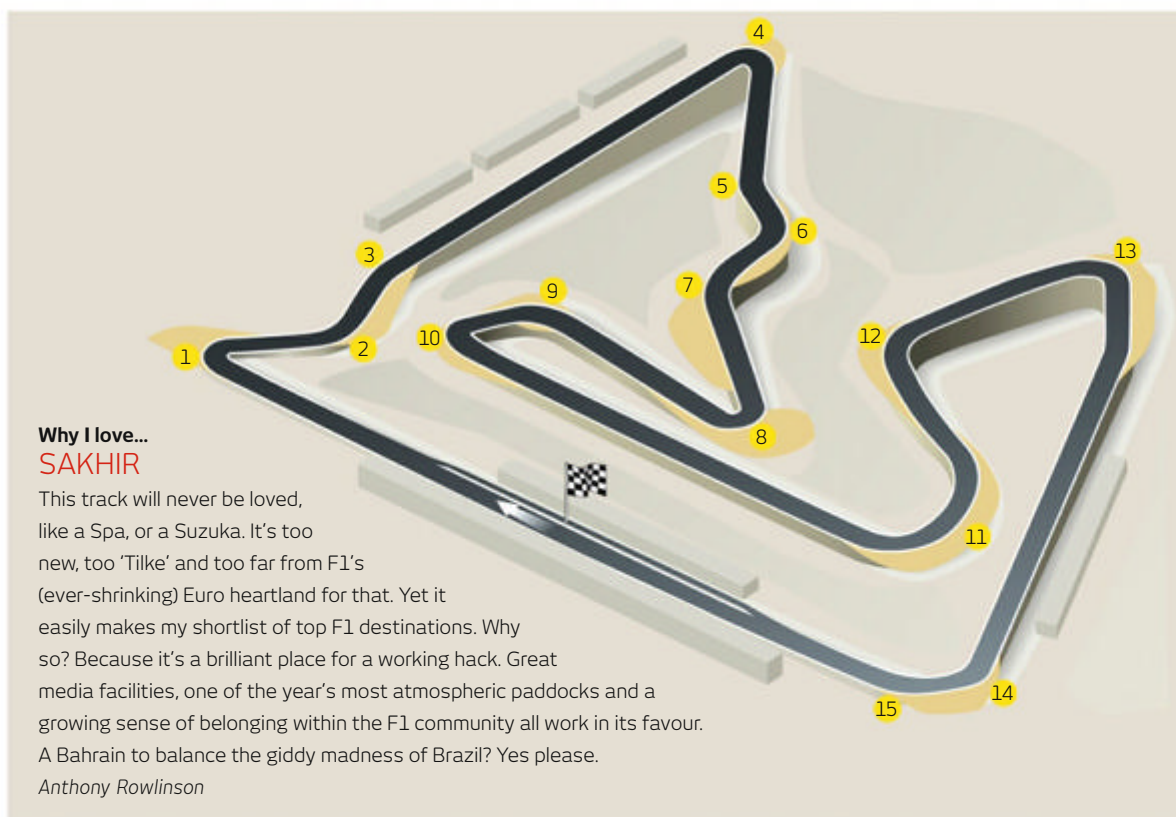
This is one race that is devoid of bag carriers and hangers-on. Drivers in China are accompanied only by their personal trainers; their sole focus here is to race. The F1 fraternity steers clear of the intense centre of Shanghai and sets up camp on the outskirts of Jiading, close to the circuit. The huge paddock rewards those who go seeking out drivers and engineers. They have no other distractions and are happy to talk. It's a throwback to a former era of F1.

James Roberts



BAHRAIN

ROUND 4/20
SAKHIR, 17-19 APRIL



Why I love...

SAKHIR

This track will never be loved, like a Spa, or a Suzuka. It's too new, too 'Tilke' and too far from F1's (ever-shrinking) Euro heartland for that. Yet it easily makes my shortlist of top F1 destinations. Why so? Because it's a brilliant place for a working hack. Great media facilities, one of the year's most atmospheric paddocks and a growing sense of belonging within the F1 community all work in its favour. A Bahrain to balance the giddy madness of Brazil? Yes please.

Anthony Rowlinson

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Bahrain International Circuit

First GP 2004

F1 races held 10

Laps 57

Circuit length

3.362 miles

Race distance

191.529 miles

Direction Clockwise

Winners from pole 4

Race start (UK time) 4pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Lewis Hamilton

Margin of victory

1.085 secs

Fastest lap

1m 37.020s, N Rosberg

Race leaders 2

Pitstops 57

Overtakes 51



SPAIN

ROUND 5/20

BARCELONA, 8-10 MAY

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya

First GP

1991

F1 races held

24

Laps

66

Circuit length

2.892 miles

Race distance

190.825 miles

Direction

Clockwise

Winners from pole

18

Race start (UK time)

1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Lewis Hamilton

Margin of victory

0.636 secs

Fastest lap

1m 28.918s, S Vettel

Race leaders

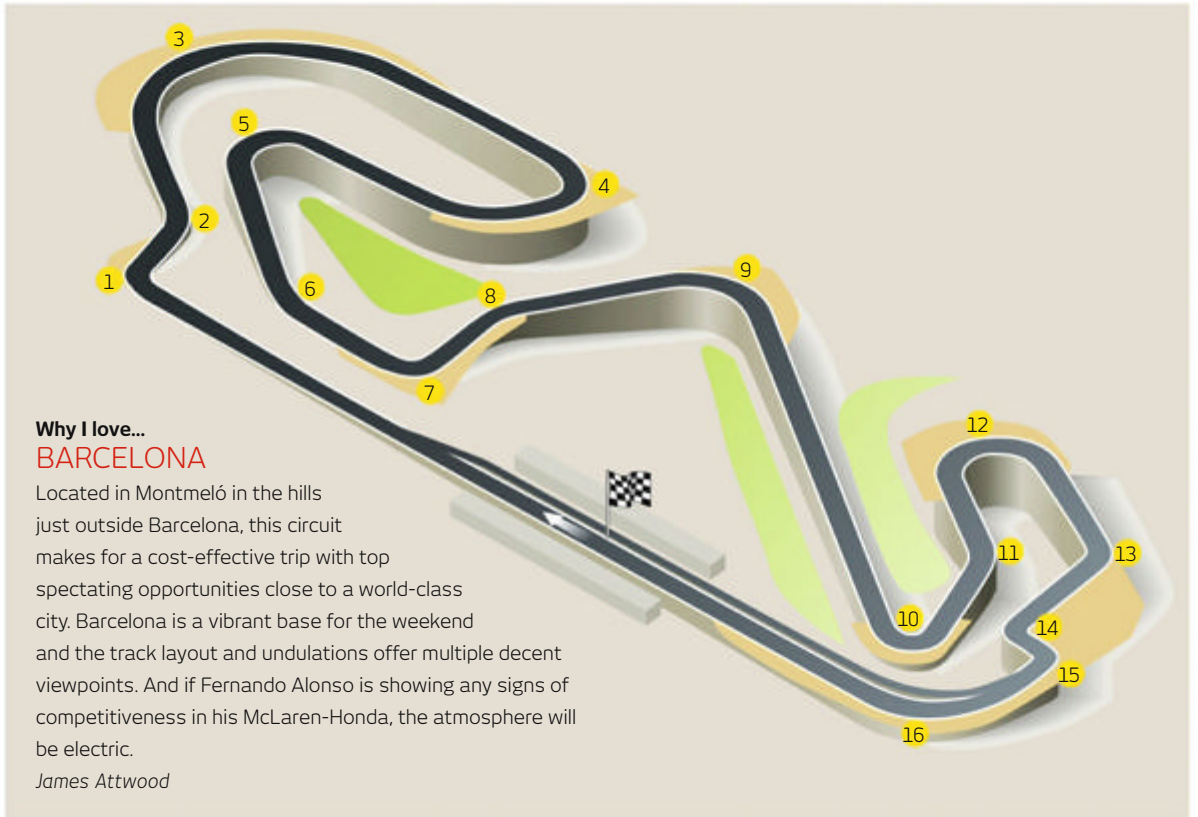
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Pitstops

48

Overtakes

32



Why I love...

BARCELONA

Located in Montmeló in the hills just outside Barcelona, this circuit makes for a cost-effective trip with top spectating opportunities close to a world-class city. Barcelona is a vibrant base for the weekend and the track layout and undulations offer multiple decent viewpoints. And if Fernando Alonso is showing any signs of competitiveness in his McLaren-Honda, the atmosphere will be electric.

James Attwood



MONACO

ROUND 6/20

MONTE CARLO, 21-24 MAY



Why I love...

MONACO

I saw my first race in Monaco in 1967, and so it became the centre of my young world. At Mirabeau on the Saturday night, I spied – yes! – Mike Spence in his Dunlop jacket, chatting to Tim Parnell. I loved the golden light of the Côte d'Azur. I became addicted to the scent of the acacias. And then there were the expectations of Monaco mornings, when engines greeted the dawn.

Peter Windsor

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Circuit de Monaco

First GP

1950

F1 races held

61

Laps

78

Circuit length

2.075 miles

Race distance

161.879 miles

Direction

Clockwise

Winners from pole

28

Race start (UK time)

1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Nico Rosberg

Margin of victory

9.210 secs

Fastest lap

1m 18.479s, K Räikkönen

Race leaders

1

Pitstops

27

Overtakes

7



CANADA

ROUND 7/20
MONTRÉAL, 5-7 JUNE

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Circuit Gilles Villeneuve

First GP 1978

F1 races held 35

Laps 70

Circuit length

2.709 miles

Race distance

189.685 miles

Direction Clockwise

Winners from pole 15

Race start (UK time) 7pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Daniel Ricciardo

Margin of victory

4.236 secs

Fastest lap

1m 18.504s, F Massa

Race leaders 4

Pitstops 33

Overtakes 30



Why I love...

MONTRÉAL

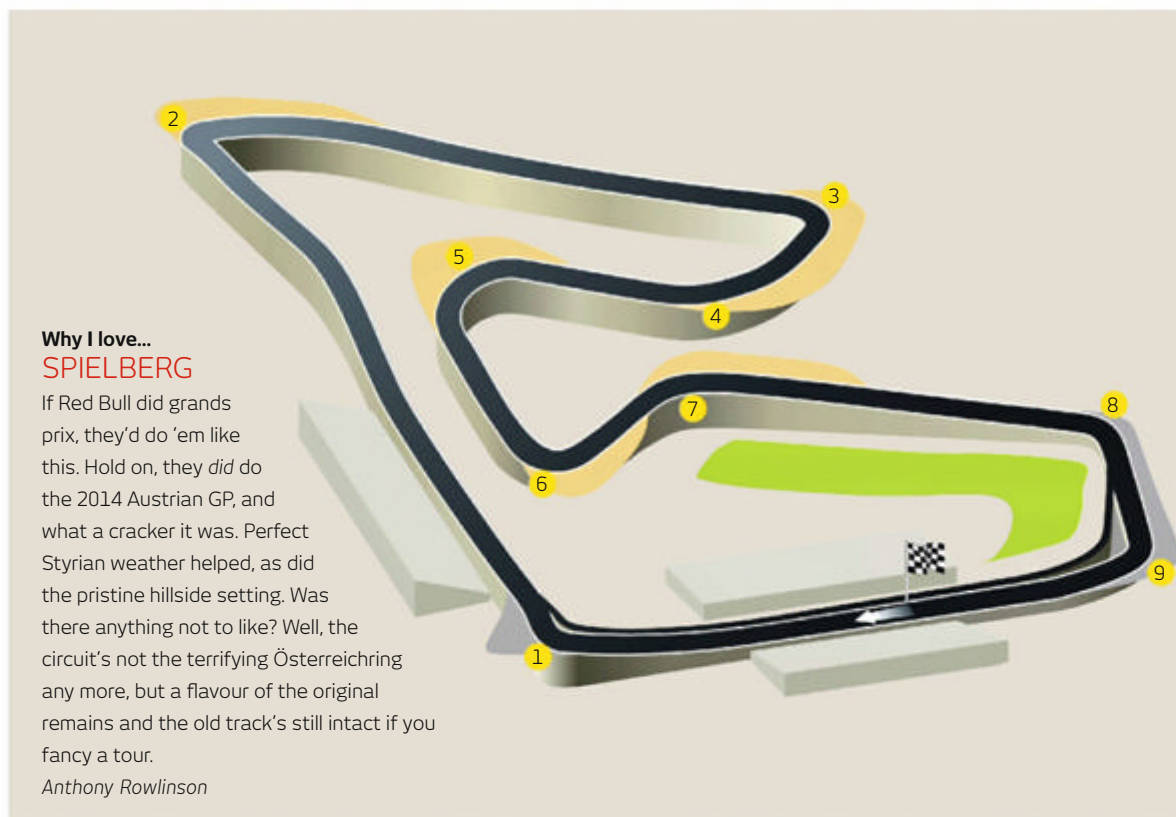
Brilliantly unique. This is a race track on a man made island in the middle of the Saint Lawrence River, with a former Olympic rowing lake on the fringes of the paddock providing a wonderful backdrop, particularly on a typical June day. There's easy access by Metro from a buzzy, cosmopolitan city that embraces the grand prix and provides a great place to stay. It's always a sell out, with very knowledgeable and friendly fans. The track may be flat but it frequently provides dramatic racing.

Maurice Hamilton



AUSTRIA

ROUND 8/20
SPIELBERG, 19-21 JUNE



Why I love...

SPIELBERG

If Red Bull did grands prix, they'd do 'em like this. Hold on, they *did* do the 2014 Austrian GP, and what a cracker it was. Perfect Styrian weather helped, as did the pristine hillside setting. Was there anything not to like? Well, the circuit's not the terrifying Österreiching any more, but a flavour of the original remains and the old track's still intact if you fancy a tour.

Anthony Rowlinson

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Red Bull Ring

First GP 1970

F1 races held 26

Laps 71

Circuit length

2.688 miles

Race distance

190.848 miles

Direction Clockwise

Winners from pole 7

Race start (UK time) 1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Nico Rosberg

Margin of victory

1.932 secs

Fastest lap

1m 12.142s, S Pérez

Race leaders 5

Pitstops 41

Overtakes 41



GREAT BRITAIN

ROUND 9/20
SILVERSTONE, 3-5 JULY

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Silverstone Grand

Prix Circuit

First GP 1950**F1 races held** 48**Laps** 52**Circuit length**

3.660 miles

Race distance

190.262 miles

Direction Clockwise**Winners from pole** 16**Race start (UK time)** 1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Lewis Hamilton

Margin of victory

30.135 secs

Fastest lap

1m 37.176s, L Hamilton

Race leaders 2**Pitstops** 24**Overtakes** 40

Why I love...

SILVERSTONE

Other circuits are shinier, grander and have better facilities, but the venue for the first ever F1 grand prix is still one of the finest places in the world to experience F1. The 2010 track revamp modernised the venue, but ensured it retained its ultra-challenging, high-speed feel, while leaving the incredible Maggotts/Becketts complex untouched. The hugely knowledgeable and enthusiastic crowd help create an amazing atmosphere.

James Attwood



GERMANY

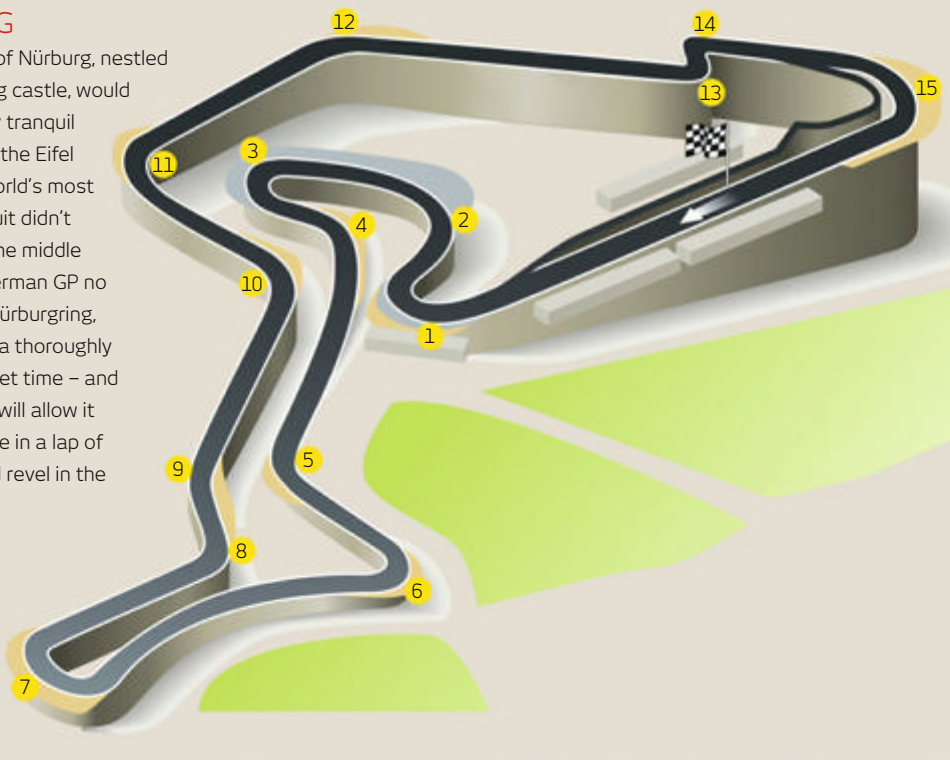
ROUND 10/20
NÜRBURGRING*, 17-19 JULY

Why I love...

NÜRBURGRING

The bucolic location of Nürburg, nestled beneath the imposing castle, would make for a pleasingly tranquil weekend getaway in the Eifel Mountains – if the world's most challenging race circuit didn't carve right through the middle of town. While the German GP no longer runs on *that* Nürburgring, the modern circuit is a thoroughly decent track. If you get time – and if your car insurance will allow it – you can always take in a lap of the Nordschleife, and revel in the majesty of a 14-mile F1 masterpiece.

James Attwood



RACE DATA

Circuit name

Nürburgring GP-Strecke

First GP 1951**F1 races held** 40**Laps** 60**Circuit length**

3.199 miles

Race distance

191.918 miles

Direction Clockwise**Winners from pole** 3**Race start (UK time)** 1pm

IN 2013

Winner

Sebastian Vettel

Margin of victory

1.008 secs

Fastest lap

1m 33.468s, F Alonso

Race leaders 4**Pitstops** 56**Overtakes** 41

*VENUE TBC



HUNGARY

ROUND 11/20
BUDAPEST, 24-26 JULY

RACE DATA

Circuit name
Hungaroring
First GP 1986
F1 races held 29
Laps 70
Circuit length
2.722 miles
Race distance
190.530 miles
Direction Clockwise
Winners from pole 13
Race start (UK time) 1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner
Daniel Ricciardo
Margin of victory
5.225 secs
Fastest lap
1m 25.724s, N Rosberg
Race leaders 5
Pitstops 44
Overtakes 49



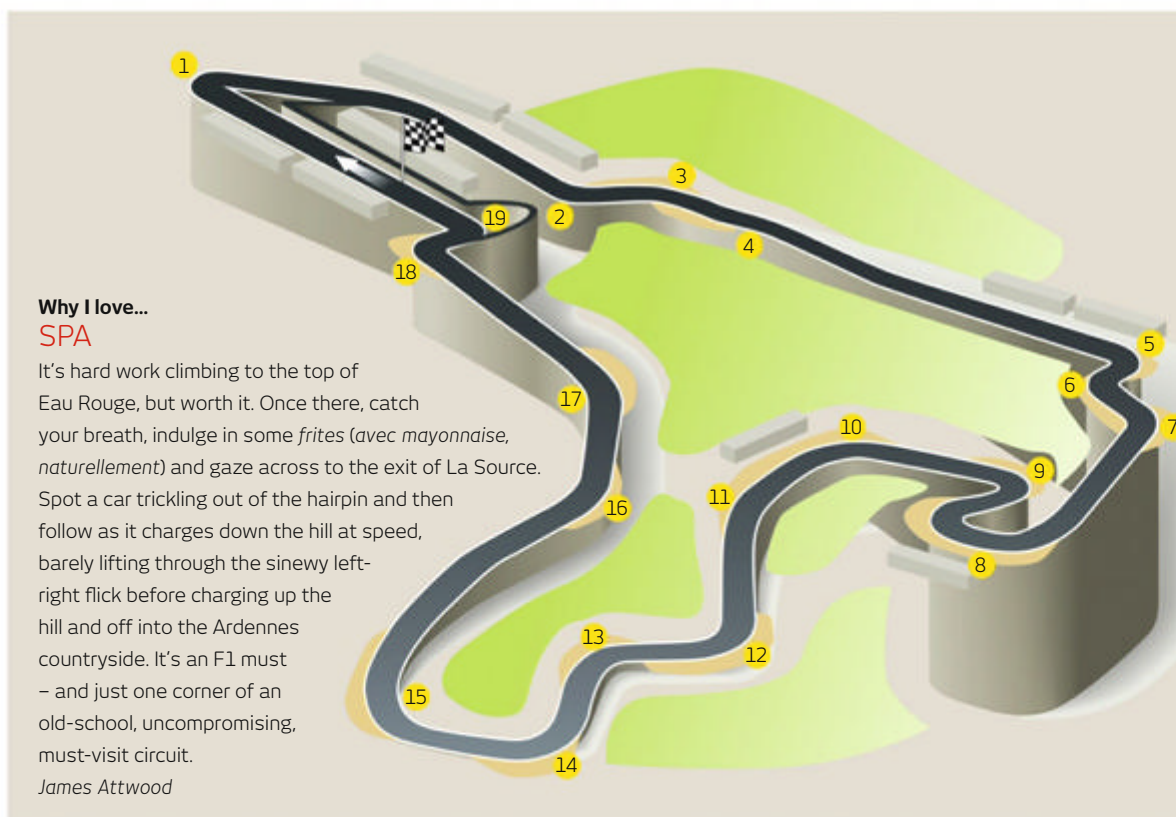
Why I love... BUDAPEST

Last year's race here was arguably the best of the season. There was everything. Drama in qualifying, rain, Safety Cars, intra team rivalries, near misses, shunts, overtaking and a popular last gasp win cheered on by an enthusiastic crowd. Now, that doesn't happen every year at the Hungaroring, but as the last race before the summer holidays, it always has a special 'end of term' atmosphere, fuelled, as ever, by the beautiful city on the banks of the Danube.

James Roberts

BELGIUM

ROUND 12/20
SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS, 21-23 AUGUST



Why I love... SPA

It's hard work climbing to the top of Eau Rouge, but worth it. Once there, catch your breath, indulge in some *frites (avec mayonnaise, naturellement)* and gaze across to the exit of La Source. Spot a car trickling out of the hairpin and then follow as it charges down the hill at speed, barely lifting through the sinewy left-right flick before charging up the hill and off into the Ardennes countryside. It's an F1 must – and just one corner of an old-school, uncompromising, must-visit circuit.

James Attwood

RACE DATA

Circuit name
Circuit de Spa
Francorchamps
First GP 1950
F1 races held 47
Laps 44
Circuit length
4.352 miles
Race distance
191.414 miles
Direction Clockwise
Winners from pole 15
Race start (UK time) 1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner
Daniel Ricciardo
Margin of victory
3.383 secs
Fastest lap
1m 50.511s, N Rosberg
Race leaders 4
Pitstops 46
Overtakes 37

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ITALY

ROUND 13/20

MONZA, 4-6 SEPTEMBER

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Autodromo Nazionale
Monza

First GP 1950

F1 races held 64

Laps 53

Circuit length

3.599 miles

Race distance

190.586 miles

Direction Clockwise

Winners from pole 22

Race start (UK time) 1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Lewis Hamilton

Margin of victory

3.175 secs

Fastest lap

1m 28.004s, L Hamilton

Race leaders 2

Pitstops 23

Overtakes 35



Why I love...

MONZA

The past meets the present meets the future at the infamous Parco di Monza. The mist and trees speak of Ascari and Fangio; of Moss and Clark.

I stroll over to the old paddock, there to touch the cobbles and dream of Lotus 33s. Down at the Parabolica I remember Taffy and Jochen, even as Lewis fills our view. Finally, over panini and cappuccino, I chat to the effervescent Claudia and Marie-Angela in their shop behind the paddock.

Peter Windsor



SINGAPORE

ROUND 14/20

MARINA BAY, 18-20 SEPTEMBER



Why I love...

SINGAPORE

Gird yourself against the stifling heat and humidity. Look over the balcony at the paddock below. That's the beating heart of Formula 1 commerce you see: Singapore is where the sport's biggest deal-makers gather to move and shake. The future is being tied up under your very nose. And when you've taken in the scene of next season's commercial deals being done, head out trackside to see the drivers really earn that money...

Stuart Codling

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Marina Bay Street Circuit

First GP 2008

F1 races held 7

Laps 61

Circuit length

3.147 miles

Race distance

191.896 miles

Direction Anticlockwise

Winners from pole 5

Race start (UK time) 1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Lewis Hamilton

Margin of victory

13.534 secs

Fastest lap

1m 50.417s, L Hamilton

Race leaders 3

Pitstops 54

Overtakes 39



JAPAN ROUND 15/20

SUZUKA, 25-27 SEPTEMBER

RACE DATA

Circuit name
Suzuka International
Racing Course

First GP 1987

F1 races held 26

Laps 53

Circuit length
3.608 miles

Race distance
191.053 miles

Direction Clockwise
& anticlockwise

Winners from pole 12

Race start (UK time) 6am

LAST YEAR

Winner
Lewis Hamilton

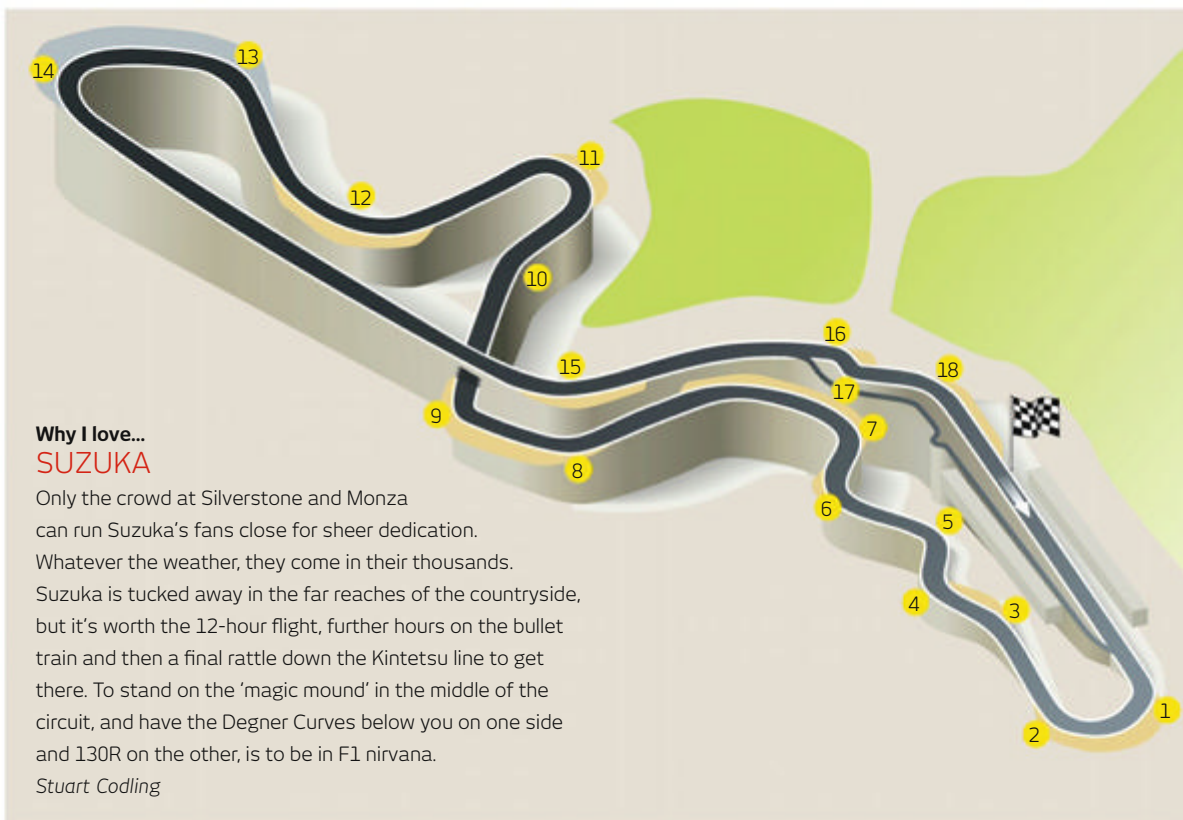
Margin of victory
9.180 secs

Fastest lap
1m 51.600s, L Hamilton

Race leaders 2

Pitstops 79

Overtakes 23



Why I love... SUZUKA

Only the crowd at Silverstone and Monza can run Suzuka's fans close for sheer dedication. Whatever the weather, they come in their thousands. Suzuka is tucked away in the far reaches of the countryside, but it's worth the 12-hour flight, further hours on the bullet train and then a final rattle down the Kintetsu line to get there. To stand on the 'magic mound' in the middle of the circuit, and have the Degner Curves below you on one side and 130R on the other, is to be in F1 nirvana.

Stuart Codling



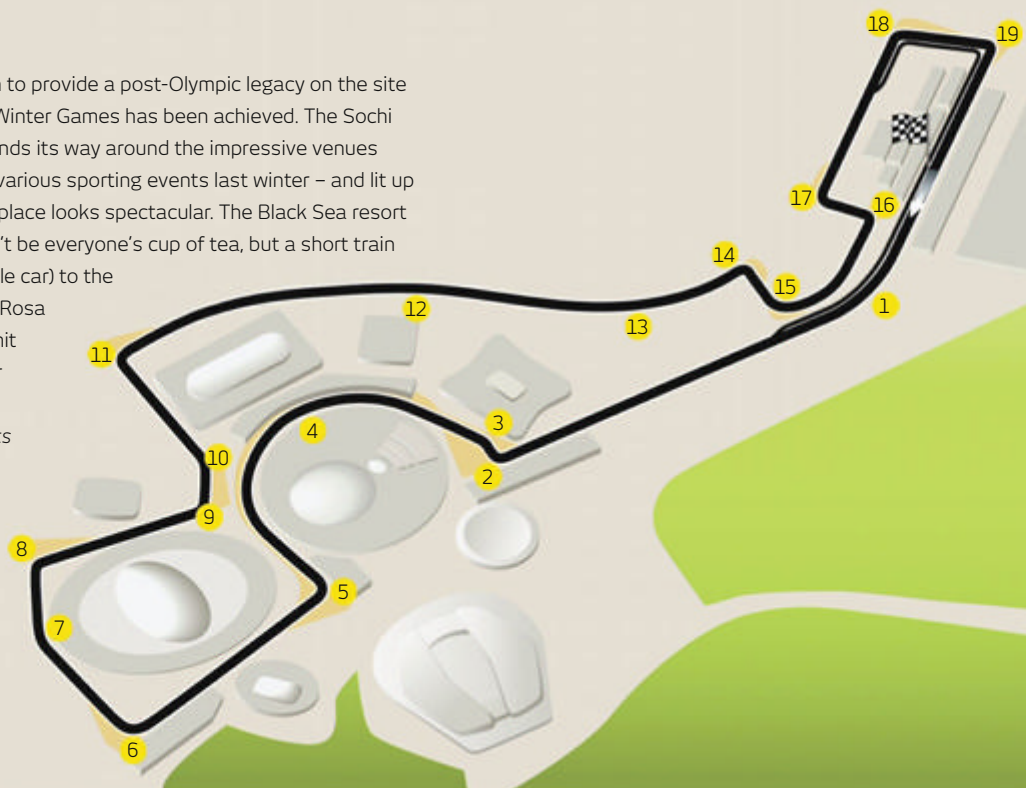
RUSSIA ROUND 16/20

SOCHI, 9-11 OCTOBER

Why I love... SOCHI

The ambition to provide a post-Olympic legacy on the site of the 2014 Winter Games has been achieved. The Sochi Autodrom winds its way around the impressive venues that hosted various sporting events last winter - and lit up at night, the place looks spectacular. The Black Sea resort of Sochi won't be everyone's cup of tea, but a short train ride (and cable car) to the 2,300-metre Rosa Khutor summit will take your breath away.

James Roberts



RACE DATA

Circuit name
Sochi Autodrom

First GP 2014

F1 races held 1

Laps 53

Circuit length
3.636 miles

Race distance
192.708 miles

Direction Clockwise

Winners from pole 1

Race start (UK time)
12pm

LAST YEAR

Winner
Lewis Hamilton

Margin of victory
13.657 secs

Fastest lap
1m 40.896s, V Bottas

Race leaders 1

Pitstops 23

Overtakes 35



UNITED STATES

ROUND 17/20
AUSTIN, 23-25 OCTOBER

RACE DATA

Circuit name
Circuit of The Americas

First GP 2012

F1 races held 3

Laps 56

Circuit length
3.425 miles

Race distance
191.633 miles

Direction Anticlockwise

Winners from pole 1

Race start (UK time) 7pm

LAST YEAR

Winner
Lewis Hamilton

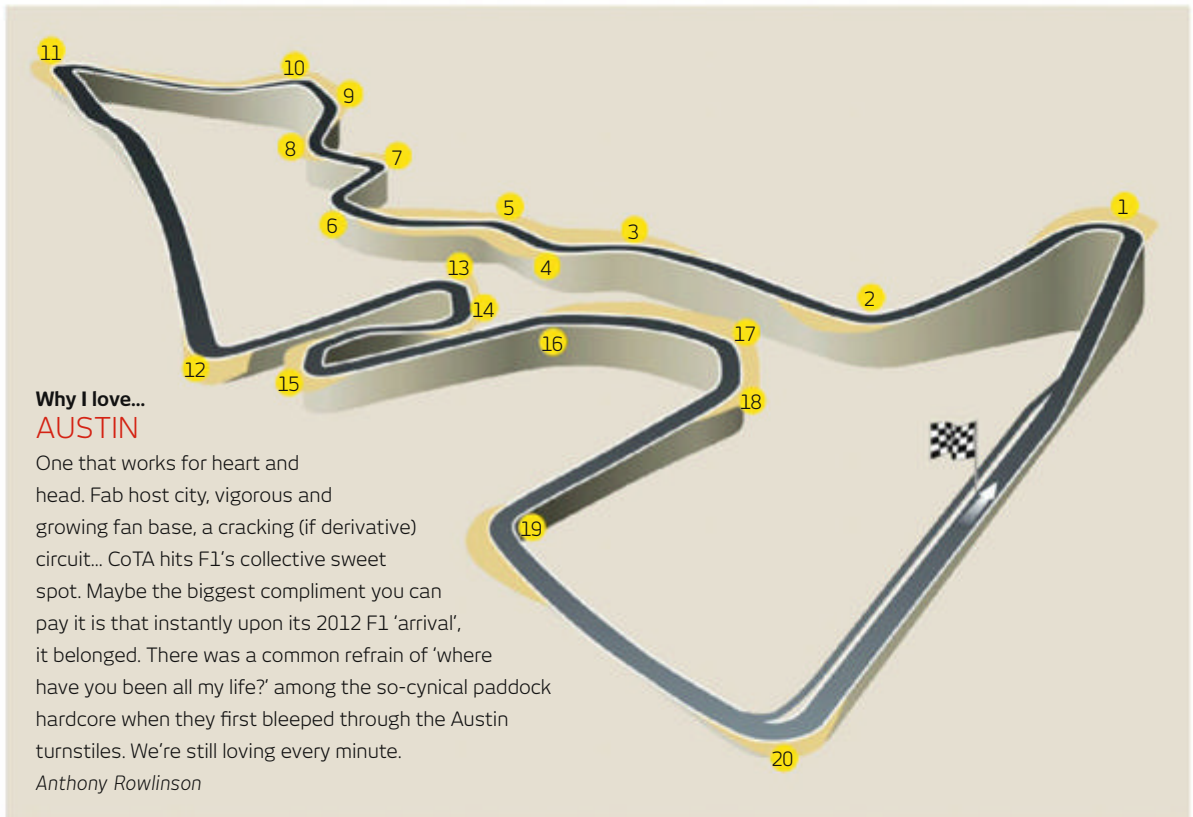
Margin of victory
4.314 secs

Fastest lap
1m 41.379s, S Vettel

Race leaders 2

Pitstops 36

Overtakes 30



Why I love... AUSTIN

One that works for heart and head. Fab host city, vigorous and growing fan base, a cracking (if derivative) circuit... CoTA hits F1's collective sweet spot. Maybe the biggest compliment you can pay it is that instantly upon its 2012 F1 'arrival', it belonged. There was a common refrain of 'where have you been all my life?' among the so-cynical paddock hardcore when they first bleeped through the Austin turnstiles. We're still loving every minute.

Anthony Rowlinson



MEXICO

ROUND 18/20
MEXICO CITY, 30 OCTOBER-1 NOVEMBER

Why I love... MEXICO

This track, inside a sports park within the city, sums up a strong F1 tradition in this colourful country. The original circuit was an excellent blend of challenges that came with a venue first used in the 1960s; hopefully that will not have been lost during refurbishment. The atmosphere in the city is unlikely to have changed, from terrific food to policemen who will stop a cab for you in exchange for a nice tip.

Maurice Hamilton



RACE DATA

Circuit name
Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez

First GP 1963

F1 races held 15

Laps 71

Circuit length
2.674 miles

Race distance
189.88 miles

Direction Clockwise

Winners from pole 7

Race start (UK time) 7pm

IN 1992

Winner
Nigel Mansell

Margin of victory
12.971 secs

Fastest lap
1m 17.711s, G Berger

Race leaders 1

Pitstops 5

Overtakes 41



BRAZIL

ROUND 19/20

SÃO PAULO, 13-15 NOVEMBER

RACE DATA

Circuit name

Autódromo José

Carlos Pace

First GP 1973

F1 races held 32

Laps 71

Circuit length

2.677 miles

Race distance

190.082 miles

Direction Anticlockwise

Winners from pole 12

Race start (UK time) 4pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Nico Rosberg

Margin of victory

1.457 secs

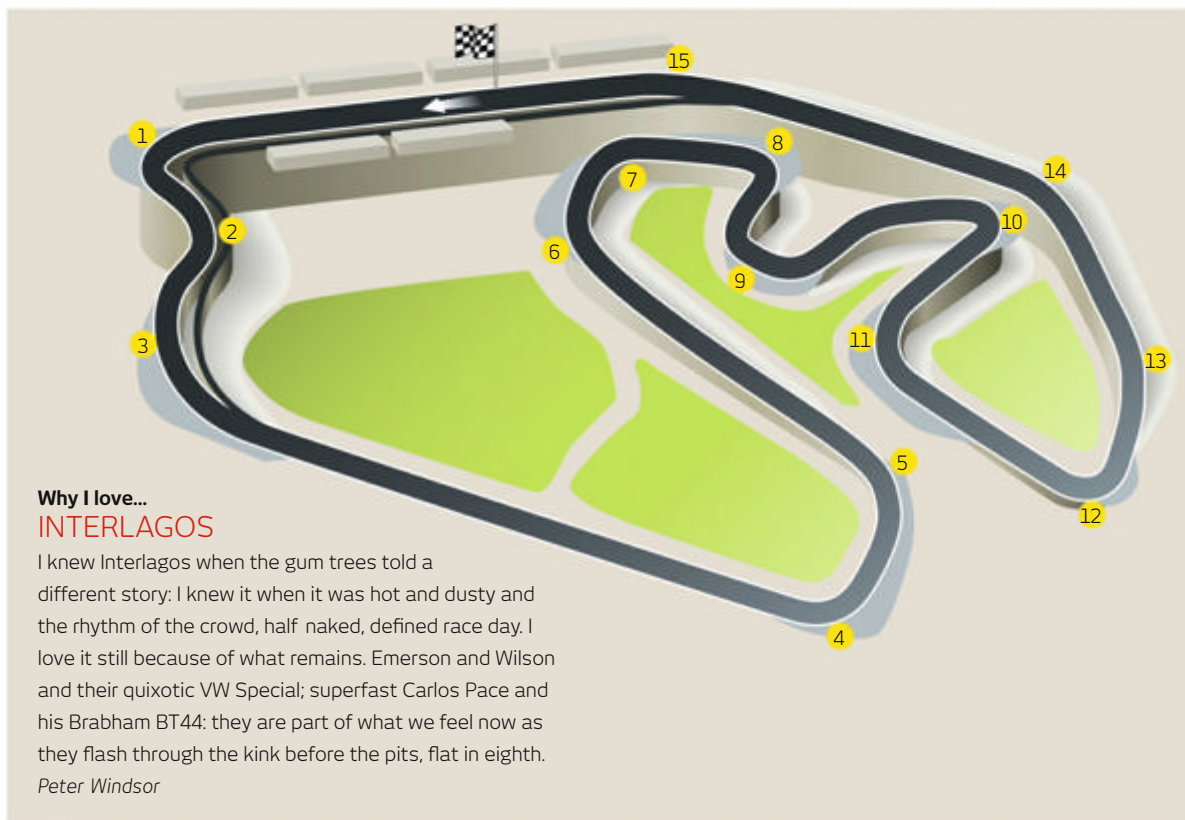
Fastest lap

1m 13.555s, L Hamilton

Race leaders 3

Pitstops 52

Overtakes 35



Why I love...

INTERLAGOS

I knew Interlagos when the gum trees told a different story: I knew it when it was hot and dusty and the rhythm of the crowd, half naked, defined race day. I love it still because of what remains. Emerson and Wilson and their quixotic VW Special; superfast Carlos Pace and his Brabham BT44: they are part of what we feel now as they flash through the kink before the pits, flat in eighth.

Peter Windsor



ABU DHABI

ROUND 20/20

YAS MARINA, 27-29 NOVEMBER

Why I love...

ABU DHABI

They missed a trick in failing to add more fast and challenging corners, but Yas Marina and its floodlit racing has a wonderful atmosphere all of its own, aided by a perfect climate. The facilities are second to none; the difference between Abu Dhabi and other countries throwing millions at new venues is that this one is thoroughly alive and proactive, rather than a white elephant in the making.

Maurice Hamilton



RACE DATA

Circuit name

Yas Marina Circuit

First GP 2009

F1 races held 6

Laps 55

Circuit length

3.451 miles

Race distance

189.738 miles

Direction Anticlockwise

Winners from pole 1

Race start (UK time) 1pm

LAST YEAR

Winner

Lewis Hamilton

Margin of victory

2.576 secs

Fastest lap

1m 44.496s, Ricciardo

Race leaders 3

Pitstops 41

Overtakes 30



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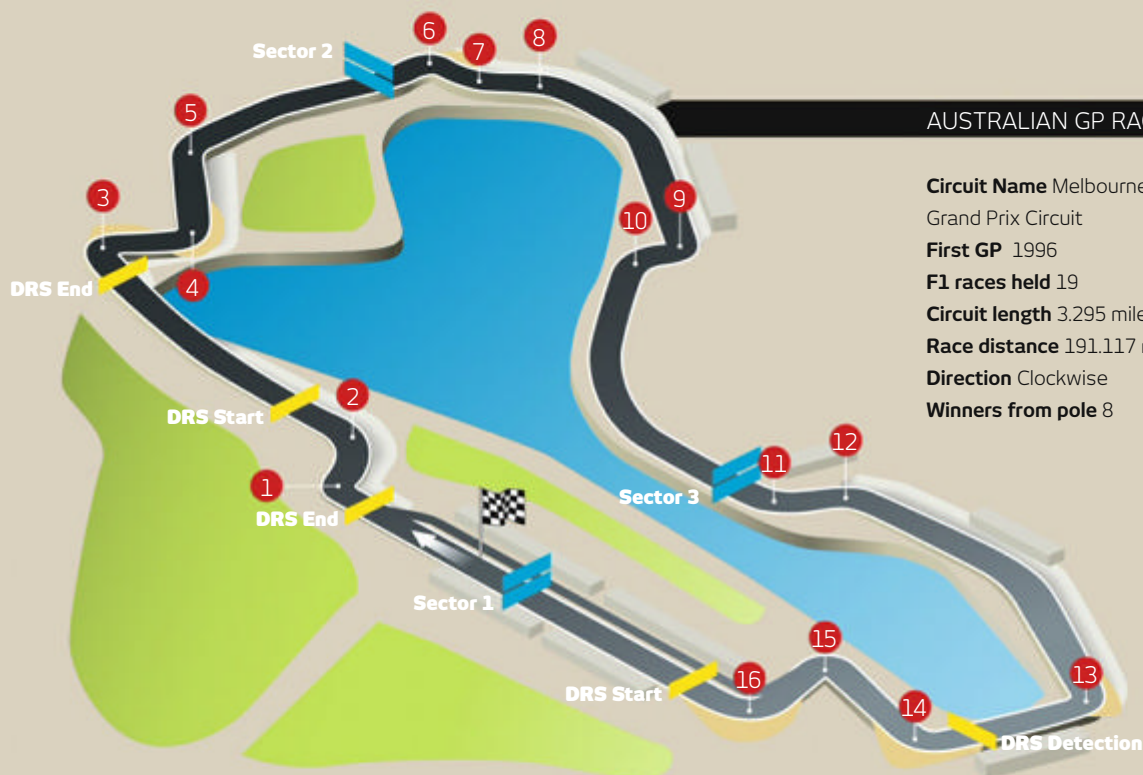
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The Australian GP preview

Round 1 / 13-15 March 2015 / Albert Park, Melbourne



AUSTRALIAN GP RACE DATA

Circuit Name Melbourne
Grand Prix Circuit
First GP 1996
F1 races held 19
Circuit length 3.295 miles
Race distance 191.117 miles
Direction Clockwise
Winners from pole 8

TV TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 13 March
Practice 1 01.30 03.00
Practice 2 05.30 07.00
Saturday 14 March
Practice 3 03.00 04.00
Qualifying 06.00 07.00
Sunday 15 March
Race 05.00
Live coverage Sky Sports F1
Highlights BBC

RACE NOTES: A SUPERB SPOT TO START THE SEASON

The excitement is building as we count down to the first grand prix of 2015 – the popular Albert Park street circuit

Albert Park has been a popular venue for the season-opener for years: this year's event will be the 20th race to take place on this deceptively testing street circuit. Jenson Button has won here three times, while Ferrari's Kimi Räikkönen has two victories here to his name.

This race often highlights form for the season ahead: Nico Rosberg dominated in 2014 after Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton dropped out on the first lap with an engine failure. But it isn't always a reliable barometer: McLaren took second and third behind Rosberg, but wouldn't return to the podium in 2014.

Home fans will be cheering on Daniel Ricciardo. He made it onto the podium here last year before his exclusion for a fuel-flow infringement. Since then he has won three races, so home hopes will be riding on him.



Australian Daniel Ricciardo just missed out on a podium finish here in 2014

PACE NOTES: THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Braking bad

The stop/start nature of the circuit means high fuel consumption and brake wear – a challenge for new machines as yet unproven in race conditions.

Set-up suggestions

The many mid-speed chicanes and lack of straights favour a high downforce set up, with stiff suspension to ensure cars corner well.

Getting a grip

As a temporary circuit, the track starts with low grip, building up over the weekend. It favours a softer tyre, which, along with the higher chance of a Safety Car, can lead to mixed strategies

Key corner

Turn 3: A second gear right hander, and the best overtaking spot, especially with the DRS zone on the preceding straight

WHAT HAPPENED IN LAST YEAR'S RACE...?

Winner Nico Rosberg
Margin of victory 26.777secs
Fastest lap 1m 32.478s, N Rosberg
Safety Cars 0
Race leaders 1
Pitstops 34
Overtakes 29



The expected duel between Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg fizzled out when Hamilton retired early with engine problems. That handed victory to Rosberg, with Daniel Ricciardo second prior to his exclusion for a fuel-flow violation. Two rookies stood out: McLaren's Kevin Magnussen who inherited second and Toro Rosso's Daniil Kvyat, who finished tenth.

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★ STAR LETTER



Reduce costs by reducing the number of people involved in a pitstop, says Rob Wall

Too many cooks...

As a long-term watcher of F1 (I hesitate to use the word 'fan') of some 40 years, I'd like to suggest some ways to reduce costs and spice up the racing.

First, I would restrict the number of people in the garages. What with wireless connections and instant downloads, all the monitor-watchers could stay back at the factory thus cutting down transport and hotel costs. All their inputs could be sent remotely. Second, working along the same lines, reduce the number of people working on the car at pitstops. Yes a sub-three-second tyre change is impressive, but imagine the scope for error with only one person per corner. Not quite in NASCAR territory, with two guys and a jack. Third – and this will make the designers howl – the FIA should design a single-plane front wing mandatory for all teams. This would reduce downforce across the car, hopefully making for closer racing.

Just the ramblings of a fifty-something man who spends too much time asleep on a Sunday afternoon when he should be enjoying a grand prix...

Rob Wall
By email



STAR PRIZE

Rob Wall wins a pair of three-day general admission tickets to the 2015 Formula 1 Santander British Grand Prix. For more details, visit www.silverstone.co.uk/events. Hotline number: 0844 3728 300

No clear progression

The difficulty Jolyon Palmer has in attempting to break into F1 demonstrates the problem with feeder formulae: success is no guarantee of progression.

In actual fact, winning the GP2 championship with no promised drive can kill off a career as the driver is not allowed to remain in GP2, but cannot break into F1.

If F1 is serious about GP2, perhaps the sport should consider sponsorship for the GP2 series as a whole, where for a sum (let's say £8million per annum) the sponsor pays for the champion to have a guaranteed seat in F1 the following season. This should ensure that teams are queuing up to take on a proven racer who is able to contribute to their budget.

Daniel Stafford
Oxford, UK

One rule for some

F1 is struggling to maintain a competitive field of teams in an environment of perennial rule changes and spiralling costs. Why then does the latest set of rules make it so difficult for Honda to return and be competitive in 2015?

Honda will not be permitted to make engine modifications to the same degree that other teams can, due to the fact that they didn't run an engine in a car in Formula 1 in 2014. This is ridiculous. F1 presents itself as the pinnacle of motorsport. It has a sophisticated image that exudes charm and elegance, while state-of-the-art engineering is used to guarantee that the spectator will always be thrilled by what they are watching. Yet stock-car racing has a simpler and fairer set of rules.

Go figure!

Peter J B Green
By email

Embrace the future

I found 'Inbox' in February's *F1 Racing* enlightening. Letters were from an 18-year-old (Jamie Carrington), a 27-year-old (Matt Barr) and another young person (Gemma Eckley) who were all enthusiastic about the sport when so much negativity from the press tells us otherwise.

I saw my first grand prix at Brands Hatch in 1984 when I was 21, and I was awestruck. The sport has moved on since then and become significantly more professional in how it presents the show and also in terms of the technology.

Every so often the rules change and now we have fuel-efficient cars that create less noise (and pollution), but showcase the technology. The younger generations are the long-term audience both for television and spectators and they are embracing the change without too much argument. Allow us to accept that times change and as much as I miss the sound of a V12, V8 or a turbocharged 1,000+ bhp V6 screaming around a circuit on one-lap qualifying tyres, we have now moved on to the next act.

I said only a few years ago to friends that you would never see me in an electric or hybrid car. But I took delivery of my first hybrid vehicle only a few weeks ago and, I have to say, I love it! So let's see where we are in a few years time. I bet we will look back and embrace what we are seeing today with awe.

Nicholas Storrer
By email

In favour of double points

Although I am strongly against the double points system, I understand that something needs to be done to boost the popularity of the sport for the future and the importance of the Abu Dhabi GP last season most likely resulted in increased interest from current and new fans.

Maybe then, a balance could be struck between what fans want and what Bernie Ecclestone wants? If

double points races were to be re-introduced, fans could vote for any track where they want to see double points. Maybe there could be several double points races each year where the fans, the FIA, Bernie and the teams and drivers collectively, get to choose a round each.

Not only would this lead to less importance being put on one race, but it would be a chance for F1 to communicate with the fans and let them have a say. Despite having a strong interest in the sport, there are always moments in the season when my interest drops – so I feel a few races of greater importance scattered across the calendar would be a very interesting prospect.

Ryan Luscombe
Devon, UK

Look after the minnows

A new season is almost upon us, and while I am certainly eager to get my fill of F1 once again, I find myself somewhat disheartened at the prospect of the upcoming season. Putting aside the mild nose jobs, there do not seem to be many other drastic changes to the cars this season; but what is stark is the reduced number of cars.

A lack of industry engagement for a fairer distribution of FIA funding has tacitly sealed the fates of many teams. And we now face the possibility of a meagre 18-car grid.

Perhaps the FIA should look to produce a financial model of support for teams based on their current need, rather than as a form of top-up for the big four.

In 2014 Marussia produced their best performance in one of their hardest years. Despite this they were left to fall, even with prize money on the way. We need these smaller teams to stay in the sport. Instead of trying to engage fans by messing around with the rules, the FIA should recognise that variety on the grid is what we want.

The best races, and surprises, come from the unexpected. The longer this remains the status quo, the smaller the grid becomes.

Sophie Dean
By email

Model of distinction

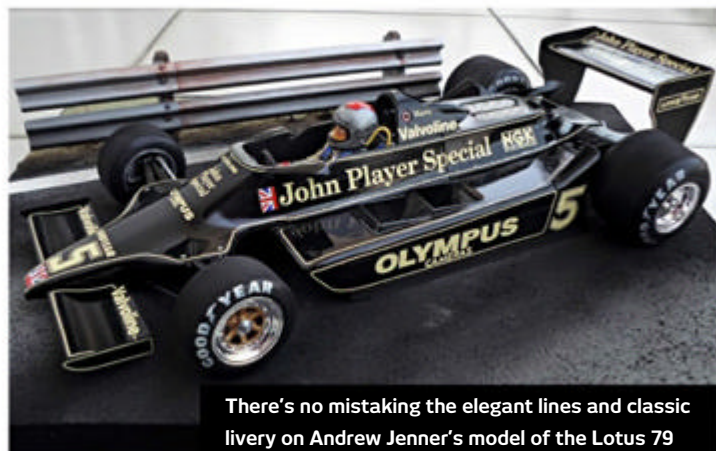
What a pleasure to see the Lotus 79 profiled in December's 'Now that was a car'. I recently took up scale modelling and it was no accident that this was the first kit I bought.

As any model maker will tell you, once you've built a car, tank, ship or plane, you truly get to appreciate the aesthetics and detail of the subject – or the lack of.

The Lotus 79 is low and sleek with elegant lines, and that stand-out gold-on-black JPS livery. It is beautifully proportioned and uncluttered. There were no tobacco sponsorship markings in the kit and I had to buy these separately; the model would have looked incomplete without them.

To date I have only built this one car and am satisfied the Lotus 79 will be as hard to beat as a display model as it was to beat out on track.

Andrew Jenner
Suffolk, UK



There's no mistaking the elegant lines and classic livery on Andrew Jenner's model of the Lotus 79

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*CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

MURRAY WALKER



UNLESS I'M VERY MUCH MISTAKEN...

"Musing about life and where it takes you, as you do, I realised I've seen every one of F1's 32 world champions"

I've also had the privilege of interviewing 24 of them and even having some of them alongside me in the commentary box – notably Graham Hill, Jackie Stewart, James Hunt, Jody Scheckter and Alan Jones. So, a host of memories then? You could say that... but where to start?

How about with Juan Manuel Fangio, arguably the greatest of them all – five world championships with four different constructors? Three times I interviewed him, one of them for a whole morning in his London hotel suite about his iconic victory in the 1957 German Grand Prix.

I found him to be charming, modest, quietly spoken and rivetingly interesting. He recalled every yard, every gear change and every rev of his Maserati 250F during his stirring drive at the Nürburgring; where he caught and passed Mike Hawthorn and Peter Collins for what turned out to be his last victory. "Come and see me when you're next in Balcarce [fat chance!] and I'll show you round my museum," he said. Sadly that never happened, although I later got to drive his Mille Miglia Mercedes-Benz 300SLR at the Buenos Aires circuit.



"Three times I interviewed Fangio (centre) and I found him charming, modest, quietly spoken and rivetingly interesting"




The most charming and charismatic of them all? No contest: Emerson Fittipaldi, champion in 1972 and '74, who makes you feel as though you're the most important person he's ever met. He loves to talk about his time in F1 and America with McLaren, with Colin Chapman's Lotus, with the towering presence of Roger Penske and racing against Sir Jackie Stewart.

His fellow Brazilian Ayrton Senna was very different. I commented on so many of his epic drives – Monaco '84 in the Toleman, his first F1 win in the Lotus in Portugal '85, every one of his McLaren drives and, so sadly, his last race in the Williams at Imola in 1994. His charisma – and he had it by the bucketload – was different to that of Fittipaldi. More intense, his command of every aspect of his dedicated profession and of the English language was awesome. For me, his era, when he raced against Nigel Mansell, Alain Prost, Nelson Piquet and Michael Schumacher, was the greatest of them all.

Now here's another contrast of personalities: John Surtees and James Hunt. I've been lucky enough to know John for the whole of his brilliant racing career as a seven-time motorcycle champion, an F1 world champion and a brilliant sportscar racer, and no one commands greater respect and admiration from me. It's an outrage that he has not been granted the knighthood he so richly deserves. Stubborn and determined but almost invariably right, he, like Nigel Mansell, who was also easy to offend, could be hard work, but both of them remain true friends to me.

As, in a funny sort of way, James Hunt turned out to be. I covered the whole of his career – Formula Ford to F1 world champion – and we worked together as BBC TV commentators for 13 years during which, different as chalk and cheese, we had our ups and downs but our chemistry seemed to work. When he died, aged 45, we were on good terms and as a unique and memorable character there's no doubt about the fact that he tops the lot.

Regrets? Just one. I never met Jim Clark. I've stood close to him but in those far off days of the 1960s he was a god and I was just a fan who was either too polite or too overawed to interrupt him in the paddock. But I don't regret too much not having had to interview Kimi Räikkönen. Mika Häkkinen was difficult enough! 

James Anderson

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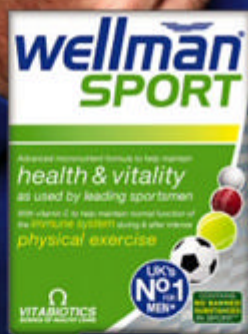
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