THE **OFFICIAL** FORMULA 1® MAGAZINE

ISSUE 2 April 2020

## THE NEW PRINCE OF FERRARI

Why Charles Leclerc can take the crown back to Maranello

How the sport is dealing with coronavirus

The full story from Australia of the race that never was

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# WELCOME TO ISSUE 2

# A difficult time for everyone in the sport



**James Roberts**
Editorial director




It was a surreal experience in Albert Park on the morning the new Formula 1 season was due to get underway. Fans had turned up in Melbourne to see the 2020 F1 cars turn a wheel in anger for the first time, but were prevented from accessing the circuit. They stood in disbelief by the entrance gates, trying to comprehend the events that had led to the cancellation of the Australian Grand Prix. You really did have to feel sorry for them.

The rapid escalation of the coronavirus outbreak shocked everyone. With a member of the McLaren team quarantined in a nearby hotel after testing positive for Covid-19 – and another 14 personnel also in self-isolation – it was clear the race could not go ahead. It was a difficult time for all.

Since returning from Australia, the continuing effects of the devastating virus has led to Formula 1 putting the brakes on the opening phase of this season – and also postponing planned technical changes for 2021.

In a public letter to the fans, Mercedes boss Toto Wolff spoke for many when he said that while it was disappointing that racing had been suspended, "we must realise racing is entertainment. We take it seriously because we love it, but in the grand scheme of things, it is by no means essential. The health and wellbeing of the fans, team members and everyone in society is."

Mercedes, along with the other teams, are now working to establish the feasibility of manufacturing respiratory devices to help support the treatment of coronavirus patients. In these dark days, it's heartening to see the skills and engineering brains of the Formula 1 community acting so positively and decisively.

## This month's contributors



### Matt Youson

Matt Youson was bewitched by Formula 1 upon receiving a Scalextric set complete with black-and-gold Mario Andretti Lotus 79 (back when advertising cigarettes to six year-olds seemed a perfectly reasonable proposition). After a wasted youth learning to use AutoCAD, and years of writing far too much about motorsport in a succession of engineering and design magazines, Matt was eventually put out of his misery with a job offer in the F1 paddock. He spent four magical years as the teaboy on the daily *Red Bulletin* magazine, before entering the endearingly fluffy world of freelance F1.



### Pino Allievi

Pino Allievi came into motorsport journalism via an unorthodox route. After first writing about art and culture, he followed his father (who was the manager of Scuderia Ferrari and Alfa Romeo) into the world of motorsport and joined the famous Italian daily newspapater *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. Initially, Pino covered motorcycle racing and then became their F1 correspondent in the mid-1970s. In recent years he has been an RAI TV commentator, written books – the most recent was on Michael Schumacher – and won journalistic accolades including the prestigious 'Dino Ferrari' award.



### Tony Dodgins

As an eight-year-old, Tony Dodgins was mesmerised by the Jackie Stewart/Jochen Rindt battle at Silverstone in 1969. An enthusiast of many sports, he realised he wanted motor racing to be his livelihood. An interview with Frank Williams ten years later helped win him the Sir Williams Lyons Award for aspiring young motoring journalists. Tony joined the *Autosport* staff in 1985, went freelance in F1 in 1992 and is now a veteran of more than 500 Grands Prix. Today he works with Ben Edwards and David Coulthard in the Channel 4 commentary box and edits *Autocourse*.

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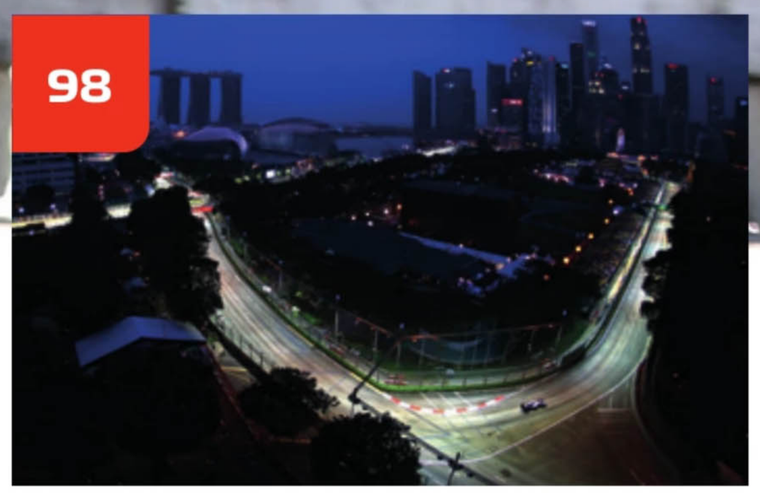

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# GALLERY

Ferrari mechanics pack their bags and make a sudden departure from the Albert Park circuit before a car has even turned a wheel. The action was cancelled two hours before the start of practice after one of the McLaren team was diagnosed with the coronavirus

**Photo** William West/Getty Images


Ray-Ban
MAHLE
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# GALLERY

Fans arrive early at the Albert Park circuit in Melbourne on Friday morning, only to discover the entrance gates remain closed. With a confirmed case of coronavirus, there was no alternative but for the Australian Grand Prix to be cancelled

**Photo** Quinn Rooney/Getty Images



# GALLERY

Like so many other sporting venues, the start/finish line of the Albert Park circuit stands empty, devoid of any action. The escalation of the global coronavirus pandemic has forced Formula 1 to close its race tracks, and teams to shut factories, for the foreseeable future

**Photo** Robert Cianflone/Getty Images

# FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX DE FRANCE 2020

## LA SUMMER RACE



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VIEW FROM THE COCKPIT

# Kevin Magnussen

## The Haas driver reflects on the postponement of the season's first race due to the coronavirus situation

I really wanted to talk about racing but, after events in Australia, I'm not sure when we will be doing that again. It was such a shame because initially it all started so well.

I've been preparing all winter for the Australian Grand Prix and the season ahead, and we got down there nice and early to shake off the jet lag. It's the only race of the season where you really get to do that because there is nothing before to stop you. I went up to Cairns and Cape Tribulation, did some diving off the Great Barrier Reef and everything was really good. I've been doing the same for many years, but then things became very different.

I'm not an expert – I have no idea of how big the coronavirus problem is or how big it is going to be. I really don't know much about it, but I could see the effects of what was happening right in front of me and it was really weird. It was a bit like a movie. It was strange not being able to mingle with the fans. It was all a bit nervy with the things that are happening around the world. It's really crazy.

But, like I said, I'm not an expert and I hate it when ordinary people think they know the answers when they don't. All I know is that we have to take every precaution we can. I wash my hands and take as much care of my hygiene as possible, just like everyone else. It seems that's all we can really do. We need to do whatever is necessary to protect ourselves and each other.

In Australia, I think everybody thought it was weird rather than scary. I'm not scared, but it's a freaky situation. I think most people feel like that – we just need to take the precautions that we are taking and see what happens.

Of course, it goes without saying that everybody who loves motorsport – drivers and fans alike – wants to see some racing as soon as possible.

Haas is still a very young team and the rate of experience gained is very steep. Every year we have arrived at the first race more prepared and more ready than the previous season. This year was the same. We have really upped our game and we spent a big part of last season researching and preparing for this year, making sure we don't fall into the same pattern we did in 2019.

The car for this season is very different. It's a new concept and we have gone down a different direction to try and fix the main issue that we had on last year's car. Whether it will be more competitive, we are yet to find out.

Unfortunately, right now, we still don't know when that will be.

Photo Getty

NEWS 2020

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WORLD OF FORMULA 1® THIS MONTH

# Cancellations and postponements hit start of season

For the first time since 1954 there will be no Monaco Grand Prix this season as the coronavirus pandemic continues to play havoc with the 2020 Formula 1 calendar.

Monaco, along with the Dutch and Spanish Grands Prix, was initially announced as 'postponed' by Formula 1 on March 19, but later that day the Automobile Club de Monaco (ACM) announced that their race had been cancelled.

In a statement, the ACM said: "To all the fans, spectators, partners and our members, the Board of Directors wishes to express its sincere regrets that these two events [the Historic Grand Prix was also cancelled] cannot be postponed and under no circumstances will it be possible to organise these events later this year."

On Monday, March 23, the organisers of the Azerbaijan Grand Prix, which was due to be held on the Baku Street Circuit on June 7, informed F1 and the FIA that they were going to postpone the race due to the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

The season-opening 2020 Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne was cancelled on the Friday morning that Free Practice was due to take place, and the following day the next two races, in Bahrain and Vietnam, were postponed.

To free up space in the calendar for rescheduling, the FIA brought forward the 'summer break', where teams close down their factories for two weeks, from August to March and April.

The governing body announced in a statement: "In light of the global impact of the Covid-19 coronavirus currently affecting the organisation of FIA Formula One World Championship events, the World Motor Sport Council has approved a change to the 2020 FIA Formula 1 Sporting Regulations, moving the summer shutdown period from July and August to March and April, and extending it from 14 to 21 days."



# Carey: "We'll race when situation improves"




Chase Carey, the chairman and chief executive officer of Formula 1, says he is committed to a 2020 Championship Season "once the situation improves." In a statement released ten days after the cancellation of the 2020 Australian Grand Prix, Carey outlined a potential plan amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"We recognise there is significant potential for additional postponements, nonetheless we fully expect the season to start at some point this summer, with a revised calendar of between 15-18 races."

While he could not provide a specific schedule due to the fluidity of the situation, he suggested the season be extended beyond the original date of November 29.

Carey added that the hiatus gave the sport a chance to experiment with new initiatives, such as Esports, and to develop more innovative content like Netflix's *Drive to Survive*.

# McLaren and Pirelli staff test positive for Covid-19

The McLaren team member whose positive test for coronavirus, which led to the team withdrawing from the 2020 Australian Grand Prix and triggered the cancellation of the race, is said to be recovering well and no longer showing symptoms.

Fourteen other team members who came into close contact with the infected employee are said to be in good spirits while in 14-day isolation in Melbourne. Team principal Andreas Seidl stayed in Australia for a few days to offer support to those affected, while racing director Andrea Stella stayed for their entire 14-day quarantine.

Formula 1 tyre manufacturer Pirelli also announced that one of their staff had tested positive for coronavirus while in Australia. The company said the employee had not come into contact with any third parties and was "following all the relevant procedures put in place by the Australian health authorities".

After the cancellation of the 2020 Australian Grand Prix, Ferrari announced they were shutting down their road car and Formula 1 facilities until the end of March.



## RED BULL PLANNED DAS PROTEST

Red Bull Racing would have lodged a protest against the Dual Axis Steering (DAS) system on the Mercedes W11 had the Australian Grand Prix meeting gone ahead. The car ran with the innovative system during pre-season testing in Barcelona but its legality can only be resolved by race stewards at a Grand Prix.

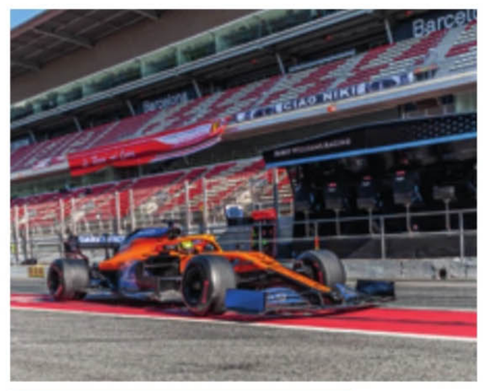
## Joburg fan festival is postponed

Formula 1 has announced that the Heineken F1 Joburg Festival, scheduled for March 29 in South Africa, has been postponed due to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic. All fans who purchased tickets for the Johannesburg event will be offered a full refund.




## DRIVE TO SURVIVE SEASON TWO ON NETFLIX

While the new Formula 1 season waits to power into life amid the uncertainty caused by the global coronavirus crisis, don't forget you can relive all the drama of the 2019 campaign with season two of *Formula 1: Drive to Survive* on Netflix.



## McLAREN ENGINE SWITCH ON COURSE

McLaren's planned switch to Mercedes engines in 2021 is still set to go-ahead despite the postponement in the technical regulations until the following year.

## Pirelli power for cement factory

Pirelli have been forced to scrap 1,800 Formula 1 tyres that were to be used at the Australian Grand Prix. Once tyres have been mounted on wheel rims it is very hard to remove them without causing damage so unused tyres are regularly scrapped after flyaway races. The set allocated for use in Melbourne will now be used to help power a cement factory.

## RELAXATION ON HELMET RULE

Drivers will be allowed to change their helmet liveries as often as they choose after the FIA relaxed the rule that forced them to commit to the same design with the exception of one event. While the intention was to help spectators identify drivers more easily, the rule was unpopular with drivers themselves.




## New Red Bull test driver

Brazilian Formula 2 driver Sérgio Sette Câmara (above) has rejoined Red Bull as a test and reserve driver for both the main team and AlphaTauri this season. He will share the role with Sébastien Buemi who has been working with the team since 2012. Sette Câmara was part of Red Bull's junior programme in 2016 and will undertake simulator work with the team this year.

## 18-INCH TYRE TEST FOR ABU DHABI

The FIA has confirmed the post-season test in Abu Dhabi will be used to assess Pirelli's new-for-2022, 18-inch tyres.

## NEW SPONSORSHIP DEAL

Formula 1 has announced a new long-term global sponsorship deal with Saudi Aramco, the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals company. Aramco will become the sixth global F1 partner alongside DHL, Emirates, Heineken, Pirelli and Rolex.



# UK-based teams help government

United Kingdom-based Formula 1 teams are set to join a number of industries in helping manufacture ventilators for the NHS during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The seven teams based in Britain – Mercedes, Red Bull, McLaren, Renault, Racing Point, Haas and Williams – hope to begin production within days.

"A collective of UK-based Formula 1 teams, engine manufacturers and their respective technology arms is evaluating support for the manufacture of respiratory devices in response to the UK government's call for assistance," Formula 1 said in a statement. "The teams are working in collaboration with F1, the UK government and other organisations to establish the feasibility of the teams producing, or supporting, the production of medical devices to help in the treatment of coronavirus patients.

"All the teams have expert design, technology and production capabilities, and specialise in rapid prototyping and high-value manufacturing, which is hoped can be applied to the critical needs set out by government."


## MARKETPLACE

### F1® 2019 OFFICIAL REVIEW

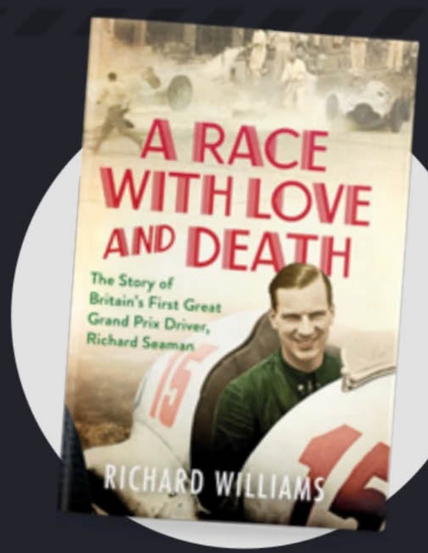
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Relive the excitement of every round of the 21-race 2019 Formula 1 season in bitesized highlights, featuring commentary from the Sky Sports F1 duo David Croft and Martin Brundle. Running to 376 minutes, this annual DVD also includes bonus material, including on-board footage.




### A RACE WITH LOVE AND DEATH

By Richard Williams

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Award-winning author Richard Williams reveals the remarkable story of the pre-war Grand Prix driver Richard Seaman, a British racer who signed up to drive for the state-sponsored Mercedes team in 1937 despite growing political tensions in Europe. From start to finish, it is a gripping read.

# New regulations delayed a year

The key stakeholders in the FIA Formula One World Championship have agreed unanimously to delay the introduction of the 2021 technical regulations until 2022 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In a conference call on March 19, the FIA, Formula 1 and all ten teams decided to delay the new regulations by a year and also agreed that the rules for the 2020 season should be enforced during 2021.

"All parties further discussed the current situation of the 2020 Championship and how the sport will react to the ongoing challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic," said the FIA in a statement. "Due to the currently volatile financial situation this has created, it has been agreed that teams will use their 2020 chassis for 2021, with the potential freezing of further components to be discussed in due course. The introduction and implementation of the financial regulations will go ahead as planned in 2021, and discussions remain ongoing between the FIA, Formula 1 and all teams regarding further ways to make significant cost savings.

"All teams expressed their support for the FIA and Formula 1 in their ongoing efforts to restructure the 2020 calendar as the global situation regarding Covid-19 develops."

The new financial regulations will still be put in place for next year. The budget cap of $175m – which covers expenditure that relates to car performance – will come into force in 2021, as planned. Teams will be required to develop their 2022 cars – under the new regulations – within the new budget cap framework.






## THE TALENT SCOUT

Who's on the road to F1® from F2® and F3®

**NAME** Sophia Floersch

**AGE** 19

**NATIONALITY** German

### WHO IS SHE DRIVING FOR?

For 2020, Floersch will contest the FIA Formula 3 Championship for Campos Racing alongside Alex Peroni and Alessio Deledda. She will also race an LMP2 car at ELMS and Le Mans in an all-female crew alongside Katherine Legge and Tatiana Calderon.

### WHAT HAS SHE ACHIEVED SO FAR IN HER CAREER?

Floersch started karting when she was four and scored points on her Formula 4 debut. Yet she is best known for a horror crash at the 2018 Macau F3 Grand Prix when she was launched at 167mph into a photographer's hut. She faced 17 hours of surgery for a spinal fracture but was back in a car just 106 days later.

### HOW DID SHE MANAGE TO TURN THINGS AROUND?

Floersch never had the slightest doubt she would come back: "Motorsport is my life. Watching the video for the first time was a big shock, but thankfully I was conscious during the crash so I remember everything. In the car it didn't feel that bad."

### WHERE'S SHE HEADING NEXT?

She plans to test a Formula 1 car within three years, then go all the way, saying: "There has never been a successful woman in F1 but I'm going to change that. Some people don't want it to happen, insisting it's too tough, but you have power steering – as Charles Leclerc showed last year when he took 130R one-handed. Still, we have to prove it."

# NEWS 2020

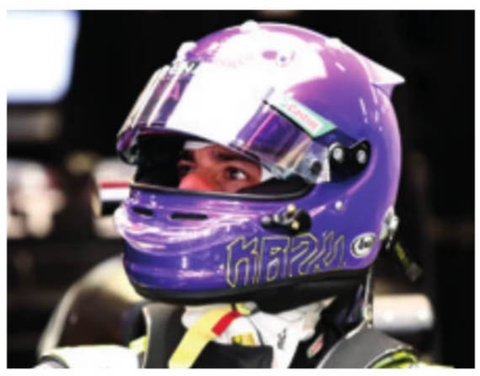
NEWSROUND-UP CONTINUED

## MERCEDES PLANS TO BE CARBON NEUTRAL

Mercedes have announced plans for the team to have a net-zero carbon footprint by the end of 2020. They plan to increase the use of renewable engines at their bases in Brackley and Brixworth, as well as eliminating single-use plastics from their catering. The team aim to halve carbon dioxide emissions from around 20,000 tonnes in 2018 to 10,000 by 2022, with the remaining emissions being offset.

## RICCIARDO'S TRIBUTE TO KOBE BRYANT

Daniel Ricciardo wore a special helmet in pre-season testing to honour the basketball legend Kobe Bryant, who tragically lost his life in January. Ricciardo drove with a helmet in the colours of Bryant's NBA-side LA Lakers with his initials and squad number, KB24, on the side of his lid.



## PIRELLI'S PLAN FOR ZANDVOORT BANKING

Pirelli ran experimental tyres during the second week of pre-season testing in preparation for the return of the Dutch Grand Prix. Renovations to the Zandvoort circuit include a new banked corner at the end of the lap. Pirelli were testing a new rubber construction for their front tyres.

## FIA AND FERRARI REACH ENGINE SETTLEMENT

The FIA has responded to teams that expressed their "surprise and shock" that the governing body had reached a settlement with Ferrari concerning their 2019 power unit. "The FIA was not fully satisfied but decided that further action would not necessarily result in a conclusive case," said the statement.

## RACING POINT DEFEND THEIR 2020 CHASSIS

Andrew Green, the technical director of Racing Point, has defended its latest F1 car after it was dubbed "the Pink Mercedes." Green said accusations that the RP20 is a copy of last season's Mercedes W10, were born out of frustration and that other teams hadn't "stepped up to the plate" ahead of the 2020 season.




# Renault announces title partner

Renault have announced a new title partner for their Formula 1 team. DP World, a leading global cargo, logistics and supply chain company that is based in Dubai and has more than 50,000 staff worldwide, will become title and global logistics partner. Having run in an interim, all-black, livery in testing, Renault also revealed a more traditional yellow and black colour scheme in Melbourne.




## In this month...

Celebrating 70 years of the FIA Formula One World Championship™

### ...43 years ago

On April 3, 1977, Mario Andretti won at Long Beach in his Lotus 78, to become the first American driver to win a Formula 1 Grand Prix on home soil.

### ...20 years ago

April 23, 2000 was the first time the British Grand Prix had not been held in July since 1950 and the constant rain caused misery in the car parks.

### ...16 years ago

On April 4, 2004, the island kingdom of Bahrain became the first country in the Middle East to host a round of the FIA Formula One World Championship.



# ASK Pat Symonds

Each month, the chief technical officer of F1® answers your questions

**Q What is a vortex and why are they so important on F1 cars?**

A vortex is a spinning column of air. The speed of the air is greatest nearest the centre and the pressure is lowest in this region. A vortex is generally formed when air from a high pressure area like the top of a wing tries to flow into a low pressure area, such as the underside of the wing, while also travelling along with the car. On a humid day we can see the path of a vortex because the low pressure allows the moisture in the air to condense and hence become visible.



Vortices are important in F1 aerodynamics as the energy they contain, particularly if working with another vortex that is contrived to spin in an opposite direction, can be used to push much larger regions of flow in a particular direction. Currently, vortices are an important control mechanism for pushing the turbulent wake of the front wheels away from the car to ensure this dirty air does not harm the downforce generating surfaces further back on the car.




**Q How much do teams copy each other and what are they allowed to do or not do?**

To be classified as a constructor in F1 a team needs to hold the design knowledge of certain key parts of the car. This includes the monocoque and the aerodynamic surfaces. For 2022, all parts are classified and much more prescriptive rules determine what teams need to design themselves and what they can buy. For example, teams can share gearboxes and many suspension components but they cannot share any parts that affect aerodynamic performance.

This does not stop teams looking at each other's work and they all employ photographers who are briefed to get detailed shots at each event. On the grid, too, you will see technical directors staring intently at details on their rivals cars.

However, just like at school, it is not the answer itself that leads to success but the understanding of how that answer is arrived at that matters. When I ran design teams, I would often spend a long time staring at a part of a rival's car, not looking at what they had done so much as asking myself why they had done it in that particular way.

# F1™ Esports

**The latest from the gaming world**



## Virtual Grand Prix series launched

Renault's test driver Guanyu Zhou beat Stoffel Vandoorne in the first-ever Virtual Grand Prix around 14 online laps of Sakhir. The race took place on the day the Bahrain Grand Prix was due to take place. A full complement of 20 cars entered the race, which included Lando Norris, Nicholas Latifi and Nico Hülkenberg. Virtual races on the game F1 2019 will take place every weekend on which a Grand Prix has been postponed or cancelled.

## F1® Esports gamers race real-world gamers

The new Virtual Grand Prix series is not the only online competition taking part in the gaming community. Various iterations are being played on both rFactor and F1 2019 with F1 Esports stars such as Daniel Bereznay (above) and Brendon Leigh competing against Max Verstappen and Lando Norris. All races are free-to-view on various YouTube channels and on Twitch.

## Esports man joins Red Bull

Red Bull Racing have announced that former F1 Esports racer Igor Fraga will join the Red Bull Junior programme. Last month it was revealed the Brazilian will participate in F3 this season. Fraga has joined Carlin F2 rookie Jehan Daruvala, TRS rival Liam Lawson and Team Mugen's Super Formula racer, Juri Vips, in the Red Bull programme.

# MELBO

# THE RACE THAT NEVER WAS

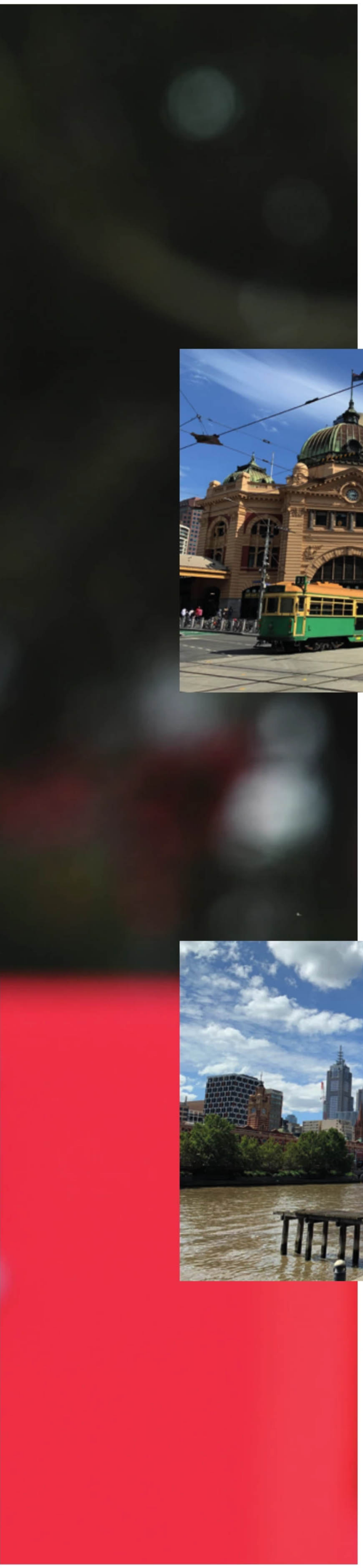
A MELBOURNE DIARY

# OURNE

The build-up to the 2020 Australian Grand Prix™ was one of the most extraordinary in the 70 years of the FIA Formula One World Championship™. The start of the week was filled with eager anticipation to get racing again, but in just five days the mood quickly turned sombre. The rapid spread of coronavirus at a global level and in Melbourne accelerated so quickly, there was no choice but to cancel the opening race of the season just hours before first practice was due to begin. This is our day-by-day account of a dramatic week in unprecedented times

**Words** James Roberts **Photos** Getty Images


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# FIVE DAYS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

## DAY 1

Monday, March 9
Canberra Day. Queen's Bridge, Melbourne



The sound of laughter carries through the air. Bars and restaurants lining the Yarra River in central Melbourne are bustling this Monday lunchtime. It's a public holiday so locals and tourists are taking the opportunity to soak up the warm sunshine as they meander along the river bank, enjoying the sights of the vibrant city. Folk are in good spirits, free to mingle and socialise. In less than a week, there will be a very different atmosphere here as a sense of fear and isolation grips the world.

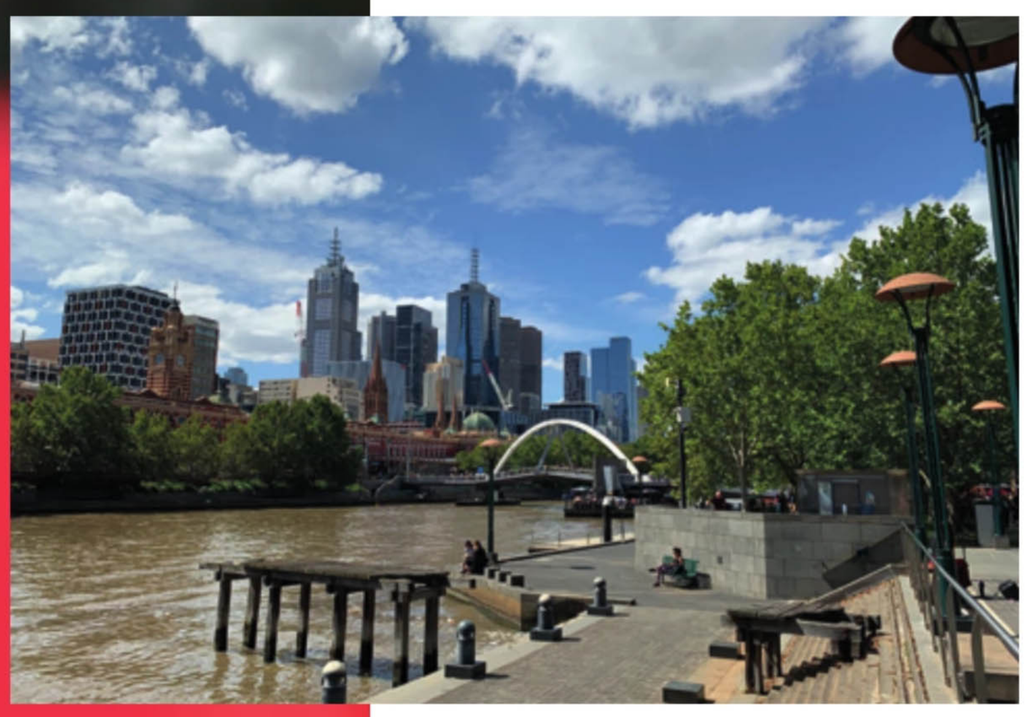
Opposite the famous Flinders Street station, there is a public square with pop-up Formula 1 merchandise stores. Some teams – Renault, McLaren and Ferrari – have their own outlets selling caps, T-shirts and hoodies. Business is strong. Everyone is excited about the 25th Grand Prix that will be held in Melbourne in the coming days.

Along the river front, just a stone's throw from the luxury, five-star Crown Towers Hotel, a couple of F1 drivers have decamped from their rooms to enjoy some light exercise to fend-off jet-lag. The 11-hour time shift hits everyone at some point. Sleep patterns are significantly disrupted.

AlphaTauri driver Pierre Gasly studies the menu outside one of the waterfront eateries; while Valtteri Bottas jogs past with his trainer Antti Vierula, having just completed a Bankside run. Social distancing, because of coronavirus, is not on anyone's radar – yet.

## DAY 2

Tuesday, March 10
Lakeside Drive, St Kilda



At 1pm the accreditation centre for permanent FIA media passes opens. Despite circuitous routes to arrive in Melbourne, with precautions being taken via various countries on the way, journalists and photographers descend from all around the world – shake hands – and share travel stories. At the reception desk of a cricket club on Lakeside Drive, located on the outside of Albert Park's Turn 13, with passport checked and pass in hand, all seems normal.

So far, the F1 personnel worst affected by the spread of the Covid-19 outbreak have been those from Italy, with the country putting into quarantine a number of regions, including Modena where Ferrari is based.

The Italian teams, plus Pirelli, have made it to Australia but questions are raised about further restrictions in travel that could be imposed in the weeks ahead. The Vietnam government announces that entry to the country will be denied to anyone who had been to Italy in the previous 14 days. Chase Carey, chairman and chief executive of Formula 1, heads to Vietnam to discuss the on-going feasibility of the April race.

With our F1 passes in our cleanly washed hands, racing in Australia is all set to proceed. Chatter focuses on Bahrain, where we are flying to next. Two days ago, organisers said that race would take place behind closed doors. No spectators or VIP guests would be allowed into the Sakhir venue. "The race weekend would go ahead, as a televised event," said a statement.

As we dine in one of the many restaurants off Acland Street, a short tram ride from the circuit, there is a further development. Miley Cyrus pulls out of the Friday night concert on the "recommendations of the authorities."

**Above:** Photographed by the author at the beginning of the week, everything is normal at Melbourne landmarks such as Flinders Street station and the Yarra River










Events take a sudden turn with a statement from McLaren reporting that one team member has self-isolated as a precaution, after showing symptoms "similar to coronavirus."




# DAY 3

Wednesday, March 11
Albert Park

The short walk from St Kilda into Albert Park is one of the more pleasant hotel-to-circuit strolls on the calendar. Each morning, there is a cacophony of exotic bird song cackling from the trees on the approach to the entrance gates. Inside the track, black swans sit menacingly on the edge of the lake. After a summer of devastating fires in this part of the world, the warm sun is unnervingly deceptive. Its UV rays easily burn and as the wind picks up there is now a foreboding presence in the air. An impending tumult.

Away from the track, on the Melbourne waterfront this morning, Red Bull conducts the first PR campaign of the event. Both Max Verstappen and Alex Albon race motorised cooler boxes around a mini makeshift track. There are smiles, but also precautions. The media are asked to keep their distance. A two-metre exclusion zone is enforced around both drivers.

In the paddock, last-minute touches are being made to the new hospitality buildings belonging to the teams. Tables and chairs are laid out, guests are welcomed. At Renault, new sponsors are handed glasses of Champagne on a day of celebration and cheer.

At 5pm in the fanzone area, Renault's drivers, local hero Daniel Ricciardo and returnee Esteban Ocon, pull back the dust sheet on the R.S.20's new livery. As the TV cameras, photographers and press congregate in front of the car, the front-wing reveals DP World, the Dubai port company that will become Renault's new title sponsor.

A few minutes later, a press conference is held in the team's paddock suite, but – in a late change of plan – the drivers have been excused. After handing out the fizz and canapés, it's requested that no questions are asked about other matters, other than the new sponsorship deal. Coronavirus queries are left in isolation for now.

Less than an hour later, events take a sudden turn with a statement from McLaren reporting that one team member has self-isolated as a precaution, after showing symptoms "similar to coronavirus." It adds: "We are awaiting test results and the team is operating as per its normal schedule."

Two personnel from Haas have also been tested at an isolation unit at the Albert Park track. Soon afterwards the race organisers, the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, advise fans of a change to the format for the weekend. Autograph sessions will become Q&A interviews and drivers will use the 'Melbourne Walk' into the paddock but "will not be closely interacting with fans for selfies, autographs or other direct engagement."

Jet-lagged teams struggle to sleep as events continue to unfold rapidly. That evening, the Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks reveals he has tested positive for coronavirus while filming in Australia. Soberingly, the World Health Organisation also declares the Covid-19 outbreak to be a pandemic.






**Above:** Early into the event, activities at Albert Park go ahead as planned with crowds being entertained by Aboriginal 'Welcome to Country' rituals and celebrities, including the singer Robbie Williams (left), appearing in the paddock







# DAY 4

Thursday, March 12
Albert Park

St Kilda wakes to the smell of fresh coffee and warm croissants. On email, teams have already warned journalists that one-to-one interviews with drivers have been shelved, as have the regular TV scrums. Access to their hospitality units is also restricted. Heading into the paddock, conversation focuses on one thing only.

The chief health officer of the state of Victoria, Brett Sutton, is on the local news hoping to fast-track the results of the tested personnel from McLaren and Haas. His verdict is stark; if negative, then everything can "carry on", but he warns that, if positive, the next step would be to discuss the implications with the organisers. Two further Haas personnel are tested, bringing the number of people advised to go into isolation to five. Esteban Ocon is photographed arriving at the circuit wearing a large, black face mask.

Media interviews with drivers commence, but journalists sit at a distance of two metres behind a belted barrier. Some are more vocal about the situation than others. During Haas driver Kevin Magnussen's written media session, the barrier comes loose and he comically shields his face in mock repulsion.

Paddock chatter is about what might happen next. Most assume the Melbourne weekend will continue, but could Bahrain host two races, a weekend apart, to replace the Vietnam round?

At 4pm local time, the formal FIA press conference commences and Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton are quizzed about the the potential impact the virus could have. "I'm very, very surprised we are here," says the current FIA Formula 1 Drivers' World Champion, assuming the mantle of one of the elder statesmen on the grid.

"There are so many fans here and it seems like the rest of the world is reacting – probably a little bit late," Hamilton said. "We are seeing [President] Trump shutting down the borders, the NBA [basketball league] has been suspended, yet F1 continues to go on."

Alongside him a pensive Vettel shares his thoughts: "You try to control the situation for yourself as much as you can," he says. "Some are more relaxed about handshakes, some not."

The Albert Park circuit has already seen action throughout the day. In the morning, practice for the big, brash V8 S5000 single-seater series took place with former Grand Prix race winner Rubens Barrichello making a guest appearance. Two practice sessions of the popular Australian V8 Supercars also occur, as well as an entertaining 19-lap Porsche Carrera Cup race. On-track it's status as normal.

As the sun sets, the lights come on and revellers sit outside in the warm air of the bars of St Kilda. Phones are monitored for news of the result of the Covid-19 tests on the five isolated personnel. The atmosphere turns to one of unease. Tensely, we wait for the first domino to fall. The two Haas personnel come up negative, but soon after 11pm the long-awaited punch arrives – and it hurts when it lands.

In a shock statement, McLaren withdraw from the Australian Grand Prix following the positive test of their team member for coronavirus. The decision was taken "based on a duty of care, not only to McLaren F1 employees and partners, but also to the team's competitors and Formula 1 fans."

The statement adds that the team member in question is being treated by local healthcare authorities and will enter a period of quarantine.

**Right:** Esteban Ocon arrives at the track wearing a face mask as a precaution, and soon afterwards a confirmed case of coronavirus puts the race in jeopardy


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# DAY 5

Friday, March 13
Albert Park

Following McLaren's withdrawal, the team principals, the FIA and Formula 1 meet at the Crown Towers Hotel in downtown Melbourne around midnight to discuss the next steps. Various scenarios are discussed, which include continuing with a reduced number of entrants, a locked-down paddock and other precautions. A careful read of the FIA Sporting Regulations reveals that Article 5.7 dictates "An Event may be cancelled if fewer than 12 cars are available for it."

Ultimately, in a statement released on Friday morning, Mercedes reveal they wrote to Formula 1 and the FIA asking for the cancellation of the Australian Grand Prix.

"In the light of the events we are experiencing with regards to the coronavirus pandemic, we no longer feel the safety of our employees can be guaranteed if we continue to take part in the event," said the statement from Mercedes. "Our team will begin pack-up preparations at the circuit in the morning."

The BBC reports the Grand Prix is cancelled and that two drivers, Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Räikkönen are already flying home. At this stage, a total of eight F1 personnel have been tested for Covid-19, with just the one positive result.

Despite the late-night developments, those St Kilda visitors who slept are woken at sunrise to the shrieking sound of a racing car lapping the Albert Park track. Marshals are situated at their posts while the F1 two-seater, run by former Minardi boss Paul Stoddart, circulates the facility at high-speed. A statement from the Australian Grand Prix Corporation states that everything is proceeding as normal.

"The gates will open at 8.45am and track activity will commence as scheduled at 9.10am. Ancillary events, sponsor functions, the hospitality programme and fan activities will commence as planned."

However, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews says to 7News Sydney: "On public health grounds, there will be no spectators at the Grand Prix this weekend – if a race actually happens at all." The opening of the circuit gates is delayed and fans form long queues outside.

At seven minutes past 10am, local time, an email lands from the FIA. The unfortunate news that everyone wanted confirmation of, but didn't want to happen: the cancellation of the 2020 Australian Grand Prix.

"The FIA and Formula 1 convened a meeting of the team principals on Thursday evening. Those discussions concluded with a majority view the race should not go ahead," read the statement. "With full support of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) all Formula 1 activity is cancelled.

"We appreciate this is very disappointing news for the thousands of fans due to attend the race and all ticket holders will receive a full refund. We have concluded the safety of all members of the Formula 1 family and the wider community, as well as the fairness of the competition, take priority."

An hour later, McLaren give an update on their staff, reporting that 14 personnel, in addition to the one confirmed case, will be placed in quarantine at the team hotel in Australia for 14 days "in accordance with local health authority directives." In addition, it says that no race team personnel will return to the McLaren Technology Centre in Woking for 14 days, as a precautionary measure."

In the paddock, the scene resembles a Sunday night, with forklift trucks whizzing about with cargo boxes. Wearing high-visibility jackets, team members start to dismantle the garages. The great pack-up begins less than two hours before the green light was due to come on at the end of the pitlane – the signal that would have heralded the start of the 2020 Formula 1 season.

Outside the paddock gates an impromptu press conference is called at 11.45am with AGPC CEO Andrew Westacott, chairman Paul Little and Chase Carey, Formula 1 chairman and chief executive, who has just dashed from the airport following his rendezvous in Vietnam.

"I think we made the right decision as it evolved," says Carey to a large group that includes media, circuit staff and team personnel. "In many places around the world, the situation in just 24 or 48 hours is very different than it was not long before then. People were traveling between Europe and the United States and 24 hours later, they're no longer traveling between those countries. You have to deal with those decisions in real time.

"We made the decision to come here based on what we knew last week," he adds. "The situation is different than it was two days ago, which is different than it was four days ago. Trying to make predictions when it's changing this quickly is challenging."

A few hours later, Ross Brawn, managing director of motorsports at Formula 1, says he had been in favour of carrying on with the event, but the sport had been caught out by how quickly the pandemic grew.

"What has surprised everyone is the rapid expansion of this problem," says Brawn. "The escalation of new cases, certainly in countries like Italy, where it's gone almost vertical. No one could have expected that.

In the paddock, the scene resembles a Sunday night, with forklift trucks whizzing about with cargo boxes. The great pack-up begins less than two hours before the green light was due to come on at the end of the pitlane

"I have spoken to [Ferrari boss] Mattia Binotto many times in the last few weeks and his mood changed in the last five days, from what he was seeing in Italy. We were optimistic we could get through it and get Formula 1 to start – to bring a bit of relief in difficult times – but once we had the positive case, once one team couldn't race because of that, clearly we had a problem we needed to address."

As the press conference ends the clouds gather overhead and the wind picks up. There is no alternative but to depart the circuit and seek a way home. On St Kilda beach, the golden sand that was filled with sunbathers earlier in the week is empty. A gale howls off the ocean.

On the following morning, the races in Bahrain and Vietnam are cancelled and the summer shutdown is brought forward as teams close their doors, unsure as to how long the deadly virus will grip the world. As more cities and countries enter lockdown, no one could have predicted that events would have accelerated so quickly.

That night at Tullarmarine Airport, sleep-deprived F1 folk step solemnly onto aircraft heading out of the country. On one flight via Doha, FIA personnel join those from Mercedes and Renault for the 16,000km journey home.

On board, there is no laughter. Only silence.















**Right:** The final act of the event in Melbourne is a press conference held outside the paddock in which F1 chairman Chase Carey is questioned about the circumstances around the race's cancellation

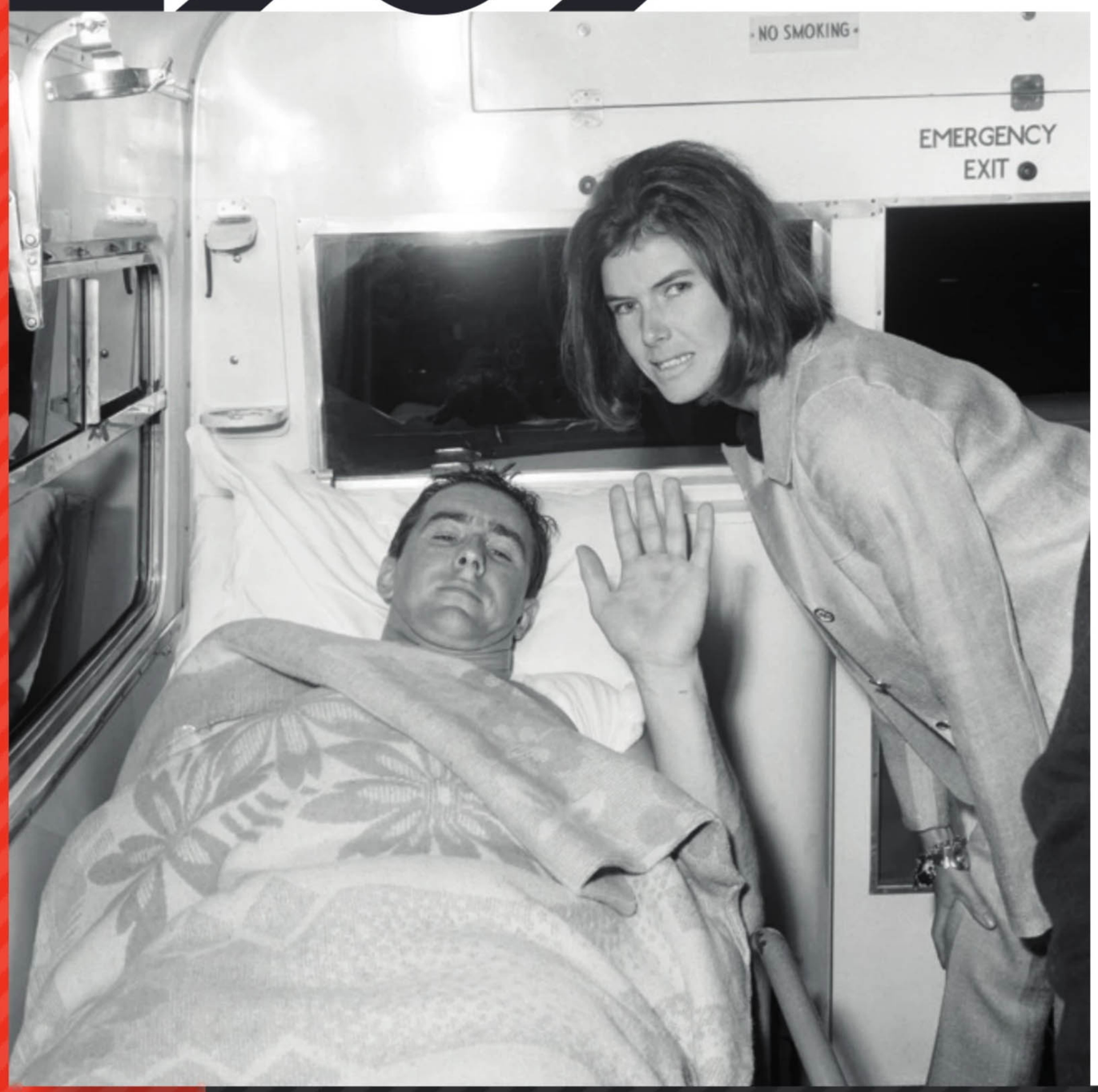
# STRIKES, CIVIL UNREST & TYPHOONS:

## WHEN TROUBLE STRIKES F1®

The cancellation of the 2020 Australian Grand Prix™ was a huge blow to Formula 1® but it is far from the first time a Grand Prix™ has been threatened or called off. Throughout the sport's history, safety, politics and other matters have all intervened to affect races. Here are ten of the most memorable occasions...

**Photos** Getty Images

# 1969




## BELGIAN GRAND PRIX

### What was the problem?

The fate of the old Spa-Francorchamps circuit was effectively sealed when Jackie Stewart (pictured) crashed in the 1966 race and was trapped in his upside-down car, soaked in leaking fuel, for nearly 30 minutes.

The incident hardened his desire for improved safety in F1, and serious accidents in the next two races at Spa, when average lap speeds were above 150mph, convinced him action was needed.

Stewart visited the track before the 1969 race on behalf of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association and demanded improvements to barriers and road surfaces. The organisers refused to pay, the British, French and Italian teams withdrew, two months before its intended date, and the race was off.

### How was it resolved?

There was one more race on the old Spa, in 1970, but in 1971 the race was cancelled because the track did not meet new safety standards.

The Belgian Grand Prix then alternated between the Nivelles and Zolder circuits until it returned in 1983 to Spa, on a circuit half the length, and much safer, but retaining key parts of the original track, and much of its high-speed, flowing character.

There was a one-off return to Zolder in 1984, but since 1985 Spa has been the race's home.

## SPANISH GRAND PRIX

### What was the problem?

In the early 1970s, the Spanish Grand Prix switched between the purpose-built Jarama track outside Madrid, and Montjuïc – a spectacular, high-speed street circuit on a hill in the centre of Barcelona.

The drivers loved Montjuïc, but there were safety concerns and in 1975 they went on strike because the barriers were not bolted together properly.

Most cars did not go out during practice.

### How was it resolved?

Circuit staff and teams worked overnight and the organisers threatened legal action if the race was cancelled. There was talk of the cars being impounded by the Guardia Civil – Spain was still a dictatorship under General Franco at this time.

Qualifying ran as normal, but Emerson Fittipaldi did the minimum required three laps and flew home the next day before the race.

On lap 26 during the race, the rear wing on the Hill of leader Rolf Stommelen broke. He bounced off one barrier, back across the track and hit another, flying over it and into the crowd. Five people were killed.

F1 never went back to Montjuïc.



# GERMAN GRAND PRIX



1976

**What was the problem?**

The Nürburgring Nordschleife was held in both awe and dread by drivers. Its 14 miles of twists and turns, peaks and drops through Germany's Eifel mountains were renowned as the greatest test on the planet, but there had been concern about the dangers of racing there for years.

The safety crusade of the late 1960s increased the pressure and in 1970 the German Grand Prix was switched to Hockenheim after the drivers voted not to race at the Nordschleife unless changes were made to reduce danger. The organisers subsequently refused.

However, the Nürburgring was back on the calendar in 1971, modified with run-off areas and barriers where possible. The drivers remained concerned, though, and the track continued to take its toll in crashes and injuries.

**How was it resolved?**

In 1976, world champion Niki Lauda tried to organise a boycott of the track, but his fellow drivers refused. Lauda crashed heavily and suffered injuries that almost cost him his life.

The Nordschleife never hosted another Grand Prix, although F1 did return to a new track next door in 1984, racing there on and off until 2013.

# SOUTH AFRICAN GRAND PRIX



1982

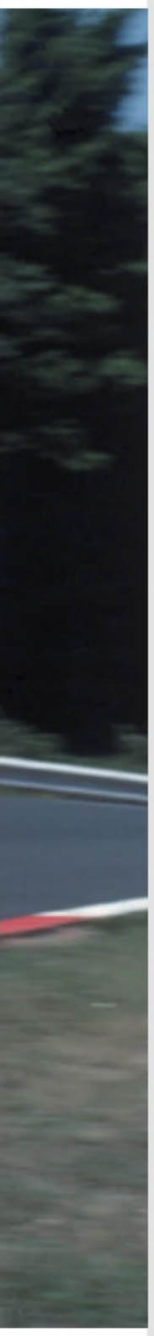
**What was the problem?**

The Grand Prix Drivers' Association – led by Ferrari's Didier Pironi and Niki Lauda, who was back in F1 with McLaren after a two-year 'retirement' – were unhappy about a clause in the newly introduced superlicence required to drive in F1. This tied drivers to teams for up to three years, and the drivers saw it as a way of them being subjugated and becoming the property of teams.

When the governing body refused to compromise, Lauda and Pironi organised a strike at the opening race, the South African Grand Prix, and the drivers went off together in a bus to a local hotel. They stayed the night in an improvised dormitory, some sharing mattresses on the floor, and missed the first day of practice.

**How was it resolved?**

The drivers stayed in the hotel, talking by phone with Pironi, who negotiated with the bosses. A deal was reached and the race went ahead, but the atmosphere was sour. Bernie Ecclestone and Gilles Villeneuve had a heated argument over breakfast. Ecclestone refused to let Nelson Piquet (pictured) take part in first practice as he was "unfit to drive" after a night on the floor, and Ensign withdrew its car for Roberto Guerrero.



1982

# SAN MARINO GRAND PRIX

## What was the problem?

The mainly British teams with normally aspirated engines were struggling to keep up with the turbo cars of the manufacturer teams. So they decided to exploit a rule that allowed replenishment of 'essential fluids' after the race.

This meant running their cars illegally underweight and then topping up large water tanks, which they claimed were for cooling brakes, afterwards.

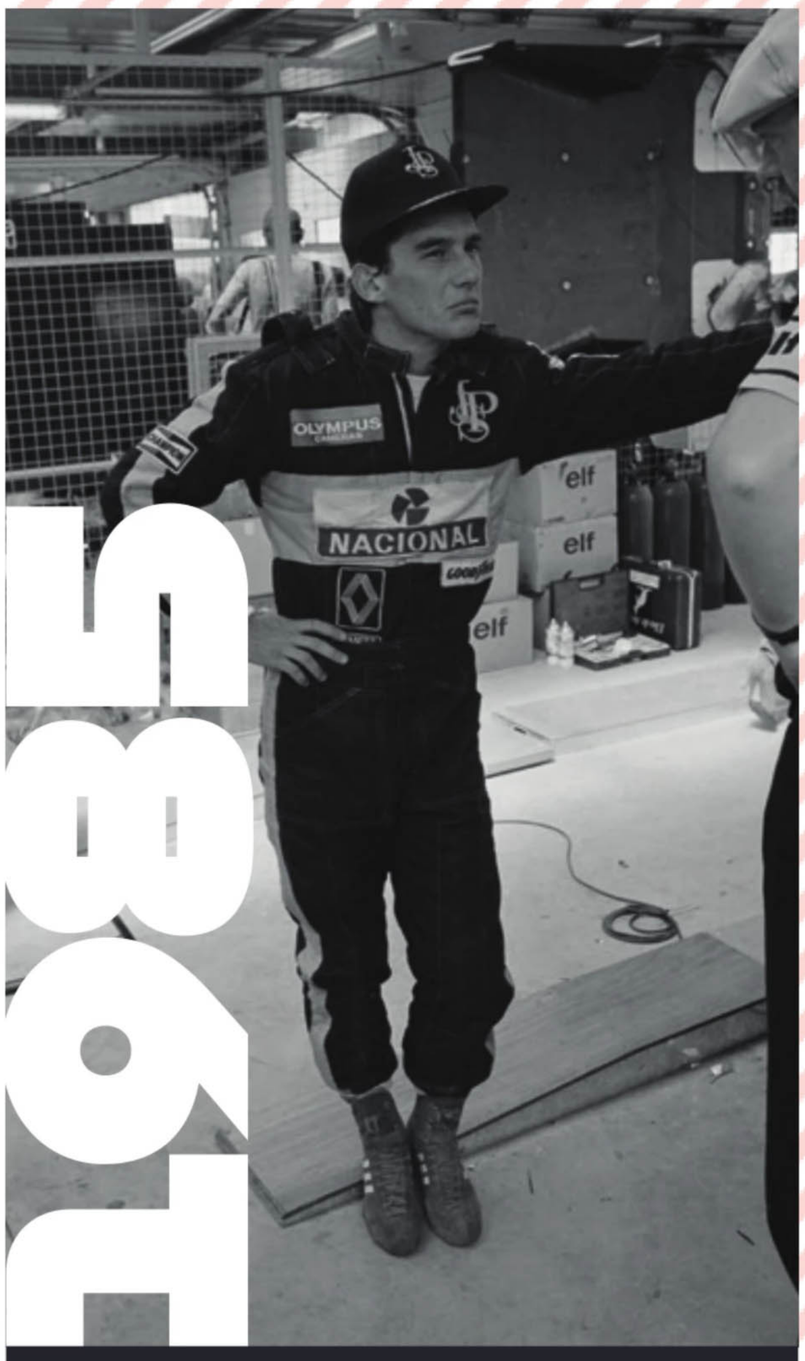
When Brabham's Nelson Piquet and Williams' Keke Rosberg were disqualified from first and second places in the second race of the season in Brazil, handing victory to Renault's Alain Prost, the British teams were enraged and most refused to race at Imola. The only exceptions were Tyrrell and Toleman, both of whom had Italian sponsors.

## How was it resolved?

The manufacturer teams raced without them, the event concluding with a Ferrari one-two and Didier Pironi's controversial 'stolen' victory from team-mate Villeneuve.

The rebel teams lost the battle. They were forbidden from topping up 'essential fluids' after the race, so had to start their cars at a legal weight, although they could still run underweight in qualifying. They also lost the war. As time went by, more and more of them got hold of turbo engines in order to stay competitive.




1985

# BELGIAN GRAND PRIX

## What was the problem?

A decision to resurface the bumpy, revised Spa-Francorchamps track ahead of its second hosting of the Belgian Grand Prix was made late and a cold winter delayed the work, which began just two weeks before the race was due to happen at the end of May. As soon as F1 cars ran on it, problems appeared, with a combination of 800bhp and grippy tyres ripping up the asphalt.

Overnight, the holes that had been torn in the surface were repaired, but when the cars went back out on Saturday, it broke up again. The fastest lap in morning practice was 23 seconds slower than it had been in first qualifying the day before.

## How was it resolved?

Despite the problems, race organisers did nothing other than sweep the track before an announcement was made late in the day that there would be no more running on Saturday but the race would go ahead as planned.

The drivers took matters into their own hands and went to the stewards to point out the dangers. This forced governing body FISA to postpone the race, and it was eventually run that September, Ayrton Senna (pictured) dominating from lights-to-flag for his second career victory.




# TYPHOONS AND THE JAPANESE GRAND PRIX

**What was the problem?**

The October date of the Japanese Grand Prix is in the heart of the country's typhoon season, so there is always a risk that the race will be affected by bad weather.

Despite this, disruption happens relatively rarely, although when a typhoon does hit, it produces chaos, as witnessed in 2004, 2010, 2014 and 2019.

**How was it resolved?**

In 2004, 2010 and 2019, typhoons forced the postponement of qualifying from Saturday until Sunday morning, a few hours before the race.

Last year, Typhoon Hagibis was one of the biggest tropical storms in recorded history, killing 98 people and causing widespread destruction; all track action on Saturday was abandoned and F1 personnel had to spend the day in hotels sitting out the storm.

In 2014, Typhoon Phanfone led to discussions about running the race earlier. It started on time, behind a Safety Car, was abandoned after two laps, and then re-started 20 minutes later. Late in the race, in fading light, Adrian Sutil crashed his Force India at Dunlop curve, and a lap later, Jules Bianchi's Marussia went off at the same place, colliding with the tractor recovering Sutil's car. The Frenchman suffered severe head injuries and died nine months later.

2005

# US GRAND PRIX

**What was the problem?**

Ralf Schumacher's Toyota crashed in practice after suffering a tyre failure through the banked final corner of the Indianapolis road course, exactly the same accident he had suffered in a Williams the year before.

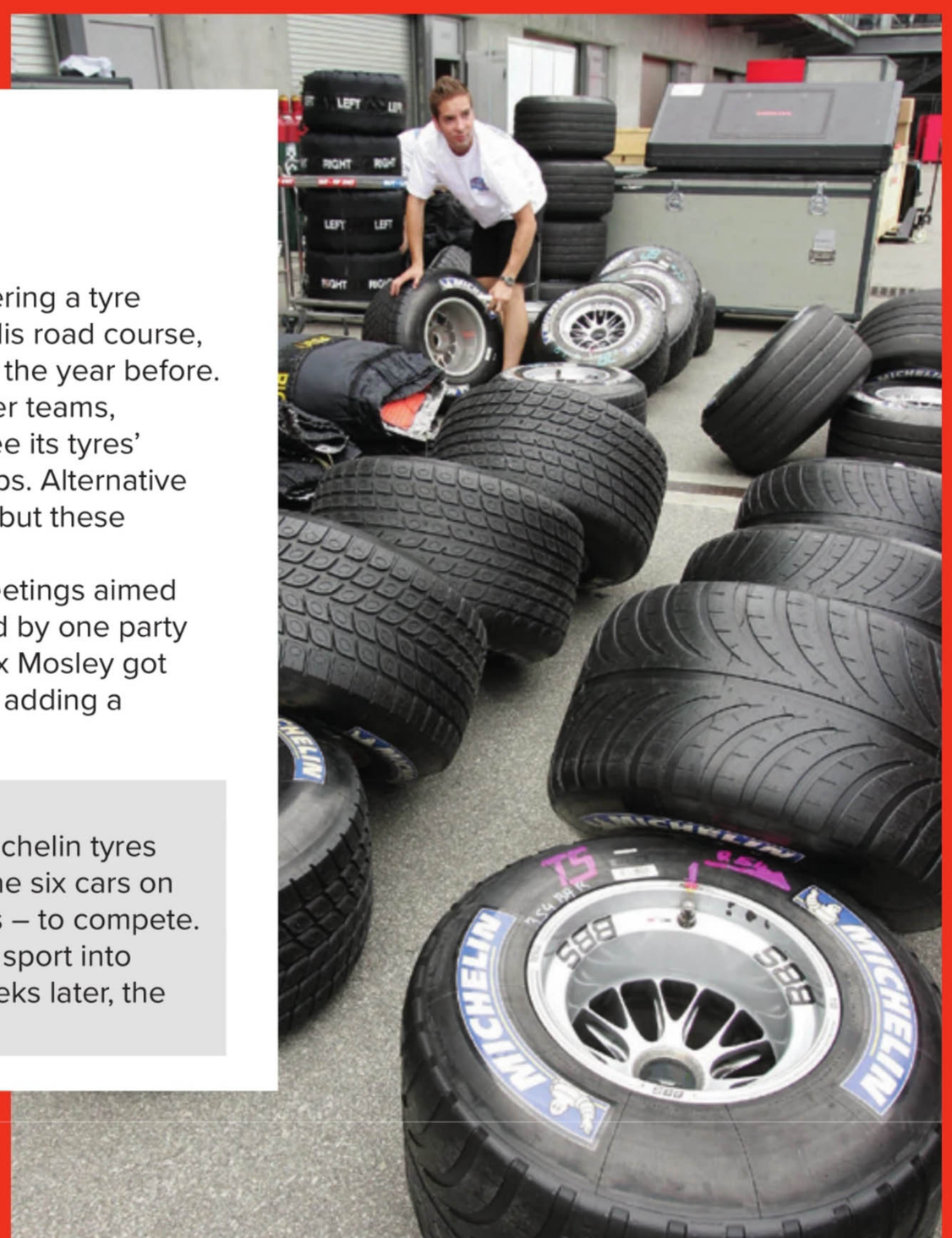
Michelin, which supplied Toyota and all but three other teams, concluded after investigations that it could not guarantee its tyres' safety on cars that ran for more than ten consecutive laps. Alternative tyres were flown in overnight before Saturday practice, but these suffered the same problems.

The tyre company and its teams set up a series of meetings aimed at finding a compromise, but all proposals were rejected by one party or another, the final nail coming when FIA president Max Mosley got involved and refused to allow the track to be altered by adding a chicane at the corner in question.

**How was it resolved?**

At the end of the formation lap, all the drivers using Michelin tyres pulled into the pits to abandon the race, leaving just the six cars on Bridgestone tyres – the Ferraris, Jordans and Minardis – to compete.

The Michelin teams were charged with bringing the sport into disrepute and found guilty at a first hearing. Three weeks later, the verdict was overturned at a second hearing.





2009

# BRITISH GRAND PRIX

## What was the problem?

A simmering civil war between FIA president Max Mosley and the Formula 1 teams came to a head on the eve of the race. Mosley was planning to introduce a voluntary £40m budget cap, thereby setting up a two-tier championship where teams operating under the cap would have more technical freedom than those who spent more.

Eight of the teams, through their umbrella group, F1 Teams' Association, announced on the Thursday evening before the race that they would set up their own breakaway championship in 2010.

If this had come to pass, F1 would have had a problem, being left with only Williams, Force India and the three new teams Mosley had enticed, while the breakaway had Ferrari, McLaren, Mercedes, Red Bull and all the big-name drivers.

## How was it resolved?

Just under a week later, a compromise was reached that ended the breakaway threat. Mosley attempted to paint it as a victory for him, as he had got the teams to accept a form of cost reduction. But in reality, he had been forced out. He had to agree not to seek a new term as president in the autumn for the teams to agree to the compromise.

2011

# BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX

## What was the problem?

The Arab Spring civil uprisings spread to Bahrain in February 2011, posing a direct threat to the kingdom's Grand Prix, which was set up and run by the ruling royal family.

Bahrain's crown prince, the leading force behind the race, initially expressed his hope that it could go ahead, but after a series of talks with human rights groups no progress was made. The event was postponed three weeks before it was due to start the season on March 13.

## How was it resolved?

F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone was keen to ensure the Bahrain race could be rescheduled later in the year, but the teams were wary of this plan as pro-democracy protests continued.

Ecclestone initially proposed moving the Indian Grand Prix to a new date in December, at the end the season, and giving Bahrain its date of October 30. But Ecclestone and the FIA had overlooked their own rules, which stated that any change to the calendar during a season had to be agreed by the teams, who objected to the plan to reinstate the race. Ecclestone had no choice but to back down.

Bahrain returned to the calendar in 2012, a decision criticised as protests continued in the country. Indeed, two teams were caught in a riot on their return from the track on the Wednesday evening before the race. One of them, Force India, did not take part in second practice in order to get back to their hotel before dark.

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# CHARLES LECLERC

## The new prince of Maranello

In a little over a year, Charles Leclerc has established himself as the chosen one at Ferrari. When he triumphed at Monza last September, he became the new hero of the fabled tifosi, and he could be the man to finally bring the glory days back to the Scuderia. Acclaimed journalist Pino Allievi reveals how Leclerc is viewed from within Italy

**Words** Pino Allievi **Photos** Getty Images & Ferrari



When a legend announces their arrival on the world stage, logic goes out of the window. Small gestures are enough: ways of communicating that don't even have to be verbal, yet which capture the imagination and head directly into the subconscious. Above all, they fly straight into the heart of anyone who can recognise them.

Charles Leclerc is one whose rise to being hailed as a genius has been lightning quick. It took barely more than a single race with Ferrari before all their followers, who had been quietly dozing thanks to a lethargy that began in 2008, woke up with a jolt in recognition of a new 'chosen one' who was destined to become their hero.

Last year's pole position in Bahrain was a statement in itself: to see the young man from Monaco fully three-tenths ahead of Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton generated enormous interest because no one had expected it. But when he made a bad start the next day, only to cockily force his way first past Valtteri Bottas and then, after six laps, his team-mate – after respectfully asking his pit crew: "I'm quicker than him, what should I do?" – it unleashed a fervour that hadn't been felt in ages.

To see Leclerc in first place was a striking sight. And it matters little that an injector failure then forced him to slow down and settle for third, because the public had already seized both on his joy and – later – the sincere pain on the countenance of this exceptional boy-next-door.

That's how the myth of Leclerc erupted without warning, even though it had long been well known that he drove superbly and was destined for success. In his case, it wasn't even a win that cemented his legendary status, just the ups and downs he went through during that Bahrain weekend. He faced it all with a determination that shook up the indifference of all the fans of Formula 1 who had grown bored of the predictability of its main players – both their actions on the track and their words off it.

Leclerc shattered this mindset, just as Gilles Villeneuve did in 1978. Back then, triangular cardboard flags were printed in both Canada and Europe featuring his smiling face and the words: "I've got Gilles Villeneuve fever", underlining how much that wild rising star had already nourished the fantasies of the tifosi without even having won a race yet. Forty-one years later, the same thing happened to Leclerc, even if the parallels between the two racers did not quite stretch to cardboard flags.

The victories at Spa-Francorchamps and Monza were the payback that Leclerc offered to everyone who was already raving about him. That's why today, he finds himself as a champion elect whose praises are already being sung despite having won just two Grands Prix – and with his maturity still to be fulfilled or even truly tested on a mental, competitive and technical level.

It's not just his fans who insist he is ready to win the championship; Ferrari's key men agree, starting with Mattia Binotto, the team principal who has been following Leclerc since his time in GP3. During the winter break between 2018 and 2019, Binotto said: "He's a young man who will surprise everyone because he's already capable of winning in Formula 1."

Binotto wasn't the only one to think it and know it. Among






those who agreed was Sebastian Vettel, who had seen the telemetry sheets from Leclerc's early test outings in the Ferrari. When someone asked what he thought about him during a press conference at Hockenheim in 2018, when it was becoming clear that they might end up as team-mates the following year, Vettel's reply was icy cold: "I don't know much about him." At that very moment it was clear how much Vettel would have preferred to continue beside Kimi Räikkönen, rather than an upcoming talent who was sure to be a thorn in his side.

Even so, Vettel could scarcely have imagined the speed at which things would move on. From his very first race in Australia a year ago, Leclerc showed character and precious little reverence in his battles with his rivals, Vettel among them. The fact that he was ordered over the radio not to attack Vettel was, for Leclerc, a declaration of his superiority that was worth half a win already, especially considering he was making his Ferrari debut.

After the glory of the first two races there followed a moment of readjustment when an unlucky incident during Q2 in Azerbaijan took him out of the running for the win. Then we came to the Monaco Grand Prix, in the Principality where Leclerc was born and grew up. "As a child, I watched the Grand Prix from a friend's balcony and I would get so excited when the red cars went past," he recalled. "That's where my love for Ferrari was born." Now here he was in a Ferrari. He spent Thursday studying the circuit, but on Saturday morning he was unleashed and imposed his authority, finishing free practice ahead of everyone and making himself the clear favourite for pole position.

**Above:** Charles Leclerc erupted onto the F1 stage in 2019 with a series of dramatic performances

That pole would have been within his grasp but for a shocking error by Ferrari, who sent him out onto the track too late during the decisive phase of Q1. It was an inexcusable howler for such a prestigious team. Leclerc was devastated, yet he didn't make accusations and in the race he went for it, despite starting near the back. His passes on Lando Norris at the old Loews Hairpin, and on Romain Grosjean at Rascasse, brought back the emotions of motor racing from a bygone era. Then the gamble he took with Nico Hülkenburg, and the resulting contact, proved a step too far. Patience would have been a virtue, but his desire to take on the impossible challenge lit up the public's enthusiasm still further and created indelible memories.

The French Grand Prix at Le Castellet, where he finished third, is the one Leclerc defines as "a turning point". That's because he finally had a full understanding of the car he was driving. It signalled his evolution as a driver – even if there were still some gaps in his knowledge, as revealed in Germany when he went off in the wet while running in second place. "I shouldn't have done it, I was stupid," he said with a look of contrition that inspired sympathy from the men working in his garage. Not to mention mothers all over the world…



"As a child, I watched the Monaco Grand Prix from a friend's balcony and I would get so excited when the red cars went past. That's where my love for Ferrari was born." **Charles Leclerc** Ferrari



**This page:**
Leclerc's angelic demeanour off the track is replaced by a devilish ruthlessness in race situations

**Previous page:**
Leclerc on-track in his SF90 at the Austrian Grand Prix last July. He lost the win after a controversial late pass from Red Bull's Max Verstappen





“Leclerc is impressively quick and he knows how to instil fear in his opponents. He has also quickly learned what it takes to win.” **Piero Ferrari**

It was all made good on his return after the summer break as he secured two first places on two tracks that have been integral to the history of Formula 1 – Spa-Francorchamps and Monza. Both races were difficult battles and far from foregone conclusions, and both were with Lewis Hamilton, the undisputed number one. In Belgium, Leclerc saw off the Englishman’s late fightback with a shiver down his spine.

In Italy, the pair ran side by side until they nearly made contact at the second chicane when Leclerc shut the door on Hamilton and pushed him off the track. It was a manoeuvre that was decisive, fearless and left no holds barred. The clinical Monégasque left Hamilton with just enough room so he coudn’t complain that he had been left without any chance of escape. Proof, if any was needed, of a devilish racing brain. Hamilton acted as a gentleman and allowed himself just one moment of irritation before surely coming to realise that this young lad was ruthless, but fair – just like himself, of course – with a talent that was off the scale and with quite a future ahead of him. As for Leclerc, he held his position to the chequered flag and Italy, long divided by serious political tensions, suddenly found unity and a common dialogue under the flag of Ferrari.



Still, it wasn’t long before the Brazilian Grand Prix, where a confrontation with his team-mate led to disastrous consequences for both drivers. Vettel had to shoulder most of the blame, but Leclerc also faced his own share of the fallout.

At the end of the championship, Leclerc finished one position ahead of Vettel in the standings and also won the key intra-team battles: two wins to one and seven pole positions compared to two. However, the figures don’t reflect how many times Leclerc had to slow down in order to not disturb Vettel’s race, or detail the repeated errors by his team. Neither, though, do they reveal his own errors, whether in qualifying or during the races, for which he was always swift to admit responsibility, apologising to everyone concerned.

On the occasions when Vettel’s mistakes were obvious, Leclerc was never tempted to add salt to the wound. For example, after the coming together at Interlagos he declared: “We have to be more careful and think of the interests of Ferrari, which we didn’t manage to do.” In this way he was polished and diplomatic in attempting to keep the turmoil behind closed doors.

Piero Ferrari, Maranello vice-president and son of the great Enzo, clearly has a sincere admiration for his latest driver. “The clear way in which Leclerc sees things and digests his experiences brings to mind Niki Lauda at his very best,” he has stated. “He is impressively quick and he knows how to instil fear in his opponents. He has also quickly learned what it takes to win – this is an ability that is neither easy or something to be taken for granted.”

The honest face of this young man – the son of a Monte Carlo hair stylist – is one that seems to seduce everyone, but is he really so nice? The answer is yes, when it comes to savoir-faire and physical communication; but no, when it comes to his own ultimate ambitions. Leclerc is a fierce competitor who is ready to tear anyone apart and his angelic face is essentially a front, just as it was for Ayrton Senna.

This combative driver’s hunger is sated only when he takes the chequered flag – and sometimes not even that glory is enough. As he says: “As soon as I came down from the podium after my first victory at Spa, I began to think obsessively about Monza, the race that is most important at Ferrari, knowing I had to win there too. I’m made like that. I wake up and I think about winning. When I drive the car it doesn’t matter what circuit I’m on, or what occasion it is, I think about winning. I go to bed and I’m still thinking about winning. It’s an obsession.”

For Leclerc, Ferrari is a religion of its own that has its origins long ago. “Jules Bianchi was like a brother to me,’ he says. “One day, I went with him to Maranello and the emotions it led to were insane. He went into the factory and I waited for him outside the gates. During those moments I dreamed of going through the

“I wake up and I think about winning. When I drive the car I think about winning. I go to bed and I’m still thinking about winning. It’s an obsession”

**Charles Leclerc** Ferrari

same gates one day. Now that I’ve managed it I want to give everything I have to Ferrari.”

Leclerc has a realistic sense of his own popularity following his success at Monza. “From that moment on, people started to recognise me in the street, wanting to wish me well,” he recalls. “That’s a nice feeling – and exciting.” Yet, perhaps Leclerc has not yet fully come to terms with how big the expectations are that people are now pushing onto him. In 12 months he has become the main reference point at Ferrari, and he’s taken from Sebastian Vettel the title of the recognised ‘number one’. He has overtaken him when it comes to results, installed himself as a possible heir to Lewis Hamilton on the roll call of all-time greats, and battled on equal footing with Max Verstappen, who is the same age but has four more years of experience in Formula 1.

Leclerc has done everything at pace, but now he has to show that this very quick growth has not also brought with it extra distractions and psychological banana skins, no matter how easy they would be to justify. He is only 22 years old, he has the world at his feet, not to mention the adulation of powerful people in Monte Carlo, who are always keen to offer help to winners like him. There are girls chasing him and a bank account that has reached unthinkable levels.

To establish whether this boy has become a man and has suffered no repercussions from the massive changes his life has undergone during these months of so-called ‘rest’, we will shall have to watch the upcoming season unfold.

It is also worth considering the words of his long-time doctor, Riccardo Ceccarelli, who met Leclerc when he was still a child: “Charles was just 11 years old when he came to see me at Formula Medicine in Viareggio. He has come a long way since then – always serious, diligent, focused and concentrated on improving himself mentally and physically. I’m not surprised that he is now up there with the best drivers in Formula 1, because he has worked towards this without distractions. From his very first steps it was clear that he had rare gifts, and he had what it takes to become a champion. Now here we are…”

One aspect of his character that Leclerc has paid particular attention to has been his emotional side. “I was wasting energy on pointless things and getting angry,” he reflects. “So I worked with some specialists and I found a way to overcome it.” This is similar to what Lewis Hamilton did at around the same age with neuroscientist Kerry Spackman, who stated as far back as 2007: “Lewis has a brain that accumulates data, so he always knows what to do. He analyses every experience and stores it away; this is why he can always find an immediate solution in his mind when he is facing an emergency.”

We just have to change the name and these words are a perfect fit for Charles Leclerc, “chosen one” and champion-elect, who is now missing just a single detail: the title.




CHARLES LECLERC
HUBLOT
VEICHAI
潍柴
PIRELLI
PASTOR

# Cracking the code

Formula 1® and jargon go together like victory and Champagne. Not only are the cars evolving every year, but so is the language that describes them. As a result, new terminology pops into the racing lexicon every day. So, here's your guide to some of the newest buzzwords and acronyms - together with a few more that have been around for a while. Just FYI, ICYMI.

**Words** Anthony Peacock **Photos** Getty Images

## BOX

What we would normally call the pits. Can be used as a verb as well as a noun, especially when barked repeatedly down team radio as an urgent instruction to come in: i.e. "box now, Lewis, box box box box!"

## BALANCE

"How's the balance?" is one of the most commonly-asked questions in F1. The balance is all about how the front of the car interacts with the back: basically, it's how the car feels to drive.

## CARAMBOLAGE

A spectacular multi-car pile-up, more closely associated with F1 of the 1970s and 1980s than the modern era. The etymology comes from a smashing together of colours, rather like a cue ball striking a group of balls on a pool table.

## CURFEW

In some ways, F1 is a bit like being 16 again. Team personnel always have to be home by a certain time, or else they're in big trouble. The pit curfew, during which no team member can be in the paddock, was introduced in 2011 to reduce the workload on the long-suffering mechanics and engineers. Otherwise, they would literally be there all night.

## DAS

A trick new system, Dual Axis Steering, pioneered by Mercedes at the 2020 Barcelona test. It basically works by the driver pushing or pulling the steering wheel to adjust the alignment of the front wheels, which can help with tyre temperature management and handling.

## DEG

Short for 'degradation' (because if you can't invent a snappy acronym, you can always rely on abbreviation). This describes how a tyre loses performance – and therefore lap time – as it gets older: one of the key factors in deciding when to box.

## DELTA

A fancy word for gap, that some people use to convince others that they are engineers at heart. As in "there's a performance delta of a second between the old set-up and the new set-up". Don't use it unless you're actually an engineer.



## DOWNFORCE

The Holy Grail of F1 designers – making the air flow round the car in such a way that it pushes it down onto the track, so the driver can corner faster. Easy to say, very tricky to do.

## DRS

Drag Reduction System – basically an element in the rear wing that flips up when not needed (in other words on the straights). The result is less drag and more speed, which makes it easier to overtake. Unfortunately, you're not allowed to use it everywhere: only in the designated DRS zones and when within one second of the car in front.

## FP

Free practice. Because, don't forget, most people in F1 are far too busy to pronounce two words when just two letters will do.

## GREEN

Used mostly in the context of a track, but a driver or a car could be 'green' as well. It means fresh and immature. A green track is waiting for cars to run on it and lay down some rubber for better grip: a process known as rubbering-in.

## GURNEY FLAP

The coolest piece of aerodynamics ever created, firstly because of its simplicity (it's just a flap that points upwards on a wing, to increase downforce) but mostly because of its heritage: it was actually invented by American race winner Dan Gurney.

## ICE

The venerable Internal Combustion Engine has never sounded so cool as when it's referred to as an ICE. That's just one element of a PU (see p52).



## GRAINING

What happens to tyres if it's cold or the compound is too hard. Instead of heating up and gripping, the surface of the rubber just slides along the asphalt, causing wave-like patterns of tyre wear called graining.

## MARBLES

The bits of rubber you find just off the racing line as a result of tyre deg. Driving on them isn't recommended, as the loss of grip on those little rubber balls may result in a carambolage. Although more often than not, they look more like small strips of rubber rather than actual marbles.

## LIFT AND COAST

Essentially, an instruction to the driver to use the accelerator pedal less. That's achieved by backing off the throttle (the lift part) and coasting through corners. This normally happens when there's a risk of running out of fuel.

## MGU

This stands for Motor Generator Unit and it comes in two different flavours: MGU-H and MGU-K. Both are part of the hybrid system of the PU, with the H extracting heat energy (hence the H) from the turbo, while the K harvests kinetic energy from the crankshaft. You did ask.

## MULE CAR

Derived from the Italian word 'muletto', which means little mule, these are cars that are cobbled together to test future concepts, with the definite function of carrying out a job rather than looking pretty. Nobody's quite sure why exactly they are called mules, but it's probably because they are sturdy, not particularly fast or glamorous, and very hard-working.

## OVERCUT

The overcut is a strategy whereby you stay out longer than your rival before making a pit stop, in the hope that you will gain enough track position to make your stop later and come out of the pits without losing the lead. It's the exact opposite to the undercut (see p53).

## PADDOCK

No horses here, only horsepower. It describes the area behind the garages where the teams set up their motorhomes and it's generally the focus of F1 life: a place to see and be seen.

## PARC FERMÉ

It's a little bit like a park as we know it, because it's where cars go to chill out. More specifically it's a place where it's forbidden for mechanics to work on the cars or make any adjustments to them.

## PRESSER

Short for press conference. Not only is there an official FIA press conference every day, but all the teams host their own press conferences and media sessions too. It's part of an evil plot to keep the journalists in the media centre busy all day.

## PU

Pronounced as two letters, 'pee you'. It stands for Power Unit and describes the powerplant as a whole, including the ICE and the two MGUs. There are strict limits on the quantities of each element that can be used per year, which is why teams will generally always change and re-use individual elements of every PU rather than just swap the whole thing in the event of a problem.

## MOTORHOME

Banish any thoughts you may have of VW campers. In Formula 1, 'motorhome' means an immense hospitality structure that has more in common with a skyscraper than a Winnebago. The biggest ones take about three days to put up and they are each team's home-from-home during European races.

## QUALI (OR QUALY)

Short for qualifying: the hour-long session on Saturday that determines the places on the grid. Little-known fact: most spellcheck programmes aren't familiar with the word 'quali', which is why you'll always find a few press releases or tweets that talk about how drivers are looking forward to quail in the afternoon. They've got sophisticated tastes after all.

## ROTATION

Basically, this means turning, as the car 'rotates' around its centre. This is normal, but what you don't want is over rotation – steering that's too vicious at the front – or under rotation: when you turn the steering wheel and nothing really happens.

## TP

Not a structure in which Native Americans live, but a team principal – the person in charge of day-to-day operations at every F1 team. This is the boss – normally the person who represents the squad in press conferences and so on.

## STRAT

Short for strategy, but this doesn't only mean tactics: it can also describe an engine map that's activated by a switch on the steering wheel. You'll often hear an engineer talking to a driver midway through a race to ask him to select 'Strat 3', for example. That's an instruction to choose a setting that will make the car behave in a specific way, to improve fuel consumption or reduce demands on the engine. Sorry, PU...

## UNDERCUT

Rather than a 1930s-inspired hipster haircut, the undercut is a strategic manoeuvre in which you pit before your rival, in the hope of taking advantage of fresher tyres sooner than him and building up an advantage that he won't be able to overhaul after making his own stop.

THE F1 INTERVIEW

# LANDO NORRIS

On the final day of testing before his second season with McLaren, we sat down with 20-year-old Lando Norris to discuss his rookie year and how he's been preparing for 2020. He even shared his meticulous approach to cleaning his new house...

**Words** Tom Clarkson **Photos** Getty Images & McLaren

Despite entering only his second season in Formula 1, McLaren's Lando Norris is already one of the sport's most popular drivers. The Bristol-born racer has developed a cult following with fans on social media and his quirky, quick wit has proved to be a hit with all ages. That's to say nothing of his speed in a racing car. Only a year ago he was making his F1 debut in Melbourne, aged just 19. He acquitted himself well, getting into Q3 at Albert Park and went on to be as quick and consistent all year, playing an integral part in securing McLaren's fourth place in the 2019 FIA Formula 1 Constructors' Championship.

His reward was a second season with the team for 2020, in which he'll seek to become a permament part of the F1 set-up. We caught up with Norris on the final day of pre-season testing in Barcelona. At this stage, the coronavirus outbreak was still developing and yet to reach the devastating levels that subsequently led to the cancellation of the Australian Grand Prix.

We met at lunchtime on the Friday of the final day of the test, in the confines of the McLaren Brand Centre in the centre of the Barcelona paddock. Laid out before Norris was a plate of grilled chicken and salad, which was still there by the time we'd finished chatting.

The interview was recorded to mark the first episode in a brand-new season of the *Beyond The Grid* podcasts for Formula 1. The aim of these long-form conversations is to get to know the personalities involved in the sport, both past and present.

Norris was in typically relaxed and amusing form. In fact, in my 20-plus years in Formula 1, I don't think I've had a conversation with a driver similar to this one. Yes, we spoke about how his McLaren is shaping up for 2020, but we delved into so many other areas as well, including his love of gaming, his unusual upbringing, his relationships with other drivers and his rather extreme approach to cleaning the house...

**They say fitness is cumulative, but in how much better shape are you in now, compared to 12 months ago?**

I think a lot better. The main thing is how I've been in the last few days of testing, and the thing everyone struggles with is the neck. In test one, by the end of it, I was struggling with my neck. I did a race run and I had done a decent amount in the gym, but not every single day. I was feeling good, but even if you train every day, when you go into the first day after the winter break in a Formula 1 car, you won't be fine. How driving a car works, you just can't replicate it by someone pulling on your neck. Because you don't have the whole force on your body and shoulders. You can replicate it as closely as you want, but you are not driving a Formula 1 car.

**And these cars are quicker than last year, is that noticeable on your body?**

It is, and for us, compared to Mercedes, by the way, I'm hoping they won't have taken as much of a step forward compared to what we have. We want to be closer to them and we should be the ones getting quicker in the corners. You do notice it physically.

You do qualifying runs – go on new tyres and low fuel – and the cornering speeds go up. You do feel it physically straight away when you are going 5-10kph quicker in the corners, especially around Barcelona at Turn 1, Turn 3 and T4. I imagine for Mercedes, who go quicker, you need to be even stronger physically.

For us, we have taken a step forward in those medium- and high-speed corners. On day one I struggled, but so did everyone, even people who have been in the sport for ten years and know what to expect – Vettel, Lewis, Max, Ricciardo – you notice that after lunchtime they are using their headrests more often. So was I.

But in the second week I've been much better. Having let the body recover, then to do a qualifying run and a race run, it was good. I didn't touch the headrest once, which I'm kinda proud of. That's because I'm not the biggest guy or the strongest, I know that. You see all the other drivers who say they are in the gym everyday, and they are the fittest they have ever been, and they are leaning their necks on every single corner.


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"We're humans and we make mistakes sometimes. It's expected. And in my first year it was expected more so. But I know I'm more confident in myself now and I'll do a better job" **Lando Norris** McLaren









**This page:** Lando Norris had a great start to the 2019 season, getting to Q3 in Australia in his first race despite the pressure that comes with such a debut

**That's the physical difference, but as you come into year two, how does it feel mentally – in terms of knowing the score, knowing the media, how it works, how to get the best out of the team? And with that, is there more pressure to perform?**
There's a different pressure. There is less pressure altogether though, less pressure that I've put on myself. Last year, I put a lot of pressure on myself because I didn't know how I was going to do. I did well in testing, but that wasn't a race weekend.

**But that must of lessened after Melbourne when you got Q3 in your first weekend?**
Yes and I felt much better. Then I did Bahrain and I had a better race than I had in Australia. I had a very good first couple of races, which gave me a lot of confidence, but I put a lot of pressure on myself from not knowing what to expect. Now I know what to expect and I don't need to put that pressure on myself. I didn't need to put it on before, but I was. Now, I feel much better for my own wellbeing. But then at the same time there is always pressure from just being a Formula 1 driver.

**You have to perform the whole time, don't you? Do you find it exhausting that people are monitoring every sector you compete on at every race track?**
No, we're still humans and we make mistakes sometimes. It's expected. And in my first year it was expected more so – you have a bit more leeway to make mistakes and if it does happen it's 'don't worry, but don't do it again!' But I know I'm more confident in myself now and I'll do a better job. It is Formula 1, there is always going to be pressure. I'm sure for Lewis, there is still pressure and expectation for him to do well, but I think you get used to it and it becomes the norm, so you don't feel it in normal ways.

**How has your understanding of speed and how to make the car go quick evolved?**
It's much better actually. Especially my understanding of the car and how it works, because F1 cars are so complicated. It's insane. For example, the differences in set-up from a bumpy track to a smooth track. How a car operates; there is always a little window where the car operates perfectly and you always want to try and get it in that window. Sometimes you can't and you have to adjust your driving style to suit it. My understanding of how the car needs to be driven and set up, and my ideas and knowledge for the setup, have developed. I can now say, 'I think we should try this' because I can remember when we tried different things from last year. So I have some experiences where I know certain things worked.




**So are you now more demanding, as a racing driver, with your race engineer? If Will Joseph was sat here now, would he be nodding?**

Yes. Last year I didn't have the knowledge the engineers had in a lot of areas. In many circumstances, when they were suggesting something I was agreeing to it. "Box this lap – yup". I was a 'yes' man last year. And this year already in pre-season they have said: "Okay Lando, box this lap" and I've said "No. I'm doing another lap." It's because I needed the chance to get more of a feeling for the set-up. I hadn't quite got Turn 1 right before a qualifying run, or I wanted to try something else.

So for the good of everyone, I'm a bit more demanding in what I want to do and what I want to achieve. It's not just for my own benefit, it's because I can give better feedback on the car. I'm at the point now, after a season, where they can trust me.

**From a set-up point of view, did you follow team-mate Carlos Sainz more last year? Are you going to do your own thing a little bit more this year?**

Not completely. Sometimes there was a contrast. I would do it and sometimes I didn't want the fastest car, but one that I felt good in, and one I felt that I could be confident in, too. For example, in Australia last year, Carlos was going a bit more aggressive, a bit stiffer with the suspension, and I didn't want that. I needed to have more confidence on the brakes, so I went for a slightly softer set-up. Sometimes I would be the opposite of Carlos.

There were other times when Carlos looked like he'd made a good step, so I said 'let's do what he's done'. Sometimes that was between FP3 and qualifying or between FP2 and FP3. So I wouldn't say I copied what he did because I didn't know what to do; I was happy with what I did between my engineers and myself and we always did what we thought was best for us and for me and my driving.

**It's fascinating to hear you talk technically about the car. It seems you're actually very analytical, but that goes against the jokey persona that you developed last year.**

I think a lot of the time I'm quite broad with things. When I say something, I say it in a quite simple way to most people. But when I get into something, such as talking to my engineers, who have never driven an F1 car, then it's more detailed. When I say I've got understeer and turn the wheel more with no more grip, I've got to explain it in a certain way to the guy who designs it. You need to tell them every single bit of detail about putting the car in a certain position, whether it's a few millimetres. That's a massive thing in Formula 1.

When I get into something like this I have to complete it with great detail, but it's the same when I clean my house. Once I start, I'll stay up until three in the morning if I have to, to finish it. I can't stop and leave it until the next day. I have to do everything, then I'm happy with myself.




**Left:** While he may seem to exude a jokey persona, Norris talks with great precision when it comes to the engineering details of his car set-up




*To listen to the full interview with Lando Norris, subscribe and download the official F1: Beyond The Grid podcast, available now on Apple podcasts, Spotify or via your favourite podcast app.*

"I was a 'yes' man last year. For the good of everyone, this year I am more demanding because I can give beter feedback on the car. I'm at the point now, after a season, where they can trust me" **Lando Norris** McLaren

If drivers are to become truly successful, it isn't just the gym where they must train. The very best are coaching their brains with meditation and visualisation techniques so they can operate at the highest level. We reveal how they do it...

# "I PICTURE THE PERFECT LAP IN MY HEAD"

**Words** Clyde Brolin **Photos** Getty Images

Every one of the competitors on the 2020 Formula 1 grid – from multiple world champions to the backmarkers – are brilliant at what they do. Even in extreme cases, the difference between team-mates is rarely more than a couple of tenths over a 90-second lap. They have all, without exception, earned their right to race on the ultimate stage.

How have they done it? Relentless hard work. Nobody is born driving a car, so there's no shortcut to becoming good at it. It simply requires long hours of teasing a speeding vehicle round corners. That is how the brain gradually learns to interpret the sensations sent in from all over the body as the car rolls and yaws, instantly converting that flood of data into clear instructions to send back to the limbs attached to the steering wheel, brakes and throttle.

Like playing music or juggling, it's about making the neural pathways in the brain adapt until even the hardest skills become routine. Easy. The years of graft eventually craft an ability to complete even the most complex tasks without thinking – at ever-increasing speeds.

Once the hours are in the bag it sounds like you're made, but the real job hasn't even started. The tricky part is making sure you don't suddenly have to think about it when you're sitting on the grid and the world is watching – a one-way street to remembering in vivid detail how damned complex the skill was in the first place.

All the proficiency in the world will be of no use if you can't access it the one day – the one second – when it really matters: the chaos of the run to the first corner, the critical in-lap or the wheel-to-wheel battle in the final stint.

What separates the best isn't the ability to nail a single stunning lap; it's about doing it consistently, corner after



corner, race after race, season after season. That boils down not to bodily ability but to mental strength, because the brain controls everything. After all, these young men are not robots, they are all too human – as we see during moments of madness and even collapses in the heat of the action. They haven't suddenly lost their hard-won abilities, they've just briefly forgotten how to access them. That's why the true greats treat their minds with the same care that they apply to their bodies.

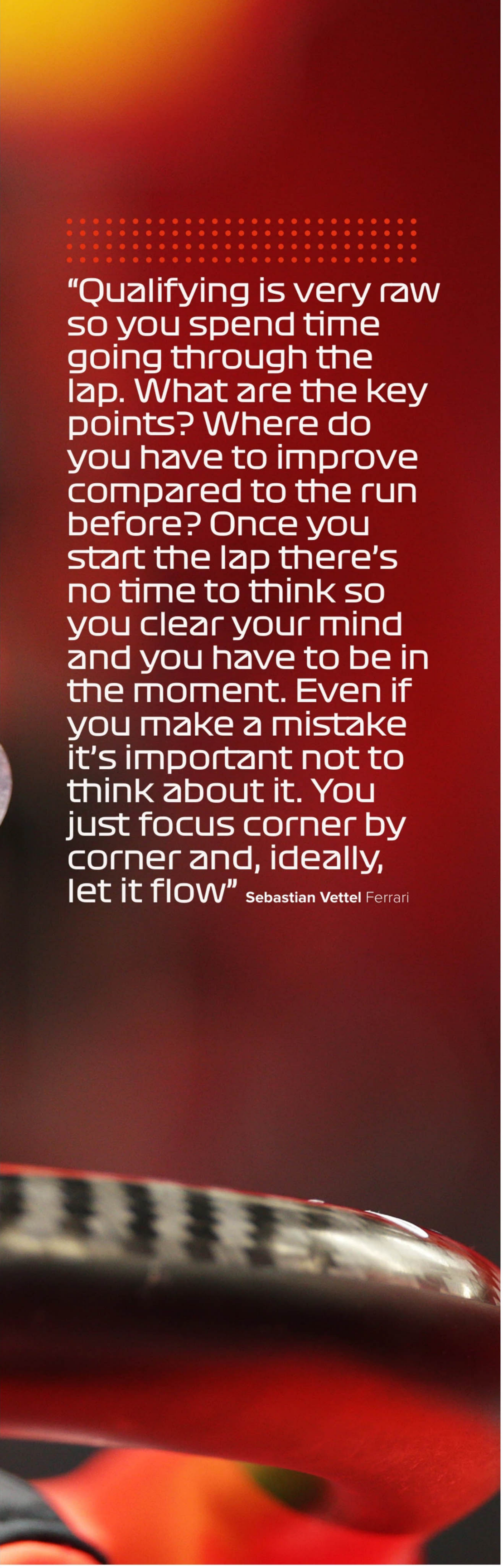
"If someone wants to be better at sport, there has to be science behind their progress," insists double title winner Mika Häkkinen. "It's like developing a racing car: it has to be calculated, with tests to analyse how to make it better. A human being is the same. Formula 1 has physical demands – but it is a mind game. Every lap, you need maximum concentration. You need to focus 100%, so everything influencing your life must be in the right place and there can be nothing disturbing your mind."

Nothing? Think how hard that must be for a twentysomething with the world at his feet, an ever-growing band of hangers-on and a bank account rapidly acquiring extra zeroes. How many of us can honestly say we could cope with all that and focus 100% on the job in hand? That's precisely why drivers are increasingly seeking help in this respect.

Mental coaching has been common practice for decades in sports such as golf and tennis, yet it has somehow remained something of a taboo in the macho world of motorsport. Now the balance is belatedly starting to shift. After all, if these stars are serious about performance and happy to turn to physical trainers for their bodies, why wouldn't they seek similar expertise for their minds?

It was only after he quit racing that Häkkinen revealed


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**Above:** McLaren’s former team doctor and performance coach Aki Hintsa (centre) with Haile Gebrselassie (right)

the impact on his career of McLaren’s long-time team doctor and performance coach, Aki Hintsa. Originally a trauma surgeon, Hintsa concluded that success was built on a foundation of holistic wellbeing after observing elite Ethiopian distance runners, including Haile Gebrselassie. He went on to help many F1 drivers, running a human performance centre for body and mind that has continued to operate since he succumbed to cancer in 2016.

“In F1, drivers are travelling non-stop; different time zones, different nutrition,” adds Häkkinen. “It’s very demanding. That’s why you need a programme to take care of yourself, recover quicker and cope with all the pressure. If you have stress, don’t keep it inside: whatever problem you have, find a solution. Trust is important, and having the right people who you can talk to is a crucial part of your success.

“I got to know Aki around 1997, after my own big crash. He was a great personality, a great doctor – always curious about science – and he really helped me become a better racing driver. He developed his knowledge to understand what drivers need to be at their peak every test, every free practice, every qualifying, every race. One of the key points I learned was that if you know exactly what you are doing, you will win.”

That last point might sound self-evident, even trite, but it contains a nugget that sums up everything it takes to become a champion – because nobody manages it without unshakable belief. And that requires knowing exactly where you are going.

All great achievers – from inventors to artists – are always great dreamers first. Sport is no exception: to reach the top you must first dream big to create an initial vision. Then you follow that dream no matter how many years of graft it takes, colouring it in with ever more intricate detail along the way. The world’s greatest Olympian, Michael Phelps, explained how he started visualising in his teens, specifying target split times in training that he was soon hitting precisely. But he never lost sight of his own ‘big dream’ of taking swimming to a new level.

That story is typical, and it applies to anything in life. This process of visualisation is part preparation, part taking control of the future and tailoring it to our liking. Once we imprint a message firmly enough into our subconscious minds we seem to unleash some inner guidance system that shepherds us towards our picture-perfect vision.

"When I'm not in the car, this mental imagery helps me hugely to be fully concentrated and readapt to the car quicker" **Charles Leclerc** Ferrari

# EMERSON FITTIPALDI ON PIONEERING SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY IN THE 1970S




**Sports psychology is not a new science, but it was in its infancy when double world champion Emerson Fittipaldi became one of its motorsport pioneers in the 1970s. When I raise the subject he reaches for my notepad and draws three circles linked together in a triangle. Each contains a single word: 'mind', 'body' and 'spirit'.**

**"Everything comes from the motivation of the mind: the desire to win, the passion for sport," says Fittipaldi. "But mind, body and spirit have to be in total coordination and the three circles must have the same proportions. You can have the strongest body, but if you aren't at a high level mentally or spiritually the body won't perform. This is the same for any athlete, in any business or just to have a good life."**

**Intriguingly, Fittipaldi admits he didn't understand enough about this balance to find his ultimate peak in F1 – despite finishing in the championship top two for four years in a row. He only completed his education when he moved to IndyCar in the 1990s and learned the "old Russian technique" of visualisation.**

**"This knowledge comes from life experience," he adds. "If I'd had that in F1 I could have reached an even higher level, but I was too young. I had a strong mind and never made many mistakes. But in any activity, you always have more to learn. You can always go one level more... there is no limit."**










"Your imagination is your brain's satnav and it can drive you to your dreams and goals," insists sports mind coach Don MacPherson, who works with everyone from racing drivers to rugby players. "What you can 'see' you can 'be'. Visualisation lets you be the producer, director and the hero of your own movie."

The simulators to train airline pilots are based on the same principles – hence why F1 teams now invest in picture-perfect recreations of the world's tracks. But visualisation requires no equipment other than the lump of grey stuff between our ears. This is the real reason why Sebastian Vettel – another of Hintsa's students – can be found sitting in his stationary car with his eyes shut most Saturday lunchtimes.

"Qualifying is very raw so you spend time going through the lap," says Vettel. "What are the key points? Where do you have to improve compared to the run before? Once you start the lap there's no time to think so you clear your mind and you have to be in the moment. Even if you make a mistake, it's important not to think about it. You just focus corner by corner, ideally, let it flow."

This aim to "clear your mind" and be "in the moment" is central to spiritual traditions like Zen Buddhism. It may seem alien to elite sport but whenever any of us finds such focus, our nagging inner critic – which dogs F1 drivers just as much as anyone – shuts up, restoring our belief and setting our ability free.

Of course, this begs the question of how come Vettel has found life such a struggle of late. Certainly he could benefit from an urgent mental clear out the next time he spots Mercedes no.44 in his mirrors. But, while the average internet forum would have us believe he has reverted to the standard of a novice in the face of his young team-mate Charles Leclerc, that view doesn't hold water. If Vettel wasn't a multiple world champion, Leclerc's achievements wouldn't cause such a stir. Vettel hasn't 'lost it', it is just that none of these mental techniques are a secret any more – and the German is now facing a fellow mind master in the other red car.

Leclerc has worked with another F1 doctor-turned-mental-coach, Riccardo Ceccarelli, since he was 11. This has helped him understand the racing mentality, an art he has been honing ever since. He started out particularly susceptible to 'red mist' – and while no driver will ever completely free themselves from its clutches, his demeanour indicates he is winning the battle.

"I've grown a lot mentally over the last few years," Leclerc says. "There are many techniques that can be used; I personally like the one of picturing the perfect lap in my head, especially before qualifying. I do this often because it really helps. When I'm not in the car this imagery helps me hugely to be fully concentrated and readapt to the car quicker. Then for the race it's about looking at previous races and picturing all the different

**“We all train our bodies flat-out every day, yet we don’t do that much for our minds. So I really ramped it up in 2016 and found a way of working intensely with a mental trainer” Nico Rosberg**

scenarios to be ready for any of them – like where to be at the first corner.”

Sound familiar? Unfortunately, the Ferrari drivers have faced a rather bigger problem in recent years: an on-song Lewis Hamilton in the best car. Lewis has always insisted he will never use a mind coach – as has Max Verstappen – but he is yet another who had a close relationship with Aki Hintsa, who he described as his “mentor”. He regularly refers to “living the dream” too, while encouraging today’s kids to live theirs. It might just be that he has these principles so ingrained he doesn’t even notice them any more. Meanwhile, as the titles rack up, his level of self-belief has rightly gone stratospheric.

This subject was a chink Nico Rosberg spotted in his own armour ahead of his unlikely charge to the 2016 FIA Formula 1 Drivers’ Championship – after the pain of his experience in 2015 prompted a drastic change.

“We all train our bodies flat-out every day, yet we don’t do that much for our minds,” says Rosberg. “So I really ramped it up in 2016 and found a way of working intensely with a mental trainer. My focus was on meditation. The word is often misinterpreted but in my case it was about concentration practice and learning to control your mind. You can’t switch off negative emotions, but you can change how you react to them. If you’re aware, you can slow them down and move your mind towards more positive thoughts. I worked on it for 20 minutes every morning and evening throughout 2016, and it was beneficial both for racing and my life as a whole. It gave me that bit extra – and it’s part of why I became world champion.”

The word ‘meditation’ is another that seems counterintuitive to apply to the pressure of elite sport, but players in the NBA have been known to meditate before games and Rosberg credits it with giving him the calm to face the slings and arrows en route to unseating his team-mate. Even then, he only just managed it, and the panic betrayed by his voice during the Abu Dhabi finale showed he was far from the epitome of inner peace. It ain’t easy, and Rosberg was so convinced he couldn’t repeat it that he retired. Yet without meditation, who knows, maybe he’d have ended in the barriers.

Now someone else has a chance to match him and deny Hamilton a record-equalling seventh title – but only if they dream big, stay calm and truly believe. Of course, for all but a handful of drivers, step one is to believe themselves into a top car first. Time to picture 2021 and beyond. But it can be done; it really is all in the mind.

Pity for them, something tells me Hamilton’s own ‘big dream’ doesn’t stop here either...

Clyde Brolin is the author of *In The Zone: How Champions Think and Win Big*.



Nico Rosberg celebrates winning the FIA Formula 1 Drivers’ World Championship in Abu Dhabi in 2016


#GOMAX
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# "HE NEVER GIVES UP"

## HE'S NOT GOING TO LET THIS OPPORTUNITY SLIP THROUGH HIS FINGERS...

Red Bull team boss Christian Horner is full of praise for Alex Albon, who has endured a difficult journey to Formula 1®. As he starts his first full season at Red Bull, Horner reveals why Albon is the perfect team-mate for Max Verstappen and why he's unlikely to waste the opportunity of a lifetime

**Words** Giles Richards **Photos** Getty Images & Red Bull Racing





**On two wheels:** This was as close as Alex Albon came to racing in Australia (right). On the eve of the new season, Red Bull performed a PR activity in Melbourne, close to the beach, with both drivers racing on motorised cooler boxes around a mini Albert Park track




Were sheer bloody-minded determination the yardstick for success in Formula 1, Alexander Albon's career would look rosy indeed. He has ridden a rollercoaster of highs and lows – of slings and, indeed, arrows – yet it is not just a singularly Stakhanovite zeal that has propelled the 24-year-old to hold one of the most sought-after seats in the sport. He also has the talent to have proven so much in such a short time in F1 that Red Bull may consider themselves lucky to have secured the one who may so nearly have got away.

With a British father and Thai mother, Albon chooses to fly the flag for Thailand and when he takes to the track in Vietnam (when it is rescheduled), he will be expecting local fans to respond in kind at a meeting he sees as something of a home race. The first F1 driver from Thailand since Prince Bira last competed some 65 years ago (see sidebar), the welcome he receives will likely be colourful, enthusiastic and raucous. It will be a moment to savour, but not one he will take for granted. Albon knows he still has much to do and, having already made such a positive impression at Red Bull, he intends to deliver.

Team principal Christian Horner is in no doubt of Albon's resolve in this respect. "Alex has been thrown some challenges," he says. "He has fought very hard to get into this position, he has never given up. There were times when he was sleeping on the floor of an F2 driver I had – because he couldn't afford the hotel whilst trying to secure an F2 drive in 2018. He has come up the hard way and he is not going to let this opportunity slip through his fingers."

Albon proved more than willing to grasp every nettle last season, impressing after taking an unexpected drive at Toro Rosso and again when the senior squad came knocking.

With Pierre Gasly off the pace at Red Bull in the opening half of last year, his inability to drive at least in support of Max Verstappen was deemed the final straw. Horner described Gasly as Red Bull's "Achilles' heel" and said they needed a driver who would "go for it". Albon, who had believed his F1 dreams were over 12 months earlier, was promoted after just 12 races. It was a bold move by Red Bull – almost a leap of faith – but Horner was confident it would pay off.

"What really impressed me is his work ethic," Horner explains. "He works really hard at being an F1 driver. He makes copious notes, trains very hard, his attention to detail is there, he is very self-analytical of where he can be better and he is very open minded. He has exactly the right approach and the engineers have been massively impressed with him. He is bright, has a good sense of humour, he's intelligent to work with and he is quite a humble guy."

"Alex works really hard at being an F1 driver. He makes copious notes and trains very hard. He has exactly the right approach and the engineers have been massively impressed with him." **Christian Horner** Red Bull Racing

The pressure on Albon was immense with just nine races to make his mark. A lesser man might have wilted, but he put in good shifts at Spa, Italy and Singapore before coming back from starting last in Russia to finishing fifth. In Japan he matched Verstappen's time in qualifying and was on for second place in Brazil only to be clipped out of contention by Lewis Hamilton.

Albon had been put through the wringer and impressed everyone. "He had nine races to prove he warranted the seat for the following year, and he did that," says Horner. "You only have to look at his qualifying in places like Japan – a real drivers' circuit – where he was within a tenth of Max. Some of his race drives and recovery drives were phenomenal."



"In 2012, I took a big knock. Then I came back and got my confidence up. When you are always on the edge of racing or not, you get the attitude that 'this may be my last race, so let's give it everything'." **Alex Albon** Red Bull Racing

Making it in F1 was far from a foregone conclusion. Albon admits his first try in a kart, at the age of four, ended in tears as he simply did not enjoy the experience. This from the child whose first word was "rari" in homage to his favourite team and in whose honour his bedroom was adorned in scarlet.

The turnaround that followed the tears was the first of many incidences when he found the F1 dream impossible to ignore. Albon's dad, Nigel, who has competed in the BTCC and sportscars, bought him a kart when he was seven and from then on it was a different, altogether more cheery boy who climbed out after his first run.

Competitive racing and success in karts followed, including a year of duelling with Verstappen. In 2010 they went toe-to-toe. "I was the experienced one, the Red Bull-backed driver who had it all going for me in that sense," Albon says. "Max was the young gun and we fought pretty much the whole year. He beat me to the WSK Championship, and then I won the World Championship, so you could say I got the better of him."

The backing he mentions was crucial to his continuing ambition. With Red Bull still partly owned by its Thai founder's family, Albon's support came through Red Bull Thailand rather than the Red Bull driver scheme managed by head of motorsport Dr Helmut Marko. Nonetheless, he did make Marko take notice and Albon was signed up for the Red Bull junior programme to race in Formula Renault in 2012. But the honeymoon did not last long; struggling to adjust to single seaters, he endured a difficult year and Marko, notoriously ruthless with his charges, dropped him.

Albon took the kicks, learned some important lessons and resolved to carry on. "Pre-2012 I was a spoiled kid," he says. "In 2012, I took a big knock. Then I came back and got my confidence up. When you are always on the edge of racing or not, you really care about it and it gets to a point where you get the attitude that 'this may be my last race, so let's give it everything'. I felt it built a strong personality."

Horner concurs. "I think he has a very strong mental attitude," he says. "Look at the challenges he has had throughout his career. The way he has dealt with them, the way he has bounced back. Everything I have seen of him demonstrates that he is very, very strong in his head, self-assured and confident in his ability."

**Right:** Albon may have beaten Max Verstappen to the karting World Championship in 2010, but in his first full F1 season he will be challenged as the more experienced driver's wingman


ON MARTIN
ASTON MARTIN
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"Alex will have to be at the top of his game to get close to Max, but he has also got the best possible data and benchmark." **Christian Horner** Red Bull Racing

Fighting on, Albon made it to F3 by 2015 and a year later, in GP3, delivered one of his most impressive seasons in a nip-and-tuck battle with Charles Leclerc. Two seasons in F2 followed, but despite a strong run in 2018, when he was third to George Russell and Lando Norris, F1 looked unreachable. There were no seats for a driver without manufacturer or engine affiliations, and by August he had signed with Nissan to race in Formula E in 2019.

It was, he believed, game over. "I had reached the end of the tunnel and there was nothing there," he says. "I knew in my heart that once I signed that contract an F1 team is not going to take an FE driver. So I had to let go of my dream."

Fate had other ideas, though. Daniel Ricciardo's surprise defection to Renault led Marko to call Albon and offer him a drive alongside Daniil Kvyat at Toro Rosso. Marko and he did not discuss the events of 2012, Albon has observed. Besides, he was in no mood for looking back, simply excited at taking his chance, which he did in no uncertain fashion.

Given it was his rookie season it was remarkable just how quickly he took to F1 and that is why Red Bull have now put so much faith in him. By his second outing for Toro Rosso, in Bahrain, Honda's technical director, Toyoharu Tanabe, was expressing his admiration. By the third race, in China, everyone was paying attention. A crash while finding the limits of the car in FP3 meant he started from the back of the grid, but Albon recovered consummately to take tenth. Horner names that race as one from which Albon could not be ignored. "He had destroyed the car," he says. "But that he was able to pick himself up and recover, and score points in the race, was particularly impressive."

Marko, never one to dwell on the past, hailed him as "the surprise of the season". The following call-up to Red Bull was another task that he met head on and acquitted himself well, but this season is no less a challenge. Albon must not only deal again with being in a car beside the vastly more experienced Verstappen, a driver increasingly looking like a fearsome package, but he must also deliver as his wingman.

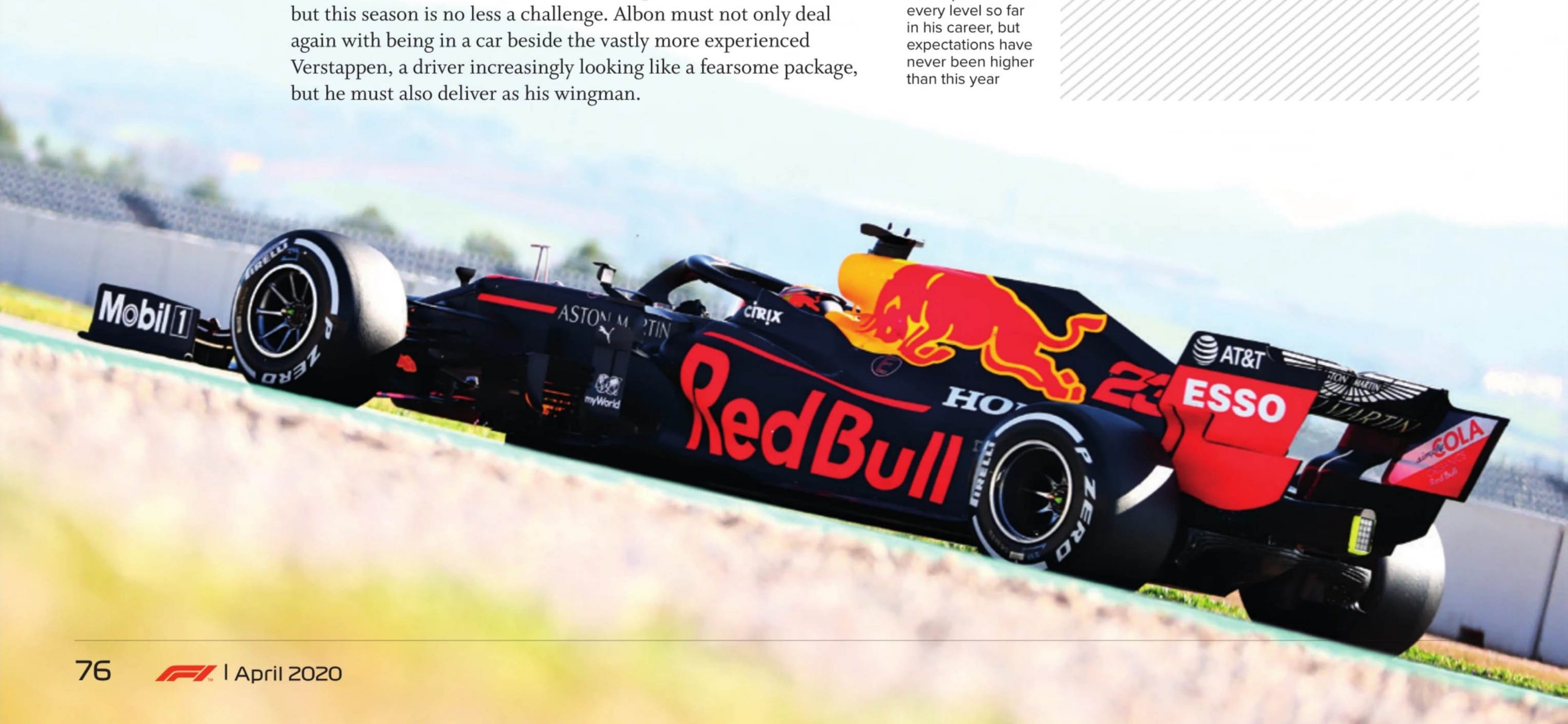
Horner acknowledges it is a big ask, but he believes Albon is up to it. "It's a tough job being Max's team-mate," he says. "Max and Lewis are probably the two toughest drivers in F1 at the moment. Alex will have to be at the top of his game to get close to Max, but he has also got the best possible data and benchmark. Alex will use all the information and tools around him to continue his development and progress. I am sure we will see strong performances from him this year."

Red Bull have put their faith in the young man and they need him to deliver. Last season, Verstappen was too often left strategically isolated, swamped by waves of silver and red. If they are to challenge, it is critical for Albon to be in the mix and Horner's expectations are crystal clear. "Tactically it is far more preferable for the team to have two drivers that are going into battle every weekend, rather than running one-legged," he says. "So to have Alex up there in the mix pushing for podiums is absolutely our target."

Expectations are high and the pressure, if anything, will be even higher now that Albon has a full winter's preparation with the team under his belt. Horner is clearly confident and while Albon will doubtless take great pleasure in being the home driver at the only F1 meeting in South-East Asia, there will be nowhere to hide. However, Albon knows all too well that prevailing winds can turn against you quickly – he has weathered storms before and emerged stronger than ever. This season, though, will test his resilience and determination to the full.



**This page:** Albon has impressed at every level so far in his career, but expectations have never been higher than this year



# Following in the footsteps of...

Three other drivers from South-East Asia who have competed in Formula 1®

## 1

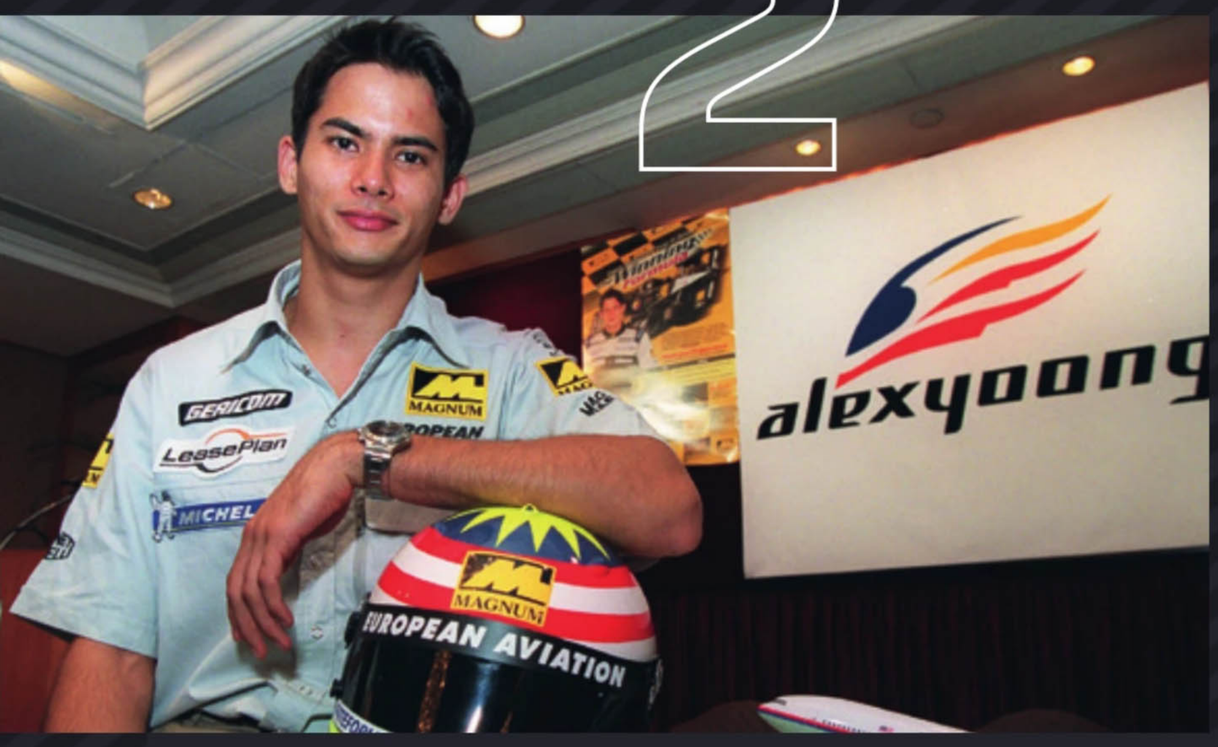
### PRINCE BIRABONGSE BHANUDEJ BHANUBANDH

THAILAND, F1 1950-1954

Until Alex Albon, Prince Bira had been the only Thai driver in F1. A member of the country's royal family, he won a race in Monaco in 1936 – the same year he had chosen Thailand's racing colours of blue and yellow, based on the dress of a Scandinavian woman he had befriended. Prince Bira raced on until the war intervened and his flying skills were sought to teach RAF fighter pilots. In 1950, he drove in the first World Championship Grand Prix at Silverstone, going on to take two points finishes that season. He ultimately competed in 19 F1 races, with two fourth places, before taking to sailing in which he competed at four Olympic Games.



## 2




### ALEX YOONG

MALAYSIA, MINARDI 2001-02

An F1 fan since he was four years old, Yoong began racing in saloon cars when he was 16 and made it to Formula Renault in 1996. Three years later, he survived a huge accident in Formula 3000 at Spa. Backed by a government-funded corporation he became the first Malaysian to race in F1, competing in three races for Minardi in 2001. Continuing with them in 2002, his best finish was seventh in Australia. Perhaps his best race was at the United States Grand Prix in Indianapolis that year, overtaking Pedro de la Rosa in a fine move round the outside of Turn 3, then scrapping with Allan McNish and Olivier Panis before retiring from the race. He later raced in ChampCar, the A1GP series and at Le Mans.

## 3

### RYO HARYANTO

INDONESIA, MANOR 2016

The first and only Indonesian F1 driver, Haryanto was also the first Muslim to start a Grand Prix. He began racing karts aged six, gained a seat with Manor in GP3 in 2010-2011, then spent four seasons in GP2. Backed by the Indonesian government's sport ministry and state-owned oil company Pertamina, he was given an F1 drive with Manor in 2016, alongside Pascal Wehrlein. Wehrlein was in a different class. Haryanto completed 12 races with a best of 15th and last, four laps down at Monaco, before the Indonesian government pulled their funding and Manor replaced him with Esteban Ocon.




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# DESIGNING THE FUTURE

## As Formula 1® is poised to make the leap to 18-inch tyres, Mario Isola, Pirelli's head of F1® and Car Racing, explains the challenge of balancing the needs of the driver with those of the spectator

**Words** Matt Youson **Photos** Getty Images & Pirelli

In a less turbulent world, this conversation with Mario Isola would have taken place in the Albert Park paddock after the first qualifying session of the 2020 Formula 1 season. Instead, we're in the coffee shop of the Crown Metropol hotel, by the Yarra River in Melbourne's Southbank district.

It's Saturday morning. Formula 1 – still reeling from the cancellation of the 2020 Australian Grand Prix the day before – is milling around in the lobby outside, engaged in the preparatory steps of a well-heeled evacuation.

Charles Leclerc wanders by looking lost; engineers and mechanics in travel kit push suitcases out to a waiting minibus in preparation for the long haul to points north. We thank Pirelli's head of F1 and Car Racing for his time. He gives an eloquent shrug and gestures to the scene outside with a wry smile. Little else to do but talk.

We're here to discuss future F1 regulations and, specifically, the move to an 18-inch tyre – an idea that has been around since Pirelli first tested an 18-inch rim on Charles Pic's Lotus E22 back in 2014 at a Silverstone in-season test.

It always seems slightly indecent to start talking about the next car when the wrapper is barely off the current model, but such is the nature of engineering in F1. Regardless of what's happening – or not happening – on track, the focus is very firmly on the future, and for Pirelli that means a wholesale change of approach that goes far beyond those five extra inches.

At the time of our interview, the new regulations are set to come into effect in 2021. However, the necessary shutdown of factories and postponement of races due to Covid-19 led to the announcement – less than a week after our conversation – that the regulation change would be delayed until 2022.

Despite this delay, the regulation change does present Pirelli – and its customers – with quite a challenge. Changing the specification would be tough with stable regulations; doing it against the backdrop of the most significant chassis reset in living memory – with no-one really sure what the final product will look like, how fast the cars will be, how much downforce they'll generate or cornering speeds they'll achieve – is akin to nailing jelly to the wall. The only thing for certain is that, if the tyres don't correctly anticipate whatever it is we finish up with, everyone will blame Pirelli.




Isola grins. Scapegoat has been the Italian manufacturer's default position since they took on the F1 sole supplier tender in 2011. This, however, is something new. The difficulty of this particular task is underlined by Pirelli having a test-and-development cycle twice the length as they would usually consider.

"We know that with the new rules everything will be different," he says. "The minimum weight is higher; the downforce package is completely different; the weight distribution is completely different. All of this has an impact on how we design the tyre – and how we design the tyre has an impact on how teams design their car.

"Usually, we begin testing tyres in March for the following year: with the new tyre, we started the work in January 2019. First a virtual tyre, then prototypes for indoor testing, then out on track with the three teams (Mercedes, Ferrari, Renault) who agreed to make a mule car in advance. The three test sessions we had last year were very important and allowed us to test different profiles, different constructions. By January 2020, we had identified a baseline and could move forward.

"At the same time as we're doing that, we're working with the FIA and the teams to agree targets for the new regulations. We want to be clear on the performance everyone expects; the level of degradation, the delta lap time between the compounds; cornering forces and so on. It's been an ongoing process in which we supply information to the teams and they supply information and simulation to us."

**Above:** Pirelli's Mario Isola says the tyre-maker has worked with teams, the FIA and F1 to establish a set of joint goals for the new generation of tyres

Isola is keen to emphasise the collaborative nature of the tyre design process. This hasn't always been the case. The more consensus-driven approach has emerged in the past few years as a product of Pirelli's desire to avoid being thrown under the bus if sections of the F1 community get a product they don't like. Pirelli's journey over ten years of tyre supply makes them wary. It hasn't been a particularly smooth ride.

Being the sole supplier places the tyre manufacturer in an invidious position. First and foremost, it's a marketing exercise – an expensive one. To get a decent return on that investment, tyres have to be part of the conversation. Bridgestone built a continuation tyre from its tyre war days when it had the sole supplier contract before Pirelli. The tyre it supplied was bulletproof, largely anonymous, and produced some fairly tedious races. Ultimately, it led to the Japanese manufacturer's decision to pull out.

Pirelli wanted more bang for its buck, and thus came into F1 with a high-degradation tyre that – like it or loathe it – most definitely engendered debate.

"Drivers want low degradation," says Isola. "They want a tyre that doesn't overheat; that can be pushed hard throughout the race, and has the highest possible level of grip. The set of characteristics they have in mind are closely linked to the old times when there was a tyre war.

"The promoter, on the other hand, isn't interested in that at all. The promoter wants action on track; they want overtaking and they really don't care if the tyres degrade or not – unless they actively want tyres that



“Drivers want low degradation. The promoter, on the other hand, isn’t interested in that at all... they want action on track, they want overtaking”





degrade and make life more difficult."

In 2015, Pirelli insisted on a written statement of intent, outlining what their tyres were supposed to do. "After that, we did our best to achieve what was written in the document. It would make some people happy, some people not so happy – but at least we had a clear direction," says Isola.

The letter in its current format is that the direction for the 18-inch tyres is very different to what has gone before. It specifies a tyre that sounds much more like something the drivers can get along with – but with a pretty big caveat attached. The overarching goal for 2022 is for a tyre with lower degradation, reduced overheating and a wider working range across the compounds, which are expected to remain at five.

Happy days for a driver who wants to go flat-out for 300km without a care in the world, but problematic for the spectacle in the same way the Bridgestones were at the end of the noughties. Pirelli, however, have a plan...

"If we build a tyre with these characteristics, then clearly we will have a one-stop race," says Isola. "We'll have one stop because one stop is written into the regulations and there will be no reason to have more. So, what we'll try to do is have tyres that, at a certain point, with a certain level of wear, rapidly begin losing grip. It's what they call 'the cliff'."

Pirelli have been targeting a two-stop race since they came back into the sport. The two-stopper opens up the most possibilities to keep a race alive into the final third. It allows the marginal one- or three-stopper to be a disruptor, but also, within a two-stop framework, it allows the driver who can run long in the middle of the race to go into a short final stint all guns blazing. Daniel Ricciardo, in his Red Bull pomp, for example, became a master of the ultra-aggressive truncated final soft-tyre stint.

The problem with the two-stopper is that it's nearly always less attractive to race engineers than encouraging their driver to lift off and eke out a one-stopper. Teams have become exceptionally good at managing degradation, and dropping half a second a lap to look after the tyres is generally a faster way to the flag than taking the hit of an extra 25-seconds in the pitlane. Falling off the cliff, conversely, doesn't allow for much in the way of careful management. "This is what the teams tell us – it




**This page:** Pirelli started testing their 18-inch tyres with Charles Pic and the Lotus E22 in 2014 and continued in Abu Dhabi last year with Mercedes






is much more difficult to control the cliff than it is to control degradation," says Isola.

The pitwall's prowess at managing degradation is apparent in how many one-stop races F1 has had since it went to wider tyres in 2017. Faced with many unknowns, Pirelli designed a conservative tyre in 2017, and thus were not surprised by the number of one-stoppers. For 2018, however, they went aggressively towards two stops, moving their compound range one step softer, and also specified softer tyres at most events. They expected a busy pitlane – but it didn't happen that way.

"The reality was teams were managing the degradation, in order to achieve a one-stop race," says Isola. "Drivers were asked to manage their tyres more in order to get to that one-stop point – and they were not happy, because they had to cruise, rather than drive a Formula 1 car as it should be driven. This is when we accepted that insisting on a high-degradation tyre was not the right direction. We agreed to go with low deg but, because two stops is still what the sport wants to achieve, the discussion turned to trying to get there with the cliff."

For those of tender years, the cliff was a prominent feature of F1 in the first year of Pirelli's tenure. It was as exciting as it was brutal: the normal tailing off of tyre performance gave way to a sudden loss of grip, the effect of which turned a previously sound F1 car into 'Bambi on ice'. Fall off the cliff at the wrong point of the lap and, in trundling back to the pits, a car might lose ten seconds and half a dozen places. The precise location of the cliff changed from track to track and compound to compound, adding an element of the roulette wheel to strategy decisions – which engineers, naturally, hate – but the longer the car stayed out, the greater the odds of the lemming-like leap into oblivion.

Given enough time and practice, teams will be able to locate the edge of the cliff – but probably not straight away. "It won't be like before," predicts Isola. "The new cars will have a big effect on the tyres. Following another car won't be the same as it's been with this generation: you won't lose grip when attacking so maybe the wear, the degradation will be different and the cliff will be approached a different way.

"If we keep the same approach for a longer period, then teams may find out how to avoid or delay the cliff – but it's going to be difficult to predict. That makes it interesting and challenging, which is what everybody wants."

With the onset of the global pandemic and a delay in the technical regulations until 2022, Pirelli will have more chance to test and develop their tyres, but until the coronavirus outbreak is over and cars can take to the race track again, they are dependent on events outside of their control. When the new tyres do arrive, they'll certainly frame the debate – though Pirelli will hope they get rather more credit than criticism for engineering it that way.

# THE CASE FOR ROMAIN

On his day, Romain Grosjean is one of the fastest drivers in the sport, but he is also prone to slipping up. We examine how good the Swiss-French driver is and explain why he hasn't always had the luck he deserves

**Words** Tony Dodgins **Photos** Getty Images

ROMAIN GROSJEAN

From the start, Romain Grosjean has been good box office. Yes, things tend to happen to him, but make no mistake, the talent and raw speed is there. Had his cards fallen a little differently, we could be looking at a multiple race winner rather than a man whose ten podium appearances have never taken him to the top step.

Grosjean, the son of a Geneva-based Swiss father and French mother, did not start karting until a relatively late 14 years of age, his earlier sporting exploits included skiing – his grandfather represented Switzerland in the Olympics – and BMX. He sees himself as more Swiss than French, likes to be on time and calls chocolate "a religion". A tennis buff, Grosjean is more Federer than Monfils and his early race cars carried the Swiss flag on one side of the cockpit and the tricolour on the other. But when he became part of the Renault Driver Academy 15 years ago, it was natural to race with a French licence, enjoying support from the Total oil company.

A litany of incidents combined with emotional radio transmissions from a guy who wears his heart on his sleeve, have given Grosjean a certain comic value. Indeed, his comedic timing in F1 has been there from the start. His debut should have been the 2009 Hungarian Grand Prix with Renault after he received a call to that effect from then-technical director Pat Symonds. The team was about to ditch Nelson Piquet Jr, which would have consequences, but Piquet survived until the summer break. Then all hell broke loose after the story emerged about the previous year's Singapore Crashgate scandal, in which Nelsinho deliberately crashed at Turn 17, bringing out a timely Safety Car after team-mate Fernando Alonso had already pitted, allowing him to win the race.

Following this, aged 23, Grosjean was in the car for the next round at Valencia and did a decent job, qualifying just over three tenths behind his double world champion team-mate on his first time out. As political machinations played out at F1, Enstone had more on its plate than nurturing a new young driver, even a slightly sensitive one whose shyness was sometimes misconstrued as arrogance.

A couple of races later came the sport's return to Singapore. Early in the first free practice, Grosjean spun the Renault at Turn 17 in what looked like a carbon copy of Piquet's deliberate shunt. As the TV monitors replayed it, the Marina Bay press room dissolved into hysterics as the TV director sublimely focused in on Renault's Bob Bell gazing disbelievingly at his screen.

The irony was not lost on Grosjean as he climbed out, hopped over the barrier and removed his helmet, looking a little lost. A nearby journalist then pointed out a short-cut back to the pits and Grosjean thanked him, suggesting with a smile that it might be better if he took his time getting back.

At the time, Renault seemed to be imploding. Looking back, team stalwart and current sporting director Alan Permane, said: "It couldn't really have been worse timing for Romain. We had all that going on, Alonso was off to Ferrari for 2010 and there were clouds over the team's future. Also, later that same weekend, we'd emphasised to Romain the importance of brake temperatures around there, and so when he glazed the brakes and went down the T17 escape road in Q1, the sympathy wasn't exactly




**Left:** Romain Grosjean will be keen to make it through the 2020 season without putting his foot in any further controversy on the track



A litany of incidents combined with emotional radio transmissions from a guy who wears his heart on his sleeve, have given Grosjean a certain comic value in Formula 1®

# THERE ARE GOOD DAYS... AND NOT SO GOOD DAYS










## THREE UPS

### 1 Japan 2013

A year after the "first-lap nutcase" label was earned, Grosjean's psychologist told him he was "ready to be aggressive on Lap 1 again." And so he was, as he took the lead from fourth on the grid, ultimately finishing third behind the Red Bulls and claiming 'Driver of the Weekend.'

### 2 USA 2013

One better than Japan. After qualifying third behind the dominant Red Bulls, Grosjean drove a scintillating race to split them and finish second, just six seconds behind new four-time champion Sebastian Vettel. He ranks that and the Spa 2015 podium as his best races.

### 3 Austria 2018

Grosjean gave Haas its best F1 finish with fourth place after qualifying sixth, leaving him happy but also lamenting a two-tier F1. He qualified within five hundredths of race-winner Max Verstappen's Red Bull, but was lapped. For a man who wants to win races, it made him start thinking about DTM and Formula E.

## THREE DOWNS

### 1 Belgium 2012

After a series of early race incidents, Grosjean caused a spectacular shunt at La Source after a contact with Lewis Hamilton that deprived his car of its brake fluid. Fernando Alonso was fortunate to emerge unscathed and Grosjean incurred the wrath of his fellow drivers and was banned from the next race, in Italy. The incident prompted him to talk to a sports psychologist.

### 2 Japan 2012

Just two races into his return from the Spa ban, Grosjean, trying to prevent Sergio Pérez from going outside him at Turn 1, ran into the back of Mark Webber and spun the front-row-starting Red Bull. Webber visited the Lotus motorhome post-race for a full and frank exchange of views and dubbed Grosjean "the first-lap nutcase."

### 3 Spain 2018

After losing the back end of his Haas at Barcelona's Turn 3 on the opening lap, Grosjean tried to keep his boot in and execute a spin turn mid-pack, taking out Nico Hülkenberg and Pierre Gasly in the process. Stewards said he should have let the car take its original course to the outside and he received a three-place grid drop for the next race in Monaco. "Generally he likes spinning," said Hülkenberg. "But Lap 1, with everyone there, is not the time to do it..."



**Left:** Despite looking closely at Nico Hülkenberg for 2020, Gene Haas has stuck by Grosjean for another season, rewarding his driver's faith in the team

overflowing. We had a lot more on our minds at that time."

In 2009, Renault was far from the level of competitiveness that had given Alonso back-to-back championships in 2005 and 2006, and even the Spaniard could only finish ninth in the points. Grosjean readily admits that he wasn't ready for F1 then. That season's races had been sold to him as preparation for a full 2010 season but, late in the day, at the end of January, he got a call from new team principal Eric Boullier telling him that Vitaly Petrov would partner new team leader Robert Kubica.

Grosjean thought that was the end of his dreams. He packed his rucksack and headed for the Paris apartment of his girlfriend, Marion Jollès, who is now his wife and mother of their three children; Sacha, Simon and Camille. As well as being a sports nut, he was also interested in becoming an aeronautical engineer and had a passion for cooking. If he couldn't race, he decided he would train as a cook, but received a rude awakening when a renowned Parisian culinary school informed him he was too old to join.

Grosjean soon realised that despite the crushing disappointment of losing the Renault seat, he could not turn his back on racing. A call from the Swiss Matech sportscar team got him back in the cockpit, and then came a chance from the late Jean-Paul Driot, whose DAMS GP2 team was going through a slump. Grosjean revived DAMS fortunes with a couple of podiums, one at Spa, which has always been a stand-out in his career – for reasons both good and bad.

Driot was impressed enough to finance a full 2011 GP2 season for Grosjean and the combination scooped the championship, which added to titles he had already secured in French Formula Renault, European F3 and GP2 Asia.

In the meantime, Grosjean had joined Gravity Sports Management, the company owned by Gerard Lopez and run by CEO Eric Boullier. Lopez also ran Genii Capital, which bought the Renault team after the ructions of 2009, and installed Boullier as team principal for 2010. When Kubica suffered his rallying accident at the beginning of 2011, Nick Heidfeld and Bruno Senna shared driving duties for the newly-renamed Lotus Renault

> "Mark Webber wanted to punch me. I had no defence and told him, go ahead, I deserve it... That one was totally me but some of the other incidents weren't"
>
> **Romain Grosjean** Haas

team, but the door was open for a 2012 Grosjean return to the team that had previously dispensed with him.

The year started promisingly when Grosjean qualified third in Australia, finished on the podium in Bahrain, was runner-up in Canada and stayed in the fight for a win at Valencia until his alternator packed up. But, as a reigning GP2 champ and race-winner, he was perhaps in too much of a hurry to get it done at the top level. He was involved in no fewer than eight early-race incidents, the most high profile of which were at Spa and Monza.

In Belgium, he crowded Lewis Hamilton, made contact and cannoned across the top of Alonso's cockpit into Turn 1 at La Source. This earned him a ban for the following Monza race. In Japan, which Grosjean thinks was a much bigger error, he took out Mark Webber's front-row Red Bull at Turn 1. The Aussie was deeply unimpressed.

"Mark wanted to punch me," revealed Grosjean. "I had no defence and told him, go ahead, I deserve it… That one was totally me but some of the other incidents weren't – I couldn't just disappear."




**Above:** Romain Grosjean may have been a source of amusement for the media at times, but as well as being entertaining, he can also deliver if the car he is driving is competitive

## "We'd always known Romain was super-fast. Sometimes he was too fast for his car. But now he is starting to become a damned good driver"

**Eric Boullier** Former Lotus team principal

Webber dubbed Grosjean "the first-lap nutcase". The label stuck and he struggled to deal with his fellow professionals criticising him – enough to seek out the help of a sports psychologist who also worked with French judo legend, Teddy Rimer.

But Boullier kept faith with his driver and, in 2013, was rewarded. After third places in Bahrain and Germany, Grosjean scored another hat-trick of podiums in Korea, Japan and India, then managed to split the dominant Red Bulls of Sebastian Vettel and Webber after a great race at the Circuit of The Americas. He finished seventh in the championship and over the second half of the season only Vettel outscored him.

"Maybe the final part of the puzzle was needing to acquire the self-confidence he was missing somewhere," Boullier said then. "We'd always known Romain was super-fast. And he can race. We saw that in GP2, and one race in particular. Sometimes he was too fast for his car. But now he is starting to become a damned good driver. I think you can rate him in the top three or four today."

That 'one race' Boullier referred to, was Barcelona GP2 in 2011 when Grosjean overtook Max Chilton and Rodolfo González around the outside of Turn 4 at the same time, then went inside Johnny Cecotto Jr at Turn 5 to pick up three places in 300 yards. His car control has been verified by tyre engineers who have commented on his ability to create some extraordinary slip angles while staying on-track.

During that great 2013 season, Grosjean proved he could do it in F1 too, pulling off a fabulous pass of Felipe Massa's Ferrari around the outside of Turn 4 at Hungaroring, for which he was harshly penalised with a drive-through penalty. Massa, always honest, said: "That was totally wrong. It was a great move, he was marginal with the line and he stayed wide to give me room."

It was at the end of 2013, at the age of 27, that Grosjean's star was at its highest. You could argue that he was more deserving of a Ferrari seat for 2014 than Lotus team-mate Kimi Räikkönen, who he regularly outpaced over the second half of the year. Nonetheless, it didn't happen for Grosjean and as the turbo hybrid era of F1 dawned, Lotus had two tough seasons before he committed to the new Haas team for 2016.

It has been a continuing story of peaks and troughs since then, many played out through emotional radio messages from one of the most open guys in F1. Whether it's the highs of sixth and fifth at Melbourne and Bahrain in that debut Haas season, or the despair of binning it behind the Safety Car in Baku, you know that Grosjean will give you good value. If the car is competitive, he will deliver. If it isn't, he will entertain. What Grosjean loves about Haas is that they are a team of uncomplicated racers and they share a bond. His reaction to them after wheel nut incidents in Australia showed it. And their reaction to him when his angst is self-inflicted, is equally genuine.

Although Guenther Steiner, the Haas team principal, understandably looked closely at Nico Hülkenberg for 2020, and Grosjean needed a word with his psychologist again after he and Kevin Magnussen contacted once too often in 2019, Gene Haas knows that Grosjean showed faith in the new team. It's good that he returned the favour.

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# CROWNING GLORY

A driver's helmet used to be his trademark and a design for life, now the FIA have relaxed the rules to allow unlimited changes in a season. This is how every driver's helmet looked at the start of 2020

## 44 LEWIS HAMILTON




## 77 VALTTERI BOTTAS




MERCEDES

## FERRARI

### 5 SEBASTIAN VETTEL




### 16 CHARLES LECLERC




## RED BULL

### 33 MAX VERSTAPPEN




### 23 ALEXANDER ALBON




## MCLAREN

### 55 CARLOS SAINZ




### 4 LANDO NORRIS



## 3 DANIEL RICCIARDO




## 31 ESTEBAN OCON




RENAULT

## 10 PIERRE GASLY




## 26 DANIIL KVYAT




ALPHATAURI

## 11 SERGIO PEREZ




## 18 LANCE STROLL




RACING POINT

## 7 KIMI RAIKKONEN




## 99 ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI




ALFA ROMEO

## 8 ROMAIN GROSJEAN




## 63 GEORGE RUSSELL




HAAS

## 20 KEVIN MAGNUSSEN




WILLIAMS

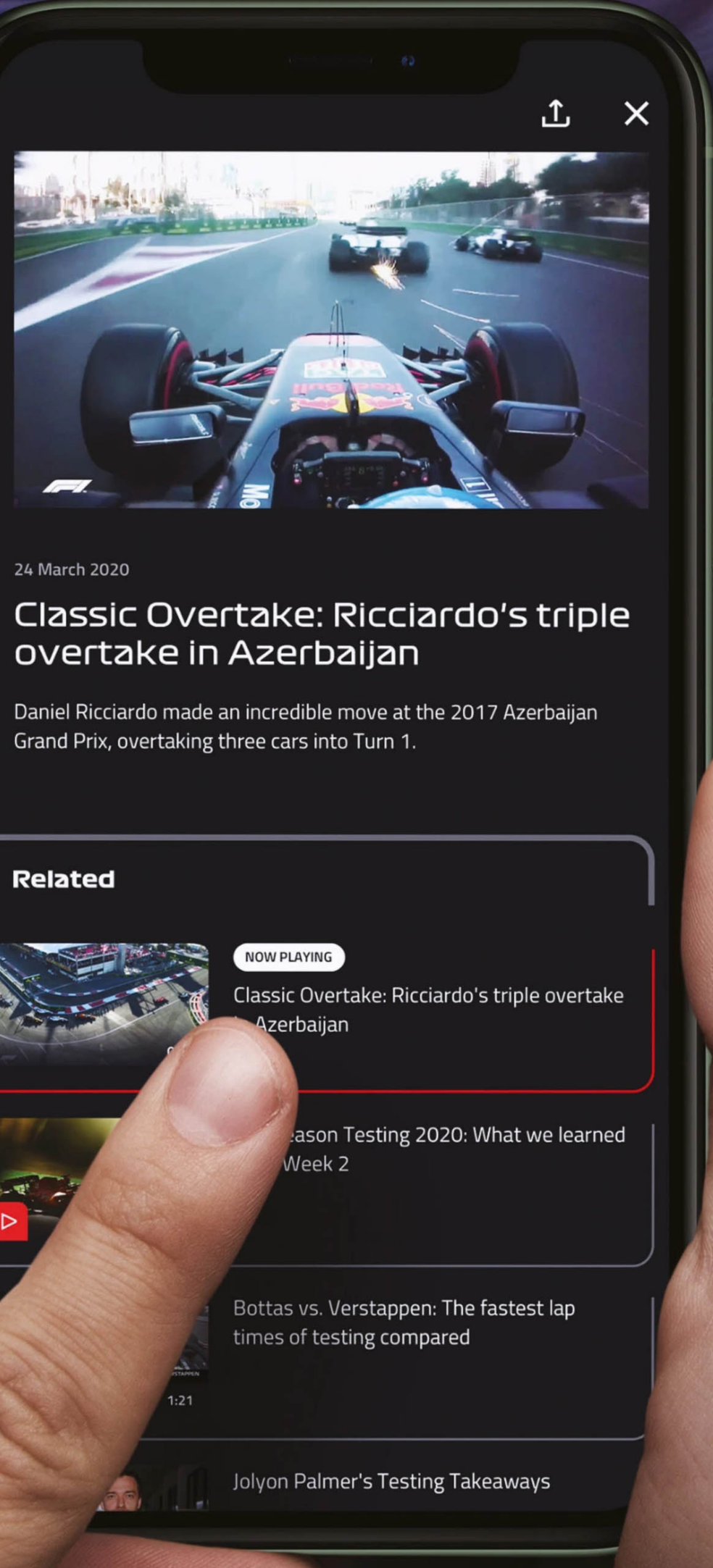
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# THE TOP 10 STREET TRACKS

Monaco is the jewel in the crown on the Formula 1® calendar, but with the news this year's event will not go ahead, we take a look at some of the other cities to have hosted a World Championship race

**Words** Oliver Owen **Photos** Getty Images

## 1. MONACO




| | |
|---|---|
| **Grands Prix** | **66** |
| **First race** | **1950** |
| **Most recent** | **2019** |



The Monaco Grand Prix isn't just the most famous race in Formula 1, it is among the premier annual sporting events on the planet. If you take the world's most glamorous sport, put it in a billionaire's playground by the Mediterranean and add a dollop of A-list celebrities and a sprinkling of royalty you can't really go wrong.

The first race in the Principality was held in 1929 and little has changed since, on a track that the drivers regard as one of the sport's greatest challenges. It is ironic that the year's lowest average lap speed requires the highest level of concentration.

The circuit combines the glitz of the harbour front, where the cars blast past the yachts – some of which are more akin to floating palaces – with the glamour of Casino Square and the opulence of the Hotel de Paris high up in the town.

Monaco is the race at which the high-rollers strike their deals and corporate guests are never more than arm's length from the Champagne and caviar. Meanwhile, out on the circuit the world's best drivers are striving to win the race they all want on their CV.

It's just unfortunate this year's race won't go ahead due to the on-going coronavirus outbreak. It will be the first time since 1954 this famous Grand Prix won't be on the Formula 1 calendar...




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# 2. SINGAPORE

Established on the calendar in 2008, Singapore is one of the most popular races of the year

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 12 |
| First race | 2008 |
| Most recent | 2019 |



When the first Singapore Grand Prix took place in 2008 it was revolutionary and the event instantly became a ‘destination’ race for Formula 1. The ideas of a street circuit or an event in Asia were nothing new, but a having a race at night was a game-changer. When the lights come on in Singapore it’s prime-time in Europe... what could be better for a Grand Prix?

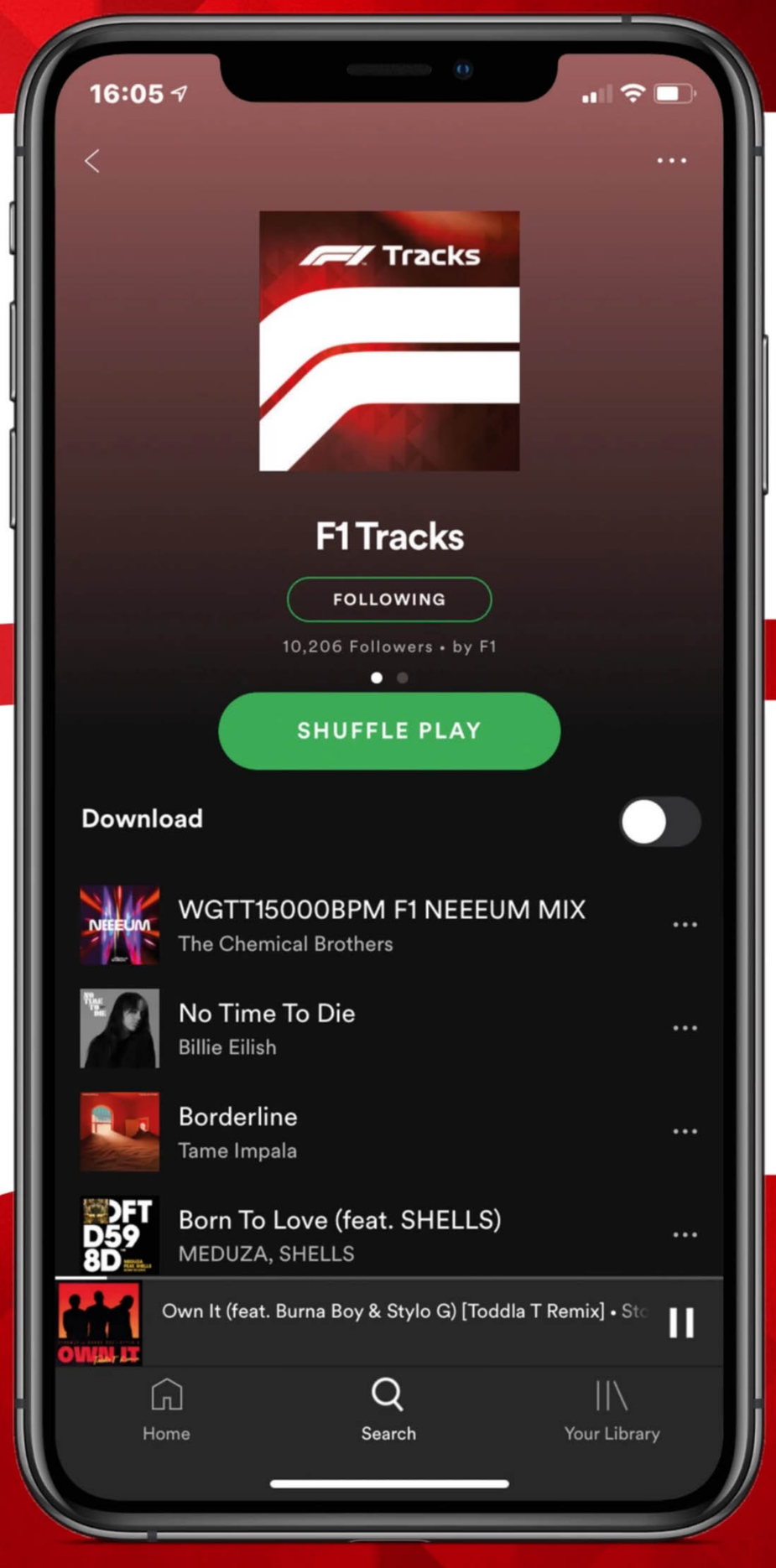
The track is just over five kilometres and incorporates 23 corners, but this allows it to pass by some of the city’s most famous landmarks – all illuminated by 1,600 specially designed lights. A permanent pit and Paddock Club complex was built facing Marina Bay and then the circuit used the highways and boulevards, including the iconic Anderson Bridge, to create one of the most challenging laps of the year. To win in Singapore you have to navigate the circuit 61 times, which takes nearly two hours.

Adding to the challenge is the stifling heat and humidity of this equatorial city. This is without doubt the toughest test for the driver and keeping hydrated is essential if concentration levels are to be maintained.

The race has taken the mantle of the ‘Monaco of the East’ and when the chequered flag falls at 10pm the night has just begun for the visiting spectators.

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# 3. MONTJUÏC PARK

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 4 |
| First race | 1969 |
| Most recent | 1975 |



Mario Andretti pilots his Ferrari around Montjuïc ahead of Denny Hulme's McLaren in 1971

The Montjuïc circuit only played host to the Spanish Grand Prix on four occasions, but it has never been forgotten by anyone who watched or raced in the park overlooking the port of Barcelona.

The track was a blend of tight hairpins and fast, sweeping bends as the cars sped past museums and palaces – as well as a football stadium, which would be used as the paddock and later played host to athletics in the 1992 Olympic Games.

The first of its four races, all held in odd-numbered years as Montjuïc alternated with the Jarama circuit near Madrid, was in 1969 when aerodynamics were in their infancy. The high rear wings on both Lotus cars collapsed during race causing accidents that would eventually lead to the devices being banned at the next race.

But the undulating nature of the track continued to thrill and cars leaping off the crest on the start/finish straight was a regular sight. Spectacular and successful races in 1971 and 1973 were followed by the tragic events of 1975 when the rear wing on Rolf Stommelen's Hill failed and the car hit a lamp post, broke in two and went over the barrier killing five people who were in a prohibited area. Formula 1 never returned to Montjuïc after the tragedy.

# 4. LONG BEACH

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 8 |
| First race | 1976 |
| Most recent | 1983 |



James Hunt's McLaren heads Emerson Fittipaldi at Long Beach in 1976

The USA West Grand Prix first took place in 1976 and put a tired seaside town with an elderly population firmly on the motorsport map. The only thing Long Beach was famous for before the Grand Prix came to town was having the 1930s ocean liner RMS Queen Mary moored in the harbour as a floating hotel. Formula 1 dramatically raised that profile.

The circuit hosted championship races for eight years and used a variety of layouts, but the original (1976-1981) is the one that sticks in the memory.

The first corner was a tight right off Ocean Boulevard and plunged down to a left-right combination as the track worked its way towards a right-hand hairpin and a flat-out 'straight' along Shoreline Drive. This reached another hairpin, also a right-hander and great for overtaking, before the track headed via several 90-degree turns back to the finish line.

The spring weather in southern California always helped attract large crowds from all over the United States, and spectators not only got to see the cars close-up on track, but also in the local convention centre in the middle of the circuit, which was used as the paddock.

# 5. ADELAIDE

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 11 |
| First race | 1985 |
| Most recent | 1995 |



Adelaide was one of the most popular circuits and cities to hold a Grand Prix, unless you happened to be an Englishman trying to clinch a FIA Formula 1 Drivers' World Championship at the last race of the season.

The circuit – a clever blend of public roads with a section that ran through the Victoria Park horse racing track – made a successful debut in 1985, but it was a year later that the venue etched itself into history as the scene of unimaginable title-deciding drama.

Alain Prost, Nelson Piquet and Nigel Mansell all arrived in Adelaide with championship hopes and the title was heading the way of the Englishman until tyre failure at 180mph on the Dequetteville Terrace dashed his chances. Eight years later, Damon Hill was set to take the lead – and the title – from a hobbled Michael Schumacher when the German rudely drove into his English rival.

For 11 years, the people of Adelaide embraced their Grand Prix and as the season finale it provided many memorable moments. The layout made for exciting racing and the enthusiasm of the locals made the event one of the most popular on the calendar.




Alain Prost celebrates winning the FIA Formula 1 World Drivers' Championship in 1986

# 6. BAKU

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 4 |
| First race | 2016 |
| Most recent | 2019 |

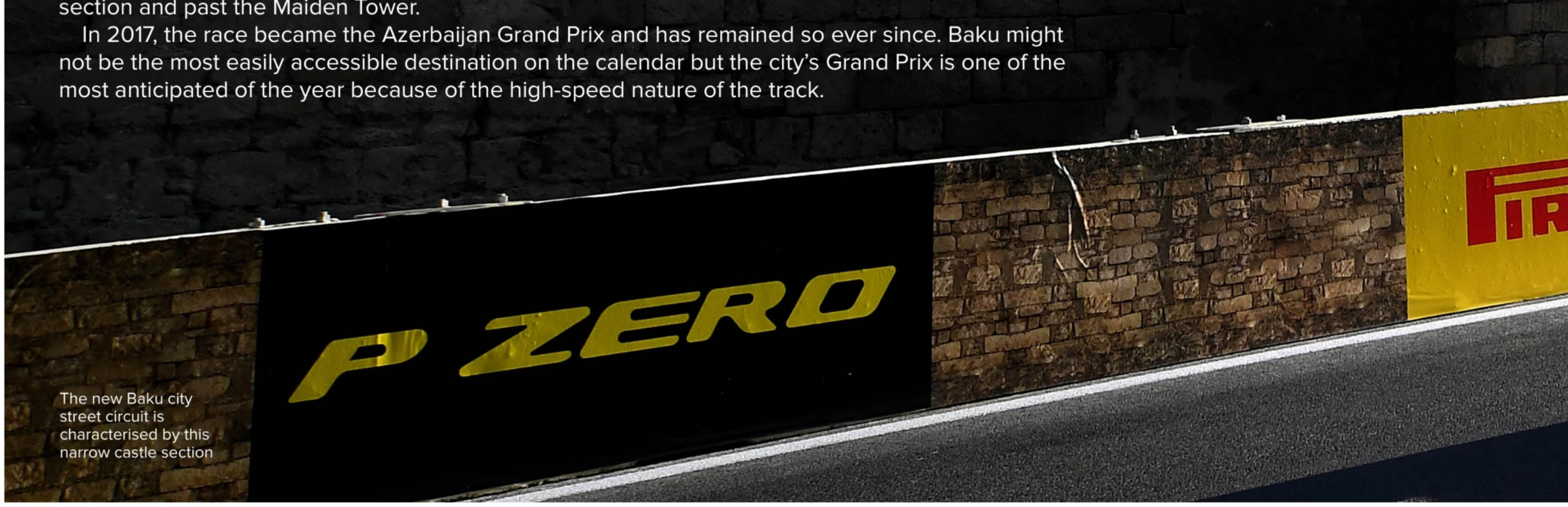


Baku and Formula 1 – or any motorsport for that matter – might seem an unlikely combination, but the track on the shores of the Caspian Sea has quickly developed a reputation for great racing.

The first race in what locals call 'The Land of Fire' – labelled the European Grand Prix – was won by Nico Rosberg in a Mercedes, but the headline statistic that emerged from the race was that Valtteri Bottas hit a top speed of 378kph (235mph) on the front straight, which highlights the unique nature of the circuit's layout.

Almost a third of the six-kilometre lap is flat-out from the far end of the circuit all the way to the first corner, making Baku the fastest street circuit in the world. In contrast, in the infield, the track navigates its way through some of the narrow streets of the old town, through the notorious castle section and past the Maiden Tower.

In 2017, the race became the Azerbaijan Grand Prix and has remained so ever since. Baku might not be the most easily accessible destination on the calendar but the city's Grand Prix is one of the most anticipated of the year because of the high-speed nature of the track.




The new Baku city street circuit is characterised by this narrow castle section

# 7. LAS VEGAS

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 2 |
| First race | 1981 |
| Most recent | 1982 |



When is a street circuit not a street circuit? When it's in a car park. Not just any car park, mind you, but the one behind Caesars Palace hotel and casino just off the Las Vegas Strip.

The casinos of Las Vegas were hell bent on doing anything that would attract punters to their tables and slot machines so, having pretty much cornered the world title fight boxing market, felt Formula 1 was a logical next step. A course laid out behind the hotel, lined by concrete blocks and competed in searing desert heat was not the answer. The race attracted few new visitors and those already in town stayed under the artificial lights of the air-conditioned gambling halls.

What they missed were two title deciders – the 1981 version settled in favour of Nelson Piquet, who was completely wiped out by 75 anti-clockwise laps in the blazing sun and took 15 minutes to get out of his car. A year later, Keke Rosberg beat John Watson to his seal only championship.

Las Vegas is still mentioned as a likely venue for Grand Prix racing, but going down the car park route turned out to be something of a dead end.




The two races in Las Vegas, including the first here in 1981, took place in a hotel car park



# 8. MELBOURNE

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 24 |
| First race | 1996 |
| Most recent | 2019 |



If Adelaide proved a popular venue for the last race of the season, Melbourne was a smash hit as the first. Late summer in Victoria is as good a place as any to start a competition and while Adelaide is much missed, Melbourne is a worthy successor.

The track, an iteration of which first hosted races in the 1950s, but running in the opposite direction, uses public roads around a lake not far from downtown. At some parts of the track the walls are close enough to catch the slightest error, while elsewhere the circuit has a more traditional road-course feel. It's not just the walls that bite though, drivers also have to be wary of the bumps, particularly in the braking zones.

Few cities in the world are as sport mad as Melbourne and the circuit draws large crowds of knowledgable and enthusiastic fans. The track is close to the beach, bars and cafes of St Kilda and the city's transport system makes it easily accessible. The first race was in 1996 and Albert Park has been on the calendar ever since.

Albert Park replaced Adelaide as the new home of the Australian Grand Prix in 1996

# 9. DETROIT

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 7 |
| First race | 1982 |
| Most recent | 1988 |



Formula 1 motor racing in America's Motor City should have been a marriage made in heaven, but it never quite worked out. The first race, in 1982, known as the USA East Grand Prix, would be one of three in the country in just a 16-race season, but initial impressions seemed to upset the locals.

The 18-turn circuit was right in the heart of downtown Detroit, an area in urgent need of a lift, but residents and office workers took a dim view when the concrete-lined track caused major disruption to their daily lives.

This was backed up by a scathing editorial in the local paper criticising Alain Prost's pole position average speed of just 82mph. The people of Motown were used to seeing high-school kids going faster than that in a car park... in reverse.

The seven editions of the Detroit Grand Prix became better known as an opportunity for local businesses to entertain and party than for any memorable racing on the track. Aytron Senna won three times on these bumpy streets but the most memorable drive came from John Watson in the inaugural race, when he drove his McLaren to victory from seventeenth place on the grid.



Frenchman René Arnoux navigates the streets of Detroit in his Ferrari 126C4 in 1984

# 10. VALENCIA

| | |
|---|---|
| Grands Prix | 5 |
| First race | 2008 |
| Most recent | 2012 |



Formula 1 had never been more popular in Spain than in the wake of Fernando Alonso winning back-to-back world championships in 2005 and 2006, so it seemed sensible for the country to play host to two races a season, though the second event would be called the European Grand Prix. The venue chosen was a new street circuit that would use the harbour section of Valencia, which was the base for the America's Cup regatta in 2007.

The circuit suffered from rather more drawbacks than plus points, the main criticism being that it was rather bland with one section looking very much like another – this despite the track running over a swing bridge at the harbour entrance. Off track too, things didn't work out entirely satisfactorily and the team garages in a converted warehouse were deemed to be too hot and too small. Holding the race in high summer didn't help anyone keep their cool.

The layout seemed to facilitate good racing among the support categories, but Formula 1 cars of the time struggled to provide the kind of entertainment fans demanded. The brief history of the European Grand Prix in Valencia provided two lasting memories: Mark Webber's terrifying airborne backflip in 2010 and a home win by Fernando Alonso two years later. Valencia eventually fell off the calendar when a deal to alternate the Spanish Grand Prix with Barcelona fell through in 2013.



The street circuit in Valencia was held at the port, rather than in the historic old town

# Just who is Monsieur Vasseur

Alfa Romeo's team principal, Frédéric Vasseur, is one the best connected figures in Formula 1®. Here, the genial Frenchman talks about his long journey to the top of the sport and reveals his pride in having helped so many junior drivers to magnificent successes along the way...

**Words** Luis Vasconcelos
**Photos** Getty Images

FRÉDÉRIC VASSEUR

What do all the drivers that have won the FIA Formula One World Championship in the past decade have in common? Well, apart from winning the ultimate prize for a racing driver, earlier in their careers they all drove for a Frédéric Vasseur team either in the Formula 3 EuroSeries or in GP2.

Sebastian Vettel, champion from 2010 to 2013; Nico Rosberg, victor in 2016; and Lewis Hamilton, winner in the remainder of the 2010s, all served an important part of their apprenticeships with the Frenchman who now leads Alfa Romeo – something he is, understandably proud of.

"Yes, it started with Lewis in 2008," Vasseur smiles. "Button won in 2009, but since then all World Champions have been with ASM or ART on their way to Formula 1." After brief pause, he adds, "and this path isn't about to end because we also had Valtteri Bottas, Charles Leclerc, Esteban Ocon and George Russell in our team, so I expect former drivers of ours to win more Formula 1 titles."

While he refuses to take much credit for their success, Vasseur admits: "When I look at a podium with Lewis, Valtteri, Vettel or Charles on it, I do feel a lot of satisfaction because I worked closely with all of them."

One of Vasseur's most promising charges, though, never got to stand on the podium at the end of a Grand Prix, but even he doesn't have an explanation for Nico Hülkenberg's lack of success in Formula 1. "Sometimes it's not enough to be a great driver, a great champion," he muses. "There are parameters that don't fall under your control – it's not only up to you to be in the right place at the right time.

"Honestly, I don't know all the details of his career – why on a couple of occasions he missed out on being hired by top teams – but he remains one of the drivers that impressed me most. He had amazing mental strength and was capable of turning around what looked like lost causes, so it was all there, from my point of view."

Then, unprompted, the Alfa Romeo team principal adds: "Maybe his F1 days are not over…" but declines to elaborate on the chances of the German returning to Grand Prix racing with the Hinwil-based team in 2021.

"Sometimes it's not enough to be a great driver, a great champion. There are parameters that don't fall under your control - it's not only up to you to be in the right place at the right time." **Frédéric Vasseur**




**Left:** Frédéric Vasseur with Alfa Romeo drivers for 2020 Kimi Räikkönen and Antonio Giovinazzi

It took Vasseur more than 20 years to get to Formula 1, but the former kart racer certainly established the most formidable team of the century in the junior formulae. "It all started with a bad accident in karting", Vasseur explains. "I was racing against guys like Franck Lagorce, but I had a huge accident and my mother was adamant that was the end of my racing career.

"I had already reached the conclusion that I wasn't good enough to make it to the top as a driver while laying in hospital for a few weeks, so the accident and the family opposition sort of made the decision for me. I then focused on finishing my studies in aeronautical and mechanical engineering, but the goal, of course, was always to get back into motor racing."

The opportunity to do it came during the final year of Vasseur's studies. "My course included an internship in motor racing and, by luck, I did mine with the team where my mate, Franck Lagorce, was already racing in Formula Renault," he recalls. "That's where the idea to start my own team came from. So, for 1991, I bought a car from Écurie Winfield."

The man who sold that car to Vasseur was French racing legend Gérard Camilli, who was impressed by the young man. "We sold our cars at the end of each year, so Fred bought a car [future F1 driver] Olivier Panis had been winning with," says Camilli. "He impressed me with how serious and meticulous he was, right from the start. Soon his team was winning races and I wasn't surprised by his success in international racing either, because he was a real pro."

Now retired, Camilli still follows his younger rival's career and is visibly pleased with his success. "It's always nice when serious, hard-working people make it to the top, so I'm delighted for Fred," says Camilli. "And I think he's still going to achieve more success in Formula 1 because he never settles for what he has."

From French Formula Renault to French F3 was a quick step for ASM and Vasseur, but the move to the F3 EuroSeries took a while, he explains, "because it was not easy to find the money". In 1996, though, Vasseur had met a man who was going to become a key part of his team and life: "Sebastien Phillipe joined us for 1996 and, with his input, the team made a good step, so we won our first French F3 Championship in 1998."

Today, Phillipe is the team principal of ART Grand Prix, running Vasseur's F2 and F3 teams. The reason, says Vasseur, is that "you cannot do Formula 1 part time, nor F2 ot F3 for that matter. Sebastien works from 8am to 9pm every day and I do the same at Alfa Romeo – but my life is made easier because ART's races are included in the Grand Prix weekends, so I can see on site how they're doing. I'm in permanent contact with him but he's been doing the job for a few years now and has my full trust."

Success in Formula 3 included several wins in the Masters, Macau and Korea and, when the French series died, a move to the EuroSeries was the logical step. That's where Vasseur helped Vettel to the runner-up spot in 2006, when the young German was already doing some FP1 sessions with BMW. Before then, Lewis Hamilton came along to claim a second international title for ASM in 2005.

That year also marked the start of a partnership with Nicolas



Todt [driver manager and son of FIA President Jean Todt] as well as the creation of ART Grand Prix to race in GP2, which it won at the first attempt with Nico Rosberg. "Things started happening very quickly because we did a couple of years in the F3 EuroSeries and then GP2 was launched, so we wanted to join the new series," remembers Vasseur. "By myself I didn't have the financing to do GP2, but Nicolas wanted to be involved in GP2 and F3 – to have competitive cars for the drivers he managed – and had the financing to do it, so we got together. We won the first two years of GP2, with Nico and Lewis, so we had the best drivers, too."

As ART Grand Prix expanded into karting and GP3, the team could bring drivers all the way from karting to the doorstep of Formula 1. "After an amiable split," Vasseur explains, Todt is no longer associated with the team and the Frenchman has partnered with Bahraini Mumtalakat Group, the country's sovereign wealth fund. Along the way, he adds, there was an attempt at moving to Formula 1 when the FIA opened the doors for new teams in 2010.

"We had a deal with Renault in place, as they were stopping their F1 team, and a cooperation for the chassis side with Toyota, who were pulling out of F1," Vasseur reveals. "But there were no guarantees we'd get the entry and it was taking too long for a decision to be made, so we pulled the plug on the project. Today, I think that was the best decision of my life." Looking at what happened to the three teams that got an entry for 2010 – Hispania, Virgin and Lotus F1 – it's easy to concur.

With no F1 in the horizon, Vasseur started a new company, Spark, to develop an electric chassis, and that led to a deal to supply the first chassis Formula E raced with. "Back in 2010, the technology for electric racing cars was in its infancy, so it was not easy to make progress, but then Jean Todt came along with his plan to create Formula E, started the championship and we were in business."

Vasseur has since sold his interest in Spark but remains proud to have been part of that project. "There's always a special pleasure in creating something from zero," he says. "These days, it's not realistic to start from zero in F1, but the motivation and hard work is the same, it's just that progress has to be slower."

It may have taken more than two decades for Vasseur to break into Formula 1, but when he joined Renault at the start of 2016 it was clear the other players knew him well and respected him a great deal. Mercedes boss Toto Wolff, for one, is full of praise for the tenacious character, saying: "Fred is a tremendous racer, we go back a long way and he has become a friend."

> **"I won't say Toto Wolff and I are competitors now because our teams are at different levels, but it's a pleasure to race in the same series as he does."** Frédéric Vasseur

Asked about his Austrian counterpart, Vasseur reveals an ironic detail from their careers: "I first met Toto in early 2003, when he started investing in young drivers and one of them, Bruno Spengler, came to ASM when we were running with Mercedes engines – so that's how he got his first contact with the company. Our relationship was instantly a good one and it remains so nearly 20 years later. I won't say we're competitors now because our teams are at different levels, but it's a pleasure to race in the same series as he does. I take pride in keeping good relationships with the people who have crossed my path at different stages of my life and my career."

While he's known and respected in the paddock, Vasseur nevertheless remains something of a mystery to the fans, but his own explanation for the lack of headlines with his name on them goes a long way to show the kind of man he is. "I don't think I'm shy," he claims. "But it's true I don't speak much, and people can take that as a sign of shyness. It's just I don't like to speak when I have nothing to say." Ah, what unusual and refreshing way to live your life these days.

# Nice one, Fred

Many drivers have raced for Frédéric Vasseur in junior categories. We name three you may know...



## LEWIS HAMILTON

The six-times FIA Formula 1 Drivers' World Champion worked for two years with Fred Vasseur and won both the 2005 F3 EuroSeries (with 15 race wins out of 20 starts) and the 2006 GP2 Championship (with five race wins and 'that' drive through the field in Istanbul to finish the Sprint Race in second place). It was this kind of success that gave Ron Dennis the confidence to hand him a seat with McLaren in 2007 and the rest, as they say, is history.



## VALTTERI BOTTAS

Toto Wolff's most successful charge, Valtteri Bottas, landed a seat with ART for the 2011 GP3 season and went on to win it before being placed at Williams, first as a test driver for 2012, and from the following year as race driver. Such is Bottas's belief in Vasseur's work that he was ready to sign with Renault for 2017 but backed off when he understood the Frenchman would be leaving Enstone. This proved an inspired decision, as a couple of months later, Nico Rosberg's unexpected retirement opened the door for the Finn at Mercedes.



## ESTEBAN OCON

The Frenchman's return to Grand Prix racing with Renault in 2020 increases the number of current Formula 1 drivers that have worked with Vasseur in the junior formulae to seven. Ocon was the 2015 GP3 champion with ART and then became Renault's reserve driver the following year, to continue his working relationship with his fellow countryman. As Vasseur left the team at the end of 2016 – when Ocon had switched to Manor to make his Grand Prix debut – a return to Enstone was ruled out and Ocon went on to partner Sergio Pérez at Force India for the next two years.

# THE LAST LAP
## VALTTERI BOTTAS

AMG PETRONAS FORMULA ONE TEAM

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**30** YEARS OLD

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**1,289** points scored

**45** PODIUM FINISHES

**26** FRONT ROW STARTS

**461** *LAPS LED*

POLE POSITIONS **11**

GRANDS PRIX™ LED **25**

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