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THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

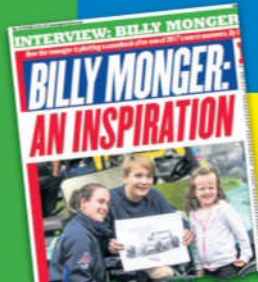
# MOTORSPORT NEWS

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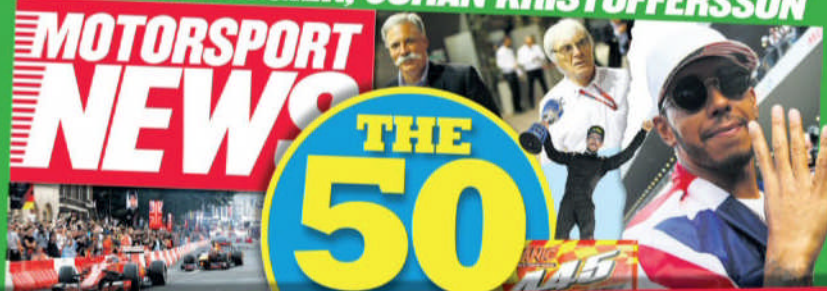
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# MOMENTS THAT DEFINED

**P17**

**2017**



**By Matt James**  
As the curtain comes down on a fabulous 2017 season, it is time for Motorsport News to reflect on the season just past. There have been some dramatic moments, some heroic performances and some outstanding drives. We reflect on them all in our moments of the defining moments of the 2017 season, both on and off the tarmac. We have a British world champion in F1 and the successes of M Sport in the World Rally Championship have been superb. There has been plenty to smile about over the last 12 months. We have looked at every branch of the sport and included our personal favourites. Do you agree with our Defining Moments selection? If you think there is something we have missed out, feel free to get in touch. Email us at letters@motorsport-news.co.uk. Have a great festive period and don't forget to look to the new year for our first issue of 2018, out on January 3.



**F1'S FLASHPOINTS OF THE YEAR**  
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**Firm's bosses keen on a move into the new electric rallycross series**  
**VW PLOTS A RETURN TO TOP FLIGHT COMPETITION**



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Wanted: Santa to bring Kris Meeke some decent suspension... Apply: MN  
Wishing all our readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



**FOR MOTORSPORT NEWS STAFF CONTACT DETAILS PLEASE SEE P16**

**German giant tempted by a return to**



Ogier was a four-time title winner with the Polo R

**By David Evans**

**Volkswagen is targeting a factory-level return to motorsport in an electrified World Rallycross Championship.**

The German manufacturer is already gearing up its electric entry for next year's Pikes Peak and an electric rallycross car would likely build from that knowledge of batteries and electric drivetrain technology. After departing the World Rally Championship following the diesel-gate scandal at the end of 2016, Volkswagen has worked more on customer-based projects, such as its Golf GTITCR race car and more recently the Polo GTI.R5. Supporting Petter Solberg's PSRX squad in this year's World Rallycross Championship has been an instant hit, with Swede Johan Kristoffersson taking the title in a Polo GTI Supercar. Between him and Solberg, they won eight of the 12 races and took the teams' title by 129 points from

the Peugeot-Hansen challenge.

But Volkswagen Motorsport director Sven Smeets said the Pikes Peak car holds the key to the firm's return to factory-level participation in motorsport.

"I can emphasise it [Pikes Peak] is the project for 2018," he said. "For the future, we have to do well and prove the concept is working with an eye to the future in the electric world in motorsport."

And Volkswagen's eye is firmly on e-WRX rather than Formula E. Smeets told MN: "For us it's clear when we enter as a works team [it will] always be with cars very closely linked to the product on the road. So, if we can call it e-WRX, it would be one of the first series we could have a proper look at because it would fulfil those requirements."

Smeets confirmed Volkswagen Motorsport has joined other manufacturers on the FIA's technical working group regarding the electrification of WRX.

"As a motorsport company we

want to be at the heart of motorsport and be somewhere with a works team. Today it's not the case, but we are concentrating on all of the projects – and there are a few – to make a success of them all. But e-WRX could be something in the future that we have a good look at."

World Rallycross promoter Paul Bellamy admitted he was working towards electrifying the series for 2020.

"This is at the top of our agenda," Bellamy told MN. "We are in regular dialogue with the FIA about the regulations and what

**"We want a factory team"**



**SVEN SMEETS**

# HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: mckein-imagedatabase.com, fiaworldrallycross.com

## world championship competition



Kristofferson claimed the 2017 World Rallycross title

# VW EYES FACTORY RETURN WITH ELECTRIC RALLYCROSS CAR

form electric WRX would take. One of the major areas we are working on is keeping this championship affordable and not just affordable for the manufacturers, but the privateers as well.

"We are talking to nine manufacturers about this – including the incumbents Volkswagen, Peugeot and Audi – and they want this for 2020. That's feasible, but we have to work to get the regulations absolutely right and then get them delivered as quickly as possible. This is a very exciting space right now."

Volkswagen's Pikes Peak car will be revealed in March or April next year, when it will also start testing.

"The Pikes Peak car is progressing in-house," said Smeets. "Another big part of the company is fully into that and we are very close to the first wind tunnel concept. We hope to present a proper car in March or April, but for testing, it's not so easy. We can only run at Pikes Peak at the official test in June. Otherwise we

are looking for uphill roads and, of course, our own test track in Wolfsburg."

A regular road-going electric Volkswagen car is already being tested, with Smeets adding: "This [car] has nothing to do with Pikes Peak, it's just to confirm the drivetrain and battery concept."

Volkswagen's record in motorsport has been exceptional, with a hat-trick of Dakar victories a precursor to the marque's move into the World Rally Championship. After a year of learning the ropes with a Skoda Fabia S2000, the Polo R WRC arrived in 2013 and won the drivers' (Sebastien Ogier) and manufacturers' titles for the next four years.

And then there was this year's success with the PSRX Volkswagen Sweden squad, a shared enterprise with Volkswagen Motorsport in Hanover preparing the cars, which were then run by three-time FIA world champion Solberg.

While Smeets considers a potential e-WRX venture, he says nothing will change in the Solberg alliance in the immediate future.

Smeets said: "The idea is that we run in exactly the same conditions as 2017 in next year's World Rallycross Championship."

Solberg welcomed the news of a possible Volkswagen return at factory level. The Norwegian told *MN*: "World Rallycross is really coming now, we have seen this for the last couple of years and this [electric] vehicle is the next step for the series. To have Volkswagen behind this would be massive – just look what they did when they came to the World Rally Championship. It would be incredible for the future of this sport."

Volkswagen is not the only manufacturer looking at stepping up its involvement in WRX, with Peugeot canning its Dakar project in order to focus on next year's World Rallycross series with Sebastien Loeb leading the attack.



Volkswagen will focus its efforts for the coming season on Pikes Peak hillclimb

# RACING NEWS

## F1 ROUND-UP

### Merc benchmark

Mercedes is close to breaking the 1000bhp barrier with its F1 engine, according to the firm's engine boss Andy Cowell. Power unit development this year has been such that the Silver Arrows' units have already been rated above 900bhp, and are now on course for the next milestone. "We're close [to 1000bhp]," said Cowell. "I'm sure that will happen at some point."

### Aston 'disruptors'

Aston Martin CEO Andy Palmer has described the British firm as a "disruptor" in the debate over the 2021 F1 engine regulations. While a number of manufacturers have criticised the proposed rules, Aston Martin feels they are a step in the right direction. "We are acutely conscious that the current incumbents will try to bring the sport towards whatever they have right now," Palmer said. "I would if I was in their shoes too. We stick out there as the disruptor, which I like. If we do an engine, we won't do it by ourselves. We'll start now to look for partners."

### Kvyat backed

Red Bull's Helmut Marko oddly threw his support behind the driver his team ousted this year, by saying Daniil Kvyat has more talent than both current Toro Rosso drivers, Pierre Gasly and Brendon Hartley. Kvyat was demoted from Red Bull, then dumped altogether from the Mexican GP. When asked if he thought the Russian had more talent than his current STR drivers, Marko said: "Yes, I completely agree. Unfortunately he just showed it in his first year with STR and in his first year with Red Bull Racing. After that his performance went dramatically down. He had brake and tyre issues that [Daniel] Ricciardo didn't have. Something happened to him mentally and he lost his speed and his ease."

### Money talks

Felipe Massa reckons his replacement at Williams will ultimately be decided by the funding they can bring to the team. Williams is mulling over its options, but richly-backed Sergey Sirotkin is currently favourite for the seat (see story, right). Massa said: "The path of the team is financial, including [Robert] Kubica, so it does not surprise me [to see Sirotkin as the favourite]. But I don't know what will happen. I'm not following the team now. My thoughts are in other things and what I'm doing from now, and it's not F1 anymore."



McLaren will likely rival Renault team next season

# RENAULT WELCOMES McLAREN CHALLENGE

## Engine deal brings "good pressure" for works team

By Robert Ladbrook

**Renault Formula 1 advisor Alain Prost insists the firm has no regrets in striking a deal to supply McLaren from next season, despite the move being likely to tighten up competition for its own works team.**

Renault finished sixth in the Constructors' Championship this year after a tight battle with Toro Rosso, Williams and Haas. McLaren was ninth after another desperate campaign with Honda, which eventually led to the Woking team switching to the French supplier from next season.

While some have questioned why Renault would want to supply what will likely now be a powerful rival team, Prost insisted it was within the spirit of competition to do so.

Prost told *MN's* sister title

*Autosport*: "It will make pressure for us, because we will have one more competitor in our field. But we know that and we hope that it's going to be positive pressure, and it's a fact that we have to beat everybody anyway."

"If you make a resume of this season for us, sixth position is not too bad. At the end of the second part of the season we were very close to being most of the time the fourth team in terms of performance."

"We had reliability problems, and when you have reliability problems, you have to go down in performance. It's not an excuse, but what we showed in Abu Dhabi [when Nico Hulkenberg finished sixth] was when we put everything together, with the pressure we had, we can manage to do it [fight further up the order]."

"The gap in front is still big, but we are going to improve the performance of the engine, but it's always a risk."

It's always a challenge for us."

McLaren's Eric Boullier added: "McLaren and Renault are now in the 'get to know each other better' phase. We are building relationships, and we want to make sure this honeymoon period lasts a lot longer than the last one!"

"I think it would be wrong to draft any expectations now [for 2018]. I am a fan of the motto 'over-deliver but under-promise', so there's no promises of where we'll be just yet."

Prost added that, even for a manufacturer team like Renault, the \$6.5 million hike in prize money for finishing sixth over seventh in the Constructors' was a big boost.

"The money is important," he said. "And also the fact we got it in the last race is very important – it gives the motivation to the people during the winter. They feel a little less pressure and are happier to work."

### Norris to be busy with McLaren

McLaren racing head Eric Boullier says British driver Lando Norris will have a 'busy life' next year as he ramps up his preparations for Formula 1.

The 18-year-old will tackle Formula 2 with the Carlin team next season with backing from McLaren, and will dovetail that with his commitment as the team's test, reserve and simulator driver.

Norris has won a title in each of the years he has raced single-seaters – winning British F4, Formula

Renault Eurocup and then the European F3 crown this year.

"I hope that one day he will drive for McLaren, that's why we took him on," said Boullier when asked about Norris's programme for 2018. "But first he has F2 – a good sporting challenge for him."

"He will spend a lot of time in the simulator and he will have the opportunity to test. He was also pushing for some FP1 outings, but I am not a fan of this. But he will still have a busy life."



Kubica tested well, but may lose out

## No Williams driver decision until January, as Kubica and Sirotkin sweat

Williams will wait until January to reveal its second driver, with the team insisting it will not rush its decision.

The Grove squad has tested Robert Kubica, 33, and Renault reserve driver Sergey Sirotkin, 22, in recent weeks as it mulls its options to replace the retired Felipe Massa.

While his testing performances have been impressive given his life-changing injuries, data from the last bout of testing in Abu Dhabi reportedly suggests Sirotkin would be the better performance option. The Russian would also bring substantial budget to the team through his link with SMP Bank.

In addition to Sirotkin and Kubica; Paul di Resta, Daniil Kvyat and Pascal Wehrlein all remain connected with the team.

Williams confirmed this week that, with the winter break approaching, no announcement would be made until January on who will partner Lance Stroll next term.

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*'Alonso shocked motorsport world with Indy 500 debut'*  
Defining moments of the year, p20



Photos: Jakob Ebrey

# AHMED MOVES TO HITECH IN EUROPEAN FORMULA 3

Runaway BRDC British Formula 3 champion Enaam Ahmed will race in the Formula 3 European Championship next season with Hitech GP.

The 17-year-old, a finalist in this year's McLaren Autosport BRDC Award, has been announced as a member of the Silverstone-based squad's 2018 line-up following his recent testing programme.

Ahmed also tested with Prema Powerteam and Carlin before racking up mileage in Spain and Portugal with the Dallara-Mercedes-equipped Hitech team.

"I'm super-excited to join Hitech for my debut FIA F3 season," said Ahmed.

"I've known Oliver [Oakes, team principal] since I was 10 in karting so we have a close working relationship already.

"I feel at home within the team and feel like we could have a strong package going into next year."

This will be the third full season for Hitech GP. Its cars were taken to race wins in 2016 and '17 by Ahmed's fellow Britons George Russell, Ben Barnicoat and Jake Hughes.

With Hughes tipped to return to the GP3 Series next season, Ahmed could be joined in the Hitech line-up by versatile Spaniard Alex Palou – a race winner in Japanese F3 this season – and his former BRDC F3 rival Ben Hingeley, both of whom have been testing with the squad recently.

● Force India protege Jehan Daruvala will remain in the F3 European Championship for a second season with the Carlin team. The 19-year-old, from Mumbai, finished sixth in the championship in his rookie F3 season, scoring one race victory at the Norisring. He had also participated in the post-season GP3 Series tests at Yas Marina in Abu Dhabi.



Ahmed dominated 2017 British F3 season

## Rebellion signs Lotterer/Jani

Rebellion Racing has signed Le Mans 24 Hours winners Andre Lotterer and Neel Jani as it returns to the LMP1 class of the World Endurance Championship next season.

The team stepped down from LMP1 to LMP2 this year and won the drivers' title with Bruno Senna and Julien Canal.

But it has now announced it is rejoining the privateer ranks of the top class with what is expected to be a new design penned by ORECA.

Three-time Le Mans winner Lotterer and Jani were both without WEC drives following Porsche's withdrawal from LMP1 at the end of this year and both had moved into Formula E. But, despite remaining Porsche factory drivers, the duo will stay in the WEC as there are no clashes with FE.

"I'm very happy to join the champion Rebellion team," said Lotterer. "The LMP1 project is very exciting and to be able to go on with the Le Mans 24 Hours and the WEC challenge is something I did not want to miss."

Jani added: "I'm looking forward to coming back where my endurance career started nine years ago.

"Rebellion Racing played a huge role in my career and also helped me to become a factory driver for Porsche."

Rebellion's other drivers for next season will be Senna, Mathias Beche, Thomas Laurent and Gustavo Menezes.



WEC: Lotterer (l) and Jani (r)

## Former F1 driver Massa apologises after team-mate throws punches against rival, marring Brazilian karting event

Ex-Formula 1 driver Felipe Massa has apologised after one of his team-mates brawled with a rival after they crashed out of the 500 Milhas de Kart event.

Rodrigo Dantas, who was driving for Massa's team, was holding up former World Series by Nissan and

A1 Grand Prix racer Tuka Rocha, who was lying second in the race and trying to catch leader Massa.

After repeated contact between them, Rocha punted Dantas off the track, with both karts coming to rest against the tyre barrier.

The pair got out of their karts

and confronted each other. Dantas then pinned Rocha to the ground while punching his helmet.

Security guards had to end the fight, which resulted in disqualification of all karts in the two teams – MDG Matrix and Sambaiba Centerbus Racing.

"From what I saw, the whole team should be disqualified," Massa said of the previous encounters between them. "But that did not happen, and what happened next was a war inside the track.

"For me, this is very sad and

sadder still to see my team within that. It was not my decision – I was driving the [leading] kart – but I apologise to everyone for what happened, because I have never seen anything like it in my career.

"The competition is inside the track, but never in this way."

## THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP



BMW has revealed its drivers for the 2018/19 World Endurance Championship 'superseason' as its M8 GTE makes its debut. BMW regulars Nicky Catsburg, Augusto Farfus, Antonio Felix da Costa and Martin Tomczyk will complete the full season and will be joined by Tom Blomqvist, Alexander Sims and Philipp Eng for the Le Mans and Sebring rounds... BMW has also



released its DTM drivers for next season. Following the announcement that Maxime Martin has split with the marque, his and Blomqvist's places will be taken by Eng and European Formula 3 runner-up Joel Eriksson... Toyota has also announced that it will keep all six of its LMP1 drivers under contract for the WEC 'superseason'. The manufacturer has all but confirmed it will remain in the WEC next season with Sebastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson, Kazuki Nakajima, Kamui Kobayashi, Mike

Conway and Jose Maria Lopez all remaining... The son of former Formula 1 racer Jean-Marc Gounon has been unveiled as part of Bentley's line-up for the Blancpain GT Series next year. Spa 24 Hours winner Jules Gounon will take Oliver Jarvis' place with the Briton heading to IMSA with the Mazda Joest squad... Alex Zanardi is targeting a return to American racing in 2019 with a planned entry in the Daytona 24 Hours. The Italian is working on a special braking system for the

BMW M8 GTE so he can use his prosthetic legs and if successful he will be part of the line-up for the 2019 race...

BMW announced drivers for WEC

## NZ Toyota Racing Series for Carlin's Pull

James Pull, runner-up in the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship this season, will head to New Zealand and compete in the Toyota Racing Series.

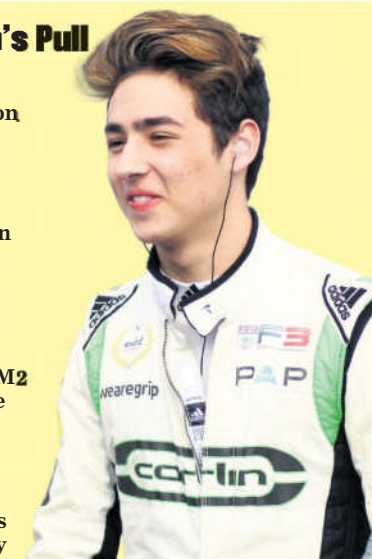
The Singapore-born Briton has joined M2 Competition, which has previously run Nick Cassidy, Lance Stroll and Lando Norris to title success.

"I have heard great things about the championship from fellow drivers in Europe and so cannot wait to get out on the track,"

said Pull, who raced with Carlin this season alongside champion, Enaam Ahmed.

"For me, 2017 was a very successful year and to finish second in the British F3 Championship in my first year in F3 was a great result. Now my attention is fully focused on TRS with M2 Competition and, like all the drivers that will be there, I want the title and will be pushing hard."

The five-event series will begin on January 12 at Ruapuna Park.



Pull came second in British F3

# RACING NEWS

## IN BRIEF

### Dropped scores

The Renault UK Clio Cup has reintroduced dropped scores for next season – just a year after deciding to ditch the system. Drivers will be able to drop one of their scores in the final points tally but this can't be one of the races part of the Brands Hatch season finale weekend. Points will also be awarded down to 15th place instead of to 20th. The Masters Cup has also been axed for 2018.

### Clio calendar

An expanded six-event Renault UK Clio Cup Junior calendar has been unveiled for next season. The inaugural campaign this year was over just four weekends after the series was initially postponed. The 2018 calendar features trips to Silverstone, Rockingham, Donington Park, Snetterton, Croft and Brands Hatch with the season beginning in March and ending in November, but with a three-month break between April and July for the exam season.

### Caldwell's success

British Formula 4 racer Olli Caldwell claimed his maiden single-seater triumph last week when he won the third race of the UAE F4 season in Abu Dhabi. The 15-year-old sits fourth in the points after the opening event of the series.

### Traynor confirmed

Shaun Traynor has been confirmed as the 750 Motor Club's Toyota MR2 champion this year after a ruling by the National Court. Traynor had collected the most points but his rival Lewis Ward successfully protested that Traynor had the incorrect amount of camber on his car in the season finale. But Traynor's appeal to the National Court has now been successful. The club's competitions manager Giles Groombridge said: "I was getting a bit worried there wouldn't be a decision before our awards ceremony in January. He was deserving, I think he won 10 races this year."

### Record rebate

The Motor Sports Association has confirmed that a record insurance rebate will be returned to clubs this year. A total of £472,000 has been returned to clubs after the MSA's work to obtain the best possible insurance arrangements. Alan Gow, MSA Chairman, said: "I'm very proud that the MSA, through very prudent financial and insurance management, are able to provide this largest-ever rebate to our clubs. It is yet further demonstration of the MSA's real commitment in looking after our clubs."

### Gulf result

The Kessel Racing Ferrari 488 GT3 of Davide Rigon, Miguel Molina and Michael Broniszewski won the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi last weekend. The TF Sport Aston Martin Vantage of Ahmad Al Harthy, Tom Jackson and Euan McKay led but had to pit for gearbox repairs and finished as the fourth-best GT car. United Autosports LMP3 trio of Johnny Mowlem, Bonamy Grimes and Tony Wells took second in class.

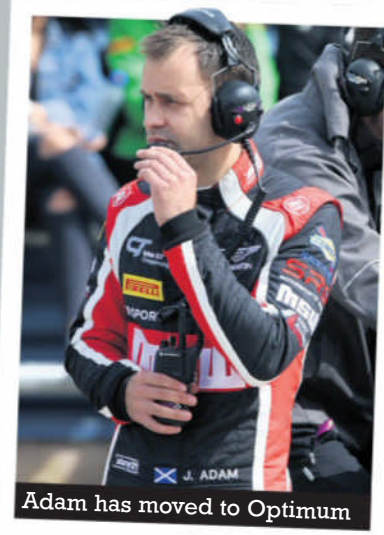
Photos: Matt Reeves Design, Jakob Ebrej



Aston Martin Vantage GT3

# OPTIMUM MOTORSPORT GT SWITCH FOR ADAM IN 2018

## Scot will share Aston Martin Vantage alongside Haigh in British GT



Adam has moved to Optimum

By Robert Ladbrook

**Jonathan Adam will attempt to become the first driver in history to win the British GT Championship with three different teams, when he returns next year as part of a new Aston Martin effort from Optimum Motorsport.**

Optimum will field a single Vantage GT3 next year, and has signed factory racer Adam to share alongside European GT regular Flick Haigh.

The deal will mark the first time Optimum has competed in British GT3 since it ran an Audi R8 LMS for a part-campaign in 2016. The team has been a regular in the GT4 category however, running the PMW-backed Ginetta – and latterly McLaren – of Graham Johnson and Mike Robinson.

Scottish star Adam is already the only driver to win the GT3 crown with two different teams – Beechdean AMR in 2015 and TF Sport for 2016.

Adam said: "Next year is going to be really exciting. I've had two great years working with TF and Derek [Johnston, team-mate] but as a factory driver you often switch surroundings, so I'm used to adapting to new scenery.

"I always wanted to stay in British GT because, with the World Endurance Championship having less dates next year [due to the contest being spread over its 13 month 'superseason'] it's an ideal second programme. I have to go for the title again as making my mark on a series in any way is always special."

This year is likely to be the last for the current Vantage GT3, with a replacement model mirroring the

new GTE car planned for 2019.

Optimum boss Shaun Goff, whose team will also benefit from engineering and technical support from AMR parent firm Prodrive, said: "Flick felt the time was right to tackle British GT, which is an incredibly tight series. When Jonny was made available to us we had to grab that chance with both hands.

"This will be his seventh year with the Vantage so there are very few drivers out there with his level of insight and understanding of the car. He'll work to bring Flick on too and I think we're in for a great year."

● TF Sport has yet to confirm its two pro drivers to share with Derek Johnston and Mark Farmer for next year. Jon Barnes could return, and a selection of AMR's other WEC drivers could also appear at the team.

## Ginetta factory support for Tregurtha/Middleton

British GT4 champions Will Tregurtha and Stuart Middleton will move into the GT4 European Series next year after both picked up factory support from Ginetta.

They will reunite with Charlie Kemp's HHC Motorsport team to campaign a G55 GT4 in the pan-European contest.

Off the back of their stellar maiden British GT campaign, scoring three wins on their way to becoming the youngest driver pairing ever to lift the GT4 title, both drivers have been signed to Ginetta's Young Driver Programme.

The British firm will provide sponsorship and spares support to the 2018 programme, as well as both becoming involved in driver and vehicle

development for the Leeds marque.

Ginetta's motorsport manager Ashley Gallagher said: "I'm delighted to welcome both Will and Stuart to our Young Driver Programme. Both have come up through the Ginetta motorsport ladder, having started in the Junior Scholarship. They're an excellent example of how great a training platform the Junior championship is for a future in GT racing."

Kemp added: "It's brilliant to have both guys back for 2018 and to be helping them make the next step in their careers. European GT4 may not be the most conventional option, but the category is enjoying a real boom at the moment and the European series sits at the top of the



Duo won British GT4 title this year

GT4 market as the toughest place to go and compete.

"The series will put them on the international stage and it's also where Ginetta's interest lies as a brand. There's no doubt it'll be a challenge. The tracks

will be new, as will the teams and other cars, but that's not much different to their situation this year. They're a tailor-made GT pairing with speed and skills that compliment each other. I see no reason why they can't be just as successful again."



Kent will race new Hyundai

## Ford Fiesta youngster Kent to race Hyundai i30 N in 2018 TCR UK series after Brands Hatch taster day

Fiesta Championship race winner Lewis Kent will graduate to the new TCR UK series next year.

Kent sampled Hyundai and Honda machinery at the series' taster day at Brands Hatch last month and has now purchased a Hyundai i30 N. He will collect the car from Frankfurt in January before embarking on an intensive test programme ahead of the new season that starts at

Silverstone on March 31/April 1.

"It's a special bit of kit," said Kent. "It's a lot different to what I'm used to driving – it is so direct. Through the corners you can feel everything, it's brilliant."

In his first season of senior racing 18-year-old Kent scored two wins on his way to second in Class C of the BRSCC Fiesta Championship, but has more modest expectations for 2018.

"It's going to be challenging because it's my first year in something this big," he said. "We're hoping for at least a top-10 finish in some of the races and if we're lucky a top-10 finish in the championship, depending on how many drivers are on the grid."

Kent is the first UK series driver confirmed to drive Hyundai's new TCR car, which won its debut international series race in October. He is in talks

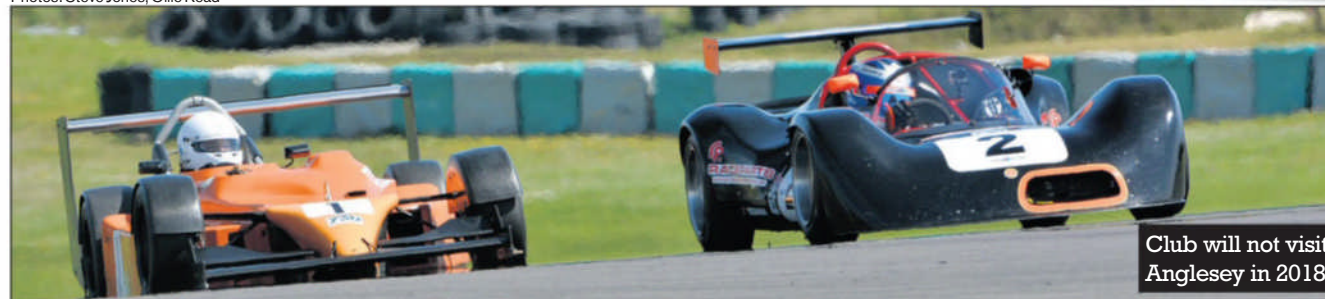
with teams, but has not ruled out a family-run operation backed by long-term sponsor Essex Bodies.

● Brisky Racing – the squad that runs in partnership with British Touring Car outfit Team Hard – has revealed that it will not enter TCR UK next season. The team had bought a Volkswagen Golf but has now decided to put this up for sale and focus on the BTCC in 2018.

*'I have had to go out and buy three more black suits!'*  
BTCC champ Ash Sutton's success, p42



Photos: Steve Jones, Ollie Read



Club will not visit Anglesey in 2018

## 750MC OPTS TO VISIT PEMBREY NOT ANGLESEY

The 750 Motor Club will visit Pembrey for the first time since 2013 next year, as the south Wales circuit replaces Anglesey.

The circuit has gone through major work in the past two years, which has increased the number of layouts it can use for race meetings.

The first new sequence will follow the opening Hatchets, Spitfires and Diben corners. Drivers can now continue straight on before heading into a new tight left-hand corner and then a right-hand bend which takes them back onto the existing track.

Additional corners have also been added on the back straight ahead of the Honda Curve.

"It's important to offer our members the opportunity to try different circuits," said Giles Groombridge of 750MC. "We've not been to Pembrey since 2013. Lots of drivers haven't

raced there. They've made some changes to the circuit which will hopefully make the racing more interesting."

He added that as one of the "major" UK motorsport clubs, the 750MC is obligated to visit multiple venues.

"As one of the major clubs it's important to try and support all the venues around the UK," he said. "Unfortunately we can't go everywhere every year.

"I'm sure we'll be back at Anglesey in 2018 and we've had some very successful meetings there in recent years. It was just time for a change."

The championship will host 20 race meetings in 2018, starting with a March 17/18 opener at Donington Park, Croft, Oulton Park, Brands Hatch and Silverstone are all among the circuits with the only venue change being Pembrey in for Anglesey.

### Club Enduro now a championship

The popular Club Enduro series has obtained championship status for the 2018 season, with the 750 Motor Club formula expanding to six events.

The five-round series in 2017 built on the strong start after its debut year in 2016. It received a season-high 42 entries at Silverstone in August in 2017 and adds Rockingham and Oulton Park to its calendar for 2018.

Club competitions manager Giles Groombridge said: "We were getting suggestions and feedback from drivers throughout the year [to

make it a championship]. We did a poll, a survey, to see what everyone wanted, at the end of the season. The numbers were good enough to warrant moving to championship status."

The club has also made changes to the RGB championship. It now becomes RGB Sports 1000, and has introduced a Sporting Cup. Drivers will score points towards the cup provided they haven't finished in the top three in a race. From 2019, the top six in the last year's series will become ineligible for the cup.

### Spencer buys a Spire for Bikesports bid

CNC Heads Sports/Saloons champion Joe Spencer will compete in the 750 Motor Club's Bikesports Championship in a newly-acquired Spire GT3 in 2018.

Spencer headed Class C in every race he finished in 2017 on the way to an impressive campaign in the British Automobile Racing Club-run northern-based series. He plans to defend his title in the new Spire, while dovetailing commitments with Bikesports.

"Danny Bird bought one [a Spire] halfway through the year and we didn't know they were eligible [for the CNC series]," said Spencer, who has driven a Stuart Taylor Locosaki this year. "We've always wanted a Radical-type car. Still being eligible for



Spencer raced Stuart Taylor Locosaki to CNC title in 2017

the CNC is a big plus for us.

"In Bikesports, I like the competitiveness. The way the classes are structured keeps costs down."

Spencer was robbed of collecting the car - which will be built from a kit by Joe and his father in Leicester - by recent snow. He hopes to complete the build by March.

Of the challenge of stepping up to the new machinery, he said: "I've only ever driven the car we've

had. I've got to get used to how downforce works."

● Bikesports will have one less meeting next year, down to five. Giles Groombridge, 750MC competitions manager, said: "We thought we'd go for one less round but move to some triple headers. There were rounds last year where the numbers were great and a few were disappointing. A better-spaced calendar and triple headers will help the numbers."

### Pidgley makes Mini Challenge switch

Renault UK Clio Cup driver Ollie Pidgley will switch to the Mini Challenge JCW Championship next year.

The 20-year-old will handle an Excelr8 Motorsport-run JCW in the British GT support category. Pidgley was formerly a podium finisher in the Clio Cup's Graduate Cup category during 2016 and contested a part-season this year.

"I'm really excited to be joining a team as professional as Excelr8, and it's going to be great being part of the British GT package," he said.

"The JCW is a real step in the right direction towards a BTCC car, with the sequential gearbox and aero package it has, so it's the ideal next step for my career."

### Donegan win will 'help' Formula Ford 1600

Keith Donegan winning the Mazda Road to Indy Shootout and a \$200,000 [£150,000] scholarship has given hope to other drivers racing Formula Fords that they can achieve the same, according to team owner Cliff Dempsey.

After finishing second at the Brands Hatch Festival, Donegan claimed a spot on the MRTI Shootout where he beat 16 other drivers to the prize.

He'll now race in USF2000 next year, and Dempsey believes more drivers will be keen to race in Formula Fords as a result.

"I said this year if another American won, [MRTI] would lose its credibility so I'm delighted they have given it to a

European," he said. "I do think it will help the Formula Ford series over here and I know from my side of things we're getting a lot of enquiries from young drivers."

Jamie Thorburn, Oliver White, Niall Murray and Ross Martin all attended the Shootout having qualified through UK and Northern Ireland Formula Ford series.

Luke Cooper, who finished third in the British Racing and Sports Car Club's National series this season, believes the MRTI will attract younger drivers to the Kent-powered cars.

He said: "It's great: it proves the drivers we're racing against are good enough to go on and do the bigger and better things."



Donegan secured Shootout spot after reviving career in FFord

AUTOSPORT.COM DEPUTY EDITOR

# MATT BEER

**"Donegan's win is a beacon of hope to drivers"**



**K** eith Donegan winning the Mazda Road to Indy scholarship Shootout is three things: 1) a deserved break for a very exciting young talent; 2) emphatic validation of Formula Ford 1600's revived potential as a career springboard; 3) a beacon of hope to drivers who think a professional chance is beyond their resources.

Unable to continue racing after being Ginetta Junior runner-up in 2013, Donegan came off the sidelines for a partial 2017 FF1600 season in a Van Diemen self-run with a very small team of family and friends on one of the smallest budgets of any frontrunner (and that budget included buying the car). Now he has a \$200,000 [£150,000] cheque and a clear path towards IndyCar in a ladder system that genuinely rewards success. That's an exceptional return on not very much (in junior single-seater terms) investment.

There had always been hints of paddock scepticism about FF1600's MRTI tie-up - fears that ultimately the prize would always go to an American for marketing reasons, or that myriad methods by which Shootout 'tickets' were on offer across multiple UK FF1600 series and one-off events somehow diluted the message.

That message now looks pretty simple: just get yourself an FF1600 and you really could end up racing on the IndyCar ladder. Run that FF1600 yourself if need be or hook up with a team if you want the comprehensive racing education on offer with one of the paddock's big guns, contest every race you possibly can or cherry pick with Mazda ticket opportunities in mind. No matter what your budget, there could be a path for you.

The door opens both ways, too. A year ago Matt Cowley was a promising young FF1600 talent but relatively unproven. He used the MRTI/FF1600 link to make his own path in America independently and dominated the US F1600 Championship with sometime IndyCar team Pelfrey Racing, then walked back into the UK FFord world this autumn as a man ready to fight for Festival victory.

Things went awry for Cowley in the Festival final, which was where Donegan really, really made his mark. All weekend at Brands Hatch, the body language of Donegan's car had an 'I'm going to make something happen' urgency. His moves were bold and incisive, and he came oh-so-close to pulling off a Festival final-winning one on Joey Foster, the ultimate FF1600 benchmark.

In the paddock afterwards, there were some questions about whether the Shootout ticket for the Festival winner definitely did automatically pass down to Donegan because Foster was outside the scheme's age range. When that was put to Donegan, he laughed, grabbed some tools and joked that anyone trying to take that ticket off him would have to fight pretty damn hard to get it out of his hands. He's going to take that edge and against-the-odds determination to America with him, combine it with his sublime racecraft, and do FF1600, his family and the UK and Ireland proud.



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# HISTORICS

'Formula Atlantic will be recognised'  
New class structure, below



Photos: Paul Lawrence

## DOWN THE WORKSHOP

### GRD 373

1600cc Historic F3 car from 1973  
Current owner: James Denty

#### They've had the car for over 30 years

"My father Peter bought it in about 1985 as a rolling chassis. Since then it's been in our stores. When it is one of your own cars, it is always at the back of the queue. We've got quite a few GRD projects and we always have had. Dad worked at GRD in period so there is a certain amount of sentimental value for him."

#### There is a strong link with GRD

"We've always had a soft spot for GRDs. They were very local to us and a fabricator we have working for us was at GRD in period. The GRD is an underrated car with a good chassis. They had a couple of years of glory but in the end I think they wound it all down at the time of the oil crisis."

#### It is ex-Passadore

"I don't think this car ran much after 1973. It only really did one full season of F3 in 1973 with Pedro Passadore from Uruguay. We think it was updated and used by the factory with a 2-litre engine, probably for development, but not raced. GRD supported the DART team in '73 and the sister car to this one was the Alan Jones car. I think that car is in Italy. We've had contact with Pedro, who is still in Uruguay."

#### They finished it this summer

"We've re-prepared it over the last couple of years. We hoped to have the car out in 2016, but customer cars always come first and another year went by. But in 2017 we made a concerted effort to get it finished and it was ready for Brands Hatch in July."

#### It is still very original

"It was pretty much complete when we got it. We took the monocoque apart and re-glued and re-riveted it. But what is there is all original. It was never really shunted in period. There were some bruises on the bottom of the tub, but that was about it for damage. We made new suspension and we fitted a fresh engine and gearbox. We've run it three times this season and it's been going well. We'll try and race it fairly regularly, depending on time."



GRD: had a big rebuild

# NEW BHRC2 CLASS LAUNCHED FOR 2018

## Category for up to 1600cc and pre-1968 cars to run next year



BHRC2 will cater for a range of rally cars

#### By Paul Lawrence

**Historic cars up to 1600cc and all cars from the pre-1968 Category 1 will have their own competition within the British Historic Rally Championship next season, called BHRC2.**

The new element of the BHRC has been developed in response to the upsurge in interest from those planning to compete in Category 1 cars and 1600cc cars from across the historic age groups, which now run up to 1990.

The creation of the Rally 2WD initiative, which offers these cars a significantly better deal on running order on gravel rallies, has met with considerable enthusiasm and BHRC2 will build on that to encourage competition across the eight rounds of the series.

Up to 20 Category 1 cars and 10 1600cc cars are expected on

the opening round, Rally North Wales (March 24). If realised, those numbers will match the peak before changes to running order decimated historic entries on gravel rallies.

"We have created BHRC2 to give these competitors their own identity within the overall championship," said Colin Heppenstall from the Roger Albert Clark Rally Motor Club.

"The overall BHRC is, of course, topped by the pace-setting cars and BHRC2 will be ideal for clubmen, younger drivers and those new to historic rallying."

The scoring within BHRC2 will be based on category and class points only, unlike the main BHRC which factors in overall points as well. The BHRC2 will mirror the full BHRC schedule but the best five scores from eight rounds will count to allow competitors to miss some events.

## Classic Formula Junior cars on display to mark the category's 60th anniversary

Six cars tracing the development of Formula Junior will be joined by a number of former drivers and constructors to celebrate the



Brabham BT6 will attend

category's 60th anniversary season at the Autosport International Show.

The world's best-supported historic racing category will feature on the HSCC stand at the NEC (January 11-14) and the display will be capped by a

gathering of Formula Junior people on Friday afternoon.

Period Junior racers hoping to be there include Richard Attwood, Hugh Dibley, Bill Bradley, Peter Procter, Chris Ashmore and Roger Nathan. Category constructors will be represented by Clive Chapman (Lotus) and Richard Utley (Caravelle).

On display will be one car from each of the category's six seasons, starting in 1958 with a front-engined Stanguellini. A front-engined Lola Mk2 will represent 1959, while Classic Team Lotus will show a 1960 rear-engined Lotus 18. A Cooper T56, Gemini MkIV and the ex-Denny Hulme Brabham BT6 will complete the story.

## Lombard Rally Bath nearing a sell-out

The Lombard Rally Bath, a non-competitive tour to celebrate the period RAC Rallies based in Bath, is getting close to a full entry with 10 months still to go to the event.

The key element will be a tour on Saturday, October 20 taking in four former RAC Rally stages in the south-west including the Porlock toll road, Wiscombe Park and Cricket St Thomas.

Already confirmed to take part are Stig Blomqvist, Jimmy McRae, Harri Toivonen, Louise Aitken-Walker, Terry Kaby and Graham Elsmore, with some of them driving cars relevant to their rally careers.

Other notable entries include Derek Boyd (Rothmans Porsche 911), Tony Fowkes (Mercedes SLC) and Bob Bean (Lotus Cortina).



**Five crews claimed gold medals on last week's Le Jog, the Land's End to John O'Groats classic rally. Despite very wintry conditions, David Stanley (Triumph TR4), Mark Godfrey (MGB), Andy Lane (BMW 2002), Thomas Bricknell (VW Golf) and Richard Isherwood (Nissan Stanza) all took top awards. TV presenter Tony Jardine (BMW 1602, above) earned a bronze medal on his debut.**



Mini Cup will run in parkland

## Weston Park to host HRCR and Old Stager

The HRCR Stage Masters and Old Stager championships will both include rounds at Weston Park next March as part of the new Saturday historic only event in Shropshire.

The Old Stager series, which incorporates the popular Mini Cup, will also substitute the Tour of Flanders for Rally Isle of Man as it visits Belgium for the first time in early September.

The Stage Masters schedule takes in only three gravel rallies, starting with Mid Wales followed by the Ralynuts Stages (former Severn Valley) and the Wydean. It also includes such diverse asphalt events as the Brawdy Stages, Isle of Man and Killarney.

## IN BRIEF

### Atlantic joins F2

The early seasons of Formula Atlantic in the UK will now be recognised in the HSCC's Historic Formula 2 International Series, which will now feature five classes with a split in the Formula Atlantic class. Cars built and raced prior to December 1975 will compete for the Vern Schuppan Trophy, named after the first UK Formula Atlantic champion in 1971.

### Home trial triumph

Ian Wright recently won the Monty Peters Trial, the penultimate event in the Historic Sporting Trials Association season. The former British champion dropped just one point all day on the event, held at his farm in Kent. Tim Barrington and former rally driver Mike Storrar tied for the post-historic class with only two points dropped across 24 hills.

### Clee Hill canned

The Midland Automobile Club has cancelled plans to run its Clee Hill Classic Trial in January. Shortage of time for the organising team has prevented the trial, planned for January 21, from taking place but the club hopes to bring the event back again in 2019.

### Silver Fern shuffle

The organisers of the Silver Fern Rally in New Zealand have amended the start date of the marathon historic rally to avoid a fixture clash with World Rally Championship's round in Australia. The 2018 Silver Fern will now start on Saturday, November 24 from Hamilton on the North Island and the event will run for eight days on supreme gravel roads.

### Manx Classic

The annual Manx Classic, featuring three closed-road hillclimbs on the Isle of Man, will run from April 26-28. The opening day, Thursday, takes in the fast sweeps of The Sloc, while Friday's competition is at Creg Willey's hill on the TT course near Peel. The final day's action is on the Lhergy Frissell climb on the TT course out of Ramsey.

### Tim Hobbs

MN is very sad to report the death, after illness, of Telford-based Tim Hobbs at the age of 61. As well as being a hugely experienced co-driver, Tim was a leading figure in the analysis of seeding information for rallies and worked closely with the BTRDA. As a co-driver he enjoyed considerable success, notably alongside Will Onions in both modern and historic Escorts.

### Darbyshire's award

Morgan three-wheeler racer Sue Darbyshire has been announced as the inaugural 'race driver of the year' from the Vintage Sports-Car Club. The new award was launched to celebrate excellence across VSCC racing and was voted for among the race competitors. Darbyshire was rewarded for her courageous, fast and safe handling of her rapid Morgan.



Darbyshire won new award

# RALLY NEWS

Photos: Sophie Graillon, Planetmarcus

# TEAMS PREPARE 2018 ATTACKS DURING TESTING

## Leading WRC crews run on the French Alps



Citroën drivers ran in mixed conditions



Elfyn Evans was very pleased with his Fiesta

By David Evans

**The World Rally Championship returned to the French Alps last week as the teams began testing for next month's 2018 opener, the Monte Carlo Rally.**

Toyota and Citroën ran on roads just south of Gap, while Hyundai was closer to Nice and M-Sport in Ardeche (see sidebar). Following three days' testing, the British team's Ford Fiesta WRC test car headed east to Sebastien Ogier's hometown of Gap, where he held his Five Stars Motor Show and demonstrated the car in front of his home fans.

All the cars ran in a variety of conditions last week, but nobody got the full spread of possible Monte Carlo conditions – which is why they all return to France early next month for a final pre-event test ahead of the 2018 season opener.

Citroën's Kris Meeke ran in icy, cold, wet and very wet conditions, while his team-mate Craig Breen got dry running in the C3 WRC. Toyota new boy Ott Tanak got a mixture of snow, ice and dry asphalt, while Jari-Matti Latvala's running was in full snow. M-Sport and Hyundai endured mixed weather, but didn't see the sort of

snow the Toyota team experienced. Citroën's Breen was pleased with his first run in the C3 WRC across these roads.

"It was good to get out there and drive the car again," Breen said. "Kris and I shared one of the days and that was fairly wet, but it was dry for my full day – that was quite helpful for me to be able to drive the car in those mixed conditions. It felt great. The team has worked really hard with the car and we've got everything pointing in the right direction. There's been some valving work done on the suspension dampers and that's just settled it down on the bumps and made it that bit more compliant. We're back out in January just before the rally and a bit of snow would be really handy then."

Latvala was happy with what he found from the Yaris WRC on snow. He and Esapekka Lappi drove for one day each, while Tanak – who's still bound by his M-Sport contract and not allowed to talk about the car until January 1 – got his first taste of Toyota power.

Latvala told *MV*: "Always when you have a driver from another team, especially a winning team, there is some small bits and pieces that can help your car.

"It's good to hear what Tanak is thinking of our car. My test was good. We have worked hard on the centre differential and driving in the full snow, everything was working really well.

"It's quite rare to get these good conditions for the Monte test."

Latvala wasn't the only driver to talk of the progress his car had made over the last 12 months. M-Sport's Ford Fiesta WRC dominated this year's manufacturers' race and there was plenty of positivity from Welshman Elfyn Evans after the first set-up test for 2018.

He said: "It was good to get back behind the wheel, and really interesting to see the progress we'd made since the first test this time last year. We only had one day of testing, but managed to get a lot of good information that we can take forward to another two days of testing in the lead up to Monte Carlo next month."

Ogier tested the Fiesta for two days before entertaining his fans on Friday night, with the addition of a special guest joining him and co-driver Julien Ingrassia.

"It was an amazing evening," said the world champion. "It was such a great feeling for us to celebrate at

### TESTING: WHO WENT WHERE AND WHEN?

■ **Toyota:** Ott Tanak – Col du Perty/ Saint André-de-Rosans; Esapekka Lappi – Col de Faye; Jari-Matti Latvala – Saint-Michel-les-Portes

■ **Citroën:** Kris Meeke – Saint Andre de Rosans/Col de Faye; Craig Breen – Col de Faye

■ **M-Sport:** Elfyn Evans – Col de la Fayolle; Sebastien Ogier – Saint Joseph des bancs/Genestelle

■ **Hyundai:** Andreas Mikkelsen – Luceram-Coaraze; Dani Sordo – Luceram-Coaraze; Thierry Neuville – Roquesteron



Reworked Toyota fared well on snowy surfaces



Ogier got to show off his Fiesta to his home crowd

home in front of our first audience, who have been following us for many years. We are very proud to have the chance to do this. Thank you everyone for the support and for this nice organisation, we enjoyed this evening a lot. And thank you also to Ari Vatanen for coming – it was an honour to have him with us."

● As *Motorsport News* closed for press Eric Camilli looked most likely to join M-Sport as the third driver for the opening round of the season in Monte Carlo, making his debut in one of the new generation World Rally Cars.

▶ HOW THE WRC TITLE WAS WON: 2017 SEASON REVIEW

▶▶▶ PAGE 31



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*'There's a Polo out there... somewhere'*  
*MN goes test spying, p57*



This shot of Sebastien Ogier at Rally Sweden was voted best picture in this year's World Rally Championship by readers of the series' official website. The shot was taken by world-renowned photographer Francois Baudin from the Austral Agency.

## CHILE CLOSING IN ON WRC FIXTURE

Chile is close to agreeing terms to join the World Rally Championship schedule for the 2019 season.

The South American country will run a candidate event a week before next year's Rally Argentina, after which the WRC Promoter and FIA will decide if it can join the series as a 14th round from 2019 onwards.

WRC Promoter Oliver Ciesla said he felt the proposed Concepcion-based event would bring great roads in the Andes and a significant increase in the fan base for the World Rally Championship.

Ciesla told *MN*: "We are very close to an agreement. This would be a forest-based rally with really nice, smooth roads with stages going from sea level up to 2000 metres into the mountains. From what we have seen, Chile would, by no means,

be behind where some of the events are right now."

Rally Chile organiser Sebastian Etcheverry outlined the benefits his country and his rally could bring to *MN*, saying: "Rallying is the second biggest sport in Chile behind football. We have run the RallyMobil series for 18 years and a WRC round is the next step for us. We are ready for this. Our stages – which are mainly wide and fast – are probably the best surfaces in the world for rallying; we have a lot of forest roads and they have to be maintained with compact gravel to allow the trucks to pass by in different weather conditions.

"In Concepcion, we have close to two million people with plenty of hotels and infrastructure."

Japan is another event pushing for 2019 inclusion. An event based close to Toyota City

on the nation's main island is working with the promoter to find a way on to the WRC calendar. Toyota itself is understood to be pushing this event hard and fast in an effort to have it in place ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Croatia's challenge looks to be fading now, with the organisers finding it hard to place the event in a preferred September date, with the holiday season ongoing at that time of the year.

Ciesla also added another asphalt event in Europe was not high on his agenda.

"Building the calendar is a portfolio," Ciesla said. "I don't need 13 Tarmac rallies in Europe and I don't need 13-times heritage; with Monte Carlo, with Rally GB and Finland, the calendar has no shortage of heritage. And the calendar is not short of Tarmac in Europe."

### WRC may have 16 shorter events

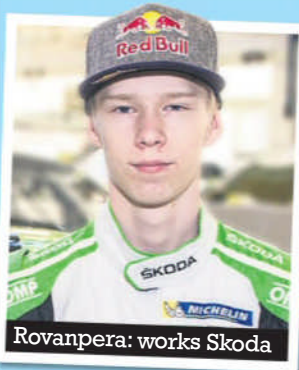
Two-day rallies are an increasing possibility if the WRC expands towards the 16-event schedule it ran in previous years.

The calendar was supposed to be 14 rallies this year, but the loss of China meant it remained at 13. Fourteen was again the target for 2018 and, had Poland remained, Turkey would have achieved that.

WRC Promoter Oliver Ciesla wants to build towards 15 or 16 events, but he remains mindful of the previously unsustainable financial and logistical burden that placed. The series last ran 16 events 10 years ago.

Ciesla said: "We do not exclude shortening the rallies, but I see it in the bigger strategic context with 14, 15 or 16 rallies. If we are talking about [shortening] one or two rallies, it wouldn't make much difference, but if we shorten them all then this can save 15 or 16 times one day – that's more than two weeks in a hotel."

Certain events have indicated they would like to run a two-day format next season. Ciesla said it would be dealt with on a rally-by-rally basis.



Rovanpera: works Skoda

### Rovanpera swiches to factory Skoda for 2018 WRC2 season

Kalle Rovanpera has been confirmed as the youngest factory driver in the World Rally Championship and will drive for Skoda in WRC2 in 2018.

Rovanpera, 17, had been choosing between Skoda and M-Sport for his 2018 R5 programme. He did Wales Rally GB and Rally Australia in an M-Sport-run Ford Fiesta R5.

He has driven a Fabia R5 before,

competing on Finnish and Latvian events in 2016 and 2017.

Skoda's squad is expected to be one of the youngest teams in WRC2 next season with Ole Christian Veiby and Juuso Nordgren, both 21, also signed up with the Czech manufacturer.

This year's WRC2 winner Pontus Tidemand remains with Skoda, but he is likely to be included in Volkswagen's

development of its Polo GTI R5 later in the year, and long-time Skoda driver and Czech champion Jan Kopecky will also remain in a factory Fabia.

Next year Skoda is expected to run a similarly mixed programme led by WRC2 and the APRC, which it won with Gaurav Gill in 2017.

Skoda won 14 national titles around the world in 2017.

### Wilson and Solberg sign up for last ever Mid Wales Charity Forum

World Rally champion team principal Malcolm Wilson and rallycross superstar Petter Solberg have confirmed they will attend next month's last ever Mid Wales Charity Forum.

The January 6 forum, held at Theatre Hafren, has become one of the sport's best-attended events,

but the organisers have decided this will be the last one.

David Richards, who will be six days into his new job as chairman of the MSA, will be joined by Wales Rally GB winner Elfyn Evans, his father Gwyndaf, fellow Welsh legend David Llewellyn and former BMC and Ford team

manager Stuart Turner.

First run in 2004 by then world champion co-driver and Newtown resident Phil Mills, the forum has raised £99,000 for local charities. The last remaining tickets for an entertaining evening, hosted by Howard Davies, are available from thehafren.co.uk or 01686 614555.



Wilson will share his stories

### GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

# DAVID EVANS

**"And so, the WRC lost to womens' cricket..."**



**W**omens' cricket. Don't get me wrong, I was chuffed to see England's ladies edge India in this year's World Cup final. But, team award at the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year?

I'm not so sure. Disappointingly, actual team of the year wasn't even nominated. How could the BBC get this one so wrong?

How's it possible that nobody even thought to include M-Sport World Rally Team in the nominations? What a story... British privateer team takes on the world's biggest car makers and beats them. Sorry, realise I'm preaching to the converted on these pages. But it's an absolute shocker.

What's doubly disappointing is the lack of recognition for what the championship has achieved this season. The WRC had been in the doldrums for a while. Let's face it, without Volkswagen arriving and taking control of the promotion of the championship in 2013, the last four years would have been pretty appalling. Thankfully, WRC Promoter has found both its feet and its voice and is now showing some real strength in the direction of commercial operations. This was a genuine breakthrough year for rallying, with the fastest and most exciting sport ever.

And we lost to womens' cricket.

Let's move on, shall we.

I don't want to leave this column on a low, so I'm going to look forward to next year. And, as you'll see opposite, testing for Monte Carlo began in earnest last week (the week before if you were Toyota). I love seeing the cars back in the mountains, it signals the start of a new chapter. Twelve months ago, we stood on the brink of something completely different – but none of us had a clue what was coming. Would the cars be too fast? How dominant would Citroen's return be? And Sebastien Ogier driving for a privateer team, how would that work?

It worked out brilliantly, that's 2017, not just the Frenchman in his Fiesta. Forget 2018 being the tricky second album; year two is going to be outstanding and even better than the one just past.

The cars won't be any quicker, but everybody starts with a real understanding of where they are and what they've got. And there are potential winners everywhere. *Everywhere.*

We start next season with every team having at least two previous winners (Citroen's second is an Alsatian called Sebastien) and a total of 11 drivers who have topped the WRC podium, and stand a very real chance of doing so again.

Do you know who I want to win Monte Carlo? Dani Sordo. The Spaniard's one of the most sincere and decent drivers I've known and, when everything comes together, he can't half drive a car. And Sweden? Hayden Paddon. Wouldn't it be fantastic to see the Kiwi start his season in the best possible fashion, helping somehow erase the memory of last year's tragic opening round?

And then what would happen at Hyundai? The civil war many are predicting would be upon us in time for Mexico.

There's interest and intrigue aplenty for next season. Maybe the BBC will finally wake up to it.

**AGREE/DISAGREE?**  
 letters@motorsport-news.co.uk

# RALLY NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrej

# MANX MAKES MAJOR CHANGES

## New clerks and condensed event for 2018



No prom stage for 2018 Manx



Rally Isle of Man will be overhauled

By Jack Benyon

**Rally Isle of Man bosses have made a number of changes to how it is run in order to improve the event in 2018.**

The event will remain a round of the British Rally Championship, British Historic Rally Championship and the FIA Celtic Trophy, with the most significant change being that only three stages will be run once as it looks to condense the route, while keeping the majority of the stage mileage.

The unpopular loops, which merge cars onto a stage together, have also been dropped as they caused issues on last year's event as they weren't deemed to be set-up correctly, causing delays.

Event director John Gill told *MN* that the route is "95 per cent there".

"We've tried to use stages more than once and to cut down on the need for re-seeing," he said. "I think all but three stages are run twice. It's around about 150 miles, we're just doing a final measurement.

"We will launch our rally guide and more details about what's on offer at the Autosport International Show in January."

The event will also feature a change of start venue. The now customary Douglas Promenade super special is off as the area is being redeveloped, but instead the event will start from the TT grandstand as it did in the late 1990s.

In making the event more condensed, the crews will have less stages to re-see, and Irish crews have been given a boost as they will now be able to travel from Dublin

on Wednesday, when previously it would have been the Sunday before. They can return to Belfast on the Sunday as a point of compromise with the Northern Irish crews, who will have to travel to Dublin on the Wednesday.

The event will continue to offer deals to competitors, organisers and marshals, and has appointed an off-island clerk of the course, Neil Cross from the Nicky Grist Stages. Last year's clerk of the course, Alan Teare, has retired.

Gill is hoping that having three clerks of the course, with one yet to be confirmed, will help with lines of communication.

"That way each person will be able to bring experience to the event," said Gill. "Each of the [major] championships will have a dedicated clerk of the course. A person will be their point of contact and that should improve communication.

"We had an issue this year with the number of competitors coming from different championships and I think this is the way forward to improve communications."

British Rally Championship manager Iain Campbell added: "They've acknowledged that there were things that needed to change and they've shown willing and enthusiasm to take on the suggestions.

"Event bosses have been working on 2018 from the moment the 2017 rally finished. They have looked at lots of route permutations that will work for the competitors, the organisers and the local residents and are doing everything they can to make 2018 a superb event."

## Pryce buys back his Fiesta ST from 2010

Osiar Pryce has re-bought the Ford Fiesta ST he used to win his class on his first World Rally Championship event in 2010, and will drive the car on the Jaffa Stages at Pembrey Circuit.

British Rally Championship frontrunner Pryce was on the podium on the five events he finished in the championship's top class this year in a Fiesta R5 run by Spencer Sport.

Pryce - who used the ST in the BRC in 2010 and early in 2011 before switching to a Fiesta R2 - is looking forward to returning to the seat, having initially not intended to rally the car.

"I always wanted to buy that back and have it to own," said Pryce. "I wasn't really fussed about doing anything in it, but I took it out for spin and forgot how fun it was to drive.

"Pembrey was coming up and I haven't done a rally since August, I thought it would be a nice event to break up the Christmas gap.

"It will be nice to go out and have some fun, with no pressure, and just drive."

The December 30 event is



Pryce: to Pembrey in Fiesta ST

named after Gareth 'Jaffa' Roberts, who died while co-driving for Craig Breen when the duo hit an Armco barrier on the 2012 Targa Florio Rally.

Among the entries are regular rally frontrunners Damian Cole (Ford Escort Mk2) and Mitsubishi Lancer E8 driver Thomas Cooper. Jamie Jukes makes his rally return after a frightening crash on the Isle of Man in September in which he suffered a fracture in his neck.

## Swann could switch to R5-spec Mitsubishi Mirage in 2018

National rally winner Rob Swann could compete in a Mitsubishi Mirage next season.

Swann has tested the R5-spec car on gravel and asphalt and was impressed by its performance.

"It's a great car and it would be good to see more makes of cars out there rather than [mostly] Ford Fiestas and

Skoda Fabias. It felt as good as the Fiesta, good grip and stability. It doesn't pitch and dive like the Fiesta. It handles well on gravel and Tarmac, I've driven it on both. At least we have options."

The only stumbling block for Swann is the fact that the car isn't homologated, which means it isn't eligible to compete in the British Rally

Championship's top class.

"I'm disappointed the BRC aren't allowing them to run [in BRC 1, the top class for R5s] because they are not fully homologated yet. The MSA Asphalt Championship is going to allow them to run and it will be interesting to see if the BTRDA has a class [for R5s]. Otherwise you're a bit stuck where you can use it."



Mirage has rallied extensively in the UK in the British and BTRDA Championships

## Smith headlines Christmas entry

Le Mans winner Guy Smith tops the entry for the Christmas Stages, an event he won last year.

Smith will drive his usual Ford Focus WRC08 owned by his father, Peter, who regularly competes on national events and will drive an MG Metro 6R4 on the December 29 event at Croft in North Yorkshire.

Kevin Procter, who retired from the lead of last year's event, will also be a potential frontrunner in his Ford Fiesta S2000 Turbo, as will stuntman Paul Swift (Ford Escort Mk2).

Making his senior rally debut on the event will be George Sheard, son of regular race and rally driver Paul Sheard, aboard their Mazda MX-5. George steps up from Junior Formula 1000.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said. "I've not driven a rear-wheel-drive car on an event before in competition, it should be a laugh."

*"Tony Jardine on his biggest challenge yet"*  
Taking on Le Jog, p58



Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Roy Dempster, SMJ Photography



Kelly will join full Turkey Run entry

## KELLY AND BABY BLUE MAKE TURKEY RUN DEBUT

Frank Kelly will visit the Turkey Run Rally for the first time this year with famous Ford Escort Mk2 named Baby Blue.

The BTRDA Silver Star champion has become a social media sensation with videos reaching millions of viewers for his flamboyant style.

The December 29 event runs at Shackleton Barracks in Ballykelly, Northern Ireland, and has filled its entry with

10 reserves waiting in the wings.

"If I am honest single venue events are not my thing but I have heard great reports from a lot of rally people who speak highly of Shackleton," Kelly told MN. "The general consensus is that it feels like a proper stage rally with plenty of space – and opportunities – to slide the car around a bit."

"I plan to enjoy myself, but don't get me wrong: I will be

trying to do my absolute best," added Kelly, who will have Alicia Knox sitting alongside him. "I know Alicia's father Raymond – he is a scrutineer at Motorsport Ireland competitions. As a birthday present he organised this for her back in April."

As well as a number of R5 and World Rally Cars, Isle of Man TT legend and now sporadic rally driver Michael Dunlop is

on the entry in his usual Den Sport Ford Escort Mk2.

The event will also play host to the opening round of the 2018 Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland, with last year's winner and defending champion Sam Adams returning. "It is good to have young blood like Sam and Peter Beaton coming out to rally – we just need more of it," said clerk of the course Michael Irving.

### Rix targets more MN class wins after roll

Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship regular Aaron Rix is targeting more Class A wins aboard his Ford Ka after a sensational two weeks in the series.

Rix, co-driven by Rob Cook, was heading for a strong result at the second round at Cadwell Park when he clipped a tyre stack and rolled out of the event.

A tight turnaround followed to be ready for Knockhill two weekends ago, where he won his class.

"There were a few hours spent in the garage," said Rix. "The car didn't come off the trailer until



Rix's Ka sported new panels for Knockhill class win

the Wednesday as I couldn't bring myself to look at it.

"I started stripping it down on the Thursday with the intention of getting it ready for Brands. I gave it a good road test and it was well. Because the entry for Knockhill

wasn't packed, I managed to get a late entry."

Rix will return on the Brands Hatch Stages on January 20, for the fourth round of the championship. The entries already number in the 100s.

### Englands go Loco for event debut

National rally frontrunners Martyn and Dawn England are among the entry for the new Loco Stages Rally at Bramley Camp.

The December 29 event will run eight stages of around 24 miles on single-track roads. The Loco Stages has kept its name despite moving from the Longmoor army camp.

Martin Masters (Fiesta S2000) could be among the Englands' challengers on the event, which has a maximum entry of 60.

The only way to see the event is to marshal as it is closed to fans. Contact Dave Whyman (davewhyman@hotmail.com).

### Slaughter offers co-driver seat for donations

British Rally Championship regular James Slaughter is offering a member of the public the opportunity to co-drive him aboard his Ford Fiesta R5.

Slaughter is competing on the Brands Hatch Winter Stages on January 20 – the next round of the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship – and is raffling off the seat alongside him in the Tiger Risk Rally Team Ford Fiesta.

Entry to the raffle requires a minimum donation of £50, with the money raised to be donated to the Heart of Kent Hospice.

Slaughter said: "I was going to do the event anyway and this is an opportunity to raise some money

for a very good cause, while giving somebody a genuine taste of competing on a rally. Included in the prize is three tickets for family and friends to join us in the Tiger Risk Rally Team hospitality.

"The only thing the winner needs to do is make sure they have a National A competition licence, available from the MSA, we will take care of the rest."

Entrants must supply contact details when buying a ticket and the draw will take place on December 24. The deadline is midnight on December 23.

To donate and enter go to [justgiving.com/fundraising/james-slaughter3](http://justgiving.com/fundraising/james-slaughter3).



Slaughter is raising money for Heart of Kent Hospice at Brands

GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

# JACK BENYON

**"Manx Rally is making the right changes"**



**W**riting negative things and channelling less than positive reviews from competitors about this year's Rally Isle of Man was one of the most difficult things I've had to do.

Without getting teary-eyed and emotional, it's the event that opened my eyes to rallying with Patrick Snijers and his 'forceful driving' in 1988.

Some competitors had no issue with last year's event, but some did, and the need for change, to me, was obvious after two consecutive years of multiple delays to stages.

Instead of getting caught up and getting into arguments with everyone about what happened, the event's bosses have been silent since putting out a statement with dignity. It has handled the situation with dignity.

And the praise doesn't stop there. Providing a clerk of the course for each championship should improve the communication between competitor and event which was inconsistent last year, and the addition of Neil Cross, a no-nonsense get things done kind of person, is a brilliant move.

The event has the benefit of the fact that it made a profit last year, and it's pumping those profits back in. Instead of the many off-island organisers seeing stages for the first time on the event proper, many will be invited over beforehand to survey the route and to get some training. This is a fantastic move which should help the stages to run more smoothly.

The route using stages more than once is also fine, after all, they are some of the best asphalt roads close to the UK. It also means marshals won't be traipsing around the island as far and will have to travel less frequently, which should also help.

Condensing the event should allow it to run with less delays and lower the costs for competitors, as they won't need to be on the island as long for receiving, especially the Irish. They can now come over on the Wednesday thanks to a new ferry deal. Given that the drivers on these events are businessmen paying to rally, less days away is vital and that should be achievable this year.

And the merges, well I don't think anyone will miss those. They were a good idea to increase mileage, but created far more problems than they solved. I know, I waited around on the roadside for rally cars for over an hour like every other fan.

The event featured problems last year that were well documented, and perhaps the over-the-top response of some competitors was down to the fact that not a lot had changed from 2016 to 2017, where most of the same problems existed or new ones were found.

So this change of, well, it feels like everything, should go some way to righting the wrongs. After all, the event constantly offers up a thrilling battle on the stages.

A hearty well done to John Gill and his team. Hopefully the proof is in the pudding and I look forward to returning to the island, if I'm still invited...



**AGREE/DISAGREE?**  
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# SPORTING SCENE

Photos: DA Racing, LDM

## Hansen expected to stay on with Peugeot

Fourteen-time European Rallycross champion Kenneth Hansen is expected to remain part of Peugeot's World Rallycross team in 2018.

Hansen Motorsport has worked in partnership with Peugeot to run the Team Peugeot-Hansen squad since 2014, but Peugeot will take on more of the day-to-day running of the team for next season with its 208 Supercars developed and run from its Velizy workshops.

The French marque confirmed in October that it would continue in World RX next season with nine-time World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb as one of its drivers, but gave no further details. Having been team principal for the last four years, Peugeot Sport boss Bruno Famin expects Hansen to fulfil the role of sporting director.

"We are going to keep working with Hansen most likely, but the job share will be quite different from where it was," Famin told *MN*. "Kenneth is Mr Rallycross, I think it would be a big mistake not to have him in the team and our wish is to have him of course. It's not signed, it's agreed but not signed. He will be the sporting director, the guy in charge of making the team work with all the sporting aspects, with the organisers, the other teams and the drivers using his incredible know-how of rallycross."

A decision is yet to be taken on any team-mates to Loeb. An announcement isn't expected until after the marque's final Dakar rally attempt in January. "We have been very happy with the Hansen brothers [Timmy and Kevin]," said Famin. "The point is to finalise the decision, which is not very easy."

# DORAN AND HARRIS TEAM UP TO RUN MINI RALLYCROSS PROGRAMME

## Expansive plans laid out for 2018 challenges



Doran is familiar with the Mini RX

By Hal Ridge

**LD Motorsports owner Liam Doran and British Rallycross competitor Steve Harris have teamed up to acquire three Mini RX Supercars from JRM Racing and plan to develop the cars for the 2018 season.**

Doran was the first driver to use the WRC-derived Mini in rallycross, winning X Games Munich in the car built and run by Prodrive in 2013. The machines were subsequently bought by JRM Racing, who signed Doran for World RX in 2016.

The parties split mid-year as the team worked through developing a two-litre engine to replace the 1.6-litre unit and experienced a number of issues.

"I know what these cars are capable of. The Mini is my most successful car," said Doran. "It's beautiful to drive: look at Hockenheim in 2016 [where he won the semi-final in the World RX event]. There is some unfinished business."

Concrete plans are yet to be finalised for 2018, but the squad is open to running the Minis in World, European and British Championship events, or could sell or rent them out.

"Liam and I have gone in on this together," said Harris. "He believes in the cars and I believe in Liam. Whether we sell them, rent them or have a bit of fun in them, I believe they will be incredibly fast."

LD Motorsports plans to upgrade the Mini, with developments largely centred around the engine.

A close relationship with Julian Godfrey Engineering means the most likely scenario is that JGE's two-litre custom Evo engine will be used.

"It's what should have happened when I was driving the car for JRM," said Doran. "The car was never the issue. The Mini is a great chassis and I'm confident it's going to turn heads; I'm a big believer that drivability of a car is what makes it fast and consistent."

The team will continue to run its Citroen DS3 Supercars and is expanding its Devon facilities. Having spent a year on the sidelines in 2017 due to licence suspension, Doran may also return to the wheel himself for some selected World RX appearances.

"Nothing is for sure yet," he said. "I would love to get back behind the wheel, but we're focusing on the team."

## Bakkerud fourth on Andros Trophy debut in Andorra

Multiple World Rallycross race-winner Andreas Bakkerud made his Andros Trophy ice racing debut last weekend.

He drove in Andorra, the series' third round, for the DA Racing team alongside double Andros champion and fellow World RX driver, Jean-Baptiste Dubourg.

Testing the V6-engined car for the first time on Friday morning in free practice, Bakkerud improved his pace throughout the weekend and set the second fastest time in Q2 in Saturday's event, before finishing fourth overall.

"Driving in the Andros Trophy was a

pure moment of fun," said Bakkerud. "I smiled as soon as I climbed into the car. I have great respect for the Andros Trophy drivers. I was lucky to be in the best team alongside the best driver. The feeling at the wheel is not the same at rallycross, there you have to always be on the attack. On the ice you have to know how to read the track constantly. I'm going to enjoy the holidays before studying the possibility of returning."

Dubourg won the opening encounter on Friday before finishing second on day two to take the points lead.



Bakkerud raced in Andros Trophy

## Testing clampdown for World Rallycross entrants

Testing restrictions for permanent World Rallycross Championship entrants will be implemented for the 2018 season.

After entries close on March 1, permanent entrants will only be able to run at World RX venues at three official tests, at Loheac in France (March 7/8), Silverstone (March 26/27) and in Riga, Latvia (Mid-July), in a bid to reduce costs.

The Loheac and Silverstone tests will be restricted to permanent World RX

teams and individual entrants, nominated wildcard drivers and regular round-by-round entrants (that will take part in three rounds or more in 2018), while the in-season test in Riga will include track time for European Championship Supercar and Super1600 competitors.

Tests on non-WRX circuits remain unrestricted. Non-permanent WRX racers can continue to test at WRX venues through the year, but not within 56 days before each circuit's event.

## Bland rejoins the National Hot Rod trail

Regular National Hot Rod round winner Shane Bland will return to the sport in 2018 after sitting out events in the latter part of 2017.

The Vauxhall Tigra racer started the season, which kicked off in July, but quit after receiving a ban in August. Now, though, he has decided to return.

"I had two very successful meetings at my least favourite tracks at the start of the campaign, and that gave me the confidence I needed that I could fight back and beat the best," he said. "Unfortunately, the comeback was short



The experienced Bland will return to the short ovals in his Vauxhall Tigra

lived as I received a two-race meeting ban for noting my tyre numbers down incorrectly. I didn't cheat and the powers

that be agree it was a simple clerical error however my chances of qualifying for the 2018 World Championship are all but over."

## Dates set in stone for the biggest prizes in 2018 National Hot Rod racing



Euros are at Lochgelly

The dates for the National Hot Rod series have been published, with the showpiece World Final set to take place at Ipswich on July 7/8.

The second half of the 2017/2018 English points championship kicks off at Birmingham on March 3 and it finishes at Aldershot on June 10. The 2018/2019 competition starts

at Birmingham on July 21, and it stops for the winter after the traditional fireworks meeting at Hednesford Hills on November 4.

The European Championship will take place at Lochgelly in Fife on April 5/6. The National Championship is at Hednesford on August 4/5. The British title is up for grabs at Tullyroan on September 22/23.

### CALENDAR

#### National Hot Rod dates 2018: England

DATE	PLACE	ROUND
March 3	Birmingham	Round 8
March 18	Hednesford	Round 9
March 30	Northampton	Round 10
April 2	Ipswich	Round 11
<b>April 5/6</b>	<b>Lochgelly</b>	<b>European Championship</b>
May 7	Hednesford	Round 12
May 28	Ipswich	Round 13
June 10	Aldershot	Round 14
<b>June 23</b>	<b>Ipswich</b>	<b>Thunder 500</b>
<b>July 7/8</b>	<b>Ipswich</b>	<b>World Final</b>
July 21	Birmingham	Round 1
<b>Aug 4/5</b>	<b>Hednesford</b>	<b>National weekend</b>
Aug 27	Ipswich	Round 2
Sept 2	Aldershot	Round 3
<b>Sept 22/23</b>	<b>Tullyroan</b>	<b>British Championship</b>
Sept 30	Northampton	Round 4
Oct 14	Hednesford	Round 5
Oct 20	Ipswich	Round 6
Nov 4	Hednesford	Round 7

# HAVE YOUR SAY

MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

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## READERS' PICTURES OF THE YEAR



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Photographs must be of a good quality and please send no more than three images

**ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S  
FAVOURITE OF  
THE WEEK!**



Jamie Pinchbeck appealed to art editor Mike Stokoe's Rover passion with this shot



Graham Lomax got Trevor Willis's slip



Goodwood woe by Anthony Underwood



Knockhill in reverse, by Alex Ireland



The rare Merc C292, by Greg Tomkins



Gerallt Price caught this Epynt moment



BMW Brands chaos, taken by Gary Hill



Andrew Cliffe was in the right place for this F3 Cup accident at Brands Hatch



Will Jones captured this drama from Donington Park's Renault UK Clio Cup round



Neil Ormston's shot from Castle Combe



Peter Atkins was at Rockingham's rally



Eric Barnes was at Autosport International



Karters hitching a lift, by Brian Gower



Tony Forrester caught this dramatic rollover at Castle Combe for Steve Hall



James Gidding's autograss photograph



Jodie Halse's BMW. Gary Hill's photo

QUIZ PAGE ANSWERS: Quick quiz Section 1: 1 Three - Thierry Neuville, Jari-Matti Latvala, Sebastien Ogier; 2 Jack Goff, three; 3 The clip was from a race in 2014; 4 28; 5 Josef Newgarden; 6 David Coulthard; 7 Shanghai SIPG; 8 The races were cancelled due to Typhoon Lan; 9 Craig Breen; 10 Marty McCormack.  
Section 2: 1 B 39 days; 2 A Bahrain; 3 B 12; 4 C Oulton Park; 5 C 70; 6 A 2: Porsche (Bernhard/Hartley/Bamber), Toyota (Davidson/Buemi/Nakajima).  
Crossword: Across: 1 Witts; 2 Kopecky; 3 Conway; 4 Plum Pudding; 5 Land; 6 C1 Challenge; 7 Malton Forest; 8 Leominster; 9 Rick; 10 Etios; 11 Haird; 12 Mettet. Down: 13 Leclerc; 14 Sweden; 15 Palou; 16 King's Lynn; 17 Plough Lane; 18 Daniel Lloyd; 19 Heathcote; 20 Griffith; 21 Myherin; 22 Tanak; 23 Laurent; 24 Ypres; 25 Gina.

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**STARRING: LEWIS HAMILTON, FERNANDO ALONSO, SEBASTIEN OGIER, JOHAN KRISTOFFERSSON**



# MOMENTS THAT DEFINED

# 2017



By Matt James

As the curtain comes down on a fabulous 2017 season, it is time for *Motorsport News* to reflect on the season just past.

There have been some dramatic moments, some heroic performances and some outstanding drives.

We reflect on them all in our countdown of the defining moments of the 2017 season, both on and off the circuit.

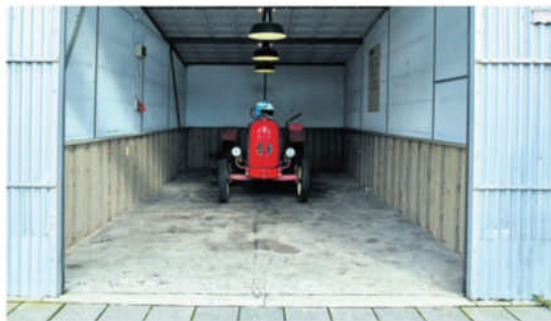
We have a British world champion in F1 and the successes of M-Sport in the World Rally Championship have been superb. There has been plenty to smile about over the last 12 months.

We have looked at every branch of the sport and included our personal favourites.

Do you agree with our Defining Moments selection?

If you think there is something we have missed out, feel free to get in touch. Email us at [letters@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:letters@motorsport-news.co.uk).

Have a great festive period and don't forget to head to the newsagents for our first issue of 2018, out on January 3.



# MOETEFINDT CONQUERS THE NORDSCHLEIFE

**O**n October 23rd, Moetefindt trailers made its own small piece of history on the Nurburgring Nordschleife.

Compared to the 8m15s pole time for this year's Nurburgring 24 Hour race, a 12m6s lap of the 20.8km 'Green Hell' doesn't sound especially fast, even allowing for the wet autumnal conditions that greeted Nordschleife circuit expert and TV presenter Patrick Simon, the man entrusted with driving duties.

But this was no ordinary lap. Set by a road-going Porsche Panamera Turbo Sport Turismo, towing a Moetefindt trailer carrying a Porsche Junior Tractor 108 that weighs in at 985kg, it was the fastest time recorded by a car towing a trailer around the famous circuit.

Suffice to say, trailers are not designed to travel at great speeds, nor are they tested on the Nurburgring to optimise performance in the same way that cars are. The primary function of a trailer is to safely transport a load from A to B, without adventure or mishap – not to break lap records. Yet that is precisely what Moetefindt trailers has achieved, with Patrick behind the wheel.

The idea was devised by Jens Moetefindt, the CEO of Moetefindt trailers and a regular competitor in the Nurburgring-based VLN Endurance Series. His goal was not only to achieve the most impressive speeds possible, but also to showcase the impressive technological capabilities of his product range that can improve safety on the road.

With Moetefindt's industry-leading air suspension system, which ensures a smooth ride while also spreading the load evenly across the axles to improve

durability and tyre wear, Jens was confident that his bespoke trailer would be up to the task. But reality exceeded all expectations.

Despite towing a total weight of 2.2 tonnes, Patrick reached a maximum speed of 180kph on the long Dottinger Hohe straight, helped by a three-dimensional nose section to improve aerodynamic performance.

Through the tight and twisting corners – over 150 in all – the FTP 235 trailer coped impressively, its double-axle configuration allowing the trailer to tilt while simultaneously turning into the corner to ensure a

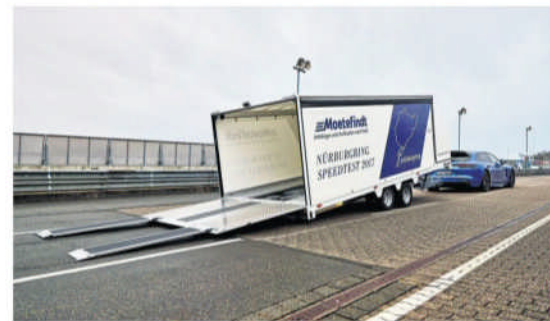
**“THE FTP 235 TRAILER  
COPEDED IMPRESSIVELY,  
ITS DOUBLE-AXLE  
CONFIGURATION  
ALLOWING IT TO TILT  
INTO THE CORNERS TO  
ENSURE A STABLE RIDE”**

stable ride through the high-speed run from Flugplatz through Schwedenkreuz. All the while, tethers over the tractor wheels ensured the 1959 classic remained in place through the bumpy Karussell and over the jump at Pflanzgarten 2.

With an unforgettable record achieved and its reputation for safety enhanced, this latest triumph of German engineering further positions Moetefindt trailers as a market leader in the transportation sector. Wait and see what is in store for next year...



**Moetefindt**  
Tailor-made trucks and trailers



# DEFINING MOMENTS

## JAGUAR LAUNCHES I-PACE ELECTRIC SERIES

50



**WHERE: ON THE FORMULA E PACKAGE**  
**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 12**

Jaguar's on-track return to international racing in Formula E didn't quite go to plan, with the Indian-owned British manufacturer toiling to last in the teams' championship.

Progress was made over the season but its biggest splash in the series came in late summer, when it announced it would orchestrate a one-make racing series for its incoming I-PACE electric sports car. The I-PACE Trophy will become FE's first support category in

2018/'19 and leaves no doubt over Jaguar's newly rekindled commitment to motorsport. Every car will be stored and transported by Jaguar, which will also centrally engineer the machines – think Jonathan Palmer-run Formula 2, but with big electric tin-tops. Want more validation of the series' credentials? The 1986 Indy 500 winner Bobby Rahal will reunite with Jaguar, having joined the Formula 1 team in a senior role in 2000, by placing two drivers in the series from his Rahal Letterman Lanigan US race team stable. **SAM**

## ALFA ROMEO BACK TO BRITISH TOURING CARS

47



**WHERE: ALL OVER THE UK**  
**WHEN: THROUGHOUT 2018**

There are certain words that are bound to get a fan of tin-top racing excited. Included among them are 'Alfa Romeo' and 'dealer team'.

At the end of August, Handy Motorsport boss Simon Belcher and the team's driver Rob Austin revealed that they had tempted the Italian firm to engage in the British Touring Car Championship again with a

new project centred around the Giulietta model. It will hit the tracks at the start of 2018.

Immediately, people were harking back to the days of the Gabriele Tarquini-driven 155 which conquered the BTCC back in 1994. But the fact this is a dealer team is even more significant: it means that all of the dealerships in the United Kingdom will be engaged with the programme and the message of Alfa back on track will be spread far and wide across the country. **MJ**



49

## ROGER ALBERT CLARK RALLY RETURNS

**WHERE: ALL OVER THE NORTH OF THE UK**  
**WHEN: NOVEMBER 10-13**

Few rallies get the sort of reception from competitors, marshals and fans that the 2017 Roger Albert Clark Rally received.

After a gap of three years while the rally was reinvented, it came back with a bang in November and drew rave reviews. Under a general concept of 'go big or go home', rally manager Colin Heppenstall really went for it, with four days, 280 stage miles and three countries.

From Friday morning, when

the car parks at Shelsley Walsh could barely cope, it was a runaway success and gave thousands of enthusiasts, whether competing or not, a truly epic experience in the forests of Wales, Northumberland and Scotland.

The competition was intense and the pace was more like a one-day sprint as Marty McCormack won the big prize. But rallying itself was the real winner for here was an event that created a unique buzz. The only problem is that there is a two-year wait until the next one. **PL**



46

## KRISTOFFERSSON WINS THE WORLD RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP

**WHERE: RIGA, LATVIA**  
**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 17**

Tipped as *Motorsport News'* dark horse ahead of his first full World RX season in 2015, this was the year that Johan Kristoffersson finally had the machinery to match his talent.

He beat the best in the business, including esteemed PSRX Volkswagen Sweden team-mate Petter Solberg, to claim his maiden World title.

Driving a VW Motorsport-built Volkswagen Polo GTI, derived from the dominant Polo WRC machine, Kristoffersson scored a record-breaking

seven wins (five consecutively) and 10 podiums. All that stopped him completing the full set was a slow final start in round one, and getting caught in an incident ahead of him in the semi-finals in the penultimate round in Germany, with the title already secured.

Concluding his year in style, Kristoffersson took another maximum points haul at the final round in Cape Town, and topped it off by heading Gymkhana specialists Ken Block and Solberg at Gymkhana Grid in Johannesburg a week later. **HR**

## NIGEL GREEN WINS HIS FIRST BRISCA F1 WORLD FINAL



48

**WHERE: FOXHALL HEATH, IPSWICH**

**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 16**

After lifting the European title, Nigel Green was one of the major threats for the BriSCA F1 World Final, but it was an accolade he had never lifted before.

The brother of DTM star Jamie moved into F1 in 2013 and it took him two years to win his first final. Another two years later, he was literally on top of the world.

Green had been a major player all season, but things rarely run smoothly in BriSCA F1. He shot into a lead in the final, but an early crash halted the competition. He held his nerve, but then a backmarker spun in front of him with a lap to go.

That let Dan Johnson within touching distance, and he tried a last-lap kamikaze move.

It failed (and he only served to take himself out of the competition), and Green was free to claim the silverware. It was a great finish to the campaign. **MJ**

## LAPPI WINS RALLY FINLAND

**WHERE: JYVASKYLA, FINLAND**

**WHEN: JULY 27-30**

Finland breathed a sigh of relief in July. The future, it appears, is safe. Toyota's Jari-Matti Latvala set a cracking early pace on the season's fastest roads, but when his Yaris WRC hit trouble on Saturday, J-ML's countryman and team-mate Esapekka Lappi was there to pick up the pieces.

Pick up the pieces? That sounds like this win was gifted, it wasn't. Lappi put Latvala to the sword.

Reassuringly for the thousands of home fans, Lappi is a Finn's Finn; the sense of humour is Raikkonen-dry and his attitude Kimi-cool and the speed? Put it this way, the times he was setting were enough to put a smile on Markku Alen's face. **DE**



45



44

## INSURANCE ISSUE CONTINUES IN IRELAND

**WHERE: REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**  
**WHEN: ONGOING**

While this isn't necessarily a 'moment' as such, as it's ongoing, Irish motorsport, particularly rallying, is facing hard times thanks to insurance difficulties.

Motorsport Ireland, the sport's governing body in the country,

has managed to agree insurance deals for the past two years, but the price has been high after accidents in previous years.

The increased cost is being passed down to events and then competitors, with entrants paying a mandatory levy on entry fees, pushing up the cost to go rallying.

This provides a circular problem.

If less people enter, less levy is gained and costs go up. It's a chicken and egg situation.

Such is the passion and support of Irish rally crews, rallying is surviving.

However, how long it can last with levies the way they are is anyone's guess. Fingers crossed a resolution is found. **JB**

Photos: LAT, Adam Hall, SMJ Photography, Eddie Walder, fiaworldrallycross, Colin Casserley

# GINETTA ANNOUNCES LMP1 EFFORT

43



**WHERE: LEEDS, UK**  
**WHEN: JANUARY 4**  
 Where would sportscar racing be without Ginetta? Before you laugh that comment off, just give it a second thought...  
 Ginetta essentially sustained the GT4 category through its darkest days, and now it's thriving. It's got multiple British championships. It made LMP3 a reality by being the first firm

to launch a car in 2015, and took the first category title in the European Le Mans Series. The list of successes goes on. Now Ginetta has a new mission – save LMP1. The current world championship is in a bit of a state. Manufacturers have abandoned it – aside from Toyota – costs have soared and an LMP2 car came within a whisker of winning Le Mans.

Privateer P1 has always been a tough sell, but now the big boys have gone to play elsewhere with their big funding, there's a chance for privateers to shine again. And Ginetta is by far the most advanced with its customer P1 offering. Developed in conjunction with strong partners – including Williams – expect the Ginetta P1 to turn some heads next year. **RL**



# WOODHOUSE WINS MN CIRCUIT RALLY 42

**WHERE: CADWELL PARK, LINCOLNSHIRE**  
**WHEN: APRIL 9**

It was a title fight that almost went down to the wire, but Ian Woodhouse and Paul Rowland became the second Motorsport News Circuit Rally champions in 2016/17.

His key rival was team-mate Paul Swift, the stuntman, who was so taken by the championship after the first few rounds that he decided to continue.

The two Ford Escort Mk2 Millington-powered men went toe-to-toe, with Woodhouse taking maximum

scores at Snetterton and Donington Park. Swift scored his first overall rally win on the Brands Hatch Stages, but ultimately a prior work commitment in China meant Swift had to miss the final round.

Woodhouse's expectations were low entering the season: "At the start of the season we were concentrating on our class. We weren't going to win it, or even think about winning it."

Any talk of second-season syndrome were dispelled quickly as the events continued to fill its entries within minutes of opening. **JB**

# DI GRASSI CLINCHES FORMULA E TITLE 41

**WHERE: MONTREAL, CANADA**  
**WHEN: JULY 30**

All things being equal this should have been a second straight Formula E title for Sebastien Buemi, but Lucas di Grassi would not be denied a third time.

Exclusions and a New York absence meant Buemi, with six wins to di Grassi's two, held a slender lead heading to Montreal. But while di Grassi put in pole and won supremely, Buemi imploded. A qualifying crash and later exclusion from the race meant di Grassi was almost

guaranteed the title on Sunday, and when Buemi struggled in qualifying and picked up damage on the opening lap of the race, that was all she wrote.

It was a deserving triumph for di Grassi, who showed supreme tactical nous and energy management to score unlikely back-to-front results earlier in the season and then delivered when it mattered.

The ultra-consistent, resilient Brazilian was a worthy champion, and Formula E's third different title winner in three seasons. **SAM**



# ASTON MARTIN BECOMES RED BULL'S TITLE SPONSOR 40

**WHERE: MILTON KEYNES, UK**  
**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 25**

Aston Martin might be more synonymous with James Bond than an energy drinks company, but that could change in the future as the British car manufacturer announced it would become the Red Bull Formula 1 team's title sponsor for 2018.

Aston was already part of the Red Bull family, joining the team ahead of the 2016 season as an "innovation partner" – collaborating on the Aston Martin Valkyrie hypercar – but has now

taken that relationship to the next level.

A new Advanced Performance Centre has been created on Red Bull's campus in Milton Keynes, which will create more than 100 jobs, house the development of Red Bull and Aston's next supercar project and foster closer collaboration between the two brands.

CEO of Aston, Andy Palmer, has even gone as far as suggesting the company could create their own F1 engines should the 2021 regulations interest them. Watch this space. **SM**



# WILLIS WRAPS UP THE BRITISH HILLCLIMB TITLE 39

**WHERE: PRESCOTT, NEAR CHELTENHAM**

**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 3**  
 He had failed to win a run-off since round 15 at Harewood in early July and he didn't enter the winner's circle on this day.

Despite this Trevor Willis sealed his second British Hillclimb championship with four rounds left, such was his consistency. He finished on the podium 10 times, and his lowest placing was seventh on Guernsey – his worst hill statistically.

Consistency has been his strength since he first drove a single-seater 17 years ago and this year he only failed to score once. After Prescott he finished second three times and won the last round. However, it is undeniable that six-times champion Scott Moran was still the man to beat on the occasions when he appeared, which was 16 of the 34 rounds. Next year's challenge will be from Wallace Menzies, who was flying for the last third of the season, but Willis will relish that battle. **EW**

# BOTTAS CONFIRMED AT MERCEDES AND TAKES HIS MAIDEN GP WIN 38

**WHERE: SOCHI, RUSSIA**  
**WHEN: APRIL 30**

It was chosen as *MN's* defining moment of 2016. But Nico Rosberg's shock retirement after clinching last season's Formula 1 title provided a golden opportunity for one up-and-coming driver in the series' top team for 2017.

In the end it was former Williams driver Valtteri Bottas who got the nod and the Finn made an impressive start. He resisted intense pressure from Sebastian Vettel to take his maiden triumph in Russia in only his fourth race with the

team before following that up with another similar triumph in Austria.

At this point a genuine title challenge looked possible as he was not far behind Vettel and team-mate Lewis Hamilton. But his season began to unravel in the second half of the year as Hamilton found another gear and an under-pressure Bottas was left a long way in the Briton's wake. A late resurgence and third win of the year at Abu Dhabi ensured he ended up just 12 points behind second-placed Vettel in the standings. **SL**



# MANOR F1 ENTERS ADMINISTRATION 37

**WHERE: BANBURY, UK**  
**WHEN: JANUARY 6**

It may seem a lot longer ago than just 2016 that Manor last competed in Formula 1. But, believe it or not, it was only at the start of this year that the team went bust.

Shortly after Christmas it was announced Just Racing Services Ltd – the company that operated Manor – had gone into administration threatening the future of the F1 squad. A key factor was the two points Felipe Nasr scored in the Brazilian Grand Prix for Sauber that

denied Manor the vital money for 10th place in the constructors' standings.

There was no shortage of interest from potential buyers for the team – with around 50 parties entering discussions – but none of them ultimately had the cash needed, so the team was shut down at the end of January and officially withdrawn in March.

One final footnote came last month when the FIA refunded the team's 2017 entry fees as a goodwill gesture to creditors. **SL**

# DEFINING MOMENTS



# 36

## ARMSTRONG BARES ALL, IS BANNED FOR SIX MONTHS

**WHERE: LONDON**  
**WHEN: OCTOBER 7**

Was it an acceptable ban or not? While marshalling on the Solway Coast Rally in August, the two-time Scottish Rally champion Jock Armstrong was photographed while exposing his rear-end to an oncoming competitor, Niall Cowan Junior, who he sponsors. He insists that Cowan wasn't travelling at rally speed after he'd hit a bale causing damage to his car. The picture was posted on social media.

The Motor Sport National Court fined Armstrong £1000

and gave him a six month ban, meaning he'll miss the first two rounds of the Scottish Rally Championship in 2018, effectively ending his championship attack before it has even started.

"This makes me more famous for that than winning the Scottish Rally Championship two years in a row," said Armstrong. "I fully understand they have to take action as I was wearing an MSA tabard.

"The funny thing is that I can go out and marshal tomorrow." **JB**

## FERRARIS COLLIDE IN SINGAPORE



# 35

**WHERE: SINGAPORE GP**  
**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 17**

It was arguably the moment when Sebastian Vettel lost this year's Formula 1 title.

The Singapore street track is a circuit Mercedes often struggles at and, with Vettel starting on pole for this year's contest, it *should've* been a perfect opportunity for the German to reclaim his points advantage. He trailed Lewis Hamilton by just three points before the race, but it proved to be the closest he would get to Hamilton for the rest of the year as Vettel's race lasted just a few metres. A startline collision between him, Ferrari team-mate Kimi Raikkonen and Max Verstappen left all three out. Vettel appeared to squeeze Verstappen towards the pitwall and this left Raikkonen with nowhere to go. Vettel did initially continue, with severe damage, but he then crashed again a few corners later.

From that point on, Vettel's season collapsed as myriad engine woes blighted his Malaysian and Japanese grands prix, leaving Singapore winner Hamilton as a comfortable champion. **SL**

## 34 RALLY 2WD IS REVEALED

**WHERE: ORGANISING COMMITTEES EVERYWHERE**  
**WHEN: JULY**

In a year when the news on rallying was often bad, the announcement of Rally 2WD at the end of July was a shining beacon of hope that all was not lost.

The concept was the idea of three enthusiasts who

wanted to do something to stem the demise of gravel rallying as the changes to running order, dictated by overall safety issues, was decimating entries.

Those in historic and smaller two-wheel-drive moderns were staying away rather than run on poor roads and events were facing increasing financial trauma.

Even some of the most popular events were losing money at a rate that organising clubs could not sustain. The plan is to run all the two-wheel-drive mileage first, followed by the 4WD cars. It starts on Rally North Wales next March followed by the Red Kite in June. The early signs are incredibly positive. **PL**



## CHRIS HAIRD WINS THE NATIONAL HOT ROD WORLD FINAL



**WHERE: FOXHALL HEATH, IPSWICH**  
**WHEN: JULY 2**

National Hot Rod's Mr Perfect was in imperious form at Foxhall Heath for the big one at the start of July.

After having missed out on the points title when illness ruled him out of the showdown, handing the glory to Kym Weaver, he was determined to put things right at the big one. From the moment the cars took to the track in qualifying, the Vauxhall Tigra racer was nailed.

From pole position, he was

untroubled for 75 laps. Scot Rob McDonald kept him within sight early on until he was overtaken by David Casey, but their battle had let Newmarket's Haird escape and he landed his third World Final crown. Not only that, after he had been to South Africa as a prize drive for claiming the world title, he went on to scoop the National title at Hednesford Hills Raceway in August too.

Haird really is at the top of his game: guess what? He is leading the 2017/2018 English points standings too. **MJ**

# 32

## INQUIRY INTO RALLY DEATHS CONCLUDES

**WHERE: EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND**  
**WHEN: NOVEMBER 21**

It's finished. Investigations into deaths on the 2013 Snowman Rally and 2014 Jim Clark Rally have finished. Hopefully the families of the victims are satisfied with the 172-page determination issued by the FAI's conductor, Sheriff Maciver.

Rallying can be content that a thorough person oversaw it and got to grips with the nitty-gritty of the sport in fantastic fashion. His recommendations were fair and reasonable, and give rallying a chance to reset, and make sure that the deaths on the events aren't in vain.

Of the inquiry, World Rally Championship winning co-driver Robert Reid said: "From a rallying point of view, it has been picked to bits by lots of experts and I think it's come out of it well. Generally I think it's very positive. The interesting thing now is to see how the sport reacts, deals with it and moves on from it." **JB**



# 31

## RON DENNIS SELLS McLAREN SHARES AND LEAVES

**WHERE: McLAREN TECHNOLOGY CENTRE, WOKING**  
**WHEN: JUNE 30**

The end of an era. After 37 years, overseeing the most successful period in McLaren's Formula 1 history – including 10 drivers' and seven constructors' titles – 2017 was the year Ron Dennis stepped

away from the company he helped to make famous. The 70-year-old sold his 25 per cent share in McLaren Technology Group and McLaren Automotive, and relinquished his directorship of both in June this year.

Joining McLaren as team principal in 1981, he shaped the team into one of the most dominant

outfits as well as managing some of the sport's most famous drivers. Stepping down as team principal in 2009, Dennis continued to focus on McLaren's other business outlets before he was eventually removed from his McLaren management roles in 2016, prior to selling his shares. A fall from grace for one of the sport's leading figures. **SM**

# WRC TO LAUNCH AT ASI

# 30



Photos: Paul Lawrence, LAT, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, John Fife, mkpics.net, Jakob Ebrey, fiaworldrallycross.com

**WHERE: THE NEC, BIRMINGHAM**  
**WHEN: AUTOSPORT SHOW, JANUARY 11-14**

You can keep Monaco, we're off to Birmingham. For the first time in its 45-year history, the World Rally Championship will be launched in Britain. What's more, it'll be launched at Autosport International, the show owned by MN parent

firm, Motorsport Network. In 2018, the WRC will be bookended with British appearances of the biggest stars in rallying (although Rally GB's actually the penultimate event, but who's counting). On Thursday January 11, every driver, co-driver and team principal will be present at the NEC (with a selection of them staying on to entertain you

and I through the following three days), where they will unveil the liveries for their 2018 World Rally Cars. Beyond the main players, WRC2 and the Junior WRC will be represented, as will Britain's own round of the WRC, Wales Rally GB. The crews will be interviewed about their 2018 prospects before they head down to Monte Carlo. **DE**

**WHERE: EBBWVALE, BLAENAU GWENT, WALES**  
**WHEN: JUNE 27**

After years of speculation and proposals, 2017 seemed to finally signal the end for the Circuit of Wales project. The final nail in the coffin came as the Welsh Government decided against funding the £443 million project, having previously indicated it might meet 50 per cent of the costs.

Initially unveiled in 2011 with a proposed opening date of 2016, the circuit would have been able to host British Touring Car Championship and Superbike World Championship events. It had already signed a five-year deal to host Britain's round of MotoGP between 2015 and '19, with an option for a further five years.

While the CoW developer, Heads of the Valleys Development Company (HotVDC), claimed there was a "fundamental misunderstanding" with the Welsh Government, the Association of Motor Racing Circuit Owners' chairman Jonathan Palmer stated "it's been an appalling waste of public money". Maybe the saga isn't over after all. **SM**

# CIRCUIT OF WALES FAILS TO SECURE GOVERNMENT FUNDING

# 29



# 28

# BENTLEY WINS BRITISH GT

**WHERE: DONINGTON PARK**  
**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 24**

It may have taken a few years, but Bentley finally secured the British GT Championship crown, courtesy of Rick Parfitt Jr, Seb Morris and Team Parker Racing.

Bentley's relationship with British GT harks back to 2014 when M-Sport ran the then-developmental Continental GT3 in a couple of races to hone it before heading off to Europe the following year.

Since then, Bentleys have been rather hit and miss in their home

championship. There had been the odd side-line factory effort, but it was only when Stuart Parker secured a deal with the Crewe firm for 2016 that it stood a real shot at domestic glory.



This year the team, Parfitt and Morris, made the Bentley a star in the endurance rounds - winning three of the four bonus-points races to set up their title charge. Third place in a tense season finale at Donington Park was enough to seal a hard-earned crown. **RL**

# 27



# BRITAIN'S WORLD RALLYCROSS GOES TO SILVERSTONE

**WHERE: SILVERSTONE AND LYDDEN HILL**  
**WHEN: JANUARY 2**

January 2 was a significant day for rallycross in the UK with confirmation that Silverstone would take over from the traditional Lydden Hill circuit.

Lydden, the venue of the first ever rallycross event, lost its deal to host the British round of the World Rallycross Championship from 2018. In the 50th year for the sport, the last World RX event in Kent was one of celebration, and won by fan-favourite Petter

Solberg. Two days later, the new Silverstone rallycross layout was revealed.

The Northamptonshire circuit's World RX weekend will be part of the 'Speed Machine' Festival, including live music, while the F1-venue will also host

two rounds of the British Rallycross Championship. Lydden meanwhile will continue to hold British RX events and is pushing ahead with development plans to improve facilities and enable big events to be held there in the future. **HR**

# TIMO MAKINEN DIES

**WHERE: HELSINKI, FINLAND**  
**WHEN: MAY 4**

Driving a works Mini for BMC in the Sixties, Timo Makinen found another use for his left foot. Instead of just using it to facilitate the switch between cogs, he tried stabbing the middle pedal to get rid of the understeer. It worked. And so left-foot braking was born.

But there was so much more to Makinen than finding the fastest way from apex to exit. Born in Helsinki 1938, the original flying

Finn was one of rallying's true characters and a master of front- and rear-wheel-drive machinery. If he made his name in the Mini, he cemented his genius with the venerable Healey 3000 and, of course, the Ford Escort RS1600 to win the 1973 and 1974 RAC Rallies, before sealing the hat-trick in that famous Allied Polymer-liveried RS1800. But it's his third-straight 1000 Lakes win in 1967 people remember best: bonnet up flying the Mini over Ouninpohja's biggest jumps. **DE**



# 26

# DEFINING MOMENTS

## HALO ADOPTED BY FORMULA 1 25



**WHERE: GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**  
**WHEN: JULY 19**

When it was announced that as of 2018 all Formula 1 cars must use the Halo it was to the dismay of drivers, teams and fans. Deemed ugly and against

the DNA of single-seater racing by its critics, the FIA nevertheless implemented the Halo on grounds of safety despite nine out of 10 teams voting against the device.

Shrouding the cockpit, the Halo is designed to deflect

errant debris away from a driver's head and prevent injury or death, such as in the Henry Surtees and Justin Wilson accidents over the last decade. Formula 2 will also use the Halo next year, before the new International Formula 3

series will introduce it for 2019. While the FIA's research, which began in 2011, has proven that the Halo will be effective and beneficial to a driver's safety, don't expect opinions to change before the start of the season. **SM**



## KUBICA RETURNS TO F1

**WHERE: VALENCIA, SPAIN**  
**WHEN: JUNE 6**

The Circuit Ricardo Tormo in Valencia is rarely the focus of the motorsport world, but for one afternoon in June it became the talk of the sport.

After suffering life-changing injuries in a rally accident back in 2011, Robert Kubica was back. And he was in a Formula 1 car.

The likeable Pole had tested a GP3 car at the start of the year, and did well, so managed to secure a run in a 2012 Renault in Spain. Turns out he did rather well in it.

Renault was so convinced it gave Kubica a test in its full-fat 2017 car at the Hungaroring in August. The arrival of Carlos Sainz in the Honda-Renault shuffle put paid to any race chance with his old team, but did show the wider world that he was ready for another shot in F1.

Williams has recently picked up the call and has tested Kubica three times – most recently in its 2017 car at Abu Dhabi – and is debating whether or not to sign the 33-year-old up for a full return next year. **RL**

## 23 F1 LIVE IN LONDON

**WHERE: CENTRAL LONDON**  
**WHEN: JULY 13**

Liberty Media promised a brave new world for F1 with ramped up fan engagement. But how would it do it? Well, Londoners found out in the build up to the British Grand Prix.

F1 Live hit the streets of Whitehall, and all the teams sent cars to do demos, burn

outs and doughnuts and thrill the thousands who were lining the streets – allied to performances from pop bands and some rather cheesy on-stage presentations. Older-spec cars made the right noise, and the drivers were there to entertain.

All, that is, except Lewis Hamilton.

The Brit was resting ahead

of the second half of the season, preferring to recharge his batteries rather than meet the crowds. He was attacked for his decision by fans and by the national media, but this was forgotten just five days later when Merc man Hamilton dominated the British Grand Prix. It kick-started a roll that led him on to his historic championship title. **MJ**



## 22 JENSON BUTTON BACK IN F1

**WHERE: MONACO GP**  
**WHEN: MAY 28**

At the Italian Grand Prix in 2016, Jenson Button and McLaren announced that the Brit would step down from his race drive and take up a position as a reserve driver and the team's ambassador, most assumed that was the last that people would see of him in the cockpit of an F1 car.

He had mentioned rallycross as a potential competitive outlet in the future and tested a car, and he also had his eyes on the Japanese Super GT Series.



Button raced at Monaco

Before he would be able to decide any of that, there was a call from McLaren. Fernando Alonso was off to Indy for the 500-mile

race and the Frome flyer was in demand once more. In truth, with no testing beforehand, it was a tall order. He started from the pits after the traditional McLaren engine penalties and in the end, he crashed out after an ugly accident with Pascal Wehrlein's Sauber.

It was a sad way to sign off his F1 career, but he now has pastures new with confirmation that he will indeed switch to Japanese Super GT in a Honda next year after a one-off outing in 2017. **MJ**



## 21 MULTIPLE SHUNT IN THE BTCC AT CROFT

**WHERE: CROFT, NORTH YORKSHIRE**  
**WHEN: JUNE 10**

The accident which left British Touring Car Championship racers Luke Davenport and Jeff Smith in a coma, and Aron Taylor-Smith with a broken leg, was a perfect storm.

Motorbase Performance Ford

Focus driver Davenport ran wide on the damp track in qualifying and ripped the sump from beneath the car. That coated the soaking circuit with oil, and the next cars around were powerless to avoid losing control.

All the drivers involved in the shunt have since recovered,

although Smith and Davenport will not be back to full health until next season.

The crash showed the huge strides that have been made in driver safety and even more work will be done in the future to learn lessons from the accident, but it was a stark reminder of the dangers of the sport. **MJ**



Photos: LAT, Jakob Ebrey, mkpics.net, Drew Gibson

# 20

## RALLY4WALES COMPLETES FIRST ROAD REPAIR

**WHERE: CRYCHAN AND HALFWAY FORESTS, WALES**  
**WHEN: MARCH 2017**

It was the story that gave and gave in 2016, but also threatened to take away. Welsh forest rallying was well and truly on the ropes for the year.

Luckily, a group called Rally4Wales stepped up and took on the responsibility for repairing the forest roads in Wales after rallying

had taken place. Fees had been due to go up to an astonishing level had Natural Resource Wales, responsible for Welsh Government-owned forests, continued the job. R4W stepped in and took on the task.

This provided two massive benefits. First, fees remained similar if a touch higher, and secondly rally roads are being repaired by rally specialists who know how to grade a

road for rally-use. The first of these repairs came after the Red Kite Rally in March, and since then the stages on offer to rally organisers has become greater, and the quality of roads has improved for competitors.

Now rallying just needs a change to the seeding issue and Wales can reach New Zealand-levels of motorway rally stages... **JB**



## LAST SHORT OVAL IN LONDON CLOSES ITS DOORS

# 19



**WHERE: WIMBLEDON STADIUM**

**WHEN: MARCH 26**

Racing engines had been heard in SW17 since 1962, but as the final one died down (that of last place finisher in the last race, Steve Hussey in his Superstock racer – for which

he got a prize), an era ended.

The sign off was highlighted by a return of a points-scoring round for the National Hot Rod English series, and the venue was packed with thousands of fans. It was appropriate that Shane Bland, from a family of Hot

Rod racers, claimed the NHR prize that night ahead of Scotsman Rob McDonald.

The officials at the meeting all wore dark undertakers suits and there was a grand parade before that final meeting where cars and stars from the modern day

and yesteryear all took to the track. It was the last track inside the M25 and, given current legislation, that situation will not change. A genuine piece of motorsporting history was lost in Plough Lane on that night at the end of March. **MJ**

## LANDO NORRIS IMPRESSES ON McLAREN TEST / WINS EUROPEAN FORMULA 3 TITLE

# 18

**WHERE: HUNGARORING, HUNGARY/HOCKENHEIM, GERMANY**

**WHEN: AUGUST 2 / OCTOBER 14**

What a year it's been for Britain's Lando Norris. The 18-year-old stormed to the European Formula 3 crown with Carlin in his first full season, where he took nine wins as well as a further 11 podiums before clinching the title at Hockenheim in the final round. He capped off his F3 campaign with second place in Macau and a week later was making his Formula 2 debut in Abu Dhabi as preparation for a full assault in 2018, again with Carlin.

For all the trophies and accolades – being named Autosport's National Driver of the Year – perhaps his greatest highlight and most impressive performance in 2017 came at the wheel of a McLaren during a Formula 1 test at the Hungaroring.

His drive in a contemporary F1 machine was his reward for winning the 2016 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award, and he completed 91 laps and finished with the second

fastest time – just 0.271s adrift of the pace set by Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel.

His performance was impressive enough for McLaren to offer him a reserve role for 2018, and he will drive a car alongside Fernando Alonso in next year's Daytona 24 Hours.

Surely it's only a matter of time until he has an F1 drive. **SM**



## 17 ASH SUTTON WINS THE BTCC

**WHERE: BRANDS HATCH**  
**WHEN: OCTOBER 1**

Ash Sutton was the coming man of the BTCC in 2016, having clinched the rookie-based Jack Sears Trophy in his Triple Eight MG6. For 2017, he stepped into the factory Subaru team alongside Jason Plato for a shot at the overall crown.

As he stepped from his battered car at Brands Hatch after the

opening three rounds of the championship, the silverware seemed a long way away. He admits as much himself. "It was always going to be a hard job," says Sutton. "Leaving Brands Hatch, it looked almost vertical for me."

But then things clicked. Tweaks to the engine regulations helped Subaru, and Sutton flew. While his team-mate

Plato was an enigma, struggling to unlock the secrets of the rear-wheel-drive Levorg machine, Sutton, on the other hand, went on a superb run over the summer and a record of six wins over 15 races. It was enough for him to claw back the deficit to Colin Turkington's WSR BMW 125i M Sport. He held on during a tense finale back at Brands Hatch and victory was his. **MJ**



## 16 INSURANCE ISSUES FORCE MULL RALLY CANCELLATION

**WHERE: ISLE OF MULL**  
**WHEN: JUNE 7**

For the first time since 1990, the Mull Rally was off. One of the most popular events in the UK, gone.

The Tobermory rally ran on closed public roads around the Scottish island since the organisers of the original Tour of Mull funded an Act of Parliament in 1990. That Act passed through the Scottish Government

allowing the organisers to suspend road traffic laws for the event.

However, the Fatal Accident Inquiry into deaths on the 2013 Snowman and 2014 Jim Clark Rally exposed potential insurance implications for the organisers, meaning at short notice the event was cancelled.

While the Targa and Rally Time Trial that ran in its place demonstrated the tenacity and

determination of the island's inhabitants and its supporters, it wasn't quite the same as a full rally.

The event isn't expected to return until 2019, while hopes are high that the Scottish Government will follow England's lead, in passing legislation that places the power to award a closed-road permit for events to the Motor Sports Association and the event's local authority. **JB**

# DEFINING MOMENTS

## 15 CRONIN WINS FOURTH BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE



**WHERE: DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN**

**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 16**

Almost exactly 20 years after the British Rally Championship's closest ever finale, the infamous 1997 Rally Isle of Man, the championship delivered what could be argued as an even closer result in the same location in 2017.

Keith Cronin won the championship by winning the

second leg of Rally Isle of Man by a tenth of a second, by a single point in the championship, beating long-time leader Fredrik Ahlin.

Unlike 1997, three drivers were in contention, not five, with the other being Matt Edwards. He led into the final stage, but Cronin overcame him by a tenth on the finale stage, adequately named 'The Classic'. Cronin needed to win both legs of the

event to score enough points to overturn Ahlin, who was aiming to become the first Swede to win the championship since Stig Blomqvist in 1983.

It was Cronin's fourth title, tying Roger Clark, in four different cars with four different co-drivers. An incredible feat for the driver, this year piloting an M-Sport Ford Fiesta R5 with Mikie Galvin on the pacenotes. **JB**

## 14 MONGER INJURED IN BRITISH F4 HORROR CRASH



**WHERE: DONINGTON PARK, LEICESTERSHIRE**

**WHEN: APRIL 16**

Some of the events that are included in this top 50 are incredibly positive moments for motorsport. This one was not. Anyone who has seen the onboard footage of Billy Monger's British F4 crash will not have forgotten it in a hurry. It was horrific. Patrik

Pasma's expired Carlin car was stranded in the middle of the track at Schwantz Curve. Monger was part of a pack of cars squabbling for position and, as they jinked out of the way of the stricken Pasma, Monger was left unsighted and ploughed straight into the rear of the Carlin machine. There was nothing the then 17-year-old could have done to avoid it. It took nearly two

hours to extricate Monger but he was left in a coma and had both legs amputated.

But then things became more positive. The motorsport community rallied around the teenager and over £750,000 was raised to help support him. He soon vowed to return to racing and completed a triumphant walk of the Brands Hatch pitlane at the British Touring Car finale. **SL**

## 13 McRENAULT IS BORN

**WHERE: WOKING, UK/VIRY, FRANCE**

**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 15**

And so, after a whirlwind three years of rubbish reliability, pants performance and bitter PR feuds, the McLaren-Honda marriage is over.

Ron Dennis's much-lauded reunion with the Japanese brand will sadly go down in history as one of the sport's biggest disappointments. But where Honda failed, perhaps Renault can succeed? All the deal took was a French firm, a Spanish driver, a ton of litigation and a botched upgrade schedule to secure McLaren's switch in engine partner.

Having fallen behind on its

agreed upgrade plan, Honda agreed on an amicable split with McLaren, but still needed a team to stay in F1. Step forward Toro Rosso, which was supplied by Renault – a contract McLaren saw as its engine exit route.

Toro Rosso was keen on Honda's financial backing and, who knows, if the firm turned things around performance-wise it could even be a solid future supplier for Red Bull Racing.

To leverage the deal Carlos Sainz was released from STR to join Renault. As a result Honda's tech chaps started learning Italian and McLaren instigated lunchtime French lessons in Woking. **RL**

## MEEKE WINS MEXICO AND SPAIN THEN CRASHES

**WHERE: ON HIS ROOF**

**WHEN: ALL SEASON**

The defining moment of the year for Kris Meeke? Got to be that Mexico win. Or maybe a better moment that actually defined his year was the trip to the car park about 60 seconds before he celebrated that win.

It's impossible to ignore the middle of the year, such was the brouhaha which surrounded Meeke's May and June. Three successive crashes led to him sitting Rally Poland out. When he came back, it was hardly champagne all-round. It

was the opposite: he crashed at the superspecial in Germany and was nowhere in Finland. A period of misery like that would definitely have defined a lesser driver's season. Not Meeke. He used a championship break through September to get his house in order and the Spanish victory that followed marked the end of the season beautifully. A driver comfortable in the car, pushing and winning where it was possible, but driving to the limit of what he had beneath him where he couldn't. **DE**

## PALMER LANDS DEAL TO RUN DONINGTON

**WHERE: DONINGTON PARK, LEICESTERSHIRE**

**WHEN: JANUARY 12**

The work Jonathan Palmer and his MotorSport Vision group has done to transform circuits such as Brands Hatch and Oulton Park in recent years has been well-documented. And at the start of 2017 it was announced another track would get the Palmer treatment.

In early January it was revealed that Palmer would take over the running of Donington Park and had acquired a 21-year lease of the estate from current owner Kevin Wheatcroft. It looked like an end to a turbulent few years for the circuit after the previous leaseholder's failed bid to land the British Grand Prix left the circuit in serious financial trouble. But it ended up being less than straightforward for Palmer.

With MSV already operating Brands, Oulton, Snetterton, Cadwell Park and Bedford Autodrome in the UK, the deal had to be investigated by the Competition and Markets Authority and was finally approved in August after much scrutiny. Even before the takeover was complete, Palmer had already started investing in improvements with part of the paddock resurfaced at a cost of £400,000. **SL**



## 10 MERCEDES QUILTS DTM



**WHERE: STUTTGART, GERMANY**

**WHEN: JULY 24**

Formula E has claimed a few high-profile scalps recently – step forward Porsche and Audi from sportscars, and Jaguar too. But arguably the biggest shock came when the all-electric series tempted Mercedes away from one of its marquee racing activities.

The three-pronged star has been a pillar in the German touring car category since it

was relaunched in 2000, having run multiple cars and honed many of its young racing talents in the domestic series. But the 2018 campaign will mark its last.

DTM has hit some tough times, but still remains one of German motorsport's biggest draws, and a strong commercial vehicle for manufacturers to promote and shift road-going models.

Regardless, it has lost value for Mercedes, which will instead launch a FE team for the 2019/20

season. "In motorsport we want to be the benchmark in the premium segment and to explore innovative new projects," said Mercedes motorsport head Toto Wolff. "The combination of Formula 1 and Formula E delivers that."

It leaves the DTM with just two manufacturers – Audi and BMW – and facing an uphill struggle to try and remain relevant in the changing modern motorsport climate. **RL**

## PORSCHE WINS LE MANS, JUST ABOUT

# 9



**WHERE: LA SARTHE, FRANCE**  
**WHEN: JUNE 18**

It so nearly ended with a whimper rather than a roar but, somehow, Porsche pulled a third-straight LMP1 victory at Le Mans out of the bag. And when we say 'victory' what we mean is the German firm salvaged any form of credibility for sportscar racing's top category. Audi's withdrawal left just five factory LMP1 entries for this year, and all of them suffered what would usually be

terminal failures to their hopes of winning the world's biggest race. The number two 919 Hybrid of Timo Bernhard, Brendon Hartley and Earl Bamber was dumped 18 laps off the lead by an early hybrid motor problem. But each of the other four cars in the category capitulated dramatically. The sister Porsche lost a sure win with an oil pressure problem and two of the three Toyotas failed to make it beyond half-distance. The third limped home ninth as the rulemakers' pursuit of efficiency

allied to the manufacturers' hunger for power finally took its toll on reliability. The LMP2 Jackie Chan DC Racing ORECA led the way for much of the race, until it fell prey to the recovering 919 in the penultimate hour. Bernhard/Hartley/Bamber would go on to lift the World Endurance Championship crown, but did so after repeated instances of team orders issued to the sister car of Nick Tandy/Andre Lotterer/Neel Jani. Porsche bowed out of the category at the end of the year. **RL**

## JOHN SURTEES DIES

**WHERE: KENT**  
**WHEN: MARCH 10**

Where do you begin to recall the life of Big John? The cliches are all there: the only man to win world titles on four wheels as well as two, the racer turned team owner, etc – but there was so much more to him. The fire for the sport that burned with Surtees was so strong. You only have to witness the efforts he put in to Buckmore Park, the kart track he owned, and the benefits offered by the Henry Surtees Foundation. That was set up to remember his son Henry, killed in an F2 race in 2009. Not only did it raise funds, it gave

a whole host of prizes to young up-and-coming racers who needed a break. The passion, and the forward-thinking, was always there. He could be a tough man to work alongside, as many racers had found out to their peril. But when the commitment to be the best runs so deep, it was understandable. The emotion at his funeral, held at Worth Abbey in West Sussex, was a mark of all those whose lives Surtees had touched, and it showed that he would be sorely missed. Even though it was 50 years since his world championship success, the mark he left was huge. **MJ**



**WHERE: BRDC HQ, SILVERSTONE**  
**WHEN: JULY 11**

With a crippling escalator put in place in the British Racing Drivers' Club's contract with Formula One Management, the tipping point had been reached: the club could no longer afford to host Britain's showpiece event. Derek Warwick, the then president of the club, announced the news in the build up to this year's event, but it was inevitable. The club bore the brunt of the costs incurred in hosting the race, and with no help from elsewhere, it was untenable. The fresh hope on the

horizon came in the form of Liberty Media, the new owner of F1. It was proclaimed to be a forward-thinking company. Now comes the crunch: will Liberty Media, which has already said that it wants to keep the core events in Europe on an even keel, get involved and save the British GP at the former wartime airfield venue. Those talks will begin at the start of next year and they will be detailed. Aside from Silverstone, there are very few options for the UK to host a race – a London GP is a distant pipe dream, and the track is the only realistic option. **MJ**

## THE BRDC QUITS THE BRITISH GRAND PRIX CONTRACT



## NEW LAW PAVES WAY FOR CLOSED-ROAD EVENTS

**WHERE: WESTMINSTER, LONDON**  
**WHEN: APRIL 7**

Closed Roads are go! In April this year, the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed a law making closed-road events in the UK much easier to achieve. Previously, you would have needed to pass an Act of Parliament in order to get a permit to run events on closed roads. The new law means that an Act of Parliament for each new event isn't necessary. The power to grant events permits now lies with the authority that governs motorsport in the UK, the Motor Sports Association, with a final ratification needed from the local parliament. It hasn't just opened up fully-closed-road events, but also opportunities for rallies to connect stages together through closed roads. There are many possibilities for organising clubs. While we haven't seen a flood of events in 2017, which is unsurprising given a big event would take a year to plan from scratch, we have heard a number of events are in the pipeline, and one has shown its cards. Rally Tendring and Clacton will run around 45-miles in the south east on April 22 next year. The Chelmsford Motor Club-run event is blazing a trail, which is hopefully followed by more events in 2018. **JB**

## LIBERTY MEDIA OUSTS BERNIE

**WHERE: LONDON**  
**WHEN: JANUARY 23**

It only took \$8 billion and 40 years to finally replace Bernie Ecclestone at the head of the Formula 1 empire. Like him or loathe him, Bernie had ruled supreme over the top category of motorsport for almost half-a-century. That was until the Americans arrived. During Liberty Media's lengthy negotiations, it looked like Ecclestone would help to barter the commercial rights deal between the new buyers and former owner CVC Capital Partners, and possibly even remain in charge for a further three-year 'transition period'. Instead, Liberty paid up, implemented its own Chase Carey as chairman and demoted Ecclestone to a 'Chairman Emeritus' role –

essentially a powerless bystander role designed merely as a hat-tip to his history with the sport. "It's like buying a new car," said Ecclestone just after his ousting. "You buy it, so you want to drive it. I can't do anything now. They want to get rid of the Bernie era." The sport has changed much in the intervening 12 months too. We've seen a fresh push on live events outside of race weekends – such as the F1 London Live event – new fan initiatives, a rise in social media coverage and a shiny (if rather unpopular) new logo. What we haven't yet seen is satisfaction among the teams, equality in the sport's financial structure and equality in the ongoing engine war. But, you know, give it time... **RL**



## ELFYN WINS RALLY GB

**WHERE: WALES RALLY GB**  
**WHEN: OCTOBER 29**

Sitting on the other side of the world, Elfyn Evans smiles and laughs. What happened has well and truly sunk in, but there's the odd flashback. On the eve of the Australian season finale, it's the previous round which still dominates conversation for the Welshman – not, I hasten to add, by his choosing. "It was pretty incredible, wasn't it..." he grins. "Them crowds, I haven't seen anything like that, not for a very long time." Typically, Evans is talking about the success of Rally GB rather than his success on Rally GB. Becoming the first

Briton to win his home round of the World Rally Championship in 17 years was a special moment for Evans, co-driver Dan Barritt and everybody involved in the sport in the UK. What was even more special for Elf was that he did it in his own backyard and enjoyed a rare opportunity to perform doughnuts in a rally car in the middle of Llandudno on a Sunday afternoon. Evans didn't just win Rally GB, he dominated it, demonstrating the sort of vice-like grip which Colin McRae and Richard Burns had managed down those same stages two decades earlier. And the crowds? They simply loved the whole experience. **DE**

# DEFINING MOMENTS

## OGIER'S WRC TITLE

WHERE: WALES RALLY GB WHEN: OCTOBER 26-29



# 3



**S**ebastien Ogier's decision to sign for M-Sport was one of 2016's defining moments and the success he and his British employer achieved this year was *the* defining moment for British rallying this season.

Not since Tommi Makinen and Mitsubishi won in 1998 had a British-based team dominated both World Rally Championship titles.

And not since... ever, had a team with a privately built car lifted both crowns.

This was, by some distance, the biggest season in M-Sport's 20-year history. The Cumbrian team was the only one this year to give each and every one of its drivers a victory, with Ott Tanak and Elfyn Evans joining Ogier on the podium's top step. The Ford Fiesta WRC led for more stages and won more rallies than any other car.

It's with some justification that Malcolm Wilson and Fiesta WRC designer Chris Williams stepped up to collect Rally Car of the Year at the Autosport Awards earlier this month.

"Our car has been fast," said Wilson. "It's probably fair to say it wasn't always the fastest, but I think it was the most reliable and the most consistent and that's what wins championships. I'm so proud of everybody in the team and back at the factory, every single one of us has worked so hard for this moment. We made history this year."

And Ogier made a fifth straight world title, elevating him above Finnish four-timers Juha Kankkunen and Tommi Makinen to become the second most successful (behind Sebastian Loeb on nine) rally driver in terms of championships won.

The defining moment of the year for Ogier and M-Sport came in Germany, where they picked up some of the tempo dropped with a big accident in Finland and capitalised on Thierry Neuville's Panzerplatte retirement. The world titles came into sight post-Saarbrücken. **DE**



## LEWIS HAMILTON RIPS UP THE RECORD BOOKS

WHERE: MEXICO CITY WHEN: OCTOBER 29

**I**n his 10-year Formula 1 career up until the beginning of 2017, Lewis Hamilton had only finished in ninth place on four previous occasions.

Most of them were in his early career with a recalcitrant McLaren. They are probably merely a ripple in his memory by now. But his fifth ninth-place finish, achieved after first-corner contact with Sebastian Vettel's Ferrari in Mexico, is one that will definitely stay in the Mercedes man's mind. It made him a British legend.

Hamilton took nine wins on his way to the 2017 title, and along with that became the most successful driver of all time in terms of pole positions, eclipsing Ayrton Senna. He claimed his 62nd F1 victory in America in October on his ride to the crown, which puts him ahead of Sir Jackie Stewart as the most

successful British driver in terms of titles won.

The big question is how far can Lewis go? Is Michael Schumacher's record tally of 91 wins truly achievable? It seems unlikely, and that is nothing to do with Hamilton's talent.

He has often said that he has plenty of other things to do with his life, and his interests are diverse. Perhaps the reason he has not been taken to the hearts of the public like he should be is because he is not a machine, like Schumacher was.

He looks outside the sport and enjoys the things that most people would if they were in his position. This will probably drive him away from the sport eventually, but there will be no denying the impression he has left on it.

But, in the meantime, there is the threats from Ferrari and Red Bull for him to stave off. That is something every fan should relish. **MJ**

# 2

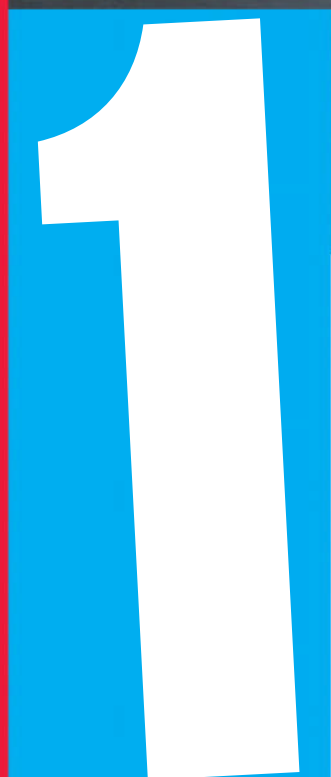


Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, LAT

# ALONSO STUNS AT THE INDY 500



**WHERE: INDIANAPOLIS WHEN: MAY 28**



**F**ernando Alonso has always embodied that Samurai spirit, the resolute craftsman, controlled and coiled, ready to pounce at any moment.

And he unleashed it in 2017, when he expressed his desire to tackle the Indy 500. In truth, McLaren would have been foolhardy to deny Alonso his wish to contest the American showpiece. Had it done so, the relationship between them – already stretched because of the dismal performance of the Honda powerplants in the back of the MCL32 – would have been ruined. So, instead of lining up in Monte Carlo, there were fresh challenges.

He headed west, ready to conquer a new world and boy, did he come close. The bare facts are that the Spaniard was classified 24th, 20 laps down and a non-runner. But look a little deeper, and the impact he made becomes clear.

He had started in the middle of the second row, ran with the lead pack throughout and headed the pack on several occasions. Although shuffled back down the field to 10th after a couple of late-race restarts, he was in the mix and sniffed one of the most sensational triumphs of his already decorated career. He led the third most laps of any driver that day and the European audience for the race was 190 per cent greater than it had been in the previous year. There was huge momentum.

But then Honda let him down. Again.

Reflecting on Sunday night, Alonso said: "I didn't miss Monaco." It might have been a different venue, but the result was the same as he had been used to in F1.

The spark that it ignited within Alonso has turned into a full-on flame. Freed from the blinkers of F1, he has a desire to go and experience other races, other cars and other challenges.

The Le Mans 24 Hours remains on his bucket list, and that may even happen through a developing relationship with Toyota. However, there are other things on the horizon, including the Daytona 24 Hours in late January. The mixed road course and oval, in the dark and with so many variations of car, will provide him with a stern test.

But the big question is will he go back to Indy? Alonso himself has said that he wants to, and the impression he left behind him also left a lot of open doors. **MJ**

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# REVIEW: WORLD RALLY

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

# OGIER AND M-SPORT REWRITE WRC HISTORY

The French and the British combine to claim glory. By **David Evans**



A measured approach helped Ogier to win

**T**wo questions. Boiled down, that's what this year's World Rally Championship came down to. Just two questions. The first is the obvious one: how did the fledgling partnership of Sebastien Ogier and M-Sport dominate both titles? The second is possibly even more straightforward: how did Thierry Neuville miss out?

We're all very well aware just how statistics can be caressed to make any case compelling. These numbers speak for themselves; if Neuville had managed just four more fastest times this season he'd have won twice as many stages as anybody else in 2018.

Twice. As. Many.

As it is, Neuville posted 56 scratch times, with Ott Tanak next up on 30. Admittedly, the Belgian's still got some way to go before he matches the height of Ogier's dominance – the Frenchman won 110 stages in 2013. That was just the 79 more than his nearest rival!

Neuville's speed wasn't all about the single stages, he led rallies for longer than anybody else this year. And he won twice the number of events. How didn't he win? Actually, let's start the piece on a positive note. Let's answer question one.

It's hard to imagine Ogier reading American theology. If he did, he definitely took a long look at Reinhold Niebuhr's work. He said: "Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage

to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

In a nutshell, that's how Ogier won a fifth straight title. Thrown the bendiest of curved balls at the end of the 2016 season, the Frenchman quickly established what his options were for this year. He picked M-Sport, did a deal with the Cumbrians, went on holiday and came to the Monte fresh and ready to rock.

Naturally, Ogier didn't feel as comfortable with the Fiesta WRC as he would have done with the 2017-spec Polo in which he'd put down so many testing miles in the previous year, but he didn't stress. He took a sensible line and drove at his own pace. He dropped the car into a ditch just outside Agnieres en Devoluy on Rally Monte Carlo and was, by his

own admission, fortunate to make it out. But make it out he did. He might have dropped from second to eighth, but he was still in it. And, as his confidence with the new car grew, he was back to second by the end of the day. With one stage remaining on Saturday, he was 51 seconds behind Neuville. He was content. A podium would do on his debut.

Neuville hit a bridge in Breziers, Ogier didn't. Neuville retired. Ogier won.

Round two, Sweden and Ogier's struggling to find a set-up he's comfortable with in the snow, but he's there or thereabouts and ends the weekend on the podium's bottom step. Neuville is ferociously fast and looking towards another big lead on Saturday night.

Neuville hit a barrier in the

Karlstad superspecial, Ogier didn't. Neuville retired. Ogier was third.

When Neuville got on the plane to head east for round three in Mexico, he should have been at the head of the table. Instead he was already 36 points behind Ogier. At that point, the defending champion knew two things, he knew Neuville was very, very fast. But he also knew he'd laid the best foundations possible for himself. Eclipsing his 2013 PB of nine wins wasn't going to happen, what was needed was consistency; keep the points coming, keep his nose in front and keep the pressure on his rivals. That's what he did. On the podium on six of the first eight rounds, he still took good points in Argentina and Sardinia where he was fourth and fifth respectively.

*Continued on page 33*

## ROUND BY ROUND

### Round 1 Monte Carlo Rally JANUARY 19-22

Ogier makes a dream start taking a fourth straight win in the French Alps, his first in a Ford Fiesta WRC. Early leader Thierry Neuville retires after he damages the suspension on his Hyundai. The Korean squad suffers an event to forget with Hayden Paddon withdrawn after a spectator is killed in his SS1 crash.

1 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) 4h00m03.6s; 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Toyota Yaris WRC) +2m15.0s; 3 Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC) +2m57.8s.



### Round 2 Rally Sweden FEBRUARY 9-12

Again, Neuville leads from the front but retires with steering damage on the superspecial. Jari-Matti Latvala takes Toyota's first win with the Yaris and moves into the lead of the championship. Double podium for M-Sport strengthens an early advantage in the makes' race, but Citroen is nowhere on the snow.

1 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Toyota Yaris WRC) 2h36m03.6s; 2 Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC) +29.2s; 3 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) +59.5s.



### Round 3 Rally Mexico MARCH 10-12

Kris Meeke leads as soon as the event hits the dirt, controlling the rally beautifully until going off the road and into a car park near the end of the last stage. He survives. Just. Ogier retakes the championship lead with a third consecutive podium and Neuville scores his first top three.

1 Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (Citroen C3 WRC) 3h22m04.6s; 2 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) +13.8s; 3 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +59.7s.



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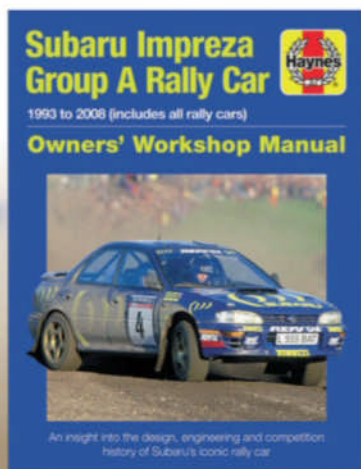


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# REVIEW: WORLD RALLY



Neuville had pace, but not the results



Tanak took two rally victories



Wilson was on top of the world



Meeke had a torrid season

Continued from page 31

By the time the championship arrived in Finland Ogier was, however, moving more onto the back foot. He suffered a sizeable shunt in testing and was facing a rival in Neuville who was absolutely flying. The i20 Coupe WRC hit the podium in Mexico, then won in Corsica and Argentina. Second, third and first in Portugal, Sardinia and Poland left Neuville just 11 points down on Ogier in Jyväskylä.

And then, incredibly, the Gap superstar crashed for the second time in as many weeks. And this time it hurt. Sideways into a tree in Jukojarvi, the pair were hospitalised with co-driver Julien Ingrassia being told he wouldn't be allowed to restart after suffering concussion.

Following that fourth stage, Neuville was ninth, but only 19s off the front. Undoubtedly, the top two in the

championship went to their respective rooms that Friday night doing the sums. If Thierry found the speed to turn this into the perfect score, he would turn onto the season's home straight 19 points clear of Ogier. Nobody in the current generation of the sport had overturned that kind of gap with four rallies remaining.

Neuville held the championship in the palm of his hand in Jyväskylä. What could he do?

There was nothing Ogier could do. The frustration was writ large across his face. He'd stepped aside and left his goal undefended.

The only weapon that remained in Ogier's arsenal in Finland was the psychological one. He used it. In the absence of the #1 Fiesta, Neuville ran first on the road on Friday afternoon. Ogier saw his opportunity.

"Now he (Neuville) realises what is

first on the road," said Ogier. "There are not so many people who have seen that. Since years I have done this job, and people like him, who have never done [it] often say: 'Ah, it's not so much, Ogier's complaining too much'. But now I see what he does when it's tough and it's nothing really impressive."

Did it work? It's impossible to say. But something unsettled Neuville. He was awful on the season's fastest rally. In the end he managed sixth and 11 points, leaving him and his rival dead level.

**"Now they know what it is to run first"**  
**Sebastien Ogier**

Neuville tried to spin it. "We were clever," he reckoned at the Finnish finish. Nobody was buying that.

And that was as close as Neuville would get. Cutting a Panzerplatte left-hander deeper than anybody else cut the left-rear wheel from the Hyundai. Retirement. Disaster. Even bigger disaster when he failed to pick up a single point after returning for Sunday's powerstage.

Advantage Seb. Seventeen points clear, three to go. Spain. Ogier second on the rally, third on the powerstage. Neuville no-scores. Rattled by hydraulic problems he pushed a fraction too hard in Santa Marina on the final day. Too hot through a left-hander, he ran wide and dropped into the gutter on the following right, getting back on the road cost him the right-front. He ended the stage in a cloud of Michelin smoke. Mathematically,

anything was still possible. But when he stepped from the Hyundai, he knew he'd just seen his 2017 title shot go up in smoke.

Question two? Neuville tried too hard this year. Take the Monte incident as a standalone example. He was comfortably ahead when they went into Breziers. But, that was the first stage that would be almost completely dry asphalt. Neuville knew, everybody knew, that would be the first stretch of road to offer a real insight into who'd got what for the rest of the season. It was an almost level playing field. And Neuville didn't just want to beat Ogier, he wanted to trounce him. He could probably argue that he was really unlucky, running off the road by an inch or two and whacking a concrete parapet. But he didn't need to be pushing so hard.

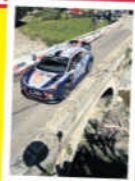
Continued on page 34

## ROUND BY ROUND

### Round 4 Tour of Corsica APRIL 7-9

Meeke leads from the start, but his hopes of back-to-back wins are blown when the C3's engine lets go on SS7. Neuville moves into the lead and stays there until the finish, but it's Ogier who extends his advantage with second place despite hydraulic problems aboard the M-Sport Fiesta.

1 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 3h22m53.4s; 2 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) +54.7s; 3 Dani Sordo/Marc Marti (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +56.0s.



### Round 5 Rally Argentina APRIL 28-30

Heartbreak for Elfyn Evans who misses out on his first WRC win by seven-tenths of a second as Neuville becomes the first driver to win two rounds in the 2017 season. Meeke retires after two big crashes. Tanak keeps M-Sport's podium going, but it's another tricky event for Ogier in fourth.

1 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 3h38m10.6s; 2 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC) +0.7s; 3 Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC) +29.9s.



### Round 6 Rally Portugal MAY 19-21

M-Sport gives Ogier a brand new Fiesta and he wins with it, looking much more like his old self. Neuville is second, but furious at being held up by Latvala who rolled then drives "slower than my grandmother" according to the Belgian. Popular podium for Sordo with Tanak fourth adding to M-Sport's manufacturers' series lead.

1 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) 3h42m55.7s; 2 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +15.6s; 3 Dani Sordo/Marc Marti (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +1m01.7s.



# REVIEW: WORLD RALLY

Continued from page 33

What's undoubtedly annoying for the top drivers is to see Ogier's car off the road and at some fairly strange angles, yet he always gets away with it. But for Ogier, the risk seems somehow calculated; you just get the feeling that he's got a little bit of margin. Yes, that margin might be in the trees, but the trees will be small trees and the sort of trees that won't significantly redefine the profile of his Fiesta. Apart from that tree in Jukojarvi. Which certainly put M-Sport's side-impact safety work through its paces.

That then, is how the drivers' title was won and lost.

Coming into this season on the back of four titles, Ogier was always going to be among the favourites to retain it. But his new team, M-Sport, was not at the top of the list as the most likely to pick up where Volkswagen had left off.

After a year away from the coal face, Citroen was expected to come back and pick up the kind of dominance it had enjoyed through the 2000s. And then there was Hyundai, which had been on the brink of a major breakthrough – and the i20 Coupe WRC was the car which carried over the most parts from 2016.

And then there was Toyota. And, after such an apparently stormy time preparing the Yaris WRC (that's the Finnish Yaris, rather than the aborted German version), nobody genuinely knew what to expect from the world's biggest car maker.

But M-Sport for the manufacturers? No. Not even Malcolm Wilson believed that. Yes, he'd got Ogier, but the champ was backed up by a brace of youngsters not long off the naughty step in Ott Tanak and Elfyn Evans. Hyundai, however, had three world rally winners. And when everybody saw that early Neuville speed, there were fears of a walk over once Hayden Paddon got into gear and the Korean's own WRC points machine Dani Sordo got going. Except the latter two didn't really happen.

In Hyundai team manager Alain Penasse's own words: "We were missing a second Thierry."

Paddon suffered the season from hell. Involved in a fatal accident with the spectator on the opener, he understandably struggled through the early part of the year. A planned co-driver change was brought forward with Seb Marshall stepping in to take



Hanninen's Rally GB nightmare

over from John Kennard after Argentina. Twelve months on from celebrating his first WRC win in South America, Paddon cut a lonely figure as he waited to drive his Hyundai over the ramp in sixth place.

It would be unfair, however, to lay the blame for the lack of a crown solely at the drivers' doors. The i20 was the fastest of the 2017 cars, but also the most fragile with the wheels coming off this one – quite literally – quicker than the others. Add to that powersteering problems and more than the odd engine issue and there's another load of points gone south.

Hyundai's speed made up for some of the disappointment and always allowed for optimism. Early doors at Citroen and it looked like a nightmare. The first two rounds were nothing short of a disaster for the C3 WRC, which looked ill-at-ease in the Alps (where it was beaten by Craig Breen and an older 2016-spec DS3 model). By Sweden, Kris Meeke's onboards gave a graphic demonstration of a car with a mind of its own.

Early radar work showed the team's touring car turbocharging experience had paid dividends under the bonnet, but when it came to the corners, a lack of suspension and transmission development was hurting it badly.

But then came Mexico and an unexpected Meeke win. The Northern Irishman made good use of a cleaner road on day one, but in all honesty, nobody could touch him on the high-altitude stages around Leon. But that suspension issue was never far from anybody's mind – especially not when the car was pitched out of the ruts and into a car park on the final stage.

It was more of the same in Corsica. On the consistent, abrasive French island roads, the C3 absolutely flew and was only halted by an oil-related engine problem. At that point in the season, Meeke was seventh in the championship and 61 points down on Ogier. The game was up. Instead of accepting it and driving for development, Kris tried to force himself back into the game. What followed was exceptional speed which left Meeke first or second in the early stages of the next three rallies. But ultimately Argentina, Portugal and Italy were the undoing of his season. Despite the speed, broken bits, bent panels and no points were the only return. Astonishingly, Meeke was dropped for the following round in Poland.

Three rallies earlier, he'd been on the crest of a wave. And now Andreas Mikkelsen would take his car to Mikolajki. Sitting at home watching Mikkelsen and Breen slip-sliding their way through the mud, it must have been impossible for Meeke not to have a wry smile. In inconsistent conditions, the C3 was all over the

## FINAL POINTS

### World Rally Championship, 2017

POS	DRIVER	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	TOTAL
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)	Ford Fiesta WRC	1	3	2	2	4	1	5	3	R	3	2	3	4	232
2	Thierry Neuville (BEL)	Hyundai i20 WRC	15	13	3	1	1	2	3	1	6	44	R	2	1	208
3	Ott Tanak (EST)	Ford Fiesta WRC	3	2	4	11	3	4	1	R	7	1	3	6	2	191
4	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	2	1	6	4	5	9	2	20	21	7	R	5	R	136
5	Elfyn Evans (GBR)	Ford Fiesta WRC	6	6	9	21	2	6	R	8	2	6	7	1	5	128
6	Dani Sordo (SPA)	Hyundai i20 WRC	4	4	8	3	8	3	12	4	9	34	15	10	NE	95
7	Kris Meeke (GBR)	Citroen C3 WRC	R	12	1	R	R	18	R	NE	8	R	1	7	77	
8	Hayden Paddon (NZL)	Hyundai i20 WRC	W	7	5	6	6	R	R	2	R	8	NE	8	3	74
9	Juho Hanninen (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	16	23	7	R	7	7	6	10	3	4	4	R	NE	71
10	Craig Breen (IRL)	Citroen DS3/C3 WRC	5	5	NE	5	R	5	25	11	5	5	NE	15	R	64
11	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	10	4	R	1	21	R	9	6	62
12	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)	Skoda Fabia R5/Citroen C3 WRC/Hyundai i20 WRC	7	NE	NE	7	NE	R	8	9	NE	2	18	4	13	54
13	Stephane Lefebvre (FRA)	Citroen DS3/C3 WRC	9	8	15	50	NE	13	NE	5	NE	NE	6	NE	R	30
14	Teemu Suninen (FIN)	Ford Fiesta R5	NE	10	NE	8	NE	12	NE	6	4	16	8	31	NE	29
15	Mads Ostberg (NOR)	Ford Fiesta WRC	NE	15	NE	NE	9	8	7	7	10	W	5	38	NE	29

16 Jan Kopecky (CZE) (Skoda Fabia R5) 7; 17 Pontus Tidemand (SWE) (Fabia R5) 4; 18 Nathan Quinn (AUS) (Mitsubishi Lancer E9) 4; 19 Eric Camilli (FRA) (Ford Fiesta R5) 3; 20 Jourdan Serderidis (GRE) (Citroen DS3 WRC) 2; 21 Stephane Sarrazin (FRA) (Fabia R5) 2; 22 Armin Kremer (GER) (Fabia R5) 2; 23 Ole Christian Veiby (DEN) (Fabia R5) 1; 24 Yohan Rossel (FRA) (Citroen DS3 R5) 1; 25 Kalle Rovanpera (FIN) (Ford Fiesta R5) 1; 26 Bryan Bouffier (FRA) (Ford Fiesta R5) 1. **World Rally Championship for co-drivers:** 1 Julien Ingrassia (FRA) 232; 2 Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL) 208; 3 Martin Jarveoja (EST) 191; 4 Mikka Anttila (FIN) 136; 5 Daniel Barritt (GBR) 128; 6 Marc Marti (SPA) 95; 7 Paul Nagle (IRL) 77; 8 Kaj Lindstrom (FIN) 71; 9 Scott Martin (GBR) 64; 10 Janne Ferm (FIN) 62. **World Rally Championship for Manufacturers:** 1 M-Sport World Rally Team 428; 2 Hyundai Motorsport 345; 3 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 251; 4 Citroen Total Abu Dhabi WRT 218. R = retired; NE = not entered; W = withdrawn



Evans broke his duck with a Rally GB triumph

place. Mikkelsen said little, Breen was "petrified".

Finland was more of the same. Back in the saddle, Meeke was never going to have the faith to fling the thing between the trees in top gear in the way he had to win this rally 12 months earlier. And just when things couldn't really get any worse, KM crashed on the superspecial in Germany. The dream had officially become a nightmare.

Instead of turning in on themselves, Meeke and Citroen got together and worked. And worked. Crucially, Ohlins had taken over the suspension and the car was coming. Meeke won in Spain and was at the races in Britain and Australia to bring him towards the end of the tunnel. The big question for next season is the one about the light ahead of the C3...

There must have been moments last season when Meeke rued the day he left

Tommi Makinen's piece of paper unsigned following their latest meeting in Helsinki in 2015. But who in their right mind at that point would have taken a wayward and apparently unstable Toyota effort over a toolled-up and apparently ready red army?

Nobody.

Volkswagen's departure at the end of 2016 dropped Ogier, Mikkelsen and Jari-Matti Latvala onto the market at the last minute. The big surprise was that Citroen didn't make room for Ogier – the lack of budget would become clear as the French firm's season unfolded – so when he signed for M-Sport, that left a Toyota free. Right up until the last minute, that seat had Mikkelsen's name on it. And finally, it was Latvala's, completing an all-Finnish line-up (alongside Juho Hanninen and Esapekka Lappi) for the Puuppola-based team led by a

four-time champion flying Finn.

Latvala had just over a couple of weeks before the Yaris would be homologated. He spied his chance. He'd gone home a broken man, demoralised and confused by his time chasing Ogier at VW, but now he had an opportunity to make his team. He got his head down and worked. There was a chance. A Monte podium was fortuitous, but the Sweden win was absolutely deserved – and rarely has there been a more popular success.

And Latvala deserved more from the year. He drove superbly, only to be let down by the car. Seeing him beating the steering wheel after an electrical problem robbed him of the lead at home was tough, but ultimately inspiring to see the fight that this new opportunity had brought out of J-ML. With Tanak and Lappi alongside him next season, Toyota has a real opportunity to deliver

## ROUND BY ROUND

### Round 7 Rally Italy JUNE 8-11

Paddon leads early on, but labels himself a "d\*\*thead" when he damages a driveshaft after hitting a bank in Coiluna. Tanak takes over and guides his Fiesta home for a maiden WRC win. Latvala is curiously subdued in second, the Finn's happy to take points after a tough run.

1 Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC) 3h25m15.1s; 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Mikka Anttila (Toyota Yaris WRC) +12.3s; 3 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +1m07.7s.



### Round 8 Rally Poland JUNE 30-JULY 2

Neuville and Tanak go into the final day three seconds apart. The Estonian moves into the lead, then crashes on the next test leaving the Hyundai man to clinch a third season win and close the gap on Ogier at the top of the championship table. Paddon finally gets a break with second place after a solid, pacey drive to turn his season around.

1 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 2h40m46.1s; 2 Hayden Paddon/Seb Marshall (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +1m23.9s; 3 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) +2m20.8s.

### Round 9 Rally Finland JULY 28-30

Ogier crashes heavily in pre-event test, then even heavier in the rally itself. Fortunately for him, Neuville can't find the speed to make the most of the championship leader's absence and finishes sixth – the pair are now tied on points. Esapekka Lappi wins his first WRC event on only his fourth start in a World Rally Car.

1 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Toyota Yaris WRC) 2h29m26.9s; 2 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC) +36.0s; 3 Juho Hanninen/Kaj Lindstrom (Toyota Yaris WRC) +36.3s.



### Round 10 Rally Germany AUGUST 18-20

Andreas Mikkelsen stars on his second outing with Citroen (having first stepped into Meeke's C3 in Poland). He leads, but ultimately has to give best to Tanak, who takes his first asphalt win in the WRC. Championship moves back in Ogier's favour with third place and retirement for Neuville after he breaks a wheel.

1 Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC) 2h57m31.7s; 2 Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger (Citroen C3 WRC) +16.4s; 3 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) +30.4s



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Paddon had a year from hell with the Hyundai



Breen was a serial points collector



Lappi stunned with his maiden victory

next year. If the car's right, the big question will be about team management and guiding three forceful individuals in the direction of the collected glory.

Arguably the most exciting thing about this year is the season it's set up in 2018. It's going to be even better. With Mikkelsen joining Hyundai and immediately showing searing pace, it'll be fascinating to see how Neuville manages a power-sharing agreement. The two are famously best mates; how long will that last? And then there's the undercurrent of disquiet from Paddon and Sordo who have been forced to share a motor to make room for the Norwegian.

Hyundai's subplot is going to be almost as exciting to watch as the season itself.

As discussed, Toyota's strong, but the darker horses will be M-Sport and

Citroën – the makes' race is likely to demand three front-line drivers next season. Ogier starts the year as joint-favourite for the title and if Evans can continue the sort of consistency of pace and improvement he's shown through 2017, there's no reason why he shouldn't be right there with him. The Welshman's been brilliant this year, and his home win should be the springboard to even bigger and brighter things. Whoever gets that third Fiesta will have plenty of pressure to bring points. Citroën's position is a strange one. Meeke and Breen have potential for pace and points, but their third team-mate could range from the non-existent to the nine-time world champion that is Sebastien Loeb. A Citroën title in 2018 would be some achievement. Then again, we said the same about M-Sport this time last year. ■



Latvala won for Toyota in Sweden

**Round 11  
Rally Spain  
OCTOBER 6-8**

Meeke bounces back from a nightmare first-stage retirement in Germany with a win in Spain. The Citroën man played himself into contention with a sensible opening day on the gravel before flying through a weekend of asphalt. Ogier and M-Sport on the brink of the title after second (and third for Tanak).

1 Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (Citroën C3 WRC) 3h01m21.1s; 2 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) +28.0s; 3 Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC) +33.0s.



**Round 12  
Wales Rally GB  
OCTOBER 27-29**

M-Sport wins the manufacturers' championship, third is enough for the drivers' title for Ogier and – most importantly for the partisan home supporters – Evans becomes the first Brit to win at home in 17 years and the third M-Sport driver to win in a Fiesta this season.

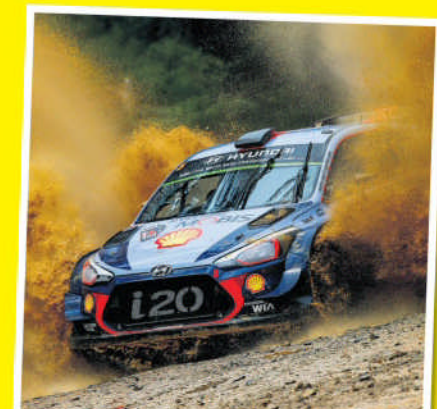
1 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC) 2h57m00.6s; 2 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +37.3s; 3 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC) +45.2s.



**Round 13  
Rally Australia  
NOVEMBER 17-19**

Mikkelsen, now in his third event as a paid-up Hyundai driver, leads in the hunt for back-to-back wins down under, but his rally is ruined by a double puncture on Saturday morning. That leaves Neuville in the clear to dominate the rest of the final round. Tanak takes an emotional podium on his final M-Sport event.

1 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 2h35m44.8s; 2 Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC) +22.5s; 3 Hayden Paddon/Seb Marshall (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +59.1s



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# REVIEW: WRC

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

# TOP 10 DRIVERS

**BY COLIN CLARK**


## 1 SEBASTIEN OGIER



Tops my list once again after an incredible debut year with the M-Sport World Rally Team. We saw a different side to the champ this year. A more intelligent, patient, thoughtful, considered and mature approach delivered championship number five to the mercurial Frenchman. Gone was the anger and frustration that drove him ruthlessly on during his VW years, replaced by a statesman-like bearing that cements his standing as one of the all-time greats of the WRC. Standout performance was the win in Monte Carlo. New car, new team, new approach, off in SS3, then masterful drive to victory.

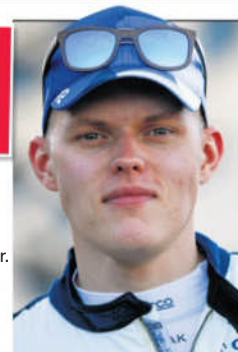
## 2 JARI-MATTI LATVALA



The surprise choice for some as lead driver for the Toyota team ended up having the best season of his life. No one expected much from Latvala, or the car, but a solid start in Monte and then a glorious win in Sweden lifted expectations. Latvala has under-delivered in his career to date. More outright speed and bravery than perhaps any other driver in history, but a propensity for catastrophic brain fade had many asking questions about his ability to challenge for titles. Most improved driver of the year for me, one mistake in the final event his only mad moment all season. He'll be a challenger for sure in 2018.

## 3 OTT TANAK

Benefited enormously from being Ogier's wingman this year. His consistency and his ability to keep a level head delivered two wins and ultimately a big-money move to Toyota. It's easy to forget that his season started off in a less than perfect way with a last-minute change of co-driver. That would have been enough to unsettle many drivers, but Tanak and the new man alongside him Martin Jarveoja rapidly formed a formidable partnership that will deliver many more wins in the coming seasons.



## 4 THIERRY NEUVILLE



The fastest driver in 2017 without a shadow of a doubt, but down in fourth place because of a lack of consistency. It was certainly a spectacular, win-at-all-costs approach from the Belgian, but you have to question if it's a championship-winning approach. Fabulously entertaining to watch in the stages, but ultimately he under-delivered for the team. Thierry might well require a different approach for 2018, but like Colin McRae before him, will find it difficult to curb his all-or-nothing mentality. A champion in waiting? I think so, but all depends on what he's learned from 2017.

## 5 ELFYN EVANS



What a difference a year makes. Twelve months ago he was accepting his British Rally Championship winning trophy with the words: "Well, everyone knows I didn't really want to be here." Well, if we didn't know where he wanted to be then, we most certainly do now. A breakthrough season for the likeable young Welshman that established him as one of the WRC elite. An agonising second place in Argentina might well have been the story of his season, but all that changed with a dominant win in extremely testing conditions on Rally GB. Has shown speed, consistency, maturity and determination in bucketloads this year and will benefit massively from being number two to Ogier at M-Sport next year. Could we be celebrating a British WRC champion in 2018? Maybe a year too early, but don't discount anything with the ever-improving Evans.

## 6 KRIS MEEKE

So much was expected of both Meeke and Citroen this year and ultimately, you might argue, they both under-delivered. But how can you blame a driver when the car he was given was such a catastrophic dog? Pre-season championship favourite with many bookies, yet benched halfway through the season. A rollercoaster of a year that hit some memorable highs and plunged to some stomach-churning lows. Meeke has shown he has the speed and ability to win any rally. But for him to be a challenger in 2018 he needs to know he has the car beneath him and the team at his back.



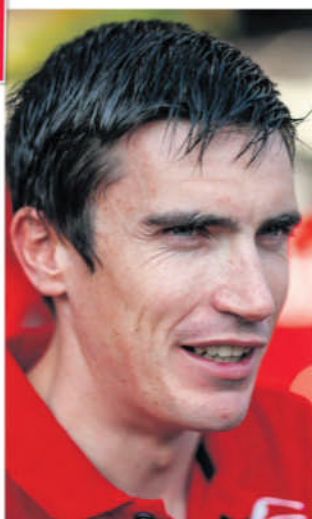
## 7 ESAPEKKA LAPPI

Have we ever witnessed such a whirlwind of a debut in WRC machinery? The pace was there in Portugal, the stage wins came in Sardinia and then an incredible drive to his maiden win in Finland. We've been waiting patiently for too many years to see Lappi in the top flight and he didn't disappoint – well, not in the first half of the season anyway. He struggled to get to grips with rallies he didn't know towards the end of his season but has shown emphatically that he can handle the speed and performance of the new generation World Rally Cars. A cautionary note though: Lappi clearly tried to adjust his approach for the last couple of events and was a shadow of the driver we know and expect to see. He needs to learn from his mistakes, but I'd hate to see the edge that makes him so unpredictable and exciting beaten out of him.



## 8 CRAIG BREEN

If this was a top 10 of likeable drivers then Breen would be my emphatic number one choice. I've rarely met an individual in any walk of life who shows as much emotion as Craig. Some might not like it, but I love it. His reaction at the stop line of the Sherwood stage in Australia was incredible. Tears, not of disappointment or frustration, but of joy. Elation at that sensation of being at one with the car, and a near-perfect stage. Kept his cool when the team was self-destructing around him and delivered results that seem to have guaranteed a full season in 2018. Steady improvement has been the hallmark of Breen's career to date and he hasn't stopped improving. How far he can go will only be determined by the opportunity he's given.



## 9 ANDREAS MIKKELSEN

In just about any other season in recent WRC history, Mikkelsen would have struggled to re-establish himself among the upper echelons of the WRC elite. Bewilderingly overlooked by Toyota for the 2017 season, Andreas seemed destined to be a bit-part player in his supporting role as WRC2 superstar. It's fair to say had other drivers, most notably Meeke, Paddon and Sordo, not under-delivered, then Mikkelsen would most probably have still been playing that role. But it's many years since we had a season of musical chairs like this one and Mikkelsen was always the dark shadow stalking those not making their mark. After slightly questionable outings with Citroen, the Handsome One came good. Has shown enough to be considered a real threat to Neuville's number one status at Hyundai.



## 10 JUHO HANNINEN

Tommi Makinen showed admirable loyalty to his number one test driver by rewarding him with his first full season in the WRC. And, after three events, Juho looked hopelessly lost and maybe not up to the task. But he persevered and showed that in rallying, experience and maturity count for perhaps more than in any other form of motorsport. Stuck to his task, ignored the doubters and delivered some very solid and creditable results as the year progressed. You can't underestimate the value of Juho's contribution to the debut year success enjoyed by Toyota.



# REVIEW: WRC SUPPORTS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

## TIDEMAND SHOWS HIS METTLE IN WRC2



Tidemand withstood the pressure in WRC2

**P**ontus Tidemand took a deserved WRC2 title this season, with the Skoda-driving Swede winning the first four rounds he started.

The first half of the year of competition in the world championship's second tier was skewed slightly by victories in Monte Carlo and Corsica for Andreas Mikkelsen. When the Norwegian was entered for Portugal as well, a full WRC2 assault looked to be a genuine possibility. Ultimately, however, Mikkelsen rolled in Portugal before moving back up to the premier league with Citroen, and then joining the Hyundai team.

Coming into this season off the back of a middling WRC2 campaign in 2016, Tidemand was under more pressure as Skoda's lead driver (apart from when Mikkelsen was in town) following Esapekka Lappi's departure for Toyota. And the likeable 26-year-old delivered.

Much was made ahead of the season about the potential fight with M-Sport men Teemu Suninen and Eric Camilli, but that battle never really materialised. Tidemand looked in complete control

throughout. There were stand-out drives from Ole Christian Veiby, Jari Huttunen and Kalle Rovanpera to take their maiden WRC2 wins in Poland, Finland and Australia respectively.

The **Junior WRC** was a hugely one-sided affair with Spaniard Nil Solans dominating the series and winning four of the six rounds. The writing was on the wall for Solans' success when he took an early season hat-trick in Corsica, Sardinia and Poland. The 25-year-old went on to collect all seven WRC2 Ford Fiesta R5 drives on offer as part of the DMACK-backed JWRC award.

Frenchman Nicolas Ciamin was Solans' closest challenger and he took the spoils in Finland when pre-event favourites Solans and Denis Radstrom rolled. While he might have crashed, Jyvaskyla was the scene of Solans' finest hour of the season. Having dropped down the order, he needed to get back to second place to win the second pair of 2018 R5 drives. He did it with an inspired effort through the final loop of stages.

Terry Folb was third in JWRC, with Julius Tannert taking a home win in Germany on his way to fourth. Disappointingly for the series organisers

those were the only four crews who completed all six events in the all-Ford Fiesta R2T series.

It's all change for 2018, with Pirelli returning to replace DMACK as the tyre supplier and the series drops back to a more cost-effective five-round format.

Solans also celebrated **WRC3** success. Raphael Astier won the same number of rounds (three) as Solans, but a retirement in Portugal hurt the Peugeot driver's title aspirations.

Sportscar racer Romain Dumas took back-to-back titles in the FIA's **R-GT Cup**, winning four from five rounds in the championship, which is split between the WRC, ERC and Tour European Rally series. Greek driver Jourdan Serderidis clinched the inaugural **WRC Trophy**. Unfortunately this wasn't the classic season of competition the FIA had hoped for the private drivers of 2016 and older World Rally Cars and probably the most memorable moment of the season would come in Spain when Skoda driver Jan Kopecky made up a three-minute gap to catch Serderidis' DS3 on the first run through Terra Alta.

David Evans



Norwegian took title

## COLIN CLARK

**"The grip of the cars took the WRC to a new level"**



**T**his year's World Rally Championship was the most hyped in history. Of course it was. The comparisons with Group B were everywhere, but the run into 1983 and the sport's supercar era was nothing like our arrival at the start of 2017.

Every week there was another story in *MN*, every day another YouTube film and every minute another tweet adding to the excitement of what was about to be the fastest season of rallying ever. Having created these monsters, the FIA began to fret on the eve of Monte Carlo. What if they'd made them too fast? A directive was sent out among the powers-that-be: no more talk of Group B comparisons.

It wasn't necessarily the power that worried folk, it was the downforce and potential corner speed.

The drivers too were taken by surprise.

Sebastien Ogier: "I remember the first stage of the season, it was by night in Monte Carlo. While we hadn't done a lot of testing with the Fiesta, we had done a lot with the previous [Volkswagen] car and we had experience of testing this generation of car. But I have the feeling we don't realise the speed because in the test you know the road by heart and it's kind of easier.

"But then we came to Monte Carlo in the night and after two splits there's a very fast section. This is the first time I said to Julien [Ingrassia, co-driver], 'now I understand the speed we have...'"

Hayden Paddon's accident on that opening event immediately drew the worst kind of comparisons with Group B's darker side, but that tragedy had nothing to do with the car being driven and everything to do with physics and one particular fan's decision on where to watch.

The contentious inclusion of chicanes to slow the cars down made it hard to create a global picture of how much quicker the 2017 cars were. You didn't need a stopwatch. You just needed a place at the side of the road. Preferably a fast road with a bit of a bend in it. Year-on-year, you rarely notice the cars getting quicker. This time it was impossible not to notice. It wasn't just the speed, it was the stability. In one rip-snortingly quick right-hander through Pihlajakoski in Finland, these things looked like overgrown, overboosted Scalextric cars. Not since I stood at Becketts post-1991 facelift have I been left truly slack-jawed at what a car can actually achieve.

And the best thing about these cars is the emotion being generated on the inside as well as the outside. Pre-2017, the drivers were masters of their machine and rarely did you see Ogier getting overly excited about what he'd seen from behind the wheel. Not this time. I know Craig Breen's an emotional sort – and we love him for that – but when did you ever see a rally car reduce a man to the good sort of tears? We did this year.

The good times are back in the World Rally Championship. And they're back just in time to get even better.



Solans was the winner in Junior WRC



Romain Dumas took back-to-back titles in the R-GT Cup in his growing Porsche

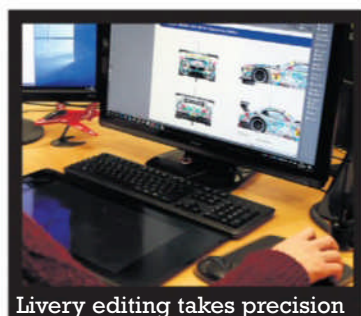
# INSIGHT: SCALEXTRIC

Scalextric will brighten many a household this Christmas. Rob Ladbrook went to see how the magic is made

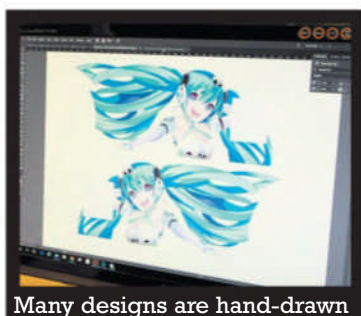
# CREATING THE MODEL



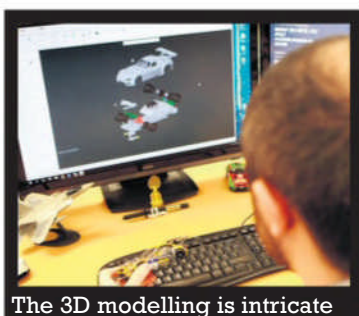
Scalextric is leading slot car racing brand



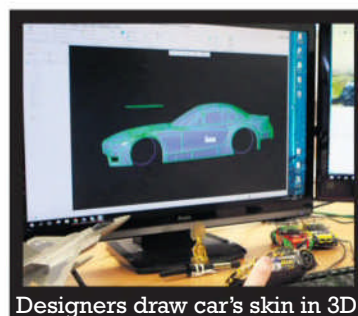
Livery editing takes precision



Many designs are hand-drawn



The 3D modelling is intricate



Designers draw car's skin in 3D



The finished product lands

**W**e've all been there. That gut-wrenching moment when you know you've overcooked it. Just that bit too quick into Turn 1. The rotation kicks in at the rear and you're helpless.

Everything goes slow motion and before you know it... total chaos. You're cartwheeling through the air, eventually coming to rest on your roof. Underneath the sofa.

They may be small and labelled as 'just toys' by many, but Scalextric cars are pieces of automotive art, which is why they're collected by millions of all ages. Head to any toy shop this Christmas and you'll be assaulted with rows of vibrantly coloured car options.

Fancy a 1/32 scale Jim Clark complete with his Lotus 49? Pick him up. Or a bit of touring car door bashing? There's ones for that. How about being a McRae for a day? Sure, why not?

Scalextric can make it happen and at one point or another we've all felt an affinity to those little plastic cars, which makes that almost inevitable sofa shunt all the more emotionally damaging. The realism and resemblance to the cars we love is a key part of that.

But just how does the British

company get the cars to look, and feel, so lifelike on track? It's a longer process than you might think.

"We're always working about 18 months ahead of ourselves," says Scalextric's product development manager Darren Nye. "The biggest challenge we have is that we cater for a variety of different customer types, all at one time. We have the collectors, who demand serious precision and only go for the limited edition and rare products and don't usually even take them out of the box. Then we have the hobbyists who love the realism we bring to the models, but still want to race them. And then we have the 'toy' market, which usually just wants to crash them!"

That's a wide range of intentions to cater for. But, whatever the consumer, realism is a key factor. At Scalextric's HQ in Sandwich, Kent, a small team of designers regularly pump out accurate recreations of some of motorsport's most famous and iconic cars. From Formula 1, to touring cars and GT via camper vans – the range is staggering.

"Typically we release between 60-100 new products per year, so that's around two new cars per week, each year," says Nye. "We offer the widest variety of cars of all the slot car brands. And we're always looking at new models to add to widen the range.

"Our researchers are always monitoring the new models, teams, drivers and the results they achieve. You have to be bang on trend with your choices too. For example if we know of a new GT3 car coming out, we have to time our commitment to modelling it perfectly. If we commit too early, the car may be hugely unsuccessful in real life and nobody will want it. If we're too late then everybody else will beat us to the punch and it won't sell as well. We need to hit the curve at the right time."

Obviously, Scalextric's wide range means this isn't always an issue. Classic cars like the Jaguar E-type or historic F1 machinery don't change overnight, neither will the fictional or kids' designs. But it's likely the more colourful modern cars – such as the touring cars, prototypes and GTs – will catch your eye at some point, and those are the ones that exist in a faster-changing environment.

Scalextric's production process takes multiple steps, both in the actual design and production, but also in working with the manufacturers themselves to ensure the correct licensing agreements are adhered to.

The first step is the actual design, which surprisingly has to be done almost from scratch, regardless of what data is available for the real-life version of the chosen car.

"Once we've decided on a new model – let's say the Mercedes AMG GT3 for example – we'll look at the feasibility of what we want to do with it," adds Nye. "For example we've made multiple variants of the BMW Z4 GT3 for the last five years, so we've got good use out of the tooling sets and moulds we created to make that model."

"Once we've agreed the rights deals with the manufacturer, they'd send us their CAD [Computer Aided Design] files for that car. They give a good outline but for us they're no more than a guideline. Those plans are for a full-size car and incorporate every nut and bolt. We have to strip them down to the bare lines almost and then recreate every surface from scratch in-house to model the car to scale."

Oscar Thornton, one of the firm's digital design team, adds: "When the CAD files arrive the first job is to scale it down by 32 times and then simplify it. Then we redraw a skin over the car's skeleton and stitch each surface together like a digital quilt. We apply a second skin to set the body thickness so we don't get the plastic sinking."

"We also model the car in exploded form as there can be up to 30 different parts on each car, and the majority are bespoke to that car. We don't use a spec chassis part as each car has its own dimensions and design, so we have to

recreate that. It takes six to eight weeks per model to produce a final design."

Once that final design is complete, the plans get sent off to the factory in China where the moulds and tooling will be created, and the model can begin production. All of Scalextric's slot car products are made using injection moulded plastic.

With the form of the car set, attention switches to arguably the most exciting bit. The liveries.

Scalextric goes further than any other brand in this department, offering multiple livery designs for many of its models.

"We study the liveries very closely," says Nye. "We like to pick the ones that are the most eye-catching and popular with the fans, but those cars also have to be successful and we have to ask ourselves what story each car has behind it. What's that car's appeal?"

The latest trend for liveries comes from the immensely popular Anime cartoon designs used largely in Japanese Super GT, but which are slowly leaking across to Europe too.

Often hugely intricate, these represent a big challenge to the graphic design team.

Tom Bills recently worked on the reconstruction of the Hatsune Miku Goodsmile Racing BMW Z4. He says: "With most designs we have to redraw



# REVOLUTION



Nye leads product development



Crashes do happen, so models are tough

them digitally by hand, which is a big job. Sometimes we can get access to the original livery artwork from the designers, but often those don't tend to scale down well. By redrawing them we can use a vector software that means the images aren't formed by pixels so we can scale them up or down without losing image quality.

"The Anime designs can take a lot of work. We have to redraw the characters on the car from multiple angles to make sure we get the perspective right, and often the characters are accompanied by complex shapes in the background too, and it all has to be modelled accurately. The Goodsmile design took just over two months to get right."

Once the design is set, it will be printed and applied to each model using water label decoration, which is a process of applying an intricate bodysticker by hand, like a vinyl wrap. This method has been used for the last five years, replacing the traditional Tampo Printing technique – likened to applying paint layer by layer, like potato printing – to enable Scalextric to incorporate more and more detail into its designs.

A layer of protective lacquer is then applied to most models, just to ensure your sofa doesn't do too much damage.

Scalextric also takes into account the chances of those over-exuberant Turns 1, 2, 5, 19 – accidents, and works to make

sure its models are as robust as possible.

"Because we work closely with the manufacturers our hands are tied in some respects as many want their cars modelled as accurately as possible, so if a design is fragile in real life then it will be in the model too, but we do take a lot of steps to make our cars tough," says Nye.

"We ensure things like rear wings are 'pop-on, pop-off' and not glued so they can be refitted easily. We take care in the design stage too to thicken the plastic in any areas we think may be vulnerable. Then we do things like model some parts, such as wing mirrors, from PVC so they have a bit of flex to them and can cushion the main chassis. We make them as durable as we can.

"By following the manufacturer's designs so closely we also do find that different cars have different characteristics. Some are faster on straights and some are better through corners. They pick up real speed and are likely to be generating real downforce, as that's what they were designed to do in real life. Relatively speaking, when scaled up these models would be travelling somewhere over 500mph, so they're real performance-based things."

Of the current product range, the bulkier GT and touring cars appear the most naturally durable, but models like the classic and contemporary Formula 1 designs can be much less so. F1 cars are

on the very edge of performance capabilities in real life, which can be a dilemma for model makers.

"We have to do a lot of work on an F1 model," adds Nye. "The cars are notoriously lightweight, thin and fiddly, and would break easily as slot cars. So we actually had to model our own generic F1 cockpit. To do that we studied every car on the F1 grid and developed our own happy medium, which was much stronger.

"To that we then add removable front and rear wings and any seasonal changes, such as the shark fin engine covers from this year. F1 is the fastest-changing part of our business as the rules change quite often and that dictates the cars' shape, and the liveries and sponsors change a lot too so we have to constantly update."

Adding a new model to the shelves, Nye says takes between 12-18 months depending on the licensing, design and actual production of the moulds and tooling needed. Something as intricate as Mr Clark's classic Lotus can take all that and more due to its extra parts. To simply produce a current car in a new livery takes around nine months.

Some big work goes into making those little cars that live up so many homes each Christmas. So next time you have a little-big off under the sofa, just be thankful that they build them strong. ■

## How planes help design Scalextric

While Scalextric's designers often rely heavily on manufacturer CAD data to help give an outline of their products, those sorts of files are not always readily available.

For the older cars, often part of the firm's Legends collection, CAD data never existed in the first place, forcing the researchers and designers into alternative methods.

"A lot of our top-range models are in great demand from collectors, so they have to be almost like motorised Minichamps models – accuracy is incredibly important," says researcher Simon Owen.

"With some of the classic cars – like the Jaguar E-type or the very rare Ferrari 330 P4 there's very few design documents around. Sometimes we can get hold of manufacturer drawings to model from, or blueprints. Motorsport has a great history of keeping things like that. Aside from that we work a lot from very detailed historical photographs.

"But in some cases we'll also use laser scanning. Being part of Hornby we're a sister brand to Airfix and have access to 3D Lidar scanning technology that usually gets used to scan models of helicopters and aeroplanes. It uses lasers to get point cloud data and builds a digital shell for whatever we're modelling.

"We've used it to work on some touring cars, but we've had a few hiccups with it too. We were recreating one BTCC team's car as they didn't have the CAD data, but when we turned up they'd polished the car to within an inch of its life. The laser can't get a reading on anything too shiny so we essentially had to make the car dirty by half-polishing it and leaving a load of wax residue over it to be able to scan it. That's a funny process when you're doing something like a million pound classic car and you have to ask the owners to make it dirty!"



## Fancy racing Scalextric in the wet?

Scalextric recently unveiled its latest innovation, the ARC powerbase.

Standing for App Race Control, the new system is designed to bring new elements of race data and management to your living room.

Available in three different price points – from basic, to the wireless ARC Air and the top-level ARC Pro setup – the kits allow you to race up to six cars on the same track and throw in multiple different elements to spice up the racing.

The system can simulate outside influences like tyre wear, punctures and pace cars, and even brings wet weather into play for the first time.

"The idea with ARC is that it syncs your Scalextric set to your smartphone and gives the user a whole new world of data and race management," explains Darren Nye. "We always try to make our products new and relevant, and the

ARC system is probably the biggest change for a decade.

"During a race you can programme the system to know specific things about your car. It will know that you've started on dry tyres, but may randomly introduce rain into the race, which will be triggered by lights and sounds via your phone app. If you're still on dry tyres, by varying the current, ARC can make your cars automatically slow and become harder to control to simulate the loss of grip. Once you pit, the system registers that you have stopped to 'change tyres' and will restore performance. It adds a new experience to the races.

"The system is all digital and can log everything from tyre wear, lap times, reaction times and even give you data graphs on your performance. It opens a whole new world for Scalextric."

# INTERVIEW: ASH SUTTON

We caught up with this year's British Touring Car champion. By **Matt James**

**A**sh Sutton had a face like thunder at 1510hrs on Sunday, October 1. It was Brands Hatch, and the Subaru Levorg British Touring Car Championship driver had pulled into the pits after claiming 12th place in the second of the weekend's three races.

He had been beaten up in the race, with cars passing him almost at will. It was at complete odds with the way the Team BMR man had ripped up the championship until that point.

He had taken six wins, and came to Kent with a 10-point advantage. After race two, the gap was down to a mere six points. There would be only one race left to make or break his season.

Sutton gave ITV4's Louise Goodman short shrift when she quizzed him after that second event. He didn't really have an explanation for his slump down the order. "I will admit, I was rattled," says Sutton looking back. "In that race, I realised that maybe I had been a bit blinkered in how I thought I was going to win the title. I had underestimated it and I made my own job a lot, lot harder in race three.

"But I took myself to the race truck and thought things through – which made me the driver I was in race three. Without that low, I wouldn't have bounced back the way I did."

With Sutton starting 12th and race two winner and title rival Colin Turkington (WSR BMW 125i M Sport) directly in front of him in 10th spot, the gloves were off for the finale.

"If you look back at that race, I was glued to Colin – whenever he made a move, I made a move. There was no chance he was getting away from me," explains Sutton. "If he threw it up the inside of someone, I was right on his bumper."

The defining moment came on lap two, when Turkington went to pass the out-of-shape Mat Jackson (Motorbase Ford Focus) and the two made the slightest of brushes. It was enough to break the suspension on the BMW and force Turkington out. Sutton had to ask three times on the radio what the title situation was before he could truly believe he had the crown in his pocket.

"I know this might sound odd, but I really didn't want Colin to retire from that race," says Sutton, who ended up in third spot in the final showdown. "I didn't want people who were just looking at that weekend to say that it had been gifted to me or that I had it easy. Obviously, there had been the whole season up until that point, but not everyone sees that. I wanted to beat Colin fair and square on track."

He did enough and that was it, his stunning career trajectory had taken another massive leap forwards. It was easy to overlook the fact that the 23-year-old was only in his second season of the British Touring Car Championship. It was only 16 months since he'd taken his maiden BTCC win for the Triple Eight MG team. Sutton is not only fast on the race circuit...

The desire to perform, and perform quickly, is down to a number of key stages in his career, one of which threatened to derail him completely.

He had begun his career in the cost-effective Formula Vee single-seater series as a way of learning the tracks without a huge financial outlay. A road car crash in 2011 left him with kidney complications and that put him out of the cockpit for more than two seasons. When Sutton returned, he knew he had

# DELIVERING



Oulton Park was a 2017 turning point

# ON THE



The Subaru man led the line

# PROMISE

to make up for the time away by putting his progression on fast forward.

"I remember sitting with the doctors and surgeons, and they told me that I might never race again," he says starkly. "That focused my mind a bit. They weren't sure if my organs would be able to withstand the forces that you experience when you race. There was a real chance it was all over."

"In early 2014, I went to a kart track and did a race, which I won. A few weeks later, I went for a check-up and everything was fine. That was a massive relief."

A lot of his early kart racing had been done on a limited budget, and that was another building block in making sure that he got the most from every situation. "Sometimes, we didn't have the funds to test," he explains. "I would

turn up at a race meeting with no time to learn, and in those situations, you have to take things on board very quickly. If I did test, I would set a great time in the second session, for example, and then spend the rest of the day going around the houses with set-up and then you wouldn't be any faster at the end of the day. So I realised how to get to the limit quickly and that is something I have always been able to do."

After the road crash, he restarted his career in Formula Ford that season (again, it was an option he took due to a cut-price deal) and he was third in the points despite missing three races. But there was something else that happened that year which gave him the break he needed.

"I was working at the Rye House kart track, and [Team BMR boss] Warren

Scott used to pop in. He was just getting into the karting business and I was the guy on the front desk," recalls Sutton. "At the time he was the big touring car driver and I was just me. We knew each other, but not that well."

"Then, at Rockingham, I remember being in the Formula Ford paddock and Warren turned up on his golf buggy: he'd come over from the BTCC paddock, and he told me he wanted a word. That's when my world changed."

It did, because Scott was about to go large in the BTCC by hiring Jason Plato and Turkington to head up Team BMR in the BTCC in VW CCs and he also wanted to create a driver academy. Sutton was his first pick.

That desire to push forward in Sutton's career was evident. When the racer entered the Renault UK Clio Cup,

a category that most take a while to master, Sutton was clear in his objective: win it in year one and get out. He was as good as his word, and Scott helped him land a drive with Triple Eight, which Team BMR owns alongside the factory Subaru team. He stated that he wanted to claim the rookie-based Jack Sears Trophy in his maiden year but didn't see why outright wins were out of the question. When he crossed the line first at Croft, it was a precursor to him lifting the JST pot at the end of the campaign.

All this led him to the point at Brands Hatch this year where he battled with two-time title winner Turkington for the ultimate prize. In truth, Sutton has looked at home in this company since he first drove a BTCC car.

"I have never felt intimidated, right



Photos: Jakob Ebrey



Sutton took the silverware with six race victories



Third in race three was enough at Brands



Goodman talks to Ash Sutton

from the opening race in the BTCC," says Sutton. "I feel like I belong. You need to establish yourself in the BTCC, and the best way of doing that is just by getting stuck in there and getting your elbows out. I don't mind how many championships other people have got – they have been doing it for longer than me, after all."

There are very few flaws in Sutton's driving: he is the consummate racer and there are rarely mistakes (despite an early season blip when he was getting to grips with the factory-backed Levorg). There were no spins and his ability to overtake was what led ITV4 pundit and former racer Paul O'Neill to christen Sutton as the 'Max Verstappen of British Touring Cars'.

"I honestly don't know where it comes from," says Sutton. "I work hard. I am

able to adapt to situations quickly, I suppose, and I like to look at things from all angles. I am not suggesting that others don't do that, but it has been one of the things I pride myself on. I will look at all situations from all angles and work out what needs to be done.

"That is how I am when I set goals for the year ahead: I will never set myself a target that I don't think I can realistically achieve. It is not arrogance: it is an honest assessment of what I think I can do."

Being honest is something that also comes naturally to Sutton, and he isn't afraid to point to areas where he thinks his hand could be even stronger in 2018.

"I think if you look back, there are areas I can improve on," he says. "My qualifying, for example. I'm fine racing against others, but not so strong

against the clock. I had one pole this year. I can drag a lap time out of the car when I have to, but qualifying is a weaker area for me. Look at Donington Park [when he was stripped of pole for an engine overboost]. I went from the back of the grid [32nd] and was still able to claim two podiums in the weekend's three races. That shows that there's nothing wrong with my racecraft, and those are the situations I enjoy the most."

And enjoy 2017 is something that Sutton did.

"It has sunk in, and it is a great feeling – it is something you think about every day," says Sutton – but there are demands. "I have had to go out and buy three more black tie suits! I have worked it out that by the time I finish the last awards ceremony in February, I will have done 10 in total – the

pressures of being a champion, hey?"

While the relief and the emotions of that final-day encounter at Brands Hatch will live long in the memory, there are immediate tasks facing Sutton that have taken more priority in his life than reflection. He has yet to nail down his deal to return to the category in 2018 and that is uppermost in his mind.

"Winning the title is a platform, a stage, but it is not the end of the journey – if anything it is just the beginning," says the Bishop's Stortford man. "As much as you want to enjoy it, you have to look forwards. I hope I can have something tied up around the time of the Autosport International Show in early January. I really don't want it to drag on any longer than that and we are working hard." ■



Sutton in Formula Ford in 2014

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# PICS OF THE YEAR

**I**n a general sense, 2017 will be a year to be forgotten. Donald Trump took office, which is enough to consider any year a write-off, and a whole host of celebrities passed on. Not a great start.

Luckily, your old faithful friend motorsport stepped in. In the pictures of the year, we can remember the good, bad, sad and plain wrong.

As they do every year, *MN* contributors are the unsung heroes of this grassroots publication, and our photographers went from Knockhill to Monza, from Kirkistown to San Marino and anywhere in between.

Here, we honour our faithful photographers who love motorsport as much as any, and pick out some of the best pictures from 2017. We could have filled 30 pages, but the overlords said no. Sorry to those that missed out.

*Thanks to Roy Dempster, mcklein-imagetdatabase.com, Jakob Ebrey, Gary Hawkins, Chris Huish - RallySport Media, Steve Jones, Paul Lawrence, M&H Photography, mkpics.net, Jim Moir, Richard Styles, James Ward - Chicane Media, Mick Walker.*



Going, going...this isn't the correct line at Chessons' Drift

## MATT JAMES EDITOR



After a protracted saga, the grim reaper stepped in for good on March 26. Wimbledon Stadium, the last active race venue within the M25, held its final meeting and it was headlined by National Hot Rods.

The Spedeworth staff, the promoters of the meeting, all dressed as undertakers to give the Grand Old Lady her final send off. It raised a smile, but it also served to underline the gravity of the situation.

The meeting was a huge success, with more than 3000 fans in attendance for the ticket-only event.

There was a display of cars from the past and present, as well as some top level action to warm the hearts and remind everyone of what they were about to be missing. It was a touching tribute to a venue with more than 50 years of history.

Football will now be played at Plough Lane again with a new redevelopment for AFC Wimbledon but for me, it involves the wrong kind of corners.



Somewhere in there is a jubilant Lewis Hamilton. It's probably on Instagram...



A moody Escort on the brilliantly-named Carpetbagger



Robert Hollyman spits flames from his Intermarque Porsche 964



The new Morris Minor Drifting Series went down a treat at Thruxton



No more racing at stadium

# PICS OF THE YEAR



Sparks fly at Silverstone for this Red Bull RB13

## DAVID EVANS RALLIES EDITOR



Being in M-Sport's inner sanctum when Sebastien Ogier crossed the line to win Monte Carlo and end four and a bit years of hurt for Malcolm Wilson was pretty special in January.

In terms of drama, watching Kris Meeke go off the road in Mexico topped that. As the C3 WRC hit the hedge, the pictures were being beamed from an external door-mounted camera, which was ripped off and sent spinning.

Momentarily, the world thought the Northern Irishman had been tipped into a massive shunt. Then we saw him driving towards the beer tent. For much of 2017, that was the moment of the year.

But then came those 20 minutes one Sunday in Wales, when M-Sport won the manufacturers' crown, Ogier took the drivers' and Elfyn Evans was victorious at home.

Watching all that unfold with Malcolm's wife Elaine and seeing the raw emotion when the party started was truly unforgettable.

## ROB LADBROOK MANAGING EDITOR



I've had the year of my life. That pretty much sums up my 2017.

A big part of that has been taking the plunge and getting involved in motorsport myself. I've raced a Ford Puma this year with the Classic Sports Car Club. Proudly achieving an apex speed of 108mph in it through Church at Thruxton comes close to my highlight, but the one I'll choose is an offshoot of that.

I took up an offer from Radical to take part in its SR1 Cup at Snetterton in August. That car taught me a huge amount about racing with aero, and learning a different style of racing.

It also gave me a great insight into the rejuvenated British company. During testing, a moment on the brakes sent me spinning off at Nelson at 210kph [130mph]. Luckily I managed to keep it out of the wall, with an innocent foam brake marker being the only victim.

After taking two seventh places and having a great laugh with the rest of the grid, came the prize-giving. The "guest driver of the weekend" accolade was a new one for the weekend.

My reward, the remnants of the marker board I obliterated, which resident snapper Ollie Read trekked out to recover for me.

Great banter from a great championship.



Andy Southcott (76) leads a GT race at a sunny Kirkistown under the windmills



A soaking Frazer Nash at Snetterton



The R.A.C. Rally returned in 2017 and was won by Marty McCormack



Paul Whiting rolled at the MG Live! Equipe GTS event at Silverstone



Prestone Motorsport News Junior British Rally champion Callum Devine



Bradley Dynes heads the tightly bunched National Hot Rod pack at Hednesford



Ferraris. Ferraris everywhere. Bliss. The Festival Italia at Brands Hatch



Jamie Anderson is hard to beat in his WRC car on the Woodpecker Rally

**PAUL LAWRENCE**  
HISTORICS EDITOR



Night stages on the Isle of Man and breath-taking Historic Formula Ford racing both come close, but the absolute memory of 2017 just has to be the Roger Albert Clark Rally.

After a gap of three years the event was back longer and tougher than ever before and really captured the hearts of everyone involved. On Monday morning, day four, we were in Caplestone Fell, a daunting 19-miler in the central block of Kielder.

This was everything that I had hoped for from the rally: a fourth straight day of rallying with good friends, classic Kielder locations and a remarkable tally of 65 cars still running and still committed.

Stage rallying has had some tough times recently, but here was an event that brought joy to thousands and showed what is possible with determination. There is no other UK rally that comes close for the atmosphere, buzz and sense of occasion.



Kris Meeke: Bad Sweden, good picture

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**  
JUNIOR REPORTER

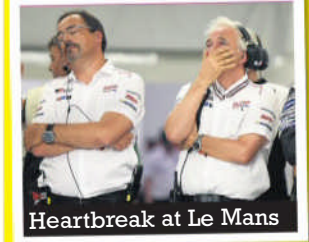


Was this the year Toyota was finally going to end its Le Mans heartbreak? It was looking good at just over one-third distance. The #7 car was in control and the #9 was still in contention. Then, in a few short minutes, everything changed.

It was just before 0100hrs. The safety car had returned to the pits and suddenly the lead Toyota slowed in the most bizarre circumstances, after a pitlane mix-up with Kamui Kobayashi thinking the waving LMP2 driver Vincent Capillaire was a marshal and needlessly stopped and started the car several times, causing a clutch problem.

MN's F1 columnist Stuart Codling and I were due to head off and get some sleep at this point but, just as we were getting ready to leave, things got worse for Toyota. The #9 car had been hit by LMP2 driver Simon Trummer and it too had to retire.

In a few minutes of unforgettable and unbelievable drama, that was it for Toyota's challenge for yet another year.



Heartbreak at Le Mans

**HAL RIDGE**  
RX CORRESPONDENT



When PSRX Volkswagen Sweden revealed its 2017 Polo GTI in Stockholm, less than two weeks before the opening round of the World Rallycross Championship in Barcelona, the car was clearly a redundant Polo WRC machine without a passenger seat.

Surely the radiator would be in the rear on the final rallycross version, like the rest of the Supercars in the field? After all, the car had been seen testing with black ducts in the rear quarters too, to back up that theory that Volkswagen Motorsport was going the down the traditional cooling route.

Technical director Francois-Xavier Demaison explained that the Hannover firm was open to either option, but on arrival in Barcelona, the radiator was indeed in the front of the Polo Supercar.

The ducts had been decoy stickers. The paddock speculated that the Polo's radiator would get damaged, too blocked up with dirt and wouldn't work. Coming from the single-car stage environment of the WRC, Volkswagen clearly didn't have a clue.

But, of course VW did. Eight wins from 12 events and the drivers' and teams' titles secured with two rounds to go proved just that.



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# PICS OF THE YEAR

**JACK BENYON**  
NATIONAL EDITOR



I'll never forget it. The 2017 Rally Isle of Man. One tenth and one point decided the 2017 British Rally Championship. A huge change from the dominance of Elfyn Evans one season before.

On what I consider to be the best asphalt roads on the BRC calendar, Keith Cronin and Fredrik Ahlin went to battle over the title. The last stage would decide it and Cronin needed to overturn a 9.4s deficit to Matt Edwards to win the leg and the title.

Standing at the stage end was tough. A huge rush of adrenaline hit as Cronin arrived, but it was a few minutes before the maths were complete and the identity of the victor (Cronin) was known.

The event offered another exciting conclusion to the British Historic Rally Championship too, with the likeable Jason Pritchard taking a third straight title.

Despite some event organisational difficulties, the drama produced was extraordinary and the atmosphere at stage end still sends a tingle down the spine in recollection.



Gianfranco Brancatelli at the Gold Cup

**STEFAN MACKLEY**  
JUNIOR REPORTER



My memory of the year comes from the Paddock Hill grandstand at Brands Hatch during the Formula Ford Festival. It was my first time at the legendary event and the racing up until the final had been action-packed and thrilling – everything I'd come to expect having covered Formula Ford races throughout the season.

The final certainly didn't disappoint, as Joey Foster was the man to beat – as he had been all weekend.

His overtake for the lead – and eventual victory – was one of the best I've seen. Leaving his braking to the absolute last, he swept around the outside of Neil MacLennan down the hill, his left-side wheels brushing the gravel in an overtake which forced applause from those watching. But the drama wasn't over.

Keith Donegan had charged his way through from sixth on the grid and was only 0.107s behind Foster at the flag.

It was a great finish to a great event.



Rob Austin jumped for joy after winning the final race of the BTCC season



Fiesta man Joe Connelly and the Donegal Rally views



It was an expensive father-son day for the Brookers at Brands Hatch



The moment of impact: David Hourie hits the Knockhill barriers hard



Foster won at the Festival

## REVIEW: F1 SEASON

## THE HITS AND

Our experts cast their eye over the standout stories from the last Formula 1 season

**I**t was a remarkable season in F1. Sure, the anticipated dogfight between Mercedes and Ferrari failed to properly spark into life, but there were so many plotlines to follow across the 20 rounds.

Lewis Hamilton underlined just why he is the driver of a generation with his record-breaking fourth title, and he was racking up the statistics that have brought Michael Schumacher's seemingly unmatchable total of 91 wins into sharp focus.

Ferrari still kept itself firmly in the game despite the turbulent waters behind the scenes, with Vettel showing that the Scuderia has the foundations of a team about to step up.

Beyond that, the dynamic Red Bull duo of Max Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo once again proved that they are the most exciting partnership on the grid, while Force India punched above its weight yet again.

Here, we pick out our highlights of the season thanks to our colleagues at *F1 Racing*: Stuart Codling, James Roberts and Anthony Rowlinson.

## MOST UNDERRATED DRIVER

## NICO HULKENBERG SHOWS HIS WORTH



Once tipped for greatness, Nico Hulkenberg has become Formula 1's pre-eminent wrong-place-wrong-time merchant. In 2013 he jumped ship from Force India to Sauber just as the Swiss team was beginning its fall from grace, then he missed out on a chance to move to Ferrari (which inexplicably chose the fading Kimi Raikkonen instead) and had to return to Force India. For this season he

chose the long-game tactic of moving to Renault, hoping that increased investment from the manufacturer would give the team a boost... which it has, but not enough to overhaul his old team just yet.

Hulkenberg has been Renault's principal points-scoring engine this season, delivering results even before the team found a huge increase in performance with a new floor design,

fitted to Hulkenberg's car at the British Grand Prix. Nico became a regular Q3 contender thereafter, while team-mate Jolyon Palmer continued to struggle and was eventually 'let go' in favour of Carlos Sainz.

The chassis still isn't perfect, though, and neither is the power unit. A string of engine-change grid penalties and in-race failures delivered Hulkenberg one of F1's

least coveted records: in Singapore he surpassed Adrian Sutil as the driver to have made the most race starts without finishing on the podium.

Gallingly, he'd been running in third during that grand prix before a strategic mis-step cost him track position and then an oil leak forced him out. Such a fast and gritty racer deserves better.

Stuart Codling

## ROUND BY ROUND


**Australian GP, Melbourne**  
**MARCH 26**

Lewis Hamilton led the early stages in his Mercedes, but an early stop brought him out behind Max Verstappen's Red Bull and he was trapped. This hiatus gave Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel enough time to push out the gap for six laps until his halt. He returned to the track ahead once the other stops had shaken out. Hamilton eventually climbed to second place, and the podium was completed by his team-mate Valtteri Bottas, who was right on Hamilton's rear wing.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)


**Chinese GP, Shanghai**  
**APRIL 9**

The advantage of an early stop for Vettel was wiped out by a safety car, which allowed poleman Hamilton to stretch away in front. Vettel was bottled up behind the sister Ferrari of Kimi Raikkonen as he tried to battle up through the pack. He eventually sliced ahead of Kimi and the two Red Bulls of Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo to regain second spot. Verstappen maintained his pace and batted third from 16th on the grid. Bottas spun under the early safety car.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)


**Bahrain GP, Sakhir**  
**APRIL 16**

Ferrari once again went aggressive with an early stop for supersofts, but Vettel struggled to unseat Bottas. However, soon afterwards, a safety car mixed things up and forced the other leading runners to stop. Hamilton was censured for impeding Daniel Ricciardo on the pit entry, and he was obliged to take the pain at his next stop. Lewis finished but over six seconds behind the winning Ferrari, with Bottas tailing in third.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)


**Russian GP, Sochi**  
**APRIL 30**

Bottas made a superb start to jump ahead of Vettel at Turn 2, but the Ferrari stayed close and went longer in the opening stint as Vettel tried to get the 'overcut' and enjoy clean air. He returned to the track behind the Merc but had fresher rubber, and crawled all over Bottas in the closing stages but without success. Raikkonen was third while a distinctly off-colour Hamilton trailed home in fourth spot, and he was mystified as to the lack of pace from his Mercedes-Benz.

- 1 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)


**SPANISH GP, BARCELONA**  
**MAY 14**

Vettel beat polesitter Hamilton to Turn 1 as Raikkonen and Verstappen tripped over each other behind. The leading pair split strategies over the opening part of the race, and it looked as if Ferrari had done enough. However, a safety car – called when Stoffel Vandoorne's McLaren clouted Felipe Massa's Williams – ruined the plan for the Italians. Hamilton jumped Vettel and held on to the flag. Ricciardo was third and the only other driver on the lead lap. He took the place when the engine on Bottas's Merc lunched itself.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)

# THE MISSES

## OF THE 2017 F1 CAMPAIGN

### FLASHPOINT OF THE YEAR

## VETTEL GOES BONKERS IN BAKU



A moment of madness, a petulant swipe from a driver these days notorious for his semi-regular volcanic eruptions.

That was Seb Vettel's flick-of-the-wrists pot-shot at Lewis Hamilton just after the exit of Turn 16 on lap 21, as he aimed his Ferrari into Hamilton's Merc.

Contact was made – Pirelli to Pirelli at low speed, behind the safety car, so no harm done – but the incident said so much about how these two stars and title contenders

approached their respective seasons.

At this stage of the year, round eight, they were still almost neck-and-neck, with Vettel 12 points ahead in the championship and both on three wins each.

Vettel and Ferrari were genuine title contenders, but – as Vettel's thump bore witness – this was a combination operating on the edge in their efforts to get ahead of Mercedes.

Vettel was penalised 10s for his crude move, which should have left Hamilton set for an easy win, but a

loose foam headrest on his W08, which required a pitstop to re-secure, scuppered his chances.

A younger Lewis might have crumbled, or behaved in a similarly irascible manner to Vettel, in response to this ill-fortune. Instead, he accepted 'biff-gate' and a blown victory with equanimity – and his Zen-like calm at the centre of the storm would carry him all the way to an ultimately dominant fourth world title.

Anthony Rowlinson

Of course Toto Wolff and Niki Lauda did an amazing job to guide their silver servants to another all-conquering F1 title double and their choice of Valtteri Bottas as Hamilton's wing man now looks inspired. Red Bull, too – Christian Horner and Helmut Marko – deserve credit for always keeping a foot on the gas even when handicapped by a third-best Renault motor. Three great wins were their reward. But the prize for making the most of

what they've got? Step forward Force India's Bob Fernley and Otmar Szafnauer.

From humble premises opposite Silverstone, with a staff around one-third the size of those employed by F1's big three and on a budget maybe a quarter (or less) the size of Mercedes', the self-styled 'Pink Panthers' proved yet again the value of efficiency and clear thinking in F1.

They took a splendidly isolated fourth place in the

constructors' championship, scoring 187 points – almost half the tally of Red Bull, ahead, but more than double Williams' haul, behind.

Thanks to two great drivers, solid commercial backing and the best customer engine available, Force India somehow make excellence look easy. If Liberty needs a template for how a leaner, simpler F1 team can excel, it should look no further.

Anthony Rowlinson

### TEAM MANAGEMENT OF THE SEASON



## BOB FERNLEY AND OTMAR SZAFNAUER AND FORCE INDIA



#### MONACO GP, MONTE CARLO MAY 28

Raikkonen led from pole, with Vettel keeping a watching brief behind. Both were easily able to stretch away from Bottas. However, the race was decided at the one and only stop. Raikkonen hit traffic on his out-lap, and the later-stopping Vettel jumped his team-mate – and that prompted suspicion of team orders affecting the outcome. Ricciardo also profited to leap up to third place. Hamilton, who had started only 13th after struggling in qualifying, fought up to seventh spot at the flag.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)
- 3 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)



#### CANADIAN GP, MONTREAL JUNE 11

A first-corner brush between Verstappen and Vettel sent the Ferrari into the pits for a fresh nose, while the Red Bull would later pull up with a battery problem. None of that troubled Hamilton, who converted pole into a lead he would not lose. Bottas inherited second when Verstappen stopped, and Vettel battled back to fourth at the flag, behind Ricciardo, after some smart strategy from the pitwall. Hamilton's win meant he trailed Vettel by 12 points in the championship chase.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)



#### AZERBAIJAN GP, BAKU JUNE 25

From an early race restart from behind the safety car, one of the flashpoints of the season occurred: Vettel accused race leader Hamilton of brake testing him and pulled alongside the Merc before turning in to the silver car to remonstrate. Vettel got a stop-go penalty but Hamilton's path to victory was interrupted by a loose headrest. He pulled in for repairs and returned to the track for fifth, just behind Vettel. Ricciardo won a crazy race from Bottas and Lance Stroll (Williams).

- 1 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Lance Stroll (Williams)



#### AUSTRIAN GP, SPIELBERG JULY 9

Bottas's "start of his life" shot him into a lead that he converted into a supreme victory. Despite the fact he stopped later for his tyre switch – and ultimately gave away time to the chasing Vettel – the Finn had enough in hand to take his second win of the year even though he came under late pressure. Ricciardo claimed third place after fending off a late challenge from Hamilton. A gearbox change penalty meant the Briton only started in eighth place and he was only 1.4s away from the podium at the end.

- 1 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)



#### BRITISH GP, SILVERSTONE JULY 16

After dominating qualifying, Hamilton was a shoo-in for victory at Silverstone and he duly delivered in front of his adoring public. Even when a safety car wiped out his 1.6s first-lap advantage, he simply got his head down and did it all over again. Raikkonen and Vettel chased hard but both would suffer cruel tyre failures late on in the race, which handed the runner-up spot on the podium to Bottas. Raikkonen pitted and recovered for third spot. Vettel was seventh.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)

# REVIEW: F1 SEASON

## SHUNT OF THE YEAR

No... NO! YES! *It really happened.* Both Ferraris taking each other off at the first corner of the Singapore Grand Prix.

As we surveyed the detritus of a scarcely imaginable incident, one truth became glaringly clear: Seb Vettel had just blown his title shot as Lewis Hamilton had emerged unharmed from the chaos and was sprinting off to the chequer.

The accident itself was triggered by light contact between the right-flank of Raikkonen – fast-starting from fourth – and the front-left of an interloping Verstappen, who'd been edged towards Kimi by the left-ward drift of poleman Vettel, ahead. The contact spun Kimi instantly, such that his Ferrari's nose speared the left sidepod of Vettel's car. Vettel drove on for a couple of corners, despite carrying pieces of front wing from Raikkonen's car, but his SF70H was mortally wounded and retired between Turns 5 and 6, with hydraulic fuel spilling from its innards.

In the meantime, Kimi and Max had clattered out at Turn 1 in a tangle of carbon bodywork and suspension. As they departed the track, out of control, they picked up an innocent Fernando Alonso, who would have found himself clear in P3 had he been a few feet further up the road. As it was, his McLaren pirouetted mid air, continued, but was called in on lap eight.

Not since the 1975 Spanish GP had both Ferraris collided on the first lap.

When they do, the results are spectacular.

Anthony Rowlinson

## FERRARIS IMplode IN SINGAPORE



## BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT

### HONDA AGAIN



After almost two seasons of over-promising and under-delivering, Honda ended 2016 on an upswing of form. It seemed to have banished many of the reliability and hybrid-deployment woes, and to be within sight of the power ballpark.

Alas, that power unit concept had reached the end of its life, so Honda designed a largely new one. History now records that it was at the very first test of 2017 when the all-new concept manifested many of the vices Honda had expunged from the previous one. McLaren called for divorce.

The key weakness of the unit was the MGU-H, the hybrid element that recovers energy from the exhaust gas. Essentially it's a component that can spin at up to 100,000 rpm, and Honda's had developed a voracious appetite for bearings.

An emergency redesign failed to cure the problem, and the embattled F1 project leader Yusuke Hasegawa was forced to admit that the MGU-H could only last two races. Component-change penalties meant both McLarens were regularly starting from the back.

Stuart Codling

## OVERTAKING MOVE OF THE YEAR

### DANIEL RICCIARDO IN THE AZERBAIJAN GP

It's not often you see one F1 car overtake *three* others, particularly with 2017-spec machinery. But Daniel Ricciardo wowed us all when he passed both Williams and Nico Hulkenberg's Renault at the Azerbaijan GP back in June. Danny Ricc thought his chances of victory in Baku were long gone, particularly as he was as low as 17th at one point. But with so many drivers hitting the walls and the propensity for safety cars, it allowed him to climb through the field.

It was on a safety car restart that he scooped a tow



Ricciano's brave move

from the two Williams and Hulkenberg and out-braked all three. "I don't think I've ever passed three cars in one move before," Ricciardo told *MN*. "Once I saw the gap I was going to do everything I could to brake as late as possible. In the last few years I've had the blinkers on with some moves where I didn't care about the outcome. That was one of them..."

James Roberts

## BIGGEST CONTROVERSY

### HANDBAGS BETWEEN TORO ROSSO AND RENAULT



Flush with post-Bernie bonhomie, Formula 1 began 2017 as a virtual love-in between teams, drivers, governing body and commercial rights holder. Even Sebastian Vettel's swerve at Lewis Hamilton in Baku was salvaged by an apology and a slap on the wrist.

That was until the reliability-related engine penalties began to rack up at Toro Rosso, shortly after the team served notice that they'd be swapping Renault for Honda motivation in 2018. When Pierre Gasly's MGU-H broke on his first flying lap at Interlagos, followed in short order by Brendon Hartley's turbo shaft, the tinfoil-hat wearers out there sniffed a conspiracy. Could Renault, vying with Toro Rosso for sixth in the constructors'

standings, have been stiffing their customer deliberately?

"We do have a little bit of a concern about the way that our engine is operated in the Toro Rosso car," was the victim-blaming response of Renault's Cyril Abiteboul. "There are never coincidences in this sport."

Toro Rosso fired back with an angrily worded statement, and Abiteboul and Red Bull's Helmut Marko were observed in a heated discussion – finger-jabbing was involved – in the paddock. Only the intervention of Renault ambassador Alain Prost, with a conciliatory statement of his own – grudgingly matched by Marko – brought this ugly spat to an end.

Stuart Codling

## ROUND BY ROUND



### HUNGARIAN GP, BUDAPEST JULY 30

Mercedes had no answer for Ferrari in qualifying, and on a circuit where overtaking is hard, this was a severe penalty. Vettel sailed off in the lead, but reported that his steering was off-kilter and was told to avoid the kerbs. It bottled up Raikkonen, who was hard on his tail. The chasing Bottas and Hamilton had only patchy contact with the pitwall due to a radio problem, but were able to perform a swap to allow Lewis to chase the red cars. When his charge wilted, he let Bottas back through for third place.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)
- 3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)



### BELGIAN GP, SPA AUGUST 27

While the Force India drivers Esteban Ocon and Sergio Perez declared war on each other, Hamilton was imperious at Spa. He led from the start and fended off a mid-race attack from Vettel. However, a late safety car when Perez and Ocon ruined each other's races for good gave Vettel a chance. He drew alongside leader Lewis on the restart, but was unable to make it stick. Ricciardo claimed third place from Raikkonen after some superb mid-race battling.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)



### ITALIAN GP, MONZA SEPTEMBER 3

This was about as easy an afternoon's work as Hamilton could have hoped for. From a record-breaking 69th pole position, taken in heavy rain, he was clear of Stroll and Ocon while his main rivals floundered. Bottas was best of the rest after an early charge as third-placed Vettel had no answer to the silver cars. Star of the race was Ricciardo in fourth, who had made his way from 16th on the grid with some superb overtaking.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)



### SINGAPORE GP, MARINA BAY SEPTEMBER 17

This was a race where Ferrari expected to get its title charge back on course. Within three corners, it was all over with Raikkonen, Verstappen and Vettel's cars all battered after a collision away from the start – for which, predictably, they all blamed each other. Hamilton still had to fend off pacesetter Ricciardo and he answered every question that the Australian asked him. He finished 4.5s clear at the flag after leading every lap. Bottas was a lonely third.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)
- 3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)



### MALAYSIAN GP, SEPANG OCTOBER 1

It took four laps for Verstappen to wrest the lead from Hamilton, who knew that the Red Bull was faster and didn't offer too much resistance. Behind the Brit, Ricciardo took a fighting third place. Vettel had been forced to start from the back after an engine problem in qualifying and charged through the pack by making up six places on the opening lap alone. He made it across the line in fourth, but not back to parc ferme after a post-flag collision with Stroll.

- 1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 3 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)

# RACE OF THE YEAR BRILLIANT BAKU



In 2016, at the first grand prix on the streets of the Azerbaijani capital, a number of trackside banners displayed the phrase: 'Well done Baku'. The 2016 European Grand Prix was a dismal affair and it was impossible not to think: 'Well done Baku for the worst race of the season.' In contrast, 12 months on, the 2017 Azerbaijan Grand Prix was arguably the best of the year. It was a race that had

everything: team-mates clattering into each other, a much-criticised rookie finishing on the podium, a comeback drive through the field – with a stunning three-pass overtake – and drama between the two world championship protagonists. When TV replays showed Sebastian Vettel pulling alongside Lewis Hamilton and deliberately driving into the Mercedes – we could not believe our eyes. And when Vettel couldn't

understand why he was being penalised for his moment of road rage – we could not believe our ears!

The loose headrest for Hamilton enabled Ricciardo to take a memorable win and even Bottas's last-lap pass to demote rookie Lance Stroll from second to third on the line, didn't dampen the rookie's joy. For so many reasons, few will forget Baku 2017 for a while.

Baku: well done.  
**James Roberts**

# BEST NEW TALENT CARLOS SAINZ



It's always difficult to assess how good a driver is when they don't have a car worthy of their talents. The TV coverage of a grand prix isn't going to focus on the lap times of the two Toro Rossos that are running in 13th and 16th positions... But when a driver switches to another team, higher up the grid, it's easier to identify their pace. Here's the evidence. The difference in qualifying times between the two Renault drivers, Nico Hulkenberg and Jolyon Palmer, clearly put the German ahead. When they both set times on Saturday, Hulkenberg's average speed over the Brit was 1.264s. Palmer twice made it into Q3 (Bahrain

and Spa), while in contrast Hulkenberg started inside the top 10 on 12 occasions throughout the year. When Palmer was dropped and Carlos Sainz took over his seat from Austin onwards, it was immediately evident how good the Spaniard was. In the three comparable qualifying sessions, he was just 0.291s slower than his mega-quick team-mate. He qualified one place behind the Hulk (eighth) in both Mexico and Brazil and had another top 10 start on his Renault debut in Austin. In just four races in decent machinery, the evidence proves Sainz is a future star.

**James Roberts**

# WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2018

## MORE COMPETITION AMONG THE LEADING PLAYERS



OK, hats off to Mercedes, once again it has done a great job to secure both the drivers' and constructors' championships. But... we need more variety in race winners – F1 needs to be less predictable. In the 79 races of the hybrid era (since 2014), Mercedes has won 63 grands prix (with a hit rate of 80 per cent). With stability in the regulations between this year and next, the hope is that Merc's rivals will have closed the gap. We need to have more charging drives from the Red Bull duo of Verstappen and Ricciardo. Fernando Alonso needs to fight for race wins again and

the hope is, after ditching Honda, Renault will provide McLaren with the ammunition it needs. And we want a title battle between Vettel and Hamilton that goes down to the wire – both slinging it out, wheel-to-wheel on-track, like we saw glimpses of in Spain, Spa and Austin this year. Longer term there are moves afoot to alter the regulations to improve the racing, but in the short-term we have to pin our hopes on the competition taking on Mercedes and beating the Silver Arrows. How long do we have to wait for Melbourne?

**James Roberts**

### FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS, 2017

POS	DRIVERS	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	TOTAL
1	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	2	1	2	4	1	7	1	5	4	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	9	4	2	363
2	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	1	2	1	2	2	1	4	4	2	7	1	2	3	R	4	R	2	4	1	3	317
3	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	3	6	3	1	R	4	2	2	1	2	3	5	2	3	5	4	5	2	2	1	305
4	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull	R	4	5	R	3	3	3	1	3	5	R	3	4	2	3	3	R	R	6	4	205
5	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	4	5	4	3	R	2	7	14	5	3	2	4	5	R	NS	5	3	3	3	R	200
6	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	5	3	R	5	R	5	R	R	R	4	5	R	10	R	1	2	4	1	5	5	168
7	Sergio Perez	Force India	7	9	7	6	4	13	5	R	7	9	8	17	9	5	6	7	8	7	9	7	100
8	Esteban Ocon	Force India	10	10	10	7	5	12	6	6	8	8	9	9	6	10	10	6	6	5	R	8	87
9	Carlos Sainz	Toro Rosso/Renault	8	7	R	10	7	6	R	8	R	R	7	10	14	4	R	R	7	R	11	R	54
10	Lance Stroll	Williams	R	R	R	11	16	15	9	3	10	16	14	11	7	8	8	R	11	6	16	18	43
11	Felipe Massa	Williams	6	14	6	9	13	9	R	R	9	10	WD	8	8	11	9	10	9	11	7	10	43
12	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	11	12	9	8	6	R	8	R	13	6	17	6	13	R	16	R	R	R	10	6	40
13	Romain Grosjean	Haas	R	11	8	R	10	8	10	13	6	13	R	7	15	9	13	9	14	15	15	11	28
14	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	R	8	R	13	14	10	12	7	R	12	13	15	11	R	12	8	16	8	R	13	19
15	Fernando Alonso	McLaren	R	R	14	NS	12	NE	16	9	R	R	6	R	17	R	11	11	R	10	8	9	17



### JAPANESE GP, SUZUKA OCTOBER 8

Hamilton was wary of Red Bull's pace in Suzuka, and controlled the speed from pole position to scoop another win after a controlled performance. Verstappen had nailed his team-mate Ricciardo at the opening turn, and that was the top three in the race set for good. Vettel should have been among them, but a spark plug failure on his Ferrari meant he pulled off the track after only four laps. It left his world championship hopes in tatters.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 3 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)



### UNITED STATES GP, AUSTIN OCTOBER 22

Vettel gave polesitter Hamilton a shock by sliding up the inside of him into Turn 1, but it only took the Merc five laps to respond. Once in front, Lewis motored clear to yet another win. Vettel held on, but had no answer in terms of pace. Behind them, Verstappen and Ricciardo provided the excitement. Ricciardo battled mightily with Bottas early on before his engine let go. Verstappen, up from 16th on the grid, snatched third on the last lap but was later penalised for going off track, gifting the place back to Raikkonen.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



### MEXICAN GP, MEXICO CITY OCTOBER 29

Three corners effectively settled this year's title: as Vettel and Verstappen became obsessed with each other into Turn 1, Hamilton swept around them both but was then tagged by Vettel, which necessitated a stop for both of them. Verstappen was in the clear, Hamilton charged back to ninth and that was enough for the title despite Vettel's fourth-placed finish. Bottas and Raikkonen joined Verstappen on the podium.

- 1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



### BRAZILIAN GP, INTERLAGOS NOVEMBER 12

A rare mistake by Hamilton, when he crashed in qualifying, left the way open for others to shine at Interlagos. Vettel jumped Bottas at the start and steered his way to a win. Bottas held on and tried to get the undercut, which narrowly failed. He did, however, fend off Raikkonen to the flag. Hamilton was the entertainment of the race on a different tyre strategy. He charged up through the pack and came within one second of an unlikely third position.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



### ABU DHABI GP, YAS MARINA NOVEMBER 26

This was one of those days when Bottas was simply untouchable. The Mercedes man blasted clear from pole position and headed his team-mate Hamilton throughout. Although never out of touching distance, the Finn kept his cool. Vettel was third but was some distance behind the German cars. Behind him, Raikkonen took advantage of a hydraulic problem for Ricciardo to claim fourth place, which couldn't prevent the Red Bull driver taking fourth place in the drivers' championship.

- 1 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 3 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)

# INTERVIEW: BILLY MONGER

How the teenager is plotting a comeback after one of 2017's worst moments. By **Stephen Lickorish**

# BILLY MONGER: AN INSPIRATION

**I**nspirational. It is a word that has been used a lot in connection with Billy Monger this year – and rightly so. But it is something that Monger himself, in an incredibly modest way, struggles to see.

“Everyone keeps saying that word to me, that I’m an inspiration, but it’s difficult to get my head around,” he says. “Going from a 17-year-old kid just doing normal things and going racing at weekends, in a space of less than a year, so much has changed.”

He is, of course, referring to the horrific crash at Donington Park this April that changed his life forever. There was nothing particularly out of the ordinary for the third British Formula 4 race of the Donington weekend – apart from the sight of Jamie Caroline at the rear of the field, perhaps. There was certainly no suggestion that the worst single-seater crash in Britain for many years was about to occur.

It was lap four. Monger was towards the back of the pack but was only just behind the gaggle of five cars in front. Coming through the fast left-hander at Schwanz Curve, the pack came across the stationary Carlin car of Patrik Pasma on the racing line. The cars in front of Monger all jinked out of the way at the last minute but Monger was completely unsuspected and ploughed into the rear of Pasma. There was nothing he could’ve done to avoid the Finn.

“I was awake after the crash for about 45 minutes and was seeing all the doctors,” recalls Monger. “Pretty much straightaway I knew the crash was bad but the first few minutes I felt OK because the adrenaline kicked in.”

For Monger’s team boss at the JHR Developments squad he competed for, Steve Hunter, it was a nightmare scenario. “Sheer devastation” is how Hunter recalls that time. Monger was in his third season with the JHR squad after progressing with the team out of Ginetta Junior and into F4. He was a regular frontrunner in the Ginetta category and came agonisingly close to his maiden single-seater win at Rockingham in 2016 when suffering a technical issue on the final lap cost him dear. Hunter had taken Monger “under my wing” during those seasons and was good friends with him. “It questions your conviction in motorsport,” Hunter says of his thoughts after the crash.

While Pasma was taken to hospital for precautionary checks (he was later released without any serious injuries), it took medics nearly two hours to extract Monger from his car. After being airlifted to hospital, doctors had no choice but to amputate both of his legs – one above and one below the knee.

“Because I was in the car and awake, I knew that it was bad so I knew there was damage done but I didn’t know I was going to lose both my legs – that was a shock,” admits Monger.

But he got over that remarkably quickly and his attention immediately turned to making a race return.

“My team was there and I was just asking them ‘do you think it’s doable?’” says Monger. “They were all supportive.” Hunter, who stayed at Monger’s side in hospital along with his family and number one mechanic, was in no doubt that he wanted to return.

“There was certainly no question he wouldn’t [return to racing],” says Hunter. “I never saw a negative at any point, which amazes me that someone can be so resilient in that situation. The way he looked at it was straightforward – ‘can I get back in a race car? Yes, so let’s carry on doing what we were doing’.



Monger's story has touched countless fans



Thousands took part in Thruxton trackwalk



Monger won the President's Award at the recent FIA Prize Giving Gala, one of a number of awards he has collected

"I've just been amazed that somebody can be as positive with what must be an exceptionally traumatic situation to be in. I don't think anyone else would've reacted in that way. I know it's a bit of a cliché that he is an inspiration, but he genuinely is."

It was at this point that Monger began to realise just how much his story had touched the nation – and not just the motorsport community. The crash was headline TV news and a Justgiving page set-up by Hunter and former JHR racer and British Touring Car star Tom Ingram raised over £750,000 to help support Monger's recovery in just a matter of days. There was an outpouring of emotion right from F1 champion Lewis Hamilton to young fans donating their pocket money to help.

"The support was a bit overwhelming – it was awesome," says Monger. "I didn't imagine I would get that kind of support."

That level of support was evident at the next F4 round at Thruxton. While Monger had only just been released from hospital and couldn't be there himself, a walk of the Hampshire track was attended by thousands and raised over £7,000. And to cap it off, Monger's close friend Caroline made British F4 history by winning all three races and dedicated his triumphs to Monger.

Monger was then able to attend the following round at Oulton Park. "The first thing he wanted to do at Oulton was the data with Manuel [Sulaiman, JHR's other British F4 driver]," says Hunter. "And it was the same with Harry [Dyson] when he joined [the F4 team later in the year]."

But already Monger was preparing for his racing comeback and his first task was regaining his race licence. His first run back in a car came at Brands Hatch in July in Fun Cup machinery with the Team BRIT squad – the team that helps injured servicemen, and now civilians as well, to race.

"Eleven weeks after the crash was my first time in the Fun Cup car and that really helped," says Monger. "It was a big step forward for me as, one that I could get my licence back, and two that I was competitive really early on that first day. It was good for me to see and show I hadn't lost my passion."

At Le Mans this year, Monger was announced as the first driver as part of quadruple amputee Frederic Sausset's academy for disabled drivers that would work towards a 24 Hours outing. But the thought of returning to single-seaters was still in his mind.

"The plan initially was we thought we should maybe make the transition [into tin-tops] like Alex Zanardi did [the Italian

moved away from single-seaters into touring cars after losing both of his legs in a 2001 Champ Car crash at the Lausitzring]," Monger explains. "That was our initial thought, but I asked the question 'has anyone raced a single-seater before like me?' I don't think anyone has raced a single-seater after a crash like mine."

However, there was a major barrier to Monger achieving this – and it wasn't just whether he was physically able to race a single-seater. The FIA had a rule in place stating that disabled drivers cannot compete in single-seater categories. Upon hearing this, Monger decided to fight to get it changed.

"If I could change this one rule then maybe it was possible [to make a single-seater comeback]," he says. And with the support of the MSA, he was able to do just that.

"I got the confirmation earlier this month and that was really good to get that sorted quite early on as well," says Monger. "Changing any rule of any form of sport takes time so we were hoping that it would be ready for the start of next year. It was a real boost. I'm hoping to have my first test in January and after that see how it goes. I've got a series in mind and I'm working with a team."

So far Monger has completed extensive runs in a simulator to prepare for his comeback and he aims to get out in the car before committing to a series just to make sure he would be competitive.

And if that racing return means he heads back to the scene of the accident at Donington Park, he doesn't view that as any problem at all.

"I don't see Donington Park as being my enemy," Monger states. "The track had nothing to do with it, it was just unfortunate that it was on that track. It could've happened anywhere – any circuit, on any corner."

The fact that Monger has even got to this point is a real testament to his character and determination. "He certainly is a character that lifts people around him and not only himself," says Hunter. "My thoughts of what we would do as a team certainly changed as Billy improved."

One shining example of that determination came at Brands Hatch earlier this year when Monger completed a walk of the pitlane – using prosthetic limbs – for charity. Learning to walk again is just one of the challenges that he has faced since his accident and he says his recovery is still ongoing.

"I'm still learning – it's a long process with what happened to me," Monger says. "I'm learning something new every day."

He reflects, unsurprisingly, that 2017 has been a "strange" year. "It's difficult to sum up a year like this," he says. "The first round-and-a-half of F4 was good and it was looking promising for at least a top three in the championship – it might've been higher but you never know. But then it all got spun on its head and it was all about recovery."

"In April I was just a 17-year-old trying to make a career out of motorsport. I feel I haven't really done much but people have a view of me as an inspiration and it's really nice to have their support."

"I've had a lot of messages from people saying I've inspired their kids – being able to have an impact on someone else's life is pretty weird."

That is typical of Monger's modesty. He may feel he has not done much since his crash but others certainly do not feel the same way. He has picked up a number of prestigious gongs in recent weeks, including the President's Award at the FIA's Prize Giving Ceremony and being nominated for the Laureus World Sports Best Sporting Moment Award. Hunter says it is right that Monger is getting recognised for what he's done: "The accolades he's getting at present couldn't be given to someone more deserving."

Monger is quick to acknowledge that his accident has opened up new opportunities for him and massively raised his profile. But he is well aware that attention has some downsides too.

"The negative of it would be it adds pressure as everyone knows who you are," he explains. "But I view it as good pressure because everyone wants me to do well. At the end of the day they are more concerned that I'm enjoying what I do."

There will certainly be no shortage of fans wishing him well for 2018. The way he has become a household name – and not just for the crash itself, but for the way this down-to-earth and incredibly likeable guy has responded to it – has made sure of that.

And Hunter is certain that his protege can still have a successful racing career. "His way of being is rubbing off on people around him all the time," he says. "He is destined for some great things." ■



F1 champion Hamilton is one of the many stars to support Monger



Monger believes he could've finished in top three of F4 standings



The racing world united behind Monger after his horrific crash



Monger and Kubica: Two drivers attempting to defy their injuries

"I was awake after the crash for 45 minutes"

BILLY MONGER



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# INSIGHT: TESTING SPIES

Photos: Colin Clark

Eagerness to see VW's new R5 presented our man with a mission. By **David Evans**



The prize at the end of the journey

## ON THE HUNT FOR A POLO



Volkswagen's test session is out there – somewhere

**F**or Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan and Hugh Grant read Pontus Tidemand, Richard Browne and Gerard Jan de Jongh. Three of those folk have spent much of their adult lives dodging the press and being hounded by paparazzi. The other three were hounded by *Motorsport News* for one day in Wales earlier this month.

Not for us the thrill of the chase through the back streets of Notting Hill. Not for us careering through LA, hanging off the back of a moped, weighed down by 600 millimetres of Canon's finest. No, we were doing this job properly. In a Range Rover. Well, if you're going to get lost in the middle of Wales, you might as well do it in a car which offers you a massage – in all four seats – and the chance to watch *Homes Under the Hammer* on top of a mountain.

And 'we' are myself (obviously), MN columnist Colin Clark and Steve Jones (aka @rallyingUK). Between the three of us, we have a vast knowledge of Wales, its lanes, its backroads, rally roads and access

roads. I'd even brought with me four OS maps (124, 125, 135 and 136), safe in the knowledge that Volkswagen Motorsport and its new R5 had been spied heading into mid-Wales.

Once the team was in position, we were confident our network of sources would offer detailed intel on where to find them. Given that it was still dark and we'd been on the road into Wales for hours already, priority was given to breakfast. Normal people would have feared the lack of Golden Arches or an absence of Starbucks offering a cup of tea and bacon sarnie. Not us. After years of following rallies around this part of the world at ungodly hours, each of us has an in-built cafe tracker with rally refreshments on tap.

So, to Mallwyd and the greasy spoon attached to the filling station. Great sausages, but usually a bit too much butter on the bread. But no matter. Darkness.

What. Not a soul about. No bother. Brigands Inn, just around the corner. Lights on, nobody at home.

OK... Up the A470 to Dinas, Buckley Arms?

Nope. Phones were beeping. Spotted,

trucks in, north of Corris reckoned to be somewhere around Aberllefenni, west of Aberangell and south of the north end of the woods. In short, somewhere in Dyfi. That's the 6000 hectare forest of Dyfi.

Now the real dilemma: if we chased the picture, we wouldn't be eating for hours. Volkswagen had made it clear this was a private test, so even if we found them, they would be offering more hostility than sustenance. In fairness, there was no dilemma. We would starve for the good of feeding Twitter.

Yeah, right.

We turned south and headed to the classic rally town of Machynlleth, where the famous clock tower refused to make it get to 0800hrs any quicker. In the end, Clark stepped from the Rangie and headed for the Maglona Cafe. He'd seen the lights going on.

The lovely ladies took pity, fired up the burners early and shipped us a couple of sausage and bacon sandwiches early. Great form.

Another beep and 124 789107. The 1:50000 of Dolgellau and surrounding area was retrieved and the map reference traced to the junction opposite the start of the Gartheiniog stage. Happy days. So, to Corris. And

Corris dressed for Christmas. That was a first with Rally GB's date falling earlier and earlier into the season.

We crawled the last half mile towards the junction, windows down, ears cocked for the sound of a Polo GTI R5 being fired into life. Nothing. And there were possibilities in just about every direction.

"They're bound to use part of the Rally GB stage," I reckoned. "They could trace that off the onboarders and get a comparison time for their car."

Noise. Generators. And, more importantly, a sign. 'No spectators.' Even more important an arrow.

We were in. Nosing the Rangie through the woods, a couple of miles in we rounded a corner to see the glorious sight of a VW-branded truck. And a man in a hat walking towards us. Fortunately, we knew him. It was Pirelli Rally man Brian Kinghorn. We told him we were expected. He went to check.

In fairness, we were expected, but we weren't expecting to be welcomed.

Jan came out to meet us, not looking too impressed. More of the same from Browne.

"You take no pictures around here," says Jan.

"There's a really interesting place to watch about 800 metres up there," adds Browne, "but you'd better go now – the car will be out shortly."

And we fell for it. Some way past the 800 metres, Browne's devious plan made sense. They'd probably taken

the car on another road. Just as we were starting to curse, our walk guided us into a long, fast left, braking into a hairpin. And, even better, the car was coming.

"Who's driving?" said Jones. "Get a good look inside..."

Standing on the inside, I was sure there was no way the water running through the apex would reach me. How wrong can you be? With water dripping off my nose, I tried to remember what my job had been.

"Well?" called Clark, "who was it?" My reply required only half the number of words he'd offered. Back down the road, Clark and Jones filmed and clicked while I looked and learned.

"He was tall..." I said. Marcus Gronholm? Hmm, don't think so.

Next time through... "Tidemand! It's Pontus." More clicking.

Gotcha. Back to the Rangie for a mass upload followed by the inevitable social media frenzy. Momentarily, I almost forgot about the mud in my ear.

Laptops fired up, pictures downloaded and...

No service. No signal. Not a G, let alone three or four in sight.

Sod it. We went back, turned the cameras off and chewed the fat with Pontus, Jan and Richard. Paparazzi wasn't really for us. We're rally fans. And anyway, lunch was on... ■



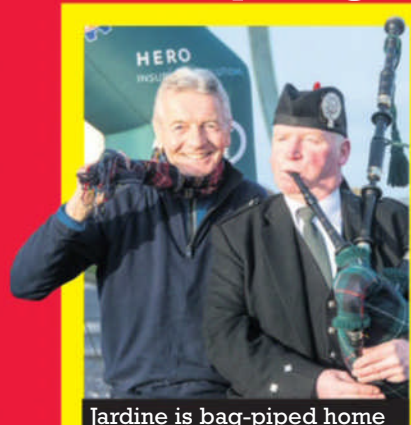
Finally spotted: The VW set-up



Evans and his chums shuttled their way deep into the Welsh forests

# ULTIMATE CHALLENGE: LE JOG

Motorsport guru signs up for his toughest test. By **Tony Jardine**



Jardine is bag-piped home

# JARDINE'S

## 1500-MILE CLASSIC MARATHON

**T**hink endurance, stamina, skill and will power. Pair a driver with a true road rally navigator, in an historic classic rally car and send them 1500 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats – the hard way. Then include endless regularities and speed tests along the route over four days and three nights. These are the ingredients that make up Le Jog; Europe's toughest classic car rally. It has established this reputation over 23 years, attracting competitors from around the globe and as far as Australia and the US.

Encouraged by 2016 Classic Road Rally champion Steve Entwistle, helped by Kev Haworth of HERO events PR, my entry was blessed by commercial director Brian Whyte and MD Patrick Burke. My chance to jump in at the deep end came sooner than I thought. Here are diary chunks of what turned out to be a very pleasant nightmare.

### November 2

Arrived at HERO HQ in Margam, South Wales. My weapon of choice? A 1972 BMW 1602 from the HERO Arrive and Drive fleet. Manager Mark O'Donnell suggested the BMW was the way forward, offering more comfort than their Alfa Romeos, Triumph TRs or Porsche 911s; ideal for such a tough endurance event. Champion rally driver Seren Whyte helped with my acclimatisation. As a former Le Jog class winner I listened to her advice: "sleep and eat when you can, keep hydrated. No energy drinks. If you don't," she warned, "the last 20 hours on the hoof can cause hallucination."

### November 23

I've only met my navigator Nick Cooper once, so time to get some serious training in for my first ever Le Jog classic car rally. No BMW yet. It's with Dave Smith at Maulden Motors for prep

after its RAC Rally of the Tests outing. Charles Colton, champion driver Howard Warren's business partner, generously stepped in and lent us his rally Porsche 911! After an afternoon in the tight Welsh lanes, pretending to be Vic Elford, we gave it back, spattered in mud.

### December 7

Training hard; longer runs; carbing up then gathering tools; checking medical supplies, thermals and snow shovel – the forecast is dire. Penzance bound, I jumped on a train and then taxied to Land's End in time to get the car to late scrutineering with Nick. Saw the famous John O'Groats sign – it didn't include the words "the hard way"! Can't sleep through the excitement and creaking 'Old Success Inn' sign as it swings away in the wind – all night. No sign of Poldark.

### December 8

Arise early to the sound of whistling winds. Peering through the window I see giant Atlantic sea horses lashing Sennen Cove. Never have I watched BBC weather reports so intently. The UK is covered by snow symbols and severe weather warnings – mostly along our route.

Nick Cooper has a full day of training and car prep planned, so we start with the measured mile six times to ensure all his trip meters, timers and clocks are tuned in.

"Where are you, the paperwork is issued..." reads a text from HERO communications chief Haworth. Rushing back to Land's End HQ there is now a fabulous line-up of historic rally cars with the craggy southerly tip of UK as their spectacular backdrop.

Nick has tried hard with 'Regularity Rookie' TJ today, but now he has five hours of route plotting, map marking and regs to go through. The hotel lounge is bursting at the seams with 60 navigators from around the world all at tables doing the same thing. Pencil cases, highlighters and rubbers strewn amongst the empty coffee pots; it resembles an A-level exam room for mature students.

I leave Nick to it and head out to the BMW, spending three hours in biting winds practicing wheel changes, fitting Camelbak water packs and packing the car with spare parts, snow shovels and food.

The worst job is laying out the snow chains, trying to work out how the spaghetti of chain links together, without wrapping themselves around the axle.



Le Jog event has a punishing schedule

### December 9

Rough night with little sleep, as high winds produced a cacophony of howling wind and rain hitting the windows like tracer bullets. Doesn't seem to have bothered M-Sport's Iain Tullie, who also stayed at Cape Cornwall.

Today is the start of Le Jog. Nerves are jangling, but Nick assures me I will settle after the opening test around the slippery headland path. And blimey it's slippery – the 1970s non-power steering is a real haul at slow speed. It's a hard pull, but the car responds.

A second test, as Nick shouts more instructions. I'm trying too hard: "It's not the quickest way. Calm down; try to drive it smoothly," says my seasoned navigator. Classic rookie errors in my first event. I wish I'd done some autotesting!

We push on to the next road section, heading to the first major regularity over Bodmin Moor, mindful of HERO Competitions boss Guy Woodcock's words. As a driver, navigator and top organiser, he is revered – so I listen. "Obey all the speed limits, but keep pushing on. It's easy to fall behind schedule – then you'll have to miss

sections." It's relentless. Words of encouragement come from multiple Le Jog gold medal winner Andy Lane, who tells me to keep it going: "hit all the controls and you could be on for a medal."

Over a maze of Bodmin roads I'm trying to keep to different average speeds, as Nick calls them. He is navigating off the map, keeping a track of time and speed all at once. It's amazing to watch but harder to keep up with, as you try to hit hidden controls on the second. I fall short. I'm frustrated. Things get fiery and we're shouting at each other! Got to calm down.

As we pull into Exeter Race Course for a control and food stop experienced navigator Andy Ballantyne asks Nick if he made the awkward control in the farm yard after the regularity? No, we hadn't read down through the last detailed instructions. Control missed already, gutted. Worse followed for Andy and driver Mike Tanswell, as their gearbox broke. They were out.

Two tests around the Exeter course allowed us to fling the BMW about; confidence is building and we're feeling better. But we're back on the

road again, chasing off to the Severn Bridge crossings.

Into freezing Wales, real rally country – narrow lanes, packed with ice and snow, with steep climbs to try and scabble up. We survive two more regularities in the dark then into a rest halt near Abergavenny. The navigators are all plotting and planning again. They never stop. The next lot of instructions have to be interpreted. Outside, the hero sweeper crews are fettling cars. We've lost a few, including the lovely 1968 Triumph 2000 of Tony Sheach and Rachel Wakefield. A Porsche 356B has slid on the ice into Bill Cleynert and Dan Harrison's Morris Mini Cooper S, but they're able to carry on. Eventually though, the Porsche has to retire.

### December 10

It's 0100hrs and we are deeper into Wales with an incredible TC section about to start in the Clwydian Ranges. Instead of timing to the second, as by day, we are to the minute. It's frenetic. We are all on the edge, just trying to cope with the conditions, losing time as the road is blocked with slithering rally cars. Five are caught at the bottom of a



The finish: sense of achievement

Photos: BluePassion



Jardine had a lot to learn on Le Jog



Snow blighted much of the running, making it tough work



The BMW 1602 didn't miss a beat



There are a wide selection of cars



Nick Cooper was the map expert



Our man TJ had to tread carefully

section, as the Minis in front can't make the steep hill. We catch, or are caught, as all crews try to stay 'on time'. Tomas de Vargas Machuca, in his 911, leads the way past the blockage to a control. We try to follow the flamboyant driver fish-tailing his 911 in a haze of snow dust; his navigator Ali Proctor misses the uphill left and we are through. Now on the tail of Mark Godfrey and Martyn Taylor's MGB they glance the snow bank - then I do the same.

It was an epic long night's rallying I will never forget. Poor Nick's trip kept freezing, so he had to make all the time and speed calculations in his head. Huge respect. Our average speed is only around 29mph, but with next to no grip everyone has to use all their skills just to make it through.

By 0345hrs we are in Chester to try and grab some sleep.

Wishful thinking.

Morning brings lots more snow... and it's still snowing. We have to dig to clear the car and push on to the first test. Entwistle is waiting, having bunked off work to advise the rookie and then watch. We don't let him down, for once, but I still get

disorientated, spinning out of one turn looking for the next marker.

The rest of the morning is an encounter with the Yorkshire Moors. Looking for all the world like an icy scene from *Wuthering Heights*, the roads are like glass. One control is blocked by a combination of German photographers and a stranded minibus. We thread through, then the 911 which was also blocked, both try to play catch up, slip slidin' away, but the downhill sections prove difficult. Incredible adrenalin-pumping stuff as you wait for the car to steer or stop drifting.

If the TC section in Wales was my highlight for total excitement, the next regularity past Ingleton and Ribbleshead Viaduct was the scariest.

The section climbed up the side of a mountain and down the other. Some couldn't get their cars to climb, but the sheet ice on the way down - with huge drops on the left - genuinely kept you cautious, as even cadenced braking couldn't always slow the car. You feel you are losing control, but nobody did. As ever in rallying, experience counts and low average speeds help keep Historic and Classic car rallying safer.

### December 11

We make it to Peebles, Scotland, in the early hours. The lack of sleep is starting to take its toll. Guy Woodcock and his deputy Dan Pidgeon have no sleep at all as they work overtime to beat the deteriorating conditions, rerouting and shortening regularities as required. They manage to keep a good half of the 80-mile long Loch Ness Monster regularity, with at least six controls in it. Amazing how they preserved some of this huge challenge.

### December 12

Three more regularities through Lowlands and Highlands. Past Loch Tay; an incredible beautiful road section past Loch Lomond and into Aviemore for a couple of hours sleep. We restart at 0150hrs and drive through the night up the East coast. More competitive sections - one, axle deep in snow, was an absolute blast.

By 0600hrs Tuesday I start to nod a bit. My brilliant navigator Nick has me singing Christmas Carols to stay awake for the final push. We arrive at John O'Groats early afternoon, as the

wonderful pipers strike up. We are elated we have made it. Better still, at Le Jog prize-giving in Wick we are awarded the class win and a coveted medal each - the bronze.

There are no overall positions but Andy Lane worked out we were inside the top 10. Nick was incredibly patient with 'TJ the Rookie', trying to learn the art of regularity rallying as we went. The sweeper crews and marshals were unbelievable, as were the entire HERO team.

What an event. At the prize-giving, I hailed the internationality of this awesome event, telling the German, Swiss, Dutch, French, Italian, Belgian, American, Australian and British competitors that, as an 'outsider' looking in, there is so much more to this incredible event.

I have genuine new-found respect for the skills of the drivers and navigators in this branch of motorsport competition.

I have competed in seven Arctic Rallies, worked on 10 Camel Trophies and two Dakars; but this has been the toughest for me yet. Here's to the 24th Le Jog December 2018. ■

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# CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Photos: LAT, Martin Walsh, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

## WORLD OF MOTORSPORT QUIZ

### ROUND 1: GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

- 1 How many different drivers led the points during this year's World Rally Championship?
- 2 This year's British Touring Car Championship featured 13 different race winners, but which driver scored the highest number of pole positions from qualifying sessions?
- 3 Lewis Hamilton picked a fight with Nico Prost on social media earlier this year after posting a video of him crashing with Nick Heidfeld during a Formula E race. But what was wrong with the video?
- 4 The Silverstone Classic will be how many years old in 2018?
- 5 Who is the only American driver ever to win the Formula Ford Festival?
- 6 Jenson Button finally bowed out of Formula 1 this year. His 136 race starts for McLaren ranks him second in the team's all-time appearance list. But who is first?
- 7 Football manager Andre Villas-Boas made headlines by entering next year's Dakar Rally. But which team did he quit managing to do so?
- 8 What denied Toro Rosso new boy Pierre Gasly the chance of winning this year's Japanese Super Formula title at Suzuka?
- 9 Which current WRC driver gave his friend a spin on the Raven's Rock Rally in June?
- 10 Who won the R.A.C. Rally, which was back with a monster new route in November?



One WRC star took on the Raven's Rock Rally



Hamilton's tweet got him in a bit of bother

### ROUND 2: MULTIPLE CHOICE

- 1 Sebastien Ogier's deal to join M-Sport wasn't completed long before the start of the 2017 Monte Carlo Rally. But how many days were there between him signing and his first event in a Fiesta WRC?  
A) 20 B) 39 C) 52
- 2 Valtteri Bottas took his first three Formula 1 Grand Prix victories this year with the Mercedes team. But at which round did he score his first pole position?  
A) Bahrain B) Russia C) Canada
- 3 Aston Martin factory driver Jonathan Adam this year became the most successful GT3 racer in British GT Championship history. But how many British GT3 wins has he recorded?  
A) 8 B) 12 C) 16
- 4 Ash Sutton secured a stunning maiden British Touring Car Championship title for Subaru this year. But where did he secure his first win of the campaign?  
A) Brands Hatch B) Thruxton C) Oulton Park
- 5 Kris Meeke celebrated his fourth and fifth World Rally Championship victories in Mexico and Spain respectively this year. But how many career WRC stage wins does he have so far?  
A) 26 B) 42 C) 70
- 6 This year's FIA World Endurance Championship featured a tight fight between Porsche and Toyota. But how many different driver combinations won races?  
A) 2 B) 3 C) 4



Meeke: five wins, but how many stages?



The WEC title fight was tight this year



Jonny Adam made GT3 history in Britain

## BIG CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

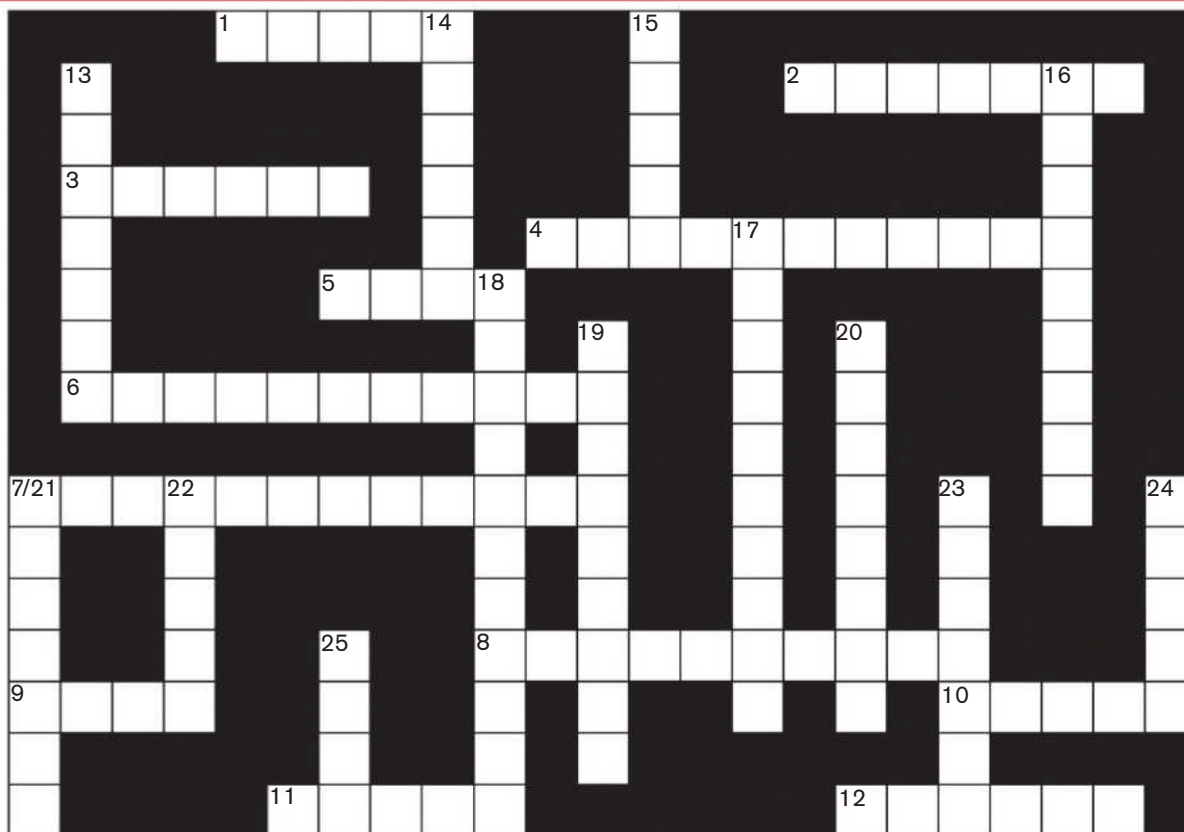
### Across

- 1 Jack \_\_\_\_, this year's National Ministox champion (5)
- 2 Skoda Motorsport's Czech rally star Jan \_\_\_\_ (7)
- 3 Mike \_\_\_\_, Toyota's British LMP1 racer (6)
- 4 Mallory Park's famous Boxing Day meeting (4, 7)
- 5 \_\_\_\_, Motorsport, winning team at this year's Nurburgring 24 Hours (4)
- 6 Which new series ran a 24-hour race at Spa for French city cars (2, 9)
- 7 The new Proton Iriz R5 scored a podium on its competition debut at this stage rally (6, 6)
- 8 Base town for this year's Roger Albert Clark Rally (10)
- 9 \_\_\_\_, Parfitt, British GT champion (4)
- 10 ORECA's new R4 rally test mule was built on this Toyota (5)
- 11 Chris \_\_\_\_, became a three-time Hot Rod World champion this year (5)
- 12 Circuit where the PSRX Volkswagen Polo won its first FIA World Rallycross round (6)

### Down

- 13 Formula 2 champion Charles \_\_\_\_ (7)
- 14 Country where Toyota scored its comeback WRC victory (6)
- 15 Alex \_\_\_\_, Spanish GP3 and Formula 2 racer (5)
- 16 Popular venue for BriSCA F1 (5, 4)
- 17 Former address of Wimbledon Stadium, which closed back in March (6, 4)
- 18 \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, driver who split with the MG BTCC team after Thruxton, (6, 5)
- 19 Nathan \_\_\_\_, this year's British RallyX champion (9)
- 20 British racing marque TVR's comeback model (8)
- 21 Rally GB Stage won twice by Elfyn Evans (7)
- 22 Toyota's new WRC signing, Ott \_\_\_\_ (5)
- 23 Thomas \_\_\_\_, French driver of the LMP2-winning ORECA at Le Mans (7)
- 24 British Rally champion Keith Cronin took his first win of the year here (5)
- 25 Sebastian Vettel's nickname for his Ferrari this year (4)

For answers, see page 15



## CARTOON CAPTION COMPETITION



Email your captions to [mike.stokoe@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:mike.stokoe@motorsport-news.co.uk) and the best ones will be published in our January 11 issue. Mike Stokoe's favourite will also receive the cartoon with their own caption in a frame as a prize.

## PICTURE CAPTION FUN



Pic one: Fernando Alonso amuses the crowd at F1



Pic two: Columnist Colin Clark

Just for fun. The best answers will be printed in January 11. Captions to [letters@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:letters@motorsport-news.co.uk)

# PREDICTIONS: ALMANAC

MN's resident medium predicts what may be on the cards for 2018. By **Chris Tylball**



A Proton Satria doubling up as a cross-channel ferry



SEAT racer Ilsa Cox gets a bit overheated at Castle Combe



Formula Ford racer Ross Martin tries out a prototype power shower



Chris Ward is unsure if his aerodynamic tweaks will work out



Wheel makes a bid for freedom...

## WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR 2018?



This trainee marshal at Knockhill was a real doll. No, really.



He's hare today, gone tomorrow, at Donington Park

### January

After a disappointing run during testing for new signing Sergey Sirotkin, the Williams team begins to wonder if it's made a mistake by passing on Robert Kubica for this season. The team opts to hold its faith in the well-funded Moscow driver with Paddy Lowe insisting: "We won't be Russian into a decision pre-season, and it's not about how rich the driver is..."

Kris Meeke dominates the Monte Carlo Rally for Citroen, winning every single stage to take the lead in the world championship. However, as he steps from the podium, he slips and falls into Citroen top brass, who are there to mark his win, spilling their champagne. Meeke is benched for the next round, Rally Sweden. Craig Breen finishes fourth.

### February

Eddie Hearn enters the fray to take over the British Grand Prix contract from the BRDC. He proposes to take the event to Madison Square Garden in New York. His plans are rejected by Liberty Media.

F1's new bosses, Liberty Media, announce a raft of new sponsorship deals designed to "reflect F1's growing appeal in America and to share the distinct American heritage with the races of the world". Many races will also feature new off-track contests between the drivers in the fan zones, featuring classic American pastimes.

### March

Meeke smashes the opposition on his return to the WRC, Rally Mexico. He even has time to slide off the road, pass through a fast food drive through restaurant, regain the road

and still claim the glory. However, Citroen bosses are not amused when they receive an unpaid bill for a diet coke and a burger, which the Northern Irishman had collected on his unexpected detour. He is stood down for the following round of the championship, Rally France. Breen finishes fourth.

The season-opening Australian Grand Prix is relabelled the 'Gatorade Rumble Down Under' as the first of Liberty's big-money sponsorship deals. The race is also accompanied by a drivers' chilli cook-off. Sebastian Vettel throws away his chances after he's disqualified for knocking over Lewis Hamilton's crock-pot during the cool-down period.

### April

British Touring Car Championship driver Josh Cook, who was the first racer for 15 years to be banned for a round in 2017, is prevented from taking part in the opening meeting at Brands Hatch for apparently calling and saying "well done" to his former team-mate and friend Ash Sutton for winning the crown.

On his WRC comeback on Rally Argentina, Meeke is once again the pace man in his Citroen. However, as he emerges from the car to celebrate his win, he treads on the toe of FIA president Jean Todt. Citroen is very embarrassed and decides to withdraw Meeke's entry on the next round of the championship, Rally Argentina. Breen finishes fourth.

Barry Hearn enters the conversation to take over the British Grand Prix contract. He wants to move it to the Crucible in Sheffield. Despite garnering support from former British F3 champion

Marc Hynes, the move is rejected.

The Bahrain Grand Prix is renamed the 'Desert Ding-Dong' in association with Bubba Gump' and each driver takes part in a line-dancing contest. Vettel gets ejected after stamping on Hamilton's toe mid-way through Cotton Eye Joe.

After a disappointing second race with Sirotkin, Williams parts ways with the Russian driver. In its search for a capable replacement, Kubica tests for the team, but it eventually settles on Microsoft founder Bill Gates instead. "This has opened real Windows of opportunity for me," says Gates...

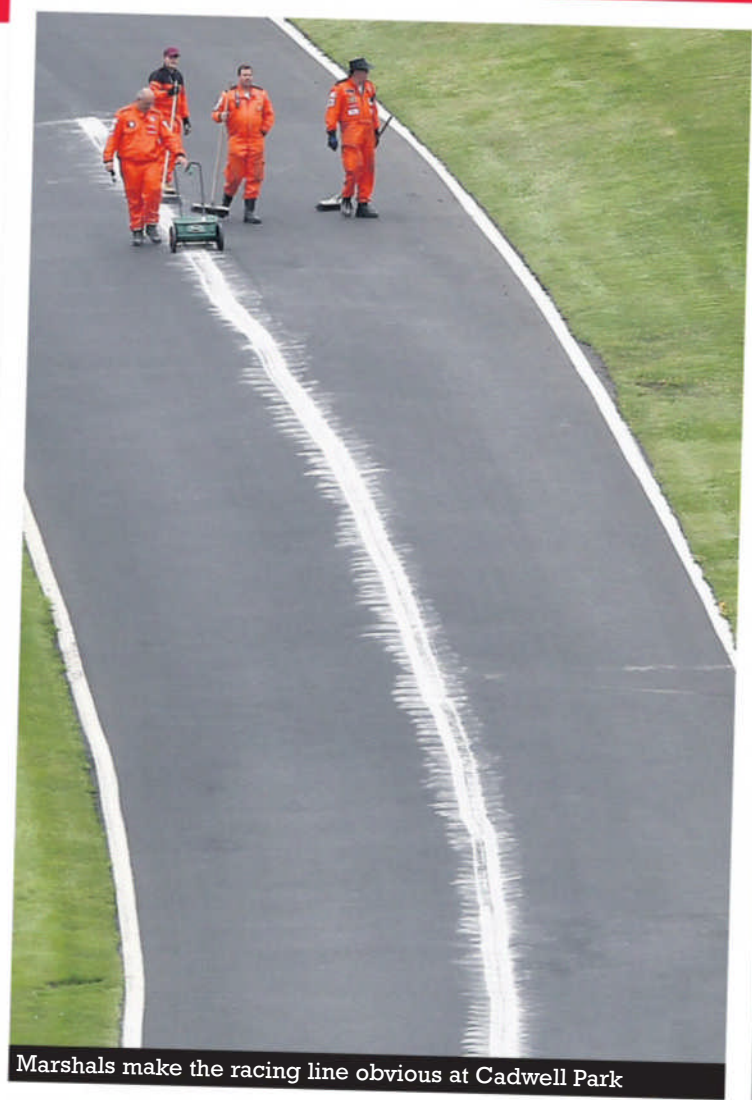
### May

Verstappen collects a win during the Spanish GP, profiting when his rivals implode at the first corner. "What are these guys doing?" reports Max on the pits-to-car radio.

Meeke is back on form on Rally Portugal, claiming an easy victory in his Citroen. The Dunganon man is so pleased he throws his trophy in the air. However, as it lands, it knocks into assembled members of the stage-end media. Citroen takes a dim view, and bars him from competing on Rally Italy, the next round. Breen finishes fourth.

The 89th Monaco Grand Prix becomes the 'Harbour Dash' powered by Burger King'. All drivers are invited to take part in an Americas Cup-style miniature remote control yacht race through the marina. Vettel finishes last after attempting to broadside Hamilton's vessel and instead harpoons both Kimi Raikkonen and Verstappen on the run to turn one.

Photos: M&amp;H Photography, Mick Walker, Jim Moir, Steve Jones



Marshals make the racing line obvious at Cadwell Park



The new Colin's Crest award in the BRC was a total failure

After another disappointing race for Bill Gates, who seems too distracted upgrading the team's IT systems, Williams terminates his contract. Kubica is called up to test, but the team eventually signs online shopping magnate Jeff Bezos. "It's unbelievable to get this chance, truly Amazon," he says.

## June

Verstappen wins the Canadian GP when Raikkonen's Ferrari, Vettel and Hamilton shunt at Turn 1. "I remember when I got my first F1 ride," laughs Verstappen on the radio.

At Croft's BTCC round, Cook is in hot water again. He and Sutton were spotted in Darlington ahead of the event going for a curry together. "He only had a Korma," says series director Alan Gow. He is cited for bringing the championship into disrepute and banned again.

The returning French Grand Prix gets a reworking to become 'Le grande race de la Francais, avec Walmart'. The drivers' activity is a traditional game of American Football. Sadly the match is

abandoned when Vettel bodychecks Hamilton during the national anthem.

## July

The British Grand Prix secures a renewed deal to stage the race until 2028, but only on the condition it goes under the name of 'The Big Battle of Britaiiin, brought to you by Starbucks'. All drivers compete in a baseball match on the Stowe Circuit. Vettel's team is docked points after several foul balls are pitched toward batsman Hamilton's groin.

With Bezos still failing to cut the mustard – and repeatedly luring the team to part with its budget with tempting daily deals and free delivery – Williams severs its ties. Kubica is spied testing the FW41 behind closed doors, but the team instead announces social media guru Mark Zuckerberg will drive. "This is the best friend request ever," he says...

Meeke is unstoppable on Rally Finland, dominating the event. He finishes five minutes ahead of the rest. However, during the post-rally

interview, he has to stop talking because he is so emotional and breaks down in tears. Citroen bosses are appalled, and decide to drop him for the next round, Rally Germany. Breen finishes fourth.

## August

Simon Cowell shows his interest in holding the British Grand Prix at Wembley Arena with Rak-Su driving. The move is dismissed.

The Belgian GP becomes the 'IHOP Tour de Ardennes' and drivers are encouraged to go 10-pin bowling. Vettel fails to win the game after his ball suddenly veers right into Hamilton's lane.

English National Hot Rod points leader Chris Haird gets his results after deciding to resit his GSCEs and A-levels. He passed all with A\*. "He really is Mr Perfect," says series boss Deane Wood.

At Knockhill, BTCC racers Cook and Sutton enjoy a round of mini-golf together. Series boss Gow is appalled. "It's not a club I want Cook to be part of," he says. Cook is banned.

## September

On Rally Turkey, no one can touch Meeke, who wins easily. The Northern Irishman steps from the car, clearly delighted. However, Citroen bosses are appalled when they hear news that Meeke has drunk a Disaronno miniature from his minibar. He is barred from the next round on Rally GB. Breen finishes fourth.

The Italian GP is rebranded as 'Domino's Day in il Parco'.

Competitive eating is the order of the day. Vettel is instantly favourite on Tifosi turf, but forfeits when he appears to deliberately sweep his Stuffed Crust Mighty Meaty over Hamilton's lap.

Zuckerburg is sacked from Williams for repeatedly poking Lance Stroll. Williams' search for a replacement begins again. Kubica is tipped for the seat, but the team favours an American driver for F1's tour of the States, so instead Donald Trump secures the deal. "I race the best grand prixeses... the best ever... everybody says so," he announces.

After Sutton wins the BTCC again at Brands Hatch, he celebrates with his friend Cook by wearing a grid girl outfit at 0200hrs. Gow is apoplectic with rage: he wanted to try it on later. Cook is banned again.

## October

Meeke returns for Rally Spain and is untouchable, clearly winning the event. The Citroen man is delighted with his win, steps from the car and does a little dance. However, it goes wrong and he slips over and breaks his ankle. He is forced to miss the last round of the season in Australia. Breen finishes fourth.

## November

The Japanese GP benefits from the new title of 'Showdown in Little Suzuka, sponsored by Benihana – My Kitchen is your Table'. All drivers take part in a Royal Rumble-style wrestling contest. Hamilton initially clears the ring to win, but Vettel sneaks up on him from behind with a steel chair...

Verstappen wins the Brazilian GP after escaping a first-corner shunt involving most of the other frontrunners. "I didn't realise Lidl were doing F1 Superlicences now," he says on the radio.

Having been denied entry to Mexico to contest the grand prix, and had issues operating the steering wheel with his small hands, Trump is dropped by Williams. Kubica flies to Mexico City, but buys a ticket to watch Sir James Dyson take the race seat. "I'm determined not to suck at this," says Dyson.

The season-closing 'Budweiser Prohibition Brew race of Destiny' – formerly the Abu Dhabi GP – features a competition between the drivers to reenact one of the world's most popular TV sitcoms. The show is cancelled after the pilot episode when it turns out Vettel and Hamilton can't be Friends.

Dyson finishes the season without a point, leaving Williams desperate for a better option for the 2019 season. The team tries to call Kubica, but finds out he's changed his number and gone back to rallying...

Hamilton secures his fifth Formula 1 world Drivers' Championship after Vettel's on-track challenge falls apart over the second half of the season. He attends the FIA's Prize Giving Gala wearing a sequined tutu from Vivienne Westwood's autumn collection.

## December

Meeke wins the Autosport Award as Rally Driver of the year. He gets exceptionally drunk to celebrate, and Citroen bans him from attending in 2019. Breen is sober. ■



Kubica is back to rallying after failing to secure a Williams cone-tract

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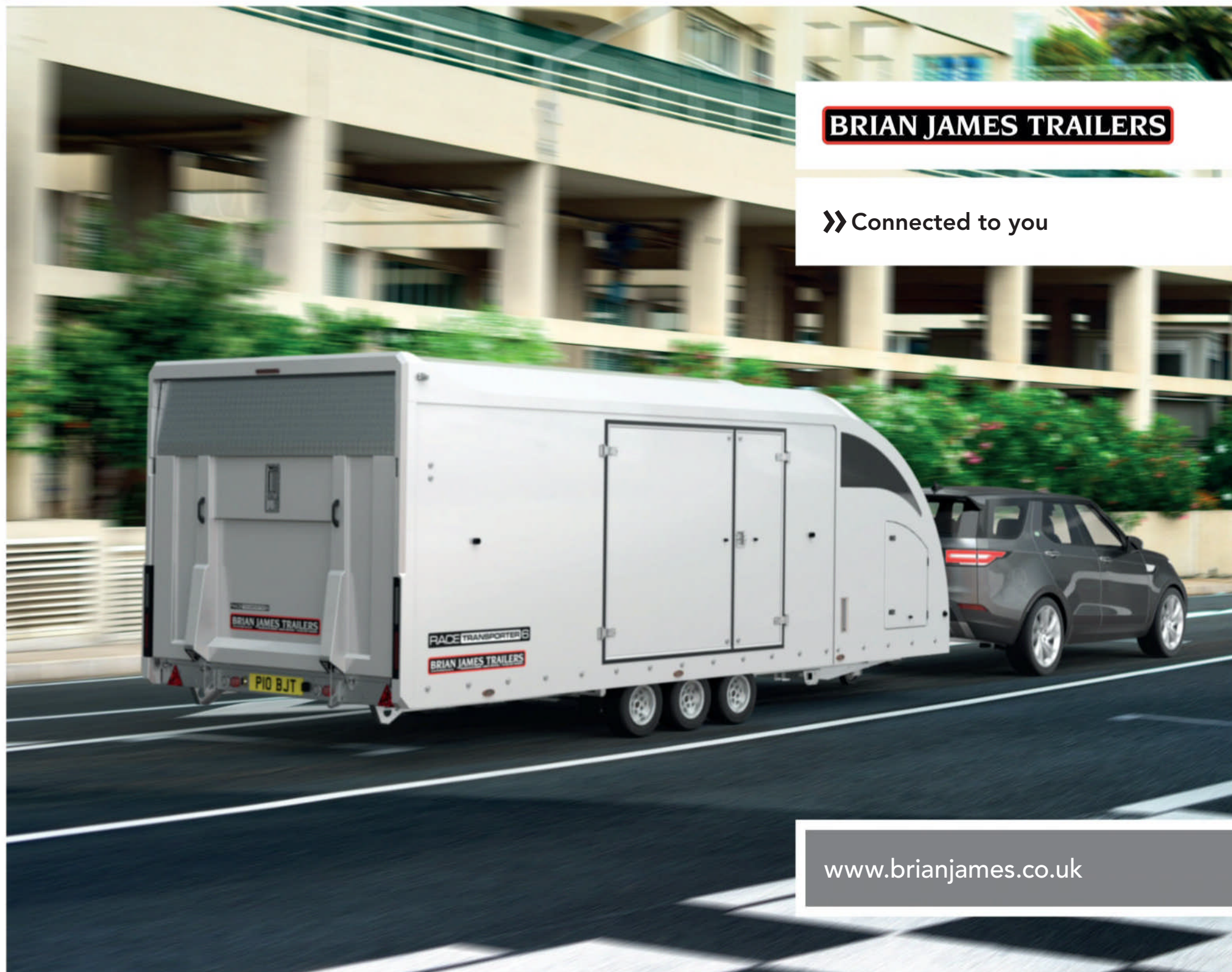
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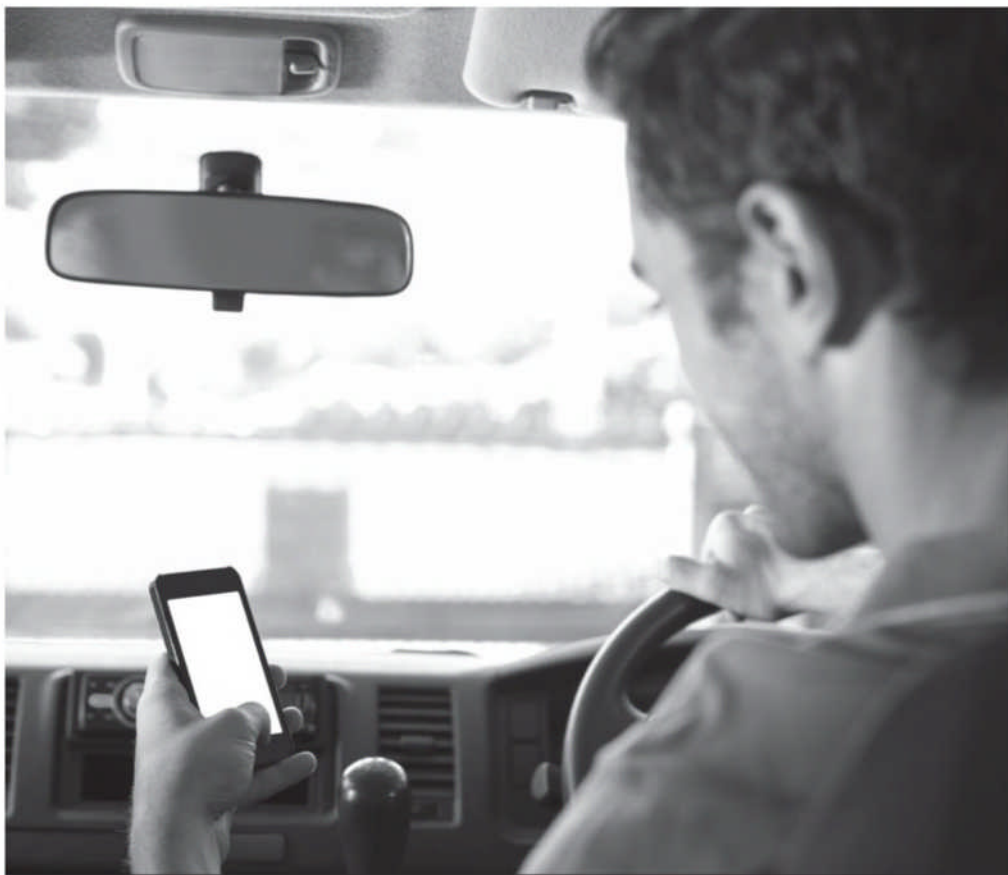
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