

2019 CALENDAR

05-06 January	Winter Series	Rnd 1
02-03 February	Winter Series	Rnd 2
02-03 March	Winter Series	Rnd 3
30-31 March	British Kart Championships - Rotax	
06-07 April	Winter Series (Final Round)	Rnd 4
12-14 April	British Kart Championships - IAME	
15 April	Bambino Experience	
27-28 April	British Kart Championships - TKM/Honda	
04-05 May	Spring Special & LGM	
13 May	Bambino Experience	
01-02 June	PFI TROPHY	
10 June	Bambino Experience	
06-07 July	Classic Cup	
15 July	Bambino Experience	
01-04 August	FAIRFX MSA KARTMASTERS BRITISH KART GRAND PRIX	
31 Aug-01 Sept	Autumn Cup	Rnd 1
05-06 October	Autumn Cup	Rnd 2
02-03 November	Autumn Cup	Rnd 3
30 Nov-01 Dec	Autumn Cup (Final Round)	Rnd 4

Spring Special

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PFI TROPHY

"Celebrating all things PFI"
Winners to get the first-ever PF plates!
Design the trophy competition

Classic Cup

"Back to old-school karting" Traditional grids format
F100 & Historic karts on track Paddock entertainment

Bambino Experience
Open to all licenced and non-licenced Bambino drivers.
Evening sessions
ARKS examiner present. Must have own equipment

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BUMPER CHRISTMAS DOUBLE ISSUE



WRC REVIEW OF THE YEAR

MOTORSPORT NEWS



THE BIG F1 QUESTIONS OF 2018



PICTURES OF THE YEAR

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TOP 50

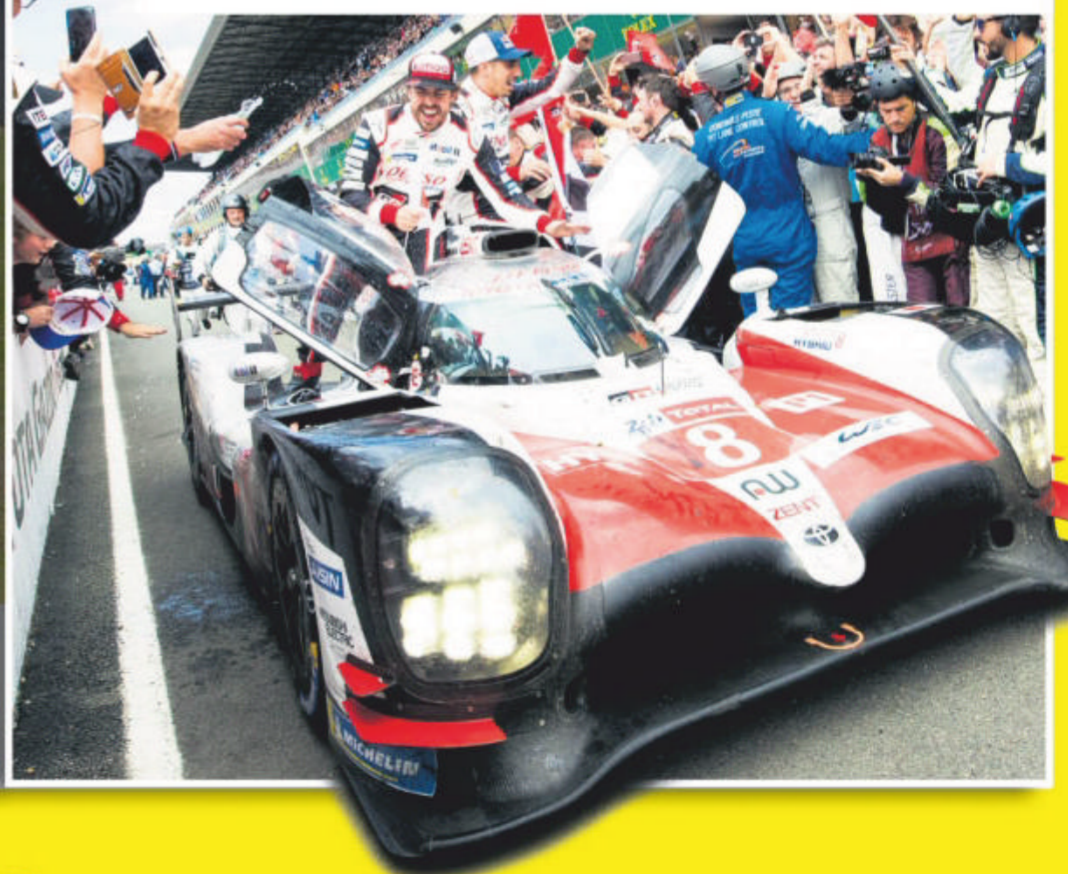
MOMENTS THAT DEFINED



2018

By Matt James
The 2018 season has been a dramatic one for so many reasons, and much of what has played out over the last 12 months will live long in the memory. From Lewis Hamilton's sensational 10th World F1 title to one of the most tense World Rally Championship showdowns in seasons, motorsport has delivered some mouth-watering storylines and we have attempted to collect together our defining moments of the 12 months just gone. We hope you enjoy our look back at the highs and lows of the year and if you think we have missed anything, please let us know at letters@motorsport-news.co.uk. Happy Christmas!

THE KEY MOMENTS OF THE SEASON



THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT
MOTORSPORT NEWS

French legend ties up deal for six 2019 rounds

LOEB GRABS HYUNDAI WRC DRIVE



By David Evans

Hyundai is hoping Sebastien Loeb's arrival will be enough to deliver the South Korean marque's first World Rally Championship title.

Hyundai returned to the WRC in 2014 and, while it has scored event wins, season-long glory has evaded the German-based team. Loeb is confident he can deliver when he makes his debut in an i20 Coupe WRC at next month's Monte Carlo Rally.

Full story, page 2-3



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IN THIS ISSUE



Da Costa strikes first in Formula E

P8

DEFINING MOMENTS OF THE YEAR

P19



WRC SEASON REVIEW



P30

BEST PICTURES OF THE YEAR

P42



TEN QUESTIONS FROM THE 2018 F1 SEASON

P46

Defining moments of the year	19	Mickel's American Dream	53
WRC season review	30	SUBSCRIBE TO MOTORSPORT NEWS	54
WRC top 10 drivers	36	BTCC drivers's wives	55
M-Sport breaking down borders	38	Christmas quiz	57
What is the BimmaCup UK?	40	Almanac	58
The future of Formula 3	41	Wanted: A Merry Christmas and Happy	
Best pictures of the year	42	New Year for all	
Ten questions from the F1 season	46		
Turkington talks	50		



FOR MOTORSPORT NEWS STAFF CONTACT DETAILS PLEASE SEE P18



Loeb not concerned about lack of i20 WRC testing

By David Evans

New Hyundai signing Sebastien Loeb will face a race against time as he prepares for his maiden World Rally Championship outing with the squad on the Monte Carlo Rally.

The nine-time world champion, who drives for a manufacturer-backed team other than Citroen for the first time in his 21-year career, will arrive at Hyundai's Monte Carlo Rally preparations next month with just hours to spare following his latest attempt to win Dakar in Peru.

Peugeot's decision to walk away from both Dakar and the World Rallycross Championship earlier this year left Loeb without a PSA contract for the first time in two decades and forced him to

look elsewhere for full-time work.

He was confirmed as a Hyundai driver for the next two years last week. His 2019 programme offers six rallies, including the first two events of the new season in Monte Carlo and Sweden. The remainder of next year and his 2020 itinerary have yet to be decided.

Despite the absence of a factory effort, Loeb sought a fourth shot at winning the South American marathon and signed up for the 3,000-mile event in a Peugeot 3008 DKR with French privateer squad PH Sport.

Loeb is scheduled to finish Dakar on Magdalena beach, Lima on January 17. He will then make the 12-hour flight back to Europe the next day and drive Hyundai's i20 Coupe WRC for the first time in a test in the French Alps on January 19.

After testing for Saturday and Sunday, Loeb will work through his test data on Monday before starting the recce for Monte Carlo at 0800hrs on Tuesday January 22. He and co-driver Daniel Elena will complete their preparations for their first Monte outing in four years at 2000hrs on Wednesday.

Rally fans will get their first

glimpse of Loeb driving a Hyundai at 1000hrs the following morning when he starts the first pre-event shakedown stage of the season.

The Sanremo Rally in October, 2000 was the last time Loeb started a WRC round in anything other than a Citroen (he guided a Toyota Corolla WRC to 10th on the Italian event) – but that all changes shortly after seven in the evening on Thursday January 24, when he starts Monte Carlo from Place Desmichels in Gap. His first competitive stage, the 12-mile test from La Breole to Selonnet starts half an hour later.

Despite the punishing schedule, Loeb admits he's delighted to be back in the WRC.

He said: "Winning at the Rally of Spain this season reignited my desire to continue competing at the very front of WRC. Joining Hyundai will give us a fresh challenge and one that I can't wait to tackle."

"I have been impressed with the team's approach and their determination to succeed. They were firmly in the title fight this season and I feel that I can bring a lot to them, together with Thierry [Neuville], Andreas [Mikkelsen]



Toyota outings for Loeb in 2000

HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

New Hyundai signing will get just one test before WRC season begins

LOEB GETS TWO DAYS IN AN i20 BEFORE MONTE



Monte is the debut venue for Hyundai/Loeb

and Dani [Sordo]. The Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC is a proven rally winner, and, as a crew, we know we can still be up there with the best, so 2019 promises to be an exciting season."

Loeb's late arrival into round one is far from ideal, but his pedigree as a seven-time Monte winner meant Hyundai was keen to have him in the car and pushing for a first WRC win by a South Korean marque on the series' blue riband event.

Loeb hasn't driven the i20 in any kind of shakedown and his first mileage in the car will come in the Alps at the pre-event test.

Hyundai team manager Alain Penasse told MN he has no concerns about Loeb's last-minute arrival into Monte Carlo.

"There is no other solution, he has to test the weekend before the event," said Penasse. "This will make it a very interesting test, I think. He hasn't driven the car yet, but he knows what it's about – he saw what the car was capable of in Spain, he knew how hard he had to go [to beat Hyundai driver Neuville]. He has so much experience of this event, he's won it a hell of a lot of times and he's always been competitive there.

His lack of time in the car won't be a problem.

"And don't forget, the Monte is a very specific event with very little testing available. We saw in Mexico this year, when he had been away for a while, he was able to come back and be on the pace. He will give away some advantage to some other drivers who have had more time in their cars and more experience, but I think he will be fine."

Penasse added that Loeb's arrival would come as a boost to the team as it went in search of its first title. Hyundai returned to the WRC in 2014 and progressed well in the first three years, finishing fourth, third and second in 2014, '15 and '16 respectively. Since then, however, the team has stalled and this year was its third consecutive runners-up spot.

Understandably, there has been mounting pressure both from within Hyundai Motorsport and from Hyundai Motor Corporation in Seoul. The hope is that Loeb's arrival will be enough to help seal a first title in 2019.

Penasse continued: "Sebastien coming to the team, his experience, his confidence and his

competitiveness, this will help everybody. He adds value to the team and he has a real aura around him and this will help the people around him next year. We have been close to winning the championship, this year we were still in the fight in the final morning of the season."

Hyundai team principal Michel Nandan said Loeb's decision to join the team reflected its standing in the world of rallying.

"Sebastien's announcement is hugely important for Hyundai Motorsport," said Nandan. "Sealing a deal with someone of his immense talent and calibre shows that we are an attractive and competitive proposition in the World Rally Championship. Ultimately, our goal is to win the WRC title. We believe we have the package to achieve that, and our composition of crews for 2019 will perfectly reflect that ambition."

Loeb will share an i20 Coupe WRC with Sordo – the Spaniard's programme is raised from seven to eight rallies in 2019 – while Neuville and Mikkelsen tackle all 14 rounds.

Loeb's arrival means Hayden Paddon is left out of Hyundai's 2019 plans (see page 10).



Dakar 2018 ended with a crash for Loeb



Loeb won in third rally of his comeback



Peugeot has now pulled out of World RX

RACING NEWS

Photos: LAT

F1 ROUND-UP

Leclerc intimidated

Charles Leclerc says he found Formula 1 "intimidating" at first as he adapted to dealing with more people than he had been used to in his junior career. Leclerc did not score a point at any of the opening three rounds of the season as Sauber struggled towards the rear of the field, but he broke his duck with a sixth-place finish in Azerbaijan in April and impressed sufficiently to secure a Ferrari drive. "At the beginning it's first of all quite intimidating to speak to so many people," he explained. "Everything you say is going to be analysed, not only by your engineer, but by so many people. So obviously it's quite... not scary, but intimidating. But then you get used to it."

Red Bull rivals

Daniel Ricciardo expected to have a worse relationship with Max Verstappen as team-mates at Red Bull but thinks they will stay friends even with Ricciardo moving to Renault. Though the duo had some intense on-track moments together, like battling for what turned out to be victory in the 2016 Malaysian Grand Prix and crashing spectacularly in Azerbaijan this year, they got on very well off-track. Ricciardo has left Red Bull to join the Renault works team for 2019 but reckons his friendship with Verstappen will continue and be "maybe even better" because they will not be "direct competitors". "I'd say the relationship with Max and myself went better than, I'll be honest, I thought it would go," said Ricciardo. "It was cool, it was a good, hard fight with him and I enjoyed it."

Mercedes support

Mercedes is turning to psychologists, well-being practices and medical support for its staff in its bid to remain at the top of F1. "As an organisation we are looking at the working environment," said team boss Toto Wolff. "We are looking at nutrition, at sleep, at medical support, at sports, and we are looking at giving days off, sending people home, if we feel they are not in a good frame of mind. We are looking at psychologists, at mindfulness at the team. I could speak here for another hour and say what we are doing."

Onyx backer dies

The colourful money man behind the Onyx team's F1 entry in 1989, Jean-Pierre Van Rossem, has died at the age of 73. The Belgian backed Onyx with his Moneytron investment company for its graduation to F1 from the F3000 ranks with Stefan Johansson and Bertrand Gachot. The Onyx, designed by Alan Jenkins, claimed a points finish in only its seventh race at Paul Ricard and then a podium at Estoril later in the season – both results with Johansson. Onyx boss Mike Earle described Van Rossem as "an eccentric, but an out-and-out motorsport enthusiast at heart".



Monza could be reworked

RADICAL £89 MILLION REVAMP EYED FOR MONZA'S LAYOUT

Italian circuit could be overhauled as it aims for new F1 contract

By Jonathan Noble

Monza is considering removing one of its chicanes and reprofiling the second Lesmo corner as part of a proposed £89 million revamp to mark the Formula 1 circuit's centenary in 2022.

Ahead of discussions to secure the Italian Grand Prix's future beyond next year, the

president of the Italian racing federation the ACI, Angelo Sticchi Damiani, has revealed a host of changes he wants implemented by 2022.

According to a report in *Gazzetta dello Sport*, Damiani wants a new circuit configuration that will make the track faster and secure its claim to the 'Temple of Speed' tag.

An initial suggestion is

to remove one of the track's three chicanes – most likely the second one – and open up the second Lesmo so it returns to being a faster challenge, as it was before it was modified in 1994.

As well as tweaks to the layout, the track would be widened, while the addition of new access roads and a new main grandstand, as well as the possible renovation of the old

banking, have been proposed.

Damiani suggests that having a full workable banking could make Monza a unique attraction with, in theory, a eight-mile circuit.

The project has been costed at £89m, but Damiani has not been put off by the amount of money it will take and thinks it can be raised through contributions from the local and national governments.

He told *Gazzetta dello Sport*: "The money will be found in some way."

Key to the project moving forward will be an extension of the Italian Grand Prix contract, which has not yet been renewed as Liberty and race promoters have yet to agree a price, for 2020 and beyond.

Additional reporting by Franco Nugnes

Alonso input would be valuable in new McLaren challenger

Fernando Alonso's input on the 2019 McLaren Formula 1 car would be "very valuable", reckon new drivers Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz Jr.

Two-time F1 world champion Alonso departed grand prix racing at the conclusion of the 2018 season, albeit leaving the door open to a future comeback.

CEO Zak Brown made clear Alonso was welcome to try the new McLaren, and rookie Norris hinted he would be willing to give up some running to have Alonso sample the car. "I think [his input] will be

very valuable," Norris said.

"He's got the best idea how the car's changed over the years, the best experience of what's good and what's bad, a lot more than I do."

Renault convert Sainz agreed McLaren could benefit from Alonso testing the 2019 design.

"It's something that for sure is in McLaren's interests, or also Fernando's interests to keep himself active," said Sainz.

"It's a decision more up to the management than to ourselves, but I wouldn't see it with bad eyes.

"I would see it as a good thing to have a driver like Fernando comparing cars."

While McLaren's sixth in the constructors' standings in 2018 was a clear improvement on the nadir of ninth the previous year, the MCL33 faded down the order and was often slowest of all by the end of the season.

Brown freely admitted it was "an extremely poor racecar".

McLaren underwent major operational changes in 2018, but Norris conceded "no one knows" whether improvements will come as soon as next year.



McLaren will be looking to bounce back to the front in 2019

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Photos: LAT

DRIVERS PROMPT ATTACK MODE CHANGE



Techeetah pair were given drivethroughs

The attack mode activation zone for the ABB FIA Formula E Ad Diriyah E-Prix was moved from its initial location prior to the race after it was criticised by the championship's drivers.

Several drivers, including reigning champion Jean-Eric Vergne, complained about the placement of the zone, which was originally situated at the exit of Turn 17 at the season-opening circuit, and fed onto the track's main straight. The zone was moved 23 metres closer

to the start line, and the painted white lines that signal the start and end points of the zone were also "increased in size for better visibility", according to an FIA bulletin after qualifying.

"After discussion in the driver briefing, the attack zone has been relocated appropriately 23 metres closer to the start line from the original location," read the bulletin.

"Effectively, the original 'exit line' of the zone is now the 'entry line'."

When asked about the changes, Vergne told *MN* that "it's a bit better".

"It's good that they responded, the only thing that I hope is that in the future they tell us what they want exactly, like if we [are supposed to] lose one second, two seconds," the DS Techeetah driver continued.

"We have the simulator, we know what is dangerous or not, and obviously this place was not right. [But] they all realised it.

"I'm happy they changed it, but in the

future I hope they can contact us and check with the drivers first."

Vergne and Techeetah team-mate Andre Lotterer were also handed drivethrough penalties during the race having passed long-time leader and eventual winner, Antonio Felix da Costa.

The offence related to a software infringement which resulted in power regeneration exceeding the level defined within the FIA suppliers' implementation guide.

What is FE's attack mode system?

Last weekend's Ad Diriyah E-Prix featured the first use of the attack mode in the ABB FIA Formula E championship.

It is intended to increase strategy and overtaking options in FE now that the championship no longer features car swaps during races.

Drivers must travel through an off-line activation zone, featuring three timing sensors, after arming the attack mode via a button on their steering wheels to access a higher power mode of 225kW.

The offline positioning of the attack mode zone is designed to ensure drivers lose time before getting access to the higher power mode.

Teams are only informed of the duration, minimum usage time and number of activations of the attack mode boost system one hour before each race.

In the Ad Diriyah race, drivers were allowed to arm the system five times as a maximum, with two activations of four minutes permitted per driver. The system is mandatory to use during races.

QUICK LAPS THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP

McLaren Formula 1 test and reserve driver Sergio Sette Camara will switch to DAMS for his third season of Formula 2 in 2019. He couldn't repeat the race win he achieved with MP Motorsport in 2017 after moving to series returnee Carlin for '18, but matched his McLaren F1 bound team-mate Lando Norris for pace and finished sixth in the championship...

David Beckmann will drive for ART Grand Prix in the FIA Formula 3 Championship in 2019. He endured a difficult start in the GP3 Series this season with Jenzer Motorsport, having switched to the series after two campaigns

in European Formula 3. But a move to Trident Racing for the fifth round of the season in Hungary brought success, and Beckmann scored three wins, a second place and two pole positions on his way to fifth in the standings... **Lucas Ordóñez, the first winner of gamer-to-racer contest GT Academy, is ending his decade-long relationship with Nissan. The 33-year-old was the first-ever graduate of the Nissan-backed GT Academy, back in 2008, which was designed to take the top players from the PlayStation-exclusive video game franchise Gran Turismo and turn**

them into professional racing drivers. Ordóñez enjoyed a 10-year career with Nissan that has included five Le Mans 24 Hours starts, outings in the Nurburgring 24 Hours, and spells in Super GT and the Blancpain GT Series...

Grand Tour test driver Abbie Eaton, who has made clear her intention to run in Super2 next season as a springboard into Supercars by 2021, will stay in Australia beyond Christmas as she searches for the required budget. She also completed her second test in a Supercars machine earlier this month in an outing with Matt Stone Racing at Queensland Raceway.

F1 champion Villeneuve to return to full-time racing

Formula 1 world champion Jacques Villeneuve will return to racing full-time next year in the NASCAR Euro Series.

Villeneuve, the 1997 champion with Williams, made four NASCAR Cup starts between 2007 and '13, and has also competed in the Trucks and Xfinity categories that support the main series plus NASCAR Canada.

The 47-year-old made a return to racing this year in the Americas Rallycross Championship in his native Canada in a Subaru Impreza, more than two and a half years after he was dropped by Venturi during the 2015/16 Formula E season.

He last completed a full season in 2005 when he drove for Sauber in F1.

Villeneuve recently tested at the Franciacorta circuit in Italy, and will race in the Euro Series with the Go Fas Racing Ford Mustang outfit that also competes in the Cup series.

"I had a lot of fun discovering the car because it is really similar to what I was



NASCAR Euro Series for Villeneuve

used to in NASCAR in the US," said Villeneuve, who also won the Indianapolis 500 in 1995 and the overall CART title that year.

"You can really drive it hard and you can work a lot on the car and that's also very nice.

"Returning full-time is what matters the most to me, because I want to be part of a complete project and have a goal for the entire season. I'm really looking forward to the first race of 2019!"

Inaugural Jaguar I-PACE eTrophy victory for Evans

Simon Evans claimed victory in the first ever Jaguar I-PACE eTrophy event, prevailing in a race-long three-way fight for the lead to make history.

Evans, elder brother of Jaguar Formula E ace Mitch, led from start to finish, but had to work hard for his win in Saudi Arabia.

With qualifying having been rained off, the starting order was decided by the free practice session that took place on Friday evening and meant that Evans was on pole.

He led from Bryan Sellers almost throughout, until Sergio Jimenez pulled off a great move on Sellers to take second on the penultimate lap and earn a sniff at putting the pressure on Evans up front, but the Kiwi held on for a landmark win.

Brits Alice Powell and Katherine Legge finished fifth and sixth respectively.

Evans led from start to finish



Former F1 champion will still race at Le Mans again with SMP Racing

Button to miss Sebring and Spa 2019 WEC rounds

One-time Formula 1 champion Jenson Button will skip both next year's Sebring and Spa World Endurance Championship rounds.

Button, the 2009 F1 champion and current Super GT title-holder, skipped this year's Spa WEC race in May as it fell on the same weekend as Super GT's Fuji race and the two events will clash again in 2019.

Although Button was named in SMP's line-up on the initial Sebring WEC entry list unveiled earlier this month, the Russian outfit has now confirmed that Super GT test commitments will preclude him from racing in the 1000-mile event in March.

It means Button's next WEC outing will be the season-closing Le Mans 24 Hours in June.

"It was always clear that it wasn't going to be easy to combine my participation in the seasons of WEC and Super GT," said Button, who is also joining Sky Sports F1 as a pundit next year.

"At the same time, to race for SMP Racing – even if I would have to miss certain rounds – is a great opportunity that I couldn't pass up.

"The Shanghai podium is an unbelievable achievement and progress for our team, and we'll keep trying and working further to secure ever greater results."

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Monger's BBC award

BRDC British Formula 3 frontrunner Billy Monger was presented with the Helen Rollason Award at the BBC Sports Personality of the Year awards last weekend (December 16). Named in honour of the first female presenter of BBC's *Grandstand* who later died from cancer, the award was given to Monger in recognition of his sensational return to racing despite suffering a double leg amputation following a crash in 2017. He achieved four podiums and a pole position on his return with Carlin this season.

New F4 driver

Australian racer Bart Horsten has been unveiled as Arden's first British Formula 4 driver for 2019. The 16-year-old took three podiums in the Australian Formula Ford Championship this season but will now switch to racing in F4. "I can't thank Arden enough for their help in making the move to the UK and providing such a welcoming environment," he said. "I have huge confidence in the team and what they can achieve next season."

Prize drive for Reid

More details have been announced about Sunoco 240 Challenge winner Kyle Reid's prize drive next year. The Mini Challenge Cooper Pro champion will get to race a BMW M4 GT4 alongside Toby Grahovec and Jayson Clunie in a four-hour support race to the Daytona 24 Hours. "I've seen Kyle race on many occasions and am confident that he will do a very good job," said Anders Hildebrand, boss of Sunoco fuel distributor AAOC. "I'm also very excited that we have teamed up with Fast Track Racing/Classic BMW team manager Toby Grahovec."



Day will use an ex-Austin Audi A4 A new dawn, a new Day for Alex in Touring Trophy

Touring car team HMS Racing will run Alex Day in the new Touring Car Trophy with an ex-Rob Austin Audi A4. Day, 19, has been sharing the Audi in the Britcar Sprint Class this year with his father Robert. BTCC race winner Austin has worked with the driver pairing before and will continue to have an input.

"I'm really excited to be joining such a prestigious team which has such vast experience of the touring car scene," said Day. "My dream is to one day race in the BTCC, so this is a fantastic opportunity to draw on the experience of HMS and learn all I can from Rob [Austin] and the team."

"TCT also provides me with a perfect stepping stone towards my long-term ambition so I know 2019 is going to be an exciting year, and I will be working as hard as I can to make it a successful year as well. I am very fortunate to already have experience in a British touring car, at just 18 years of age, and I am relishing the opportunity to build on that in a more competitive environment."

The Touring Car Trophy is new for 2019. It is the brainchild of former BTCC racer Stewart Lines and starts at Donington Park on April 14.

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Mick Walker



TORDOFF SIGNS UP WITH AMD TEAM IN A HONDA

Championship runner-up in 2016 will partner Scot Butcher next year

By Matt James

Former series runner-up Sam Tordoff will join Rory Butcher in AmDTuning.com's British Touring Car Championship assault in 2019.

The pair will race the squad's new Honda Civic Type R machines, which AmD acquired from Eurotech Racing at the end of the 2018 campaign.

Butcher, 31, will return for a second season with AmD. He took a best finish of sixth in 2018.

Tordoff, who was the championship runner-up in 2016 with WSR in a BMW, was a race winner this year in a Motorbase Performance Ford Focus on his way to 11th in the standings.

Tordoff, 29, said: "I'm sure there will be some people who are surprised by

this move and while there is some appeal in going into 2019 as an underdog, the reality is that I have one aim and that is to fight for the championship title.

"AmD have put a lot of investment into not only getting the cars, but in strengthening the team behind the scenes in order to move to the next level and there can be no excuses."

Butcher, who is the brother-in-law of

three-time BTCC champion Gordon Shedden, said: "You only have to look at the stats for the Honda in recent years to see how well it has performed and on paper, there is huge potential for us to do some big things on track in 2019. It's a big step up for both the team and I, and I'm confident that this package will give us a great chance of success. It would be silly of me to not aim for podiums and race wins."

BTCC return for Hill with Trade Price Racing's Audi S3

Jake Hill will return to the British Touring Car Championship grid in 2019 at the wheel of a Trade Price Racing Audi S3 saloon.

Hill started this season driving for the Team Hard operation in an VW CC, and finished in second place in the second race of the season in wet-but-drying conditions. However, he split with the squad before the middle of the season and was unable to return to competition.

Hill previously raced the S3 for Shaun Hollamby's AmDTuning in 2015 in a one-off outing. The 2019 operation will



be run by new team Trade Price Cars and overseen by AmD.

Hill, 24, said: "We have been working non-stop since the summer to get things in place to get back into the BTCC, and I am absolutely buzzing to once again be part of this exciting new project with Trade Price Cars Racing."

"We've had a tough year but everything happens for a reason and I am more focused, fitter, and more determined than ever to succeed – this will be a fun ride. I really, really liked being on the podium at Brands so I'd like to get a bit more experience of it in 2019."



Hill split with Team Hard last season but has already raced S3 in the past



MG Motor UK has helped develop the new MG3 racer to be used next year

New MG3 car could spark standalone series by 2020

The MG Car Club has been working with MG Motor UK to develop a new MG3 racer in a bid to bring more modern cars into the club.

The first example of the race-ready MG3 will be built by interns at SAIC Motor Technical Centre UK – an offshoot of MG's owner – at Longbridge and will race in the invitational class of the MG Cup. If there's sufficient interest, a full standalone series is planned for 2020.

"The main reason for doing it is two-fold," said MGCC general manager Adam Sloman. "First, it's to get a current MG on the grid with us. Right through our history we've always had a current MG as part of our package. Since MG-Rover collapsed we've not had anything [new] since the ZR."

"MG Motor have had to establish a dealer network and brand and made a

significant investment in top-level motorsport with touring cars so club-level racing wasn't a priority for them.

"Also, one of the main areas the club is looking to engage with is young members. We wanted to work with MG so that we can create something that is affordable and accessible to young people. If you're a first-time driver, the ZR 190 could be a bit too much. But a 105bhp MG3 that's quite closely related to the road car is something that's more accessible."

Sloman says that prospective drivers can pick up an early accident-damaged model for between £2000 and £3000 making it cost-effective to enter.

"The idea is by this time next year we would've built enough cars to write a set of regulations for its own series," Sloman added. "We've had some interest from some universities about building cars."



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Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Caldwell takes Gulf 12 Hours class win

Italian Formula 4 race-winner Olli Caldwell took a class victory on his GT debut contesting the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi last weekend, but plans to remain on the single-seater ladder in 2019.

Sharing a Bullitt Racing Mercedes-AMG GT4 with British GT race winner Ian Loggie and Russian Oleg Kharuk, the 16-year-old Briton won by a lap on his first outing with a roof since a half-season in Ginetta Junior in 2016, finishing in 20th overall.

Caldwell told *MN* that the event was meant to be a “bit of fun” and enjoyed the experience, despite losing ABS during the second portion of the two six-hour races.

“The first part of the race went really well, there was a few safety cars and I ended up doing a double stint, which was just over two hours, so a lot longer than I’ve ever driven in one go,” he explained.

“After the second start, Ian did his first stint and about 20 minutes into my stint the ABS failed, which was quite unsettling, but after I adjusted quite quickly.”

Caldwell added that he “wouldn’t say no” to doing more endurance racing, although his ambition remains Formula 1.

He has tested a GP3 car and plans to take a step up from F4, but has yet to decide between the F1-supporting FIA F3 and re-named Formula European Masters series on the DTM bill.



Mercedes-AMG GT3 will be raced

Full-time British GT return for ABBA Racing

Team ABBA Racing will return to the British GT championship for a full season next year after its partial 2018 campaign was curtailed by fire damage at Spa in July.

AMG factory driver Adam Christodoulou and Richard Neary will again drive the Mercedes-AMG GT3, which has been repaired after the dramatic fire caused Christodoulou to spend a night in hospital for treatment on burns to his hands and smoke inhalation.

The pairing first appeared in 2017 when Christodoulou took over from the retiring Martin Short mid-season, but only made two appearances this term – failing to finish on both occasions – while Neary concentrated on racing in Britcar.

Christodoulou is determined to set the team’s recent poor luck aside and capitalise on its experience of the car.

“The car now being in its third year is to our advantage, hopefully we can take advantage of their lack of experience with the new cars out there,” said Christodoulou, ahead of his first national campaign since winning the 2008 Formula Renault 2.0 UK title.

“We have to use everything to our advantage, we’ll be working hard over the winter doing plenty of testing and fine-tune the car more.”

Christodoulou will miss the first of two visits to Donington Park due to a clash with the Nurburgring 24 Hours.

IMPRESSIVE DEBUT FOR McLAREN'S 720S GT3



New McLaren led before problems

Ben Barnicoat is confident the new McLaren 720S GT3 will shine in customer hands next year after a starring performance on its debut in the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi last weekend.

The McLaren factory driver has been developing the successor to the 650S with fellow factory drivers Joe Osborne and Rob Bell, and was chosen to partner former McLaren GT works drivers Shane van Gisbergen and Alvaro Parente in a works-entered car for the season-ending enduro.

The 720S was leading with two hours to go when a minor right-front damper problem resulted in a long pitstop for repairs that cost it four laps and demoted the crew to eighth, but Barnicoat said McLaren had taken encouragement from its performance.

“It was frustrating that [the suspension problem] happened but to be able to perform as strongly as we did against Audis and Ferraris, which are well-renowned cars, was incredible and gives me a lot of confidence,” he told *MN*.

“We ran the car in full FIA-spec because the objective was to run it as customers will have it next year and get as much information as we could, which I think we did a very good job of.”

The outgoing 650S was renowned for being tricky to drive on the limit, so the new car has had significant suspension and geometry changes to make it more stable and easier for Am drivers to use. Barnicoat believes there is still “more on the table for us to be had” and added that development will be ongoing throughout next year

when the first cars are delivered.

Meanwhile, the new Aston Martin Vantage GT4 had a troubled debut in Abu Dhabi after damage from an opening lap collision condemned the works-prepared car driven by Mark Farmer, Tom Canning, Ollie Wilkinson and Adrian Willmott to a lowly finish.

The Kessel Racing Ferrari 488 GT3 driven by Alessandro Pier Guidi, Davide Rigon and Michael Broniszewski capitalised on McLaren’s misfortune to take the team’s fourth straight win in the event.



Photos: Jakob Ebrey

The final laps of the Rockingham Motor Speedway were completed last Thursday (December 13) as the circuit prepares to close at the end of the year. IndyCar driver Max Chilton and 2019 McLaren Formula 1 racer Lando Norris both took to Carlin GP2 machines and performed donuts and burnouts on the start-finish straight. Also there was the new-for-2019 Revolution Prototype, driven by James Abbott, that will be distributed from next year and used in a variety of series. The venue will now be closed to motorsport as it becomes a storage facility for defleet cars, a testing venue and hold auctions.

Other Clio models allowed to race in Clio Cup Series

The Michelin Clio Cup Series will be opened up to a wide range of Clio models next season following the addition of a Sport Series class.

Previously the category has only allowed third-generation Clios split between its Race and Road Series classes. Now the extra division will allow second and fourth-generation Clios to compete – with both Renault Sport-built Clios and road car conversions, limited to 220bhp, eligible.

This is significant given the 2019

season marks the final one with the current fourth generation car in the Renault UK Clio Cup so those cars can now be rehomed in the Michelin series.

“The aim of the new Sport Series is to give the many fans of the car a more open series where modified road cars can race against Renault Sport factory-built race cars all with like minded people, in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere – we really want to celebrate the Clio ‘family,’” said championship promoter Richard Colburn.



Older models, like pictured above, can compete in new Sport Series class

Ginetta Junior series move for In2Racing

Porsche Carrera Cup GB regular In2Racing will expand into Ginetta Junior next year, plotting a multi-car entry.

The team, which competed in British GT in 2017 and has been on the Carrera Cup grid since 2006, has signed Junior TKM karter Zak Taylor as its first driver.

In2racers will also get a chance to test the team’s Carrera Cup car at the end of 2019.

“The Junior Championship is a proven training ground for young aspiring drivers to showcase their talents at a high-profile level,” said team boss Nick Dudfield.

“With drivers of the calibre of Lando Norris learning their trade in the series and McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Tom Gamble a race winner in 2017.”

FORMULA E: SAUDI ARABIA

Photos: LAT

A brave new dawn broke on electric category. By Alex Kalinauckas

BMW DRAWS FIRST BLOOD IN FORMULA E



Da Costa was in top form



Da Costa leads away from pole

Formula E may have a new look, rules and many unfamiliar drivers for the 2018/19 championship, but its racing was as tight and unpredictable as ever.

Not unexpectedly, BMW Andretti claimed pole position. The squad had topped all three days of pre-season testing and again showed good top-end speed to claim the top spot on the grid, through damp and greasy conditions on the still-drying track, with Antonio Felix da Costa.

He transformed pole into a debut FE win for BMW – it is now a full works FE manufacturer, although Andretti still owns the entry – but it wasn't straightforward. First, da Costa had to reverse in to his grid spot as he was "looking at the wrong line on the floor so I misplaced my car a little bit", and that left him pointing towards the wall on the left of the track.

That proved to be no bother, though, as he shot off the line and into the lead, while behind him, Sebastien Buemi battled by Jose Maria Lopez to take second around the outside of the first corner.

Da Costa consolidated his lead during the early laps, as Jean-Eric Vergne and his DS Techeetah teammate Andre Lotterer passed Lopez and closed in on Buemi. Vergne seized second with a spectacular pass on the outside of the right-hand Turn 18 – the track's main overtaking spot, where Lotterer also demoted the

Nissan e.dams driver a few tours later, but down the inside, on lap 12 of 33.

The Techeetah drivers then closed in on da Costa. First, despite the BMW driver's fierce defence, Vergne repeated his trick around the outside of Turn 18 to take the lead. An immediate season five win for the season four champion looked on.

A Techeetah 1-2 also appeared likely eight laps later when Lotterer shot by da Costa on the straight opposite the pit garages to take second going into Turn 1.

But then the race turned on its head. Both Techeetah drivers were handed drivethrough penalties for going over the maximum permitted power while using regen. This is a breach of article 27.9 of FE's sporting regs and relates to a software issue resulting in power regeneration exceeding the level defined within the FIA suppliers' software implementation guide. The penalties handed da Costa the lead back ahead of Lopez and Jerome d'Ambrosio, who had risen up from sixth on the grid, with Vergne and Lotterer rejoining fifth and seventh.

But the duo roared back towards the front of the race. In the closing stages, they lowered the fastest lap benchmark three times (twice for Vergne and once, finally, with Lotterer) – Techeetah set 15 times out of 27 overall, with BMW the next best on six – to close in on the top three. Their charge was aided by Lopez stopping with a broken left rear suspension, just after Vergne had moved into third.

It had been a spirited drive from Lopez, but he was undone by the entry to the attack mode zone. "I tried to go a little wider and got onto the dust, I never expected it to be that bad," he explained. "I did a mistake there and misjudged the situation. I went wide and I touched the wall with the rear – not hard, but enough to have some damage."

Lopez limped on for a few more laps but eventually stopped at Turn 14 on lap 26, which triggered a virtual safety car that then became a full safety car interruption. This closed the pack up, with da Costa immediately activating his first attack mode usage as he ran ahead of D'Ambrosio and Vergne. When the race restarted for a four-lap dash to the flag, both da Costa and Vergne used their second attack mode activations just before the safety car came in. The disruption meant all the drivers could push flat out to the end, although many reckoned the event was not particularly energy limited in any case.

Da Costa scampered clear while Vergne was busy demoting D'Ambrosio to third. At the start of the final lap, the Portuguese driver's lead was 1.507s, but that was just 0.462s at the finish.

"I was not actually stressed until the second last corner where I wasn't expecting him to be that close," a delighted da Costa said afterwards. "I took it easy on the last lap just to bring it home and then I looked in the mirror and he was right there. I was like 'jeez I should have kept pushing on

RESULTS

Round 1/12, Ad Diriyah (SA), December 15, 33 laps - 51.510 miles

POS	DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Antonio Felix da Costa (POR)	BMW-BMW iFE.18	46m29.377s
2	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Techeetah-DS E-Tense FE19	+0.462s
3	Jerome d'Ambrosio (BEL)	Mahindra Racing-Mahindra M5Electro	+4.033s
4	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar-Jaguar I-TYPE 3	+5.383s
5	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	DS Techeetah-DS E-Tense FE19	+5.579s
6	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Nissan e.Dams-Nissan IM01	+6.625s
7	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Nissan e.Dams-Nissan IM01	+9.105s
8	Daniel Abt (DEU)	Audi Sport Abt-Audi e-tron FE05	+9.819s
9	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Audi Sport Abt-Audi e-tron FE05	+10.936s
10	Nelson Piquet Jr (BRA)	Jaguar-Jaguar I-TYPE 3	+11.564s
11	Sam Bird (GBR)	Virgin Racing-Audi e-tron FE05	+11.747s
12	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Virgin Racing-Audi e-tron FE05	+12.189s
13	Oliver Turvey (GBR)	NIO-NIO 004	+13.104s
14	Tom Dillmann (FRA)	NIO-NIO 004	+14.273s
15	Maximilian Gunther (DEU)	Dragon Racing-Penske EV-3	+16.161s
16	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	HWA-Venturi VFE-05	+20.013s
17	Felipe Massa (BRA)	Venturi-Venturi VFE-05	+43.610s
18	Alexander Sims (GBR)	BMW-BMW iFE.18	+47.712s
19	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Venturi-Venturi VFE-05	-1 lap
R	Jose Maria Lopez (ARG)	Dragon Racing-Penske EV-3	25 laps/accident damage
R	Gary Paffett (GBR)	HWA-Venturi VFE-05	9 laps/accident damage
R	Felix Rosenqvist (SWE)	Mahindra Racing-Mahindra M5Electro	8 laps/transmission

Winner's average speed 66.479mph. Fastest lap Lotterer 1m12.591s (76.854mph).
 Qualifying 1 da Costa 1m17.728s; 2 Lopez 1m18.113s; 3 Buemi 1m18.268s; 4 Vandoorne 1m18.490s; 5 Vergne 1m18.571s; 6 d'Ambrosio 1m19.077s; 7 Lotterer 1m19.317s; 8 Evans 1m19.712s; 9 Paffett 1m19.929s; 10 Mortara 1m20.330s; 11 Sims 1m20.367s; 12 Abt 1m20.385s; 13 Massa 1m20.407s; 14 Rowland 1m20.849s; 15 Piquet 1m21.489s; 16 Gunther 1m21.883s; 17 Rosenqvist 1m23.037s; 18 di Grassi 1m25.104s; 19 Bird 1m29.625s; 20 Frijns 1m31.566s; 21 Turvey; 22 Dillmann. *Three-place grid penalty.
 Championship 1 da Costa 28; 2 Vergne 18; 3 d'Ambrosio 15; 4 Evans 12; 5 Lotterer 11; 6 Buemi 8; 7 Rowland 6; 8 Abt 4; 9 di Grassi 2; 10 Piquet 1.

that lap' but he was still not close enough."

BMW motorsport boss Jens Marquardt called the victory a "historic" moment for the manufacturer. "To bring [BMW's hard work] onto the race track here in Riyadh for the first time and have the first victory from pole straightaway," he continued, "you

definitely can't have it any better."

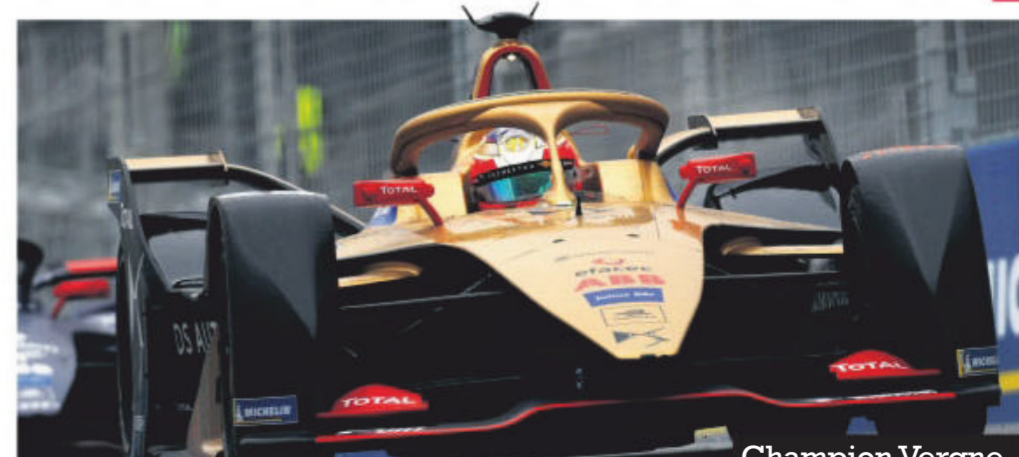
D'Ambrosio completed the podium ahead of a late-charging Mitch Evans (Jaguar), Lotterer, Buemi, and Nissan's Oliver Rowland, who was the top placed rookie. Nelson Piquet rounded out the top 10 behind a disappointed Audi pair, Daniel Abt and Lucas di Grassi.



Lotterer had to serve a drivethrough during race



D'Ambrosio collected a podium finish for Mahindra



Champion Vergne tracked the leader

HISTORICS

'Morgan makes it to the end'
Against all odds, below



DOWN THE PUB WITH

SAM COLLIS

Age: 32 Lives: Chesterfield
Silver Fern-winning co-driver

He's an ace co-driver

"I've been rallying for 15 years and I started as soon as I could, mainly co-driving. I've driven on a couple of single-venues and a few road rallies. I've just bought a stage rally Vauxhall Astra to start doing a bit more next year. But I'll still be co-driving for Matthew Robinson in his historic Escort Mk2."

They won the Silver Fern

"The Silver Fern Rally in New Zealand last month was literally mind-blowing. To understand the roads you'd have to go and have a look at it yourself. There are fresh air drops and the road surfaces are incredible. The people want you there and they are so friendly. It is a superb country."

It wasn't easy

"We went off on the third day at a very, very deceptive corner. We were the first car on the road and it was just one of those things. Shane Murland, in the second car, followed us in and I thought he was going to land on top of us. We then needed to change the engine because the cam belt had jumped when we left the road. The rally came back to us when Roger Chilman broke a halfshaft, but that's all part of rallying. In a 40-mile rally it would have been game over."

Maps were a challenge

"Then, because we were leading by so much we felt like sitting ducks because it was ours to lose. We'd have rather been 30s behind and chasing. The maps in New Zealand are nothing like as good as we have here."

It was a massive win

"I can't tell you what it meant to win. There was a lot of emotion: like nothing either of us has felt. It was like a weight had been lifted because we'd spent three days nursing a lead. We went through the final stage, the Motu Road, and after about eight miles Matthew said: 'am I driving fast enough?' You hear every rattle and Matthew had convinced himself that the propshaft was coming off!"



Collis: Silver Fern glory



Hill was a giantkiller at Silverstone in July

HILL REUNITED WITH LOTUS ELAN 26R

BTCC racer signs up for 2019 Masters Gentleman Drivers series

By Paul Lawrence

British Touring Car Championship racer Jake Hill will dovetail a season in a Lotus Elan 26R with his other commitments after making an impressive appearance at the Silverstone Classic in July.

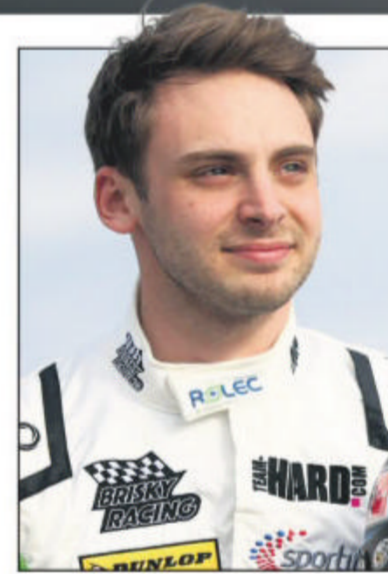
BRDC Rising Star Hill has been invited to share the same Elan he took to a memorable victory in the Gentleman Drivers' race at Silverstone as he fended off the best AC Cobras, TVRs and Jaguar E-types.

At the time, the Elan was owned by Richard Wheeler and now the new owner Rob Fenn has asked Hill to share the car in the 2019 Masters Gentleman Drivers' series. Fenn is switching from the Lotus Cup UK to race the car under the wing of John Danby Racing.

"I got a call from David Fenn a few days ago and he asked if I would be interested in racing with Rob and working with them and I jumped at the chance," said Kent-based Hill. "I can't thank David enough for the opportunity, and for believing

in me and what I can do. I'd love to develop a career in historic racing alongside my BTCC campaign, so this is a superb opportunity."

Hill's victory at Silverstone was widely regarded as one of the drives of the historic season and showcased his speed and versatility. "Winning in the Elan at the Classic was one of the highlights of my career, so to have a chance to drive on so many legendary circuits in one of my favourite cars with fantastic people will be incredible," said Hill.



Hill: Stand out drive in '18



Combe will highlight 1960s

Castle Combe to roll back to the 1960s with Autumn Classic event

Heroes of the 1960s will take centre stage at the eighth Castle Combe Autumn Classic on Saturday October 5.

The event will include a celebration of 50 years of Formula Ford at the Wiltshire track, 60 years of Marcos and a round of

the Historic Racing Drivers' Club's new Classic Alfa Challenge.

In 1969, the Castle Combe Formula Ford Championship was created as the first circuit-based championship in British motor racing. The inaugural champion was Bryan Sharp

(Merlyn Mk11) and 50 years of the category will be celebrated.

Meanwhile, the circuit's heroes of the 1960s will be remembered, including saloon car racers like Vince Woodman, Brian Cutting, Geoff Mabbs and Richard Longman.

Allingham for Ford Escort Mk2 in Barbados

Three-time Welsh Rally champion Alex Allingham will join the historic scene for next year's Sol Rally Barbados after accepting an invitation to drive the Weir Rallying Ford Escort Mk2.

Allingham and co-driver Ross Weir are the first new overseas competitors confirmed for the 30th running of the high-profile event, organised by the Barbados Rally Club. Last year, Weir co-drove for the car's builder,

Dave Jenkins, on the way to 29th overall on the car's debut, despite engine issues in the high ambient temperatures.

Allingham started his rallying career back in 2001 in a 1600cc Escort Mk2 but has done most of his events in Subaru Imprezas.

Team patron and former competitor Rob Weir said: "We're excited to have Alex as part of the team. With our new Jondel engine installed and tested, we feel they're a winning combination."

Appendix K series to grow next season

Eight events covering a mix of sprint and pitstop races have been unveiled for the second season of the Equipe Pre '63 series for Appendix K FIA sportscars.

First launched for the 2018 season, the new series rapidly gained support and next year's calendar takes in the grand prix circuits at Silverstone and Brands Hatch.

John Pearson from Equipe Classic Racing said: "The first season surpassed all our expectations, achieving an average of 27 cars per race, which is a fantastic result when you consider just how many options there are for racing these cars. Early indications for 2019 point to bumper grids and close racing."

IN BRIEF

Full Monte attack

Blue Diamond Riley Services will field a six-car team comprising five classic Rileys and an MG TC in the Monte Carlo Classique Rally at the end of January. The cars, ranging from a 1931 Riley 9 Tourer to the 1949 MG will start from Clydebank on January 30.

LeJog medals

Just four crews from 70 starters won Gold Medals on the recent LeJog, the Land's End to John O'Groats Classic Reliability Trial. When the crews arrived at the top of Scotland, those with the top performances were Noel Kelly/Pete Johnson (Volvo 122S), Roger Tushingham/Amy Henchoz (MGB GT), Paul Bloxidge/Ian Canavan (Porsche 911) and Richard White/Bernard Northmore (Porsche 924S).

Canadians prevail

After more than 4000 miles, the big winners in the inaugural Rally Round Africa were Canadians David and Barbara Berks (1929 Chrysler 75) and Australians Steve and Ruth Lambert (BMW 2002). The 1955 Morgan +4 of Jeremy Holden and Victoria Oliver took third in the Pre '66 class as well as the 'Against All Odds' award after overcoming car breakdowns.

Arctic will begin

The 4300-mile 16-day Arctic Circle Rally will start on June 13 2020 from the historic city of Potsdam, just to the south-west of Berlin. Run by Classic Events, the event already has entries from across Europe.

Trial is full

Fifty entries are expected for the final Historic Sporting Trial of the year, the Historic Plum Pudding Trial on Saturday December 29. The event will be held near Petersfield in Hampshire.

White's award

Grahame White has been appointed as an Honorary Life President of the Historic Sports Car Club to mark the end of his time as the club's chief executive officer. White has held the role for over 20 years and will stand down from the end of December.

Studebaker sale

The rare 1965 Studebaker Lark Daytona 500 most recently raced by Nick Whale will be offered for sale by his Silverstone Auctions's operation at Autosport International in January. As the only racing example in Europe, the 430bhp touring car has been invited to compete at Goodwood five times. It has an auction estimate of £100,000 to £130,000.



Lark Daytona 500 is a rarity

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RALLY NEWS

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HYUNDAI CONSIDERED REDUCING MIKKELSEN OUTINGS

German team investigated options with struggling driver



Norwegian driver came under threat



Mikkelsen underperformed in WRC in 2018

By David Evans

Hyundai tried to alter Andreas Mikkelsen's contract ahead of the 2019 World Rally Championship season, investigating the chance to reduce his number of outings in the series.

Motorsport News understands Hyundai had looked at the potential for reducing Mikkelsen's programme – a theory backed by an initial reluctance from management to confirm the 29-year-old's precise programme in 2019.

Mikkelsen endured his toughest season in the WRC in 2018, failing to win a rally while his full-time team-mate Thierry Neuville won three times and led the drivers' championship for seven rounds. The Belgian only lost his title bid on the final round in Australia, ending the season second while Mikkelsen was a distant sixth, 117 points behind him.

Sources inside the team have talked of frustrations building with Mikkelsen and his lack of pace.

Since returning from the final round in Coffs Harbour, there have been a series of robust meetings between Mikkelsen and the team management. An upturn in form, pace and results is expected from next month's Monte Carlo Rally onwards.

The Norwegian said he would be 'regrouping' through the winter and looking to take lessons from this season.

Team manager Alain Penasse admitted more was expected from his squad's second full-time driver in the new year.

"It's been a tough year for Andreas," Penasse told MN.

"And it's clear that last year was not the one he expected or we expected overall. We have had some debriefings after the last round of the championship and we will work together to find a better way. We will see in Monte Carlo if he has taken something out of these discussions."

Asked directly if he would be contesting all 14 rounds alongside Neuville, Penasse replied: "Yes, all

14. It was a very easy decision because we have the contract and we want to respect the contract."

Mikkelsen told MN he had work to do, saying: "It's very important for me to get my form back. I'm working with this team next year, so it's important for me to get out of this bad spiral that I'm at. At every rally [we had a problem], I tried harder to make up for it on the next one. I guess I need just one good result and then I can relax again, maybe I'm thinking too much about the driving."

Along with Sebastien Loeb, Dani Sordo was announced as a Hyundai driver for next season last week. The Spaniard will tackle the eight rallies Loeb misses, but presumably his deal could shrink if the team's new superstar Frenchman wants more WRC action.

Sordo urged Hyundai to take the positives from the last five years and use them in 2019.

"I felt that 2018 was one of my most competitive seasons," said Sordo. "We know that when things work in our favour we can

really be strong contenders. It is important for us to learn from the difficult moments and come back stronger – that's the aim for 2019. We have an exciting crew line-up with Sebastien coming on board. He brings an immeasurable amount of experience which will be a huge benefit to the entire team as we move forward."

Team principal Michel Nandan will be keen to forget 2018 and look towards the new year, and starting the season with a former Monte Carlo Rally winner in his line-up.

"Ultimately, our goal is to win the WRC title," said Nandan.

"We believe we have the package to achieve that, and our composition of crews for 2019 will perfectly reflect that ambition. We are also happy to retain the services of Dani for another year, extending a positive working relationship that dates back to 2014. With Thierry and Andreas already on the books for next season, we have an exciting mix of personalities and a complementary line-up."

Paddon dropped, uncertain future

Sebastien Loeb's decision to return to the World Rally Championship has forced Hayden Paddon to consider his time in the series could be up.

Paddon was on the brink of being announced alongside Dani Sordo on a part-programme when an 11th-hour agreement was made with nine-time champion Loeb. Hyundai offered Paddon a single outing for 2019, but he declined the offer (see column).

For the first time in a decade, the 2011 PWRC champion faces a season without any WRC action.

Paddon admitted the news was tough to take, saying: "The last few months have been mentally very difficult. There have been many discussions in the background, we were promised and told many things which haven't come to fruition."

"After the signing of Sebastien Loeb we've been left high and dry – a seat [and] position which was planned we had after several months of discussions. We were offered just one rally, which in every one's

best interests – that's not an option for us.

"Naturally we are very disappointed, but at the same time understand that can be the reality of professional sport. We can be proud of what we achieved and hold our head high."

"We were always told it was impossible for a Kiwi to be in the WRC. Not only did we get there, we won a rally and have eight podiums, [which] is some nice success that we can reflect on and was not possible without the belief and help of so many people in NZ. Of course, I feel like we could have achieved more but you can't spend life reflecting on the 'what ifs'."

"This is certainly not the end," he said. "Rallying is in my blood and it's just a matter to regroup and plan the next steps. We have some nice ideas [and] projects that we will try and put in place to take on the world with our own Kiwi team."

"I'm still competitive, I'm still motivated, I still want to drive and I still want to win!"

Paddon ousted from Hyundai



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WHO STOLE THE SHOW IN MN'S TOP 10 WRC DRIVERS OF THE YEAR?

PAGE 36

*'Eating a doughnut
at 14,110ft in America'*

David Evans's memory of the year, p44



M-SPORT FIGHTING FOR WRC FUTURE



Is M-Sport heading for WRC sunset?

M-Sport will seek an extension to the FIA's Friday deadline for entry to the World Rally Championship as it battles to save its future in the series.

WRC manufacturers have to confirm their entries with the governing body by Friday afternoon for inclusion in next year's world championship. M-Sport team principal Malcolm Wilson said his team is not in a position to do that.

Despite lifting back-to-back drivers' titles with Sebastien Ogier and winning last year's manufacturers' crown, the Cumbrian squad is out of cash ahead of 2019.

"I don't think people really

understand how close we are," Wilson told MN. "I have contacted the FIA and explained to them that, right now, I simply can't commit to 2019. We don't have the necessary resource to compete and I don't see that changing by Friday.

"It goes without saying that we're working flat-out on this and there are some things in the pipeline, but I've been in this sport long enough to understand that the deal's not done until the money's in the bank."

Wilson admitted funding the last two years with Ogier had cost M-Sport.

"Don't get me wrong," he

said, "I wouldn't change a thing and I'd do it again. To win three of the four titles, five of the six including the co-drivers' titles for Julien [Ingrassia] was an absolutely outstanding achievement for a [private] team like ours.

"Moving forward, one thing I am simply not prepared to do is risk the future of the company. I walk around the factory here and I see 300 faces that rely on M-Sport's future being safeguarded – they're more important to me than competing in the World Rally Championship for another season.

"Like I said, we're working

on it and we're working with the FIA. I desperately want to be there and I'll do as much as possible to make sure we are. But I won't risk everything."

M-Sport has competed on every WRC round at the sport's highest level since taking over Ford's WRC participation in 1997 and won seven world titles in that time.

Toyota, Hyundai and Citroen will all confirm their entries with the FIA on Friday (December 21), along with their entries for round one. Friday is also the closing date for Monte Carlo Rally entries, with the entry list published by the round one organiser on January 11.



WRC livery reveals at the Autosport Show

WRC liveries to be revealed at Autosport International

Citroen and Hyundai are expected to reveal all-new liveries for next year's World Rally Championship at the season launch at Autosport International.

A third new colour scheme will also be unveiled by British team M-Sport, if the Cumbrian firm commits to the series (see separate story).

Defending manufacturer champion Toyota Gazoo Racing is expected to run a

livery similar to this year, but 'Super Saturday' January 12 will be the first time to meet the Japanese firm's new British crew Kris Meeke and Seb Marshall.

Events director Kate Woodley said: "The livery unveil is such an exciting part of the season and to have all the World Rally Championship teams showing their colours for the first time at

Autosport International is amazing for us. But, even more importantly, it's amazing for the fans to have the chance to share in this moment."

Fans attending ASI on Thursday and Friday will have the opportunity to look at all four factory cars in their 2018 liveries.

Tickets for the show are available from autosportinternational.com.

Bottas to make rally debut in WRC Fiesta

Valtteri Bottas will follow in the footsteps of fellow Finnish Formula 1 greats Keke Rosberg, Mika Hakkinen and Kimi Raikkonen when he starts next month's Arctic Lapland Rally in a current-spec World Rally Car.

The 29-year-old will drive a Ford Fiesta WRC on the Rovaniemi-based event with two-time world champion Timo Rautiainen co-driving for him. Ahead of the January 24-26 event, the Finn will complete two days of testing in the Arctic Circle.

M-Sport's deputy team principal Rich Millener is confident Bottas won't let himself down.

He said: "We met Valtteri at the start of this season when we were in Monte Carlo and he made it clear what he wanted to do. He's done a lot of karting with [Citroen

WRC driver] Esapekka Lappi and I think this is something he's always wanted to do.

"What will be tough for him – and we've seen this with the likes of Kimi Raikkonen and Robert [Kubica] is learning pacenotes. But he's got Timo [Rautiainen] there to help him."

As well as the pacenotes, the weather conditions will play a big part in his debut on the stages.

"Consistent conditions would really help," said Millener. "Ideally there will be a lot of snow, big snowbanks and lots of good, hard ice on the road. If he gets those conditions, he'll find the grip's at a really high level and he'll learn quickly. If it's a bit warmer and he starts to lose some studs from the tyres because there's gravel coming through the ice, then it could be tough."

OBITUARY

Steve Bagnall

Motorsport News is sad to report the death of former Audi and Volkswagen team manager Steve Bagnall.

One of British rallying's key figures through the 1980s and 1990s, Bagnall was responsible for bringing Audi's stars from the world stage to these shores – including a brace of British Open outings on the Ulster and Manx Rallies for Michele Mouton in the sensational Sport quattro E2.

Volkswagen's success through the BRC's Formula 2 era owed much to Bagnall and drivers like Mark Higgins and Alister McRae both readily accept their route to the top of the sport would have been more difficult without Bagnall.

McRae remembers his time with VW and Bagnall's SBG team fondly – especially their

test for the Donegal Rally in 1996.

McRae said: "Our first Tarmac test was in Ireland and the reason for using the particular road was because Steve said the local pub had the best Guinness anywhere in the world. After the first day of testing I had to go down with him and was allowed one pint as we were testing the next day. I picked up the pint and he nearly knocked me off my seat saying 'Young McRae put it back on the bar. You must let it rest so it can reach the zenith of its creamy excellence'. A great guy who was instrumental in getting me into the WRC, he loved his motorsport."

Higgins added: "He was a fantastic character, boss and friend. They don't make them like Steve anymore."

David Evans



GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

"Paddon didn't deserve to lose Hyundai seat"



Rubbish week that last one. Glad to be rid of it. Heard the news that Steve Bagnall and Maurice Nagle had passed, two fellas for whom I had the greatest of respect. Can't move on here without mentioning the fear factor with Bagnall as well, he scared me rigid through the early part of my career.

And so it remained, right up until my first trip to the Essen Motor Show with him. After that, everything was simpler, more straightforward. Largely because I remained comprehensively anaesthetised from the amount of Guinness consumed.

Maurice, I met much more recently, but what a genuinely lovely bloke and so rightly and justifiably proud of Paul and his entire family. Both will be much missed.

I hope it doesn't sound trite to move on to another person who will be missed, if not in the ultimate sense, but Hayden Paddon's demise was another source of despondency for me last week.

The news that Sebastien Loeb had signed for Hyundai was, of course, fantastic from a rally journalist's perspective. But once the deal was announced, the more I talked and the more I thought about it, the more confused I became. What does this say about the South Korean firm's WRC ambitions?

Short-term, there's no doubt he will raise the potential for seeing an i20 Coupe WRC on the podium more regularly. But longer-term? Is Loeb the answer, I'm not so sure.

I've rarely felt so conflicted on such a question. I sympathise hugely with the view that Loeb and Dani Sordo have had their go and they need to move on and let lads like Paddon get a fair go.

But then, when it comes to Monte, I'll be at the front of the queue to see how Loeb's shakedown time compares. He will, undoubtedly, offer another fascinating angle to what's shaping up to be a classic 2019 story.

Loeb brings massive potential and a very safe pair of hands. So maybe keep him and ditch Dani. But then Sordo had his best season in years while the guillotine hung over his neck through 2018. The same could be said for Paddon, Hyundai's second best scorer in terms of returning points per rally.

Hayden did absolutely nothing wrong last year. He followed team instructions to the letter and delivered. And this is the thanks he gets.

Before I'm done with this column for this year, maybe we should tackle the elephant that's popped in and out of the room over the last 12 months. Andreas Mikkelsen.

I'm baffled at how Paddon's shown the door after what's been a shocking season for the Norwegian. Sure, we can look up fastest times here or great splits there, but, on the results of 2018, Mikkelsen doesn't deserve his seat next year. There are a few in the team who genuinely fear that he'll ever come to terms with the i20 Coupe WRC.

That said, nobody will want to turn things around more than Mikkelsen. And he doesn't have to look too far back in history to remember the pain of rejection. If those two elements don't serve to carry him back to the podium's top step then he must go.

And if he does, feel free to call me Michel Nandan: I've got the number of a Kiwi who can fly.

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RALLY NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, SMJ Photography

New co-driver training scheme

British Rally Championship co-driver Craig Parry has launched a co-driver training scheme to help navigators improve.

Parry has started CPM Training alongside Jamie Edwards – a respected rally co-driver in his own right and co-founder of the Rally4Wales road repair outfit – to deliver special workshops based on the duo's experience.

The first workshop is at Monkhouse Granary in Shrewsbury and takes place on February 2.

"There's a massive gap between national events and the route to the world championship," said 2016 BRC champion Parry.

"Once I announced I was retiring, I spoke to Jamie about the potential to run some courses. Jamie is a professional trainer by trade so it made sense to organise something together.

"Between us, we've put together a four-hour course, which is open to drivers and co-drivers, if they want to come as a pair, and there's no age limit so everyone is welcome. It's about improving skills."

Parry has taken on a number of roles in rallying recently after he was forced to retire due to a crash in testing for WRC Rally Germany.

During the workshop, attendees will learn about scheduling tests, reces and movement schedules for teams on events, as well as checking notes from a recce video and learning how to prepare better for events.

Admission to the workshop is £100. For tickets and more information visit facebook.com/cpmrally.

RICHARDS BACKS CALENDAR RETHINK

Motorsport UK chairman calls for 'common sense' in the future

By Jack Benyon

Motorsport UK chairman David Richards believes a rethink is needed on how the UK rally calendar is formed, as called for by Motorsport News at the beginning of the season.



Richards: Calendar issue

and this goes a while back, 'it would be so much better to have a rally calendar, if we didn't have any regional championship events two weeks before a British Championship event. It would help us with marshalling, officials and participation'.

"We can change things through common sense."

Currently the rally calendar is formed by clubs stating when and where they want an event, and that is then approved or denied.

Richards said that a new system could improve national rallying and bring costs down.

"We should be telling the clubs where they can rally, choose the area they can rally in and make sure there's no overlaps," Richards added. "We use 10 per cent of the roads available in Wales, the opportunity to expand is colossal.

"And if we do it, the maintenance costs will come down, costs [altogether] will come down. Why has no one managed this? Because no one has the responsibility for the end performance."

In *MN's* 'how to save national rallying' feature, one item that came up repeatedly after canvassing the rally community was the belief that fewer events in the calendar could help to boost participation by strengthening bigger events to help improve entries.

While Richards stopped short of backing fewer events, he did say that the UK could implement a policy similar to European countries like France, which doesn't allow regional rallies two weeks prior to the national championship, in the UK's case the British Rally Championship.

"We've allowed the calendar just to happen," Richards told *MN*. "Everyone has turned around to me



BRC has struggled to bag clubmen

Barbados regular Swann will drive an Escort Mk2 for the first time in December

Tempest Rally winner and Barbados rally frontrunner Rob Swann will drive a Ford Escort Mk2 for the first time on the Mini Tempest Deepcut stages later this month.

Brit Swann has focused mostly on rallying his Subaru Impreza S12B WRC in Barbados in recent years. "The Subaru won't be back in time from Barbados, it's on its way back for a freshen-up over the winter," said Swann.

"Steve Finch has lent me his Mk2 Escort and that will be a new experience for me. I've had Escort Cosworths and an Escort G3 when I did BTRDA back in the day. I'm really looking forward to it."

Swann wanted to help out the Sutton and Cheam

Motor Club event run in tandem with the Craven Motor Club, having initially not planned to take part.

"I'm a big fan of the Tempest rallies: I've won the gravel rally a few times, I saw the entry and didn't think I'd have a car.

"But then I saw they were struggling for entries so I rallied around a few people to try and drum up the entries."

The event takes place for one time only on the Princess Royal Barracks, Deepcut. The MoD facility will close next year, so this is the last chance for an event there.

It is a non-spectator event so the only chance to watch is to marshal. Contact davewhyman@hotmail.com for details.



Swann is a frontrunner in Caribbean events in his Impreza

OBITUARY

Maurice Nagle 1951-2018



Maurice (r) and Paul (middle)

A conversation about Moll's Gap is always special. But it was never more special than when it was with Maurice Nagle.

MN is saddened to report Nagle's passing following a short illness. Well-known and much-loved as both a co-driver and Killarney organiser, Maurice made for the best of company, especially when he was talking about the sport he loved most. But, better than talking about it was doing it, which is just what Maurice did when he drove

course car on the Killarney Historic Stages Rally earlier this month.

Not far behind him on the road was his son Paul, co-driving a second course car – albeit slightly quicker – in Craig Breen's Metro 6R4. Paul's career as a world championship co-driver was a source of huge pride for Maurice.

MN's deepest sympathies are extended to his wife Angela, sons Paul and Alan, the rest of his family and many friends in the sport.

David Evans

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'M-Sport's new R2 challenger tested'

MN visits Poland factory, p38



Photos: IF Image Cymru, Roy Dempster, Kevin Money

SPEED & RALLY SHOW BACK WITH NEW DATE FOR 2019



Welsh event attracts storied works' cars

The Oswestry Showground based Speed & Rally Show will return in 2019, with a new August date, and a celebration of the Mini and Richard Burns.

In 2018 the *Motorsport News*-supported event celebrated the anniversary of the last season of the Moting News Road Rally Championship in 1986, with special guests from the era.

Next year marks 60 years since the Mini hit the roads in the UK and the mid-wales event near

the English border is looking for cars throughout the years to join on static display and as demonstration machines.

The 20th anniversary of the Richard Burns Subaru Impreza is also on the agenda to celebrate on August 17.

The event always attracts an array of current and historic machinery from British and World Rally history, with a testing demo stage set-up which also

features buggies, motorbikes and other machines from the world of motoring.

"After feedback from entrants and the great clubs that help us source vehicles it became apparent the May date just wouldn't work," said Lightning House's Brynmor Pierce, the man behind the event.

"We've looked at other dates and decided to take a leap of faith with August 17, this has

already ensured some of the amazing ex-works rally cars from 2017 are back with us."

Pierce owns a Mk1 Mini Cooper and has had variations of the cars in his family since the 1960s. The Mini Cooper Register and HRCR Mini Cup championship have also been invited to mark the occasion.

Tickets for the event are available on January 1 and are all priced below £20. Visit: tsars.org for details.



McGonigle is targeting a Mini title push

McGonigle to defend Turkey Run Rally win in WRC Mini

Reigning Turkey Run Rally winner Joe McGonigle will return to the event at the end of December to do development work on his Mini John Cooper Works WRC car.

McGonigle finished third in the Irish National Rally Championship this year in the Mini, but a rules change in the country means WRC cars must revert to running with the original size restrictor

they used in period. In the UK and Ireland WRCs are often run with a bigger restrictor for more power.

"You're not allowed a 34mm restrictor now," said McGonigle.

"I'd never even driven the car [with the homologated restrictor] so we want to do the Turkey Run to work on the mapping and make sure everything is as good as can be for the Irish National

Championship next year. "It took me some time to settle in to the Mini so hopefully we'll be in better shape in 2019."

Dominic McNeill, Derek McGeehan and Alan Carmichael are all set to use WRC cars on the County Derry Shackleton Airfield event on December 29. There are 29 stage miles on the event. For a list of festive rallies, see *What's On*, page 16.

RALLY REPORTS

Procter takes eighth Croft Christmas win

Christmas Stages Rally
By Larry Carter

Organiser: Northallerton Automobile Club **When:** December 16 **Where:** Croft Circuit, North Yorkshire **Championships:** North of England Tarmacadam **Stages:** 8 **Starters:** 89.

After going two years without a victory on their home event, local aces Kevin Procter and Dave Bellerby returned to winning ways when they emerged triumphant in Northallerton Automobile Club's Christmas Stages Rally at Croft Circuit.

Runners-up last year, the pairing overcome the tricky damp conditions early on to win all eight stages for an eighth win in total on the festive event.

Once the early challenge from 2016 winners Guy Smith/Patrick Walsh (Ford Fiesta R5+) and Tony Barty/Tony Walker (Ford Focus WRC) ended in both crews suffering mechanical problems after SS2, no one else got a look in as Procter eased to victory.

As the milder conditions allowed the track to dry, he eased 22s ahead after SS2 and the gap extended to 44 seconds over Peter Smith/Graham Wild (Fiesta RS WRC) by the half-time turnaround following SS4.

Peter Smith valiantly equalled Procter on SS6, but it was to no avail as darkness fell, Procter upped the pace again to stamp his authority on proceedings in



Procter never looked in doubt after two year win drought

his S2000 car with a turbo engine.

Smith claimed second ahead of Gordon Morrison with stunt driver Paul Swift fourth. A late charging Peter Stephenson/Ian Windress (Subaru) jumped the Escort of Mark Jasper/Don Whyatt for fifth. Class 1 was won by Mark/Andrew Constantine (Vauxhall Corsa), Des Campbell/Craig Forsyth (Peugeot 206) took Class 2 and in Class 3, Edward Todd/Andy Brown (GTM Coupe) took the win. Swift won

Class 4 with Stephenson doing likewise in Class 5.

Results

1 Kevin Procter/Dave Bellerby (Ford Fiesta) 57m14s;
2 Peter Smith/Graham Wild (Fiesta RS WRC) +1m19s;
3 Gordon Morrison/Calum MacPherson (Subaru Impreza);
4 Paul Swift/Russ Swift (Ford Escort Mk2); 5 Peter Stephenson/Ian Windress (Subaru Impreza WRC);
6 Mark Jasper/Don Whyatt (Escort Mk2); 7 Geoff Wright/Chris Sanderson (Fiesta); 8 Des Campbell/Craig Forsyth (Peugeot 206); 9 Edward Todd/Andy Brown (GTM Coupe);
10 Barry Lindsay/Caroline Lodge (Peugeot 106).
Class winners: Mark Constantine/Andrew Constantine (Vauxhall Corsa); Campbell/Forsyth; Todd/Brown; Swift/Procter/Bellerby.

MN'S MAN ON THE MANX

CHRIS BOYDE

"Manxmen hope for better 2019 rally season"



Just two of five intended stage rallies took place on the Isle of Man in 2018, making it the leanest calendar for over 40 years, foot and mouth aside.

In 2017 the island clubs restarted forest rallying with two successful events, a much-needed return to the gravel stages that helped launch Mark Higgins and Martin Rowe, among others. Both were scrapped this year due to a lack of entries and, worryingly, neither is even on the calendar for 2019. All the impetus has been lost.

Then in the summer came the cancellation of Rally Isle of Man, a heritage event not just for the island but for British rallying. The fact that it fell because of disagreement between the organisers and the authorising bodies of the Government remains a sore point of contention for all entrants and spectators.

RIOM organisers, battered by the bruising aftermath of their decision, have shown little appetite to move forward. Almost four months have drifted by since the event was axed and, although they say they hope to run a 2019 rally, in reality planning appears slowed and there is no date confirmed.

Most importantly, the stalemate means that any significant and vital rebuilding of relations with the IOM Government has yet to begin.

Beyond that is the question of where the future of this once folklore event lies.

Pokerstars Rally winner Jamie Jukes, as big a fan of Manx rallying as there is, rightly reminded me in November, "we all watch the Patrick Snijers videos in awe, but that was 30 years ago. We need an updated reason to marvel. What would RIOM be coming back as? It needs to be something special."

Yet in 2017 the event was a round of no fewer than nine championships and had over 170 entries. The demand is there, but the sense of déjà vu is too, back to 2012 and the last 'start from zero' project. It will be more difficult now.

However, there are chinks of light. Manx Auto Sport will introduce the Junior Rally concept on an event in February, the Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship return to the Manx National Rally was a great success to be built on, and the Pokerstars Rally profile continues to rise, albeit linked to the absence of the Mull Rally in the short-term.

All of the issues facing Manx rallying are serious, but they also pale into insignificance in the wake of the loss of driver Mark James following his incident on the Pokerstars Rally. Mark's family and friendship circle are in the thoughts of the island's rallying community, and it is a stark reminder of the need to pull together and the privilege we have to enjoy our sport.

A New Year offers an opportunity to turn the page.

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SPORTING SCENE

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

VOLKSWAGEN QUILTS WORLD RX

Champions' future in doubt as German firm withdraws its backing from contest



The PSRX team will step down in 2019

By Hal Ridge

Petter Solberg's World Rallycross Championship-winning PSRX Volkswagen Sweden team won't defend its titles in 2019 as he and VW have decided not to take part in the category.

VW joins Audi and Peugeot in quitting the series, while the privately-run OlsbergsMSE team, which ran Ford Fiestas in the class, will also be on the sidelines in 2019.

PSRX had planned to continue in the series next year, but in a statement issued at the end of last week, it cited a lack of competition following the departure of the other works or works-assisted teams from World RX.

The announcement means that, as it stands, there will be no manufacturer-backed teams in World RX in 2019, for the first time since the championship gained FIA World status (when Peugeot backed Kenneth Hansen's team and OlsbergsMSE received support from Ford) in 2014.

PSRX won both drivers' and teams' titles for the last two years, running a brace of WRC-derived Volkswagen

Motorsport-prepared Polos. "We can all see the potential here, but it's just not sensible to continue for PSRX Volkswagen Sweden in 2019," said double WRX champion Solberg.

The top non-works driver in the 2018 drivers' championship was GRX driver Niclas Gronholm in seventh, 195 points behind champion Johan Kristoffersson.

Solberg said: "The important thing to understand here is that this is a pause – a pause and not an end. I still believe in World RX. I still believe this championship can deliver the most sustainable, relevant, entertaining and competitive racing anywhere in the world."

The Norwegian has stated that he will compete in a Volkswagen in 2019, but has given no further information.

While Solberg's team has competed in every World RX event since the series began, Volkswagen Motorsport's involvement since 2017 has been with an eye on the future, and the electrification of World RX. However, that switch has been postponed until 2021. The marque says it's still interested in the electric switch.

"We certainly didn't take the decision

lightly, but we came to a mutual agreement not to continue in WRX in 2019 as there is huge uncertainty regarding the entries and the competition for next season," said Volkswagen motorsport director Sven Smeets. "Naturally, Volkswagen Motorsport will keep a close eye on any developments towards the electrification of the sport of rallycross."

World Rallycross promotor IMG says it is in discussion with several privateer teams about entries for 2019. "It's disappointing that Petter and Volkswagen are pausing their involvement," said World RX managing director Paul Bellamy. "But while one door closes another door opens. Volkswagen has been incredibly dominant over the last two years and it does make it a very open championship now as we go into 2019. Talking to a number of private teams, they see an opportunity now to be a world champion. There's probably five or six of those looking at that as teams. Car count, I think it could be anywhere between 14 to 19 with the conversations I'm currently having."

SOLBERG'S WRX TIMELINE

2013

Petter Solberg returns to European rallycross with a PSRX-built Citroen DS3 but endures a difficult year clouded by mechanical issues and on track incidents.



2014

Solberg wins the first ever World RX event in Portugal and goes on to claim the first drivers' title. PSRX runs a two-car team, with the second car driven by Alexander Hvaal, Simone Romagna, Sten Oja and Manfred Stohl.



2015

Solberg teams up with Brit Liam Doran in a two-car effort called SDRX, and the Norwegian claims his third FIA World title.



2016

Returning to a single-car DS3 outfit, Solberg fights for the title with Mattias Ekstrom but drops to fourth in the points in the final rounds of the season.



2017

PSRX gets Volkswagen backing to run a pair of adapted ex-WRC Polos, and signs Johan Kristoffersson. Solberg wins at Lydden Hill as Kristoffersson takes the title, and PSRX claims the teams' crown.



2018

Kristoffersson and PSRX defend the drivers' and teams' titles. Kristoffersson wins 11 of the 12 rounds, Solberg just misses third in the points due to an engine penalty.



Kristoffersson did '18 Rally Sweden

Kristoffersson assesses his options for 2019 and has race and rally chances

Back-to-back World RX champion Johan Kristoffersson says it's highly unlikely that he will be on the grid in 2019 as he weighs up circuit racing and rallying options, but is keen to return to the discipline.

The 11-time 2018 round winner said: "I'm disappointed that we cannot continue [in World RX] because for me it's been two amazing years with great success.

"Since day one I've felt really comfortable and really welcome in PSRX, it's been a really nice journey and I enjoyed every minute. It's something that I will remember for the rest of my life but I 100 per cent understand the decision."

Kristoffersson's contract with the team comes to an end this month. He received final confirmation of the news that the VW-backed squad would shelve its plans to compete in World RX next

year on Thursday evening, before the announcement on Friday, the same day that he is believed to have tested a WTCR Volkswagen Golf at Portimao.

A source told *MN* that reigning Swedish Touring Car champion Kristoffersson attended the Portuguese test and ran at comparable pace to British driver Rob Huff. "I'm not closing any doors, but it is highly unlikely to see me in another rallycross team for 2019. For me scanning the market, the closest I'm looking at is within the Volkswagen family. I have been there since 2008 so that's quite natural to look there and see what opportunities I have."

Kristoffersson won the STCC title with his father's team this season and is also set to drive a new Polo R5 for the team in rallying.

He will debut the car before the end of the year, and is working on plans to

compete on Rally Sweden in February.

"There is still an evaluation going on about what happens with STCC for Kristoffersson Motorsport next year, so for sure there is testing going on," he said. "Also within Volkswagen there are TCR cars running in the WTCR, but for the next couple of weeks rally will be my focus."

The Swede says he is keen to return to rallycross, especially in the proposed electric switch in 2021. "If they are able to push through electric and there will be manufacturer teams running in 2021, I will most likely be there," he said. "There will be a big, big difference between the 2018 and 2019 seasons in rallycross, next year it looks like it will be less manufacturers involved, but I don't think that the announcement from Volkswagen's side is decreasing the possibilities for an electric future in rallycross."

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ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S
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Gary Hill snapped this shot of a Rover at Brands Hatch. It makes Mike Stokoe happy



Duncan Stephens caught Aaron Haizelden



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Lambo drama at Oulton, by Nick Littler



Mike Phillips went to the Spa 24 Hours



Good timing, taken by Steve Wells



A Ford C100 at Mondello, by Mark Ashby



BTCC traffic jam, by Adam Chamberlain



Julian Godfrey's spectacular exit from British Rallycross at Croft, by Richard Salisbury



Touring car classics at Oulton Park, sent in by James Lomax



Flying Lancer, taken by Geoff Bengough



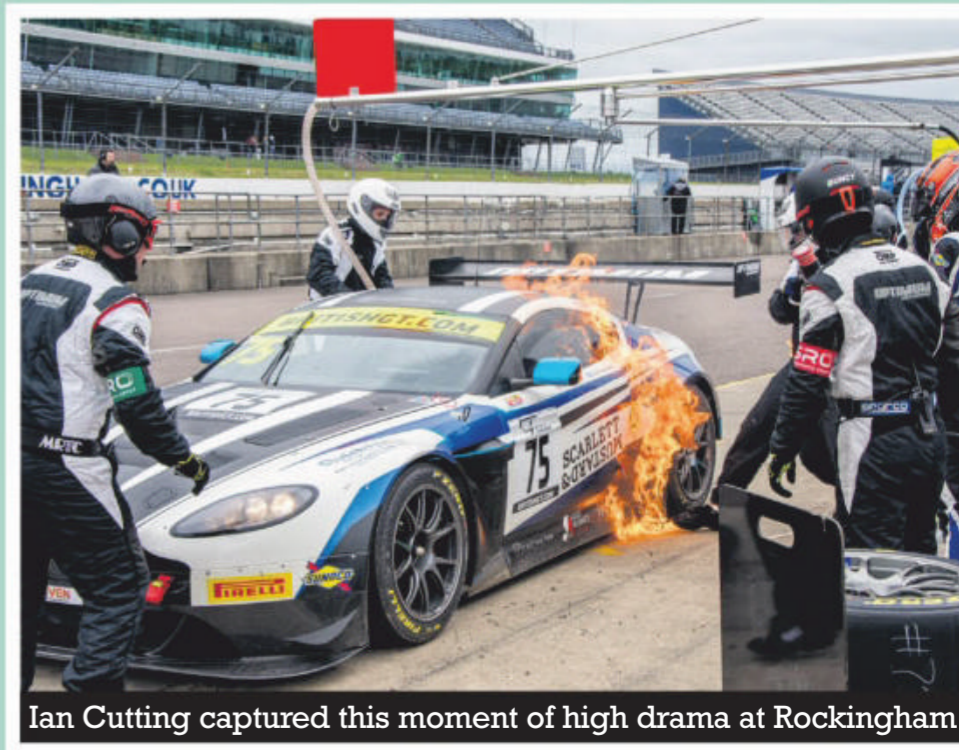
Robert Taylor enjoyed a trip to the Goodwood Festival of Speed



Daniel Darrall took a trip to the WRC season-opener in Monaco



Nearly! Snetterton fun from Sam Nudd



Ian Cutting captured this moment of high drama at Rockingham

GOT AN OPINION?

LET US KNOW: LETTERS@MOTORSPORT-NEWS.CO.UK

WHAT'S ON

MN SAYS...

Why it was a year to remember

Motorsport has delivered – but there's plenty to look forward to

It is that time of year when we can reflect on the 12 months just gone, and motorsport has once again delivered some truly remarkable moments which we have compiled within these pages. In fact, there are so many that we could have filled the Defining Moments list (pages 19-29) twice over.

The news this week that Sebastien Loeb will take part in a selected programme of World Rally Championship events with Hyundai adds even more excitement to what will be a fascinating season. The main focus will be on Kris Meeke, as he aims to restore his reputation in arguably the fastest car on the stages, the Toyota Yaris WRC.

Then in F1, Lewis Hamilton shows no signs of slowing down as he is ripping up the record books on his way to becoming the best of all time. He might well dominate, but his mastery is supreme. We will also look out for the progress of young British-born aces Lando Norris, George Russell and Alex Albon. Motorsport is in a very good place.

Matt James, Editor (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT
MOTORSPORT NEWS

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CHRISTMAS TV GUIDE BY MIKE STOKOE

So, the TV is about to vomit out a kaleidoscope of top notch entertainment over the festive period. After a year of Brexit mania and the world being on the verge of a nuclear war it's nice to be brought back down to earth with the classics.

So let's start with **Watership Down** (Part 1 – Saturday, December 22, 1900hrs, BBC1/Part 2 – Sunday, 1920hrs, BBC1). Fans of ships tune out, fans of rabbits tune in. Not got any tissues in the house? Tune back out again. Next it's **Dragon's Den** (Sunday, December 23, 2000hrs, BBC2). Those huge piles of cash sitting next to the Dragons is just asking for a lone mentalist to come waltzing into the den pitching for a 1 per cent stake in his new sawn-off shotgun range with built in smoothie maker.... now that would make for great entertainment watching Peter Jones get haggled down at gun point but sadly I won't be watching it tonight... "I'm out!"

The name's Bond, James Bond, in **Casino Royale** (Sunday, December 23, 2100hrs, ITV). Don't get too excited by the car in this one though. The Aston Martin DBS doesn't have the usual 007 gadgets the rear-facing double-barreled gun, the flamethrowers, the ejector seats with parachute... but just a small defibrillator, the one careful previous owner was infact a hypochondriac villain. Bond wins it in a strip poker game I think...

Big fans of laughter and suffering

from **Father Ted** insomnia should avoid lying horizontal and tune in to Channel 4 after midnight to watch Ted offend Craggy Island's Chinese community with four classic episodes.

It's Christmas Eve, the stocking is hung, the children's eyes are taped closed – settle down with a pint of mulled vodka and watch **The Lady in the Van** (Monday, December 24, 2200hrs, BBC2). If an old bag parked her van on your driveway for 15 years, that's £657,000 in parking fines... thank you!

Christmas Day is finally here, so watch the **Queen's Speech** (1500hrs, BBC1) as she marvels over the UK's amazing year through her rose tinted spectacles (well Gareth Southgate's lads did alright in Russia, then there was Billy Monger's courageous motorsport comeback, Harry Redknapp being crowned King of the Jungle but that's it and she probably won't mention any of these so I feel it my duty to here!).

Anyway watch **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang** (1510hrs, Channel 5), the noise of the flying vintage car backfiring might be handy to mask those awkward trouser coughs post brussel sprout overdose, you might need to apply a gas mask though... I mean who actually likes brussel sprouts but we all eat at least 10 because it's tradition.

If you fancy a swift half pint of misery then pop into the Queen Vic (2115hrs, BBC1). Spoiler alert, the new **EastEnders** set won't be ready

until 2023 and at a cost of £86 million.

It's Boxing Day, time for more family bonding with **Quantum of Solace** (Wednesday, December 26, 2000hrs, ITV). Aston enthusiasts don't get too excited as a gold Ford Ka seems to be centre stage! **Skyfall** (Thursday, December 27, 2000hrs, ITV) on the other hand is rich pickings and Aston nerds will not be able to stand up as the gorgeous DB5 makes one of its longest appearances since Goldfinger (1964).

It's New Year's Eve. You could go out and watch fireworks whizzing, banging and popping by the bongs of Big Ben and then get kettled in a dark alleyway by the old bill for three hours, or you could stay indoors as a hair-raising supercar chase through Rome is definitely a more appealing option in the Bond thriller **Spectre** (Monday, December 31, 2000hrs, ITV). Bond has a DB10 and will need more than a tube of T-cut to sort it in the end.

So now it's New Year's Day, 2019... the hangover cure, (no not becoming a fully fledged vegan, or running backwards for five miles in your new lycra budgie smugglers) settle down with a turkey sandwich and watch **World's Strongest Man** (Tuesday, January 1, 2019, Channel 5, 1750hrs). Tossing the hammer, pulling an aeroplane and lifting a car. That's all they'll be fit for soon when they have no steering wheel or engine and rely on 400 odd 9V rechargeables... these guys could have single-handedly built Crossrail in half the time.

LISTINGS



Jaffa Stages at Pembrey Circuit is on December 30

RACING BOXING DAY

■ Mallory Park, Leics

BRSCC meeting:

Sports Cars, Open Saloons, motorbikes
Starts racing from 1130hrs (qualifying from 0945hrs)
Admission adult £12, under 13 free **Web** mallorypark.co.uk
Contact 01455 502214

RALLY DECEMBER 27

■ Mondello Park, County Kildare
Carlow Rallysprint
Starts 1130hrs
Admission TBC
Web carlowclub.ie

DECEMBER 29

■ Shackleton, Ballykelly
MJM Turkey Run Rally

Starts 0945hrs
Admission TBC

Web maidencitymotorclub.webs.com

DECEMBER 30

■ Pembrey Circuit, Llanelli
West Wales Rally Spares Jaffa Stages
Starts 0930hrs
Admission TBC
Web carmarthenmotorclub.co.uk

SPORTING SCENE

DECEMBER 30
■ Stoke, Staffs
BriSCA F1
Starts 1230hrs
Admission TBC
Web brisca.com

Details correct at time of press but please check before travelling

NEXT ISSUE

OUT WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2 2019

BRITAIN'S FUTURE FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONS?



ALBON, RUSSELL AND NORRIS

SHORT OVAL REVIEW OF THE YEAR



NATIONAL RACING'S UNDERDOGS



PLUS: ALL THE USUAL NEWS, VIEWS AND REPORTS

STARRING: LEWIS HAMILTON, KRIS MEEKE, COLIN TURKINGTON, FERNANDO ALONSO



MOMENTS THAT DEFINED



By Matt James

The 2018 season has been a dramatic one for so many reasons, and much of what has played out over the last 12 months will live long in the memory.

From Lewis Hamilton's sensational fifth World F1 title to one of the most tense World Rally Championship showdowns in seasons, motorsport has delivered some mouth-watering storylines and we have attempted to collect together our defining moments of the 12 months just gone.

We hope you enjoy our look back at the highs and lows of the year and if you think we have missed anything, please let us know at letters@motorsport-news.co.uk.

Happy Christmas!

DEFINING MOMENTS

Photos: LAT, Jakob Ebrej, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

WEST TAKES MN CIRCUIT CHAMPIONSHIP

50



WHERE: ANGLESEY
WHEN: MARCH 18

There's no doubt that the Ford Escort Mk2 has a rightful place in rally history, and it continues to write concurrent chapters in both modern and historic rallying in its varying specs, especially in the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship where the model has won the last two titles.

But sometimes it's nice to see some variation, and a different car taking plaudits. Especially when it's a Peugeot 306 Maxi.

The ex-Francois Delecour and

Gilles Panizzi test car was driven brilliantly by the talented Chris West and co-driver Keith Hounslow and, although it is more advanced than the original F2-spec car, it's still fundamentally heavier than a Mk2 and front-wheel drive.

West wrapped up the title a round early at Anglesey after three maximum scores out of eight, and has returned just as strong in the 2018/19 season taking two maximum points scores on the first three rounds already. **JB**



TOM GAMBLE WINS THE McLAREN AUTOSPORT BRDC AWARD

49

WHERE: GROSVENOR HOUSE HOTEL, LONDON
WHEN: DECEMBER 2

Tom Gamble certainly was not the favourite going into the judging process for the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award.

He faced opposition from 2017 British F4 champion Jamie Caroline, Formula Renault Eurocup winner Max Fewtrell and the 2018 British F4 champion Kiern Jewiss. Gamble, 17, had jumped from Ginetta Juniors to F3 in one bound for 2018, which was a giant leap. He finished fifth in the points but when the

pressure was on in the assessment sessions at Silverstone at the end of the year, he handled the MSV F2 car, the Ligier LMP3 and the McLaren 650 GT3 with skill. Judges were impressed with all aspects of Gamble's overall performance.

"To say I've won the Autosport Award, and having beaten some of the best drivers my age in the UK, is phenomenal," Gamble said. "It's definitely going to take a while to sink in! Having this award on my CV will definitely make me a lot more appealing." **MJ**

LOEB SHOCKS THE WRC BY SIGNING WITH HYUNDAI

48

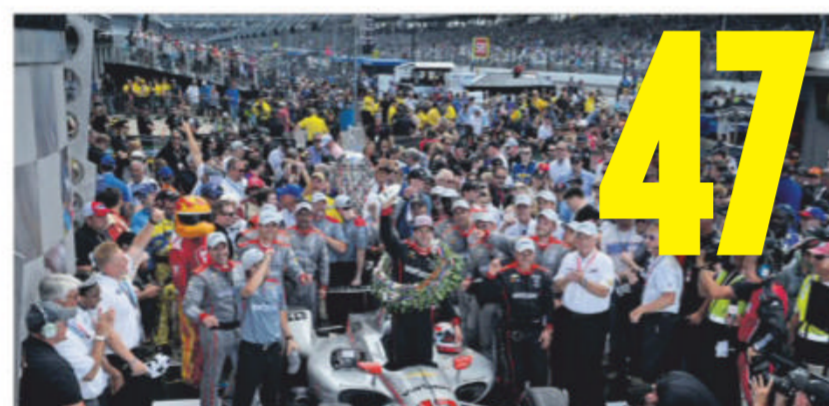
WHERE: ALZENAU
WHEN: DECEMBER 13

The sight of Sebastian Loeb driving anything not made by the PSA Group (Citroen and Peugeot) is akin to seeing pigs fly or riding a unicorn, but the impossible became the happening last week when the French nine-time World Rally champion confirmed he would sign for Hyundai for a six-round slate in 2019.

Peugeot pulling out of Dakar and World Rallycross lightened Loeb's load for 2019, and then Abu Dhabi pulling its backing of the third Citroen C3 he had driven in 2018 cleared it completely.

The competitive juices are not done flowing as he steers just his third make of car in his rally career, with a couple of outings in a Renault Megane and a part-schedule in a Toyota Corolla coming before he was established in the WRC with Citroen.

Judging by this year, he'll be tough to beat in what looks like an i20 stronger than the C3. **JB**



47

POWER WINS INDY 500

WHERE: INDIANAPOLIS
WHEN: MAY 27

It's fair to say there wasn't quite as much interest in this year's Indy 500 as last season's. Fernando Alonso's maiden appearance ensured many more millions were watching than usual in 2017. And it even topped MN's defining moments list last year.

With no Alonso, there was less attention when former British Formula 3 racer Will Power claimed his maiden victory in the legendary event. He was able to lead much of the

race and pounced on Oriol Servia, Jack Harvey and Stefan Wilson in the closing stages after his last stop dropped him back.

But, sadly, this year's IndyCar season will instead be remembered for a horrific crash for Robert Wickens at Pocono. The Canadian suffered a serious spinal injury when he hit the rear of Ryan Hunter-Reay's car, which sent him along the top of a barrier and into a catchfence. His recovery is still in the early stages and it's not yet known if he will be permanently paralysed. **SL**

VERSTAPPEN AND OCON COLLIDE

46

WHERE: BRAZILIAN GRAND PRIX
WHEN: NOVEMBER 11

It had been a mature, faultless drive from Max Verstappen as he made his way up from fifth on the grid to lead this year's Brazilian Grand Prix which had included overtakes on both Mercedes and Ferrari cars, supposedly quicker machines on the Sao Paulo circuit.

But on lap 44 of the 71 lap race everything changed when Racing Point Force India's Esteban Ocon, on brand new supersoft tyres and

with a pace advantage, tried to unlap himself around the outside of Turn 1 and then on the inside into Turn 2. Ocon's front-left wheel hit Verstappen's right-rear and both cars were sent spinning. Verstappen lost the lead and an assured win, trailing Lewis Hamilton home in second.

Enraged by the actions of Ocon, the Dutchman confronted him post-race before pushing him several times, which earned him two days of community service from the FIA. **SM**



45

TOMMY BYRNE RETURNS

WHERE: SILVERSTONE
WHEN: JULY 8

Everybody loves a good motorsport comeback, and one of the best in 2018 was 60-year-old Tommy Byrne.

The sometime F1 driver famed for his rapid pace in his car and his equally high-adrenaline lifestyle, re-emerged in the motorsport spotlight after a movie was released about him, called *Crashed and Byrned*.

Having been out of competition in the UK for decades, coaching drivers over in the United States, his friend James Hagan invited him to drive his Ensign N177

at the Masters Historic F1 round supporting the British Grand Prix.

Infamously Byrne was rapid in a McLaren test in 1982 at Silverstone, but the circuit has changed a bit since then...

"I tried to go in a simulator over in the States, and I couldn't get a lap in without crashing," Byrne said with a smile.

A broken halfshaft ruined qualifying, he recovered to 16th in the opener while engine trouble ended his second race.

Byrne hasn't ruled out more outings with "the right deal". **JB**

44



THRUXTON'S 50TH BIRTHDAY MEETING

WHERE: THRUXTON
WHEN: JUNE 3

Just to hear the sound of a wailing DFV around the sweeps of Thruxton was special. The Williams FW08C that Karun Chandhok hustled around the 2.356-mile track was a joy, but it was only the icing on the cake of a wonderful weekend marking five decades of the Hampshire venue.

The superb race line up including many historic categories recalling machines from the track's past, and there was a mouth-watering display of iconic motorsport winners in the paddock.

The weekend also marked a significant development in terms of the facilities at the circuit, with the opening of

the new Thruxton Centre on the inside of Allard corner.

It is a state-of-the-art building which offers facilities for fans on race weekends and corporate hospitality, but will also allow the venue to maximise its revenue through the week with manufacturer launches and conferences. The future seems set for many years to come. **MJ**

WHERE: CORDOBA, ARGENTINA

WHEN: JANUARY 20

When Carlos Sainz started this year's Dakar, a second win on the South American marathon was a long shot. That had nothing to do with him being short on testing in Peugeot's 3008 DKR Maxi.

Even less to do with him failing to finish the event since 2011. And absolutely nothing to do with the 55 years' experience he brought to the start in January.

No, the reason a Sainz win was going to be tricky was Peugeot's emphasis on

Sebastien Loeb. Somewhat understandably, the French firm was putting significant resource behind its French star (that's Loeb, by the way, not his 13-time Dakar winning countryman Stephane Peterhansel...), but when Loeb was forced out after his co-driver Daniel Elena sustained a back injury, the floor belonged to Sainz. Consecutive stage wins either side of the La Paz rest day were enough to nudge *El Matador* into a lead he wouldn't relinquish. Brilliant drive. And even better story. **DE**

SAINZ WINS DAKAR

43



GINETTA'S LMP1 NIGHTMARE

42

WHERE: IN THE WEC
WHEN: THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

It was with much fanfare Ginetta announced it would build an LMP1 car for 2018, with bold claims of six cars on the grid and Toyota-beating pace. In reality, the Ginetta LMP1 programme has been nothing short of a disaster, challenging Nissan's pitiful effort three years ago.

The only two G60-LT-P1 machines entered into the World Endurance Championship by the Manor/TRS operation failed to take part in the Spa season-opener amid cashflow problems with sponsors.

The cars did make it to Le Mans but were woefully unreliable and, although one technically made it to the finish, it was 105 laps down. And nowhere near Toyota-beating pace – its best lap was 6.8 seconds off.

Upgrades were planned for Silverstone but a switch to AER engines from Mecachrome wasn't formally approved in time to race and Manor later withdrew from running the cars. TRSM/Ginetta then planned a single-car entry for Fuji and Shanghai but that too failed to materialise. Forget LMP1, this embarrassing affair was LMP-none. **SL**

SCHUMACHER WINS EUROPEAN F3 TITLE

41

WHERE: HOCKENHEIM, GERMANY
WHEN: OCTOBER 14

Over the first half of the European Formula 3 season Mick Schumacher took just one win and two other podiums, languishing eighth in the standings and 53 points off the summit. Therefore it's no wonder eyebrows were raised when he went on to win the championship by 57 points...

The Prema driver was unstoppable in the second half of the year and has now secured an F2 drive. Considering his father is seven-

time champion Michael, it's not surprising that he is already being linked with F1 teams.

Over the first half of the season, Briton Dan Ticktum and New Zealander Marcus Armstrong were evenly-matched at the front of the field. But too many mistakes from Ticktum and a lack of performance from Armstrong enabled Schumacher to pounce. It has given Schumacher's career impetus after he had been treading water since he was runner-up in the competitive German and Italian F4 series in 2016. **SL**

39

MONGER RETURNS TO RACING WITH PODIUM

WHERE: OULTON PARK
WHEN: MARCH 31

It was like a fairytale or Hollywood film script. Less than 12 months after his horrific British Formula 4 crash at Donington Park which led to a double leg amputation, Billy Monger was on the podium again.

He'd secured third place at the opening round of the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship at Oulton Park on his racing return, and through the course of the year would claim three more rostrums and sixth in the

overall standings.

Over the winter he'd re-learned how to drive using hand-controls created by Carlin but still needed MotorSport Vision, operators of British F3, to give the team permission to run an extra car. This was after Monger had got the FIA to overturn a rule banning disabled drivers from racing single-seaters. Perhaps his personal moment from the season, though, was being given the chance to drive a 2011 Sauber F1 car at Rockingham as part of a Sky Sports F1 programme. **SM**

TOYOTA RETURNS TO THE BTCC WITH SPEEDWORKS

WHERE: NANTWICH, CHESHIRE
WHEN: NOVEMBER 28

There is something irresistible about both Speedworks Motorsport and Tom Ingram as they have battled their way to the summit of the British Touring Car Championship.

Ingram's progress from rookie to podium finisher, and then on to race winner and title challenger, has been stellar, and Speedworks has been with him every step of the way through that journey. There is no tighter commitment between team

and driver on the grid.

When news broke in late November that Toyota was going to step back in to the BTCC arena as a factory effort with the Team Toyota GB name returning to the paddock, Speedworks was in prime spot to capitalise.

The new Corolla for next season looks the part, and 2019 will be a huge staging post for both the driver and team principals Amy and Christian Dick. If their amazing upward trajectory continues, then there will be plenty of silverware in the future. **MJ**

38



LLOYD WINS FIRST TCR UK RACE AND TITLE

40



WHERE: SILVERSTONE
WHEN: APRIL 1

Much was made of the new-for-2018 TCR UK series after the growth of the category elsewhere in Europe and Asia. Its inaugural season held seven rounds at Silverstone, Knockhill, Brands Hatch, Castle Combe, Oulton Park, Croft and Donington Park, with the series being run by the British Racing and Sports Car Club.

While grid numbers would fluctuate throughout the season, 13 cars lined up

for the first ever race at Silverstone. WestCoast Racing's Dan Lloyd took pole in his Volkswagen Golf GTi and would go on to take the first of six victories on the bounce. He would eventually win the title at the final round at Donington, but not before Pyro Motorsport's Ollie Taylor pushed him all the way.

The series also attracted the likes of 2017 British Touring Car champion Ash Sutton who took a double victory at Oulton aboard a Honda Civic Type R for Verizon Connect Racing. **SM**



WRC LAUNCH AT ASI

WHERE: BIRMINGHAM
WHEN: JANUARY 11, 2018

Thursday January 11 was a day Motorsport Network made history. For the first time in the 27-year history of Autosport International, an FIA world championship was launched under the roof of Birmingham's NEC.

Every driver, co-driver and team principal from the World Rally Championship was joined by hundreds of media and thousands of fans when the series took over the opening day of this year's ASI. M-Sport

Ford's 2017 World Rally champion Sebastien Ogier was bowled over by the event and immediately called for it to be run onto a public admission day, offering even more fans the opportunity to come in and join Ogier and his colleagues looking forward to the season ahead.

The six-time world champion's wish has been granted: the WRC's back in town again next month, but this time it's going to be a Super Saturday (January 12) with everybody welcome to the 2019 season launch. **DE**

DEFINING MOMENTS

Photos: LAT, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Jakob Ebrey



36

TOYOTA EXCLUDED FROM SILVERSTONE WEC

WHERE: SILVERSTONE**WHEN: AUGUST 19**

Following Porsche's withdrawal from the World Endurance Championship at the end of last year, Toyota only had itself to beat this superseason. Yes, there were a number of privateer outfits in the LMP1 class with rewritten rules aimed at achieving increased parity – but in reality they were still miles off the Japanese manufacturer.

Toyota was even able to finally shake off its Le Mans 24 Hours curse and take a 1-2

in this year's event. But at Silverstone Toyota did manage to beat itself. Everything seemed to go well enough as the TS050 HYBRIDS took another regulation 1-2 but both were later excluded after failing skidblock deflection tests.

Instead it was the Rebellion team that was able to claim the 1-2 honour, with victory going to the R13-Gibson of Gustavo Menezes, Thomas Laurent and Mathias Beche.

And Toyota will just have to wait for next season to see if it can take a clean sweep. **SL**

WHERE: AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX, WHEN: APRIL 29

The number one unwritten rule in motorsport is never collide with your team-mate. There were a few instances during the 2018 Formula 1 season where that rule was ignored, the most spectacular of which was Red Bull drivers Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen coming together in Azerbaijan.

The ominous signs had been there for the majority of the race, as on several occasions the pair rubbed and banged wheels. But then at the start of lap 39 it all went wrong.

Behind, and in the slipstream, Ricciardo tried one of his famous late lunges to the inside of Turn 1, but Verstappen in front moved across at the last second. Ricciardo thumped into the back of his team-mate which sent both cars down the escape road and into retirement. Blame lay with both drivers and an apology to the entire team was in order. **SM**

35 RED BULLS COLLIDE IN BAKU



34 FLICK HAIGH / JONNY ADAM WIN BRITISH GT

WHERE: DONINGTON**WHEN: SEPTEMBER 23**

After a bruising title-decider at Donington Park, Optimum Motorsport duo Flick Haigh and Jonny Adam emerged unscathed to seal the British GT title in the swansong year for the venerable Aston Martin V12 Vantage GT3, seven years after Adam had first raced it in Beechdean AMR colours.

Haigh made a triumphant return to UK motorsport after two years on the continent to become the first female outright champion and impressed with standout drives at Oulton Park, Spa and Brands Hatch, while Adam's third title (with as many different co-drivers after successes with Andrew Howard in 2015 and Derek Johnston in '16) made him

the most successful driver in series history.

The championship was sealed by eight points over Barwell Lamborghini pair Jon Minshaw/Phil Keen, whose victory in the final round at Donington was not enough to make up the 27.5-point deficit that followed Optimum successfully overturning its penalty for contact at Snetterton. **JN**



TEAM DYNAMICS FAILS TO LAND MAT JACKSON



33

WHERE: THE MIDLANDS**WHEN: JANUARY-FEBRUARY**

The British Touring Car Championship staged its very own soap opera weeks before the first engines had been fired up in anger.

While most were pleased that three-time champion Gordon Shedden had been offered a drive in the World Touring Car Cup with the WRT team, it left a Scotsman-sized hole in the factory Honda team in the UK. Team Dynamics tried to fit Mat Jackson into that void, but he had already signed for

Motorbase Performance. Cue something of a Mexican stand off, which resulted in several grumpy emails pinging their way between Dynamics HQ and Motorbase's North Kent workshops.

Ultimately, it left Jackson out in the cold – and out of his original drive with Motorbase too – and paved the way for Dan Cammish to plonk himself into the driving seat of the Civic alongside team co-owner Matt Neal. Cammish went on to lift the Jack Sears Trophy and he claimed two outright victories along the way. **MJ**

32

MARK HIGGINS WINS BRITISH RX IN FIRST FULL SEASON

WHERE: SILVERSTONE WHEN: NOVEMBER 3

A three-time British Rally champion, Mark Higgins signed for the Albatec Racing squad to drive a Peugeot 208 in the British Rallycross Championship for 2018, and won in only his second start at Lydden Hill.

It was a turbulent campaign for Higgins, who displayed fast pace from the get-go but spent time learning circuits and the opposition in his first season of door-to-door racing. Three drivers were separated by five points entering the Silverstone finale, with Higgins the lowest-placed of the trio. The Manxman knew a win was critical if he was to snatch the crown from the hands of experienced rallycross campaigners Julian Godfrey and Ollie O'Donovan.

He did exactly what he needed with a dominant performance to take his third win of the season and wrap up the title from the front. Higgins' maiden rallycross crown was also Albatec's first title, reward for owner Andy Scott's longstanding commitment to the cause. **HR**



31 MSA



MOTOR SPORTS ASSOCIATION REBRANDS INTO MOTORSPORT UK

WHERE: COLNBROOK**WHEN: NOVEMBER 13**

Since taking over as chairman of the Motor Sports Association – responsible for governing motorsport in the United Kingdom – at the start of the year David Richards has already implemented a raft of changes which overall have been well-received over the last 12 months.

The 1981 World Rally champion co-driver and Prodrive boss is intent on promoting and regulating more efficiently than before, with one of the most significant changes being the rebranding of the MSA into Motorsport UK. Long-time Prodrive employee Hugh Chambers, who also worked closely with Richards at the

BAR Formula 1 team in the mid-2000s, collaborated with him on the rebrand since early 2018.

Chambers has previously overseen a similar transition in the governing body of sailing, and the target with Motorsport UK is similar: to increase participation, stimulate the grassroots and promote the sport externally. **SM**

MATT NEAL WINS THE BTCC SPECTACULAR

30



WHERE: SNETTERTON
WHEN: JULY 29

In the season to celebrate 60 years of the British Touring Car Championship, series bosses devised something special to help commemorate the occasion: the Diamond Double at Snetterton.

Double points were on offer for the race, which ran to a length of 60 miles (although it eventually ran to 63 miles due to a caution period) and there was a 15-minute qualifying session on

Saturday night, which was effectively a one-shot showdown with all of the cars carrying no ballast.

As has so often been the case in the category's history, Matt Neal was the man for the big occasion as he qualified on the front row in the Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R and then jumped the privately-run Civic of Jack Goff to assume the lead, which he would not lose – it was Neal's second win of the season and his 63rd victory in the category overall. **MJ**

WHERE: HOCKENHEIM
WHEN: OCTOBER 14

Thousands flocked to the Brands Hatch circuit in August as, for the first time since 2013, the popular German touring car series, DTM, returned to race on UK soil. Some were left disappointed as higher and more catch fencing had been placed around the Grand Prix loop to provide greater safety, and the trackside section between Sheene Curve and Stirling's Bend was closed.

Still, the event proved popular as Mercedes drivers Daniel Juncadella and Paul di Resta took a win each. It would be di Resta who would lead the championship into the final round at Hockenheim, but fellow Brit Gary Paffett came out on top to secure his second DTM title to go with his 2005 triumph. Third place in the final race meant he finished four points ahead of reigning champion Rene Rast, who won the final six races of the season. **SM**

PAFFETT SEALS THE DTM TITLE AS SERIES RETURNS TO BRANDS HATCH

29



28

WOOD WINS NATIONAL HOT ROD WORLD FINAL

WHERE: FOXHALL HEATH
WHEN: JULY 8

There were only 11 laps left of the 75-lap winner-takes-all National Hot Rod World Final and Glenn Bell was cruising serenely in the lead of the race headed for his second World championship.

Then all of a sudden, drama. A large puff of smoke emitted from his Vauxhall Tigra as the throttle stuck open. Bell initially tried stamping on the anchors to get himself around the turns, and

then decided to use the ignition switch to slow the car down.

As the laps wound down, rival Billy Wood closed in on the ailing car and eventually made his way ahead as Bell lost control and spun, although Wood had been pushed hard all the way by John Christie.

Wood went on to take his first World Final win and added that silverware to the English points title that he had collected earlier in the year. **MJ**

27



FORCE INDIA SAVED FROM ADMINISTRATION

WHERE: SILVERSTONE
WHEN: LATE-JULY AND EARLY AUGUST

Force India was one of the teams most vociferous about the unfair division of F1 finances at the end of 2016, when Manor disappeared from grand prix motorsport. There's no wonder that the Silverstone-based squad was so keen on

seeing a fairer division of the cash pot that Formula 1 generates. It had often been held up as the team that managed to make the limited amount of cash it had go the furthest in terms of being competitive.

However, the money tap ran dry on the verge of the Hungarian Grand Prix and the team faced extinction. However,

in rode Lawrence Stroll, father of F1 racer Lance Stroll, and he rescued the situation just two weeks later. The team was rebranded Racing Point Force India (which will change again for 2019).

Given the tough times that all F1 teams are experiencing in the commercial world, it would have been unthinkable to lose another outfit from the grid. **MJ**

THE CURIOUS CASE OF SANTINO FERRUCCI

WHERE: SILVERSTONE
WHEN: JULY 11

American driver Santino Ferrucci shot to stardom for all the wrong reasons at Silverstone in July. The Formula 2 backmarker crashed into his Trident Racing F2 teammate Arjun Maini on the cool down lap after the race – and multiple times during the race – in front of the Formula 1 audience. He was banned for four races, two rounds.

In addition to that, he drove his F2 car between Silverstone's two paddocks without his gloves and

was seen operating a phone while driving. Can you believe it?

He was dropped by the Trident team not long after the incident had occurred.

He was back racing in no time in IndyCar, and was kept on by the Haas Formula 1 team as one of its juniors, despite what he called a "mental lapse".

"I have no excuse other than the fact I am a 20-year-old Italian American with a deep passion for motorsport, which is a very emotional sport," he said. **JB**

26



DEFINING MOMENTS

Photos: LAT, Jakob Ebrej, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

TICKTUM WINS MACAU F3 GRAND PRIX — AGAIN



25

WHERE: MACAU, CHINA
WHEN: NOVEMBER 18

Charging Briton Dan Ticktum seemed set fair for the title in the European F3 Championship after taking four victories, until Mick Schumacher went on a late season charge and snatched the glory. However, the Macau F3 Grand Prix is

the blue riband event of the year and the Motopark-run driver snatched a second successive win on the streets in the Far East. It was a race he led from start to finish.

That event was marred by a dramatic accident for Sophia Florsch, who collided with a rival, vaulted the barriers and ended

up colliding with a photographer's tower. She is recovering from a spinal fracture.

After taking part in the final Formula 2 rounds of the season in Abu Dhabi, Ticktum crowned his season by collecting the National Racing Driver of the Year accolade at the Autosport Awards ceremony. **MJ**

24



KRISTOFFERSSON WINS SECOND WRX TITLE

WHERE: AUSTIN, TEXAS
WHEN: SEPTEMBER 30

Barring an unprecedented upturn in form, Johan Kristoffersson's second straight World Rallycross drivers' title was merely a formality by the time the series arrived in Texas for round 10.

At the Circuit of the Americas' first World RX event, the Swede completed the defence of his title at the semi-final stage. It was, however, his team-mate Petter Solberg who

was dominating in Austin, but when the Norwegian made a mistake with less than two laps of the final to go, Kristoffersson pounced and sealed his crown in style with a ninth win of the campaign.

The PSRX Volkswagen man would go on to win 11 of the 12 rounds in 2018 aboard Volkswagen Motorsport's Polo Supercar, an incredible run against the might of Solberg, Sebastien Loeb, Mattias Ekstrom and the rising rallycross youngsters. **HR**

23 BUTTON WINS SUPER GT CROWN



WHERE: MOTEGI, JAPAN
WHEN: NOVEMBER 11

Success has been hard to come by in recent years for Jenson Button. The 2009 Formula 1 champion was lumbered with a series of ever decreasingly competitive McLaren cars during the twilight of his F1 career. Him spearing Pascal Wehrlein into the wall at Monaco in his final one-off appearance last year marked a rather desperate exit.

But success was back on Button's agenda this season. After a year out,

he returned to full-time competition with a Super GT title tilt alongside competing in the LMP1 class of the World Endurance Championship.

Button had dipped his toe in the Japanese Super GT water at the end of last year and, alongside Kunimitsu Honda team-mate Naoki Yamamoto, he clinched the title by just three points with third place in the Motegi finale. Button became the first rookie to win the top class in over 10 years and described his triumph as "just as big" as taking his F1 title. **SL**

22 LOEB AND KRISTOFFERSSON TAKE SILVERSTONE'S FIRST RALLYCROSS HONOURS

WHERE: SILVERSTONE
WHEN: MARCH 17, MAY 27

Silverstone's first ever rallycross event, on a track constructed inside the Stowe circuit, was held in bitterly cold March conditions for the British RX season opener.

Rally legend Sebastien Loeb claimed victory in a podium lockout for factory World RX teams.

Loeb's Peugeot colleague Timmy Hansen and EKS Audi driver Andreas Bakkerud also used the event as a test and finished ahead of the national contenders.

The Northamptonshire rallycross circuit was built so World RX could switch from Lydden Hill to Silverstone for 2018 and Johan Kristoffersson won the first World RX round to be

held at the venue, despite careering into a tyre wall at the start of the semi-finals following contact with PSRX Volkswagen team-mate Petter Solberg. While Solberg retired from the re-run race, Kristoffersson won.

The World RX round was part of the Speedmachine festival weekend, headlined by Dizzee Rascal, but it was Kristoffersson who stole the show. **HR**



21



EDWARDS'S SUCCESSFUL RALLY YEAR

WHERE: ALL OVER THE UK
WHEN: ALL SEASON

The culmination of 15 years in rallying, Matt Edwards achieved a dream by winning the British Rally Championship title in just his second season in a top-line car.

Edwards signed with World Rally Championship squad M-Sport in January, forming the M-Sport

Swift Rally Team with his long-term backer Pete Smith, owner of Swift Caravans.

What would follow is domination, he and co-driver Darren Garrod won all four of the series' events outright, stumbling only on Wales Rally GB where the event was divided in two.

Taking third on the first leg

was all that was needed to secure the title, and they duly delivered despite sliding off in his favourite Penmachno stage late-on, bringing back a second-hand Fiesta R5.

Before GB, he had also wrapped up the BTRDA title against a host of Fiesta RS WRC cars with more power, and did that with a whole round to spare. **JB**

VETTEL WINS BRITISH GRAND PRIX

20

WHERE: SILVERSTONE
WHEN: JULY 8

“Deliberate or incompetence” that was Mercedes technical director James Allison’s controversial opinion after Kimi Raikkonen clattered into polesitter Lewis Hamilton at the start of the British Grand Prix.

A spun Hamilton was unhappy too but later retracted his comments about

questionable Ferrari tactics. What we do know is the incident denied Hamilton a chance of an unprecedented sixth win on home soil – but only just.

Despite dropping to the very tail of the field, the Mercedes driver stormed up the order and finished just 2.2 seconds behind Sebastian Vettel in the runner-up spot (admittedly

aided by two safety car periods).

It had been an eventful race with multiple incidents and talking points but the result reflected Ferrari’s strong position at the time. Vettel left Silverstone with a 17-point advantage over Hamilton, only for him to throw it all away, starting with that clumsy spin at Hockenheim two weeks later. **SL**



19 VERGNE WINS FORMULA E TITLE

WHERE: NEWYORK, USA
WHEN: JULY 14

Cast aside by Red Bull in Formula 1, Jean-Eric Vergne found refuge in the Formula E championship during its inaugural season in 2014/15.

It took until the final round of season three in Montreal for him to finally break his race win drought, and that was a sign of things to come for 2017/18. The Techeetah driver took four wins in Chile, Uruguay, France and America on his way to sealing the title at the final round in New York, his first title triumph since British F3 in 2010.

Reigning FE champion Lucas di Grassi endured a torrid start to the season with Audi Sport Abt, but then recorded two wins and five second places in the last seven races to finish runner-up. His efforts and that of team-mate Daniel Abt were enough to give Audi the teams’ championship by two points from Techeetah. **SM**



TURKINGTON WINS A THIRD BTCC TITLE

WHERE: BRANDS HATCH
WHEN: SEPTEMBER 30

One win. That was all Colin Turkington took on his way to the 2018 British Touring Car Championship and that just proved what a tough competition it had been.

The modern-day championship, with option tyres, success ballast and reversed grids, means that the path to glory is beset with pitfalls. And the competition in the series this term was tougher than ever, with 17 different race winners across the course of the 30-race campaign.

Turkington’s WSR BMW 125i M Sport never had the ultimate pace and that meant he had to scrap for every single point and, alongside that win at Oulton Park, there were nine other podiums which helped him to finally eclipse Tom Ingram’s Toyota for an emotional third BTCC crown. Turkington had been through some tough personal times away from the circuit in the middle of the year and the tears as he stepped from his car after the 29th round, where he claimed the trophy, were the release of a huge uphill battle. **MJ**

18



BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP CHAOS

WHERE: THE UK’S STAGES
WHEN: MARCH TO SEPTEMBER

The British Rally Championship began its third year since a hiatus to relaunch the contest in 2016 in turmoil through no fault of its own, as the Border Counties Rally had to be cancelled due to ‘the Beast from the East’ and the heavy snow it brought to Jedburgh.

The series had gone for a shorter

calendar, instead adding the blockbuster Wales Rally GB to the schedule, but the combination of this and rallies being cancelled compromised the calendar significantly.

Further drama snowballed the situation when Rally Isle of Man was cancelled due to a disagreement between the event and the government over road closure permits, the government accused the

event of “long-standing personal organisation”, while the event called it an “unavoidable decision”.

The result was a four-event BRC calendar, losing one of the rallies that is synonymous with it in the Manx.

In better news, the Cambrian, West Cork Rally and Galloway Hills have been added in place of the Border Counties and Wales Rally GB in 2019’s calendar. **JB**



NEW FEMALE-ONLY W SERIES LAUNCHED

16



WHEN: OCTOBER 10

There’s been a plethora of new series launched in the last 12 months but none of them have caused quite as much controversy as W Series.

The British Racing and Sports Car Club-administered category is open to female drivers only, will use an FIA Regional F3-spec Tatuus car and the winner will receive \$500,000. But despite having big name backers like David Coulthard and Adrian Newey the series received a swathe of criticism. “It’s completely unnecessary,”

said 2014 Mazda MX-5 Supercup champion Abbie Eaton. “I just feel we’ve backtracked a load by segregating men and women and creating this series.”

There were various other arguments against the series too – some suggested it’s at too high a level to encourage more female drivers into the sport and the money should be spent at the grassroots.

But despite all the acrimony, five British drivers have signed up and are among the 55 contenders that will be whittled down to the 18 that actually get to race. **SL**

DEFINING MOMENTS

Photos: LAT, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Jakob Ebrey Photography

15

BREEN GETS BENCHED AND RETURNING LOEB WINS



WHERE: IN THE WRC
WHEN: THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

The whole situation was utterly bizarre. Just off the podium after the rally of his life, finishing second in Sweden, and Craig Breen was lost for words. In a bad way. That was the last the Waterford man would see of the inside of a C3 WRC in competition for two months. He was out. Sebastien Loeb was in.

Citroen team principal Pierre Budar thought about

his response, considered conservatism, then replied: "This was not my decision." He couldn't have been clearer: Loeb for Breen was his predecessor Yves Matton's plan and he thought very little of it. For his part, Loeb sympathised with Breen. It wasn't the way he'd seen this one playing out either.

But, when Citroen's nine-time world champion was up for a three-round return, Breen was always going to play second fiddle. And when Loeb led

Mexico until stopping to change a puncture, the story evolved further. The world still loved super Seb the first. Sliding off the road early in Corsica deviated slightly from the script, but Rally Spain was just perfect for the Versailles team and its king.

It was like he'd never been away when he landed a 79th WRC win with an inspired tyre choice and stunning drive through the final day in Salou. Breen was brilliant, but luckless. **DE**

14

WRX ELECTRIC STUMBLE



WHERE: IN WORLD RX
WHEN: ALL YEAR

It was a rollercoaster year for the World Rallycross Championship and its future, which began on a high in January when Mattias Ekstrom ended his full-time DTM career to focus on rallycross with increased Audi support, just before it was confirmed that electric cars were planned to be the top World RX class from 2020. That move was ratified in

June by the FIA, but when the minimum three marques required to sign up for the concept by the end of August didn't materialise, the electric start date was postponed until 2021. That delay was in part forced by Audi not signing up to EWRX and withdrawing from the series just days later, the consequence of which was Ekstrom ending his full-time rallycross career as a driver at the season finale and his EKS team subsequently concluding

its rallycross chapter.

Before the final round, Peugeot also made the shock decision to withdraw its World RX programme having not finished the first year of its in-house assault, citing that the delay in EWRX no longer fitted into its timescales.

RX regulars Olsbergs MSE and finally PSRX VW followed last week - withdrawing because of a lack of competition - leaving the series in a state of disarray. **HR**

13

PORSCHE 919 'EVO' HYBRID SMASHES SPA AND NORDSCHLEIFE RECORDS

WHERE: GERMANY AND BELGIUM

WHEN: APRIL 9/JUNE 29

After World Endurance Championship success and subsequent withdrawal from the series at the end of 2017, it was expected Porsche would consign its title-winning 919 Hybrid LMP1 car to a museum.

Instead, the German firm modified it and took the 919 'Evo' on a spectacular 'world tour'. It broke the unofficial lap record of the Spa-Francorchamps circuit with Neel Jani at the wheel, beating Lewis Hamilton's pole position time for the 2017 F1 race. Jani set a 1m41.770s, 12 seconds quicker than the car's WEC pole lap in 2017. Despite Sebastian Vettel retaking the record back

several months later, it still didn't diminish Porsche's feat.

Two months later, and with Timo Bernhard driving, the car unofficially smashed the late Stefan Bellof's outright lap record for the Nurburgring-Nordschleife. Bernhard knocked nearly a minute off Bellof's 1983 Nurburgring 1000kms pole position time of 6m11.13s around the 12.94-mile Nordschleife, setting a 5m19.546s. It also just missed out by one tenth of a second on the Brands Hatch Indy lap record of 38.032s set by the Benetton B197 of Scott Mansell back in 2004 during a EuroBOSS race. One of motorsport's most remarkable machines was finally retired from public life in October. **SM**

12

VW BEATS PIKES PEAK RECORD

WHERE: PIKES PEAK
WHEN: JUNE 24

Five years ago Sebastian Loeb smashed the record for the Pikes Peak International Hillclimb. His benchmark of 8m13.878s came via 3.2litres, two turbos and 875bhp. At the time, the word was, his time would never be beaten. Ever. How could it? How could anybody drive those 156 corners faster than Loeb's average of 87mph? Nobody could. Nobody did.

Until Romain Dumas arrived in Colorado Springs to drive Volkswagen Motorsport's electrified Norma prototype chassis up the 12.42-mile course. First announced in October last year, the word from Hannover throughout the development programme was about chasing Rhys Millen's electric best of 9m07.222s for Pikes Peak. Nobody was willing to go anywhere near the record on the subject of besting Loeb. Volkswagen kept its counsel and worked

to level a near vertical learning curve. Right up until the final week of practice, there were issues and niggles. But, when it mattered most, everything came good. The clouds cleared on Sunday June 24 and Dumas sent Volkswagen's I.D. R Pikes Peak up the hill. America's Mountain smiled down and history was made. Two 250kw motors, a stack of aero and a ballsy Frenchman were enough to hit a history rewriting 7m57.148s. Job done. **DE**

RICCIARDO SWITCHES TO RENAULT F1

WHERE: ENSTONE
WHEN: AUGUST 3

There aren't many driver swaps in F1 that really catch onlookers unawares, but Daniel Ricciardo's decision to jump from Red Bull to Renault came from left of centre.

The Red Bull is a winning car, and the Renault hasn't been since the manufacturer returned in 2016. The car has been arguably the fastest among the 'Class B' division,

but needs a big step forward.

Ricciardo acknowledged as much when he inked his deal: "There is a lot ahead in order to allow Renault to reach their target of competing at the highest level but I have been impressed by their progression in only two years, and I know that each time Renault has been in the sport they eventually win. I hope to help them in this journey and contribute."

The fact that Kimi Raikkonen's time was up at Ferrari wasn't such a shock. He had been under a cloud in the last few seasons and the Scuderia called time on his tenure as Sebastian Vettel's team-mate later on in the year - after which, he managed to win the US GP. Raikkonen will perform a swap with Monegasque Charles Leclerc going in the opposite direction from Sauber to Ferrari. **MJ**



ROCKINGHAM CLOSES

10



WHERE: ROCKINGHAM
WHEN: DECEMBER 31

After 17 years which included the first and only IndyCar races to be held in the UK, as well as British Touring Car Championship and British GT action, Rockingham Motorsport Speedway closes to motorsport at the end of the year. Rumours about its closure had plagued the circuit almost as soon as it opened in 2001, but those whispers began to gather pace

when the 2019 BTCC calendar was announced in June. For the first time since 2006 the Northamptonshire venue wouldn't host a meeting for the UK's premier racing series.

Then two months later, Rockingham boss Peter Hardman confirmed that motorsport events would completely cease at the end of the 2018 season and the venue would become a storage facility for fleet cars,

a testing venue and hold auctions.

A farewell meeting was planned for November, but the event was cut from two days to just one and the promise of seeing American single-seaters and NASCARs never materialised. Perhaps fittingly, Hardman won the final ever race at the venue and on December 1/2 Paul King won the final motorsport event at the venue: the Rockingham Stages Rally. **SM**

9

RALLY 2WD SOLVES THE RALLY SEEDING ISSUES

WHERE: IN FORESTS
WHEN: JANUARY TO JUNE

Three men from Shropshire. It may sound like the start of a bad joke, but in actual fact they helped to kickstart a revolution in British rallying this year. Since 2015, the running order on gravel rallies was seeded on performance, meaning powerful four-wheel-drive cars ran at the front, creating damaged and rutted roads for lower powered and less durable cars at the back. The

main groups affected by this were 1400cc front-wheel drives and older historic cars.

However, *MN*historics editor Paul Lawrence, Simon Wallis and Alan Walker devised a scheme whereby cars were separated into two different groups effectively creating two different rallies on the same roads. While it wasn't a perfect format, it allowed many of the affected cars back onto the gravel stages of Britain and renewed the debate for

reversing the performance-first seeding. In June, new Motorsport UK chairman David Richards helped force through a change to allow events to seed in two groups or by class, alleviating the need for the Rally2WD format anymore. But while it was needed it renewed participation and sparked debate. It was also proof that with a loud enough voice, the powers at be will have to listen and adapt – and what a brilliant sign for the future. **JB**



WHERE: GROVE
WHEN: NOVEMBER 22

Robert Kubica's world came crashing down in February 2011 when he shunted his rally car. At the time, he was being feted as F1's next big superstar, but his trajectory was brought to a halt against a barrier in Andorra in Italy which left him with severe forearm damage among a number of other very serious injuries.

The return was a long and painful one, but, after a stint in the World Rally Championship, the circuits were beckoning again. He sampled GTs and tested LMP1 and Formula E machinery. Renault was the

marque that gave him a breakthrough in 2017, when he got back behind the wheel of an F1 car and impressed with his immediate pace. Amid a swirl of rumours of a race drive, he ended up landing the role of test and development driver with Williams for 2018, tackling three sessions and completing mileage away from the race weekends.

The work that the one-time race winner put in with the backroom staff and his approach impressed many and he finally got the call in late November to become a full-time F1 driver again with Williams alongside young Brit George Russell. The resurrection is complete. **MJ**

ROBERT KUBICA'S RETURN TO F1



NORRIS JOINS McLAREN



WHERE: WOKING
WHEN: SEPTEMBER 3

Whether it was the sheer driving talent or the nine Weetabix he eats each day, Lando Norris was a man on a mission in 2018 and in September, he realised a life-long goal of becoming a Formula 1 driver with McLaren.

Having been a junior with the team since 2017, a pair of FP1 outings at Spa and Monza pushed his agenda over the line and the Woking team couldn't turn down the 19-year-old, who had been linked with a move away to Toro Rosso.

He also led the first half of the Formula 2 season and helped British squad Carlin to the teams' championship, although he missed out on the drivers'

crown thanks to a slight dip in performance in the second half of the season, and the resurgent form of eventual champion George Russell.

This year may have not been perfect in terms of F2, but in just his fifth season racing cars, he achieved what he had always set out to do. He has the difficult task of beating team-mate Carlos Sainz, and being a junior driver hasn't always been positive (read Kevin Magnussen, Stoffel Vandoorne). But Norris has met adversity and conquered it in his short career, and there's a reason McLaren chose him over Vandoorne and others in the F1 driver market. **JB**



OGIER SEALS A SIXTH WORLD RALLY TITLE

WHERE: RALLY AUSTRALIA

WHEN: NOVEMBER 18

For four years not much happened in Sebastien Ogier's life. He went to work, drove his Volkswagen Polo (faster than anybody else), won rallies and, at the end of the season, wore his crown.

Two years ago, all that changed. Volkswagen departed and Ogier got busy. He went private, he kept on winning. And when he extended his M-Sport deal into 2018, it looked like more of the same after three wins from the first four rallies. His lights-to-flag success in Monte Carlo was an early season highlight given the capricious conditions in the Alps this season (remember Thursday night over the top of Sisteron?).

Wales was another highlight. After a run of three rallies without a podium, the champ hit back big time when it came to Rally GB. Despite knowing that putting the car off the road would likely signal the end of his championship challenge and five-year reign at the top of the WRC, Ogier was sublime to edge Jari-Matti Latvala for the win.

Not only did that fifth GB win put his title tilt back on track, it also made him the most successful driver in the history of Britain's WRC round. Just over a month later, five became six as Ogier topped the world down under. **DE**

RUSSELL'S STRONG YEAR



WHERE: IN FIA F2
WHEN: ALL SEASON

Picking a defining moment for George Russell in 2018 is tough. Is it equaling the record number of wins in a Formula 2 season with seven, tying Charles Leclerc and Stoffel Vandoorne? Or perhaps joining the elite club of Leclerc, Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg and Nico Hulkenberg in drivers who have won Formula 2 in their debut season? Overcoming a tricky F2 car which threw

reliability problems at him on multiple occasions? Or realising his life goal of reaching F1, signing with Williams? You see the problem with trying to pick one.

He spent the first half of the season plagued with reliability problems and having to watch golden boy Lando Norris steal all the headlines. But after a stunning run of form into mid-season and onwards, he was incredible. On average he finished a place higher in

qualifying and in the feature races than any other driver and, erasing car issues, finished outside the top five once all year.

That kind of form got the Mercedes junior noticed and Williams came calling in late October; a PowerPoint to Paddy Lowe helping to push the deal over the line. A win at the first race in Abu Dhabi in F2 secured the title and less than a week later he was sat under a fitting halo, in the Williams F1 car, as an F1 driver. **JB**



ALONSO QUILTS F1 AND WINS LE MANS

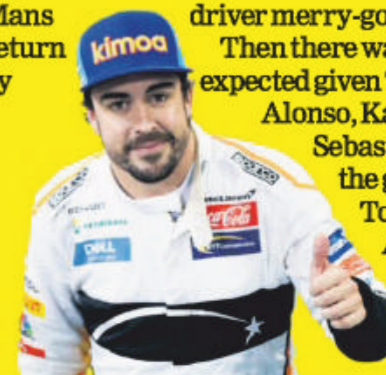
WHERE: F1 PADDOCK AND LA SARTHE
WHEN: JUNE AND AUGUST

You could probably fill an entire top 50 list of 2018's defining moments related just to Fernando Alonso. From the trivial, like him declaring another 15th-place grid spot was his 'best qualifying lap ever' or berating the 'amateur' driving standards in Formula 1, to larger stories like him winning Le Mans and confirming an Indy 500 return next year. There has certainly been no shortage of Alonso stories this year.

The most significant is probably his decision to quit F1. It was not exactly a surprise after four dismally disappointing – and wasted – seasons at McLaren,

although he hasn't completely ruled out ever returning to the series. His F1 career, for now anyway, ended with an 11th-place finish in Abu Dhabi in a race that was notable for Alonso continually cutting corners in the closing laps – and receiving three penalties – as he attempted to creep into the top 10. His McLaren seat will be taken by Carlos Sainz Jr, who was confirmed in an intense period of the driver merry-go-round.

Then there was the Le Mans win. While expected given Toyota's advantage, Alonso, Kazuki Nakajima and Sebastien Buemi still delivered the goods and finally ended Toyota's Le Mans drought. And the trio is topping the World Endurance Championship standings, too. **SL**



DEFINING MOMENTS

LEWIS BECOMES A FIVE-TIME CHAMPION

WHERE: MEXICAN GRAND PRIX WHEN: OCTOBER 28



Hamilton wrapped up the title at the Mexican Grand Prix

It seemed that Mercedes-Benz bosses on the pitwall were determined to make Lewis Hamilton's attempt to capture a second successive title and his fifth overall as difficult as possible.

Strategy mistakes in Australia and China gifted the advantage to rivals, but the Briton's rescue missions in those races meant that he moved into command in the championship when he took his first win in Azerbaijan.

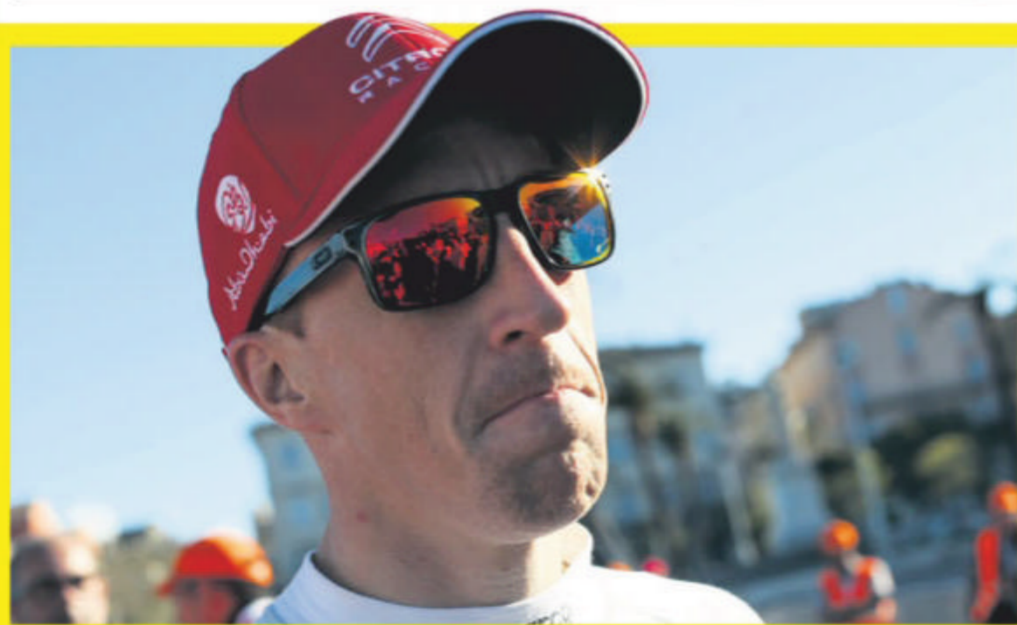
Rival Sebastian Vettel pushed his Ferrari back to the top of the standings as Hamilton struggled for pace in Canada and then suffered a crippling fuel pressure problem in Austria.

From that point, Mercedes was in the ascendant and Hamilton went on a run of six wins in seven races throughout the summer to push himself well out of reach. The run mirrored a similarly crushing blow in 2017 and once again underlined that he is truly the master of the turbo-hybrid era. In the end, he was nearly 100 points clear of Vettel.

Another impressive indicator to Hamilton's domination was his ability to win races even after the title was in his pocket – which is not something he has done previously.

Team boss Toto Wolff said that the Brit is performing at a different level.

Hamilton noticed it himself: "I think this year it was being in a different place in my life. I do want to continue to push the limits. [I want to] so that I can really continue to keep that foundation as strong as it has been this year, so I can use that to start on next year. It was no biggie that I didn't win after I won the championship but I'm definitely happy [with the way the end of 2018 went]." **MJ**



KRIS MEEKE'S ROLLERCOASTER YEAR

WHERE: EVERYWHERE WHEN: ALL SEASON

The World Rally Championship's very own shock and awe moment was delivered at 1719hrs on May 24.

Just days after crashing out of Rally of Portugal, Citroën pulled the pin on a grenade that would rock the service park. Nobody saw it coming.

"Due to an excessively high number of crashes, some of which were particularly heavy and could have had serious consequences with regard to the crew's safety, and given that the risks involved were unjustified by the sporting stakes at play, Citroën Racing WRT has decided to terminate the participation of Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle in the 2018 WRC."

Even re-reading that team statement more than six months on, it still takes some comprehending.

Meeke's start to the season hadn't been ideal, but a powerstage win and fourth overall on a tricky Monte allied to a podium in Mexico were by no means the end of the world.

There's no getting around the fact that the Portugal shunt was a bit of a monster, but Meeke had been leading the event on the first day and things were starting to take shape for the Northern Irishman and Citroën.

And then May 24 happened.

Meeke and co-driver Nagle went to ground and said nothing. They stayed away from the sport for much of the summer, but offers from Toyota, M-Sport and Hyundai were hard to ignore. In the end, Meeke did what he feels he should have done at the end of 2015, when he and Mäkinen first talked around the table: he fixed his future in Finland.

For all the months after May, it appeared more and more complicated for Meeke to return. Reading much of the copy – on these pages as much as anywhere – must have been like having your obituary presented to you. But I was wrong, we were wrong, everybody but Meeke and Mäkinen was wrong. October brought the news – exclusively to *MN* – the Dungannon man would be back. And then some. **DE**



2

Photos: LAT, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, M&H Photography, Jakob Ebrey, Tony Adams

1 CLOSED ROADS IN ACTION

WHERE: UK WHEN: 2018



Watergate Bay brought hillclimb into closed-roads mix



Sebastien Ogier dominated on Wales Rally GB's Llandudno town street stage



Variety in the British Automobile Racing Club's sprint in Coventry



Melvyn Evans and Sean Hayde won Rally Tendring and Clacton

When closed-road legislation was passed in 2017, British fans rejoiced and called for events to sprout up all around the country. Whether that would happen though was uncertain, and required big investment, both in terms of money, people-power and time for organisation. A closed-road event takes a massive amount to come together.

Thankfully, the beginning of 2018 was littered with the news that closed-road action was coming to a town, city, lane or forest near you. Wales Rally GB, the Coventry Motofest and Watergate Bay Hillclimb all confirmed their intentions in the first three months of 2018.

Wales Rally GB, perhaps being the highest profile of all, delivered a special stage around the Great Orme in Llandudno in October, finishing in the middle of the town with its central roundabout providing a perfect donut mound. The five-mile stage provided plenty of drama and played a key role, as Sebastien Ogier used his advantage on the test to eke out victory, which became vital to him taking a sixth world rally title.

While that was one short sharp test, Rally Tendring and Clacton was a full-blown 40-plus mile closed-road stage rally and, after over a year of planning, the event went off without a hitch despite the nerves of residents around the area. Melvyn Evans and Sean Hayde steered their Subaru Impreza S12B WRC to victory in the roads of the south-east.

Between those two rallies, motorsport returned to city streets for the first time since 1990 and the Birmingham Super Prix as the Coventry Motofest ran a British Automobile Racing Club-sanctioned event won by Olly Clark, son of rally ace Roger, in a Subaru in June.

And then the Watergate Bay Hillclimb followed in September, an uphill flier through the twists and turns of Cornwall a perfect metaphor for the ascendancy of closed-road motorsport in the UK.

Three more rallies have confirmed the intention of using closed-roads next year, Formula E is looking for a British return and no doubt there are other clubs out there discussing the possibility of going closed roads in 2019. If they run as the events this year did, fans, spectators and competitors are in for a treat. **JB**

REVIEW: WRC

David Evans looks back on a tense and dramatic WRC season in 2018



A strong start stood Ogier in good stead

OGIER HOLDS HIS NERVE TO REPEAT TITLE-WINNING TRICK



Kris Meeke's year was truncated

Thierry Neuville could have. Ott Tanak should have. Sébastien Ogier did. In terms of vintage, this year's World Rally Championship was right up there with the bottle of Chateau Petrus the Frenchman shared with Malcolm Wilson to celebrate it.

That the cork came so close to remaining in the merlot only served to further improve the taste.

With three of the season's 13 rallies remaining, Ogier was the outsider. Sitting in third place, 23 points down on Neuville after Rally Turkey in September, a comeback from here was hard to picture. Even for the M-Sport

Ford World Rally Team driver.

Ogier's trip home from Turkey was a quiet one. The day prior to his departure he'd experienced every emotion imaginable. Saturday's opener had done for championship leader Neuville, leaving Ogier out front. Could he stay there?

If he could, his rival's top-of-the-table advantage could be wiped away in a stroke. Such thoughts were gone one stage later, when he too was stranded at the side of the road working on his car.

Finally, he got the Fiesta WRC mobile again and got to the next stage. Then he slid off the road and stayed there.

Ogier's not known as a hugely emotional character, but Turkey got to him. When he arrived in service having fixed his car, he

was close to tears. Listening to him relay the effort, the agony and ultimately the ecstasy at getting his car working, his voice wobbled. He took a moment. Bowed his head slightly, composed himself. Then crashed on the next stage.

Turkey's return to the world championship was always going to be a contentious issue for entirely separate political reasons.

No matter what your views on Recep Tayyip Erdogan were, the roads over which he presides played host to the season's most dramatic scenes.

Tanak denied

Plenty saw Turkey as the turning point. It was, apparently, where Neuville and Ogier lost the championship. And Tanak emerged

as the man to beat. Sure, he headed to the next round in Wales 13 points down on Neuville, but he landed on Deeside with the sort of momentum only a Finland-Germany-Turkey hat-trick can generate.

And Friday's north Wales stages only served to further that theory. The Estonian demolished everybody and had the rally won before the weekend had begun. Cruising and controlling Saturday, the fragile front end of his Toyota Yaris WRC let him down again and he was forced to stop with radiator damage. Sweet Lamb left a bitter taste.

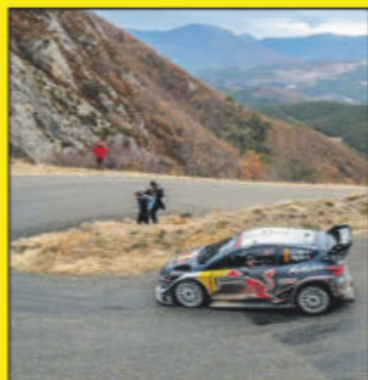
But he wasn't done yet. One rally on and he was bossing a Spanish Friday in the same fashion. This time it was a puncture that halted his charge.

His journey from hero to zero was completed when he crashed out of the

ROUND BY ROUND

1 Monte Carlo JANUARY 25-28

Forget the Col de Turini providing a sting in the tail on this year's Monte, the sting comes right at the top of the season as the crews are forced to tip-toe their way across the top of a frozen solid Sisteron test on the first Thursday night of the 2018 season. Few emerge unscathed, but Thierry Neuville (spin) and Elfyn Evans (puncture) endure the toughest starts, dropping four minutes apiece. The shocking conditions continue, but Sébastien Ogier is more than a match for them, to



secure his fifth straight win on the WRC season opener.

- 1 Sébastien Ogier (Ford Fiesta)
- 2 Ott Tanak (Toyota Yaris)
- 3 Jari-Matti Latvala (Toyota Yaris)

2 Rally Sweden FEBRUARY 15-18

Sitting in a Sisteron ditch a couple of weeks earlier, it was hard for Neuville to see a positive from his disastrous start to the Monte. But starting fifth on a particularly snowy road in Sweden isn't a bad pay-off and he makes the most of it – moving into the lead on SS3 and staying there all the way to the finish. First and second on the road, Ogier and Ott Tanak can do nothing except shovel snow out of the way and swear about it. They do lots of both.

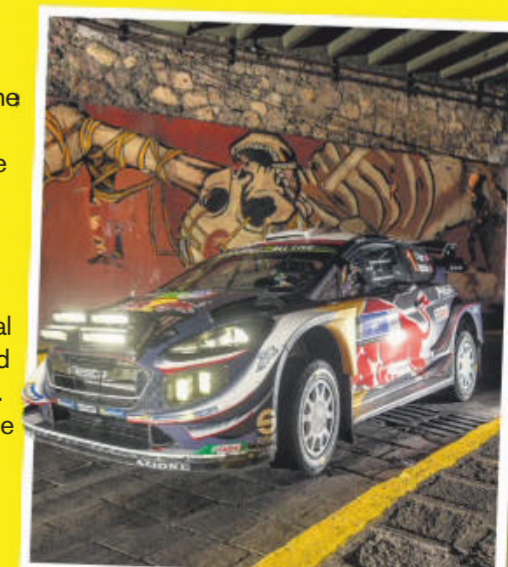
- 1 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai i20)
- 2 Craig Breen (Citroën C3)
- 3 Andreas Mikkelsen (Hyundai i20)



3 Rally Mexico MARCH 8-11

Championship leader Neuville finds the shoe on the other foot on round three, where he's sacrificed at the front of the field and can only manage sixth place. Sébastien Loeb is back in the WRC again and leads, but loses out when he stops to change a puncture. Ogier wins, but clipping a chicane on the final stage means a trip to the stewards and the loss of his four powerstage points. Ogier is furious and this row will rumble on until mid-season.

- 1 Sébastien Ogier (Ford Fiesta)
- 2 Dani Sordo (Hyundai i20)
- 3 Kris Meeke (Citroën C3)





The men who bossed the series (l-r): Martin Jarveoja, Ott Tanak, Sebastien Ogier, Julien Ingrassia, Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul

lead fight in the Australian finale. By then, however, his hopes and dreams of a maiden title were well and truly out of his hands.

Tanak's start was one of the surprises of the season. Nobody doubted his pace, but 2018 was his first year aboard a Yaris WRC, having driven Cumbrian-built Fiestas for six of the previous seven seasons. Tanak was as surprised as anybody, evidenced by him rating his debut podium in Monte Carlo as a personal highlight from a year of exceptional wins and towering speed.

And that speed has been placed beyond question with the season's big numbers: stage wins? Tanak: 70 from this 250, 30 more than anybody else. And he led for 86 of those 250. That's 21 more than his nearest rival.

Second place on a particularly tricky and changeable Monte in January was a solid indication that Tanak had located a sweet spot with the Yaris, but it was round five in Argentina in April where he sank squarely into the middle of it.

A silly spin in the first stage proper, dropped Tanak to the wrong end of the top 10 and cost him 23 seconds to the leader. Fired up and frustrated, the #8 Toyota was taken by the scruff of its neck and driven harder and faster than ever. Four stages later, he was in the lead. A lead he never let slip.

So much was expected from the next two rounds in Portugal and Sardinia, but a rock and a heavy landing cost him those results. In Toyota's defence, the rock on the line in Portugal was virtually football-sized, but Tanak slotted it mid-ships

where the underbody protection is at its strongest. But still the oil exited.

Three Fridays later and the Yaris nosedived flat-in-top into the Monte Baranta stage. Immediately, Tanak looked down at the dash, waiting for the warning light. It came. He stopped.

But the heart-breaker was Wales. That was the one he really deserved. Braking for a medium-speed left-hander, the front of the car took another engine-damaging impact, but this one really wasn't Tanak's fault. In Portugal, Ott slammed the bonnet down in frustration. In Italy, co-driver Martin Jarveoja flung his pacenote book at the dash. In Wales, Tanak lay down on the ground and shut his eyes, pondering a massive, massive missed opportunity.

Continued on page 32



Four victories put Ott Tanak in the heart of the championship showdown

4 Tour de Corse
APRIL 5-8

For the third time in four rallies, Ogier is the man to beat. M-Sport's Ford Fiesta WRC has the legs on its rivals and the Frenchman is looking entirely comfortable on the French island as he stretches a championship lead to 17 points. Tanak solves a suspension conundrum that had contained his speed in Toyota's Yaris, allowing the Estonian to power his way up to second by the finish. Neuville survives a late engine scare to clinch third for Hyundai.

- 1 Sebastien Ogier (Ford Fiesta)
- 2 Ott Tanak (Toyota Yaris)
- 3 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai i20)



5 Rally Argentina
APRIL 26-29

Tanak's first win in a Toyota was telegraphed by an encouraging pre-event test in Sardinia a week or so earlier. Arriving in South America, the Estonian is in confident mood and, courtesy of his speed from shakedown to powerstage, the new boy in the team is simply unbeatable. Kris Meeke runs second before he's forced to stop and change a puncture late on day two, a deflation that allows Neuville up to second place. Dani Sordo is third, a second podium in three events.

- 1 Ott Tanak (Toyota Yaris)
- 2 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai i20)
- 3 Dani Sordo (Hyundai i20)



6 Rally Portugal
MAY 17-20

Once he's dialled the Hyundai in at lunchtime on day one, Thierry Neuville doesn't look back. He's on sublime form and an inch-perfect performance, allied to punctures for Citroen rivals Meeke (who then crashes heavily on the second day) and Craig Breen, not to mention an uncharacteristic accident from Ogier, leaves the Belgian looking down on everybody from the top of the table by the time this event finishes. After a troubled start, Evans is glad to get his season up and running with second.

- 1 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai i20)
- 2 Elfyn Evans (Ford Fiesta)
- 3 Teemu Suninen (Ford Fiesta)



REVIEW: WRC

Continued from page 31

The comfort for Tanak is what lies ahead. It's fair to say the transition into Toyota wasn't all plain sailing and there was the need for adjustment from both sides as they became acquainted. Mid-season, there was more talk of trouble on the horizon in the Puuppola base, but once again team principal Tommi Makinen has steered the ship to calmer waters and Ott ended the year a happier man. If Toyota can deliver in terms of transmission development (Tanak's sure there's more grip, feel and stability to come from the car) and front-end reliability, then he'll start next season in a very strong position.

And not just him. Jari-Matti Latvala suffered similar issues, but with his job on the line, the Finn kept his counsel and refused to be drawn on internal matters. Instead, Latvala focused his energies on what he could control and was simply superb – arguably better than ever – in the second half of the year. Second in Turkey, he was pipped to the win by Ogier in Wales, then lost a possible Spanish success with a puncture before topping the podium in Australia.

Latvala looked a more complete driver than ever as this year drew to a close. A potential title tilt next season might have looked fanciful with team-mates as strong as Tanak and the inbound Kris Meeke, but if J-ML can stretch that autumn form into a full season, 2019 could just deliver his dream.

Citroen not Meeke

Having mentioned Meeke, now's as good a time as any to discuss what turned out to be a dramatically shorter year than the Northern Irishman expected. The first two rounds weren't dramatically different to 12 months earlier, with Meeke finding nothing like the confidence needed to push for a win in Monte or Sweden. By round three in Mexico things were looking up, then a rare error from co-driver Paul Nagle cost them a podium in Corsica in April; stopping to change a puncture had the same effect on their Argentina result. And then came Portugal in May. A couple of deflations at the end of Friday forced the Citroen crew to run a tyre-less rim on the Porto street stage, where television pictures



Mads Ostberg: Citroen call-up

depicted sparks flying and high drama. The reality was a sensible strategy that kept them in the event.

Seeing the C3 WRC through the Porto streets reminded folk – this time quite unfairly – of Meeke's reckless streak. At this point, the Dungannon driver hadn't made a significant mistake since that Thursday night on Rally Germany the previous summer.

On day two in Portugal, Meeke turned into an Amarante left-hander fractionally too late and the C3 was sent to the trees. When the dust settled, the car looked horrific. Meeke and Nagle rightly pointed to the Citroen's safety features doing their job in keeping the crew safe. But Citroen went down the road of what-ifs, put together a damning communication and sacked the pair of them.

Mads Ostberg stepped in and made the most of a heavily revised Citroen with a great second place in Finland and Craig Breen constantly looked for ways to build on a brilliant second in Sweden. But neither could make their season stick, with Breen enduring a genuinely luckless year.

Staring down the barrel of what would be only Citroen's second winless season since 2002, the old boy came back and delivered for them. On the third event in his three-rally programme, Sebastien Loeb wound back the years to clinch a Rally Spain victory that provided yet another fanciful storyline in this most compelling of seasons.

Hyundai's rollercoaster

Coming into the second season with these latest generation World Rally Cars, Hyundai hogged the headlines. Firstly, could Neuville finish the job he'd started in 2017 and secondly, how quickly could the Korean manufacturer tie-up the makes' title?

Andreas Mikkelsen joined Hyundai at the end of 2017 and, showing immediate pace, came close to winning in Australia. The world waited as famously good mates Neuville and Mikkelsen went head-to-head in a straight race to the title. And that story would have been fascinating, had the Norwegian turned up; it's rare to see a driver fall so far from grace in a single season. Yes, there were flashes of inspiration and speed, but that's all they were.

Struggling to get the car to suit him, he tweaked his driving style to suit the i20 Coupe WRC, but once a driver turns their back on what comes naturally to them, they're on a hiding to nothing. That's precisely what Mikkelsen was on all season.

Conversely, Hyundai's part-timers Hayden Paddon and Dani Sordo did the job they were asked to do. And spent much of the year making up for Mikkelsen's shortcomings. It's telling to see that Paddon, with six fewer starts

FINAL POINTS

World Rally Championship, 2018

POS	DRIVER	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	TOTAL
1	Sebastien Ogier	Ford Fiesta	26	5	25	28	16	-	22	10	17	5	28	22	15	219
2	Thierry Neuville	Hyundai i20	14	27	11	15	23	29	30	4	19	5	12	12	-	201
3	Ott Tanak	Toyota Yaris	18	3	5	19	27	-	5	30	29	28	4	13	1	181
4	Jari-Matti Latvala	Toyota Yaris	17	6	8	-	-	-	6	18	-	20	23	4	26	128
5	Esapekka Lappi	Toyota Yaris	6	17	-	13	4	15	15	-	18	-	16	6	16	126
6	Andreas Mikkelsen	Hyundai i20	3	18	14	6	13	-	2	1	8	10	8	1	-	84
7	Elfyn Evans	Ford Fiesta	8	-	-	10	8	19	1	6	-	1	-	17	10	80
8	Hayden Paddon	Hyundai i20	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	12	-	15	6	-	18	73
9	Dani Sordo	Hyundai i20	-	-	18	12	15	15	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	71
10	Mads Ostberg	Citroen C3	-	-	-	-	-	8	10	22	-	-	4	-	18	70

11 Craig Breen (Citroen C3) 67; 12 Teemu Suninen (Ford Fiesta) 54; 13 Sebastien Loeb (Citroen C3) 43; 14 Kris Meeke (Citroen C3) 43; 15 Jan Kopecky (Skoda Fabia R5) 17, etc.



Jari-Matti Latvala rounded out the season with a win

than Andreas, finished just 11 points behind him – and outscored him on four of his seven starts. Sordo, who was one place behind the Kiwi in the end of season standings, beat Mikkelsen to the finish five times.

All too often, the heavy lifting was left to Neuville. Toyota didn't win this year's manufacturers' title, Hyundai lost it.

And that's absolutely not meant to take anything away from Makinen's men. They did a quite magnificent job in the mid-season development of the Yaris and the four-time champ and his sporting director Kaj Lindstrom should take plenty of credit in reigniting Latvala's fire. Unfortunately, those changes came too late for Esapekka Lappi, who'd seen enough by Finland and was already looking to learn French for an end-of-season move to Citroen.

Ogier on top

Lappi's new team-mate will, of course, be Ogier who takes his number ones from the side of the Fiesta and puts them on a C3 next season. Ogier will be badly missed by M-Sport in 2019. And he'll miss the Brits as well.

We've seen a different side to Ogier this year. After five years of dominance, he's been in a dogfight through 2018. That he's come out with the same result since '13, is testament to Ogier's ability, resolve, talent and temperament.

There have been times of sheer brilliance from Ogier this year. Aside from winning three of the first four rallies, stage six in Sardinia (fastest in thick fog and pouring rain) and that final run through Gwydir on the final morning in Wales kind will live long in the memory.

But what of Neuville? Can he bounce back from dropping a 27-point

lead going into the second half of this season? Looking at his results following a quite brilliant final-stage win in Sardinia, you'd have to question that. He managed just one podium (second in Germany) through the season's second half and rarely looked like the driver who'd taken a rare non-Scandinavian win in Sweden at the top of the year.

Neuville has little interest in such considerations. Anybody who knows the Belgian knows confidence and self-belief is no problem for him. He passes the point up the line and talks of Hyundai's need to keep pace with Toyota.

But at the back of his mind – and that of Ogier, no doubt – there will remain a single figure; one man ready to ruin everybody's 2019 plans. Ott Tanak won't be far from anybody's thoughts as Monte Carlo moves ever closer. ■

ROUND BY ROUND

7 Rally Italy JUNE 7-10

This is the World Rally Championship at its absolute best. Helped by unseasonal heavy rain on the opening day, title protagonists Thierry Neuville and Sebastien Ogier raise themselves above and beyond everybody else and it's all eyes on them as they head into the final stage of a Sardinian classic. Neuville overturns Ogier's 0.8s lead to win on the Italian island, strengthening his series



lead ahead of the summer break. Esapekka Lappi makes his first trip to the 2018 podium with third, going some way to making up for a second successive retirement for Ott Tanak.

- 1 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai i20)
- 2 Sebastien Ogier (Ford Fiesta)
- 3 Esapekka Lappi (Toyota Yaris)

8 Rally Finland JULY 26-29

Taking a second per kilometre out of everybody in the Moksi stage is almost unheard of. Yet Tanak does just that to set up a first Estonian win in Jyvaskyala for 15 years. Driving a Toyota built just up the road in Puuppola, Tanak humbles the best of the rest with an outrageously quick Finland win. Citroen stand-in Mads Ostberg makes the most of new C3 geometry and a favourable place on the road to lead early on. He finishes second, edging local hero Jari-Matti Latvala in a final-stage thriller.

- 1 Ott Tanak (Toyota Yaris)
- 2 Mads Ostberg (Citroen C3)
- 3 Jari-Matti Latvala (Toyota Yaris)



9 Rally Germany AUGUST 16-19

Tanak is untouchable in his successful pursuit of back-to-back wins in Germany. Behind him, the championship battle intensifies. Ogier looks to be the only man capable of threatening the Estonian's runaway Toyota, but he's forced to stop and change a puncture and can only manage fourth. Series leader Neuville endures an indifferent event, struggling with transmission issues for the first half of the rally and is relieved to make it to the finish in second place ahead of Lappi.

- 1 Ott Tanak (Toyota Yaris)
- 2 Thierry Neuville (Hyundai i20)
- 3 Esapekka Lappi (Toyota Yaris)



10 Rally Turkey SEPTEMBER 13-16

First thing Saturday morning and championship leader Neuville hits trouble as the front-left damper bursts through the bonnet. He's out. And chief title rival Ogier damages the front-right of his Fiesta. Crucially, the M-Sport crew make it to service before sliding off the road on the very next stage. You couldn't make this up! Having been nowhere for two days, Tanak finds himself in the lead and cruising to a third successive win.

- 1 Ott Tanak (Toyota Yaris)
- 2 Jari-Matti Latvala (Toyota Yaris)
- 3 Hayden Paddon (Hyundai i20)





Andreas Mikkelsen failed to show his pace



Neuville gets to work on his Hyundai i20



Thierry Neuville was top in Sweden

TOUGH TIMES FOR THE UP-AND-COMING BRITS

It was a trying year for Craig Breen

Last year's Autosport International was a cause for significant optimism for British and Irish rally fans. Kris Meeke, Paul Nagle, Elfyn Evans, Dani Barritt, Craig Breen, Scott Martin and Seb Marshall [Hayden Paddon's co-driver] were all in Birmingham for the launch of the World Rally Championship and all looking ahead to putting forward a significant challenge.

Admittedly, Marshall's would be something of a bit-part programme with him and Paddon only tackling half the rallies.

What a difference a year makes. Next month Marshall's back in Britain's second city where he will be alongside Meeke and surely ready for a title tilt.

Meeke was in that position last year. After a stop-start season of development, much was expected of the Northern Irishman and his C3. It didn't go to plan.

Breen was the first of the three to make the podium, with the Waterford star finishing round two in Sweden in a stunning second place. And he'd done it without, apparently, breaking too much of a sweat. Unfortunately for Breen, that career best result would only serve to pile on the frustration as he was benched for the next two rallies in Mexico and Corsica to make way for the returning Sebastien Loeb.

Citroen's inbound team principal Pierre Budar made it quite clear this was the policy of his Belgian predecessor (Yves Matton, who departed to become FIA rally director in February) and not a decision he had made.

A Saturday shunt ruled Breen out of his returning rally in Argentina and then his season just seemed to spiral downwards, with middle of the road results running through the middle of the season. And very little of that was of Breen's making, there were punctures, handbrake issues, rain showers in Germany – all of these things combined to leave him running in the worst

possible position on the road through the weekend.

It would be fair to say Breen saw little of the rub of the green this season.

And then things went seriously wrong when his C3 was lost to fire in Turkey. Fourth in Wales was a brief respite, allowing him to offer his favoured, "Flat to the square right," as a description on more than one occasion. If you're still off the pace with that one, Google those five words, sit back and enjoy some quality Irish onboard.

Spain and Australia didn't offer the end of the season he might have hoped for. The Coffs Harbour-based rally started well enough. Quickest in Sherwood late on Friday, Breen was right in the thick of the lead fight until suspension damage on Urungu – his concentration not helped by a sticking throttle on the previous stage – confined him to the lower end of the top 10.

There's no doubt building pressure probably took its toll on Breen as the season progressed, the harder he sought a result, the harder it became to find one. In a perfect world, there was enough pace and potential there to offer Breen another shot this season, but only time will tell if his is the perfect world.

It was a similar story of misfortune for Evans. Punctures ruined Monte and Sweden, while a sixth-gear shunt left co-driver Barritt seeing stars and out of not just the Leon weekend, but also the following event in Corsica. Fifth was a solid result with stand-in co-driver Phil Mills.

Evans and his more illustrious

M-Sport Ford team-mate Sebastien Ogier struggled to get the best out of the car in Argentina, but second in Portugal offered hope for the second half of the season. A nobby accident in Tula, understeering into a bank on the second stage in Sardinia, put the mockers on his trip to the Italian island and Evans couldn't revive the speed which had carried him to second in Finland 12 months earlier. He was seventh in Jyväskylä this time around. More understeer and more steering damage followed in Germany and, by this time, the pressure was really building.

Things didn't improve with broken suspension in Turkey and a road section engine issue in Wales.

By this point, things were looking grim for Evans – just as they had three years earlier. In 2015, Evans wilted under the pressure and was a broken man on the final round. Not this time. He bounced back with a sensational drive through Spain, edging Thierry Neuville – to the delight of Ogier and the whole M-Sport squad – for third place and then delivering an untroubled sixth at the New South Wales finale.

Evans, like Breen, has been better than his results would suggest this season. He's demonstrated maturity and self-confidence. But, if he does bag another season in the WRC, then he has to come out and put the Ford Fiesta WRC on its door handles from the very start.

The misfortune's finished, Evans has had enough time at the sport's sharp end. It's time to start winning some rallies.



Elfyn Evans was a man under pressure

11 Rally GB OCTOBER 4-7

Tanak has two objectives in Wales: to score a fifth win of the year and play himself into the race for the drivers' championship. The Estonian is magnificent through the opening day, pulling himself half a minute clear of the chasing pack. It all goes wrong when the radiator is damaged second time through Sweet Lamb. Ogier steps in to take a sensational victory from under the nose of an inspired Latvala. Neuville's at the races before he slides into a ditch. He finishes fifth.

- 1 Sebastien Ogier (Ford Fiesta)
- 2 Jari-Matti Latvala (Toyota Yaris)
- 3 Esapekka Lappi (Toyota Yaris)



12 Rally Spain OCTOBER 25-28

Not even the great man himself thinks it's possible. But it is: Sebastien Loeb winds back the years and clinches a ninth Rally Spain victory. And the Frenchman does it in the best way possible, gambling on a final-morning tyre choice that proves inspired and enough to seal Citroen's only victory of 2018. Of more relevance in terms of the championship fight, his countryman Ogier is second and moves past a fourth-placed Neuville to the top of the table with one round remaining.

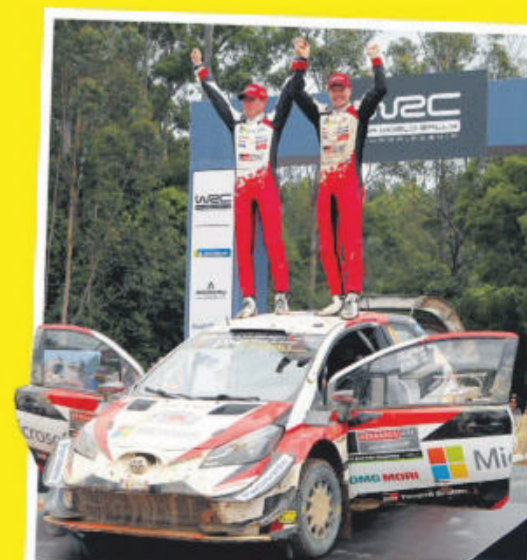
- 1 Sebastien Loeb (Citroen C3)
- 2 Sebastien Ogier (Ford Fiesta)
- 3 Elfyn Evans (Ford Fiesta)



13 Rally Australia NOVEMBER 15-18

Try as they might, there's nothing Neuville or Tanak can do about Ogier's march towards the title. A first-day puncture costs the Hyundai man dearly. He pushes as hard as he dares to make time up on Ogier, but mistakes creep in and he retires, knocking a wheel off on the penultimate stage. Tanak leads, but it's not enough. He needs Ogier to hit trouble. Instead, he bounces his Yaris off the New South Wales scenery and leaves a five-time champion to make it a straight six. Latvala wins.

- 1 Jari-Matti Latvala (Toyota Yaris)
- 2 Hayden Paddon (Hyundai i20)
- 3 Mads Ostberg (Citroen C3)





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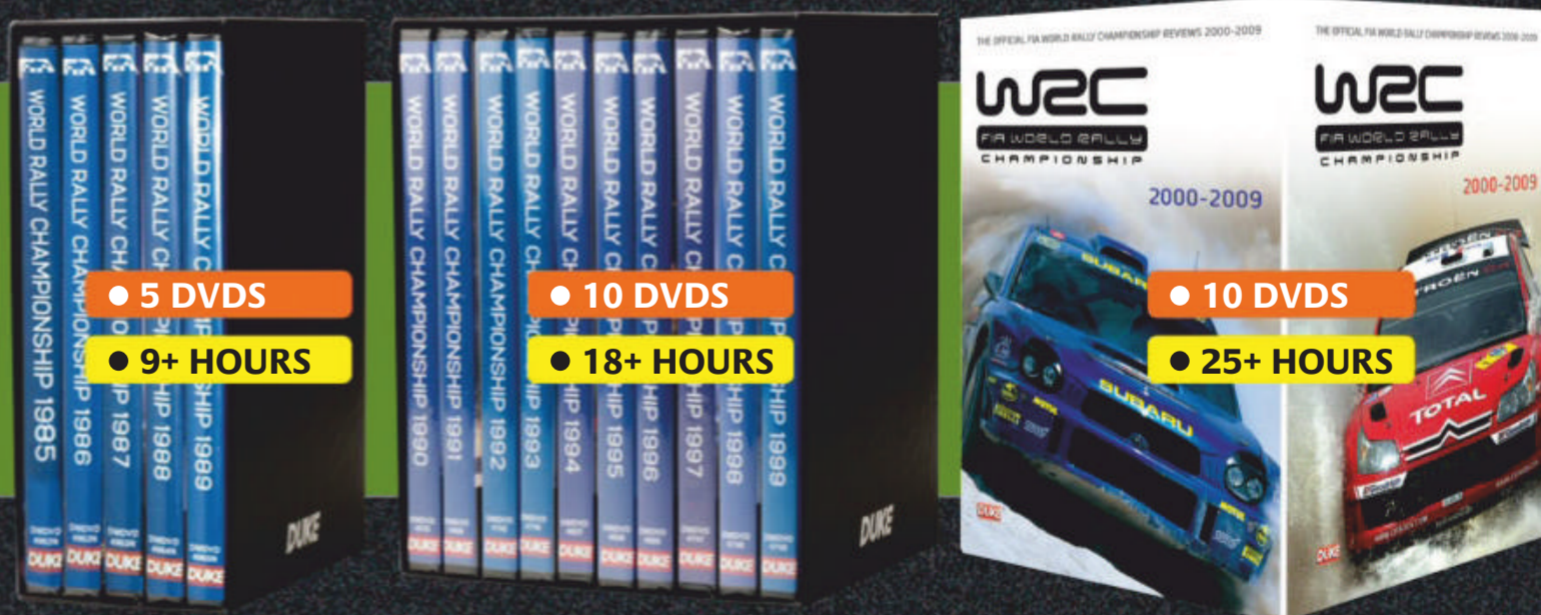
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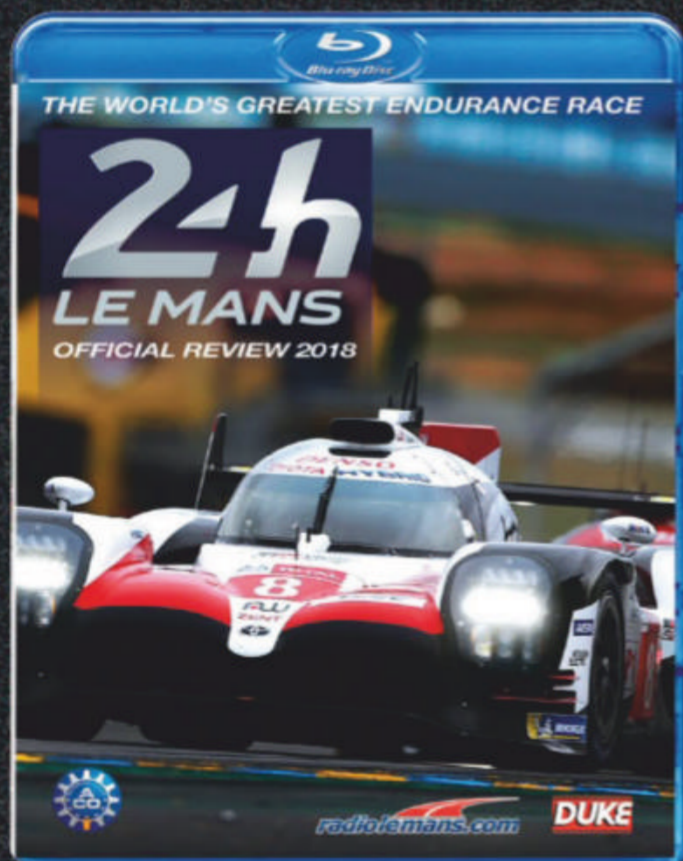
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REVIEW: WRC

MN'S LEADING PERFORMERS OF THE WRC SEASON

We pick out the top 10 drivers of the season just gone. By **Colin Clark**



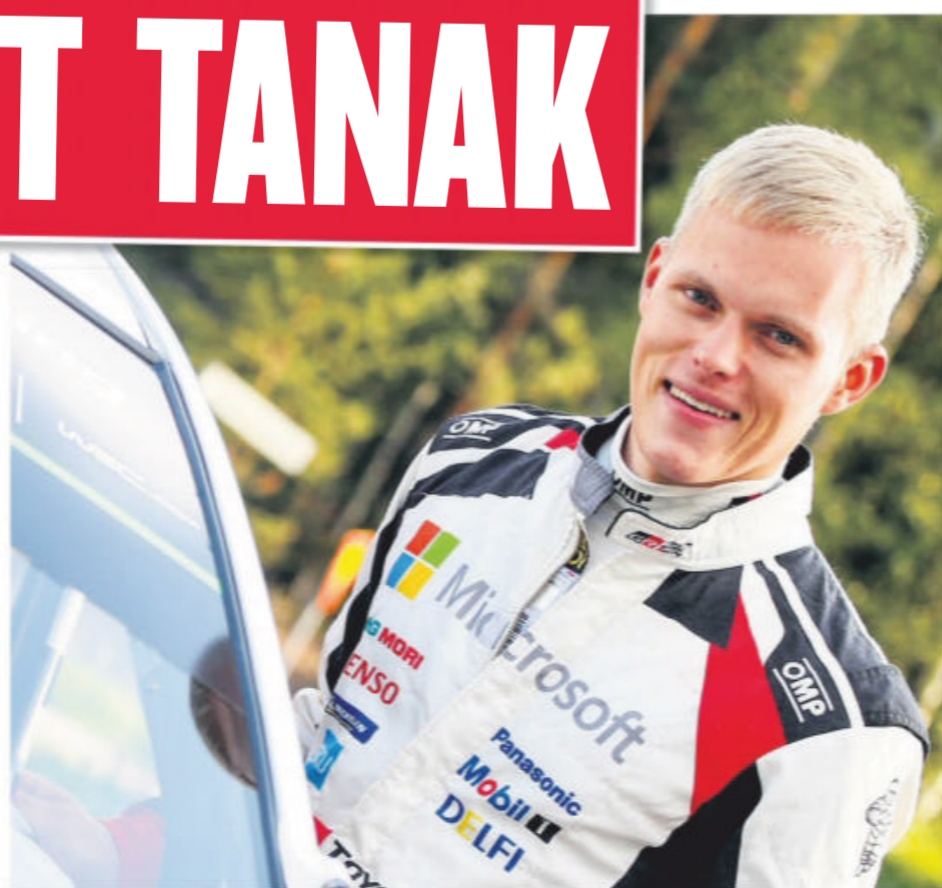
1 SEBASTIEN OGIER

Car: Ford Fiesta
WRC Team: M-Sport Ford World Rally Team
Wins: 4
Podiums: 6
Points: 219
Championship position: 1st
Showed his absolute pedigree this year. Was 23 points down with three events remaining and looking down and out. Ogier used every ounce of his experience, his guile, his nous and his considerable talent to stalk, pounce upon and ultimately pass his title rivals. He might not be the fastest driver in the world, but he is unquestionably the best and at the top of his game right now.



2 OTT TANAK

Car: Toyota Yaris WRC
Team: Toyota Gazoo World Rally Team
Wins: 4 **Podiums:** 6
Points: 181
Championship position: 3rd
Well if Ogier isn't the fastest in the world then who is? Not too much doubt about it really. Tanak was showing signs of brilliance in 2017 in the Fiesta but moved up another couple of levels in his debut year with Toyota. He won four rallies this year but it could have been many more. Well placed to challenge in 2019 and will be title favourite in many eyes.



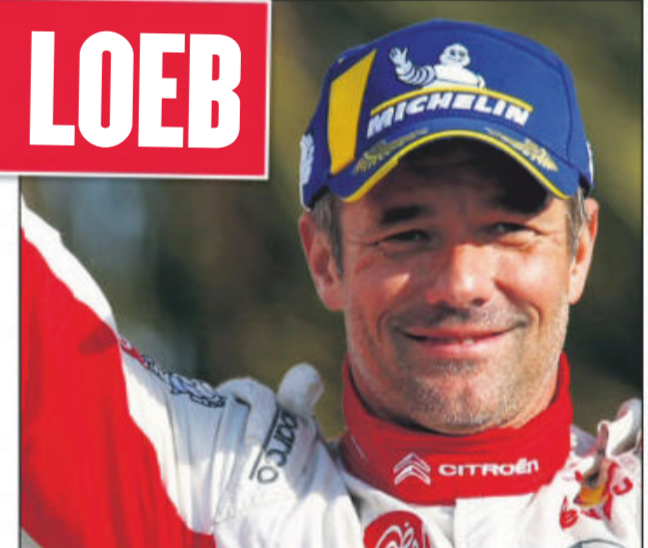
3 JARI-MATTI LATVALA

Car: Toyota Yaris **Team:** Toyota Gazoo World Rally Team
Wins: 1 **Podiums:** 5
Points: 128 **Championship position:** 4th
In the form of his life in the second half of the 2018 season. Three podiums and a win in Australia signalled a stunning return to form for the eminently likeable Finn. Most importantly his head seems to be in the right place with the Puuppola-based Toyota team. Played a major part in securing the manufacturers' crown for Toyota and will be a contender in 2019.



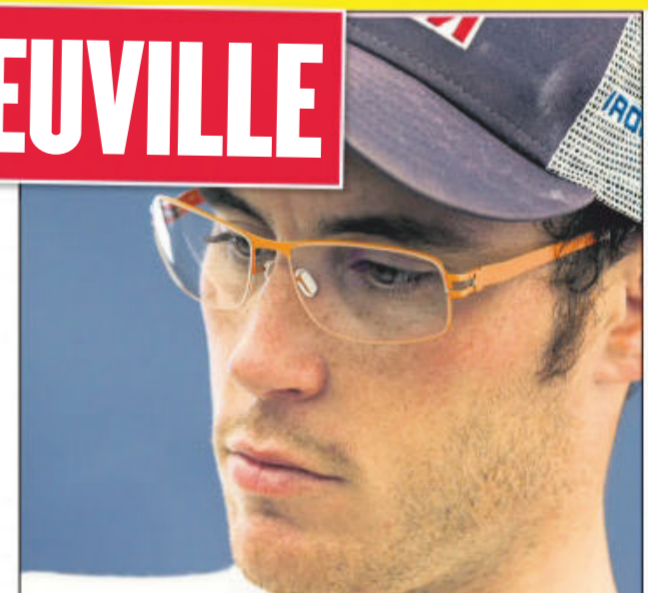
4 SEBASTIEN LOEB

Car: Citroen C3 WRC
Team: Citroen Total Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
Wins: 1 **Podiums:** 1
Points: 43 **Championship position:** 13th
Just the most remarkable comeback from *Le Maestro*. Was challenging in Mexico, mighty quick in Corsica and utterly brilliant in Spain. Has lost none of his ability and demonstrated superbly that rallying is not, and never will be, about speed alone.



5 THIERRY NEUVILLE

Car: Hyundai i20 **Team:** Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team
Wins: 3 **Podiums:** 6
Points: 201 **Championship position:** 2nd
Brilliant start to the year where three wins and two podiums gave him a dominant lead in the championship. The second half of the season was nothing short of a disaster, however. One podium in six events was far from championship-winning form. Battled the car and drove beyond its capabilities on too many rallies but gets a solid five stars for effort and commitment.



6 KALLE ROVANPERA

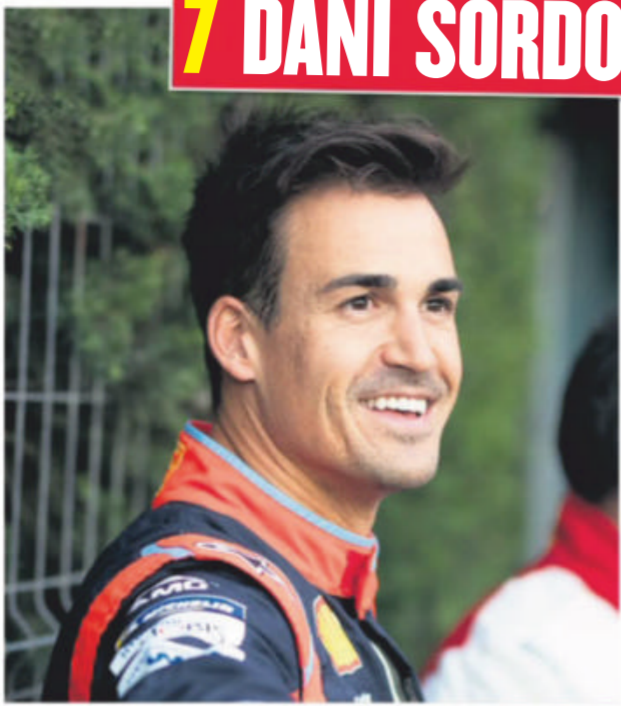
Car: Skoda Fabia R5 **Team:** Skoda Motorsport
Wins: 2 (WRC2) **Podiums:** 3 (WRC2)
WRC2 points: 90 **WRC2 championship position:** 3rd
We have seen the future, and the future is as exciting as hell. Stuttering start to his season exploded into life with breathtaking and car breaking run on Rally Finland. Finished the year with two wins in WRC2 and looks to be more than living up to all the hype that continually surrounds this child prodigy.



WRC2

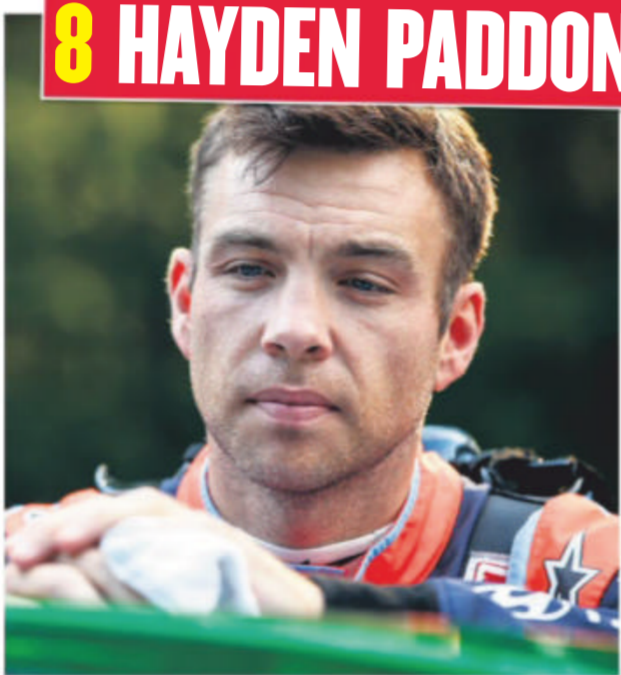
7 DANI SORDO

Car: Hyundai i20
Team: Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team
Wins: 0 **Podiums:** 2
Points: 71
Championship position: 9th
 Never outside the top five and two podiums in his part time season with Hyundai was exactly what was needed by his employer in 2018. The reduced level of expectation on the veteran Spaniard seems to suit him well and his speed and overall performance was at a level beyond what we've seen in the past. More of the same in 2019 please.



8 HAYDEN PADDON

Car: Hyundai i20
Team: Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team
Wins: 0 **Podiums:** 2
Points: 73 **Championship position:** 8th
 Remarkably similar season to Sordo. Rally GB was a disappointment but other than that a solid point-scoring season for the Kiwi charger. Podiums in Australia and Turkey demonstrate that he can still be a challenger to the WRC elite. But with Hyundai signing Loeb, his future at the top-level of rallying is up in the air and he has very few options available to him.



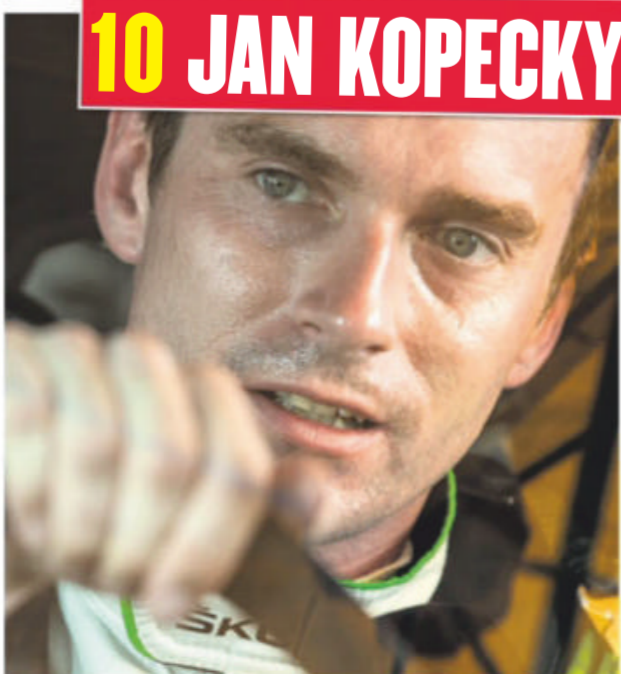
9 KRIS MEEKE

Car: Citroen C3 WRC
Team: Citroen Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
Wins: 0 **Podiums:** 1
Points: 43
Championship position: 14th
 He makes my top 10 for his actions off the stages and most definitely not because of his actions on the stages. He was supposedly suggesting that the terse note of dismissal from Citroen was career-ending, yet somewhat miraculously, six months later was confirming a full time return with Toyota. Bouncing back with all the style, punch, power and finesse of Tyson Fury. Genius.



10 JAN KOPECKY

Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Team: Skoda Motorsport II
Wins: 5 (WRC2) **Podiums:** 6 (WRC2)
WRC2 points: 143 **WRC2 championship position:** 1st
 Won 11 of the 12 events he entered in 2018. Much like Loeb, demonstrating brilliantly that rallying is about experience and intelligence as much as anything else. Gave the supposed young guns of the WRC an absolute whipping on more than one occasion and fully deserved his WRC2 crown. Would love to see him get a crack in a WRC car.

KOPECKY
SIGNS OFF IN STYLE

Jan Kopecky won WRC2 at a canter

Seeing the end of an 11-year career looming onto the horizon can be an incredibly motivating force. Just ask Jan Kopecky (or Dani Sordo, obviously...). Kopecky came into this season not really sure what his year was going to look like. It ended up being his best yet.

So often in the past, the Czech star has been forced to play second fiddle to the next big thing coming through in a Skoda. But, having served his time in the Asia Pacific and European Rally Championships, Kopecky was finally given a shot at the big one; Skoda sanctioned his assault on the R5's biggest prize: WRC2. Kopecky repaid that faith with a remarkable campaign that delivered five wins, a second place and the title.

Once again, however, the WRC2 battle was skewed by the fact that the main protagonists came together on just one occasion. Ironically, they weren't avoiding each other – it was Skoda's decision when and where to run Kopecky and team-mates Pontus Tidemand and Kalle Rovanpera. But the simple fact that Turkey provided the only head-to-head competition once again demonstrated that the FIA and WRC Promoter doesn't have an answer to the calendar for the series' second tier.

But let's not get bogged down in that. Instead, let's revel in Kopecky's mastery of the Fabia R5. Jan was the man in Turkey as his Swedish team-mate and rival Tidemand



Kalle Rovanpera was an instant hit at the wheel of a Skoda

suffered two punctures and broken wheels in successive stages, ruling him out and ruining his year.

Tidemand's season didn't get off to the best of starts, when he was beaten at home by Toyota's junior Japanese driver Takamoto Katsuta – a surprise, but worthy winner of WRC2 in Karlstad. He won his next three rallies, but retiring in Turkey effectively ended his hopes of a successful WRC2 title defence.

Kopecky deserved the win. And Rovanpera certainly deserved the headlines and the plaudits he earned for his wins in Wales and Spain at the end of the 18-year-old's first season in WRC2.

Gus Greensmith upheld M-Sport's honour with fourth. The

Manchester driver made a solid start to the season, with a brace of seconds in Mexico and Argentina, but retirements in Germany and Turkey hit his title campaign hard.

The Junior WRC title race went to the wire with just about every driver still able to take the crown, partly thanks to a double-header finale in Marmaris. Dennis Radstrom was the early pacesetter, taking two wins from the first three rounds in the six-event series. But when the Swede crashed in Finland, his countryman Emil Bergkvist justified his decision to step back from WRC2 to the junior series by taking the title – and the biggest prize in world rallying, a new Ford Fiesta R5 – on the final round. ■

INSIGHT

The firm's Polish arm has ramped up its HQ and is ready to take the next step. By David Evans

HOW M-SPORT IS BREAKING DOWN THE BORDERS



Polish staff will build 100s of cars and kits

Flying into Krakow's John Paul II International Airport is a slightly surreal experience for a rally fan. There's the predictable bird's eye view of a long-stay car park, an Orlen petrol station, a McDonalds... and an enormous M-Sport building.

Arriving on the car park at M-Sport Poland, it's quite disorientating. The signage is, naturally, similar to the business end of Dovenby Hall, but in place of a 16th-century country house, there's a cutting edge, design-led factory.

And every few minutes a pair of Rolls-Royce engines reverse thrust to remind you you're some distance from Cumbria.

M-Sport managing director Malcolm Wilson smiles at the recognition of mission accomplished.

"I wanted this place to be the complete opposite to Dovenby," he says. "At Dovenby we're a fairly long way from the nearest airport, so to make this Krakow site work, it had to be as close as possible."

Any closer and it'd be an extension

to the terminal building. Completed last year, Wilson's justifiably proud of the super-swish new facility. And just as proud of the chap in charge of it.

Maciek Woda moved to Britain to chase his dream of becoming a rally engineer in 2004. After a two-month trial period, he was taken on as a full-time mechanic at Dovenby. After rising through the ranks, Woda took advantage of Wilson's good mood as Mikko Hirvonen and Jari-Matti Latvala cruised towards an apparent 1-2 at Rally Poland in 2009.

"As we walked down to watch the final superspecial, I asked Malcolm what he thought of Poland," says Woda, "he said he liked it. So I said 'Why don't you invest in Poland then?' He thought for a moment and said: 'Why not... I'm glad I didn't leave it for a couple of hours, his mood wasn't so good after Jari-Matti crashed!'"

M-Sport Poland was born the following year and housed temporarily at workshops in Krakow from 2011.

Woda continues: "We moved into some premises in Krakow in time to run the original Fiestas for the 2011 WRC Academy. We ran the cars from those premises for three years, but it was always about a new building close to the airport. This is perfect."

Opened last year, M-Sport Poland's new factory is something special. Once you're inside – and away from the noise of Lufthansa's 1235hrs departure for Frankfurt – it's M-Sport all over with a gleaming factory floor finished to the same standard as the Cockerhouth headquarters.

The Woda and Wilson tour takes a while, encompassing shops for bodyshells, fabrication, engine, electrics, suspension and transmission. Then there's a huge side section which

swallows a couple of transporter trucks whole and allows them to be washed in the warm – a genuine comfort in a place which spends a chunk of the winter weathering below freezing.

The engine dyno room is especially impressive. And begs the obvious question of what's the place for?

"We're focusing on front-wheel drive here," says Woda. "The dyno was invaluable in the development of the new [Ford Fiesta] R2 car. The engine did 120 hours on the dyno. Having it really transforms a facility like this one. For example, we needed to do some work on the camshaft for the car and we had it redesigned, on the dyno and ready to go in the car in 48 hours later."

"But as well as that we use it for the rebuild of R5 engines."

Wilson's investment in M-Sport Poland is significant, especially in Woda himself.

"He's fantastic," says Woda. "He's always there on the end of the telephone and he's over here regularly, but he lets me get on with things. He keeps telling me: 'no pressure!' But I think we both know..."

"It's so important to me that M-Sport Poland stands on its own two feet financially. With the exception of the [wiring] looms [which come from Cumbria], we have designed and built the R2 car completely on our own here, with our own workforce. OK, we have the M-Sport database, so we can dive in and look at the work from the R5 or World Rally Car – and, of course, our friends in Cumbria are only on the end of the telephone. But I'm really proud of what we achieved here and what we have planned for the future."

The first part of that future is supplying next year's Junior WRC cars out of Krakow, not to mention one-make series in national rallying

all around the world. M-Sport sold 120 of the current one-litre R2 cars. Woda has already committed to building 100 kits for the new cars.

Ford has committed budget to the development of the R2 car, but that's a smart investment from the Blue Oval as M-Sport is surely one of its biggest customers; the stores are packed from floor to ceiling with original parts bought and paid for from Ford Poland.

Walking back onto the main factory floor, it's hard to miss a distinctly dog-eared R2 car.

"That's the first test car," says Woda. "As you can see, it's been busy."

Dented panels add detail to almost 2500 miles in stage mode already.

"It's been everywhere, every surface. We have to have it ready for homologation on January 1."

It will be. And from then on, the target is to sign-off three or four cars per week.

"We have a lot of orders and a lot of interest in this new car," says Woda. "It's not surprising. The previous car was good, but this one is even better – almost everything is new. We have a new engine with 200bhp [the old one had 175bhp] thanks to using the turbo from the Fiesta ST, different pistons and a new cam. And we have a higher specification gearbox from Sadev. There was nothing wrong with the old one, but this one has thicker casings – some of these changes had to be made because of the new R2 regulations from the FIA. But the car is good. Very good."

And, on the inside, it bears more than a striking resemblance to its big brother World Rally Car.

"The seating position and much of the rollcage design," says Woda, "we took these from the Fiesta WRC. It makes sense for us to use the expertise we have within the company."

At the same time, Woda is about generating talent from within Poland, which was why he was intrigued by a letter from Jaroslaw Rusek. Working in a design studio in Krakow, lifelong rally fan Rusek wrote to Woda to ask if he could help out at the new M-Sport facility at weekends.

"He was offering to wash cars, to do anything," Woda says. "I talked to Chris [Williams, M-Sport's head of rally engineering] and sent him the CV. Chris said to talk to him."

Rusek landed the dream. He spent a year at Dovenby Hall before returning to M-Sport Poland, where he now works full time.

"I wanted to be involved, somehow, in M-Sport Poland," Rusek says. "In Poland we have some workshops for rallying, but nothing like M-Sport. For us, it's M-Sport and nothing else. "I remember the first time I saw the building in Dovenby. Of course, you know this building from the pictures, but in life it is something completely different. And then inside, the first time I saw the first generation Focus, the Safari car [from 1999], it was incredible. I have so many posters of this car on my wall. It was Colin's car – you could cry in a moment like this. This was something amazing for me; I could never imagine this story would go like this for me."

"It was the same when I saw Malcolm Wilson for the first time. I had seen him so many times in interviews on the television, but to have this man as my boss was something incredible."

And when Wilson and Woda pull back the cover to reveal the all-new Ford Fiesta R2, Rusek is full of pride. "From here, we put our heart and soul to this car," he says, "this is the car from Poland."

And the start of a new story for M-Sport Poland. ■



Impressive new M-Sport facility



Engine pushes out 200bhp



Evans got to grips with the R2

MN'S MAN GOES SLIP SLIDING AWAY...

TECH SPEC

Engine: 12-valve, three-cylinder 999cc turbo
Power: 200bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque: 290Nm @ 4000rpm
Gearbox: Five-speed sequential Sadev with plated LSD
Clutch: AP Racing two plate
Suspension: Reiger adjustable dampers/Eibach springs
Front brakes: vented 285mm (gravel) 310mm (asphalt) AP Racing discs/Alcon calipers
Rear brakes: Solid 280mm discs
Steering: electric power-assisted
Wheels: 6x15-inch (gravel) 6.2x15-inch (asphalt)
Length: 4065mm
Width: 1735mm
Wheelbase: 2490mm
Weight: 1030kg
Price: €64,990 (£58,000) + VAT built/€37,990 (£34,000) + VAT for kit (donor car and wheels not included)



The R2 car has been completely built in the new Krakow base



Malcolm Wilson (left) and his protege Maciek Woda on the prowl

Last year's Junior World Rally champion Nil Solans is sitting alone at a table. He has, quite clearly, been happier. The highlight of his day was driving M-Sport's brand new Ford Fiesta R2 at the Kielce circuit in Poland.

From the point he stepped out of the left-hand seat and back into the freezing morning mist, things started to go downhill. It's early on a December Tuesday and the all-asphalt track which sits halfway between Krakow and Warsaw is full of ice. He didn't mind the conditions. He enjoyed himself, lots of handbrake, lots of driftiness.

But now it's time to get back in the car. On the other side. Next to me. At least one of us is happy to be here.

I try to offer him a reassuring smile. He takes a deep breath and: "Morning-it's-so-slippery-we-need-to-be-very-very-careful."

OK... Fortunately for him (probably even more for me), we're using the infield part of the Kielce track, which involves the bottom half of the five-speed Sadev gearbox far more than the top.

While I'm wrestling with the belts, M-Sport engineer Marek Lach leans into the car with some fresh input into the conditions.

"It's very slippery out there," he says. OK, thanks.

Finally tied down and ready to fire the Fiesta up, Lach is back.

"So," he says, "the open hairpin right at the far end of the stage is completely ice. All ice. It's very, very slippery."

Yep, got that. Shall we go?

Lach: "If you feel you would get more of a feeling for the car, we could let Nil drive..."

Searching for some inspiration, I catch the eye of Finnish colleague Miika Wuorela. He's been outside. He looks cold.

"It's your Monte test," he grins. "It's not too late to impress Malcolm, maybe it could be you and Teemu [Suninen] next year..."

I ask if there's any sign of the ice melting.

"They're putting salt down," Wuorela says, "but, no. There's a lot of ice there." Very slippery?

"Very slippery," he shuts the door,

with the grim-faced expression of an executioner sending another to meet their maker.

The door's open again. Lach's back. "We decided to change the mapping a bit," he says, leaning down to plug a laptop in somewhere beneath my left buttock.

Now happily (happily, try firmly...) ensconced in the right-hand seat it's time for a word from Solans.

"We don't need the anti-lag," he says, "we will run in road mode."

I am here, you know. Finally, full of fear, I back M-Sport Poland's second 2019-specification Fiesta R2 out of the garage and out onto the track.

"Cake or Dime?" says Solans.

Excuse me? His mouth's moving, but I can't hear a thing. I shrug. He shrugs back. Then he gets it and turns the volume up on his mic.

"Take your time!" Ah! Understood. Watching a video of my sighting lap, I can absolutely confirm I took my time.

A couple of laps in, a bit of heat into the brakes and things started to work. Clutch only from first to second and, once out of that icy hairpin, on to the straight and up to fourth.

Wheelspin in every gear. Nice. Left foot hard onto the brakes and silence. Stalled. Even nicer.

Detailed analysis of this lovely car was, I'm afraid, beyond me. My time aboard the all-new R2 was all about finding grip. And not make an utter pillock of myself. Feeling the front wash away from under you going in and out of corners wasn't ideal, but even in such compromised conditions the car still gave confidence and feedback.

A couple of times the Fiesta got reasonably out of shape, but was still compliant enough to be brought back



Back in one piece: MN's Evans

under control from angles it was never designed to be driven at.

The power, what little I used of it, was impressive—massively so when you consider the three pistons ahead of me were sweeping just 999 cubic centimetres to deliver 200bhp. And the gearbox was, predictably Sadev lovely.

I was enjoying myself. Even Nil seemed to be enjoying himself. So much so that he offered a bit more advice. Turning the volume up again, just to be clear, he said: "Turn this way, we're finished..."

Probably best. I think he'd seen me eyeing the handbrake and sensed I was about to jump on the happy stick next time around; I'll be honest, as you read these words, it's quite possible we might still have been spinning down the road...

Arriving back into the garage, I got a big thumbs up from Lach—a man who looked like he might just have come out from behind his hands.

"How was the seat position?" he asks. "It's comfortable—like the World Rally Car."

So focused had I been on keeping the thing out of the trees, I'd completely forgotten to consider the creature comforts from the inside. I'm sure it was lovely though.

Feeling I might have let my engineer down and with little left to offer in terms of debrief—beyond confirmation that it was indeed, very slippery—I went in search of the Pirelli man to compliment him on getting the choice right.

Alberto Ferloni had sent me out on the SottoZero B (that's the STZ-B to those of us in the know...), basically the softest, most heavily grooved cover this side of a Swedish spike. I asked what it would have been like on a soft wet. It was warming up and I thought this data might prove useful were I ever asked back to this corner of Kielce.

Ferloni looked a little bit awkward. "The wet?" he questions, "you want the wet..."

Longish pause, ending with an even more awkward look and a deep breath from him.

"You would need to be a real rally driver," he says. "To get any heat into a wet, even a soft wet, in these conditions, you would need to really stress the tyre."

Oh. OK. I didn't need any more stress. I left the wets and went home.

Great car. Great place. Very slippery. ■

FEATURE

Photos: Simon Clarke, Kevin Money

From Barbados to the UK and back, the BimmaCup UK is set to impress. By Jack Benyon

The most common complaint in UK rallying is why aren't there more successful single-make championships?

In 2019 and beyond that could well change with the arrival of BimmaCup UK.

It has the most unlikely origins for a UK championship... in Barbados. Long-time competitor and organiser on the island, Greg Cozier, began the BimmaCup there with the intention of offering a low-cost rear-wheel-drive formula for the island, as its rally entries had struggled to recover after the 2008 financial crisis.

Launched in 2015, the formula has expanded to have an Antigua variant and a Caribbean series, with numerous competitors from across the region travelling through the islands to compete.

Nearly 30 cars started the last round in Barbados in November. That is quite some number considering the population of the three hosting islands combined is under 500,000 people. As Cozier puts it: "It's like having a rally championship in one of your [UK] small cities!"

For 2019, BimmaCup UK has been launched for the BMW 318ti, and the only major changes to the car are the rollcage, larger limited-slip differential, ECU reprogramme and new suspension. For under £10,000, you've got a fun rear-wheel-drive car and a season's rallying with

good reliability. What's the catch?

The only real downside is that the series is based around single-venues, but that is great for keeping it accessible, costs down and allowing new people into the sport at an acceptable price. For the target market, it is perfect and the organisers will consider expansion as and when the series grows.

The right people are behind the series too. Long-time British competitors and organisers Martin Stockdale and Rob Brook, who have competed in Barbados since 2001, are organising BimmaCup UK with Cozier remaining involved.

And the best part is still to come. Not only have you got a brilliant season's rallying for under £10,000; the winner gets an expenses-paid trip to compete in the final round of BimmaCup Caribbean in Barbados next November. In the rallying scene in Barbados, the fun and party-aspect of the pre and post event is taken just as seriously as the locals take the competition on the event itself. What other grassroots series can offer that?

'Mr Single-Make' himself, Ryan Champion, is building a BimmaCup car for rental and the occasional outing, despite owning much more trick machinery like a 1996 Group A Subaru Impreza, driven by Didier Auriol, among others.

Having competed in the Peugeot Challenge, Puma Cup, British Junior championship when it was for 306s, and single-make series for Peugeot 106s and Mitsubishi Lancers, the reigning East African Safari winner knows a thing or two about single-make championships.

He believes BimmaCup UK can succeed where other single-make formulas have failed.

THE UK'S NEXT SINGLE-MAKE SUCCESS?



Champion backs new BMW series



Stockdale (l) and Champion (r)

CALENDAR

2019 BimmaCup UK

DATE	RALLY	VENUE
Feb 9	Jack Neal Memorial Rally	Blyton Park, Lincolnshire
April 7	Lookout Stages	Down Ampney, Cirencester
June TBC	Abingdon Carnival Stages	Dalton Barracks, Abingdon
Aug TBC	Pendragon Stages	Warcop Ranges, Cumbria
Oct TBC	Harold Palin Memorial Stages	Fulbeck Airfield, Nottinghamshire

"A lot of one-make championships are costly to do, there's no doubt about it," says Champion. "BimmaCup UK is about as cost-effective as a rear-wheel drive single-make formula can get.

"You can convert an existing race car, or buy a car for £300-400 and build it from there. You can get engines for £250. They are so fun to drive as well. That's two good foundations – cheap and fun – for a strong single-make formula."

Cozier agrees: "A gearbox in my historic Escort is £7000. You can have a BimmaCup car for that!"

The series organisers are rally fans, competitors and organisers who are realistic. The first round takes place at Blyton next February 9, and the organisers expect things to start small and build quickly.

"We all agreed between us [the organisers], if we finish the year with five or six cars, that would be

a success," adds Cozier. "It's not difficult to get the cars ready in time for the first round in February 2019 as there's a pool of race cars available."

Present at the first round will be Derek Edwards, the Caribbean champion, who has never competed abroad before. He definitely has the short straw, coming to Blyton in Lincolnshire in February, while the BimmaCup UK champion heads in the opposite direction... ■



UK winner gets Barbados visit

As the circuit closes, MN remembers the first rally at Rockingham. By Jack Benyon



Stephen 'Simmo' Simpson: Hyundai



An ex-Pond Metro 6R4 won



Stone won last Rockingham Rally

ROCKINGHAM'S FITTING RALLY DEBUT

Rockingham circuit is known for some brilliant racing memories, but the circuit has a long rallying history which also comes to an end when the circuit closes to motorsport at the end of the year.

Rallying launched onto the scene at Rockingham in 2004, three years

after opening, to a strong national-level entry, most of whom are still competing at a high level today.

Car number one was Stephen Simpson, co-driven by Mark Booth in a Hyundai Accent WRC. Bringing the fight to him was perennial Asphalt Championship rival John Stone and navigator Lee Carter, in the third of Stone's MG Metro 6R4s. Old vs new for the first ever rally at the circuit.

Simpson had the advantage for most of the day in his ex-Freddy

Loix and Armin Schwarz car, but as the rally – then a one-day event – reached its climax, Stone wanted to provide a fitting ending.

He needed to go a second a mile faster on the last stage to take victory in his ex-Tony Pond car.

"At that time there weren't many single-venue rallies at circuits running, but I remember the facilities being fantastic," says Stone.

"Going into the darkness, we gunned it on the last stage and I

remember coming into the control feeling that we'd done it, and it was one of my best rally memories.

"There's a few times where you drive a car and you can feel everything working perfectly. Everything worked and that was one of those times.

"We [with Carter] were quite a formidable team at that time and it was a really good rally. Lee was the king of single venues. He was a brilliant co-driver and he was just pushing me all the way."

It was enough as Stone took victory by just three measly seconds.

Stone returned to the venue for the last ever event there, winning the one-day Sunday rally aboard his Ford Fiesta RS WRC.

Times have changed since 2004, but the rivalry hasn't. 'Simmo' Simpson and Stone are still fighting multiple times a year, but sadly it will never be at Rockingham again. Stone's win in the last event – having won the first – was a fitting send off. ■

FEATURE

Photos: LAT

In 2019 one of the most famous junior single-seater formulas is getting a makeover. By **Jack Benyon**



Car was unveiled at Abu Dhabi Grand Prix

TEAMS

- ART Grand Prix
- Campos Racing
- Carlin
- Charouz Racing System
- Hitech Grand Prix
- HWA RACELAB
- Jenzer Motorsport
- MP Motorsport
- Prema Racing
- Trident

CALENDAR

2019 FIA Formula 3 Championship

DATE	TRACK
May 11/12	Barcelona
Jun 22/23	Paul Ricard
Jun 29/30	Red Bull Ring
Jul 13/14	Silverstone
Aug 3/4	Hungaroring
Aug 31/Sep 1	Spa
Sep 7/8	Monza
Sep 28/29	Sochi

FORMULA 3'S NEW DIRECTION

In 2019, the top level of Formula 3 will take a huge step in a different direction, as the FIA shakes things up.

The GP3 Series – a single-make formula that supports Formula 1 races – is merging with the multi-engine European Formula 3 Championship to create the FIA Formula 3 Championship. Simple, eh?

In reality, very little other than a few teams will be carried over from European F3 to the new series, as the main characteristics from GP3 dominate. The same boss takes over, Bruno Michel, the single-make, single-engine format remains and the series remains on the Formula 1 support bill.

The car is similar too, albeit new, with a chassis by Dallara as per the previous two championships. The engine and gearbox is from the GP3/16, with more aero added in line with Formula 3. Purists will be unhappy to know that the trademark side-mounted intake pod – which looks a bit like a bazooka launcher – does not remain, dropped for a standard over-head intake.

The power output matches GP3, with the new car pushing out

160bhp more than European Formula 3 with 380bhp, and a top speed of around 186mph from the 3.4-litre Mecachrome engine.

While the power output may seem massive in comparison to 'old' F3, the new cars will be much heavier, in most part down to a steel halo added to the car as mandated by the FIA. The Formula 2 car – run by the same Michel operation – introduced a new car this year, meaning F1, F2 and F3 will all be on the same track, competing on the same weekends with a halo next year.

All three will have DRS, too, as that's carried over from GP3. However, it will be unlimited in F3 next year, whereas GP3 allowed six uses in its feature races and four in its reversed-grid counter.

The teams have a limited number of mechanics that can work on each car, which ex-European F3 teams will have to adapt to having not had a limit before.

While the car is a departure from many things considered fundamental to F3, it does at least use many parts from a GP3 car which was – most of the time – reliable. The Formula 2 car featured a turbo engine and new technology, and proved unreliable for the first half



Michel is in charge of new series

of the season. Keeping consistent parts from GP3 should at least help to avoid that.

It's a star-studded list of teams signed up to compete in the championship too (see above right), including Prema Racing with four decades of F3 experience and the 2018 European F3 teams' title under its belt, and ART Grand Prix which won seven GP3 teams' championships in eight seasons of the category.

Whatever you think of the direction of new F3, it has the support of the FIA and Liberty Media, which is set to invest more in drivers in its support categories next year and to promote them more, and there are some brilliant teams involved. ■



New F3 has a halo and DRS



Johnny Herbert was an F3 product



Driver development over entertaining

Is new F3 really good for young drivers' development?

MOTORSPORT NEWS says...

There are many positives to racing on the Formula 1 bill, and it's often a positive that drivers cite for wanting to compete in championships like Formula 2 and GP3. But is it harming the development of young drivers?

The fact that these championships appear on F1 weekends means they have to satisfy an entertainment quota, but in the formula's long history, Formula 3 has always been about the same thing: providing a platform for young drivers to learn unhindered.

The new FIA Formula 3 Championship is the furthest departure yet from Formula 3's roots, and there are two major issues. The addition of DRS, and the Pirelli jelly tyres that are tough to manage and use.

Yes, Formula 2 has DRS. But it's a tool

which takes talent almost completely out of the equation. Competing at this level should be all about natural overtaking; finding gaps, setting drivers up, experimenting with grip and pulling off the overtake. The addition of DRS in F3 will help to prepare drivers for the use of it in F1, but how much learning is needed to push a button and sail past your rival?

Asked if it was a difficult decision to make, new F3 boss Bruno Michel said: "No, it was not a difficult decision to make, we wanted to make a car that creates fantastic racing. This is our DNA, that is why [people] are watching it and know the drivers."

The other issue is the Pirelli tyres. It gives less talented drivers the chance to artificially appear better if they are able to look after their tyres more effectively

than a potentially quicker rival. In F1, the tyres have been developed to degrade a lot less than in previous years, and also teams get access to bucket loads of data thanks to tyre temperature sensors on the cars and cameras pointed at the tyres to evaluate wear. F2 and F3 will have no sensors, so having tyres that degrade less would still be a challenge, but the driver would be relying on the process of data and adapting to it rather than driving to a delta time or taking a specific line with the current tyres.

Then there's the one-make element. It gives the championship total control, meaning the ability for different suppliers to undercut each other, naturally bringing prices down and opening the series up to more

competitors, is void. Costs are totally controlled centrally, and often this doesn't work in motorsport. It also means many motorsport suppliers miss out on a chance to do business.

There are positives, that drivers are theoretically on an even playing field by the fact that they are in the same car. But DRS and management of Pirelli tyres can sway that playing field in drivers' favour, and not always because they are a faster driver.

There are pros and cons to the new series and the fact that the FIA has supported it means it has faith. It's not really F3 in its DNA, but perhaps this new series can change and adapt with motorsport in the future. But maybe that's seeing the glass half-full.

Jack Benyon

PICS OF THE YEAR

It's that time of year again where we look back at the best action from the last 12 months which wouldn't be possible without our dedicated team of photographers.

Our MN contributors have gone above and beyond as ever to capture the best moments in racing and rallying from 2018.

Out of thousands of pictures, we've selected the very best images to get you in the mood for 2019.

Thanks to Rachel Bourne, Colin Casserley, Jakob Ebrey, Gary Hawkins, mcklein-imagetatabase.com, Chicane Media, SMJ Photography, Steve Jones, Ollie Read, Richard Styles and Mick Walker. ■

MATT JAMES
EDITOR

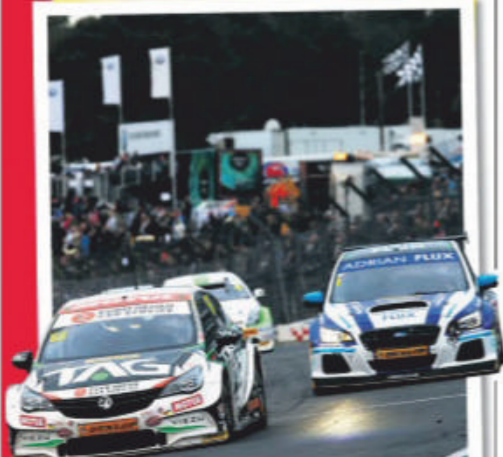


The final British Touring Car Championship meeting of the year is a pressure cooker, with the ultimate title usually to be decided. That generally sweeps all before it in terms of drama, and this year's conclusion was no different.

Colin Turkington rather limped over the line to claim his third overall crown, but the BTCC saved up its best for last in 2018. There were a number of exceptional races over the course of the year - Senna Proctor's gamble for a win on the drying track at Brands in April and Jack Goff's narrow triumph in race one at Snetterton were two very strong contenders.

But the race of the year was the very last one where good chums Ash Sutton (Team BMR Subaru Levorg) and Josh Cook (Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra) went hammer and tongs at it. There was no quarter asked or given as each explored parts of the Brands Hatch Grand Prix track Tarmac not usually associated with overtaking.

The last eight laps were utterly absorbing, with the pair going side-by-side on numerous occasions. It was gloves off racing, with a mutual respect rarely seen and a dash to the line which gave deposed champion Sutton the perfect sign off to the campaign.



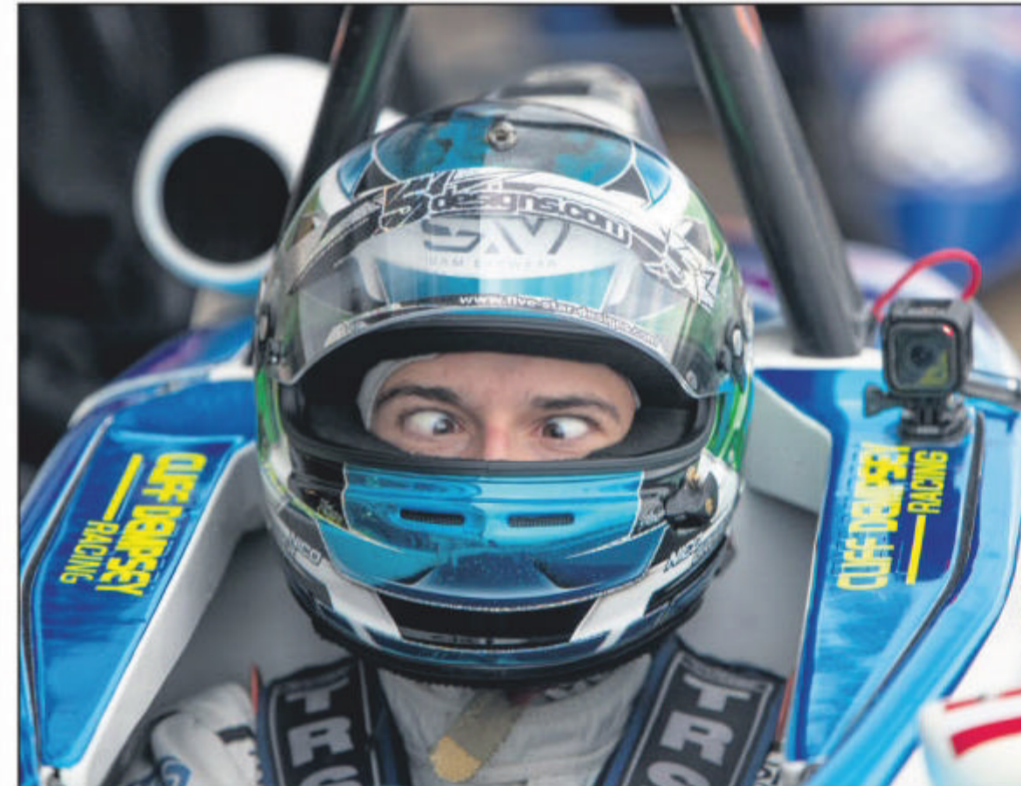
Cook (1) battled with Sutton



Drama wasn't far away in BMW Compact Cup at Castle Combe



A Chevron B8 driven by Andrew Kirkaldy gets some air at the Oulton Park Gold Cup



Seeing is believing: Formula Ford driver Nico Gruber gets cross-eyed



Things go very wrong for Joe Dalgarno in MG Trophy race at Oulton Park



Stu Smith Jr was once again on top of the world with a win in the BriSCA F1 World Final



Nelson Rowe tries to make a quick exit

JACK BENYON
NATIONAL EDITOR



This year has been the best in junior single-seater history for British-born drivers. It's a bold statement, but never have three of the nation's starlets dominated the closest feeder series to Formula 1 – currently Formula 2 – locking out the top three in the standings and all graduating to F1.

George Russell pulled off one of the most brilliant years in F2, taking the title in his rookie year having won the GP3 Series the previous year, also at his first attempt. His seven wins ties Charles Leclerc and Stoffel Vandoorne as the most, while he went on to take 11 podiums in a year that could have been even better had it not been for an unreliable F2 car. Lando Norris pipped Alex Albon to second in the points, and his Carlin team continued the theme of British domination by taking the 'Teams' crown.

That is the kind of year of British domination which will be hard to repeat.



Future F1 champions?

STEPHEN LICKORISH
DEPUTY EDITOR



Last year's Donington Park British Formula 4 meeting will forever be remembered for Billy Monger's horrific crash. But this year's event was memorable for all the right reasons as the second race featured arguably the best performance in the category's short history.

For any driver to win from 13th on the grid takes either a multi-car pile-up, a terrific strategy call or an overtaking masterclass. And with that Donington race it was definitely the third option.

Kiern Jewiss's weekend in Leicestershire hadn't got off to the best of starts as a failed move on Ayrton Simmons left him stranded in the gravel in the opener. But the Double R driver quickly put that disappointment behind him to deliver a truly stunning display in race two, gliding through the field with breathtaking ease to win. It really was something special.

That one drive alone shows why he was champion and will be remembered for a long time.



The start of the British GT race at Donington Park where some drivers find a new route



A new racing series for 2019 or demonstration run at Cadwell?



Porsche 987 Boxsters line-up in formation for a Brands Hatch celebration



Billy Monger got the chance to get behind the wheel of a rally car this year



Jewiss won from 13th on grid

PICS OF THE YEAR



The British GT field about to do battle at Snetterton

DAVID EVANS RALLIES EDITOR



So many moments, so little room... What's it to be? Something from the closest World Rally Championship finish in 15 years? Actually, no. It's eating my first doughnut at 14,110 feet.

Actually, that's just a very small part of it. The bigger picture is Pikes Peak, an event I've wanted to visit ever since I first watched Ari Vatanen climb and dance his way up America's Mountain.

It didn't disappoint. Neither did Volkswagen's I.D. R Pikes Peak. Not only did it smash the record for 12.42 miles and 156 corners, it turned me on to electric. All-in-all, a fabulous few days in Colorado.

But... was that the moment of the year? Actually it wasn't. The moment of the year has to be the one that stops you in your tracks. And this year, it wasn't a good moment. In terms of track-stopping news value, Citroen sacking Kris Meeke took some topping.



VW beat Pikes Peak record

STEFAN MACKLEY REPORTER



It seemed impossible at the time and even now it's still difficult to believe that it happened. The word impossible isn't one I imagine Billy Monger takes much notice of, but even he was surprised after taking a shock podium on his return to racing. Less than 12 months before he'd been involved in a horrific British Formula 4 accident at Donington Park which led to a double leg amputation.

The fact he was back out on the grid at all so soon was incredible.

But the unflappable teenager put to bed any questions about what his pace would be by qualifying fifth before finishing the opening race of the BRDC British F3 season in third.

His family and Carlin mechanics were rightly overjoyed and Monger struggled to hold back tears as he made his way, with the use of prosthetic legs, onto the rostrum surrounded by droves of supporters. I imagine there were few more inspiring sights across the whole of motorsport in 2018.



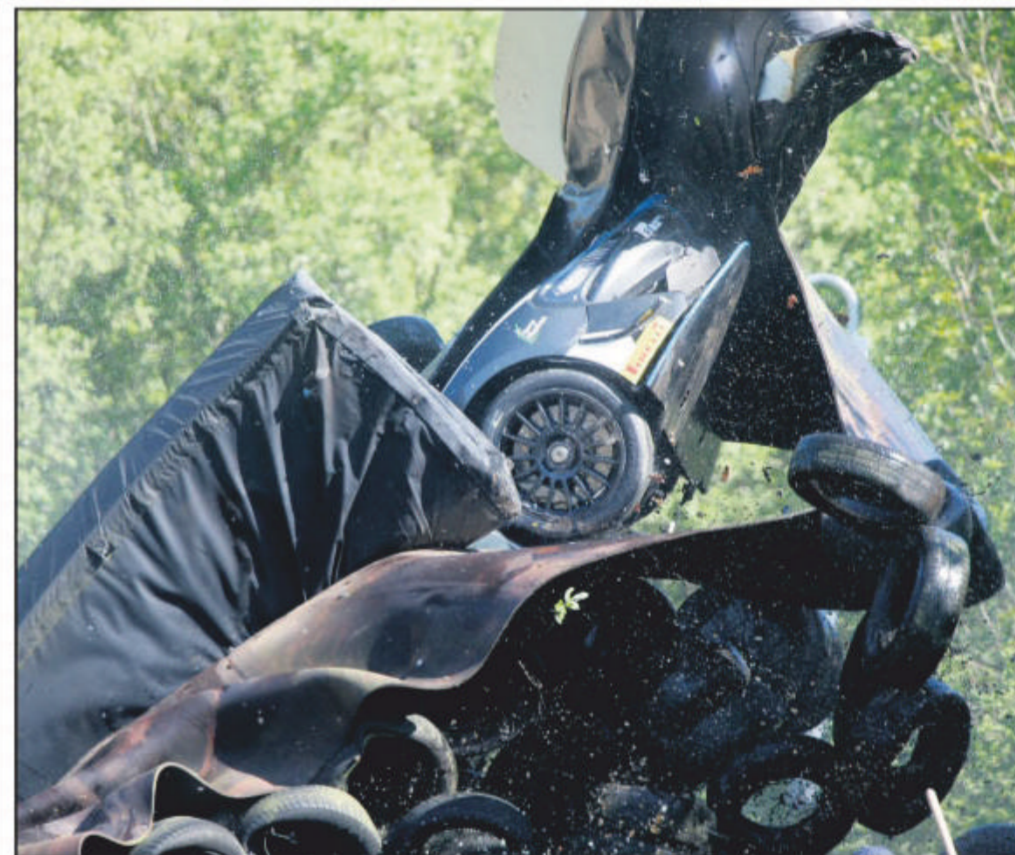
Monger was all smiles



Phil Burton driving a Subaru Impreza in the MN Circuit Rally at Cadwell Park



Tim Davies's Metro leaves a trail



We have lift-off: Ricardo van der Ende ends up in an unusual position



Sparks from Paul di Resta on the DTM's return to Brands after five years away



James Pinkerton avoided any distractions on his way to the Radical SR1 Cup crown



Simon Edwards aboard his Morgan Super Aero at the Vintage Sports Car Club meeting at a damp Snetterton



Mark Farmer was lucky to escape serious injury after his Aston Martin ignited following a crash at Spa



Glenn Bell was heartbroken as his throttle jammed at the Hot Rod World Final

PAUL LAWRENCE
HISTORICS EDITOR



We get precious few chances to witness gravel rallying in the dark these days. Aside from the biennial Roger Albert Clark Rally, the stand-out is the Trackrod Historic Cup and this year's event was glorious.

On the Friday evening the historics are let loose in Dalby forest, which offers some of the highest speeds of the historic season and it all happens under the cover of darkness.

The 2018 edition was truly epic, as the moon rose over the Yorkshire forests and the stars came out on a balmy late summer evening. As well as those populating the Milky Way, the stars came out in the historic entry.

When Matthew Robinson dropped his Ford Escort's clutch at the thick end of nine grand, it was game on and the noise of a posse of BDGs, and the BRM-Avenger of Ieuan Rowlands, working up and down the long, flowing riggs was unforgettable.



Rallying in the dark



Luke Cooper makes a splash in FF1600

HAL RIDGE
RX CORRESPONDENT



My memory of the year in unashamedly self-indulgent. Only two cars won a round of the World Rallycross Championship this year, and I got the incredible opportunity to drive one of them. The Peugeot 208 WRX used by rally legend Sebastien Loeb to win the Belgian round in May, as part of a feature for *MN's* sister publication, *Autosport*.

Having squeezed myself into Loeb's compact seating position, the 208 drove amazingly, with incredible response from the two-litre engine and suspension so efficient that you hardly noticed Lydden Hill's kerbs and rough sections. That was followed by an outing in a rather more agricultural Will Gollop MG Metro 6R4, the car that Tiff Needell raced in the 1989 Rallycross Grand Prix, complete with its wailing naturally aspirated V6 engine.

Wherever top-flight rallycross technology goes in the coming years, the cars of the Group B era and today's Supercar machines deserve their place in the history books.

Driving both on the same day is something that will stay with me for a very, very long time.



Peugeot 208 WRX/Metro 6R4

REVIEW: F1 SEASON

THE GOOD AND THE

Our F1 Racing experts Ben Anderson, Stuart Codling and James Roberts look back on the season's highlights

The bare statistics of 2018 show that Lewis Hamilton was once again the behemoth of F1. A fifth world title was snared with 11 victories, and his dominance was such that he was able to lift the crown with two rounds to spare, his second title in a row which has now brought him level with Juan Manuel Fangio in the all-time list.

He was almost 100 points ahead of any other driver, and the seemingly unbreakable benchmark of Michael Schumacher's seven world titles and 91 race wins is being brought into sharp focus. Who knows where the bandwagon will roll?

A strong start from Ferrari and Sebastian Vettel, in particular, went on the wane in the second half of the year, while Red Bull was only able to challenge on occasion.

Despite that, there were some good races with plenty of action, and that seems set to continue through to 2019. Here, we answer the big-questions of the season gone by.

MOST UNDERRATED DRIVER



STOFFEL VANDOORNE

It's said that a human sacrifice is often required when any project is seen to be failing. Quite frankly, though, an Aztec priest in a frenzy of deity-appeasement might look over at the way the bodies are stacking up at McLaren, gasp at the awfulness of the shambles there, wipe the entrails off his knife and take up Buddhism instead.

Stoffel Vandoorne arrived in Formula 1 accompanied by a justifiably loud fanfare, having dominated GP2 and shown well in a 'holding season' in Super Formula as he awaited a vacancy at McLaren. He showed well in a one-off drive at Bahrain in 2016, filling in for the injured Fernando Alonso and dragged his

uncompetitive McLaren to a points finish it barely warranted.

Promoted to a full-time drive from 2017 onwards, he was initially guilty of trying too hard. He studiously revised his approach and improved... but not enough to regularly beat Alonso in that season or the one just past.

That, and the fact that pretty

much everyone responsible for bringing him aboard McLaren's young driver programme has now gone in the succession of management purges in recent years, accounts for his departure. He's a lot better than he's looked – but he's not a protege of the current Woking regime, so onto the casualty list he goes. **SC**

ROUND BY ROUND



AUSTRALIAN GP, MELBOURNE MARCH 25

Lewis Hamilton qualifies six tenths clear of the pack but is denied victory by Mercedes' strategic miscalculation under virtual safety car conditions, which hands the race to Sebastian Vettel's Ferrari. Haas suffers a double blow as both cars retire while running strongly inside the points thanks to two botched pitstops.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



BAHRAIN GP, SAKHIR APRIL 8

Vettel fends off Valtteri Bottas to win again. After Mercedes misjudges Vettel's strategy, Bottas is slow to give chase, and thinks better of attempting a pass on the final lap. Hamilton recovers from a grid penalty to finish third, while Kimi Raikkonen retires when his car strikes a Ferrari mechanic during his pitstop.

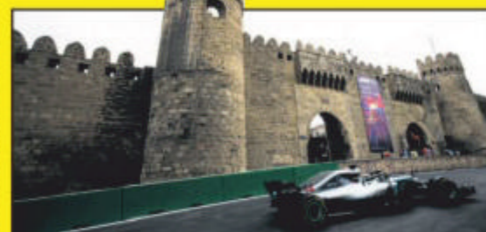
- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)



CHINESE GP, SHANGHAI APRIL 15

Bottas looks good to win this race, after jumping Vettel in the pits, but the timing of the VSC leaves him struggling to resist a late Red Bull charge. Max Verstappen goes off trying to pass Hamilton and crashes into Vettel. Daniel Ricciardo's more measured judgement allows him to steal victory from Bottas.

- 1 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



AZERBAIJAN GP, BAKU APRIL 29

Another race Bottas should have won. This time, debris eliminates him with just three laps left, following a late-race restart after the Red Bull drivers wipe each other out battling over fourth. Vettel botches a bid for the lead moments before Bottas's puncture and drops to fourth, as Hamilton inherits victory.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)
- 3 Sergio Perez (Force India)



SPANISH GP, BARCELONA MAY 13

Feeling comfortable with the set-up of his Mercedes for the first time since Australia, Hamilton dominates in Spain, winning by more than 20 seconds. Vettel runs second until Ferrari's over-eager appetite for Pirelli's special low-gauge tyres forces him to make a second pitstop and drops him behind Bottas and Verstappen.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)

BAD OF F1 IN 2018

FLASHPOINT OF THE YEAR

GERMAN GRAND PRIX



On lap 52 of 67 of this year's German Grand Prix, the world championship slipped through Sebastian Vettel's fingers. The Ferrari driver had started his home race from pole position, while his title-rival Lewis Hamilton was 14th on the grid after a hydraulic gremlin in qualifying.

The race dramatically turned on its head and a Ferrari 1-2 became a Mercedes 1-2 after a downpour soaked the Hockenheim track and Vettel slithered out of contention, crashing into the Turn 13 barriers after an unforced error. Hamilton came through the field to take an unlikely victory.

The shunt was one of many to affect the Ferrari driver in 2018. In total, there were nearly a dozen mistakes made by the German. They included the lock-up in Baku that cost him victory, the first corner clash with Valtteri Bottas at Paul Ricard and spinning after wheel-to-wheel contact with Hamilton (in Monza) and Max Verstappen (in Suzuka). In contrast, Hamilton rarely put a foot wrong and soaked up the pressure magnificently.

As the thunderstorm continued to strike the Hockenheim track in July, two images stand out. The first is Hamilton celebrating with his hands to the sky, while the second is Vettel kicking the gravel trap in frustration. **JR**

TEAM MANAGEMENT OF THE SEASON

TOTO WOLFF, MERCEDES-BENZ

At the Russian GP, Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff denied Valtteri Bottas a race victory by imposing team orders and favouring Lewis Hamilton. With five races remaining, many people questioned his decision. After the race, Wolff responded by posing the question: "What would *you* have done?" He admitted the previous night he

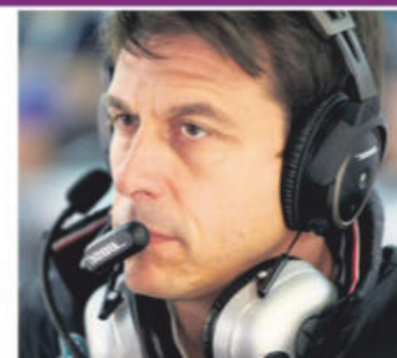
struggled to sleep, wrestling with the morality of team orders and the affect it would have on 'the show'. But he displayed leadership in his decision and justified his actions. When the sole goal of the whole of the Mercedes organisation – totalling nearly 1,000 employees – is to win the drivers' and constructors' titles, then every critical

decision must return to that single aim. A clear strategic action is the difference between winning and losing.

It was suggested Wolff's actions mimicked those unpleasant scenes of Jean Todt in Austria '02, when he ordered Rubens Barrichello to make way for Michael Schumacher early in the season. His response? To remind

us that Jean Todt was arguably the most successful team principal in the history of modern motorsport, with his championship victories in rallying, sportscars and F1.

Is it any surprise, then, that Wolff has now matched Todt's achievement of five consecutive drivers' and constructors' championships? **JR**



MONACO GP, MONTE CARLO MAY 27

After Verstappen's crash in final practice, Ricciardo takes pole and leads comfortably until an MGU-K problem robs his car of power and forces him to avoid using seventh and eighth gears. Ricciardo wins despite the problems, describing the victory as "redemption" for the Red Bull pitstop blunder that cost him in 2016.

- 1 Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)



CANADIAN GP, MONTREAL JUNE 10

Vettel grabs the championship lead with a comfortable victory from pole in Montreal, as Hamilton endures a difficult weekend on one of his favourite circuits and ends up a distant fifth after suffering engine power "drop outs". A failed challenge on Bottas at the start forces Verstappen to settle for third.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)



FRENCH GP, PAUL RICARD JUNE 24

Hamilton uses Mercedes' delayed engine update to great effect, winning from pole as Vettel is restricted to fifth after colliding clumsily with Bottas on the opening lap. Bottas's title hopes take a further blow as he can only recover to seventh, while Verstappen takes up vain chase of Hamilton and finishes seven seconds adrift.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



AUSTRIAN GP, RED BULL RING JULY 1

An anomalous race where both Mercedes retire with mechanical problems after running 1-2 for the first 12 laps. A first-lap error that gifts position to Verstappen thus costs Raikkonen his shot at victory. Vettel recovers from a grid penalty for impeding in qualifying, including passing Hamilton on-track, to complete the podium.

- 1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 2 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)
- 3 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)



BRITISH GP, SILVERSTONE JULY 8

A brilliant pole lap leaves Hamilton physically shaking from the effort, but his good work is undone when Raikkonen turns him around at Village on lap one. Bottas inherits the lead when Vettel pits for a second time, but loses out to a bold Vettel pass at Brooklands six laps from the finish.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)

REVIEW: F1 SEASON

SHUNT OF THE YEAR



SPA

The obvious choice would be the spectacular startline shunt at Spa, where Nico Hulkenberg (who had another impressive crash in Abu Dhabi) misjudged his braking point, cannoned into Fernando Alonso and launched the latter airborne. Alonso's McLaren landed on Charles Leclerc's Sauber and left significant scarring on Leclerc's halo. Suddenly, critics of the FIA's latest safety crusade fell silent.

Last year, Niki Lauda said the halo "destroys the DNA of an F1 car", but perhaps that DNA is worth discarding if doing so can save a life.

Subsequent investigations by the FIA show that the halo did indeed save Leclerc from a blow to the head.

Hulkenberg's Abu Dhabi accident also put the halo in the spotlight again, and it was thought that the device had impeded his exit from

the inverted car, but this was later denied by the FIA.

It was impressive how quickly the halo became just the norm in F1: it wasn't the ugly blemish that most fans thought it would be at the start of the season. And, with the results of the report into the Leclerc accident, and a similar incident in F2 where Tadasuke Makino was prevented from harm in a shunt in Barcelona, the halo proved its worth. **BA**

GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENT

WILLIAMS FW41



When the Williams FW41 was unveiled in a trendy east London 'art space' earlier this year, the signs were good. Well, rather than 'unveiled', but it was more a case of an image being projected onto the brick wall of a Shoreditch basement, and perhaps therein lies the problem.

The image thus displayed was of a car more aerodynamically in line with the Ferrari that had showed reasonably well throughout the previous season. On the face of it, a far better prospect than the low-downforce design concept the team had been pursuing with diminishing returns since 2014.

But you only had to watch from trackside at Barcelona's Turn 3

in pre-season to grasp the awful truth. For lap after lap, Lance Stroll and Sergey Sirotkin grappled gamely with the twitching and spasming of the wretched device as it made successive bids to spear itself into the barrier.

And the car got little better throughout the year. A new (and less complex) front wing made it slightly less edgy, but at Silverstone Williams had to junk a new rear wing because the airflow wouldn't reattach when the DRS closed. By season's end the team seemed no nearer to understanding why the car was so bad.

They might be better off Shoreditching the whole lot and starting again. **SC**

BIGGEST CONTROVERSY

MAX VERSTAPPEN V ESTEBAN OCON



When racing drivers attack one another off-track, not only is it professionally unseemly, it just looks stupid – especially if they're both wearing crash helmets, in which case they tend to slap at one another ineffectually like two cats playing patercake. Even without helmets, driver-on-driver brawls often go no further than a bit of pushing and shoving. And that's just plain disappointing.

The facts of the Max Verstappen versus Esteban Ocon case are that

shortly after Verstappen took the lead of the Brazilian Grand Prix, Ocon, who was running outside the top 10 but had just made a pitstop, came up fast behind him. Ocon's Force India pitwall told him that he should unlap himself if he had the speed, and this is what he was trying to do when they collided.

Ocon tried to go around the outside into Turn 1, Verstappen needlessly – perhaps even churlishly – made it difficult, so as they proceeded towards

the right-hand portion of the Senna Esses Ocon tried to claim what was the inside line. Verstappen turned in as if he'd forgotten his adversary was there. The stewards decided to ping Ocon, and he was, by the letter of the law, "wholly or predominantly to blame".

Afterwards they had that rather disappointing shoving contest in the FIA garage. Really, Max, if you're not going to throw a punch then learn to turn the other cheek... **SC**

OVERTAKING MOVE OF THE YEAR

DANIEL RICCIARDO



Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo is considered one of the best passers in the business, unexpectedly pouncing on his prey with clean, ruthless efficiency. At this year's Chinese Grand Prix he came from behind to overtake title protagonists Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel – plus Valtteri Bottas – to claim the sixth victory of his career.

Despite a tyre advantage, Ricciardo still needed to make the moves stick and if you needed an example of how it could have come undone, look no further than his team-mate Max Verstappen who, on the same strategy, made a mistake attempting to pass Hamilton

and then crashed into Vettel.

Two of Ricciardo's overtakes in Shanghai were assisted with DRS into the final hairpin, but the highlight of the season was the pass on Bottas for the lead. As they crested the rise and approached the tight right-hander at Turn 6, Ricciardo immediately started to position his car to the inside.

Bottas defended once, then moved across again. Ricciardo was watching the gap narrow, but kept his Red Bull between the Mercedes and the apex. He beautifully kept off the brakes for longer, didn't lock up, and neatly won the corner from the Finn. P1 and victory assured. **JR**

ROUND BY ROUND



GERMAN GP, HOCKENHEIM JULY 22

A pivotal moment in the title race as Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel slides off the track and throws away a race he looks sure to win after the Scuderia surreptitiously orders Kimi Raikkonen to move aside. Lewis Hamilton recovers from a gearbox failure in Q1 that leaves him 14th on the grid to claim victory and the championship lead from his team-mate Valtteri Bottas.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



HUNGARIAN GP, HUNGARORING JULY 29

Another race Ferrari clearly has the pace to win, until heavy rain lashes the circuit for qualifying. Hamilton's wet weather wizardry does the rest, giving him an unlikely pole he duly converts into victory. Vettel finishes second after passing Bottas late-on and somehow surviving being rear-ended by the Mercedes.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



BELGIAN GP, SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS AUGUST 26

Hamilton claims pole by a huge margin as rain affects qualifying again, but cannot prevent Vettel crucially slipstreaming past on the first lap. Max Verstappen finishes third as Bottas recovers to fourth after a grid penalty. The controversial halo is praised after a collision sends Fernando Alonso airborne and onto Charles Leclerc's Sauber.

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 3 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)



ITALIAN GP, MONZA SEPTEMBER 2

A psychologically crucial win for Hamilton, as he comes from behind to beat Ferrari on its home turf. Poleman Raikkonen finishes a feisty second after being told he's told he's lost his drive for 2019, while Vettel is only fourth after colliding with Hamilton on lap one and spinning to the back.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)
- 3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)



SINGAPORE GP, MARINA BAY SEPTEMBER 16

Hamilton takes a surprise pole on Mercedes' weakest circuit with a lap Toto Wolff calls the best he's ever seen, and extends his championship lead to 40 points with an assured drive to victory. Vettel loses out to Verstappen in the pits after overtaking him for second place early on.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 3 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)

RACE OF THE YEAR AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX



It's a sign of a dramatic race weekend when you discover that three drivers were in tears at various points over the weekend. The unforgiving street circuit around the Azerbaijan capital, Baku, once again delivered non-stop action, drama and heartbreak...

First we witnessed Romain Grosjean with his head in his hands at the side of the track on Saturday when his Haas gearbox malfunctioned

and he was consigned to the back of the grid. Tears turned to fury on Sunday when he crashed in P6 – on his own – while running behind the safety car.

On the opening lap, Force India's Esteban Ocon was nudged into the barriers and retirement by Kimi Raikkonen. Cue more tears.

Finally, after the two Red Bull drivers had crashed into each other (!) and Sebastian Vettel had taken himself out of contention

for victory (with a rash Turn 1 overtake), Valtteri Bottas found himself in the lead of the race. As he began his last lap – suddenly – his right-rear tyre blew. The puncture was caused by running over debris. Hamilton inherited victory and Bottas was left to rue his bad luck. Later he admitted when he returned to his hotel room that night, he fell to his knees and "cried like a baby". Baku. Once again an emotional rollercoaster. **JR**

BEST NEW TALENT CHARLES LECLERC



Charles Leclerc was this year's standout rookie in Formula 1 – by a long shot.

To be fair to Sergey Sirotkin, his qualifying record versus Williams team-mate Lance Stroll was a very healthy 13-8 in Sirotkin's favour. But qualifying is not Stroll's strong suit, and Sirotkin did nothing much else of note really. The car was bad, yes, the worst Williams for a while – perhaps ever – but Sirotkin did not do a great deal with it either. In the

end, his sponsors grew too frustrated – partly (and probably unfairly) with him, but mostly with Williams' dire lack of performance and development – to bother continuing, so his F1 career already looks over.

By contrast, Leclerc's rookie season was, by all accounts, outstanding. After a tricky early period coming to terms with the set-up of his Sauber, and toning down his F2-derived driving style to better suit

the demands of F1, Leclerc buried the five-year career of experienced team-mate Marcus Ericsson with performances so increasingly assured that Ferrari *finally* felt moved to end Kimi Raikkonen's long second stint at Maranello.

That Leclerc has earned his promotion to Ferrari already, after just 21 grands prix, is proof enough he was 2018's most outstanding new talent. **BA**

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2019

NEW FRONT WINGS



Part trial run for the all-new regulations coming in 2021, part quick-fix because nobody foresaw or cared about how aerodynamically disruptive the latest generation of cars would be, new front wings are coming in 2019. The intention is that by reducing aerodynamic outwash from the wing, each car's wake will be less turbulent, making it easier for drivers to get close and launch an attack without relying on artifice such as DRS.

But will it work in practice? Perhaps. But senior engineers within F1 are expressing very little hope that it will, at least in the long term.

The most likely scenario is that we'll see a raft of differing designs at the first test next year, and then, as one particular concept proves more effective than the rest, there will be a convergence towards that solution. By the beginning of the European season the wealthiest teams will no doubt have achieved that convergence, while the less well-resourced ones lag. Grand prix racing has been like that since Nuovolari got his licence. Still, it will give the pundits something to talk about, and anything that fuels conversation about subjects other than tyre degradation is fine by us. **SC**

FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS, 2018

POS	DRIVERS	CAR-ENGINE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL
1	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	18	15	12	25	25	15	10	25	-	18	25	25	18	25	25	25	25	15	12	25	25	408
2	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	25	25	4	12	12	18	25	10	15	25	-	18	25	12	15	15	8	12	18	8	18	320
3	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	15	-	15	18	-	12	8	15	18	15	15	15	-	18	10	12	10	25	15	15	-	251
4	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-TAG Heuer	8	-	10	-	15	2	15	18	25	-	12	-	15	10	18	10	15	18	25	18	15	249
5	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	4	18	18	-	18	10	18	6	-	12	18	10	12	15	12	18	18	10	10	10	10	247
6	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-Tag Heuer	12	-	25	-	10	25	12	12	-	10	-	12	-	-	8	8	12	-	-	12	12	170
7	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	6	8	8	-	-	4	6	2	-	8	10	-	-	-	1	-	-	8	8	-	-	69
8	Sergio Perez	Racing Point Force India-Mercedes	-	-	-	15	2	-	-	-	6	1	6	-	10	6	-	1	6	4	-	1	4	62
9	Kevin Magnussen	Haas-Ferrari	-	10	1	-	8	-	-	8	10	2	-	6	4	-	-	4	-	-	-	2	1	56
10	Carlos Sainz	Renault	1	-	2	10	6	1	4	4	-	-	-	2	-	4	4	-	1	6	-	-	8	53

11 Fernando Alonso (McLaren-Renault) 50; 12 Esteban Ocon (Racing Point Force India-Mercedes) 49; 13 Charles Leclerc (Sauber-Ferrari) 39; 14 Romain Grosjean (Haas-Ferrari) 37; 15 Pierre Gasly (Toro Rosso-Honda) 29; 16 Stoffel Vandoorne (McLaren-Renault) 12; 17 Marcus Ericsson (Sauber-Ferrari) 9; 18 Lance Stroll (Williams-Mercedes) 6; 19 Brendon Hartley (Toro Rosso-Honda) 4; 20 Sergey Sirotkin (Williams-Mercedes) 1.



RUSSIAN GP, SOCHI SEPTEMBER 30

Bottas annexes pole and has the race under control until Mercedes botches Hamilton's strategy and drops him behind Vettel. Hamilton re-passes the Ferrari before Bottas is ordered to move aside to mitigate any remaining threat. An uncomfortable podium ceremony ensues.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)



JAPANESE GP, SUZUKA OCTOBER 7

Ferrari bungles its tyre choice in mixed conditions in Q3, leaving Hamilton and Bottas clear to set up another Mercedes 1-2 finish. Vettel starts strongly from eighth but spins trying to pass Verstappen and finishes only sixth. Verstappen pressures Bottas towards the end as Hamilton stretches his points lead to 67.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
- 3 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)



USA GP, CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS OCTOBER 21

Raikkonen ends a personal victory drought of 112 races by beating Hamilton off the line then managing tyres perfectly. Mercedes parks its innovative wheel design as a precaution against protest and Hamilton is only third after making an extra stop. Verstappen is second from 18th on the grid, while Vettel again spins in battle.

- 1 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)
- 2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 3 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)



MEXICAN GP, MEXICO CITY OCTOBER 28

Verstappen is furious at losing pole to team-mate Daniel Ricciardo, but puts that right with a strong race as Ricciardo botches the start. Merc struggles with tyre-life and Hamilton clinches his fifth world title with a subdued race to fourth. Ricciardo declares his car "cursed" after another technical failure while running second.

- 1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



BRAZILIAN GP, INTERLAGOS NOVEMBER 11

A stirring drive from fifth on the grid puts Verstappen in position to win again, but a collision as Esteban Ocon tries to unlap himself hands the race back to Hamilton – whose engine comes close to failing from an exhaust problem. Verstappen is punished for confronting Ocon after the race.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
- 3 Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari)



ABU DHABI GP, YAS MARINA NOVEMBER 25

Hamilton rounds out 2018 with an impressive 11th victory after beating Bottas to pole. Bottas slumps to fifth in the race, and the championship, after another underwhelming outing – this time struggling with his brakes. Vettel comes through to second while Verstappen recovers from a tough start to record his fifth consecutive podium.

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
- 2 Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)
- 3 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)

BIG INTERVIEW

In a turbulent season for the Northern Irishman, a third title was his most pleasing yet. By **Matt James**



Turkington had a strong weekend at Thruxton

HOW TURKINGTON OVERCAME HIS TOUGHEST



The BMW man withstood huge pressure to claim a third championship

HOW COMPETITIVE IS THE MODERN-DAY BTCC?

Average gap in qualifying from the front to the back of the grid (only including representative lap times)

2013	3.896s
2014	4.251s
2015	3.433s
2016	3.995s
2017	2.512s
2018	2.131s

Races settled by less than one second at the flag

2013	7
2014	10
2015	12
2016	11
2017	13
2018	16

Average race winning margin

2013	2.547s
2014	2.284s
2015	1.561s
2016	1.788s
2017	1.792s
2018	1.910s

British Touring Car champion Colin Turkington has broken records this year, but he has set one benchmark which is evidence of just how tough the season has been.

The 36-year-old took the title with the lowest average score across the 10 race meetings since the points system was altered for the 2012 season. He collected an average of 30.4 at each event.

Conversely, in that seven-year period, he also has the record for the most points scored on average by a champion (43.4) across the 10 meetings when he took his second crown in 2014.

"I think the 2018 performance and the statistics go to show just how far the championship has come in that time," says the Portadown man. "In 2014, I won eight races and I was on the podium at every event we went to. In 2018, I won one race, although my podium strike rate was quite good with nine others. It is evidence of the strength in depth of the championship. The cups are

being handed out to a lot more people."

The championship has ramped up in its competitive level in the last five years at least, as the graphs on this page show. The qualifying spread is much less than it used to be, the average winning margins are down and, remarkably, more than half of the 30 rounds in 2018 were settled by one second or less. There were 17 different race winners this year.

That is something series bosses have noticed, and the upper level of ballast has been dropped from 75kg in 2018 down to 54kg for the forthcoming year.

"Four years ago, when the maximum ballast was 45kgs, I wouldn't even have thought about it," explains Turkington, who was saddled with 75kgs going into five meetings in 2018. "But 75kg was a real struggle. You knew you couldn't race with that level of weight on the car. You were just managing the situation, driving around and hoping to pick up a couple of points just waiting until you could shed the ballast for the next race. It was not even fun to be in races like that.

"That is why I found this year so difficult. I wasn't getting the rewards

in terms of the race wins and that means you really have to adjust your mindset to how you approach the championship and how you approach each race weekend.

"People came up to me after it was all over and say 'you've had a good year, you've won the title', and I would think 'did I have a good year? Did I really?' I am not sure it really felt that way – mind you, if I think I have had a bad year and I am champion, how must the others feel?!"

But it was a good year, and Turkington survived the pressure cooker of the traditional final-round showdown. He and Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Avensis driver Tom Ingram went toe-to-toe at Brands Hatch and Turkington prevailed in the penultimate round – more as a result of Ingram failing to land a podium rather than anything the BMW 125i M Sport driver did. Turkington was knocked into the gravel and wasn't able to register a single point.

There was some real emotion from Turkington in the parc ferme area afterwards, as he struggled to hold

back the tears. That was a legacy of the relief at topping the battle he had to wage on track and some of the most turbulent times he had ever been through off it.

His mother Mavis, a regular in the British Touring Car Championship paddock since Colin (and brother Gary) came to race on the mainland in 1999, passed away before the rounds at Oulton Park after battling a long illness.

"The weekends at Thruxton and Oulton Park were the most difficult events of my life," says Turkington candidly. "The situation was grave and I didn't know if I was going to be able to race at Thruxton at all. I could have had to go at any minute. It was hard to cope with and I was living day by day.

"But, once you go to a race meeting, you are locked into it for two days. It is a distraction and you have to put things to one side and it gave us, as a family, something to smile about. After mum passed away, I won at Oulton Park just days later. You can't choose when to win in the BTCC, but that one was special. Fate was on my side.

"My dad and brothers were there,

as well as my family, but it was hard to drive into parc ferme afterwards. That is where the family were waiting to greet me, and it was tough turning up there and mum not being around. In a way, it was a year of firsts for reasons like that."

And it ended up with the ultimate first, the championship trophy for a third time to add to that 2014 triumph and 2009.

The WSR BMW 125i M Sport was fitted with a new engine for the 2017 campaign and attracted factory backing. The hard yards were done at the start of that season getting to understand the new-spec rubber that Dunlop had introduced to the championship, but there weren't very many more steps to be taken ahead of 2018.

"We had four days ahead of the season – and two of those were wet," says Turkington. "We had a small step on the engine, but the job was to maximise everything we had. We needed to be the best prepared we could because we knew the fight would be harder than ever. We didn't have the fastest car at

Photos: Jakob Ebrey Photography



THE THREE CHAMPIONSHIPS



The first title came with the WSR-run BMW 320si

2009 THE FIRST ONE

Team: WSR Car: BMW 320si

Wins: 6 Podiums: 14

Driving the Team RAC-branded WSR BMW 320si, Turkington was in his third year with the rear-wheel-drive machine and it clicked together. The season was not a simple one with huge competition from both the RML-run Chevrolet Lacetti of Jason Plato and the factory Vauxhall Vectra of Fabrizio Giovanardi. The BMW lapped up the strong acceleration zones at Oulton Park and Croft, where he took two wins apiece, but it went down to the wire. With Plato leading the final round, Turkington had to finish at least in the top four to seal the crown. He held his nerve to land his first title.



Turkington managed eight wins over the season

2014 THIRD PLACE IS ENOUGH

Team: WSR Car: BMW 125i M Sport

Wins: 8 Podiums: 19

The eBay Motors-supported car was fully refined in its second year and Turkington was ready to pounce – but once again, Jason Plato was the man who proved to be his biggest nemesis. Turkington again performed his now customary trick of dominating the mid-part of the championship when the series visits the tracks that are most suited to rear-wheel-drive. That laid the foundations, but Plato was keeping the pressure up all the way through. In the showdown at Brands Hatch, Triple Eight Race Engineering MG man Plato was gifted a win by team-mate Sam Tordoff, who adhered to team orders, but Turkington's third position was enough for him to seal a second crown.



The WSR BMW 125i M Sport faced stiff opposition

2018 KEEPING IT TICKING OVER

Team: WSR Car: BMW 125i M Sport

Wins: 1 Podiums: 10

The BMW 125i M Sport driver was quietly optimistic coming into the series, with a developed BMW. The car was not a match for some other rivals, but the experience and guile of Turkington guided him through the pitfalls of the series, which includes success ballast, option tyres and reversed grids. He was boosted when the two drivers who were chasing down the advantage he had built – Tom Ingram (Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Avensis) and Ash Sutton (Team BMR Subaru Levorg) – were both booted out of the top two spots at Knockhill for ride height infringements. He was nervous despite taking a 34-point lead into the finale, but when Ingram failed to finish on the podium in race two at Brands Hatch, a third crown was his.

TEST YET TO CLAIM THE BTCC



Suspension damage ruined Turkington's Snetterton meeting



Oulton Park brought a highly emotional victory

any point across the season, but it was how we played the game that got us to where we were at the end of September."

Although the team boxed clever with the German hatchback, there were three weekends where Turkington had a particularly tough time, and one of those was at the second meeting of the year at Donington. Technical gremlins restricted him to just six points.

"Between the opening six races at Brands Hatch and Donington Park, I had effectively only done three of them," he explains. "We'd had a problem in race two at Brands, and twice at Donington. It would have been very easy to get your head down at that stage, but the good thing about this championship is that it does give you the chances to play your way back into the picture. Given the factors of the ballast, reversed grids and tyres, you can come back, although it seemed like a long way. I was lucky it happened so early on in the season, and I knew I had the tracks which really suit me and the car – like Oulton Park and Croft – yet to come."

That resilience of mind is something

that Turkington says has been one of the major high points of his campaign. He is a driver who works extremely hard away from the circuit filing reports on the car to the team and assessing all aspects of his performance.

"At the end of every year, I sit down and analyse how I have driven and where I can improve," says Turkington. "Each year, I can see I am getting a little bit better. I am not sure that is in terms of raw pace but the other areas, the areas you learn to control with more experience. I am getting better at managing the car over a race weekend and how to claw yourself back into it after a setback."

And Turkington is keen to gain more race mileage in 2019, although his exact programme has yet to be determined. Given the level of success he has enjoyed in the British Touring Car Championship, and the profile it has given him since he returned in 2013, it would be hard to see him walking away, even if it did offer him the biggest challenge of his life in the past 12 months. ■



Race two at Brands GP was torrid, but he still took the title



Donington was a nadir for Turkington

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INSIGHT

Photos: Gary Hawkins

After winning a record fifth UK Legends title, John Mickel still has his sights on the USA. By Stefan Mackley

MICKEL'S AMERICAN DREAM



Mickel is still aiming to race full-time in America



Record breaker: Five titles now for Mickel

History was made this year in the UK National Legends Cars Championship as John Mickel became the first driver to win five titles in the category, which incredibly was his fourth success on the bounce.

That's no small feat in a series where more than 30 cars regularly compete, across six races over a weekend and with randomised grids. "If people say it's easy to win this championship then they want to come and have a go because we do six races in a weekend and you've got to keep that consistency going," says the 47-year-old, whose first UK Legends title came in 2001.

"Week in, week out, making sure the car is reliable, keeping it on the track, there's a lot of work involved and I don't think people realise how hard it is.

"Some championships only do one race or two races a weekend but we have six."

Drivers from the other series looking in might believe that Mickel's domination is a sign that the series is competitively weak or that numbers are dwindling. But, in fact, the series, which will celebrate 25 years in 2019, is proving to be just as competitive and popular as ever.

The final meeting of the year –

always a good barometer of how healthy a series is – at Brands Hatch in early November attracted 32 entries, while Mickel's title was sealed that same weekend as opposed to several rounds before.

The series also shared five of its nine rounds this year with the highly-popular British Truck Racing Championship, which attracts thousands of spectators to its meetings.

Mickel isn't surprised that the series and cars – five-eighth scale models based on pre-war Ford, Chevrolet and Dodge bodies with 122bhp, a locked rear differential and no aerodynamics – continue to be so popular.

"They've got loads of power and no grip, it's not like they're slicks and wings where you put your foot down and it goes where they want it to go," says Mickel, who is also a five-time Legends World champion.

"We're on the knife-edge all the time with them and there's a fine line between keeping it on the track or putting it off the track.

"That's why they're so fun to drive, they've just got bags of power over the ground and no grip at all.

"And that's why I think anybody who goes from Legends into a different formula really does shine because they've got the car control and skill to handle something that does handle when they move into it."

Racing has always been in Mickel's

blood, his dad Brian was a local stock car racer when he was growing up, and by the age of 10 Mickel was competing in Ministox.

He was Superstox World and European champion on short ovals when he was 18-years-old before eventually making the move into Legends in 1998, as "that was the only thing we could afford moving up to".

He founded Mickel Motorsport in 2000 with his wife, and former Legends driver, Lisa, and his first UK Legends title followed the next year, as well becoming Legends World champion for the first time and the inaugural title holder in the Rockingham-based series ASCAR in the same year.

While Legends is where Mickel has made a name for himself it's in the United States of America where he's been looking to make a break for more than a decade.

Having done several races in the States, he explains it's more than just racing over there.

"The Americans understand motorsport I think. They do so many different classes of racing, it's just not racing it's a show and I think that's what the Legends have done," says Mickel, who took Legends World Championship honours in 2001, '15 and World Series success in 2001, '15, '17.

"It's not just about racing, it's the whole show and festival at the meeting, getting the crowd involved

and the excitement of it all. Like we have the Trucks with the Legends, we get 30,000 or 40,000 people there.

"We're not just drivers: we're showmen really where we've got to put on a show for the crowd and get them excited and the more they get excited the better the crowd gets.

"That was the great attraction about Rockingham, the ASCAR was going because we had big crowds and if we can get big crowds back to motorsport then it makes everybody's life easier."

He made his NASCAR Truck Series debut in 2005 at Texas Motor Speedway and the following season contested the final five rounds of the championship.

In 2010 he also won the inaugural ASA Freestate 500 race in South Africa and in the process became the first Englishman to win a NASCAR-sanctioned race outside of the USA.

But ultimately a lack of budget held him back from competing further, but it hasn't stopped him eyeing a possible return to the States in 2019 for a full season of racing.

"I still want to do a year in America, it's just finding the sponsor to get us there but I'm not getting any younger," admits Mickel.

"It would be Trucks or Xfinity [Series], if we can raise the budget to do that for a season and then when I'm old and grey I can hang up my crash helmet and boots and say 'you

know what, at least I've had a go'.

"We've done four or five races out there but because you're new and you jump straight into it you get two races underneath your belt and you just get into the swing of things and then you're coming home."

Even if the American dream doesn't come true Mickel still plans to return to UK Legends next year to try and claim what he refers to as the "drive for five" titles in a row.

But he's under no illusions that the task of winning another title isn't becoming any easier.

"There's a lot of good drivers coming through that have raced on the ovals. I've got to up my game and I'm in the process of doing that because I think I've been a bit lax last year, maybe the last two years," he says.

"Hopefully that push will be enough to give me the edge but there's a lot of good drivers coming through.

"You can't put your finger on one, I could probably reel off 10 who possibly, on their day, could put it all together and win the championship."

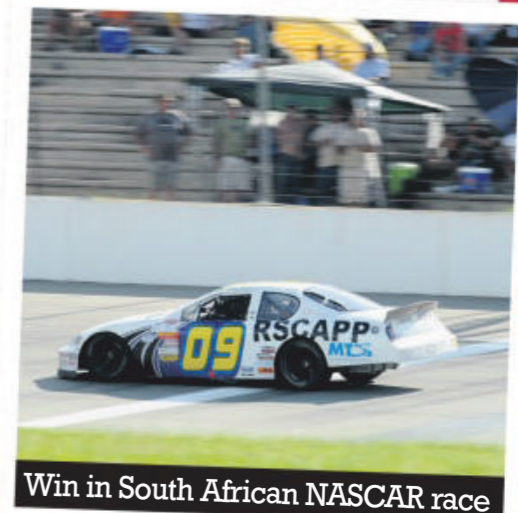
The fact that the UK Legends Cars championship record holder is already predicting how difficult next season will be tells the uninitiated all they need to know about how competitive one of the UK's most popular series is. ■



UK Legends is going strong after 24 years



Mickel has raced in NASCAR Truck Series and wants to return



Win in South African NASCAR race

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FEATURE

Photos: Mike Hills Speed Images, Jakob Ebrey

Behind every great BTCC driver, there is a dedicated partner. By Matt James

Those moments when a driver stands on the top step of the British Touring Car Championship rostrum mark the summit of years of effort that has gone in on and off the circuit, and it is not just about the hours spent in the workshop or the miles of testing and preparation.

Whatever happens on the track, drivers will then go home to their partners and families. The champagne is nowhere to be seen and life has to go on – whether the weekend before has been strong or a disaster.

Drivers' partners have many different roles over the course of a race event and there has to be a strategy as to how to cope with the highs and lows.

There are several roles the girls perform at a meeting. For example, champion Colin Turkington's wife Louise looks after the commercial and performance aspect of her BMW-driving husband over the course of the event.

Louise explains: "I am the eyes and ears on the ground and I have no hidden agenda other than to have Colin's best interests. Wherever that takes me, or whoever I have to speak to or whatever I have to do, that's for Colin."

"It's up to me to remove distractions and manage his energies so that his complete focus is on his own performance."

The Turkingtons have been together since 1999 and the relationship between them has evolved over the seasons that they have spent at the forefront of the BTCC.

Louise says: "It is not easy but it is instinctive. I understand what he needs and that helps because I am as passionate about the end result as he is. It has almost become like a kindred spirit. If we communicate or we don't communicate, we are both on the same page."

Toyota Avensis driver Tom Ingram was the runner-up in the championship in 2018, and his partner Laura Drysdale is a constant at every race meeting. However, she is rarely in the pitlane, as she has a hands-on role with the running of the Speedworks Motorsport team in the hospitality unit.

"It is actually a treat that Tom is busy when he is at a race meeting: it's awesome," she says. "We are a bit like ships in the night. Tom is one person, and I have anywhere between 70 to 100 people to look after in hospitality. They are my focus for the day."

It seems leaving a driver to it is a popular way of coping. Three-time race winner Rob Austin's wife Lucy says the race weekend doesn't only start when the Alfa Romeo driver turns up at a race circuit.

"The run up to the race weekend can be quite up and down," explains Lucy. "Rob could be a bit stressed or he could be looking forward to it. There are a whole range of emotions going through him. He likes to be prepared. Everything has to be right – so I kind of just leave him to it."

"Over the race weekend, even if he has won a race or been on the podium, I am not there. It is the engineer, mechanics, it is the team manager: it is all those people who



The Turkington family celebrate

THE POWER BEHIND THE ON-TRACK GLORY

A Monday tradition for Ingram and Drysdale: Llama farm...

Alfa Romeo BTCC racer Rob Austin and his wife Lucy

have helped him to get there that should be there. It's not me really: they are the ones who get their hands dirty and do the hard work."

There are different approaches as to how to deal with the driver on race day, there has to be a coping mechanism. If the racer has had a bad weekend and had a dent in their title hopes, it can be tough for the partner.

Laura Drysdale explains that she has ironed out the peaks and troughs that Ingram might have experienced over the campaign, particularly if it went badly.

"He used to get very overemotional and upset," explains Laura. "But I didn't sign up to deal with that sh*t, so I had to stop it. I couldn't deal with him being this prima donna, I didn't want that. I started to train him: I used a distraction technique. We would find the nearest McDonalds to the circuit. Big Mac, chicken nuggets, fries – usually a milkshake too. That sorts it out and then we can have a conversation."

Then, on the flip side, there's the

joy of a strong weekend. There were many of those for Ingram in 2018, and again, it is another food outlet that feels the benefit.

"After a good weekend, it is podium pizza," says Laura. "As soon as we get out of the track. Then on Monday, we will go out and do an activity together as a couple, usually involving animals. An animal farm somewhere: we both love llamas. They are cuddly, approachable and nice – just ask [BTCC boss and former llama owner] Alan Gow."

Louise, too, knows that a tough weekend can have an impact but the Turkingtons have a more pragmatic attitude to the rollercoaster rides of motorsport – especially reflecting on Donington Park in April, where the three races yielded just six points after some mechanical woes.

"It is instinctive. You just know what to do," says Louise. "But it's funny you mention Donington. The first thing I thought was 'sh*t, I don't know where this chapter is in my manual [of how to look after Colin]!' It was uncharted territory – and

how do you find a positive in that situation? Because everything that could possibly have gone wrong. But you have to try and keep the focus on the end goal. You can't get pulled down by the lows and you can't ride the highs too high."

"He responds to empathy and tough love. I will tell him it as it is. The facts. I am not afraid to tell him what the situation is: I won't pussyfoot around him. He responds well to a positive attitude, not sympathy. He really has got his head together and it's up to me to compliment that. He does the same with me. We work really well together."

Lucy Austin explains that her husband's attitude after a bad weekend can take a while to defrost, but he generally recovers quickly.

Lucy says: "The good thing about Rob is that if he has had a sh*t weekend, he will have an hour to himself where he feels down or whatever and gathers his thoughts, but then he will just get on with it. He will quickly start becoming positive again."

"By Monday morning, he is absolutely fine. He puts it behind him, he thinks about the weekend and looks at what's happened and he just gets on with it. Rob just gets on with life and moves on. It is about what's next."

Louise Turkington says that the highpoints along the way are just staging posts along the season-long campaign. It is not until the final chequered flag of the season and the final points totals have been counted up that the couple can truly enjoy what they've been through.

"Then the emotions come out," says Louise. "That is the finish line for us. And that's when you start to see what you've done and how far you've come."

And while it was Colin Turkington who stood on the top step of the rostrum at Brands Hatch to collect the silverware, it wasn't long before he was joined by Louise and his boys Adam and Lewis. That is one of the unseen measures of what goes into making a successful driver. ■



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CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Photos: LAT, Jakob Ebrey, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

WORLD OF MOTORSPORT QUIZ

ROUND 1: GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

- 1 Toyota GB is returning to the British Touring Car Championship next year, but what model will its new challenger be?
- 2 National Hot Rod organisers have recently unveiled the calendar for next year. Name the two new venues that feature on it.
- 3 Williams finished 10th in the constructors' championship in 2018. Name the two Formula 1 seasons since 2010 when it was ninth.
- 4 Who won their second BriSCA F1 world championship this season?
- 5 Esapekka Lappi is moving to Citroen next season, but what was his best result in his final World Rally Championship campaign with Toyota?
- 6 Why was Fernando Alonso handed three penalties in his final Formula 1 race in Abu Dhabi?
- 7 DS has split with the Virgin team for the 2018/19 Formula E season. Which team has it now partnered with?
- 8 Next year's Chinese Grand Prix is set to be the 1000th Formula 1 race. Where and when was the 900th?
- 9 Jenson Button won the Super GT title as a rookie. Which ex-Formula 1 driver was the last rookie to win the championship?
- 10 A visit from which high profile figure led to the Galway Summer Stages rally being rescheduled this year?



Lappi was unable to win a WRC round in 2018



DS has split with the Virgin team in Formula E

ROUND 2: MULTIPLE CHOICE



There's been lots of Team Hard BTCC drivers, but how many?

- 1 How many different drivers did Team Hard run in the British Touring Car Championship this year?
A) 6 B) 8 C) 10
- 2 Who finished runner-up in the Formula 2 standings this year?
A) Lando Norris B) Alex Albon C) Nyck de Vries
- 3 Out of all the 2018 World Rally Championship drivers to have previously won an event, which has the longest current win drought?
A) Dani Sordo B) Mads Ostberg C) Hayden Paddon
- 4 How many of the last 20 World Rallycross rounds has Johan Kristoffersson won?
A) 15 B) 17 C) 19



Kristoffersson: regular wins



Raikkonen's last win in 2013

- 5 Kimi Raikkonen took his first Formula 1 win since 2013 this year. How many races did he start between those wins?
A) 111 B) 115 C) 119
- 6 Out of the initial 2018/19 Formula E driver line-ups, how many teams don't have at least one ex-Formula 1 driver?
A) 0 B) 2 C) 4

BIG CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

Down

- 1 Fernando Alonso's best result in F1 this season (5)
- 2 Lake _ proposed Northern Irish circuit that hit funding trouble this year (7)
- 3 Billy _ the winner of this year's National Hot Rod World Final (4)
- 4 Andrew _ the 2018 Scottish Rally champion (9)
- 6 Team the 2017/18 Formula E champion Jean-Eric Vergne drove for (9)
- 7 The circuit that will be visited twice by the BTCC next season following Rockingham's demise (8)
- 10 Circuit where BTCC champion Colin Turkington took his only win of 2018 (6, 4)
- 12 Mick _ winner of European Formula 3 title (10)
- 14 The new BRC opener for 2019 following a calendar revamp (8)
- 15 _ Chambers, the new chief executive of governing body Motorsport UK (4)

Across

- 5 Number of consecutive WRC titles won by a driver called Sebastien (7)
- 8 Manufacturer that won the WRC teams' title this year (6)
- 9 The name given to the WEC's new 2020 rules concept (8)
- 11 Number of laps behind the winner the first non-Toyota car finished at Le Mans this year (6)
- 13 Mercedes' new reserve driver after he failed to find an F1 seat for 2019 (7, 4)
- 16 Number of different drivers to win a WRC round with Hyundai this year (3)
- 17 Name of the driver to deny Johan Kristoffersson a clean sweep of WRX wins this year (9, 4)
- 18 Anthoine _ the last ever GP3 champion (6)
- 19 The 2018 British Rallycross title winner: Mark _ (7)
- 20 The winner of both the BRC and BTRDA titles this season (4, 7)

Answers to the quiz and crossword will be found in the January 2 issue of *Motorsport News*



CARTOON CAPTION COMPETITION



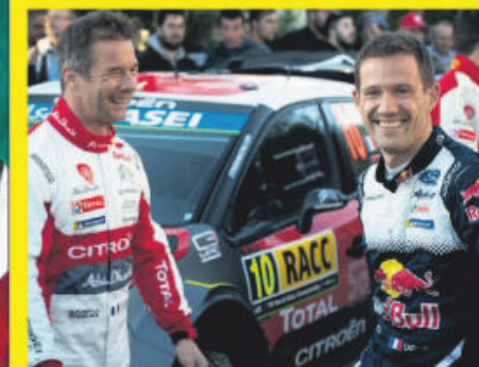
Email your captions to mike.stokoe@motorsport-news.co.uk and the best ones will be published in our January 9 issue. Mike Stokoe's favourite will also receive the cartoon with their own caption in a frame as a prize.

PICTURE CAPTION FUN



What are Ricciardo and Verstappen thinking in Mexico? What's amused the WRC legends?

Just for fun. The best answers will be printed in January 9. Captions to letters@motorsport-news.co.uk



PREDICTIONS: ALMANAC

MN's resident medium predicts what may be on the cards for 2019. By **Chris Tylball**



Hamilton combines motor racing with gymnastics at Silverstone



Unfortunately, this Volvo was parked up because it sounded ruff



Every single BTCC car here took a victory during the 2019 season



Street fighters hit the boulevard in the United States of America



Hot Rod racers:
Ready for school

WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR 2019?



Trumped up charge? Brands Hatch fights off a takeover bid



The BTCC winter season was not a hit with race spectators

JANUARY

In the build up to the season, Sebastien Loeb finds he has time on his hands and enters the darts world championship at Frimley Green. He topples the men who have been on the scene for years and beats Michael van Gerwen in the final.

Given the struggles the World Rallycross Championship has had attracting entries, it decides the only solution is to introduce a new top class for specially-modified old FIA European Formula 3-spec cars. The Dallaras feature a number of changes to make them suitable for the discipline including strengthened suspension and new tyres.

FEBRUARY

With a spare weekend in his calendar, Loeb enters the opening round of the World Superbike Championship at Phillip Island in Australia. He wins in front of reigning champion Jonathan Rea.

The opening round of the British Rally Championship, the Cambrian Rally, is cancelled at the last minute when it is discovered that paperwork was not filled in properly ahead of the event. A replacement is not scheduled.

The British Racing and Sports Car Club feels it has spotted another gap in the market and announces a new series for the old FIA European F3 spec cars. Organisers believe there are not enough options for teams wishing to continue racing the Dallara machines.

MARCH

Citroen picks up backing from the Saint Kitts and Nevis government and decides to enter a third car in the World Rally Championship. Short on

fresh talent, it hires Petter Solberg to spearhead the attack. The Norwegian takes a sensational victory.

Lewis Hamilton dominates the Australian Grand Prix for Mercedes. Team-mate Valtteri Bottas struggles to get a handle on the set-up of the car, and finishes more than one minute behind. McLaren struggles with its new car and Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz finish laps behind.

The West Cork Rally, a round of the BRC, is axed when a mystery virus strikes down the organising team. A replacement cannot be found.

Another gap in his schedule allows Loeb to take part in the British round of the Motocross GP season. He leads home Dutch ace Jeffrey Herlings to claim the trophy.

APRIL

Three different drivers take wins in the opening rounds of the British Touring Car Championship at Brands Hatch.

Hamilton takes his third win of the F1 season in China. However, team-mate Bottas once again has issues getting to grips with the Mercedes. He finishes outside the points. McLaren struggles with its new car – it blames a dodgy batch of cup cakes in the staff canteen for the trouble.

The Pirelli International Rally is cancelled at the last minute as a rare species of butterfly is found in the forests where the event is planned to run. A replacement cannot be organised.

There are three new round winners in the BTCC at the second meeting

of the season at Donington Park.

There is a sensational win on Rally Argentina for Carlos Sainz, who has been drafted in to pilot the Saint Kitts and Nevis-backed Citroen.

MAY

Hamilton dominates the Monaco Grand Prix, while Bottas is once again at a loss to unlock pace from the car. He fails to qualify. McLaren joins the Finn in failing to qualify. It blames problems with the wind, which is apparently "blowing in the wrong direction".

Sensation on the Giro d'Italia bike race as Loeb dominates the event to take a famous win – ahead of team-mate Chris Froome. It means he misses the final games of the Premier League, where he has made several appearances for Liverpool, but remains the division's top scorer.

JUNE

The Saint Kitts and Nevis government are delighted after Rally Portugal when Didier Auriol takes the win on a one-off appearance for Citroen in a C3.

Hamilton strides to victory in the Austrian Grand Prix at a canter. Bottas has just finished the previous French Grand Prix. He is still in front of the McLarens, though.

At Croft, after 12 rounds of the British Touring Car Championship, three fresh drivers scale the rostrum meaning there has been a dozen winners.

The Ypres Rally is axed from the BRC schedule when Brexit negotiations mean that none of the UK crews have their entries accepted. A replacement is not found.

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, mkpics.net, Gary Hawkins, Colin Casserley



Who threw away the keys? Jakob Ebrey enjoys the high life...



Dan Cammish loves Matt James' Tyson Fury impression



Nick Tandy: no fan of number two



If only I had a windscreen wiper...



Rolling back the years



Confusion: what am I supposed to do now?

JULY
After securing a last-minute drive, Loeb dominates the National Hot Rod World Final from the very last spot on the grid.

Fresh from Foxhall Heath, Loeb beats Novak Djokovic to win the Mens' singles final at Wimbledon.

Yet another win for Hamilton at Silverstone. He finishes a lap clear of anyone else, and finished the 52 laps well clear of the rest – especially Bottas, who is still taking part in Free Practice 1.

AUGUST
On Rally Germany, one-off driver Miki Biasion stands on the top of the rostrum after hauling the Saint Kitts and Nevis Citroen to glory.

TOCA chiefs feel there is a growing market for old FIA European Formula 3 cars and announce at the last-minute that a new series for the machines will support the British Touring Car Championship in 2020. A statement says there had been a clamour from teams moaning about a lack of realistic options for continuing to field the cars.

The Ulster Rally, a round of the BRC, is cancelled because the weather is too warm and the Tarmac roads have melted. A replacement can't be found.

SEPTEMBER
Hamilton wraps up the championship with a win in the Italian Grand Prix. Bottas is still on the beach enjoying the mid-season break. McLaren blames Honda for its terrible performance, until it is pointed out that the Japanese powerplants no longer motivate the British cars.

All competitors in the British Rally Championship finish on zero points when the Galloway Hills Rally is axed as Scotland is in the middle of an independence vote. It is not replaced. Bosses of the BRC announce a calendar for the 2020 season involving no rounds at all.

The BTCC breaks all records at Knockhill, with three more new winners at the head of the pack. That means 24 different racers have tasted the champagne.

OCTOBER
Juha Kankkunen makes a sensational one-off appearance for Citroen on Wales Rally GB and takes glory in the Saint Kitts and Nevis-supported C3.

After the final rounds of the BTCC at Brands, the series records an extraordinary 30 different race winners from the 30 races. All drivers have equal points and every single entrant is crowned champion.

NOVEMBER
In another dominant performance, Hamilton claims the Brazilian Grand Prix at Interlagos. Meanwhile, in Finland, Bottas is in the departure lounge at Helsinki airport ready to board a plane to Sao Paulo. McLaren blames "evil spirits" in its pitlane garage for its appalling performance.

The British Hillclimb Championship reveals that it will be adding a new class to its ranks for limited FIA European Formula 3 spec cars. Series bosses claim teams have been struggling to find places to race the cars and were only too happy to incorporate a class dedicated to F3.

DECEMBER
After a 10-week process, Loeb claims £250,000 from Alan Sugar after winning The Apprentice.

Bottas wins a celebrity version of BBC's Mastermind. He takes glory due to the fact he has made absolutely no passes.

Loeb claims the number one slot at Christmas in the UK after winning the X-Factor.



Ouch – that's gotta hurt. Putting the boot in at Brands Hatch in 2018



Spedworth boss Deane Wood shows off a new short oval category

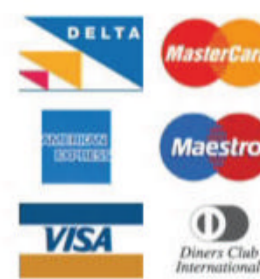


Paul di Resta, Jamie Green and Gary Paffett prepare to take on Loeb...

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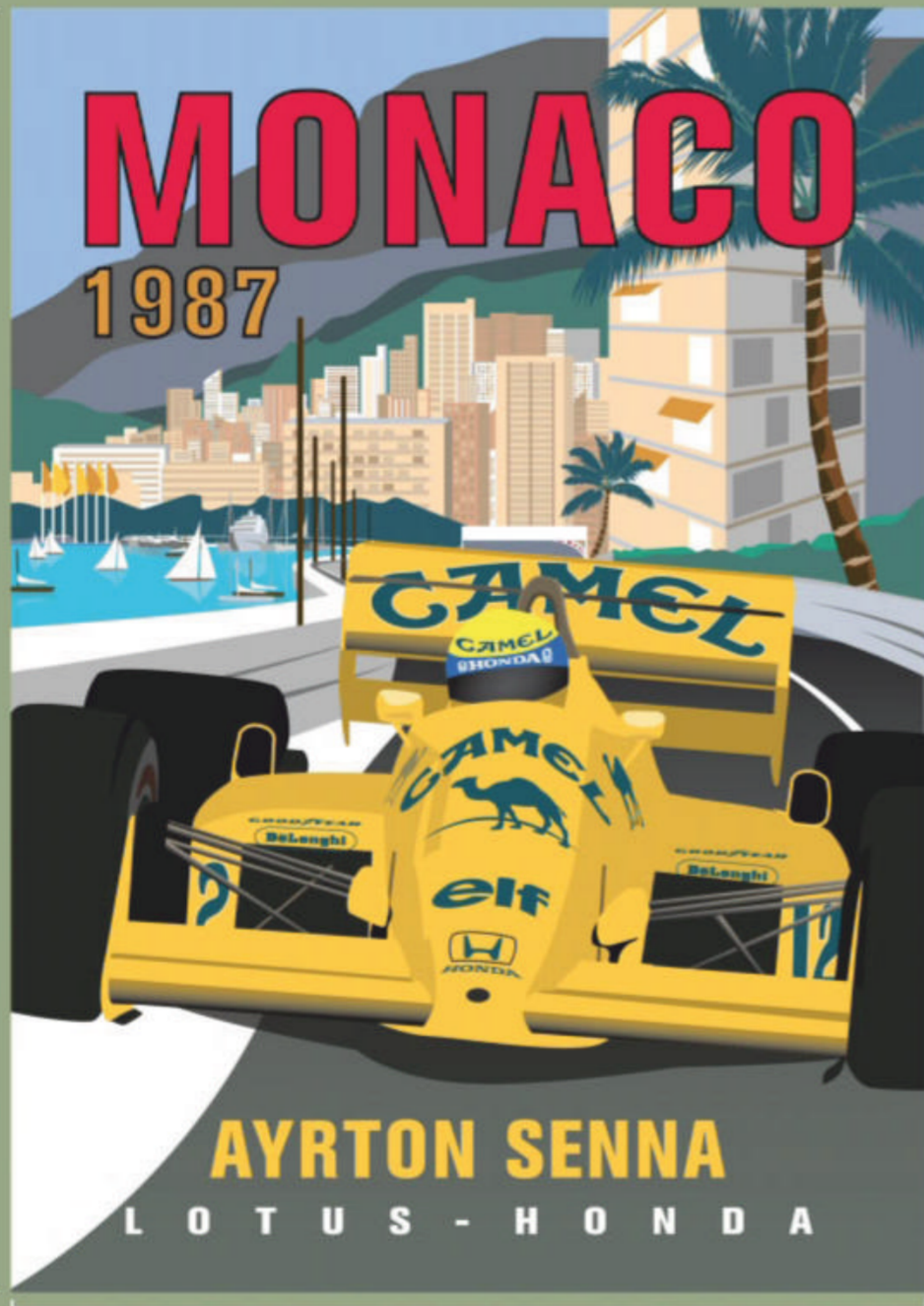
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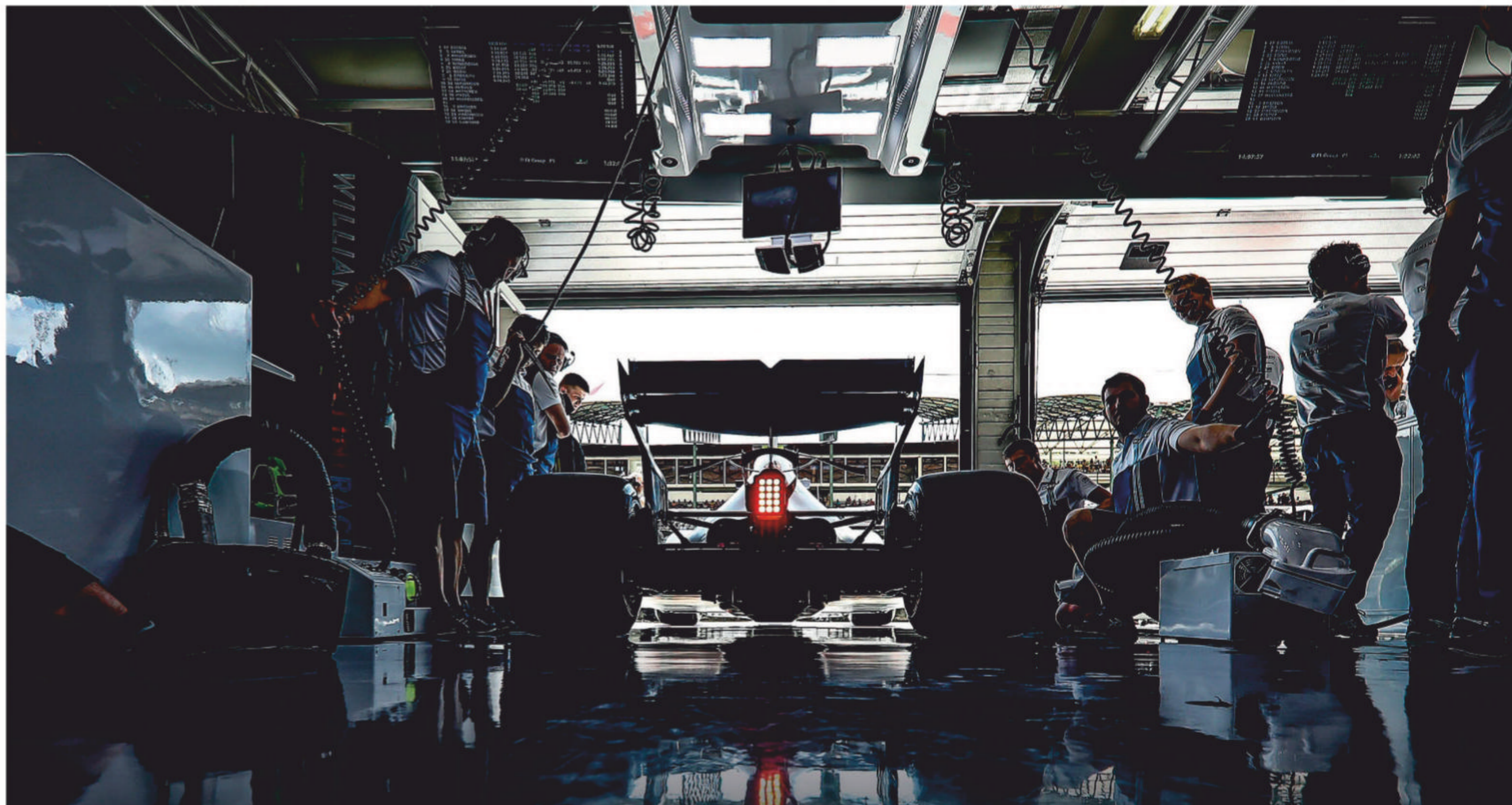
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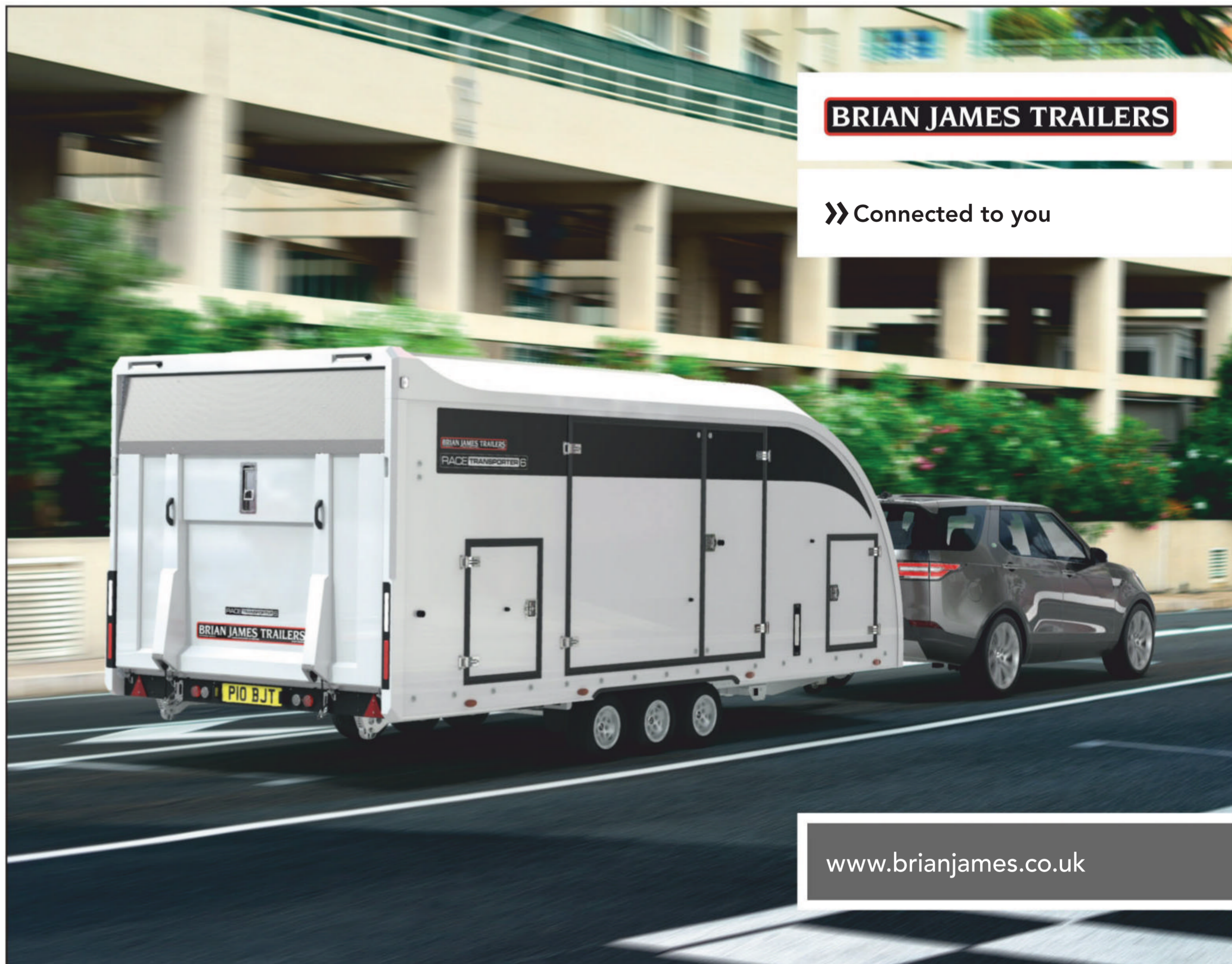
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