

**CHRISTMAS
DOUBLE ISSUE
156-PAGE SPECIAL**

WRC How Ogier
beat his biggest
challenge

F1 Alonso's
greatest
drives



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DECEMBER 20-27 2018

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RANKING THE BEST DRIVERS OF 2018

Few things create more debate at Autosport HQ than putting together our top 50 drivers of the year list. Comparing people racing (or rallying) vastly different machines in different parts of the world is *almost* impossible, but the 2018 edition is our 17th consecutive try.

When putting the list together, we take into account a range of criteria, including the competitiveness of the championships involved, the quality of the machinery at each driver's disposal and the level of experience of those behind the wheel.

Lewis Hamilton has now topped our end-of-season list 'only' four times, compared to his five Formula 1 world titles, but that puts him ahead of three-time winners Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel. As Edd Straw explains on page 42, putting him first this year was an easy decision. Rarely has a driver been so far ahead of his peers. Surely the gap will be closer in 2019?!

Behind Hamilton, the list was much harder to agree on (p19). Just how do you compare, for example, Fernando Alonso's campaigns across F1 and the World Endurance Championship with rising World Rally star Ott Tänak? We're sure you won't agree with everything on our list, but hopefully you will find it a good basis for debate during the festive season.

It's not all about the top 50. This bumper issue also includes an account of the epic WRC title fight, a rallycross track test, and an entertaining look at motorsport's imposters by Gary Watkins. Plus, we explain how BMW kicked off Formula E's new era with victory.

Which just leaves me to say merry Christmas! See you in 2019.

• While you're sharing your views with us on the top 50, there's still time to get your vote in for F1's greatest era (launched in the December 13 issue). Please let us know when you think F1 was best by emailing autosport@autosport.com.



Kevin Turner

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LOEB LEAVES THE FRENCH

WRC

The unthinkable has happened: Sebastien Loeb has left the PSA Group and joined another manufacturer. Actually, the unthinkable came when he was shoved out of Citroen three years ago as an unwanted World Touring Car Championship driver. But now, with no PSA contract in his pocket, he was forced to go out and find work. Unsurprisingly, it didn't take long.

Loeb, a man as fiercely French as any Alsatian, will be driving a German-built South Korean car in next year's World Rally Championship. He's signed for Hyundai Motorsport until the end of 2020, when he'll be nearing his 47th birthday.

Not since he nearly joined Volkswagen in 2011 has there been such ruffling of French feathers. Seven years ago, such a move was laughed off as impossible.

Just hours after Loeb signed what would be his final WRC deal with Citroen, we asked PSA Peugeot Citroen managing director Jean-Marc Gales how close he thought Loeb had come to signing for Volkswagen, his other option for 2012.

Barely able to contain his disgust, Gales said: "It was inconceivable for us to let him go to Volkswagen. His relation to Citroen is symbiotic. I always say Sebastien Loeb and Citroen is like Paris and the Eiffel

Tower — they belong together."

From last week, Loeb nailed his colours to the Namsan Tower in central Seoul. The deal is one of complete convenience. Loeb needs to be busy in the absence of a Citroen seat in the WRC or a Peugeot for him to bang doors with his new rallycross mates, and Hyundai needs a leg-up in its efforts to land a world title.

But the nine-time champion says it was the emotions of his October success on Rally Spain that convinced him to tackle six rallies in an i20 Coupe WRC — his biggest WRC programme since retiring from the full-time WRC in 2012. "Winning at the Rally of Spain this season reignited my desire to continue competing at the very front of WRC," he said. "Joining Hyundai will give us a fresh challenge and one that I can't wait to tackle."

Hyundai team manager Alain Penasse told Autosport that Loeb's battle to overcome Hyundai's own Thierry Neuville was one of the factors that convinced him

"HE SAW WHAT THE CAR WAS CAPABLE OF, AND HOW HARD HE HAD TO GO"



New team-mates: Loeb and co-driver Elena (centre) with Neuville (right) and Nicolas Gilsoul

Solberg out as rallycross enters crisis

WORLD RALLYCROSS

The World Rallycross Championship was plunged further into crisis last week with the news that PSRX Volkswagen Sweden would sit out next season – leaving champion Johan Kristoffersson without a car to bid for his third successive title.

Petter Solberg's squad has followed Olsbergs Ford, Mattias Ekström's EKS Audi team and the Peugeot factory squad out of the door for next year.

Team principal Pernilla Solberg – wife of Petter – left nobody in any doubt as to the reason for the decision to take a 2019 sabbatical. "It's really sad," she said, "but the declining numbers of teams in the series makes it impossible for us to remain for 2019."

Volkswagen Motorsport director Sven Smeets echoed those sentiments, but offered hope for the future – providing that future is electric.

"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," he said.

"Volkswagen Motorsport will keep a close eye on any developments towards the electrification of the sport of rallycross. From the beginning we have been supporters of this initiative and we continue to be interested."

The series promoter has until March 2019 to convince four manufacturers – or three and one specialist supplier, such as Prodrive – to commit to eWRX in 2021.

Kristoffersson, one of motorsport's most dominant competitors through 2018 (he won 11 from 12 WRX rounds) said: "Obviously I'm really sad not to be competing in my fantastic Polo next season, but I completely understand the reasons why this decision has come. If we don't have enough people to race, what can we do?"

DAVID EVANS



AND JOINS HYUNDAI

of the team's ability. "He saw what the car was capable of in Spain," he said. "He knew how hard he had to go [to beat Neuville]."

Loeb will, however, face a race against time to get to the first round in Monte Carlo. After finishing the Dakar Rally in Peru, he will fly directly to the French Alps for a test to get his first taste of the i20 Coupe WRC. After a debrief with the team, he and co-driver Daniel Elena go straight into the recce and shakedown.

"There is no other solution – he has to test the weekend before the event," said Penasse. "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."

Loeb's arrival in the team means an end to Hayden Paddon's five-year term with Hyundai. The Kiwi – the only driver other than Neuville to have won a WRC round in an i20 – politely turned down the offer of a single outing at Rally Finland, the team's Achilles' heel. "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," said Paddon. "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."

The exit of Paddon – who will most likely spend the year competing in New Zealand – means Loeb will share the third Hyundai with former Citroën team-mate Dani Sordo. With Loeb competing on the first two rallies – Monte Carlo and Sweden – Sordo will contest at least seven WRC rounds, starting from Mexico. It remains to be seen which of the two of them takes up the challenge of Finland. Neither will be overly keen, having no recent experience of the WRC's fastest stages.

Hyundai's last-minute Loeb inclusion all but concludes team line-ups for 2019. Only M-Sport remains unclear, and the British team will seek an extension to the FIA's Friday (December 21) registration date as it chases funds to continue what would be a 23-year run in the WRC.

Team principal Malcolm Wilson said: "I don't think people really understand how close [to not competing] we are. 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 we're working flat-out 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."

DAVID EVANS



Sirotkin tests DTM Audi for new WRT squad



DTM

Will Williams Formula 1 refugee Sergey Sirotkin race in the DTM with Audi next season? That was the series' burning question last week when the Russian unexpectedly joined the rookie test at Jerez.

Sirotkin joined the fray with WRT, the Belgian squad that is entering a pair of Audis in the DTM next season in addition to the six works cars. Formula 3 European Championship podium finisher Jonathan Aberdein is thought to be almost a cert for one car – and the South African, whose father Chris was a works Audi driver, racked up more than double the number of laps of any other Audi tester. Ferdinand Habsburg was to be the other WRT pilot in the test,

but he switched at the last minute to the HWA Mercedes line-up, and was replaced by fellow F3 race winner Sacha Fenestraz.

"I watched the DTM even as a child, so I was incredibly excited about the test," said Sirotkin, who completed 91 laps. "Being able to sit in an RS5 DTM was a unique experience, but also pretty tricky. I hadn't found the perfect feel for the car by the end of my stint. I've never driven a race car before that comes close to the RS5 DTM – the closest I may have come to it was in Formula 3. The engineers and the mechanics supported me as best they could and shortened the time for me to familiarise myself as much as possible."

Team Rosberg also ran an Audi in the test, with triple Le Mans 24 Hours winner

Benoit Treluyer, Porsche Supercup starlet Mattia Drudi, World Rallycross ace Andreas Bakkerud and WTCR racer Frederic Vervisch at the wheel.

Mercedes, which has exited the DTM, ignored the test as far as PR was concerned, raising speculation that the HWA test was a tryout for its tie-up with the R-Motorsport Aston Martin project for 2019. Apart from Habsburg, F3/GP3 race winners Jake Hughes and Jake Dennis (who is contracted to R-Motorsport) and German Carrera Cup champion Thomas Preining drove.

BMW ran what is said to be a shootout for its final DTM slot for 2019, with Nicky Catsburg, Mikkel Jensen, Nick Yelloly and Sheldon van der Linde at the wheel.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Monza aims to make circuit faster

FORMULA 1

Monza is weighing up the removal of its chicanes and a reprofiling of the second Lesmo corner as part of a proposed €100million 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, Angelo Sticchi Damiani, the president of Italian racing federation the ACI, has revealed a host of desired changes.

According to *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 three chicanes – most likely the second – and open up the second Lesmo, as it was before its 1994 modification.

The track would be widened, while the addition of new access roads and a new main grandstand, as well as the renovation of the old banking, have been proposed.

Damiani suggests that full workable banking (right) could make Monza a unique attraction with, in theory, a 10km circuit. The cost of the project has been costed at €100m, but Damiani said: "The money will be found."

**JONATHAN NOBLE
AND FRANCO NUGNES**



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IN THE HEADLINES

BOTTAS GOES ARCTIC

Mercedes Formula 1 star Valtteri Bottas is to contest next month's Arctic Rally. Bottas, who has never rallied before, will drive a Ford Fiesta RS WRC and be co-driven by Timo Rautiainen, who navigated Marcus Gronholm to his two World Rally crowns. Fellow Finnish F1 luminaries Keke Rosberg, Mika Hakkinen, Kimi Raikkonen and Heikki Kovalainen have also competed on the event.

VILLENEUVE'S RETURN

Jacques Villeneuve, the 1997 F1 world champion, is planning a full season of racing in 2019 – in the NASCAR Euro Series. The 47-year-old Canadian, who recently took part in a test at Franciacorta in Italy, will drive a Go FAS Racing Ford Mustang.

COLLARD LOSES DRIVE

British Touring Car Championship veteran Rob Collard is assessing his options after being ousted from the WSR BMW line-up for 2019. Collard, who had an outbroken run of nine years with the team, has been replaced by Tom Oliphant, who contested his rookie season in '18 in a Ciceley Mercedes. Another BTCC recruit for next year is Jake Hill, who will drive an Audi S3 for the new Trade Price Cars squad, overseen by AmD Tuning.

BECKMANN'S TOP F3 SEAT

GP3 Series ace David Beckmann has become the first driver named by ART Grand Prix for the FIA Formula 3 Championship, which replaces GP3 for 2019. German Beckmann scored three late-season wins for Trident in GP3 this year, and drove for all-conquering ART in the post-season test at Yas Marina.

FLORSCH FOR MASTERS

Sophia Florsch, famed for her horrific shunt in last month's F3 Macau Grand Prix, is to remain with Van Amersfoort Racing for next season's renamed Formula European Masters series. VAR plans a four-car attack.

MORGAN'S FUNERAL

The funeral of ex-F1, Formula 2 and Formula Atlantic star and versatile engineer David Morgan, who died last month, will be held on Friday (December 21), at Randalls Park Crematorium in Leatherhead, at 12.30pm.



Agag changes his FE role

FORMULA E

ABB FIA Formula E Championship CEO and founder Alejandro Agag is switching roles to become the series' new chairman.

The announcement was made ahead of last weekend's inaugural Ad Diriyah E-Prix, and a new CEO will be appointed in the coming months, with Agag remaining in that position "until the new person joins Formula E".

Autosport understands that Agag (above, right) will remain heavily involved in the key FE decision-making processes and is expected to continue as its figurehead.

"It's sort of a way to enforce the whole management team," Agag explained. "I think there is the opportunity now to divide roles between a chairman and a CEO that would make an optimal management team – better than we have today. It's a really good solution to really make a super-powerful management team. I will have a little bit less day-to-day management tasks but I will still be very involved."

When asked if the change is the first step in him becoming more heavily involved in other projects – such as the FE-operated Extreme E electric SUV series that will be launched at the end of January

2019 – Agag replied: "This will allow me to do other things. My priority will be Formula E, but I may do other second priorities. One of them could be Extreme E definitely – that is one project I am really keen on. It allows me to dedicate some time, [but] the main part of the time will always be in Formula E."

Porsche confirms Jani for entry

At almost the same moment as Agag's announcement, the first driver to be fully confirmed for the 2019-20 championship was revealed. Factory Porsche star Neel Jani will race for the manufacturer when it enters FE for next season.

Jani, who won the 2016 Le Mans 24 Hours and that year's World Endurance Championship for Porsche, drove in the first two rounds of the 2017-18 FE campaign for the Dragon squad. But after two underwhelming races in Hong Kong, and a mooted Porsche tie-up with Dragon not coming to fruition, he left the team.

"I'm very much looking forward to the new task," said Jani. "Being part of an entirely new Porsche Motorsport programme for the second time, right from the beginning, means a lot to me."

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FIFTH COLUMN

FAREWELL TO ALL THAT

Lewis Hamilton dominated Formula 1 in 2018. Will the changes to come next season do anything to close up the field, or can we expect more of the same?

NIGEL ROEBUCK

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY



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What,” said Martin Brundle, “are the two most evocative Mercedes-engined cars on the grid?” A trick question, I supposed, and I was right. “I’ll tell you – the safety car and the medical car! If EV and EQ and all that are so important in hybrids, why do we have a double-supercharged V8 at the front and back of the grid? On Ferrari’s website the cars are categorised not by spyder, coupe or whatever, but by V12 and V8. Which company in Formula 1 sells a 1.6-litre engine? I suppose, to be fair, Renault probably do, and maybe Honda – but all Mercedes’ new engines are straight-sixes! My point is, in Formula 1 what are we selling – and to whom? If it fails down the road, the beginning of the failure was these bloody hybrid engines...”

For years Brundle and I have met for lunch in December to talk through the season past and the one to come. The politics we got on to later, by which time a quantity of Amarone had gone down; as usual, the first topic was drivers and teams, and inevitably we started with Hamilton and Vettel. This season was indisputably the best of Lewis’s career to date.

“No doubt about it,” said Martin. “I thought his drive at Spa was a bit scrappy, but that was the only one. What made this year different was that, for the first time, Lewis went through it without any of those weekends when he’s mysteriously off

his game. As well as that, Mercedes seem to gather pace – they don’t get fragile towards the end of the season, with their three motors, and so on. If they carry on like this, in a couple of years we could be looking at Lewis’s seventh championship. On stamina no-one can touch Mercedes.”

Right enough. In the five years of the hybrid era, Hamilton has won more than half the races.

“Yes,” Brundle grinned, “and always in front of his favourite fans!”

All the pieces were in place for Lewis this year: not only did Ferrari falter, as we have come to expect, but Bottas, less strong than in 2017, offered little of the opposition he faced from Nico Rosberg. No wonder he calls Valtteri the best team-mate he has ever had: nice guy, apolitical...

“Yes – and he moves out of the way when he’s told to! I wasn’t surprised Valtteri was upset at being called ‘Lewis’s wing man’ by Toto [Wolff] – he should have won in Shanghai, Baku, and also Sochi, where he was ordered to let Lewis by. That was tough – especially when you look at the points tally, and see it was wholly unnecessary. I think Mercedes buried their driver that day. Later Lewis said no, he wouldn’t want to pay Valtteri back – he wouldn’t want a soft victory, anyway, but what about his in Sochi!



Double-supercharged Mercedes V8s are the most powerful engines in F1



Mercedes team orders in Sochi appeared to break Bottas's spirit

"I think Bottas is psychologically screwed. He has to tolerate Hamilton's speed, confidence... everyone wanting to talk to him and not you... I saw his comment the other day, 'Next year I've got to drive every race as if it were my last', and he's right – he needs to start dominating race weekends. Esteban Ocon is now parked at Mercedes as reserve driver, and everyone's assuming he'll be in the car in 2020..."

If Hamilton was at his best this season, his major rival was not. Vettel and Ferrari began superbly, but the momentum was not sustained: although frequently the fastest of the weekend, the car lost pace here and there, and Sebastian himself made too many mistakes, as – operationally – did his team.

"It's difficult to know what to say," said Brundle. "Either Seb had some kind of distraction this year – and you hear certain things – or he's not what he was. Unless he has a dominant car, his judgement in wheel-to-wheel combat has gone, and that's critical. The minute – under no pressure – he hit the barrier at Hockenheim, and made that anguished radio call, the wheels started to come off, didn't they?"

"Thinking back to the Red Bull era, when Seb won his four championships, both Lewis and Fernando Alonso were quite dismissive of him, saying, well, he had the best car – which is a bit of a laugh when you think what Lewis has

"IF LEWIS HAMILTON WAS AT HIS BEST THIS SEASON, HIS MAJOR RIVAL WAS NOT"

had in the past five years!

"It would be foolish to write Vettel off, but... although I hate saying this about a great racing driver, I do think he might be past his best. If you put him out front, in probably the fastest car, he'll win, and you can't say that about a lot of them, but wheel-to-wheel I sometimes think, 'What are you doing?'"

"Monza was a case in point – he was angry from Saturday on, when Ferrari got it the wrong way round in qualifying, so that



Vettel's championship fell apart after his blunder in Germany

Raikkonen got the tow from him, which gave him pole. Then on Sunday he thought he was going to get a magic carpet ride..."

Not so. Unfathomably, Maurizio Arrivabene chose the night before the Italian Grand Prix to inform Kimi that he was out for 2019, and although he had seen it coming, it was not calculated to bring out his usual selflessness the following day.

"First of all," Martin said, "it was nuts of Ferrari not to slipstream Seb onto pole position – that really was the finish of their championship campaign. Remember his terse response on the radio? 'We'll talk about it later...'"

"As for giving Kimi the bad news, it really might have been a good idea to save it for Monday. Seb expected to be let through at the first corner, and when he wasn't he danced around in anger until the chicane – where he screwed up and spun after the touch with Hamilton.

"By his own standards, the second half of his season was appalling, and worst of all was that lunge on Verstappen at Suzuka. OK, he'd passed backmarkers at that corner, but they were compliant – there was no way Max could afford, from a reputation point of view, to give way. All Seb had to do was wait for the next straight."

Unquestionably the death of Sergio Marchionne in July had a destabilising effect on Ferrari, for the strong man was gone, and in his absence the simmering discord between Arrivabene and technical director Mattia Binotto erupted.

"Well, the word was that Marchionne was going to bin Arrivabene, and install Binotto as team principal, wasn't it? Whatever, Ferrari have to be careful not to step on their own tail next year – and Leclerc's arrival is only going to add to that. Marchionne had said Charles should be in the team in 2019, >>

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but once he was gone they tried really hard to unravel the move, and keep Kimi – which was what Seb wanted, of course.

“In the end, Leclerc – with, let’s say, a certain amount of political momentum – got the drive, and it was the right move: there’s no point in a junior programme if you don’t use it. Ferrari politics will be critical, because Charles is going to challenge Seb, and if the year with Ricciardo at Red Bull is anything to go by, he might not respond well to that. In Abu Dhabi, when Charles breezed past Kimi, and into Seb’s mirrors, it must have crossed his mind, ‘He’s on my tail – in a Sauber...’

“From what we’ve seen of Leclerc, I reckon he’ll cope with it all. Think of that qualifying lap in Interlagos, when he opted to stay out in the spitting rain – 21 years old, with the confidence to take matters into his own hands! I really like the kid, and he seems to have it all.”

At one stage it looked as though Ricciardo might go to Ferrari, but although they talked, nothing came of it, and eventually Daniel – clearly set on finding an alternative to Red Bull – committed to Renault, a decision most found incomprehensible.

That said, as Webber found in his Red Bull days, once the other driver is patently ‘the anointed one’, life becomes unsettling. In Mark’s case it was Vettel, in Danny’s Verstappen, and the clearest evidence came in Baku, where Max several times thwarted his faster team-mate before eventually taking him – and himself – out in a stupid accident.

Webber had a similar experience with Vettel in Istanbul, and on both occasions Messrs Marko and Horner declined to lay blame where it was due. If Ricciardo had any doubts about his status in the team, he had none after Baku – this despite the fact that his season had begun superbly while Verstappen screwed up time after time.

“Danny’s been unbelievably unlucky this year,” said Brundle.

“OFF TRACK MAX MIGHT HAVE HIS FATHER’S STROPPINESS, BUT ON IT HIS TALENT IS CLEAR”

“There’s always a reason for everything, and if a team’s focused on one driver... I think Helmut and Christian are like Ron Dennis – they can only love one driver at a time. Remember Ron in 2007, with Lewis and Fernando...”

“To me Danny’s decision to leave for Renault was emotional, not rational. He’s more than good enough to take a fight to Max. That drive at Monaco was brilliant – all those problems to manage, and still no one got near him.

“I just hope his move isn’t an Alonso decision! Hamilton went to Mercedes after Ross Brawn had shown him the blueprint of the hybrid engine, and explained why it was going to dominate the next phase of F1: that’s one thing, but I can’t imagine Renault could have shown Danny anything that was going to be career-changing like the Merc engine. If they want to join the top three, they’ve got to find a lap a race – and aiming at moving goalposts, too, because Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull aren’t going to stand still. If Renault can halve that gap, they’ll have done bloody well.”

In the meantime Verstappen charges on, and if the Honda should disappoint in 2019, one trusts he won’t heap criticism on the company, as Alonso did – and as Max himself has endlessly done with Renault.

The hope is that Honda will enable Red Bull – without equal in the downforce stakes – to compete more strongly with Mercedes and Ferrari in a straight line, and many see Verstappen as Hamilton’s major rival in 2019. Off track he may have his father’s inherent stropiness, but on it his talent is light years clear.

“Right on both counts,” said Brundle. “Max doesn’t like admitting he’s in the wrong, but then think of Senna – in his mind he was never wrong about anything, including deliberately crashing Prost at Suzuka! Certainly Max shouldn’t be threatening to headbutt journalists, and so on, but I like him – he’s got the irreverence I wish I’d had – and I love his touch in a car.

“Undeniably there are still times when he shows a lack of maturity, like when he tripped over Ocon in Brazil. If that had been for position, we’d have said, ‘racing incident’, but it >>



wasn't. No, you don't throw it up the inside of the leader when he's a lap ahead – but, on the other hand, why didn't Verstappen just let him go?

"It was an unnecessary incident – neither came out of it with credit. I know Max, being Max, says, 'I don't listen to anybody – I just carry on doing what I'm doing,' but I tell you what, next time he'll let him go – if not, he'll never be a multiple world champion: you've got to pick your fights. Having said all that, though, I think he'll be the man to beat in the next phase of Formula 1."

For so many years, I said, you and I would talk about three drivers – Hamilton, Alonso, Vettel – being on a separate plane from the rest, but now one thinks in terms of Lewis, Fernando and Max...

"I agree entirely," said Martin, "and sadly we're losing one of them – although in a way it's a relief, because no one enjoys seeing a driver as great as Fernando wasting his time. I don't think there's anyone in the paddock who doesn't still consider him one of the top three."

"The problem is that he's made himself unemployable with some heavyweight decision-makers who are not in the

"FORMULA 1 WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF ALONSO HAD BEEN IN A COMPETITIVE CAR"

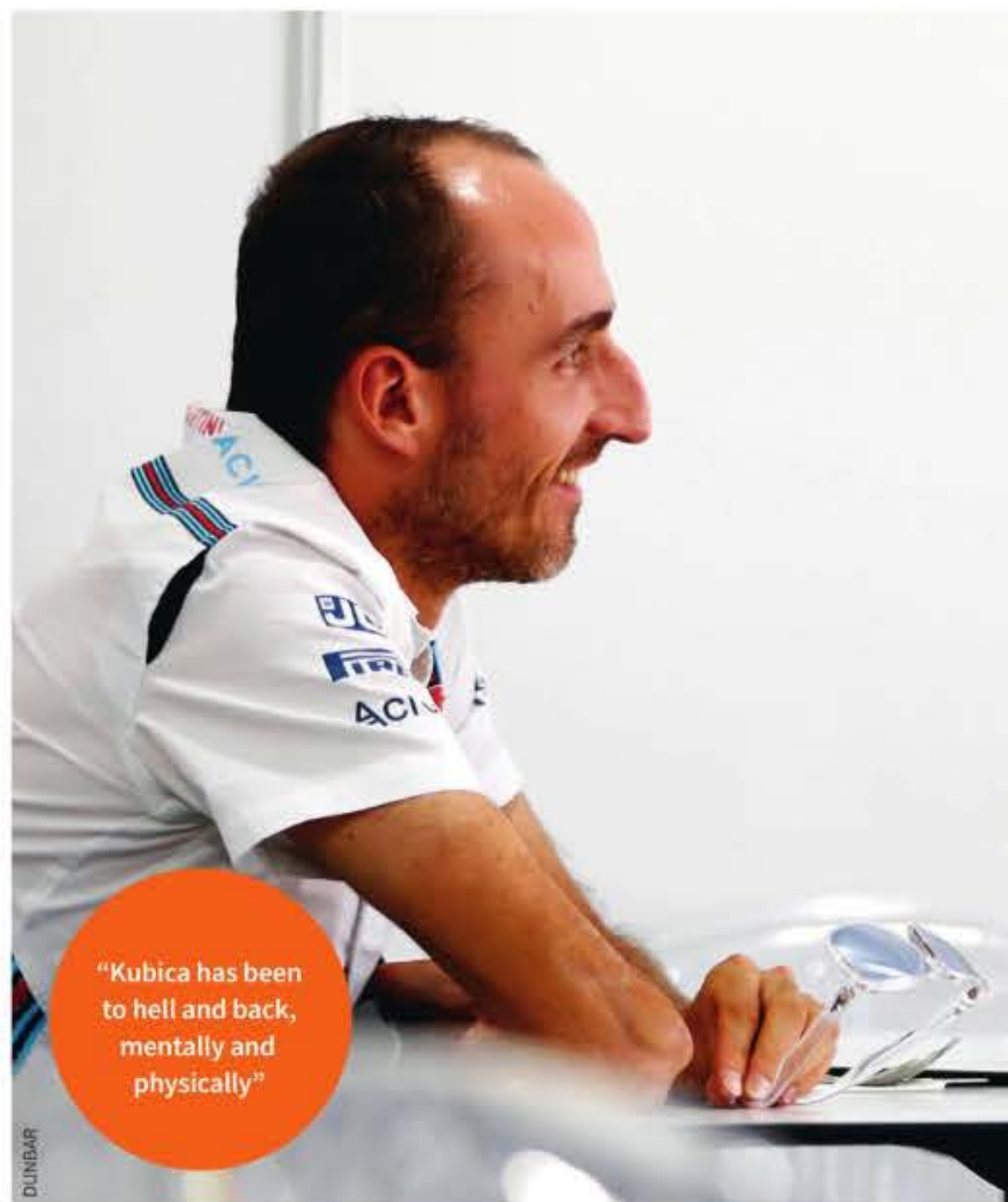
paddock – people like [Dieter] Zetsche. Potentially there were seats available at Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull..."

True, I said, but look at MotoGP: for 2019 Honda has signed Jorge Lorenzo as team-mate to Marc Marquez, but such a scenario would be inconceivable in contemporary Formula 1 – for one thing, Hamilton and Vettel would never countenance Alonso in the other car, and for another, nowadays team principals seem paranoid about potential problems between drivers.

"Yes – they're scared of oil and water, aren't they? Personally I'd always have the two best available, then deal with problems as they came along."

Whatever else, I said, no one can dispute that Formula 1 would have been immeasurably better these last few years if Alonso had been in a competitive car.

"Absolutely right. A lot of people – including me – believe that if Fernando had been in the Ferrari this season he'd have been world champion. Look at that team – all the data they've got, two hugely experienced drivers... how could



it go so wrong for so long? For sure the drivers have to put their hands up for some of that.

"Fernando is a huge loss to F1 – but you never know, maybe he'll be back. 'Is this farewell or good-bye for now?' I asked him in Abu Dhabi, and he said, 'It's good-bye for now.' I wasn't really expecting that."

At McLaren it is all change, for Stoffel Vandoorne has gone, too. "Being up against Alonso's relentless speed didn't help him," said Martin, "but I know a lot of drivers who'd like to be within half a tenth of Fernando on a qualifying lap. Stoffel's done all right, but it's the old pressure spotlight, isn't it? It can make you grow, or it can wilt you."

"I've got high hopes for Lando Norris – and George Russell at Williams, for that matter – and it'll be interesting to see Carlos Sainz leading a team."

Personally, I said, I'd have put Sainz in the Red Bull. "Me, too. All day long. I'm a fan of Carlos – he's got a lot of competitive maturity, and although I rate Gasly, I think Sainz would have been closer to Verstappen on performance. Pierre's had a good year, but this feels like a marriage of convenience – after being at Toro Rosso with him, Max knows Carlos is a bit handy..."

"Since the Abu Dhabi test I've talked to him and Lando about the McLaren, and – like Alonso – both said it was well balanced, actually pretty good – except against the stopwatch! If a car's balanced, but slow, you've had it – better to have one that's a bastard and slow, because then you think, 'Well, if we fix that, that and that, it'll be quicker...'"

Like everyone in the business, Brundle is delighted to see Kubica return after eight years away, but is not without his concerns. Prior to Robert's rallying accident, I said, Alonso told me he thought him – in terms of pure talent – the best.

"I think he was right. The guy has been to hell and back, mentally and physically, so we've just got to hope it works out for him. I can see how he can get it together on a dry track on a test day – which is what he's done so far – but I worry about him handling wheel-to-wheel combat on a wet day at the start



of a race – I don't see how he's got the ability to swing the wheel about, but I hope I'm wrong.

"In Brazil I was doing an on-track feature for Sky, and this guy – dressed in black, on a black bike – kept rushing past like a whirlwind. I later found out it was Robert – he was going so fast I couldn't see who the hell it was! I love his determination, and wish him the best."

Kubica is, of course, driving for Williams, a team – like McLaren – with a mountain to climb. In varying degrees, though, you could say that of any outside the top three, whose advantage over the other seven grows by the year.

"Yes," said Martin, "the rest mostly get lapped, don't they? Any of the top six cars could start in the pitlane, and finish in the top six. If there isn't a safety car that closes them all up at some critical point, that's what happens – and it's a massive problem. As you say, the haves and have-nots just get further apart.

"Why? Because those customer teams have half as many people, and a quarter of the budget – and the teams with all the money aren't about to give it up. When I hear someone like Gene Haas say, 'I don't really know why I'm in this'... whoa!

"If ever you needed proof of the importance of 'aero', look at Red Bull/Renault/McLaren – or, for that matter, Mercedes/Force India/Williams and Ferrari/Haas/Sauber. In each case, they have the same engine, so it's *all* about downforce – and the 2019 regulations will only increase the gap.

"There are huge changes next year – front wing, bargeboards, rear wing – and a major reset always benefits the big teams, because they have the resource to work on it and go racing at the same time. The aim of the revised regs is to improve the racing, but I'm not sure anything's going to change – when I said to Pat Symonds, 'What can we look forward to next year, with overtaking and so on?', his answer was, 'It'll stop it getting worse...' As far as I'm concerned, that's a cop-out."

In a recent conversation with Kevin Magnussen, he told me of the frustration of going to every race, thinking in terms of seventh place being like winning.



"It's an awful situation," Brundle said. "The fact is, Formula 1 has always been about the drivers, hasn't it? If people stop me in the street, they want to talk about Lewis or Fernando – no one ever says, 'Tell me more about those vented rear wheel hubs on the Mercedes...' I mean, who gives a toss? It's not an engineers' championship, but I'm afraid it's become one.

"The average age of the golf audience on Sky is 60, so it's dying with its fans; in Formula 1 it's 48, so if we carry on doing the same thing, is it going to die with us? Maybe we should try and engage the next generation, and bring in some of this digital stuff Liberty are talking about – but there's no point in any of it unless your core product is *amazing*, which means the fastest drivers in the world – the fastest, not the richest – wheel to wheel, and overtaking! What Liberty need to understand is that it's the action that matters..."

Amen to that. ✽

The first Fifth Column appeared in Autosport on May 15 1980, and now this one, sad to say, will be the last. My grateful thanks to all who have read it down the years.

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

"TVKC's charity event" Raising money for our chosen
2019 Charity Special race format

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

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THE PUBLIC VOTE

Lewis Hamilton missed out on winning BBC Sports Personality of the Year, but the contest shows that his and Formula 1's popularity is enduring

EDD STRAW

Lewis Hamilton's stunning 2018 season has justifiably been talked about so much in the pages of Autosport that it's difficult to find anything new to say about him. But something unusual happened to him on Sunday night – he actually lost.

Granted, it wasn't a race or a championship, it was the BBC Sports Personality of the Year. The annual televised gathering doesn't mean much in itself, but it's a tradition beloved by many British sports fans – not to mention athletes – and is a useful barometer of public interest in Formula 1. After all, it's decided by public vote from a prime-time television audience and is useful precisely for the reason it's heavily criticised – it is very clearly a popularity contest.

Although Hamilton missed out on the big prize to Tour de France victor Geraint Thomas – a very worthy winner – his second place is a reminder that F1 drivers still do resonate with the public in the UK. Hamilton has won the award before, when he claimed his second world championship back in 2014, and this was the third time he's finished second. This suggests an enduring popularity, as even when there have been years when he's failed to break into the top three, he's still placed well

"HAMILTON'S SINCERITY DOESN'T ALWAYS TRANSLATE WELL INTO THE WRITTEN WORD"

(fifth in '15 and sixth in '17).

Frustratingly, the BBC has decided to dispense with transparency and not release the polling breakdown this year, so we can't be sure how popular he was with the voters. For the years there is data available, second place ranges from 9-28% of the vote – although it should be noted that with a reduction to six nominees to vote for this year, it's likely to be at the high end of this spread or even above that ceiling.

Hamilton played a big part in this year's show, presenting the Helen Rollason Award to Billy Monger. It was encouraging to see Monger's story recognised, and it's another reminder that motorsport still strikes a chord with the public. That said, Monger's is a human narrative that can't fail to touch those who wouldn't know one end of a racing car from the other, and it's to Hamilton's credit that he attended primarily to be part of that presentation.

It will be interesting to see how Hamilton performs next year,

should he again emerge as world champion. There are those who argue the downscaling of F1 coverage on terrestrial television to highlights only (save for the British GP, which will be broadcast live on Channel 4) removes it from the public eye. That might be the case, and it could take longer than 12 months for any impact to be felt, but it should also be remembered that there are plenty of sportspeople who have proved popular despite being on subscription television.

The other interesting word is 'personality'. What part that personality should play in this award versus achievement is ill-defined and generates plenty of debate, but the use of the word means it's part of the equation.

Frustratingly, Hamilton still struggles for a fair hearing in the wider world and it's significant that what he was wearing seemed to draw the most attention during the show – within minutes of him appearing, the *Daily Express* website ran a story reporting viewers were "distracted" by his jacket. That said, he wasn't the only one to get a similar treatment from that outlet.

But Hamilton, in the past few years, has emerged as a bigger personality. While there are occasional missteps that he's been pulled up on, he does have a genuine interest in the world and has taken the opportunity to talk about issues that stretch far beyond cars and engines. His sincerity doesn't always translate well into the written word, and there are those who will pick apart just about anything he says in a negative way. Take the way his apologetic reaction to lucking in to victory in Azerbaijan this year – which was genuine – was interpreted. To many, it was nothing more than a humblebrag designed to elevate him, when all Hamilton was doing was expressing what he really felt.

This is where personality becomes a problem in sport, not least F1. While corporately-minded teams are usually blamed for drivers uttering inanities, social media has actually magnified the need to do this because there are hordes of people eager to misinterpret and complain every time someone does show a little character. You can't do anything or say anything meaningful in life without it being unpopular with some, and sadly Hamilton is a character some will always have an unfavourable reaction to.

But he's a great ambassador for motorsport, with true reach outside F1. What's more, he is not afraid to express his desire to do things the right way on track – to be genuinely sporting. To have a driver with five world championships, a living, active legend with plenty of years left in him should the hunger remain, is something motorsport fans should embrace.

Drivers, and characters, like Hamilton don't come along very often. This doesn't mean everyone has to be a fan of his, but if you don't respect and appreciate what he brings to motorsport on and off track, you're missing out. His runner-up spot in BBC Sports Personality of the Year is proof that there are many who do appreciate him. ✎



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YOUR SAY

The time has come for the DNA of F1 to change. If it follows all the advancing technology it will lose all the reasons why people love it and find it spectacular

NICHOLAS LEES

Sort out the single-seater ladder

So the FIA has set up its new F3 series while still awarding superlicence points to European Masters and Euroformula Open ('Business as usual for old F3', December 13).

If the intention was to concentrate rising talent on one ladder, would it not have been better to award no or very few points to EM and EO? As it is, talent is likely to be spread across all three series. Maybe a better solution would be to dump FIA F3 and continue with 'old' F3, amalgamating EM and EO into one super-strong series. Perhaps it might begin to come close to the one-litre and 1600cc F3 series I remember from my youth...

Tim Barrett

Hardingham, Norfolk

Nipping at Hamilton's heels

You wouldn't want to bet against a sixth title for Lewis Hamilton, but could there be clouds on the horizon? Aside from Hamilton's obvious skill and hunger level, how soon will Max Verstappen match that? Or Charles Leclerc? And how much can Lewis rely on his team-mate being competitive with those two, or Sebastian Vettel, maybe Pierre Gasly, in a close fight given recent form? If not, how much pressure will Hamilton be under in another long season?

Then, what if Red Bull and Ferrari close the all-track performance gap in 2019? If I were Toto Wolff or Lewis, I might be pondering all this, sooner rather than later.

Steve Singleton

Ilkley, West Yorkshire

Turn back the clock to make F1 better

I've been writing to Autosport for about 30 years, my main point being that F1 should finally do what everyone has been talking about over this period (the regs changes have always seemed to have done the opposite), namely enforce standard narrow front and back wings for all the teams with little or even no downforce.

There would still be room for advertising, it would save the teams millions and it would improve the racing/overtaking – a win/win situation. The narrower front wing would stop the



extremely common occurrence of drivers' races been ruined by catching the front wing on other drivers' tyres, puncturing them and eliminating both drivers. This regulation needs to be in the 2021 rulebook – preferably before if possible.

On a broader note, the time has come for the DNA of F1 to change. If it follows all the advancing technology (particularly electric motors) it will lose all the reasons why people love it and find it spectacular. That should be F1's DNA – to be spectacular. I would love for the rulebook to require powerful V10 (V8 at least) engines, manual gearboxes, big fat low-profile slicks that can last the whole race, steel discs, low or no wing downforce, medium ground-effect downforce and no driver aids or technical 'tricks'. I know this is going back in time, but it would be spectacular and ensure the longevity of the sport.

Finally, the teams should get the same share of the 'money pot' and if Ferrari and/or Mercedes don't like it, tell them to F1 off!

Nicholas Lees

Hertfordshire

We're all for a fairer distribution of revenue and cutting downforce, though actually achieving those aims is tricky. And F1 should have advanced technology. How much is open to question, but going too far backwards would just make F1 irrelevant as the world moves on. It could be spectacular, but wouldn't ensure its longevity – ed

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TOP 50 DRIVERS of 2018

By Jack Benyon, Jack Cozens, Tom Errington,
David Evans, Matt James, Alex Kalinauckas,
David Malsher, Hal Ridge, Marcus Simmons,
Edd Straw, Andrew van Leeuwen and Gary Watkins

 For extra content visit
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RE-ENTRY



**GABRIELE
TARQUINI**

WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPION

50

Tarquini's inclusion is based on his success in winning the inaugural World Touring Car Cup crown.

The Italian was flawless at the opening couple of rounds, winning three of the first six races to establish a healthy points lead. He would lose that gap before the mid-season break, and almost forfeited the title at the Macau season finale by allowing Yvan Muller to reduce a 39-point deficit to an arrears of three.

Make no mistake, though. The old man of touring car racing was the class of what was arguably the most competitive World Touring Car field since he claimed the 2009 WTCC title.



RE-ENTRY



**ROMAIN
GROSJEAN**

14TH IN FORMULA 1

49

What's a driver who crashed under the safety car in one race, spun and wiped out several rivals at the start of another,

hit his team-mate in yet another and threw away too many points doing in the top 50?

Well, that's just one part of what Grosjean did this season. For, as well as some strong race drives, he was ferociously quick in qualifying and made Q3 a midfield-leading 16 times.

"The feeling in the car has been better and better," says Grosjean. "Definitely, the Canadian GP update [in June] helped me with the car, but I think it was more in here [taps forehead]."



DOWN 8



**KEVIN
MAGNUSSEN**

9TH IN FORMULA 1

48

Magnussen emerged as a more consistent Formula 1 performer and was the more impressive Haas driver in the

first half of the season. While Romain Grosjean asserted himself in the second half of the year and unlocked more pace, Magnussen remained a formidable competitor and isn't satisfied simply being a leading midfield runner.

"In that way, this is the best time in my career," he says of how comfortable he is with the team. "But unless you are fighting for wins and championships, it isn't going to be that great. I've almost forgotten what a podium feels like."



RE-ENTRY



**JENSON
BUTTON**

SUPER GT CHAMPION
CURRENTLY 10TH IN WEC LMP

47

It's to his credit that – after his toe-in-the-water in the 2017 Suzuka 1000Km – Button didn't underestimate Super GT, and

threw himself into an extensive winter testing programme to prepare for his year alongside Naoki Yamamoto in Team Kunimitsu's Honda NSX.

This was no coast towards retirement as so many of his Formula 1 contemporaries exhibited in Super GT's European equivalent, the DTM.

Granted, he was the weaker half of the title-winning partnership with Yamamoto, but that's no disgrace when you're alongside one of Japan's most talented domestic racers.

Button also proved a kingpin of the SMP Racing attack in the World Endurance Championship.





THE SCHUMACHERS IN MACAU

HOW MICK COMPARED TO MICHAEL AND RALF

For those among us who like statistical symmetry – and there's nothing wrong with being a bit of an anorak – a Mick Schumacher victory in the Macau Grand Prix would have been ideal. After all, it was his second visit to the Guia circuit, and his father Michael and uncle Ralf both took two attempts

to triumph there.

Michael Schumacher actually won the first heat from the sixth on the grid on his first visit in 1989, but failed to finish the second part. Ralf was fourth overall on his '94 debut. And Mick set fastest lap in 2017 following a spin and a gearbox glitch. So, they all impressed

on their first visits...

Michael's win in 1990 is one of the most famous in Macau history, coming as it did following his last-lap coming-together with Mika Hakkinen. Ralf's 1995 success was also a notable one: a double pile-up caused the GP to be compressed into one race, and he took victory from Jarno Trulli. Could Mick follow suit?

The answer was no. He looked fantastic in FP2, a genuine pole contender, but a wall-touching mistake in Q2 left him with too much work to do in the races, and the Prema Powerteam squad was struggling with straightline speed. It had been a scintillating end to his Formula 3 European Championship season, but Macau was a bit of an anti-climax. And ruined everything for the stattoes...

TITLE RIVAL'S VERDICT

NICK CASSIDY ASSESSES BUTTON'S YEAR



Cassidy won the Super GT title in his

second season in 2017, but this year lost out in the championship fight with rookie Jenson Button and team-mate Naoki Yamamoto.

Here's Cassidy's verdict on Button's adaptation to Japanese racing:

"It's definitely a hard championship to come into because it's a lot

different to what he was used to. The biggest thing is traffic and the start of races – it's nothing he'd experienced before. By the end of the year he got a lot stronger and hats off to him – he won the championship.

"I was really impressed by how seriously he took the year. He's come over here, he's made a great impression and he has a lot of Japanese fans,

so that was great for the championship because the attention has grown and brought more people to the track. And he's a friendly guy, and good to have a laugh with.

"We did a lot of wheel-to-wheel racing, which was cool! In the early races you could get him, because he wasn't used to the traffic, but by the end of the year it got a lot more difficult."

NEW ENTRY



DRIES VANTHOOR

4TH IN BLANCPAIN GT SPRINT
7TH IN BLANCPAIN GT ENDURANCE
BATHURST 12 HOUR WINNER

46

This was the season when Vanthoor emerged as one of the stars of the GT3 category. The Audi factory driver truly delivered on the

promise we'd all know was there since his maiden season in sportscars as an 18-year-old in 2016.

There was a string of sit-up-and-take-notice performances from the Belgian. He showed his one-lap pace and his speed over a stint, suggesting that he is very much the real deal. He put his WRT Audi R8 LMS on pole for the Spa 24 Hours by a cool six tenths (it's irrelevant that he lost it in the scrutineering bay) and then starred when it mattered at Monza.



NEW ENTRY



MICK SCHUMACHER

EUROPEAN FORMULA 3 CHAMPION

45

Until late summer, Schumacher was no more than one of the five Prema drivers pitching for a potential European Formula 3 event win.

Then came a much-discussed turnaround that set him off upon an unstoppable winning spree in the run-up to the Hockenheim finale, where he reverted to his previous form – and carried that through too for an underwhelming Macau Grand Prix.

This is not the place to discuss all the paddock gossip but, notwithstanding that, Schumacher's peaks weren't as awesome as those of Dan Ticktum or Juri Vips. At this level, that's arguably at least as important as title successes.



TOP 50 2017



- 01 Lewis Hamilton
- 02 Max Verstappen
- 03 Fernando Alonso
- 04 Sebastian Vettel
- 05 Sebastien Ogier
- 06 Josef Newgarden
- 07 Daniel Ricciardo
- 08 Martin Truex Jr
- 09 Sebastien Buemi
- 10 Charles Leclerc
- 11 Valtteri Bottas
- 12 Ott Tanak
- 13 Nico Hulkenberg
- 14 Carlos Sainz Jr
- 15 Esteban Ocon
- 16 Sergio Perez
- 17 Rene Rast
- 18 Scott Dixon
- 19 Thierry Neuville
- 20 Brendon Hartley
- 21 Mike Conway
- 22 Lando Norris
- 23 Felix Rosenqvist
- 24 Lucas di Grassi
- 25 George Russell
- 26 Pierre Gasly
- 27 Joel Eriksson
- 28 Bruno Senna
- 29 Kyle Busch
- 30 Kamui Kobayashi
- 31 James Calado
- 32 Sam Bird
- 33 Felipe Massa
- 34 Timo Bernhard
- 35 Jamie Whincup
- 36 Elfyn Evans
- 37 Mirko Bortolotti
- 38 Kris Meeke
- 39 Will Power
- 40 Kevin Magnussen
- 41 Johan Kristoffersson
- 42 Jamie Green
- 43 Ash Sutton
- 44 Jari-Matti Latvala
- 45 Ricky Taylor
- 46 Kimi Raikkonen
- 47 Alex Lynn
- 48 Raffaele Marciello
- 49 Nicki Thiim
- 50 Dane Cameron

DOWN 1



ASH SUTTON

4TH IN THE BRITISH
TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

44

Sutton's stock was extremely high coming into the 2018 British Touring Car Championship season. Not only was he the

reigning champion, he was one of the youngest of the modern generation at just 24 years old.

His title defence started on the back foot as a new engine tuner in the Team BMR Subaru Levorg altered the characteristics. It took the squad and driver until Croft just before the middle of the campaign to get on top of the combination.

Once refined, Sutton started a mighty comeback to try to haul himself back into contention. He scored six victories, more than anyone else.



NEW ENTRY



SERGIO SETTE CAMARA

6TH IN FORMULA 2

43

Sixth in Formula 2 hardly seems fitting of Autosport's top 50, especially when two drivers above him haven't made the

cut. But unpick Sette Camara's season and it's clear he deserves to be here.

He outqualified his Formula 1-bound Carlin team-mate Lando Norris, who in turn said his strong early-season form was in part down to being pushed so hard by Sette Camara.

Despite a torrid reliability record, the Brazilian still earned a pole and eight podiums. Such was his step up that McLaren has signed him for a test-and-development role.



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/AMUGER

NEW ENTRY



NICK CASSIDY

SUPER FORMULA RUNNER-UP
SUPER GT RUNNER-UP

42 In just his second season in Super Formula and his third in Super GT, Cassidy came within a whisker of winning both titles. The most impressive of those came in the single-seaters.

Kondo Racing is far from being Toyota's spearhead, and historically is more like a third-string operation, yet Cassidy worked hard behind the scenes on the team's operations and, after a disappointing opening round, was a force everywhere. With his talented young mate Kenta Yamashita, Cassidy carried Kondo to an emotional teams' title, and was only denied in the drivers' stakes at the last gasp.



DOWN 33



MARTIN TRUEX JR

NASCAR CUP RUNNER-UP

41 Truex's year as reigning champion did not go as planned. He failed to retain the title, and he had to compete for it while the future of his Furniture Row Racing squad was in serious doubt.

Fortunately he found refuge at Joe Gibbs Racing for 2019, but the very fact that he was still able to fight for the crown was impressive, as was holding his own in the 'Big Three'.

Regardless, his year was not error-free. Naivety in the battle with Joey Logano for a final-four place at Martinsville could well have cost him a title shot had the remaining playoff races not gone his way.



NEW ENTRY



JURI VIPS

4TH IN EUROPEAN FORMULA 3

40 When Helmut Marko dropped in on the Formula 3 European Championship at the Red Bull Ring, he reportedly blurted: "I've got Vips!" He hadn't, because this talented Estonian was also entertaining an offer from another F1 junior programme, but within a couple of weeks it was settled, and Vips was heading to the Red Bull stable. Rightly so, for he is ideal for Marko: young, superfast, with incredible car control and a bullshit-free amiable personality. His rookie F3 season came with none of the pressure of Motopark team-mate Dan Ticktum's, and Vips did make mistakes, but by the summer he was arguably the quickest driver.



RE-ENTRY



SHANE VAN GISBERGEN

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS RUNNER-UP

39 Van Gisbergen thrives on having a car that suits his scruff-of-the-neck driving style, and someone to feed his competitive instinct. He got both in 2018, gelling with the new ZB Holden better, and establishing a rivalry with Scott McLaughlin.

What really shone through in van Gisbergen's driving this season was a sense of fun. On more than one occasion, the effects mic on his car's onboard camera caught him cheering himself on when he did something cool (such as his blistering start to the Saturday race at Queensland Raceway).

His drive on the Saturday at Pukekohe was the perfect example of the 'vintage' van Gisbergen we saw in 2018. By the time he was told he had a five-second penalty for a bump-and-run on McLaughlin, there were only four tours of the short lap to go. The way he went from cruise control into overdrive was spectacular, and richly rewarded with a 5.5s lead at the flag.



KLYNSMITH
motorsport
IMAGES

RE-ENTRY



SCOTT McLAUGHLIN

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS CHAMPION

38 McLaughlin secured 13 poles and nine wins on the way to a maiden Supercars title.

His only finish outside the top 10 – a 15th at Albert Park – came when a 50:50 decision to pit for wets went the wrong way.

Despite those devastating stats, it wasn't a dominant championship win. The Ford Falcon's speed advantage from 2017 was gone, and McLaughlin was forced to fight every step of the way through a seesawing battle against Shane van Gisbergen in the new Holden Commodore.

He also exorcised the demons of Newcastle 2017 with a stunning drive to wrap up the title on the final day of the season. His second place rendered van Gisbergen's controversial Saturday penalty irrelevant, at least in pure mathematical terms.



NEW ENTRY



DAN TICKTUM

EUROPEAN FORMULA 3 RUNNER-UP
MACAU GRAND PRIX WINNER

37 His Euro F3 campaign veered between sublime performances in adversity and typical Ticktum what-on-earth-is-going-to-happen-next randomness. That meant that once the Mick Schumacher Prema Winning Machine kicked into gear he was always going to get eclipsed in the points table. As Ticktum saw what he'd thought was his title slipping away, his qualifying in particular got ever-more ragged. Then came a little break, a superb McLaren Formula 1 test, and his incredible Macau Grand Prix. Quite simply, Ticktum's sign-off from his season with Motopark was the single most remarkable F3 performance of the past few years.



DOWN 30



JOSEF NEWGARDEN

5TH IN INDYCAR

36 The 2017 IndyCar champion didn't put up a bad title defence. Newgarden won three races (the same as this year's champion Scott Dixon), scored four poles (joint top with Will Power) and was regularly a prominent player.

What hurt Newgarden's title defence was inconsistency. Aside from his hat-trick of wins, he never set foot on another podium.

He had results compromised by yellow flags, and at St Petersburg and Detroit Newgarden gave himself too much work to do with mistakes in qualifying. But when he had the car 'in the zone', he was magic.



DOWN 6



KYLE BUSCH

4TH IN NASCAR CUP

35 Busch was the only one of the 'Big Three' to hold his own against the playoff's form driver Joey Logano, winning twice in the post-season.

The Joe Gibbs Racing ace was also able to beat fellow dominators Martin Truex Jr and Kevin Harvick to the regular season crown – no mean feat considering Truex defeated Busch in 2017 and that Harvick often led the trio earlier in the year.

If not for poor pitstops in the Homestead finale, Busch could have featured more in the title fight.

If the Cup was decided in a conventional manner, Busch would have been the 2018 champion convincingly – by 40 points over Harvick.



DOWN 18



SERGIO PEREZ

8TH IN FORMULA 1

34

While Esteban Ocon was the stronger performer at Force India on pace, Perez was close behind and outscored his team-mate.

What's more, it was Perez who pulled the big result out of the bag with a brilliant drive to third in Baku.

"If you look at the difference, they're usually in the same tenth," says chief race engineer Tom McCullough. "If you look at the race pace, with tyre wear, in terms of pace I've been amazed by how close the two of them have been."

"There's a good chance with a normal weekend and dry qualifying, Esteban has the edge. But that's Sergio, on the back foot he comes out ahead."



RE-ENTRY



PAUL DI RESTA

3RD IN THE DTM

33

The ex-F1 driver didn't have the pace of Mercedes team-mate Gary Paffett in qualifying. In fact, Lucas Auer, Edoardo Mortara and Daniel Juncadella also headed the Mercedes troops more frequently than di Resta on one-lap pace. But it was his tenacity and startling speed in races that carried him into title contention. Once the random results of the early rounds had shaken out, he moved with Paffett away from the rest in the points table. A below-par weekend at the Hockenheim finale, which dropped him to third, was not deserved for a driver who was utterly mesmerizing at the floodlit, rainswept Misano round.



TICKTUM'S MACAU DOMINATION

THE HIGHLIGHT OF A WILDLY BRILLIANT YEAR

Dan Ticktum had endured a disappointing end to his Formula 3 European Championship title challenge, but the month's break between the Hockenheim finale and the Macau Grand Prix appeared to make all the difference.

Ticktum: "It was the highlight of my year – 100% it was very special. Nothing surpassed that. That was what was so important to me about it. The championship was not ideal, so it was important to try to end the season on a high, and that was what

happened. I couldn't have asked for more. There was a lot of work behind the scenes from the team at Motopark. For everyone to be as dominant [on pace] as that – not just me, but Joel Eriksson and Juri Vips as well – made it a really special thing."

LOGANO'S CAREER TURNAROUND

DOING WHATEVER IT TAKES TO WIN

It's 10 years since Joey Logano first arrived in the Cup field aged just 18, having not even done a full year of the then-Nationwide-branded feeder series but already carrying the nickname 'Sliced Bread' (as in, the best thing since...) because he was so highly rated by the likes of veteran Mark Martin. He'd won in only his third Nationwide start and in June 2009 he became the youngest-ever Cup race victor too.

But by the end of 2012 he had lost his Joe Gibbs Racing drive and was being branded "overrated" and lambasted

HE WAS RUSHED INTO A HORNET'S NEST WITH NO REPELLENT

because he "didn't pay his dues" before getting his big break.

In reality, he was rushed into a hornet's nest with no repellent.

"You come in with so much hype, and you're expected to win right off the bat. If it wasn't for that hype, I wouldn't have had the job anyway, so I don't think it's a bad thing," Logano says now.

"But I expected to go out there and win as well, and just got my butt handed to me on a platter. It was hard. There were a lot of times that I felt really weak, and I'd break down. When you're confused, you don't know how to be better."

Veteran team owner Roger Penske, urged by his champion driver Brad Keselowski, believed Logano's true talent remained untapped and signed him for 2013. Penske was right.

Though Logano missed the 2013 playoffs, he was a title contender in the following year's decider. A run-in with Matt Kenseth cost him a '15 repeat – in a year when he won six races – but he was the '16 championship runner-up.

His revitalised career stalled again with what he called a "horror-film" 2017 season before he and crew chief Todd Gordon focused on how to execute races better for '18. Logano, perhaps unexpectedly, also recaptured something from his youth. He went from a fearful driver at times to a fearless one, willing to do whatever it takes to win – as Martin Truex Jr found out this year.

"I just felt like I'm back to where I was growing up. As the kid growing up, I was an aggressive racer, and I was able to win a lot of races," Logano says.

"I got humbled pretty quick [in NASCAR]. I got beat up. I got pushed around a lot. I wasn't fast. I didn't have any respect. That beats up your confidence pretty quickly.

"You have to kind of dig back inside. Every sport is a mental sport, so you have to really figure out how to be strong again and dig out of holes."



Dover 2009: Logano has his butt handed to him

MOTORSPORT IMAGES/ABBOTT

DOWN 10



LANDO NORRIS

FORMULA 2 RUNNER-UP

32

Norris is one of the most difficult to place in this list after an up-and-down year. Fundamentally, the job was done as he secured

a seat in Formula 1 with McLaren.

But in terms of 2018's actual target – the Formula 2 title – Norris led for almost half the year but let it slip as George Russell came to the fore.

Ultimately Norris was the most consistent driver, but lacked the win and pole potency of his rivals Russell and Alexander Albon.

His year won't be remembered for a sterling F2 season, but for the graduation to McLaren. Mission accomplished, just not in the perfect fashion.



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/MAUGER

DOWN 17



CARLOS SAINZ JR

10TH IN FORMULA 1

31

Sainz's move to Renault, on loan from Red Bull, didn't entirely work out. But he still performed well despite sometimes struggling with the instability of the car, in qualifying trim especially.

"It has been quite a challenging one, as it took me a bit at the beginning to understand the car and how to go as fast as I could," says Sainz. "As soon as I understood it, it was a big confidence boost and the results started coming. We all have those four, five, six weekends where you perform at the highest level – you extract the absolute maximum out of the car – but reliability reasons or strategy things didn't allow me to."



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/PORTLOCK

NEW ENTRY



ALEXANDER ALBON

3RD IN FORMULA 2

30

Coming off a disastrous first Formula 2 campaign with ART in 2017, Albon began the season with just a race-by-race deal with DAMS and ended it with a '19 Formula 1 seat.

Four wins, eight podiums and three pole positions marked him out as one of the F2 season's top drivers and, while Lando Norris and George Russell stole the headlines, Albon snuck under the radar to take second in the standings heading into

the final round in Abu Dhabi.

A poor qualifying and a stall handed the position back to Norris in the final tally, but finishing a place higher on average in the feature races – where the grid isn't reversed – and in qualifying, means Albon gets the nod to finish the better of the two in these rankings. Extra points are awarded for his incredible turnaround – to suggest a 2019 F1 seat would be the outcome after last season would have seemed ridiculous.



RE-ENTRY



KEVIN HARVICK

3RD IN NASCAR CUP

29

Harvick's emergence as NASCAR's most likely champion in the first half of the season was a shock.

Driving for Stewart-Haas

Racing, a relative novice with Ford machinery, Harvick was also steering the oldest car on the grid in the Ford Fusion. But SHR got the absolute maximum from the machinery to steal a march on the dire-starting new Chevrolet Camaro and the competitive Toyota Camry.

Harvick's ability to regularly win put him well ahead of team-mates Clint Bowyer, Kurt Busch and new-for-2018 recruit Aric Almirola. Whenever SHR ran 1-2-3-4, it was usually Harvick leading the way.

DOWN 17



VALTTERI BOTTAS

5TH IN FORMULA 1

28

Bottas described this as his worst season in Formula 1. It wasn't, but it probably felt like it having come into 2018 with title ambitions.

He did show good form in qualifying relative to Lewis Hamilton – a dry-pace average deficit of 0.153s is nothing to be sniffed at. Despite struggling in race conditions he could easily have won twice.

Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin says: "His strong performances arrived at the wrong time. In Austria with the car stopping, and Sochi with the team orders. [A puncture while leading in Baku] was about as unlucky as I've seen a driver be."

RE-ENTRY



JOEY LOGANO

NASCAR CUP CHAMPION

27

Before the NASCAR Cup playoffs, Logano would not have made this list. The Penske driver may have taken an early win at

Talladega, but the randomness of restrictor-plate racing and Ford's edge at the circuit made it impossible to draw a conclusion. While it would have been tempting to consider the triumph a one-off after a winless 2017, instead it was a ticket on the route to title glory.

Logano scored more points than any other driver in the playoffs. His forceful pass on Martin Truex Jr at Martinsville was a highlight, as was the eventual rematch that sealed the title at Homestead.



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NEW ENTRY



NAOKI YAMAMOTO

SUPER FORMULA CHAMPION
SUPER GT CHAMPION

26

The short-sightedness of motorsport means that a driver who has hitherto never lined up on a grid outside Asia was

suddenly being talked about as a potential Toro Rosso FP1 contender. For Yamamoto, the season was simply one in which Honda finally got it right in both Super Formula and Super GT, allowing him to take both titles by the skin of his teeth. In single-seaters, he sealed his second crown after prevailing in a final-round showdown with Nick Cassidy. In GTs, he was the quicker driver in the NSX he shared with Jenson Button, enabling him to pip Lexus pair Cassidy and Ryo Hirakawa.



UP 21



KIMI RAIKKONEN

3RD IN FORMULA 1

25

This was probably the strongest of the five seasons Raikkonen spent at Ferrari in his second stint.

While he frustratingly made key errors regularly – particularly in qualifying – that cost him shots at victory, it did all come together in the United States Grand Prix. There, he bagged his first win in five and a half years in a race that presented plenty of opportunities to drop the ball.

Backing that up, there were a further 11 podium finishes, and he would have outscored team-mate Sebastian Vettel over the final stretch of the season but for retiring early in the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. A good, solid season to sign off his Ferrari career.



TOP 50 DRIVERS OF 2018



KIMI IN HIS OWN WORDS

RAIKKONEN SUMMARISES AN EVENTFUL YEAR

...on ending a five-year win drought

"It hasn't really been a big deal for me. It's been a much bigger deal for other people. If it comes it comes, if it doesn't it doesn't change my life one bit. The biggest difference is how people look at you. I just proved some people wrong."

...on being dropped by Ferrari and returning to Sauber

"People don't understand I'm actually very happy with where I'm going. I have had my time with Ferrari, I won the championship with

them and many races with them. For me, as a driver, I want different challenges. I want different things. I wasn't really at any point disappointed with the decision. I've been in F1 long enough to know it doesn't matter if you have a contract or not – things happen for different reasons."

...on the media

"People always complain that 'oh, F1 is not exciting', 'it's not this', or something like 'why are people not interested so much?'"

"But to be honest,

I think how much bullshit there is in the media, and stories and gossip and stuff – if there wasn't that much, I think F1 would be much better. People try to create so much nonsense that it actually starts harming F1. I think if there would be less nonsense and more actual things that are true, it would be better for F1 in many ways."

...on early rumours of where he might move for 2019

"I have zero interest to get involved in all the nonsense."



"IF THERE WAS LESS BULLSHIT IN THE MEDIA, F1 WOULD BE MUCH BETTER"

DOWN 15



**SEBASTIEN
BUEMI**

LE MANS 24 HOURS WINNER
4TH IN FORMULA E

24 It was a strange year for Buemi: he finally conquered the Le Mans 24 Hours with Toyota, but over in Formula E he failed to do something that had become a habit – win a race.

Buemi won Le Mans at the seventh attempt and calls the victory the high point of his career. Fernando Alonso began the #8 car's charge back to the front, but it was Buemi who built up the lead over the course of an impressive quadruple stint.

His FE campaign didn't have the highs of previous seasons, but then he was no longer in a winning car. A quick one, yes, witness his three poles in 2018, but not one that could compete over a full race.



UP 18



**JOHAN
KRISTOFFERSSON**

WORLD RALLYCROSS CHAMPION
SCANDINAVIAN TOURING CAR CHAMPION

23 Kristoffersson's haul of 11 wins from 12 starts on route to the defence of his World Rallycross Championship crown appears as though he utterly dominated. And he did. But what those stats don't show is just how hard he worked.

The updated Volkswagen Polo Supercar didn't have as much of an edge over its rival machines from Peugeot or Audi as it had enjoyed in 2017, but Kristoffersson mastered extracting the best from the car and being in the right place at the right time. When others made mistakes, he was there to pounce.

His tin-top form back home was impeccable also, as he netted a second domestic touring car crown.



UP 4



**PIERRE
GASLY**

15TH IN FORMULA 1

22 Watch the first free practice session on any Formula 1 weekend, and several drivers catch the eye for their willingness to attack early on while others are tentative. Gasly is one of the chargers. This approach often allowed him to get down to a good lap time rapidly, carrying that momentum through the weekend. That attitude is to his advantage when it comes to all aspects of his game.

"He's very confident, not overconfident, but he believes in himself and that helps him," says Toro Rosso chief race engineer Jonathan Eddolls. "Nothing fazes him. He knows he's got the ability."



UP 18



**WILL
POWER**

3RD IN INDYCAR
INDY 500 WINNER

21 The 2014 IndyCar champion showed instances of brilliance, but there were enough errors and misfortune to halt his title charge.

Only three times did he qualify outside the top three, and he produced the lap of the season to take pole at Portland. Appropriately, that moved him up to second in IndyCar's all-time pole-winners list.

As well as his three wins, including a brilliant Indianapolis 500 triumph, he was the only Chevrolet driver able to take the fight to the best HPD-powered cars at Long Beach, Detroit and Pocono.

Against this were driving errors at Phoenix and Toronto, and aquaplaning at Barber. He was, however, blameless when his spotter's warning of a car drawing alongside in Texas was drowned out by a message from team boss Roger Penske.



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IMAGES

TOP 50 RE-ENTRIES

- 03 Jean-Eric Vergne**
24th in 2011
23rd in 2010
- 12 Alexander Rossi**
37th in 2015
- 17 Gary Paffett**
41st in 2013
14th in 2012
44th in 2010
20th in 2009
10th in 2005
25th in 2004
46th in 2002
- 27 Joey Logano**
26th in 2016
26th in 2015
- 29 Kevin Harvick**
23rd in 2015
11th in 2014
31st in 2013
37th in 2011
18th in 2010
34th in 2003
- 33 Paul di Resta**
27th in 2011
13th in 2010
32nd in 2009
25th in 2008
34th in 2007
40th in 2006
- 38 Scott McLaughlin**
48th in 2014
- 39 Shane van Gisbergen**
28th in 2016
- 47 Jenson Button**
47th in 2016
35th in 2015
15th in 2014
43rd in 2013
5th in 2012
2nd in 2011
10th in 2010
2nd in 2009
29th in 2008
6th in 2007
5th in 2006
7th in 2005
8th in 2004
11th in 2003
29th in 2002
- 49 Romain Grosjean**
18th in 2015
40th in 2014
24th in 2013
14th in 2011
36th in 2008
38th in 2007
- 50 Gabriele Tarquini**
44th in 2009
41st in 2004
41st in 2003



UP 1



MIKE CONWAY

CURRENTLY 2ND IN WEC LMP

20 Conway wasn't in the spotlight quite like the rest of Toyota's driver roster. There was no press pack hanging on his every word — he did his talking on the track.

The Brit had another strong year over the five 2018 races on the superseason schedule. He performed at the highest level every time out and didn't put a foot wrong.

Conway played a key role in the victory for the #7 TS050 HYBRID at Fuji. He was also impressive at the season opener at Spa, a race he and his team-mates might have won had they not started a lap down after a procedural issue.



DOWN 4



ESTEBAN OCON

12TH IN FORMULA 1

19 It was a season of sharpening his skills at the front of the intense 'Class B' fight for Ocon.

He scored fewer points than team-mate Sergio Perez, but without the collision with Kimi Raikkonen at the start in Azerbaijan it's conceivable he would have been the Force India driver on the podium. Had he finished there, and not been disqualified after finishing eighth at Austin, he'd likely have been ahead on points.

"This year I've been probably putting double the focus on all the details I had last year," he says. "It is very tough on the mind, to try to think ahead, and ahead of what you could do to avoid an issue."





DTM TITLE DECIDER

THE HOCKENHEIM QUALIFYING DECISION THAT WON GARY PAFFETT THE TITLE

"The whole weekend, we knew Rene [Rast]'s pace in the race was going to be strong but we knew we had a good qualifying car. I said at the start of the weekend I just had to keep Rene in my sights. On Saturday I was second on the grid, just behind Lucas [Auer], and I hadn't done a perfect lap, so I knew we had a car quick enough for pole.

"And then on Sunday, on the first run I had a big lock-up at Turn 6 and lost quite a few tenths there. And we were still in P4, I think, so I was feeling pretty confident going into the second run, and I was just losing a little bit in the first sector.

"So I kind of threw it into Turn 1 as quickly as I

could. The car bottomed on the kerb and bounced off the track and was well wide of track limits.

"We'd prepared for it. I said 'Do we need to just fuel it for one lap?' If you want to qualify on the first two rows it's one lap, but I said we needed a safety margin. I said, 'If you have to abort for the traffic or track limits then you've got a second lap, and you might be able to get onto the first four rows, if you're lucky'.

"When I bounced wide, I lifted straight away. I saved the tyres as much as I could and went for the second lap which, based on our simulations, wasn't going to be quick enough. But that's all I had.

"I threw it into Turn 1

a bit more gingerly, but actually ended up on opposite lock before I got to the apex. At that point I thought, 'This is not good'. I just kept on full throttle and made it through Turn 1. Two tenths down in the first sector and I was P9 and I thought, 'That's it'.

"The next two sectors – I didn't actually purple a sector but they were nearly purple. I put it P3 and the garage erupted as if we'd just won the championship, because everybody knew the importance of qualifying near the front.

"I remember stepping out of the car after qualifying and seeing Rene and his face just of... just disbelief, I think."



UP 14



SAM BIRD

3RD IN FORMULA E
CURRENTLY 9TH IN WEC GT

18

In what was generally considered an inferior package compared to his closest rivals in the championship – Techeetah's

Jean-Eric Vergne and Audi driver Lucas di Grassi – Bird transcended his car throughout the season.

He got off to the best of starts by winning the opener in Hong Kong – although he picked up a penalty for the second race by sliding into his pit garage at the car swaps – with his pass on Vergne in that race probably the best overtake of the year.

Bird showed his pace throughout the season in qualifying with five top-three starts, although he lost out to Vergne in the pole position stakes.



UP 5



THIERRY NEUVILLE

2ND IN THE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

14

Neuville's position is based on a superb first half of the season. But if he never wins the World Rally Championship,

he will forever look back and regret this year. How did he let such a significant mid-year advantage slip? He was 27 points up with six rounds to go.

Almost more important than the points, he had the impetus, the wind in his sails following a maiden Sweden win and success in Portugal. Beating Sebastien Ogier over a final-stage, winner-takes-all test in Sardinia filled Neuville with self-confidence and sent him very firmly into the summer break on the front foot.

But that was as good as it would get for Neuville. From there on, he didn't win again. Once again, Hyundai failed miserably in Finland as it searched for a workable set-up for the i20 on the season's fastest roads. Second in Germany would be Neuville's final podium visit of the year.

RE-ENTRY


**GARY
PAFFETT**

DTM CHAMPION

17

It had been a long time since his 2005 title, and for a period it looked as though Paffett was heading towards being an ex-DTM driver.

He was reborn in '18 thanks to the new technical rules and a forgiving Mercedes that perfectly suited his style. Suddenly, a driver who had always raced well but whose qualifying had often let him down was now the man to beat on single-lap pace – with the DTM awarding points to the top three qualifiers, that made the difference between him winning a second title and losing it to Audi star Rene Rast, who scored the most points in races. It was a beautiful Indian summer before heading off to Formula E.



REPORT BY GREG GASPARETTI

UP 8


**LUCAS
DI GRASSI**

FORMULA E RUNNER-UP

16

As well as his two Formula E wins this year, di Grassi has taken three victories in the Brazilian Stock Car championship and quickly

adapted to an unfamiliar Mazda to finish second at Petit Le Mans with the Joest squad he knew from his Audi LMP1 days.

In terms of his FE title defence, it's very hard to fault him. Audi's miserable start to the campaign meant he didn't score a point until the fifth round of the season in Mexico City, where he rose from last on the grid to ninth. But after that race he did not finish off the podium again, and stood on the top step in Zurich and the first New York race.



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/FERRARO

UP 2


**RENE
RAST**

DTM RUNNER-UP

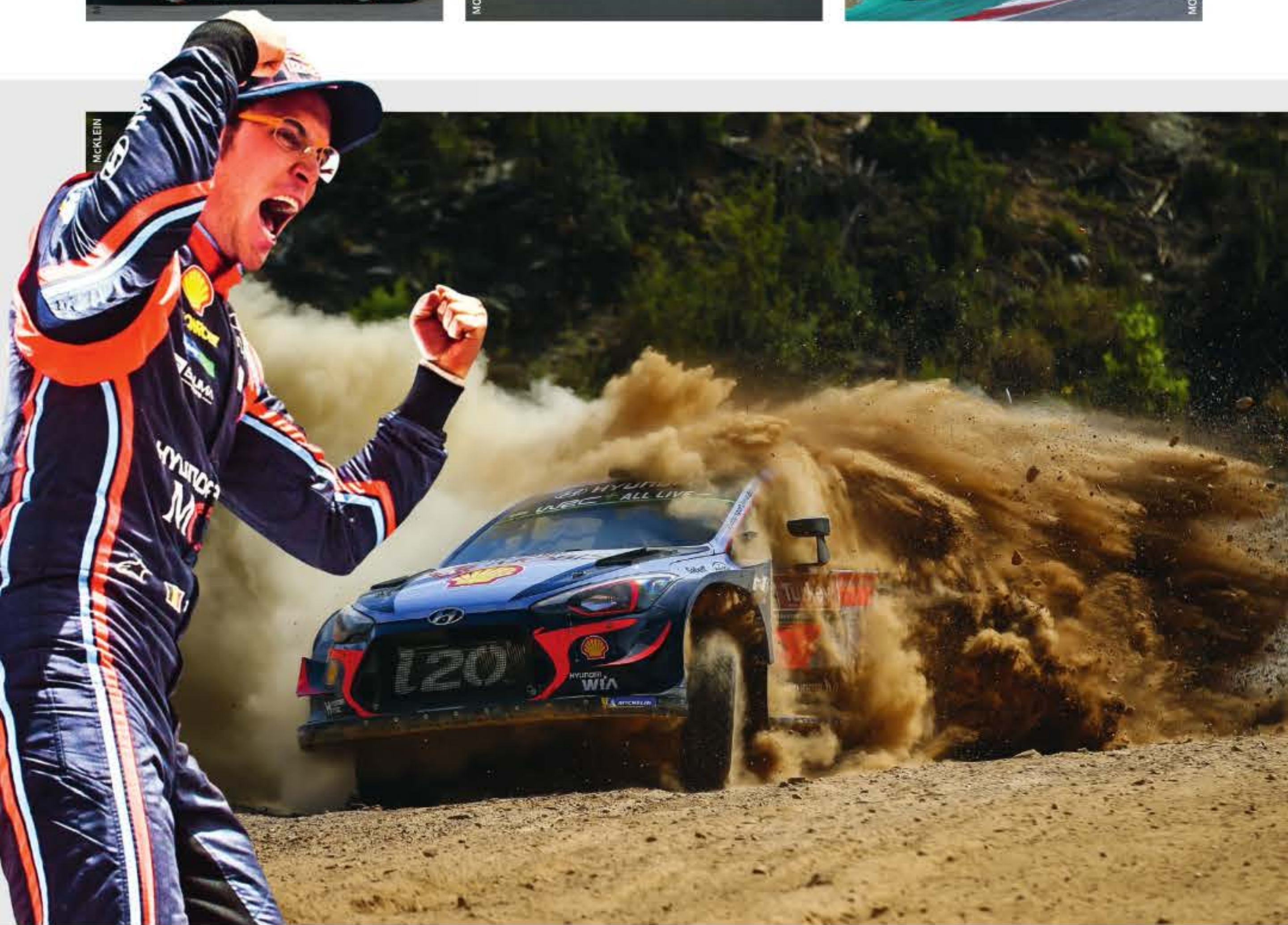
15

After a rookie season that culminated in his crowning as DTM champion in 2017, Rast arguably surpassed even that this

year. His extraordinary comeback to win the final six races almost resulted in a second successive title. While that did owe a little to changes to the sporting regulations hampering Mercedes, and some help from team-mates, he absolutely dominated a quality Audi sextet. From the 19 qualifying sessions he took part in (don't forget, he missed Lausitzring race two following his enormous first-race shunt), he was quickest of the marque's drivers on 11 occasions.



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/TRIENITZ



MCKLEIN

DOWN 6



DANIEL RICCIARDO

6TH IN FORMULA 1

13

There were two glorious high points – victory in China and Monaco – but beyond that it was a campaign that stretched the limits of the relentlessly cheery Ricciardo.

Poor reliability and grid penalties meant those were his only visits to the podium, although there were seven fourth places. Crucially, he was often 0.15-0.2s off team-mate Max Verstappen, and he admitted that the problems of 2018 inevitably did have an impact on performances – as perhaps did the half-season he spent contemplating a move away from Red Bull.

“A lot went on this year and I would be naive to think it didn’t affect me at some points,” says Ricciardo. “It’s not like I can pinpoint a race and say it went badly because I had too much on my mind, but it’s draining.”



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/SUTTON

RE-ENTRY



ALEXANDER ROSSI

INDYCAR RUNNER-UP

12

With Andretti Autosport back on form in 2018, Rossi proved from the off he’d be a title contender.

He was only mid-grid after a disrupted qualifying at St Petersburg, but he carved through to the front. While the clash with leader Robert Wickens was controversial, it laid an important marker: if he feels he has more than a 50% chance of pulling off a pass, Rossi will risk it.

At Phoenix, overtaking was supposedly impossible but, after a pitlane infraction triggered a drivethrough penalty and cost him a couple of laps, no-one could match Rossi’s pace and he climbed back to third.



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/ABBOTT

UP 2



NICO HULKENBERG

7TH IN FORMULA 1

11

Formula 1’s other champion in 2018 after prevailing in the unofficial ‘Class B’ midfield battle, Hulkenberg produced his

strongest season in some years. His pace has never been in doubt, and that was proved by his six races topping the midfield – twice what any other driver managed – but he has also played a key role in raising standards of an emerging Renault team.

“Nico brings a huge amount,” says the team’s trackside operations director Alan Permane. “He’s very driven, he’s very critical of the car and he’s very hard-working. He’s dragged us up and made us realise more of what’s important in the car.”



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/DUNBAR

UP 15



GEORGE RUSSELL

FORMULA 2 CHAMPION

10

A Williams seat on the 2019 Formula 1 grid wouldn’t have been possible without a brilliant 2018 F2 campaign for Russell, in

which he had tremendous rivals in Lando Norris and Alexander Albon – both also headed for F1.

Russell took the new F2 car by the scruff of the neck to start the year, and often it broke. But when it didn’t, there was rarely a moment when he wasn’t on top. His average feature race finish position was 3.4, a whole place higher than the next best Albon. He also tops the average qualifying charts, again over Albon. And he could have scored many more points without mechanical maladies.



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/MAUGE



UP 1



**CHARLES
LECLERC**

13TH IN FORMULA 1

09

The highly rated rookie had a difficult start to life in Formula 1, meaning those eager to write him off did so simply because he was

outqualified a couple of times by Marcus Ericsson.

But once he got to Azerbaijan, it all clicked for him. The result was an outstanding sixth place in a race where many more experienced drivers lost their heads. He never looked back, with his performances earning him a promotion to Ferrari.

"In the first few races, I learned massively," says Leclerc. "I worked extremely hard to understand what my weaknesses were. Since then, we were quite strong."



DOWN 4



**SEBASTIAN
VETTEL**

2ND IN FORMULA 1

08

There were too many errors, not least throwing away the lead in the German Grand Prix by sliding off in the wet. But we can't let that

overshadow the strong points of Vettel's season.

Saddled with the expectation of a Ferrari team that hasn't won a championship for a decade, which occasionally led to cracks appearing, he also put in some outstanding performances.

No driver nailed their theoretical best lap as many times as Vettel did. He also delivered consummate victories, and proved his wheel-to-wheel strength by overtaking Hamilton both in Austria and Belgium. It wasn't a perfect season by any means, but it wasn't a disaster either.



2018 NEW ENTRIES

26 Naoki Yamamoto

2013 Super Formula champion
2009 Japanese Formula 3
National Class champion

30 Alexander Albon

2016 GP3 Series runner-up
2014 3rd in FRenault Eurocup

37 Dan Ticktum

2017 7th in FRenault Eurocup
2015 6th in British Formula 4

40 Juri Vips

2017 German Formula 4 champion
2016 5th in Italian Formula 4

42 Nick Cassidy

2017 Super GT champion
2015 Japanese Formula 3
champion

43 Sergio Sette Camara

2017 12th in Formula 2
2016 11th in European Formula 3

45 Mick Schumacher

2017 12th in European Formula 3
2016 2nd in German & Italian F4

46 Dries Vanthoor

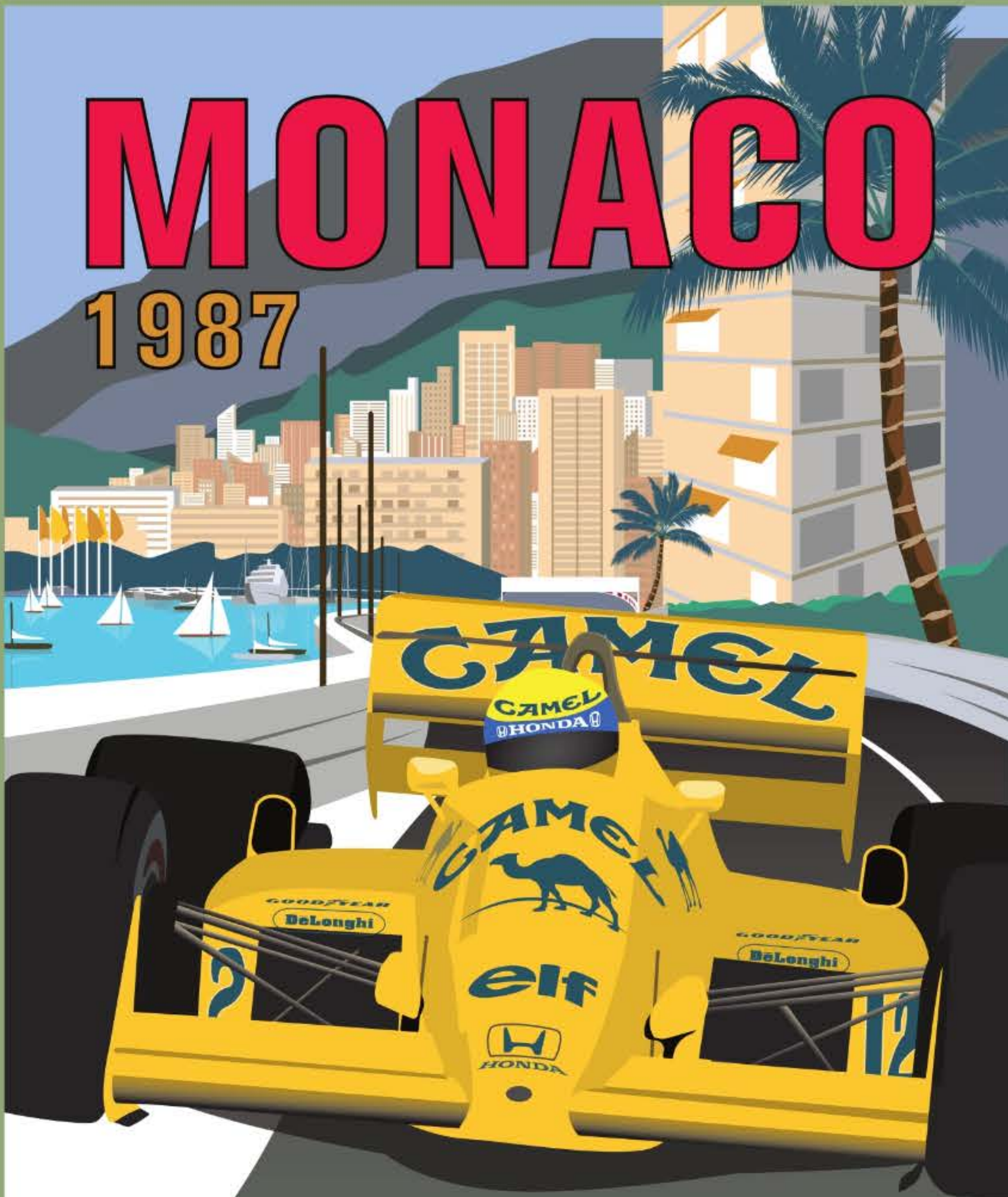
2017 10th in Blancpain GT
2016 20th in Blancpain GT



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TOP 50 DROPOUTS/ 2017 POSITIONS

- 20 Brendon Hartley**
19th in Formula 1
- 23 Felix Rosenqvist**
6th in Formula E
10th in Super GT
- 27 Joel Eriksson**
14th in DTM
- 28 Bruno Senna**
Currently 5th in WEC LMP
- 30 Kamui Kobayashi**
11th in Super Formula
13th in Super GT
Currently 2nd in WEC LMP
- 31 James Calado**
Currently 4th in WEC GT
- 33 Felipe Massa**
Switching from Formula 1 to Formula E
- 34 Timo Bernhard**
11th in ADAC GT Masters
- 35 Jamie Whincup**
3rd in Australian Supercars
- 36 Elfyn Evans**
7th in WRC
- 37 Mirko Bortolotti**
5th in Blancpain GT Sprint
8th in Blancpain GT
- 38 Kris Meeke**
14th in WRC
- 42 Jamie Green**
18th in DTM
- 44 Jari-Matti Latvala**
4th in WRC
- 45 Ricky Taylor**
7th in IMSA SportsCar Prototype
- 47 Alex Lynn**
Currently 10th in WEC GT
16th in Formula E
- 48 Raffaele Marciello**
Blancpain GT champion
Blancpain GT Sprint champion
2nd in Blancpain GT Endurance
- 49 Nicki Thiim**
Currently 5th in WEC GT
3rd in British GT
- 50 Dane Cameron**
5th in IMSA SportsCar Prototype

DOWN 2



SEBASTIEN OGIER

WORLD RALLY CHAMPION

07

Ogier couldn't be sure of keeping his crown until the end of the penultimate stage at the Rally Australia finale.

He enjoyed his best start to a season in four years with three wins from the first four rounds. When he left Corsica in April, he'd opened up a 17-point advantage over his nearest rival.

But the mid-season went south. In the next six rallies, he took one podium and watched his lead turn into a 27-point deficit following his final-stage defeat in Sardinia at the hands of Thierry Neuville. Fortunately, in Wales and Spain, he truly turned it on and you knew he wasn't going to let it slip again.



UP 12



SCOTT DIXON

INDYCAR CHAMPION

06

Dixon's third title in six years was the best of the lot. It didn't look like being his year after the first few rounds – he didn't lead a lap

or score a podium finish. But how many times have he and Chip Ganassi Racing been underestimated?

The turnaround started in May with second on the Indianapolis road course (from 18th on the grid) and third in the Indy 500. A week later in Detroit, he had his first win of the year – matching Michael Andretti's career tally of 42 victories – and a week after that at Texas Motor Speedway came his second.

Nothing better summed up Dixon's unerring ability to not shoot himself in the foot than Toronto – all his chief rivals bounced off walls or each other, as Dixon drove to victory lane.





DOWN 3



MAX VERSTAPPEN

4TH IN FORMULA 1

05

The first six races of Verstappen's season were a disaster, with too many incidents, a couple of potential victories thrown away and legitimate fears that he might be losing the plot. But while he vehemently denied it for much of the season, he moderated his approach from the

Canadian Grand Prix onwards and from that point was the only driver to consistently hold a candle to Lewis Hamilton's performance level. The result was victories in Austria and Mexico. And he consistently outperformed team-mate Daniel Ricciardo – twice number one in Autosport's Top 50 Drivers rankings.

"It's not really changing my approach," says Verstappen. "But I wanted too much initially – I really wanted to challenge even with the package we had. It was not possible."

The results of this change were obvious. At the start of the Canadian GP, he wisely backed out of a potential pass on Valtteri Bottas through the opening sequence of corners and was rewarded with a strong third-place finish. Having set aside the frustration of not driving a hoped-for

championship-contending car early in the season and having stopped trying to force the issue, by driving within himself he was back to the driver who we knew he could be. From then on, he was usually on the podium when the machinery would allow it and showed he'd learned how to keep out of trouble with charges from lowly grid positions to good results when he needed to.

But the Mexico win was when he really showed his class. In a race where everyone was limited by the tyres, he was able to build enough of an advantage to take an extra pitstop without losing the lead. This shoots down those who believe Verstappen to be nothing more than a fast hot-head, because he's also capable of great feats of race management when in the right mindset.

For the remaining three-quarters of the season, the main criticism of Verstappen was his willingness to move around in the braking zones, which led to a penalty at Monza. He also rejoined recklessly at Suzuka, which again led to a penalty. These are the errors of judgement he still needs to iron out or risk losing a championship to them. But what he proved once and for all in 2018 was that he could balance up his natural speed with a good, sharp racing brain that will keep his inner desire to take every turn at 100% in check.

Knowing when to attack and when to consolidate was one of the key things that made Hamilton so strong in 2018. Verstappen took a step towards knowing how to do the same thing this season, and the fact that he did that after seemingly losing the plot early on is testament to a capacity for self-improvement that should one day make him a champion.



UP 8



OTT TANAK

3RD IN THE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

04

Precipitation on the Swedish-Norwegian border, a Portuguese rock and his Toyota's fragile front end cost Tanak his first

World Rally Championship crown this season.

Had he (and series leader Ogier) not suffered the worst of the conditions – sweeping the snow aside at round two, bouncing off an on-line boulder in Portugal – and instead landed a couple of the results he looked odds-on for, the drivers' title would have been Estonian-bound for the first time.

Of course, every driver has a hard-luck story, but Tanak truly lost this year's title. The steely look in his eyes at the end of Rally Australia as he sat in the boot of his broken Toyota Yaris WRC was an indication that he has no intention of being in this position next year.

With four wins and a shot at the title, Tanak's season was mighty

enough but, when you consider it was his first time with the team after departing M-Sport, it was even better. Joining a new squad in the WRC is tough – you sign off from the old job in late November and you're wheeling the new motor over the ramp in Monte in January. In between, you'll be lucky to get two or three days of testing in the French Alps and luckier still if you get anything resembling the prevailing conditions.

Tanak emerged from a beautifully capricious Monte Carlo on the podium's second step, a warning shot muffled by miserable trips to Sweden and Mexico. In Corsica he was second again before the first win in Argentina. He was then up, running and should have disappeared into the points lead.

The highlight of the season for Toyota's new hero was a Finland-Germany-Turkey hat-trick. Hard to imagine three more different events unified by victory for one man and one car.

HOW TANAK BLEW HIS RIVALS AWAY

How has the season's third best rally driver (in points terms) rocketed eight places up our top 50 from last year and been outperformed by just three people in all of motorsport in 2018?

It's straightforward. Look beyond the table, and drill down into the real detail of the year.

The 13 rounds of this season's World Rally Championship comprised 250 stages – Tanak was

fastest on 70. More than one in four stages was won by the Toyota driver. Nobody else came close to that. Next best was Thierry Neuville on 40.

That number would probably have been even higher had it not been for the various problems that hampered Tanak in Mexico, Sardinia, Wales and Portugal.

Everybody knows that championships favour

the consistent and not always the fastest.

Performance peaks and troughs are not conducive to taking titles; steering the line of least resistance is.

NOBODY ELSE CAME CLOSE TO OTT TANAK'S NUMBER OF STAGE WINS

On every round this year, Tanak set out with one goal: to dominate and demoralise his opposition. He set at least one fastest time on every round and led all but five of the rallies.

There will be those who point to the potency of Tanak's Toyota as key to his 2018 performance, and there's no doubt that the speed of the Yaris WRC helped. But, in just its second season back in the WRC, Toyota was still finding its feet in terms of durability – front-end damage in Portugal, Sardinia and Wales (at least two of which shouldn't have slowed let alone stopped the car), allied to overheating and power-loss issues in the heat and height of Mexico, hindered him greatly.



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RE-ENTRY



JEAN-ERIC VERGNE

FORMULA E CHAMPION
ELMS LMP2 RUNNER-UP

03

Three years after his Formula 1 exit, Vergne began a journey that resulted in his first title in eight seasons and – one

high-profile disqualification aside – everything he touched seemed to turn to gold.

This was a driver who had earned a reputation as surly, difficult to work with and struggling to come to terms with his F1 rejection long after his exit from the highest stage in motorsport. He's certainly not that driver anymore.

His 2017-18 Formula E campaign began in spectacular style with pole for the first race in Hong Kong, which he set pointing in the wrong direction as he spun his car over the finish line. It took until the fourth race of the season for Vergne to claim a second category win – following on from his victory in Montreal at the final round of the 2016-17 season – but from that race in Santiago onwards he did not lose the points lead.

A subdued race in Mexico City was followed by a defensive masterclass to hold off a rampant Lucas di Grassi to triumph in Punta del Este, and he then scored an emotional home victory in Paris before taking a walk-off win in the New York season finale.

Between January and July, he also scored two wins in the European Le Mans Series (he added a third for the season at Silverstone in August), and shone at the Le Mans 24 Hours to help the same G-Drive squad take the LMP2 class honours. That victory, though, was taken away due to the team being found to have used illegally modified fuel rigs. With his help, G-Drive romped to the ELMS title, although Vergne lost out on the drivers' crown as he missed the season opener at Paul Ricard due to his FE commitments on the same weekend in Rome.

He claimed the FE title in the first race of the New York weekend with a drive that summed up just how much he has grown as a person. When the two Techeetah drivers were thrown out of qualifying due to a software issue causing their cars to briefly exceed the maximum power allowance, Vergne stalked from the paddock. A joke in the FE team and crew catering unit helped him lift the fog of fury and he returned to charge from 18th to fifth in the race, taking the points he needed to eliminate Sam Bird from title contention.

Vergne has worked hard, changed his approach, the people around him and refocused his goals. Success in sportscars was to show that he could be a team player – job done, and boosted further by the way he helped Techeetah team-mate Andre Lotterer get up to speed in FE.

"I took the lessons from losing F1 and losing the [Toyota] LMP1 seat and I had to restart, reset everything, and prove to people that I can change and prove that I can also work," he said during that July weekend in New York where he took his first title since winning British Formula 3 in 2010.

WHY FORMULA E ISN'T OVERRATED

A noticeable feature throughout the assembly of this year's Top 50 Drivers was the level of office argument over high placings for Formula E drivers.

In the case of Vergne, the reasons for his number three spot should be obvious. He won his primary championship, did so in what was ultimately an inferior car – although undoubtedly helped by Audi's early-season struggles – didn't make a proper mistake when it mattered all year, scored multiple wins in another category, and was arguably the standout LMP2 driver at Le Mans.

Vergne's primary series these days is FE – a new championship, yes, but new doesn't mean bad or inferior.

WHAT LITTLE CHAFF WAS IN FORMULA E HAS BEEN REPLACED BY PURE WHEAT

Consider Vergne's opposition this season. The top 10 contained four other former F1 drivers, a World Endurance class champion, two Macau GP winners, a GP3 champion, a triple Le Mans winner, and many more. Every seat for the 2018-19 season is now occupied by a driver of serious quality. What little chaff there was has been replaced by pure wheat.

The FE racing is always close and the cars are seriously hard to drive. Yes, they aren't as fast as in some other series, but since when does slower equal easier?

FE events are always set on city centre tracks, which means all the venues punish driver errors – there is a significantly smaller margin for error and the better drivers shine as a result.





ALONSO'S PREVIOUS TOP 50 RANKINGS

2002 N/A	2010 4th
2003 2nd	2011 3rd
2004 5th	2012 1st
2005 2nd	2013 4th
2006 1st	2014 3rd
2007 3rd	2015 13th
2008 3rd	2016 6th
2009 10th	2017 3rd



UP 1



FERNANDO ALONSO

11TH IN FORMULA 1
LE MANS 24 HOURS WINNER
CURRENTLY LEADING WEC LMP

02

Without Alonso, McLaren's season would have looked even worse than it was. What modest success the team did have was largely

down to his knack for extracting lap time from an unstable car through his willingness to put it on the edge of the performance envelope and rely on his sensational car control.

His 21-0 qualifying demolition of team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne reflects Alonso's ability to drive around the limitations that would constrain most other drivers.

"Last season, we could get into Q3 and often it was Fernando and Stoffel right next to each other, but this year the window has opened between them," says McLaren performance director Andrea Stella – formerly Alonso's race engineer.

"I've often seen, working with Fernando, the

more difficult the car was, the more he had a margin over his team-mate. And I would classify this year's car in the group of difficult cars. The 2014 Ferrari and even the '12 Ferrari, which is a car that was so close to being world champion, were not easy cars. So it's not a surprise that with a difficult car Fernando does this."

Add to that his iron will, dragging a battered McLaren back to the pits in the Azerbaijan Grand Prix then somehow hauling it to seventh place, and it was an outstanding season deserving of more than minor points finishes.

His heroics in Formula 1 going largely unrewarded made it easier to swallow his Toyota team's unopposed status in his parallel World Endurance Championship programme. But while Toyota may have had no factory LMP1 opposition, Alonso had five very well-established sportscar drivers to go up against within the team – and he acquitted himself extraordinarily well in terms of both his performance and attitude.

His commitment to his rookie season in the WEC and his ultimately successful bid to win the Le Mans 24 Hours was nothing short of amazing. That commitment was almost constantly evident both on and off the race track. The two-time F1 world champion took a no-stone-unturned approach to preparing for the WEC and Le Mans as he set out

on his quest to complete the unofficial triple crown of motorsport. Watching hours and hours of in-car footage from the previous year's races probably went beyond the call of duty, and it underlined how seriously he was taking his new challenge.

That commitment was equally evident on the track, nowhere more so than at Le Mans. The way he dived through the traffic at the restart after the second safety car early on Saturday evening was simply breathtaking.

Not every ex-F1 driver has conquered the unique challenge of the Circuit de la Sarthe at the first attempt in recent times. But Alonso did. It was he who ignited the fightback from the winning #8 Toyota TS050 HYBRID shared with Sebastien Buemi and Kazuki Nakajima early on Sunday morning. It was the decisive period of the race and Alonso was in the car at the time.

Everyone at Toyota was impressed by Alonso's dedication to the task in hand.

"I was thinking maybe we would treat the first Le Mans of the superseason as a learning year and then go for the win next year," says Buemi. "That wasn't the case at all. I was really impressed by his focus and how he never gives up. He wasn't just there to participate."

But then Alonso doesn't go motor racing to just participate, he does it to win.

NO CHANGE


**LEWIS
HAMILTON**

FORMULA 1 CHAMPION

**TOP
50
DRIVERS
of 2018**

WHY HE IS OUR NUMBER 1

A decade on from his first world championship, Lewis Hamilton has evolved from a raw and occasionally fallible talent into a seemingly unstoppable winning machine – and one without equal this year

EDD STRAW

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY


**motorsport
IMAGES**
01

What makes Lewis Hamilton so good? It's a simple question, but one with a complicated answer. What you can't argue with are his performances in 2018, which have been extraordinary. His pace is undeniable and he showed an uncanny knack for nailing key passing moves when it really mattered – notably on Sebastian Vettel in the Italian and Russian Grands Prix.

But he's also a great manager of races, knows when to attack and when to consolidate, looks after the tyres very effectively despite occasionally expressing scepticism over the radio that they will last, and works well with the team. In short, he's the complete package. During the 2018 season, the combination of Hamilton and Mercedes established itself as one of the great driver-team alliances in grand prix history.

So who better to offer insight into what it is that makes Hamilton the pre-eminent grand prix driver of today than Mercedes director of trackside engineering, Andrew Shovlin?

"His feel for the car is extraordinary," says Shovlin. "He doesn't drive on data, he just has this innate feeling for what the car's doing and what the tyres are doing with the way that he brings them in for a qualifying lap. All drivers can do that, but it's about the level that you can do it to."

"It's the way he can use the different tools as well, turning the car not just with the steering wheel, but the front axle, the back axle, how he can push the braking to the limit. It's all to do with margins, and he just seems to have the capacity to get closer than anyone else."

This means a lot coming from an engineer such as Shovlin, who has had first-hand experience of working with Michael Schumacher and Jenson Button. When it comes to Hamilton, Shovlin believes the level he's operating at is undoubtedly Schumacher-esque. >>

PREVIOUS DRIVERS OF THE YEAR

2002 Michael Schumacher
2003 Michael Schumacher
2004 Michael Schumacher
2005 Sebastien Loeb
2006 Fernando Alonso
2007 Kimi Raikkonen
2008 Robert Kubica
2009 **Lewis Hamilton**
2010 Sebastian Vettel
2011 Sebastian Vettel
2012 Fernando Alonso
2013 Sebastian Vettel
2014 Daniel Ricciardo
2015 **Lewis Hamilton**
2016 Daniel Ricciardo
2017 **Lewis Hamilton**



GORIA

HAMILTON'S YEAR IN NUMBERS

21
RACES

11
WINS

11
POLE
POSITIONS

3
FASTEST
LAPS

408
POINTS

458
LAPS
LED

3136
TOTAL
LAPS

9893
MILES

"I've worked with two multiple champions, Michael and Lewis," he says. "They will stop at nothing to just keep getting better and better. It's not about winning a championship for Lewis. It's just about constantly wanting to improve, maximise, and do more and more."

"Just having the goal of winning championships isn't enough. When you've got that inherent desire to, every year, come back a stronger, better, more effective driver. That has just kept pushing the level up, and eventually you just leave people behind. That's what he's done."

It's this iron will that has allowed Hamilton to reach new heights this year. The raw pace has always been at the heart of his game, but he's built himself up to become a fully rounded driver and team leader.

"In all the time I've known him, which is since he joined this team in 2013, the relentless desire to win has always been there," says Shovlin. "Almost it was less controllable [before]. I think what's really moved upwards is his resilience and demeanour, and being able to harness that so it's just completely productive emotion."

"Lewis won't accept second place, he won't accept third place. He always wants to know how we can win. But when you're racing for championships, you've got to make sure that on your bad weekends you can salvage as much as you can. Some races you do have to move to damage limitation mode."

"I would say that relentlessness is there. What you're seeing is that he's just able to rationalise the highs and the lows of a championship. He stays much more engaged. His proximity to the team is always there. If we have a bad race, he doesn't go off and worry about it on his own. He'll come to the factory, get us all together, and say, 'What are we going to do?'"

"In China, we had a horrendous weekend where we just didn't get the most out of the car. And Lewis would come in and get everyone together and we'd have a big head-scratching session because some of the things he knows about what's happening and how the car is feeling are clues as to what we need to put right."

Hamilton's sheer will to win is often manifest in the races, as he grapples to get his head around the race situation when strategy calls haven't gone as hoped. That happened a few times this year, but it never seemed to have a negative impact on his performance.

"Drivers do want to know what's going on in the race, they've got to build up that picture, and when you're racing really closely it is difficult," Shovlin says. "If you have a Ferrari behind you at the first stop, they will push you into a strategy that you're not comfortable with. But if you don't stop early then they'll undercut you. So they have a certain advantage even though you're leading."

"Those situations are often quite difficult to explain on the radio, it's quite difficult for the driver to understand everything about the race strategy. We're there with three screens of data, showing us everything. He's only got what we're telling him through the radio."

"But it is just part of his passion to win and the fact that he finds it quite hard to rationalise why we're not winning. And it's nice that he

Hamilton wrapped up
the championship with
two races to spare



**JUST HAVING THE GOAL OF WINNING
THE CHAMPIONSHIP ISN'T ENOUGH.
YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE THAT INHERENT
DESIRE TO COME BACK A STRONGER
DRIVER EVERY YEAR**



doesn't give up. There are drivers that, when they have a setback, they won't be matching the lap times they had been doing before.

"I think Lewis just wants to finish every Sunday thinking that he couldn't have done one single bit more to have achieved a win if we didn't win a race. It's his desire to know that he's delivered the absolute maximum."

Some of Mercedes' strategic decisions this past season genuinely seemed to test Hamilton's resolve. But Sochi exemplified how he is able to channel frustration into a game-changing pass when he overtook Vettel around the outside of Turn 3/inside of Turn 4 after he lost track position to a delayed pitstop. >>

Shovlin has worked with Hamilton since Lewis joined Mercedes



"It's those instances where you get those flashes of brilliance," says Shovlin. "Sochi was one where we thought we'd made a mistake again. We should have had Lewis ahead of Sebastian in that scenario but he managed to pull it back. He shouldn't have been able to do that. Theoretically, he didn't have the pace delta in the car to make a pass work.

"But he's searching to make sure there's no stone left unturned, no opportunity missed, and it may be that other drivers wouldn't have tried a move there in the way that he did. He never, ever gives up.

"There are days when that can cause us problems on the pitwall. We've got an angry Lewis to deal with because we've not done a good enough job. But there are also days where you deliver a race win that may have gone to another team if we didn't have him in the car."

The Italian GP, where Hamilton first passed title rival Vettel on the opening lap, then drove a beautiful race to pass Kimi Raikkonen to win during the final stint, is a classic example of where the driver made the difference. That drive combined the need to improvise, to seize the opportunity, with knowing when to bide your time. Hamilton did that brilliantly and, aligned with the right strategy, seized victory. Those who believe he's just a fast racing driver in a good car should take a long, hard look at races like those to appreciate just how great a driver Hamilton is.

"In the past you had battles where you had the natural talent versus someone who was more intelligent, maybe more academic, who would put more hours in and they can balance out," says Shovlin.

"But when you look at Lewis, he's taken all that natural ability and attached to it this understanding of how the car works, how the tyres work, doing all the preparation work that you need to do. And these days, you can't just jump in the car and drive it. You've got to understand all of that. There's a lot of the engineering that they've got to have in their heads while they're thinking about what's going on."

The progression of Hamilton from stunningly fast but raw rookie in 2007 to now has been fascinating to follow. He's a driver who has raised his game at every turn and came into '18 as not just an all-time great, but one of the very greatest. That's his greatest strength – the ability to improve constantly driven on by his ferocious will to win. That's what makes him, by some margin, our number one driver. ✎

Sheer will to win is one of Hamilton's key characteristics



Hamilton's pass on Vettel in Sochi was a textbook example of his ability to make something out of nothing





After Lewis Hamilton won the Azerbaijan Grand Prix it was a surprise to see him, immediately after the race, run through the paddock at a time when protocol demanded he head straight to the podium.

It turned out he was seeking out team-mate Valtteri Bottas, who'd suffered a puncture with three laps to go that cost him victory. Hamilton felt it was Bottas's race to win, and went to commiserate.

Some believed this was a show of false modesty, but it was sincere. Hamilton believes there's a right way and a wrong way to win. And that's an aspect that has elevated him and his performances in 2018.

In recent decades, the trend has been to venerate

ruthlessness in the star drivers. Alain Prost, Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher all stepped over the mark at times in their pursuit of titles.

Hamilton shares that determination to win, but it's a mark of his greatness

that the way he takes victory is just as important. He's a driver every aspiring Formula 1 racer will look up to, so perhaps his greatest legacy will be instilling that less uncompromising ethical code in the minds of the next generation?

There was a time when Hamilton was a regular face in the F1 stewards' room. But he hasn't been held officially responsible for an on-track clash since the 2015 Hungarian Grand Prix. What he has demonstrated is outstanding judgement in

battle, knowing when to go for a gap, and when it might be just that a bit too small.

He has also either developed a stronger social conscience, or has become more willing to use his position to express himself. He doesn't always get it right, but he is sincere in his desire to have a positive effect, to help ensure young drivers don't ruin their education in the often futile pursuit of racing success, and to lobby for causes he believes in.

Whether or not you agree with him, that's worthy of great respect.

This is what makes Hamilton more than just a champion racing driver, and elevates him closer to the level of a global sporting superstar.



Da Costa gives BMW perfect start

Heavy rain — in Saudi Arabia of all places — threatened to disrupt proceedings at this ‘Suzuka with walls’, but Formula E’s new era got off to an encouraging beginning

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY



W

hen it came to one crucial area, every pre-weekend predication and expectation for the opening round of the ABB FIA Formula E

Championship season in Saudi Arabia was proved utterly, almost shambolically, wrong.

Over the 45 races of the Gen1 era, there had not been a single wet race. Sure, there were rain-affected moments here and there, but it was never a realistic consideration that the Ad Diriyah E-Prix — situated in Saudi Arabia’s first capital, which lies on the outskirts of the modern equivalent, Riyadh — would feature anything but blazing sunshine. That woefully naive assumption was thoroughly debunked on race day, though, as overnight storms coupled with further rain first thing in the morning caused timetable chaos and dramatically increased uncertainty levels throughout the FE paddock.

Tensions were already running high because of the nature of the track — an undulating, 1.5-mile construction near the UNESCO heritage site of Ad Diriyah that had two distinct sections. The flowing downhill first half featured plenty of blind turns and narrow runs between the walls, and a second section comprised longer blasts and more typically tight FE turns. “Suzuka with walls,” was NIO driver Tom Dillmann’s assessment.

Losing both scheduled practice sessions due to the weather — the up-and-down topography meant pooled standing water could not be pumped away fast enough — was not what the teams needed ahead of the first race for the new Gen2 cars. They did finally get 35 minutes of practice, though, shortly before a hastily revised qualifying session took place with two combined groups and no superpole.

That impacted their race-preparation plans, which had more import here because there were so many lingering uncertainties.

Not least of these was the impending debut of the attack-mode system, allowing cars to run with higher power for short periods. The FIA mandated two four-minute uses at 225kW for the system’s first event, but it was the placing of the activation zone that caused plenty of pre-race headaches.

Many drivers — including reigning champion Jean-Eric Vergne — were unimpressed with the zone being positioned close to the wall at the exit of Turn 17, which fed onto the track’s main straight that staged the race start. Located off the racing line, to the right of the corner exit, the zone housed the three timing loops the drivers had to run over to activate the attack mode. This required a tighter line than the natural corner exit, and the drivers complained about having to slow down on the racing line to make it into the zone, and run close to the right-hand wall to go over the loops. In the end, the FIA listened to their feedback and moved the zone 23 metres further away from the corner.

“Losing both practice sessions wasn’t what the teams needed ahead of the first race”

But the race firmly banished any sense of unease or uncertainty. FE may have a new look and many unfamiliar drivers for the 2018-19 championship, but its racing was as tight and unpredictable as ever.

One firm non-surprise was the team that claimed pole position: BMW Andretti. The squad had headed all three days of pre-season testing and again showed good top-end speed to claim the top spot on the grid, as Antonio Felix da Costa mastered the damp and greasy conditions on the still-drying track. >>

GRIFITHS



TAGHeuer



Throughout FE's first four seasons, the Andretti squad had not scored a single race win. It had come close – Franck Montagny took second in the championship's inaugural race, a feat matched that season by Vergne and Scott Speed – but its first event as the BMW works squad ended on the top step of the podium.

But it wasn't straightforward. First, da Costa had to reverse into his grid spot after overshooting because he was "looking at the wrong line on the floor". The manoeuvre left him pointing towards the wall on the left side 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 past Jose Maria Lopez to take second around the outside of the first corner.

"Both Techeetah drivers were penalised for going over the maximum permitted power"

Lopez had started second after Dillmann was thrown out of qualifying for not respecting the maximum number of laps allowed. The drivers were supposed to stick to the usual out-lap, 200kW sighting tour, 250kW flying lap, in-lap arrangement, but Dillmann ran solidly for 10 minutes before putting his flying lap in. He was also punished, along with team-mate Oliver Turvey, for missing sensors on the FIA dataloggers in the NIO cars, which meant they lined up at the rear of the field.

Da Costa consolidated his lead during the early laps, during which Venturi's Edoardo Mortara crunched into the barriers at Turn 1 on the first tour, and Vergne and his DS Techeetah team-mate 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 – clearly the track's most optimal overtaking spot, because 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's 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 one-two 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 drive-through penalties for going over the maximum permitted power while using

regen. This is a breach of article 27.9 of FE's sporting rules and relates to a software issue resulting in power regeneration exceeding the level defined within the FIA suppliers' software-implementation guide.

"It was basically on regen – similar to what other people [including Lucas di Grassi, Sam Bird and Robin Frijns] had in qualifying," said Techeetah team principal Mark Preston. "We had a similar issue [in practice] but we thought we fixed it."

"When you brake, the system has to keep below a certain kW regen level and you're trying to go down the line and follow the rule. If you spike across the line, it's actually quite hard – the brakes





may lock or something – and then your control system has to react because now we've got brake-by-wire."

The penalties handed da Costa the lead back, ahead of Jerome d'Ambrosio, who had risen from sixth on the grid, with Vergne and Lotterer rejoining fifth and seventh.

But the penalised DS Techeetah duo – Felipe Massa was also forced to serve a drive-through for the same infraction – 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) to close on the top three.

Their charge was assisted by Lopez stopping with broken left-rear suspension. It had been a spirited drive from Lopez, but the Dragon Racing man 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 >>

EVANS SETS INITIAL PACE IN ETROPHY

THERE WERE ONLY 12 JAGUAR I-PACEs on the grid for the first round of the eTrophy, but it only takes two cars to make a race. In the event there was a three-way fight for the win, and it made for entertaining viewing.

Heavy rain meant qualifying was an unexpected washout and handed Simon Evans – older brother of Jaguar Formula E star Mitch – pole by virtue of his free practice time. The Kiwi held the lead off the line and defended from Bryan Sellers, then later on rebuffed a late attack by the charging Sergio Jimenez to score a landmark result.

Jimenez pulled off a sweet move on Sellers on the penultimate lap and, although he homed in on the leader, he didn't quite get close enough to make an attempt on the lead.

"When I saw him make the pass in my mirrors I knew it was my chance to focus in front of me and get my head down," said Evans. "In the end I was just relieved to see the chequered flag."

In a bid to save his single set of tyres, Jimenez had deliberately run minimal laps in practice, but was sure he had the pace to win: "In the beginning of the race it was more wet and for my car that was not very good for the set-up we chose. So I was following the front two although it was not easy. Then, when it started to dry a bit, my car improved and I was quicker than them. In the final five laps they started to slide and when I saw Bryan slide a bit wide I made the move."



Sellers was a comfortable third, while Brazilian stock car legend Caca Bueno was a frustrated fourth after deploying a similar tactic to Jimenez in practice.

Making a one-off return to racing in the VIP guest car, Alice Powell was fifth and the highest of the three female drivers in the Saudi Arabian race.

"I hadn't done any racing in about three years, so it was fantastic of Jaguar to invite me and I really enjoyed it," she said. "The aim was top four, so I just missed out, but still really pleased."

Katherine Legge took sixth ahead of Bandon Aleyasi, the Saudi driver who was the class of the five-car Am field by a substantial distance.

ANDREW VAN DE BURGT



IN THE HEADLINES



ROWLAND'S POINTS

Oliver Rowland (above), who was only confirmed as Sebastien Buemi's Nissan e.dams team-mate just before the start of the season, finished 2.48 seconds behind the 12-time FE winner. "Overall it was pretty good," he said of his race, which was helped by the safety car closing up the pack. "I just sort of got stuck in, got my elbows out, and had some fun and ended up seventh."

VERGNE EXTENDS

It was announced after shakedown that Jean-Eric Vergne has agreed a new long-term contract extension with the DS Techeetah squad. Autosport understands the deal will last at least two more seasons. Vergne has raced with the Techeetah squad, which is now the works DS FE team, since the start of the 2016-17 season.

PENALTY PAINS

The race didn't pan out well for much of the British contingent: Sam Bird, Oliver Turvey, Gary Paffett and Alexander Sims failed to score points. Bird reckoned Virgin Racing "could have got a podium if it wasn't for the [power overshoot] penalty", but he ended up 11th after starting 19th. Turvey recovered to 13th after his qualifying penalty, while HWA's Paffett crashed out of a "very disappointing race weekend for me". BMW man Sims's race was wrecked by two penalties – one a 10-second stop/go – for going over the 200kW power cap, after he started 10th due to disruption at the end of the second half of qualifying.

ROSENQVIST RETIRES

The disruption in qualifying was caused by Felix Rosenqvist crashing into the barriers at the final corner. The Swedish driver – making a one-off appearance in place of Pascal Wehrlein at Mahindra Racing – retired from his FE swansong with a suspected transmission issue during the early running. "We're afraid it was the same thing that happened in qualifying," said Rosenqvist, who will compete in IndyCar next season.



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 was quickly replaced with an actual one. This closed the pack up, and da Costa immediately activated his first attack mode 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. Once Vergne had accomplished that he set off in pursuit of da Costa, but he simply

ran out of laps: at the start of the final tour he was 1.507s behind, but was just 0.462s adrift at the chequered flag.

"I wasn't actually stressed until the second-last corner where I wasn't expecting him to be that close," 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 thinking, 'I should have kept pushing on 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 on to the race track here in Riyadh for the first time and have the first victory from pole straight away, you definitely can't have it any better," he said.

D'Ambrosio completed the podium for Mahindra ahead of a late-charging Mitch Evans (Jaguar), Lotterer, and Nissan pair



Rain pooled in certain areas of the undulating Ad Diriyah circuit



Buemi and Oliver Rowland, who was the top-placed rookie. Jaguar's Nelson Piquet rounded out the top 10 behind disappointed Audi pair Daniel Abt and Lucas di Grassi.

Given BMW's instant success and Techeetah's impressive pace, the first race of the new season was rather disappointing for the reigning teams' champion. An emotional Abt reckoned afterwards that Audi "absolutely have no pace in the race compared to others".

"We probably didn't hit the sweet spot in terms of the car, I think that's quite clear," said team boss Allan McNish. "On pure pace, we weren't there this weekend. But that's not our performance level – our performance level is better than that, but it certainly was not ideal. Hence the reason that I'm a little bit frustrated and disappointed, as we all are, because we came here with a different goal than finishing eighth and ninth."

There were several key takeaways from the opening race of the Gen2 era. First, Techeetah looked mighty. Vergne and Lotterer pulled off overtaking moves few others were capable of and their pace in the race was searing.

Second, BMW has the speed over one lap but needs to improve in the race. "In a way it was good that we see someone still has the upper hand on us," said da Costa. "Because I'm sure the [team will] still work hard – that's what I wanted."

Audi needs to hit back in Marrakech. Its recovery in season four proves that it should never be written off, and at least both drivers are on the scoreboard from the off this time. But really, the main lesson from Saudi Arabia was that the pre-race uncertainty was for nothing. FE is still as close, exciting and unpredictable as ever. *W*

RESULTS ROUND 1/12, AD DIRIYAH (KSA), DECEMBER 15 (33 LAPS – 51.510 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Antonio Felix da Costa (P)	BMW / BMW iFE.18	46m29.377s
2	Jean-Eric Vergne (F)	DS Techeetah / DSE-Tense FE19	+0.462s
3	Jerome d'Ambrosio (B)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M5Electro	+4.033s
4	Mitch Evans (NZ)	Jaguar / Jaguar I-TYPE 3	+5.383s
5	Andre Lotterer (D)	DS Techeetah / DSE-Tense FE19	+5.579s
6	Sebastien Buemi (CH)	Nissan e.Dams / Nissan IM01	+6.625s
7	Oliver Rowland (GB)	Nissan e.Dams / Nissan IM01	+9.105s
8	Daniel Abt (D)	Audi Sport Abt / Audi e-tron FE05	+9.819s
9	Lucas di Grassi (BR)	Audi Sport Abt / Audi e-tron FE05	+10.936s
10	Nelson Piquet Jr (BR)	Jaguar / Jaguar I-TYPE 3	+11.564s
11	Sam Bird (GB)	Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE05	+11.747s
12	Robin Frijns (NL)	Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE05	+12.189s
13	Oliver Turvey (GB)	NIO / NIO 004	+13.104s
14	Tom Dillmann (F)	NIO / NIO 004	+14.273s
15	Maximilian Gunther (D)	Dragon Racing / Penske EV-3	+16.161s
16	Stoffel Vandoorne (B)	HWA / Venturi VFE-05	+20.013s
17	Felipe Massa (BR)	Venturi / Venturi VFE-05	+43.610s
18	Alexander Sims (GB)	BMW / BMW iFE.18	+47.712s
19	Edoardo Mortara (I)	Venturi / Venturi VFE-05	-1 lap
R	Jose Maria Lopez (RA)	Dragon Racing / Penske EV-3	25 laps-accident damage
R	Gary Paffett (GB)	HWA / Venturi VFE-05	9 laps-accident damage
R	Felix Rosenqvist (S)	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 1m18.269s; 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 Sims 1m20.367s; 11 Abt 1m20.385s; 12 Massa 1m20.407s; 13 Mortara 1m20.330s*; 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. * 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.



PICTURES OF THE YEAR

From trackside and pitlane to special stage, our photographers captured some fine images in 2018. Here's our pick of the best



A riot-of-colour backdrop for the Jota-run Jackie Chan DC Racing ORECA in the Daytona 24 Hours.
DREW GIBSON





S BLOXHAM
motorsport
IMAGES

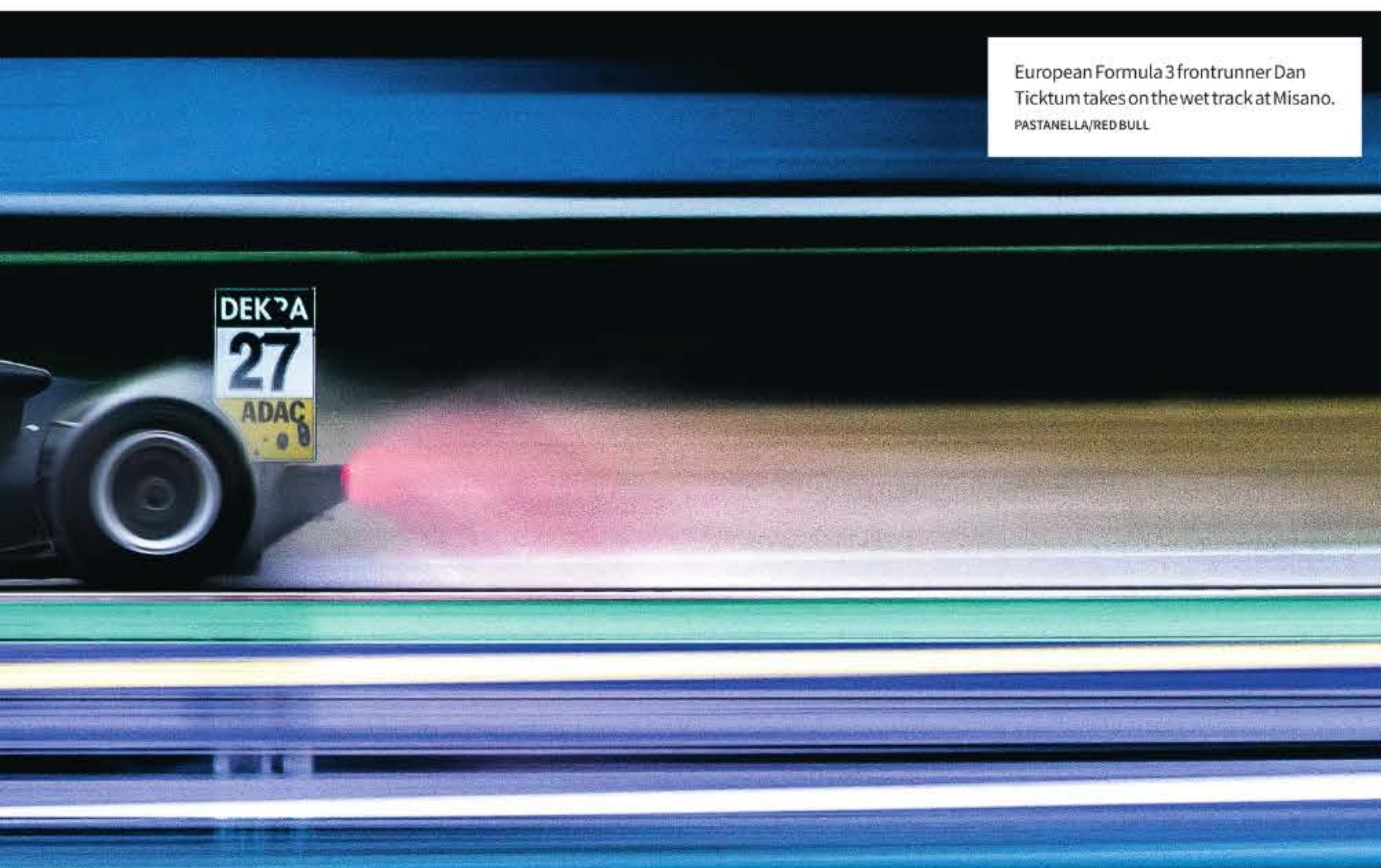
Jerome d'Ambrosio makes a splash during Formula E's season-four finale in New York.



GORIA
motorsport
IMAGES

Sebastian Vettel's fine impression of Kimi Raikkonen's reflection at the United States GP.







Johan Kristoffersson enjoys the fireworks in Sweden as he scores another rallycross win.
MCKLEIN PHOTOGRAPHY





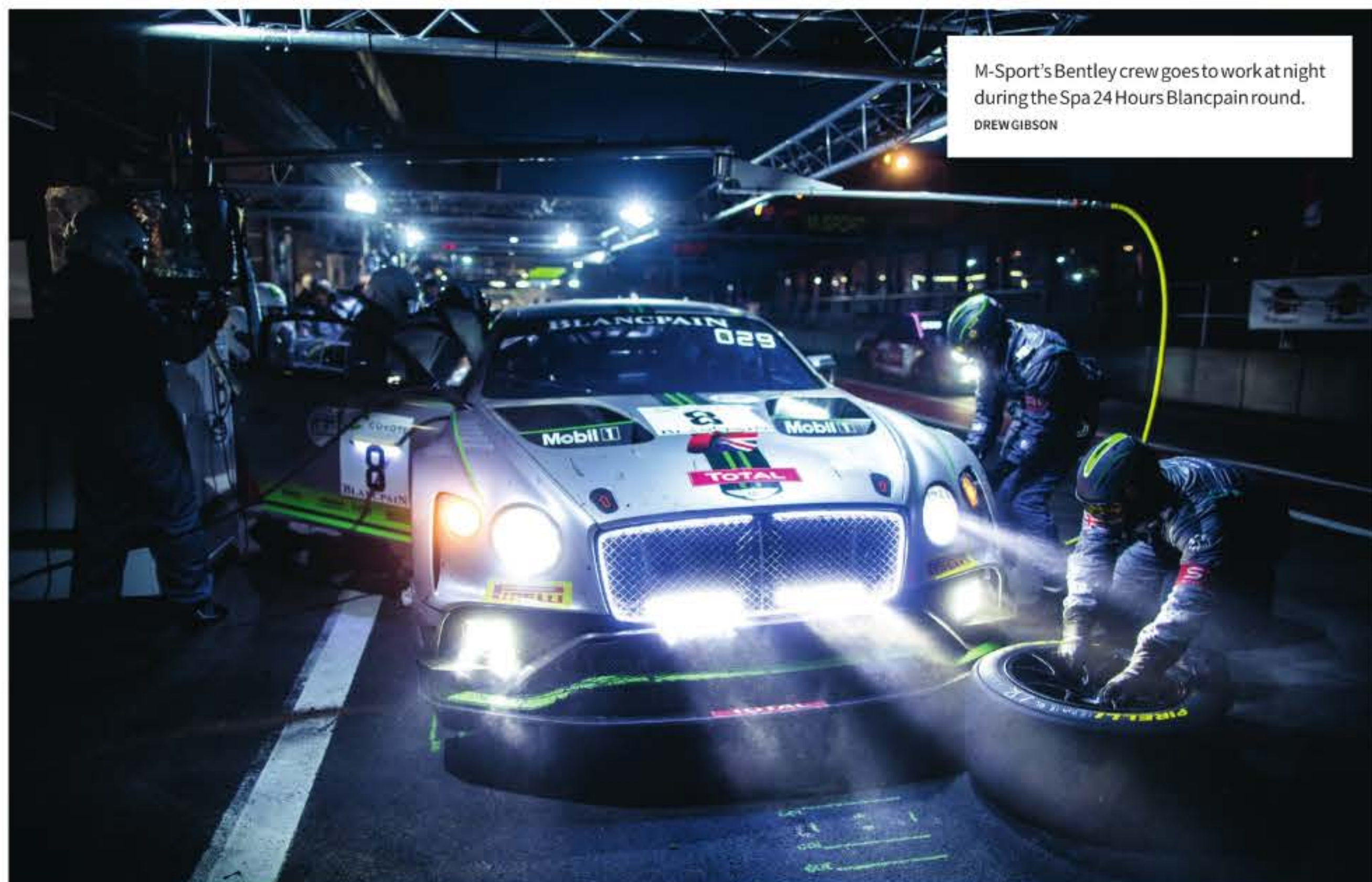
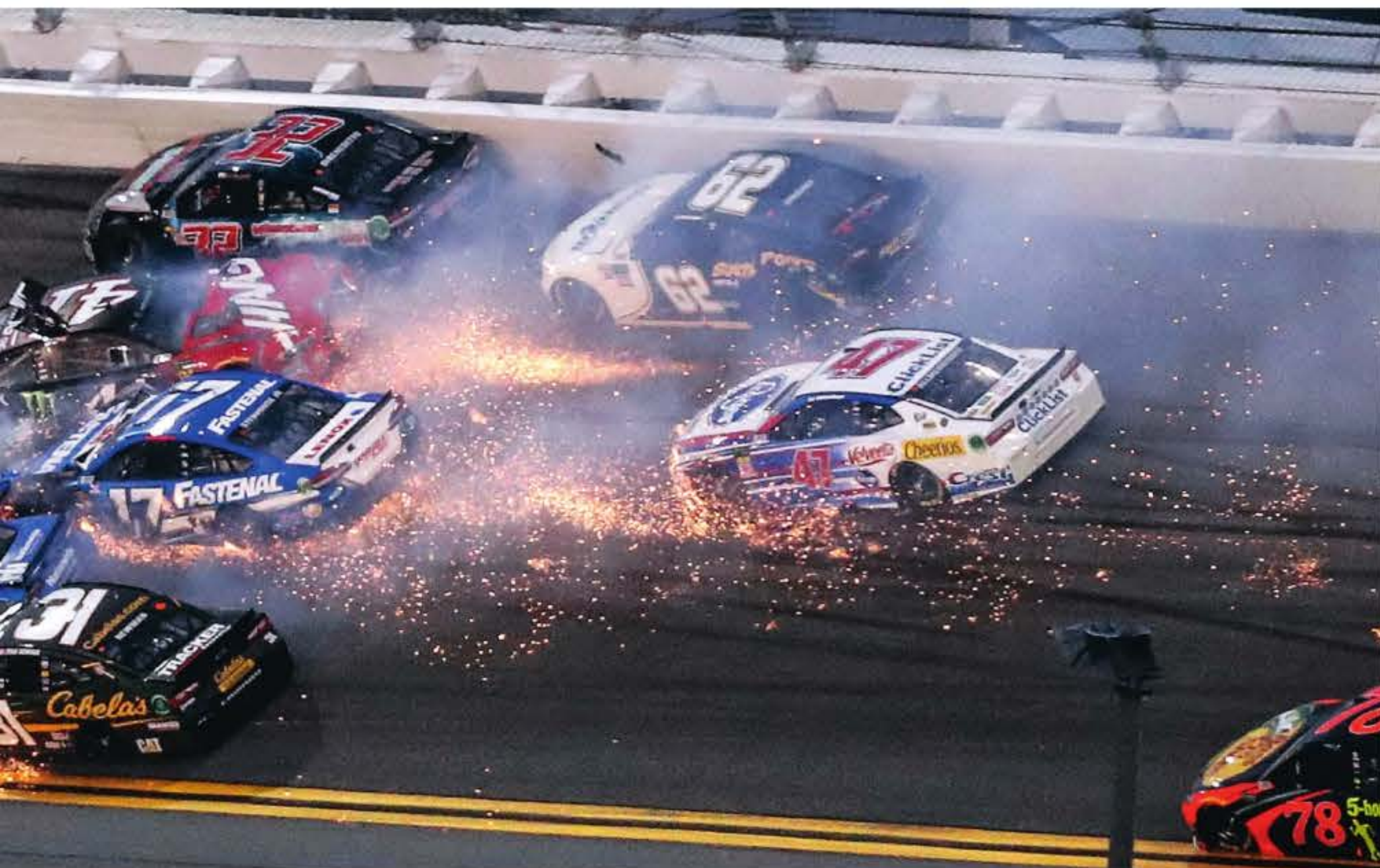
LEVITT
motorsport
IMAGES

Some classic NASCAR Cup chaos in round one, the Daytona 500, back in February.



GORIA
motorsport
IMAGES

Red Bull's Max Verstappen retires from the Hungarian GP after a Renault MGU-K failure.



M-Sport's Bentley crew goes to work at night during the Spa 24 Hours Blancpain round.

DREW GIBSON





FASTEST LAPS OF 2018

Every year we record who set the fastest race laps for cars on each circuit layout used in the UK and Ireland — from Vettel to the BOSS Ireland boys...

COMPILED BY MARCUS SIMMONS



TRACK, DRIVER AND CAR	TIME	SPEED	DATE
SILVERSTONE GRAND PRIX Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari SF71H)	1m30.696s	145.30mph	July 8
ROCKINGHAM OVAL Dale Gent (SHP Pickup-Vauxhall)	40.075s	132.86mph	September 23
DONINGTON PARK NATIONAL Stephen Daly (Dallara-Mercedes F308)	1m01.591s	115.67mph	April 21
THRUXTON Jack Doohan (Mygale-Ford/EcoBoost M14-F4)	1m13.854s	114.84mph	May 19
SILVERSTONE HISTORIC GP Michael Lyons (Lola-Chevrolet T400)	1m55.139s	113.79mph	June 16
SILVERSTONE NATIONAL Cian Carey (Dallara-Volkswagen F308)	52.416s	112.66mph	June 24
BRANDSHATCH GRAND PRIX Rui Aguas (Peugeot 908 HDi)	1m19.420s	110.29mph	May 27
GOODWOOD Karun Chandhok (McLaren-Elva-Chevrolet M1A)	1m20.238s	106.78mph	September 8
OULTON PARK INTERNATIONAL Nicolai Kjaergaard (Tatuus-Cosworth F4-016)	1m31.047s	106.44mph	March 31
CASTLE COMBE Josh Smith (Radical-RPE Suzuki PR6)	1m02.721s	106.18mph	August 12
MALLORY PARK Andy Southcott (MG-Vauxhall Midget)	46.315s	104.93mph	October 7
DONINGTON PARK GRAND PRIX Nicolai Kjaergaard (Tatuus-Cosworth F4-016)	1m25.815s	104.34mph	September 23
SILVERSTONE INTERNATIONAL Joe Stables (Radical-RPE Suzuki SR3)	1m04.79s	102.79mph	August 11
SNETTERTON 300 Bradley Smith (Norma-Nissan M30)	1m44.137s	102.63mph	July 1
KIRKISTOWN Eamon Matheson (MM-Honda)	54.160s	100.50mph	August 25
BRANDSHATCH INDY Michael Lyons (Lola-Chevrolet T400)	43.746s	99.40mph	June 10
BISHOPSCOURT Sam Mansfield (Radical-RPE SR8)	1m06.804s	98.29mph	May 13



GOODWOOD
Karun Chandhok
(McLaren-Elva-Chevrolet M1A)

J BLOXHAM
motorsport
IMAGES



CROFT



KNOCKHILL ANTI-CLOCKWISE



PEMBREY CLUBMANS



MONDELLO PARK LONG

TRACK, DRIVER AND CAR	TIME	SPEED	DATE
OULTON PARK ISLAND Lewis Plato (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)	1m22.769s	96.81mph	June 9
SNETTERTON 200 Mark Charteris (Mallock U2-Ford Mk20/21)	1m14.128s	96.35mph	April 21
ROCKINGHAM INT'L SUPER SPORTSCAR Chris Dittmann (Dallara-Mercedes F312)	1m13.235s	95.36mph	September 29
CROFT Lee Morgan (Jedi-Suzuki Mk6)	1m20.454s	95.08mph	September 9
CADWELL PARK Michael Watton (Jedi-Suzuki Mk6)	1m22.933s	94.93mph	June 2
KNOCKHILL Johnathan Hoggard (Mygale-Ford/EcoBoost M14-F4)	49.266s	92.58mph	August 25
ROCKINGHAM INT'L LONG Patrick Sherrington (MCR-Ford/Duratec Sport)	1m22.758s	89.17mph	June 23
KNOCKHILL ANTI-CLOCKWISE Josh Price (Honda Civic Type R TCR)	51.691s	88.23mph	May 13
ANGLESEY COASTAL Neil Harrison (Dallara-Toyota F302)	1m04.066s	87.09mph	November 18
PEMBREY NATIONAL Damian Longotano (Westfield-Millington SE)	1m00.766s	86.25mph	August 19
PEMBREY CLUBMANS Paul Smith (Mittell-Honda MC-53)	1m03.74s	84.15mph	July 1
MONDELLO PARK LONG Stephen Daly (Dallara-Mercedes F308)	1m33.378s	83.92mph	September 15
ANGLESEY INTERNATIONAL Paul Rose (Saker-Subaru RAPX S1-400)	1m32.031s	82.14mph	September 2
ROCKINGHAM INTERNATIONAL Alex Sidwell (Holden Commodore)	1m49.720s	80.05mph	September 1
LYDDEN HILL Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC)	45.356s	79.37mph	July 8
MONDELLO PARK SHORT ANTI-CLOCKWISE Sylvie Mullins (Dallara-Mugen Honda F305)	54.581s	75.82mph	June 10
MONDELLO PARK SHORT Peter Dwyer (Lola-Nissan T96/50)	55.906s	74.03mph	April 14

SEASON
REVIEW

OGIER TOPS CLASSIC SEASON WITH HIS BEST YET

The Frenchman emerged victorious after a titanic battle with Ott Tanak and Thierry Neuville to clinch his sixth World Rally Championship crown

DAVID EVANS

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN



Thierry Neuville could have. Ott Tanak should have. Sebastien 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 bottle 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 Wilson's lead M-Sport Ford World Rally Team driver.

Ogier's trip home from Turkey was a quiet one. The day before 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,



Ogier started the year with fifth consecutive Monte Carlo victory

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. But while he was 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 Tanak wasn't done yet. One rally on and he was bossing

"TANAK LAY ON THE GROUND AND SHUT HIS EYES TO PONDER A HUGE MISSED OPPORTUNITY"

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 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 maiden Monte Carlo podium 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 year's 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.



With Tanak 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. Yet 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 heartbreaker 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, Tanak had slammed the bonnet down in frustration. In Italy, co-driver Martin Jarveoja had 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.

The comfort for Tanak is what lies ahead. It's fair to say that the transition into Toyota wasn't all plain sailing and there was the need for adjustment from both sides as they became acquainted. >>

ROUND BY ROUND

Monte Carlo

- 1 **Sebastien Ogier**
- 2 **Ott Tanak**
- 3 **Jari-Matti Latvala**

Forget the Col de Turini providing a sting in the tail, instead it comes at the top of the season as the crews tiptoe across a frozen Sisteron test on Thursday night. Thierry Neuville (spin) and Elfyn Evans (puncture) endure the toughest starts, dropping four minutes apiece. The shocking conditions continue, but Sebastien Ogier is more than a match to secure his fifth straight Monte win.

Rally Sweden

- 1 **Thierry Neuville**
- 2 **Craig Breen**
- 3 **Andreas Mikkelsen**

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.

Rally Mexico

- 1 **Sebastien Ogier**
- 2 **Dani Sordo**
- 3 **Kris Meeke**

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. Sebastien 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.

Tour de Corse

- 1 **Sebastien Ogier**
- 2 **Ott Tanak**
- 3 **Thierry Neuville**

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 as he stretches his 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.

Rally Argentina

- 1 **Ott Tanak**
- 2 **Thierry Neuville**
- 3 **Dani Sordo**

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



Tanak was the fastest man across the season...



...yet the world championship slipped away



Latvala ended the season on a high with Oz victory



Old master Loeb still had a trick or two up his sleeve

Rally Portugal

1 Thierry Neuville

2 Elfyn Evans

3 Teemu Suninen

Once he's dialled the Hyundai in at lunchtime on day one, Neuville doesn't look back. 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 Neuville looking down on everybody from the top of the table by the finish. After a troubled start, Evans is glad to get his season up and running with second.

Rally Italy

1 Thierry Neuville

2 Sebastien Ogier

3 Esapekka Lappi

Helped by unseasonal heavy rain on the opening day, title protagonists Neuville and Ogier raise themselves above and beyond everybody else as they head into the final stage of a Sardinian classic. Neuville overturns Ogier's 0.8s lead to win, bolstering his series lead ahead of the summer break. Esapekka Lappi makes his first trip to the 2018 podium with third for Toyota, going some way to making up for a second successive retirement for Tanak.

Rally Finland

1 Ott Tänak

2 Mads Ostberg

3 Jari-Matti Latvala

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 here for 15 years. Driving a Toyota built just up the road in Puuppola, he humbles the rest with an outrageously quick win. Citroen stand-in Mads Ostberg makes the most of new C3 geometry and a favourable place on the road to finish second, edging local hero Jari-Matti Latvala in a final-stage thriller.

Rally Germany

1 Ott Tänak

2 Thierry Neuville

3 Esapekka Lappi

Tanak is untouchable in his successful pursuit of back-to-back wins in Germany. Behind him, the title battle intensifies. Ogier looks to be the only man capable of threatening Tanak'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.

Rally Turkey

1 Ott Tänak

2 Jari-Matti Latvala

3 Hayden Paddon

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.

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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 Tanak 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

"LOEB PROVIDED YET ANOTHER FANCIFUL STORYLINE TO THIS MOST COMPELLING OF SEASONS"

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 SO MEEKE

Talking of 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 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 he 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 the second winless season for Citroen 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. >>



Rally GB

- 1 Sebastien Ogier
- 2 Jari-Matti Latvala
- 3 Esapekka Lappi

Tanak has two objectives in Wales: to score a fifth win of the year and play himself into the race for the drivers' crown. He 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.

Rally Spain

- 1 Sebastien Loeb
- 2 Sebastien Ogier
- 3 Elfyn Evans

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

Rally Australia

- 1 Jari-Matti Latvala
- 2 Hayden Paddon
- 3 Mads Ostberg

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 knocks 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 scenery and leaves a five-time champion to make it a straight six. Latvala wins.

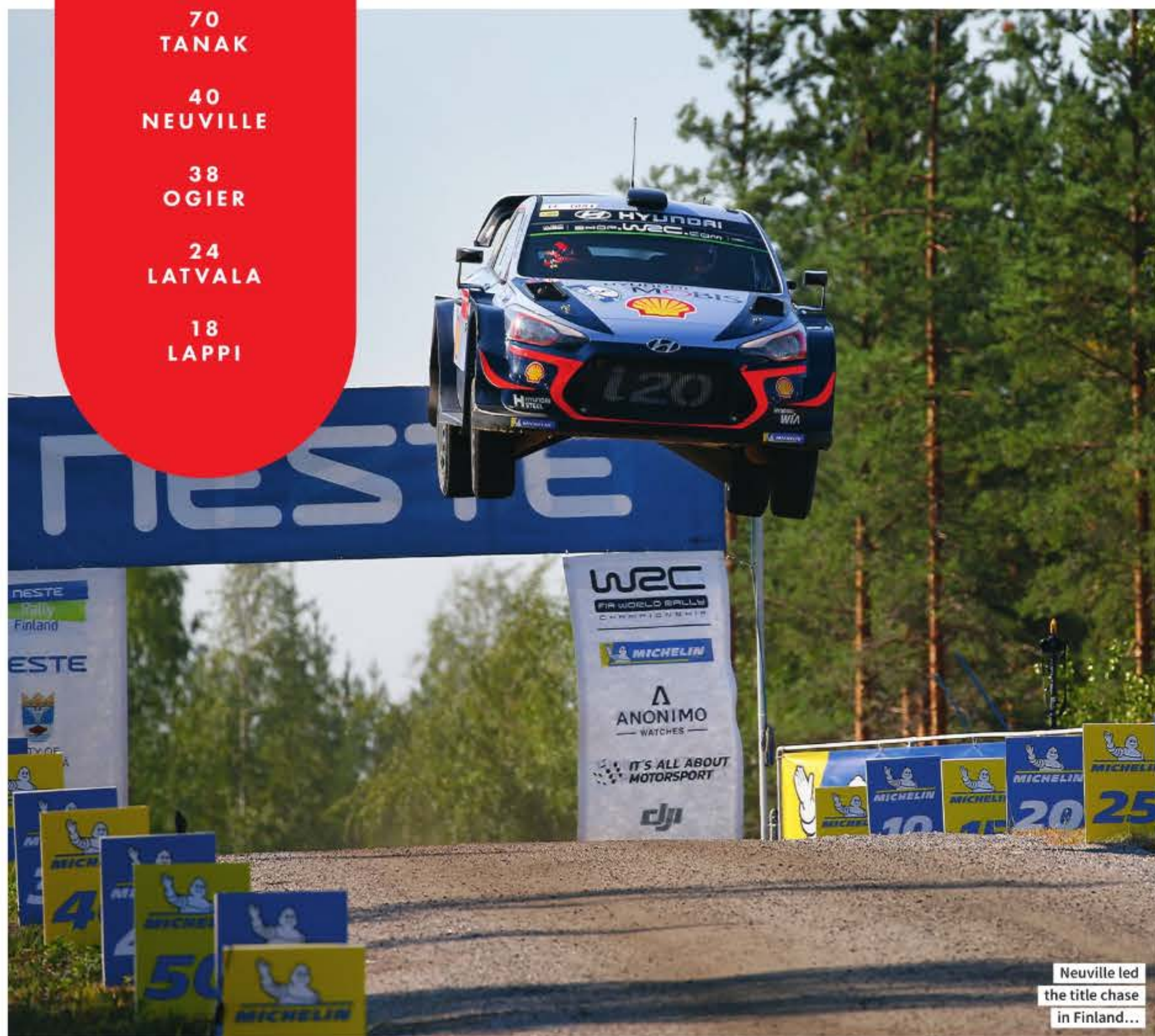
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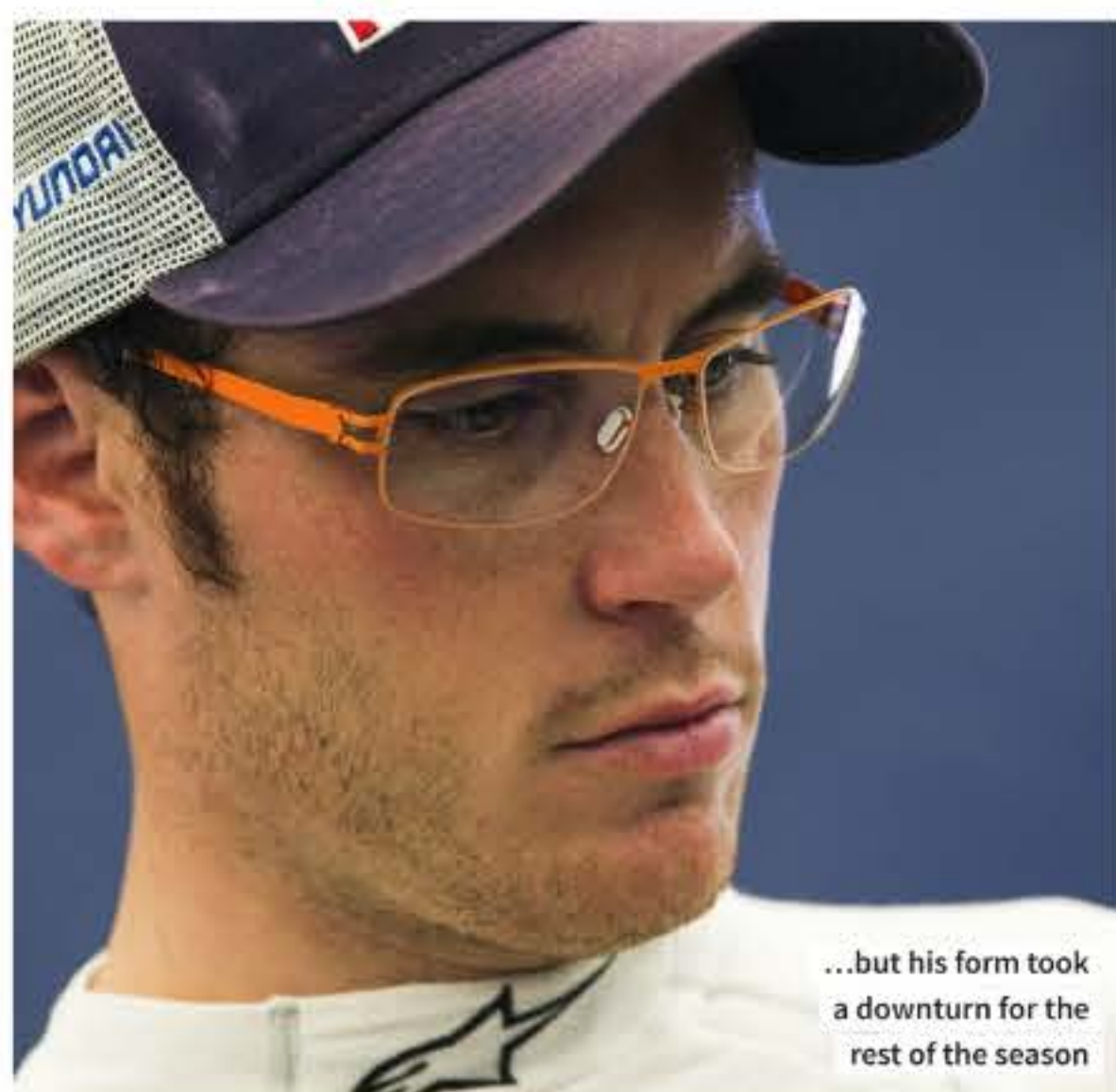
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#NEVERSURRENDER

TOP 5
STAGE WINNERS70
TANAK40
NEUVILLE38
OGIER24
LATVALA18
LAPPI

Neuville led
the title chase
in Finland...



...but his form took
a downturn for the
rest of the season

HYUNDAI'S HIGHS AND LOWS

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 South Koreans tie up the makes' title?

Andreas Mikkelsen joined Hyundai at the end of 2017 and, showing immediate pace, come 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 flashes are all they were.

Struggling to get the car to suit him, he tweaked his driving style to suit the i20 Coupe WRC, and 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 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 than Mikkelsen, 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. >>



KOPECKY STARS IN WRC2

Seeing the end of an 11-year career looming on 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 don'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 suffered two punctures and broken wheels in successive stages, ruling him out and ruining his year. Tidemand's season hadn't got 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 victories 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 faltered and 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.

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 Mäkinen'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 Lindström should take plenty of credit in reigniting Latvala's fire. Unfortunately, those changes came too late

“OGIER'S RESULT IS TESTAMENT TO HIS ABILITY, RESOLVE, TALENT AND TEMPERAMENT”

for Esapekka Lappi, who'd seen enough by Finland and was already looking to learn French for an end-of-season move to Citroën.

OGIER BEATS NEUVILLE... AGAIN

Lappi's new team-mate will, of course, be Ogier, who takes his #1 from the side of the Fiesta and puts it on a C3 next season. Ogier will be badly missed by M-Sport in 2019. And he'll miss the Brits too.

We've seen a different side to Ogier this season. 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 him 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 will live long in the memory.

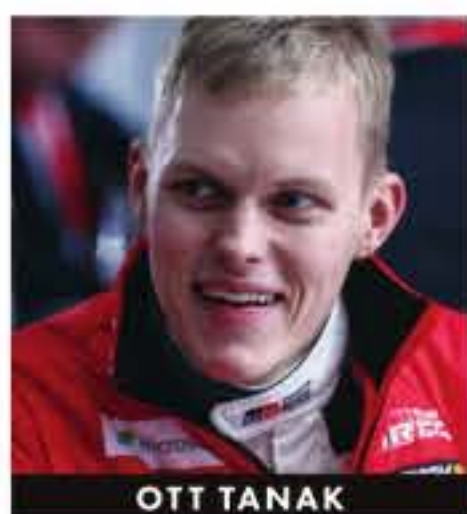
But what of Neuville? Can he bounce back from dropping a 27-point lead going into the second half of this season? Looking at his results after a brilliant final-stage win in Sardinia, you'd have to question that. He managed just one podium (second in Germany) through the season's second half and rarely looked like the driver who'd taken a rare non-Scandinavian win in Sweden.

Neuville has little interest in such considerations. Confidence and self-belief are 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. Tanak won't be far from anybody's thoughts as Monte Carlo moves ever closer. 🏆



AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



OTT TANAK

1 Tanak's rivals feared this might happen. He has found consistency to match the towering speed he's demonstrated in his progression through the sport in the past 10 years. Fastest by some distance this season, he starts 2019 as favourite.



SEBASTIEN OGIER

2 Won more rallies than last year, but faced a much bigger battle to wrest the title from Thierry Neuville's grasp. His speed remains undimmed, but a couple of uncharacteristic errors could so easily have cost him the crown.



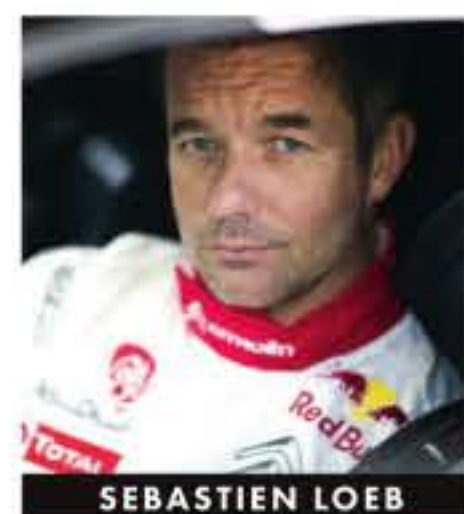
THIERRY NEUVILLE

3 Had the speed mid-season, but failed to carry that momentum into the second half and lost his nerve at key moments with mistakes in Turkey and Wales. That cost him the chance to become Belgium's first World Rally champion.



JARI-MATTI LATVALA

4 Easily overlooked for the first two thirds of the season, the widely held thinking was this was J-ML's last dance in a factory car. Not so. Dig deeper and you'll see one of his finest seasons – never more so than with his last-round win down under.



SEBASTIEN LOEB

5 Six years on from his last full-time job in the series, Sebastien Loeb landed back on planet WRC for three rallies and could conceivably have won every one of them. In the end he 'only' won Spain, but did it brilliantly.



KALLE ROVANPERA

6 When he wasn't landing his Skoda Fabia R5 on parked cars in Argentina, the 18-year-old Finn was busy embarrassing the establishment with a simply staggering demonstration of speed and surefootedness.



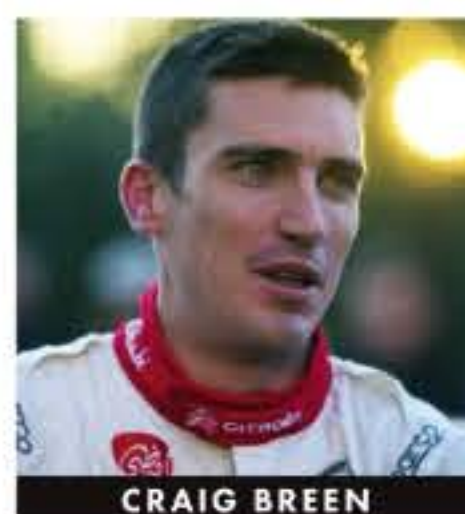
HAYDEN PADDON

7 Crashed out of the lead in Portugal, then decided to toe the party line and drive for the team. Was top four (with two podiums) on four of his remaining five outings. Could have done so much more with a full programme.



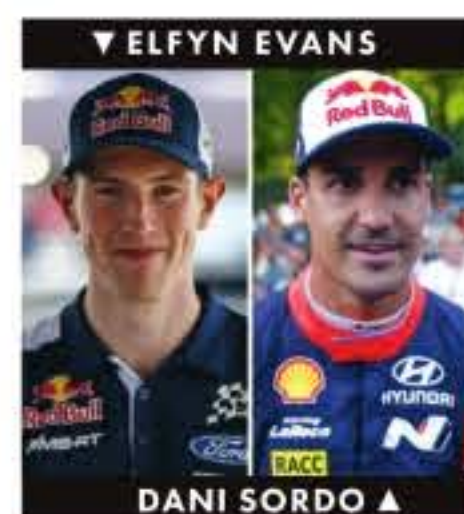
ESAPEKKA LAPPI

8 It's easy to forget this was his first full season in the WRC. There was nothing like the high of last year's Rally Finland win, but there was solid progress in what would be his last season with Toyota. Citroen and Ogier await...



CRAIG BREEN

9 Second in Sweden was a superb start, but Breen lost all that momentum when he was benched for Loeb for the next two rallies. Showed the pace needed to win this year, but a myriad of reasons meant it wouldn't come together.



ELFYN EVANS

DANI SORDO

10 Hard to split this pair. Sordo's start to the year was superb, but he failed to deliver just when it was reaching fever pitch. And Evans simply couldn't be ignored after a superb Rally of Spain brightened a tough season.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	PTS
1	Sebastien Ogier (F)	M-Sport Ford WRT	Ford Fiesta WRC	1	10	1	1	4	R	2	5	4	10	1	2	5	219
2	Thierry Neuville (B)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	5	1	6	3	2	1	1	9	2	16	5	4	R	201
3	Ott Tänak (EST)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	2	9	14	2	1	R	9	1	1	1	19	6	R	181
4	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	3	7	8	R	R	24	7	3	R	2	2	8	1	128
5	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	7	4	11	6	8	5	3	R	3	R	3	7	4	126
6	Andreas Mikkelsen (N)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	13	3	4	7	5	16	18	10	6	5	6	10	11	84
7	Elfyn Evans (GB)	M-Sport Ford WRT	Ford Fiesta WRC	6	14	R	5	6	2	14	7	25	12	20	3	6	80
8	Hayden Paddon (NZ)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	-	5	-	-	-	R	4	4	-	3	7	-	2	73
9	Dani Sordo (E)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	R	-	2	4	3	4	-	-	R	-	-	5	-	71
10	Mads Ostberg (N)	Citroen Total	Citroen C3 WRC	-	6	-	-	-	6	5	2	R	23	8	-	3	70

11 Craig Breen (Citroen Total Citroen C3 WRC) 67; 12 Teemu Suninen (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Fiesta WRC) 54; 13 Sebastien Loeb (Citroen Total Citroen C3 WRC) 43; 14 Kris Meeke (Citroen Total Citroen C3 WRC) 43; 15 Jan Kopecky (Skoda Motorsport Skoda Fabia R5) 17; 16 Pontus Tidemand (Skoda Motorsport II Skoda Fabia R5) 12; 17 Henning Solberg (Toksport WRT Skoda Fabia R5) 8; 18 Simone Tempestini (Simone Tempestini Citroen C3 R5) 4; 19 Alberto Heller (M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta R5) 4; 19 Marijan Griebel (Marijan Griebel Citroen DS3 WRC) 4; 19 Bryan Bouffier (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Fiesta WRC) 4; 22 Kalle Rovanperä (Skoda Motorsport Skoda Fabia R5) 3; 23 Gus Greensmith (Gus Greensmith Ford Fiesta R5) 2; 24 Lukasz Pieniazek (Printsport Oy Skoda Fabia R5) 2; 25 Chris Ingram (Toksport WRT Skoda Fabia R5) 2; 26 Steve Glenney (Steve Glenney Skoda Fabia R5) 2; 27 Pedro Heller (Pedro Heller Ford Fiesta R5) 1; 28 Stephane Lefebvre (Citroen Total WRT Citroen C3 R5) 1; 29 Yoann Bonato (CHL Sport Auto Citroen C3 R5) 1; 30 Jourdan Serderidis (M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta WRC) 1.

SEASON
REVIEW

WORLD OF SPORT

Familiar faces ushered in a new era of World Touring Cars, the battle down under went to the wire, ex-Formula 1 stars were crowned champions, and Joey Logano upset the NASCAR establishment



Old dog Tarquini learns new tricks

FLAMAND/DPPI

WTCR

In year one of the new World Touring Car Cup era, it was both surprising yet somewhat predictable to see two of the most prodigious names from the tin-top scene duking it out for the inaugural crown.

World Touring Cars' rebirth attracted faces new and old, but the frenetic pace of the Hyundai i30 N beneath Gabriele Tarquini and Yvan Muller, plus the wealth of experience acquired from 20-plus years at the top of the ladder, gave them the edge.

Old dog Tarquini found his stride first by winning two races from three at the

Marrakech season opener – perhaps of little surprise given how well prepared he and his BRC Racing team were, having assisted the development of the Hyundai.

The 56-year-old made it three wins from six with another victory at the Hungaroring, before Muller hit back. Two wins plus two more podiums from the next eight races – a spell that also accounted for the Zandvoort round at which all four Hyundais failed to score – hoisted the four-time world champion into the points lead by midsummer in Vila Real, although Tarquini regained the advantage at the following Slovakia Ring round with a fourth win.

While momentum ebbed and flowed between the pair thereafter, Tarquini maintained his lead – with a fifth victory of the season at Suzuka offering him a healthy points lead ahead of the Macau season finale. That was just as well, too, as Tarquini's troubled Guia race weekend almost allowed Muller a route to the title.

A six-point loss in Muller's favour was comfortable enough in race one for Tarquini, but the Italian was then eliminated from race two – a consequence

of qualifying in the midfield – and faced an uncomfortable sweat in race three as Muller pushed for the top three. Eventually, though, a 10th-place finish in the finale – with Muller unable to secure the podium he required to overhaul his rival – helped Tarquini secure a second world title by a mere three points.

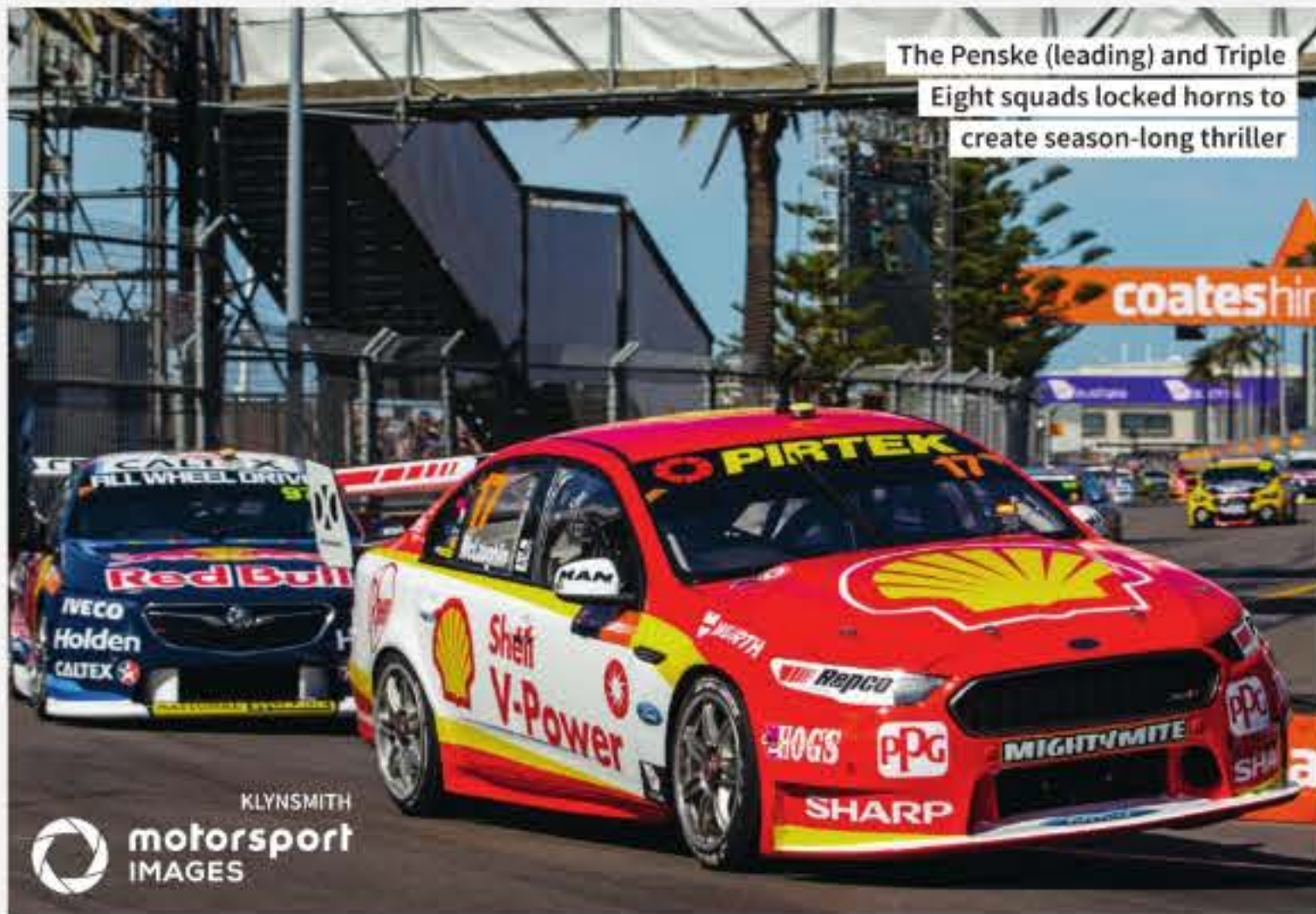
It would be unfair to suggest the pair dominated the season, though. The fact seven drivers were in contention for the title entering the final weekend and that 15 won races confirms not only that the grid was fiercely competitive, but supports the theory that the much-maligned Balance of Performance system employed to level the field did its job.

One of Tarquini or Muller led the standings at all but one juncture, but there was one non-Hyundai interloper early in the season. Muller's nephew Yann Ehrlacher ended up a lowly 10th in the drivers' standings in his Munnich Motorsport Honda Civic, but that classification belied the 22-year-old's impressive campaign, which netted two victories.

JACK COZENS



Muller ran Tarquini close, while Ehrlacher impressed



Scott edges Shane for supremacy down under

SUPERCARS

For the second Supercars season in a row DJR Team Penske and Triple Eight staged a thrilling title battle. And for the second season in a row, it was decided in 'can't script this' circumstances on the streets of Newcastle.

This time around it was Scott McLaughlin's turn to come out on top, the Kiwi breaking through for a well deserved maiden title.

His stats read like a typical championship-winning season. Thirteen poles, nine wins, and just a single finish outside the top 10 – a 15th at Albert Park only through a poor decision to pit for wets in changeable conditions.

However, it was in no way that simple. Triple Eight and its lead charge Shane van Gisbergen provided stiff competition. For starters, the new Holden Commodore ZB eroded any speed advantage the Penske Ford Falcon had enjoyed in 2017. There were teething problems for the new Holden, sure, but for the most part it was devastatingly fast. Despite McLaughlin's consistency, seven wins for van Gisbergen made it a see-sawing battle for supremacy throughout the year.

There were undertones of bitterness in the battle as well, not so much from the drivers but from the teams. It started with DJR Team Penske complaining about the ZB's use of composite panels in Adelaide, which led to speedy re-homologation of Ford and Nissan parts before Albert Park.

Then Penske went and put an ineligible drop gear in McLaughlin's car for qualifying at The Bend, something it claimed was an honest mistake. The matter escaped immediate detection from Supercars, and it wasn't until the next round at Sandown that the team copped a \$30,000 fine. Results from The Bend, however, couldn't be changed. McLaughlin had finished sixth in race one but only 10th in the second. In a game of very fine margins, though, that was a lucky break.

At Pukekohe, Triple Eight enjoyed a stroke of its own. Van Gisbergen was caught red-handed with his rear wheels spinning during a pitstop on the way to victory on the Sunday, but a post-race investigation got him off on a technicality, which kept the championship fight alive. He'd already celebrated by blocking McLaughlin's car in parc ferme, which, followed by Penske's unsuccessful protest of the wheel-spinning let-off, marked the height of the tensions between the two squads.

But in Newcastle, Triple Eight's luck ran out. Having beaten an out-of-fuel McLaughlin with a last-lap overtake on the Saturday, setting up the showdown for the Sunday, van Gisbergen found himself pinged post-race for his car being dropped from its jacks while refuelling.

The subsequent 25-second penalty dropped him from first to fifth, burst his bubble of momentum, and helped McLaughlin cruise to the title on the Sunday evening.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

2018 CHAMPIONS



EUROFORMULA OPEN
FELIPE DRUGOVICH



JAPANESE FORMULA 3
SHO TSUBOI



GERMAN FORMULA 4
LIRIM ZENDELI



ITALIAN FORMULA 4
ENZO FITTIPALDI



SMP FORMULA 4 NEZ
KONSTA LAPPALAINEN



JAPANESE FORMULA 4
YUKI TSUNODA

EUROFORMULA OPEN

MOTORSPORT IMAGES/ISHIHARA

ADAC MOTORSPORT

ACISPORT

PERTTI KANGASNIEMI

FIA F4 JAPAN

Button is champ in rookie year

SUPER GT

The headline news was that Jenson Button claimed the Super GT title in his rookie attempt at the series. But in reality it was the best driver on Honda's domestic roster of talent, Naoki Yamamoto, who put in the hard yards to claim Team Kunimitsu's victory as the NSX-GTs returned to prominence after a period in the wilderness.

Honda made a lot of progress on its engine over the winter, and Yamamoto and Button were second in a Honda 1-2 behind the Real Racing NSX of Koudai Tsukakoshi and Takashi Kogure in the Okayama opener. Once the series' weight handicaps kicked in, it was a case of maximising points wherever possible, with the eventual champions putting themselves right in the title picture thanks to a victory at Sugo.

Reigning champions Nick Cassidy and Ryo Hirakawa had also been racking up the scores in their TOM'S Lexus. They gave themselves a lot of work to do by never



qualifying higher than fourth, but their win in the penultimate round at Autopolis – after the sister car of Yuhi Sekiguchi and Kazuki Nakajima moved aside in the closing stages – allowed them to level the scores with Yamamoto and Button going into the Motegi finale. There, a failed strategy gamble by TOM'S resulted in fourth for its star duo, who lost out to Yamamoto and Button by a mere 1.6 seconds.

Victory in that finale propelled ARTA Honda duo Tomoki Nojiri and Takuya Izawa

to third in the points, as the only pair to win twice – their other victory came at Suzuka.

It was a poor year for Nissan, with star NISMO pairing Ronnie Quintarelli and Tsugio Matsuda claiming the marque's only victory at the May Fuji race. Ditto fellow former champion Heikki Kovalainen, although he claimed one win in the SARD Lexus at Buriram with Kamui Kobayashi. The other winners were Nakajima and Sekiguchi at the longer August Fuji round.

MARCUS SIMMONS



Yamamoto pips Cassidy in thriller

SUPER FORMULA

You can't deny that, with three wins from six races, Naoki Yamamoto deserved his second Super Formula title. But equally, it was a weird points-system change, a fogged-off race and a truncated one that denied one-time winner Nick Cassidy – plus the small matter of 0.654 seconds by which he lost the finale.

Three bonus points were awarded to the winner of that climax at Suzuka, and after claiming pole Yamamoto knew that victory would overhaul Cassidy's series lead. The Honda-powered Team Mugen car of Yamamoto remained in control,

but New Zealander Cassidy made a late pitstop to switch to soft Yokohamas, and charged his Toyota-engined Kondo Racing car onto Yamamoto's tail in the closing stages. It was a gripping fight.

Cassidy was fifth in the penultimate round at Okayama, with Yamamoto nowhere, but gallingly only half-points had been awarded due to a long rain delay and an abundance of safety cars. Similarly, he outqualified Yamamoto by three places at Autopolis in May, only for the race to be fogged off.

Outgoing champion Hiroaki Ishiura (Cerumo-Ing Toyota) was also ahead of Yamamoto in the standings before the Suzuka finale, where he was off the pace

and dropped to third in the classification.

Yamamoto can point to Sugo as critical to his campaign. He and Cassidy got lucky with a well timed safety car before Yamamoto won – remarkably, that's the only one of his six Super Formula victories not to be taken at Suzuka.

Apart from Cassidy's Fuji win and Ishiura's Motegi success, the other victor was Yuhi Sekiguchi (Team Impul Toyota) in that chaotic Okayama race after a frantic battle with Kamui Kobayashi. He beat team-mate Ryo Hirakawa to fourth in the points, with TOM'S veteran Kazuki Nakajima next after a disappointing year.

MARCUS SIMMONS



Consistency the key to Ammermüller's crown

PORSCHE SUPERCUP

Michael Ammermüller's path to a second consecutive Porsche Supercup title was tediously efficient. And that's not meant as a criticism, merely a reflection of a points system that privileges consistency over flashy results.

By winning the Barcelona season opener, then following it up with sustained strong finishes, Ammermüller played it to perfection, even though there were times when it was frustrating to watch him playing the percentages sat behind another driver.

Ammermüller led the points from start to finish, with his sole victory backed up by a further six podium finishes. But he

did have to wait until the final race of the season, the second of a double-header in Mexico City, to make sure of it thanks to Nick Yelloly staying in the hunt.

Yelloly won twice – a fine victory under intense pressure from Ammermüller at Monaco the highlight. But what he couldn't match was his rival's weight of placings. Beyond those two victories, Yelloly took just one second place in the final race of the season and the rest of his results were fourth and fifth places. Even so, it was an impressive campaign.

Thomas Preining won four of the season's 10 races but his title push was over before it started thanks to retiring from the season opener after a clash.

EDD STRAW

Edwards flies to first British Rally success

BRC

Welshman Matt Edwards steered his Ford Fiesta R5 to a stunning first British Rally Championship title in a season curtailed by off-stage drama.

The opening round of the series – the Border Counties Rally in Jedburgh, Scotland – was cancelled at the last minute due to stormy weather. Later, the penultimate round, the infamous Rally Isle of Man, didn't run as planned in September due to a disagreement with the government over road-closure permits.

On the stages, Edwards, backed by the World Rally Championship squad M-Sport, was the class of the field.

Four-time BRC champion Keith Cronin



was beaten on two rounds and didn't resurface again, while 2011 champion David Bogie's realistic hopes of the title evaporated with a trip into a ditch on what became the first round, the Pirelli International Rally.

Edwards won the Pirelli, Ypres and Ulster rallies to set up a final event decider at Wales Rally GB. The home of Britain's WRC round was split into two points-scoring affairs, and fourth would have given Edwards the title. He took third, and then went on to take the BRC event win overall as a rapid Bogie crashed his Skoda Fabia R5 into a ditch on the final day.

Rhys Yates showed well through the year and took a huge step forward to challenge into the final round, as did Alex Laffey.

JACK BENYON

2018 CHAMPIONS



INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN
MIKKEL MAC



MICHELIN LE MANS CUP LMP3
LEONARD HOOGENBOOM/
JENS PETERSEN



MICHELIN LE MANS CUP GT3
SERGIO PIANEZZOLA/
GIACOMO PICCINI



PIRELLI WORLD CHALLENGE
TONI VILANDER



ADAC GT MASTERS
MATHIEU JAMINET/
ROBERT RENAUER



BLANCPAIN GT SERIES ASIA
MARTIN KODRIC/
DENNIS LIND

Nasr finds winning refuge in IMSA



Nasr/Curran triumphed in both drivers' and manufacturers' titles with the #31 DPi Cadillac

DOLE
motorsport
IMAGES

IMSA

The battle for top honours in all three classes of this year's IMSA SportsCar Championship went down to the wire.

Formula 1 refugee Felipe Nasr combined with 2016 champion Eric Curran to claim the flagship Prototype spoils by a slender three-point margin aboard an Action Express Cadillac DPi-V.R. Veterans Jan Magnussen and Antonio Garcia limped to the GTLM title for Corvette despite not winning a race all season and a rare error from Garcia at the Petit Le Mans finale.

GTD was equally hard-fought, with the Lamborghini Huracan GT3 of Bryan Sellers and Madison Snow edging Katherine Legge's Acura NSX GT3 by just four points.

It was the kind of year where there was virtually nothing to choose between the leading contenders. There were seven different overall winners during the 10-race Prototype season and no shortage of drama. The burgeoning DPi concept was buoyed by the arrival of Acura Team Penske, which, surprisingly, won just once, at Mid-Ohio with Helio Castroneves and established sportscar star Ricky Taylor.

Also surprising was that Mazda, now teamed with powerhouse Joest Racing, also failed to win with its drastically overhauled prototype, although the team had been on course for the spoils at Laguna Seca until a late error by Harry Tincknell, then came up fractionally short at Road Atlanta.

Still, the double podium should stand Mazda Team Joest in good stead for 2019.

Scott Sharp's ESM team won twice with its Nissan GT3-powered Onroak/Ligier cars, in large part due to the heroics of Pipo Derani. The squad otherwise was plagued by reliability issues, leaving Cadillac to comfortably claim the manufacturers' title alongside the drivers' crown.

Nasr, who was often the class of the field, and Curran took a giant step towards the title when the sister car of Joao Barbosa was eliminated in an accident even before the startline at Laguna Seca, which meant his unfortunate co-driver Felipe Albuquerque failed to score any points at all. He deserved better than sixth in the final points tally.

The other full-season Cadillac of defending champion team Wayne Taylor

Racing also attracted more than its share of misfortune before Jordan Taylor and Renger van der Zande rebounded to take a well-judged win – their only one of the year – at Petit Le Mans, ably assisted by IndyCar star Ryan Hunter-Reay.

That left the P2 ORECA-Gibsons of privateers CORE Autosport and JDC-Miller to take the challenge to the factory cars. Colin Braun scored two wins with amateur co-driver and CORE team principal Jon Bennett, and finished the season just three points behind Nasr/Curran, despite some end-of-season Balance of Performance rule tweaks that handed a small advantage back to the DPi machinery.

JEREMY SHAW



Magnussen/
Garcia shared
Corvette to GTLM
title despite zero
class wins

LEVITT
motorsport
IMAGES



Late victory in the Homestead finale helped Logano to shock crown

Logano leaves old guard licking their wounds

NASCAR CUP

NASCAR's 2018 season was meant to be about the next generation deposing veterans, as championship bosses hoped it could steer through the choppy waters created by the exit of star names such as Dale Earnhardt Jr.

Instead it was the 'Big Three' that stole the headlines, before Penske's Joey Logano pinched the title.

Logano may have won the restrictor-plate randomiser at Talladega, but he was one of a few drivers able to sneak a victory while Kevin Harvick, Kyle Busch and defending champion Martin Truex Jr combined to win 17 of the 26 regular-season races.

Their dominance was such that Austin Dillon, going into the playoffs, joked: "If we just wreck the Big Three the next several weeks, we're going to have a much better shot going to [the] Homestead [finale]."

But that trio began to falter. Penske's Brad Keselowski threatened them with a run of victories to signal Penske's revival as a slew of drivers claimed wins to mix up the order.

That Big Three then ended up with just three victories in the playoffs, Busch winning two to Harvick's one.

But Harvick's victory at Texas came with a twist, turning sour when his automatic place in the final-four decider at Homestead was revoked after a rear-spoiler infraction left him sweating to secure the place at Phoenix.

It was the crescendo of infractions that broke NASCAR's patience after its new inspection system caught out more cheating than it would have liked to have admitted existed during the year.

But back to racing, and Logano was in the ascendancy, and Truex discovered that fact first.

Truex had already watched a win slip away when the desperate Jimmie Johnson – who ended 2018 without a win in his last year with famed crew chief Chad Knaus – hit him on the last lap of the thrilling Charlotte Roval race.

Come Martinsville, it was almost déjà vu, except the contact was intentional. Logano seized victory and a final-four spot by barging Truex wide late on.

NASCAR got its narrative ahead of the finale. Truex was furious at Logano and promised he would race the Ford driver "differently" to his other title rivals.

Yet when it came to the final showdown at Homestead, Logano had the last laugh. In a race in which Harvick, Truex, Busch and Logano struggled to maintain a dominant lead, it came down to the final 15 laps following a caution.

Truex earlier nudged Logano to remind him of his threat, but the defending champion's impressive restart counted for little when Logano swept around the outside to take a shock title.

"I told you we weren't [underdogs] and showed you why," Logano said as the Big Three licked their wounds.

TOM ERRINGTON

2018 CHAMPIONS



NASCAR XFINITY SERIES
TYLER REDDICK



NASCAR TRUCK SERIES
BRETT MOFFITT



BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS
DANIEL SERRA



SUPER TC2000
FACUNDO ARDUSSO



INDY LIGHTS
PATRICIO O'WARD



US FORMULA 4
DAKOTA DICKERSON

MOTORSPORTIMAGES/KINRADE/NKP

MOTORSPORTIMAGES/LABOINT/NKP

FERNANDA FREIXOSA

SUPER TC2000

INDYLIGHTS

RED CASE



Three-pointed stars top the Blancpain tree

BLANCPAIN GT SERIES

Mercedes scored the big prizes in the Blancpain GT Series in 2018. Its drivers claimed the Endurance Cup, Sprint Cup and overall crowns, but it would be wrong to say that it in any way dominated either leg of the championship – the Mercedes-AMG GT3 won only three of the 15 races across the 2018 BGTS schedule.

The German marque owed its Endurance Cup title, notched up by the Black Falcon crew of Maro Engel, Yelmer Buurman and Luca Stolz, to consistency and a victory under pressure when it mattered at the Barcelona finale. Its Sprint Cup triumph, meanwhile, had a lot to do with the talents of Raffaele Marciello in the Auto Sport Promotion Merc he shared with Michael Meadows.

Marciello's strong run across the two

segments of the BGTS gave him the overall crown. He had, for a short time, his hands on the Endurance title after the Black Falcon Merc was disqualified at the Barcelona race.

The winning AMG was found to have an engine induction system sealed with tank tape, contrary to the car's homologation. The exclusion was subsequently overturned on appeal: the penalty was ruled to be disproportionate to the offence and was replaced with a fine.

Engel, Buurman and Stolz thus pipped Marciello to the Endurance title on the back of a consistent season in which they only once failed to make it home in the top six, courtesy of retirement at the Paul Ricard six-hour round. The Merc was never the quickest car, Barcelona excepted, but it was generally there or thereabouts.

The Endurance title race is always skewed

by the double points on offer at the Spa 24 Hours. Engel and co notched up 27 points in Belgium, which ultimately proved decisive in their battle with Marciello. The ASP Merc failed to score at the six-hour cut-off courtesy of an intermittent gearbox problem that deprived the Italian and team-mates Tristan Vautier and Daniel Juncadella of sixth gear when the temperatures were higher in the hours of daylight.

The anomaly of this year's series was provided by the Walkenhorst BMW entry. Its one-off pro class entry won the race, which propelled Tom Blomqvist, Philipp Eng and Christian Krognes into contention for the title, even though they had no points on the board before the event. In fact, only Blomqvist had actually started a round.

The WRT Audi crew of Dries Vanthoor, Christopher Mies and Alex Riberas started the season in style at Monza, finished fourth at Silverstone and then retired at Paul Ricard. Their season might have been very different but for the 15kg their car gained in a pre-race Balance of Performance change after Vanthoor had lost pole position for the same homologation infringement as the Black Falcon car at Barcelona.

Marciello and Meadows won twice in the Sprint Cup and were never out of the points. That consistency gave them a 7.5-point margin over Mies and Riberas come the end of the season.

GARY WATKINS



Vergne completes G-Drive's title trio

ELMS

The TDS-run G-Drive Racing squad romped to a third successive European Le Mans Series LMP2 title in 2018, with team owner Roman Rusinov and Andrea Pizzitola easing to drivers' honours.

They were joined by Jean-Eric Vergne for their triumphant campaign, but Vergne missed out on the title because he skipped the opening race due to a Formula E clash. Once he came on board for the second round in Monza, though, the #26 ORECA-Gibson was unstoppable.

Victory in Italy was followed by further wins at the Red Bull Ring and Silverstone, before the G-Drive trio sealed the deal with a round to spare at Spa despite a nightmare race in mixed conditions.

G-Drive's closest challenger was Racing Engineering, which also campaigned an ORECA and won first time out at Paul Ricard with Norman Nato, Olivier Pla and Paul Petit.

However, Racing Engineering failed to replicate that success again and barely hung on for second in the standings from another ORECA team, IDEC Sport.

The remaining wins at Spa and Portimao went to United Autosports, which was the top non-ORECA team thanks to the efforts of Philip Hanson and Filipe Albuquerque in the #22 Ligier.

RLR Msport was victorious in the Ligier-dominated LMP3 division, while the Proton Competition Porsche team won the close fight in GTE.

JAMIE KLEIN



Fewtrell makes a R-ace of it to defeat Lundgaard

FORMULA RENAULT EURO CUP

Renault F1 junior Max Fewtrell took a come-from-behind title success to add another accolade to his CV. With three rounds remaining, the Brummie was a distant third, but come the Barcelona finale he was crowned, adding that to his 2016 British F4 and '17 Eurocup rookie honours.

Fewtrell, with the French R-ace GP team, was up against star newcomer Christian Lundgaard and fellow second-year racer

Yifei Ye. Chinese ace Ye was the early-season points leader with Josef Kaufmann Racing, but couldn't quite keep the pace during the deciding rounds at year's end.

Dane Lundgaard – another Renault F1 junior – was the revelation. The reigning NEZ and Spanish F4 champion with MP Motorsport, he stayed at the Dutch squad, which itself had hardly excelled in FRenault in 2017, and looked set to win the title. But a horror weekend in the penultimate round at Hockenheim, with a tangle in race one and transmission failure while leading race two, put control into the hands of Fewtrell.

Two more R-ace drivers were next, with American Logan Sargeant finding strong late-season form and Frenchman Victor Martins impressing many. Other race winners were Charles Milesi and Alex Peroni, who both triumphed in Monaco.

MARCUS SIMMONS



2018 CHAMPIONS



TCR EUROPE
MIKEL AZCONA



SCANDINAVIAN
TOURING CAR
CHAMPIONSHIP
JOHAN KRISTOFFERSSON



EUROPEAN RALLY
CHAMPIONSHIP
ALEXEY LUKYANUK



ITALIAN GT
DANIEL ZAMPIERI/
GIACOMO ALTOE



EUROPEAN LAMBORGHINI
SUPER TROFEO
VITO POSTIGLIONE/
KAROL BASZ



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WIRELESS HEADPHONES II**



*Now that the
Top of the Pops
Christmas special
is no more, you've no
reason not to do our quiz*

A FORMULA 1/SINGLE-SEATERS IN 2018

- 1** Of those who led a Formula 1 grand prix in 2018, who was in front for the fewest laps?
- 2** Which F1 race driver from 2018 scored the highest finish in the Macau Grand Prix, and when?
- 3** Who was the second-highest-placed son of a former Stewart F1 driver after two rounds of this year's world championship?
- 4** In which single-seater series were the eventual top four placed 13th, seventh, 10th and 16th respectively after the first weekend of racing?



- 5** Who was the highest-placed Australian-born driver in the IndyCar Series final standings?
- 6** Who were the drivers standing on the podium with the highest average age in Formula 2 this season – and at which circuit?
- 7** Who won the highest number of races run to FIA Formula 3 technical rules in 2018?
- 8** Which Formula Renault Eurocup title contender is the son of a former rally champion?
- 9** Name the Formula E race drivers from the 2017-18 season who finished in the top six of a national or regional Formula Renault 2.0 championship in their early careers.
- 10** Name the 13 FIA Formula 4 champions to be crowned in 2018.

B BACK IN TIME

- 1** Who took the highest finish for an ERA in a Formula 1 world championship race?
- 2** Name the drivers who won a world championship race in an Osella in the 1980s.
- 3** Who won the most Tasman Cup races in Formula 5000 machinery?
- 4** Who drove a Ferrari to race victory in the European Formula 2 Championship?
- 5** Who scored the highest finish in an old Formula 1 chassis in Formula 3000 competition, and in what?
- 6** Which was the first year in which ovals were outnumbered by road and street courses on the CART World Series calendar?
- 7** Who finished on the podium in the first Formula Ford Festival not run for Kent-engined cars?
- 8** Which was the first world championship grand prix to feature a turbocharged car in the top 10 on the grid?
- 9** What was James Hunt driving the first time he finished a race in the top three in an F1 car?
- 10** Name the four class winners from the 1977 British Grand Prix-supporting British Saloon Car Championship race.

C TOURING CARS/SPORTSCARS IN 2018

- 1** Which Toyota WEC drivers have tested for F1 teams during those teams' F1 title-winning seasons?
- 2** Which ex-F1 racers have claimed LMP2 podiums in the WEC during 2018?
- 3** What was the best result in a DTM race this season for any Audi driver not named Rene Rast?
- 4** Name the BTCC champions to have competed in the World Touring Car Cup.
- 5** Which two ex-IndyCar racers were regulars in the top class of Super GT this year?
- 6** In which single-seater series, and which year, did Blancpain Endurance Cup champions Yelmer Buurman and Maro Engel finish in consecutive positions?
- 7** How many pole positions were claimed in 2018 by IMSA SportsCar champions Felipe Nasr and Eric Curran.
- 8** Who was the youngest 2018 BTCC race winner not to be named after a Brazilian F1 driver?
- 9** Who was the highest-placed Porsche Supercup driver this year to have raced in the British Formula Ford Championship.
- 10** What was the age difference between the 2018 ELMS LMP3 champions?

D RALLYING IN 2018



MCKLEIN

- 1 Which driver enjoyed the longest points-scoring run in this year's World Rally Championship?
- 2 Which WRC event had the slowest average speed this season?
- 3 Name the two New Zealanders who competed regularly in this year's WRC.
- 4 Who set the most fastest stage times in this year's WRC2 category?
- 5 Only one team managed a 1-2 in this year's World Rally Championship. Who was it and where?
- 6 Which R5 driver took the best overall placing on a round of this year's WRC?
- 7 Name the four drivers who won a round of the 2018 Junior WRC.
- 8 Who won the 2018 FIA RGT Cup?
- 9 How many WRC titles have been taken by the families of those who finished in the top 10 of this year's World Rallycross standings?
- 10 Three DTM drivers scored points in the Latvian round of the WRX this season. Name them.

E WINNERS' GALLERY?

SEE IF YOU CAN WORK OUT WHO THESE 2018 CHAMPIONS ARE



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Send your answers via email to autosport@autosport.com and include Christmas Quiz as the subject line **or** send in your answers on a sheet of paper to: **Autosport Editorial Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG**

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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF LOEB AND GOLLOP

Fancy a go in a modern World Rallycross Supercar and a historic Group B monster? Erm, don't mind if we do. Here's how they compare

HAL RIDGE

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: ZAK MAUGER



Wailing V10 Formula 1 engines; the sweet-shop mix of turbocharged flat-sixes and atmo V8s and V12s from Group C; the fire-breathing Group B monsters of rallying. Halcyon days, but motorsport in the current era is all about smaller powerplants, economy... and comparative lack of noise.

But there's always an exception. Those four-wheel-drive Group B machines were banned from rallying in 1986 and taken up by rallycross, and today's Supercars are arguably the closest breed to their ancestors of any motorsport discipline – notwithstanding

the planned switch to electric cars in 2021.

Due to the intrinsic value of period Group B racers, seldom do opportunities arise to sample what drivers of the 1980s and early '90s would have experienced. How would one of those cars from a generation ago compare to a state-of-the-art works-built Supercar?

Autosport got that opportunity at Lydden Hill, the birthplace of the sport, with a period car dressed in arguably the most recognisable rallycross Group B livery of all; the Silkolene-backed ex-Will Gollop MG Metro 6R4. The modern car is the Peugeot 208 WRX that rally legend Sebastien Loeb drove to victory at Mettet in



May – the only machine to stem the otherwise utter domination of Johan Kristoffersson's Volkswagen Polo this year.

The 2018 208 WRX was the first rallycross car conceived entirely at Peugeot Sport's Velizy base. With the marque's Dakar Rally campaign coming to an end, Peugeot took the RX programme it had previously shared with the Hansen Motorsport team in-house for this year. While this 208 was released with wholesale changes in almost every area – including styling and aerodynamics – to appear more like its road-going cousin than its predecessors, it was superseded from the Holjes round in July by the 208 WRX Evo. To all intents and purposes a new car, the Evo featured further revisions to chassis, suspension and transmission, and the first in-house-developed engine. But the Evo version of the four-wheel-drive, 600bhp 208 wouldn't win an event.

This one did in the hands of Loeb who, it must be said, is somewhat more *petit* than I am. It's a damp, overcast, winter's day that greets us in Kent, and it's with some dismay that I learn that the Loeb-sized seat inside the left door of the 208 is attached by non-adjustable mounts. Once I've forced myself over the rollcage and into Loeb's preferred driving position, I ask if it's possible for the pedal box to be moved away a little. "Non," say the technicians.

Tools are sought to move the steering column and gear-change assembly up to the maximum extension, and even then there is a real risk that my overalls may have a hole worn into them by the rubbing of the gear linkage. But I'm willing to take it...

Although driving aids are fundamentally banned in rallycross, I'm confronted with a steering wheel full of buttons. The early 2018 Peugeot 208 WRX uses an ORECA-built, transverse-mounted two-litre turbocharged engine, and engineer Theo Caniard gives me the lowdown on what button does what. The most important for the first run are the anti-lag system (ALS, which keeps the turbo spooled



Our man
prepares for
rallycross action

to maintain inlet-manifold pressure to increase engine response) and the map. Caniard tells me to adjust the map to '2' – in the mid-range for aggression. There are four options for the ALS, '1' being the least aggressive and '4' the most. Feeling brave, I plump for '3'.

The clutch pedal feels heavy compared to other Supercars I've driven, with little travel. But, having pulled the sequential lever towards me to produce a mechanical 'clunk' while engaging first gear, I manage to balance the throttle and clutch and don't stall pulling out of the awning – first mission accomplished.

As I accelerate towards the first corner, Chessons Drift, pulling >>



RALLYCROSS TRACK TEST



four gears towards me before changing down two, the clutch-less flat-shift gearchange feels heavy but positive. The brake pedal is quite pliable – unlike other Supercars, where it's like standing on a house brick.

Lydden may only have five corners but, with surface changes into two of them, it's easy to get caught out. The 208 feels incredibly settled through Chessons on the loose for the first time, and I turn 'map' to '2' and press the yellow ALS button on the wheel on the long corner's exit, forcing me into the back of the seat as the already lively engine explodes into another dimension and I accelerate towards Devil's Elbow. The first lap is completed without drama.

Second time into the Elbow, and aware that I'm surrounded by plenty of open space, I give the vertical handbrake to my right a slight tug to explore how sensitive it is. 'Very' is the answer. Even when it's given the tiniest tweak, the drive to the rear wheels is broken by the hydraulic differential release, the rear tyres lock and the car over-rotates. I jump on the clutch in time to keep the engine running and hurriedly switch off the ALS. With more time in the car, harder application of the throttle coupled with opposite-lock would have saved the day.

After a three-point turn, the remainder of the first run is completed unscathed, pushing later and harder on the large central brake pedal with my left foot, and getting on the throttle earlier. The engine's response is extraordinary – there's next to no lag at all.

Having looked over the data with Caniard, I'm back in Loeb's seat for a second run, which starts with a launch. Now, rallycross Supercars are famed for crazy acceleration – 0-60mph in two seconds is not just a pub-talk figure – but to achieve that you need to remember a tricky sequence. Pulling up to the startline, I select 'map 2' and press the ALS button on the steering wheel, before dipping the clutch, pulling first gear then pressing the launch button on the top of the handbrake and pulling the vertical lever backwards. Burying the throttle, I find the bite point on the clutch and we're ready to go. I let go of the clutch pedal and handbrake in unison and I hurtle towards the first corner. Forget your Koenigseggs, Ferraris and Bugattis, or even a Boeing 747, the acceleration is extraordinary as the four wheels find amazing traction that pushes my organs into my back as I select gears almost quicker than I can think.

I push harder through the second run. The chassis is incredible, very neutral and balanced, and I can lean hard on the front axle when turning in, before controlling slides on exit with a little opposite lock. On each lap, having changed down from fifth to second, I tug the handbrake on turn-in to the North Bend hairpin to rotate the rear, sending the four-wheel-drive machine into a drift. Not the fastest way, but certainly the most fun.

The MacPherson-strut suspension soaks up the bumps and kerbs as if they are hardly there, the engine hitting the rev-limiter briefly each time the right wheels leave the ground as I climb through the chicane at the end of the lap. As my time in the car nears its end, I'm pressing on harder out of Chessons Drift down Dover Slope and I'm up to sixth gear. It's at this point that the car really comes alive. The harder you push, the more the differentials work as they should and the 208 feels even better, inspiring more confidence as it hugs the inside of the long loose section. Despite the quality of the dampers, and the relative lack of gravel at Lydden, the cockpit is ultra-noisy, while my vision is almost blurred by the vibrations.

Having sampled one of the present elite, it's time to step back in time. While Lydden is regarded as the home of rallycross, arguably the events that made the sport famous in the UK were the annual Rallycross Grand Prix, held at Brands Hatch each December through the 1980s and early '90s. This 6R4 is a Gollop car, but it was famously used by racing driver and television presenter Tiff Needell in the 1989 RXGP as part of a two-car effort.

That event featured unabating fog, rendering racing impossible, so the running was effectively undertaken as a time trial, two cars at a time. Needell would have finished 11th, only for a jumped-start penalty to demote him to 47th, while Gollop claimed his third GP victory in the near-identical sister car. Twenty-nine years on at Lydden Hill, it's as if the rallycross gods want this experience to be >>

A LEGEND LOOKS BACK



GOLLOP AT A GALLOP

Will Gollop was one of the first to bring a Group B car into rallycross, shortly before the sport became awash with the redundant rally machines in the late 1980s.

"It was a works-spec international 6R4 with a few modifications, which I drove for the first time in October 1986," says Gollop. "I think Mark Rennison got a Ford RS200 at about the same time, so we had a bit of a battle for the first season. For the Grand Prix we were seeking more publicity, so we asked Martin Brundle to drive a car of similar specification to mine. He said he would have loved to, but he was burnt out that year. Tiff Needell was the next call.

"Before we went to the Bi-Turbo engine in 1990, we'd developed the naturally aspirated engine to have 420bhp [from 410 in rally trim]. The naturally aspirated cars were very good for initial startline performance, sharper than anything I've driven since, including the turbo engine, but that in itself was more difficult to manage because you got instant wheelspin.

"The non-turbo car was quicker for the first few yards. We used to get jumped-start penalties in Austria when we first went there, but we weren't jumping – it was just that good off the line. If there was a long straight before the first corner, though, the power wasn't enough.

"The Grand Prix always had the best prize and the best publicity, live on BBC television.

"That day in the fog at Brands [in 1989], you needed to know your way round the track. Obviously I did. I remember I had to overtake another car within the lap too, because they ran us two at a time, but I set the fastest time.

"I'd beaten Martin Schanche and Rennison in the Grand Prix the year before, so I felt a bit sad we didn't have the race in '89, but I was happy to take the win and the prize money. We had a lot of sponsorship riding on where we finished. All in all it was a good day's work."



"THAT DAY IN THE FOG AT BRANDS, YOU HAD TO KNOW YOUR WAY ROUND" GOLLOP



Handling dominated by understeer on Tarmac but rear does drift with more aggressive inputs



6R4 cockpit is basic but comfortable. Large steering wheel lacks buttons



Metro's mid-mounted Cosworth 3.2-litre V6 produces 420bhp



Gollop ditched rally-spec sidepods and front spoiler after knocking them off



Unusual left-hand-drive cockpit features switchgear labelled in Finnish

as genuine as possible as I step aboard the 6R4, heavy fog having descended over the venue.

The 6R4's owner, Adam Keeler, is more Ridge than Loeb in the physique stakes, so I fit into the driver's seat without issue, where I'm greeted by the aroma of oil and fuel customary with period machinery. I ask engineer Allan Weston to run me through the controls – more basic than those of the Peugeot – and turn on the large red kill switch. Flicking down the ignition toggle, I press the starter button and the V6 engine over my shoulder roars into life. The large steering wheel in the 6R4 is button-less. No laptops required here...

The engine is derived from the famous Ford Cosworth DFV – Austin Rover hoped that the linear naturally aspirated powerplant would be a driver-friendly match for the turbocharged machines in Group B. This rare 'international' 6R4 engine (known as V64V; V6, four valves per cylinder) has been bored from three litres to 3.2 litres and produces 420bhp.

Longitudinally mounted, the gearbox sits in front of the engine, under a large transmission tunnel in the cockpit, while the interior is more rudimentary than in the 208. Amusingly, the switches and mechanical gauges are labelled in Finnish – a nod to the machine's previous life in the Nordic nation (it was a works-built RED rally car before switching to rallycross). It is also now left-hand drive, converted by Gollop's G-Tech team for its new owner in 1990.

The gearbox is H-pattern, with a 'dog-leg' first. That means first gear is where second would conventionally be. Thankfully, first gear isn't required at any point with this machine, so second, located where you would usually find third, can be treated as first. Simple...

First impressions are that the clutch is heavy, but not a patch on the Peugeot's. And, even when driving in the paddock, you realise that the throttle response is rather lazier than the modern machine's. The differentials knock and bang in the kind of agricultural fashion that replicates the 6R4's box-like aesthetics – this car lacks rally-spec front spoiler and sidepods, Gollop having ditched them, after knocking plenty off in the rough-and-tumble of the racing.

On track, using the clutch for every gearchange, the 6R4's gearbox

requires a firm but precise hand, but engages gears surprisingly well, with an even more satisfying 'clunk' than in the Peugeot.

The V6 engine feels like it's wrapped around my shoulders as it sings behind me, revving sweet and crisp in the brisk Kent air, especially when all 10,500rpm is released up and down Hairy Hill in a very linear, naturally aspirated fashion. The Metro gives away 180bhp to the Peugeot, with substantially less torque, but it still feels bloody quick and I'm far more timid at its wheel.

To my surprise, the brakes are positive and stop the car well. And, while the steering is power-assisted, via a pump on the engine, after four laps my arms feel like they've been in a wrestling ring. But you don't notice that when you're driving. Peering through the foggy gloom, unable to see from one corner to the next, it's hard to decide whether those who rallycrossed these machines in period against a grid full of Ford RS200s, Peugeot 205 T16s and Audi Quattros were mad or heroic. Perhaps both.

Probably the biggest gain in the 30 years since this 6R4 was state-of-the-art has come in suspension technology – the dampers on the Metro are less confidence-inspiring than the 208's, and crash and bang over the hole-strewn unsealed sections, unsettling the car.

Towards the end of my time at the wheel, with increased conviction and earlier, harder throttle application, the rear drifts slightly on the exit of both sealed and unsealed corners, but you're hounded by understeer into the Tarmac turns, a common trait of rear-engined machines with no weight to speak of up front to aid traction – and of course no downforce. But, for me, driving the Metro isn't a case of trying to string together the perfect lap – it's about enjoying the ride and appreciating this genuine piece of history for what it is a fantastic reminder of an incredible era.

Thanks to Loeb's Belgian win, wherever this 208 WRX chassis ends up next – in the wake of Peugeot's withdrawal from World RX – it has already joined Gollop's 6R4 in the history books. Whatever the future holds for the discipline, electric or not, the Group B era and today's Supercars can justifiably be remembered as some of motorsport's most exciting cars. *W*

TECH SPECIFICATIONS

PEUGEOT 208 WRX

Year	2018
Chassis	steel monocoque
Engine	two-litre, four-cylinder turbo
Orientation	front, transverse
Transmission	four-wheel drive, mechanical differentials
Gearbox	six-speed, sequential
Suspension	MacPherson strut
Weight	1300kg
Power	600bhp
Torque	627lb ft
Acceleration	0-60mph in 2.0s

MG METRO 6R4

Year	1989
Chassis	space frame
Engine	3.2-litre V6
Orientation	rear, longitudinal
Transmission	four-wheel drive, mechanical differentials
Gearbox	five-speed, H-pattern
Suspension	MacPherson strut
Weight	1030kg
Power	420bhp
Torque	270lb ft
Acceleration	0-60mph in 3.2s



FERNANDO ALONSO'S 10 GREATEST F1 DRIVES

Formula 1 said farewell – at least for now – to the double world champion at the end of this season. Here's our pick of Alonso's best races from his 17 years

KEVIN TURNER

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

2008 JAPANESE GP

FUJI

RENAULT R28 (1ST)

10

Following his troubled first season at McLaren, Alonso returned to Renault. The R28 was not a championship contender, but won

two races – the crash-scandal Singapore Grand Prix and the Fuji contest two weeks later.

An error from Lewis Hamilton, embroiled in a title fight with Felipe Massa, at the first corner provided an opportunity. Beaten away by Kimi Raikkonen, Hamilton tried to retaliate down the inside, but locked up, ran wide and took Raikkonen and Massa with him.

Robert Kubica's BMW Sauber – up from row three – emerged in the lead, chased by Alonso. The duo took control, though Heikki Kovalainen's McLaren remained a threat. Kovalainen was fuelled for a longer first stint, so had the chance to jump them. But engine failure after just 16 laps removed him from the equation, making Kubica the focus.

As the first stops approached, Alonso got proactive. "Over the radio, moments before his first pitstop, he told – not asked – the team to short-fuel him to jump the BMW Sauber," wrote Autosport's Edd Straw.

Now Alonso set about building the required gap before the second stops. "This race was winnable and Alonso had decided he was going to win it," reported Mark Hughes. "By the time he stopped again he was 13 seconds clear after a stunning sequence of on-the-limit laps. There was nothing to stop him now."



2018 AZERBAIJAN GP

BAKU

McLAREN MCL33 (7TH)

9

Several of Alonso's 2018 performances were worthy of this list – his drive to seventh in Singapore scored a 10/10 in our driver ratings – and it's the race in Azerbaijan, which

Alonso described afterwards as "the best race of my life", that gets the nod.

Alonso started 12th, but was involved in a clash with Sergey Sirotkin's Williams that left the MCL33 with floor damage and punctures on two tyres.

After a safety-car period, Alonso was 17th and immediately started picking people off. He kept up his pace throughout and snatched seventh from Lance Stroll's Williams on the final lap. It was a fine example of Alonso adapting to a damaged car and pressing on regardless.

"You will never predict beforehand what is going to happen and how you will drive a car with 50 or 100 less points of downforce," said Alonso. "We fought for every tenth, every lap, close to the walls all race long. These points were a miracle."





8

'Awesome Alonso' said our cover for his only victory of 2011. In a season dominated by Red Bull, it was Alonso and McLaren's Jenson Button who put up the strongest resistance,

and a rule change gave Ferrari a chance at Silverstone.

Off-throttle blowing of the diffuser was temporarily banned ahead of the British GP and, with updates also bolted to his 150 Italia, Alonso qualified third, just 0.117 seconds off Mark Webber's polesitting Red Bull.

Sebastian Vettel jumped Webber at the start, with Alonso chasing on a track that was wet in some places, dry in others. While Vettel pulled clear,

Alonso threatened Webber more as the track dried.

Webber and Alonso pitted for slicks after 12 laps of the 52, with Vettel coming in a lap later and retaining his lead. The Ferrari was generally slower at the start of a stint but got faster later, and Alonso briefly lost out to Lewis Hamilton's McLaren. But Hamilton couldn't get away and Alonso came back at him. With the Ferrari all over his gearbox, Hamilton pitted for new rubber at the end of lap 24, releasing Alonso. Now third, Alonso started closing on the Red Bulls.

Webber stopped on lap 26, Vettel and Alonso on lap 27. Remarkably, both Red Bull stops were slow and Alonso jumped ahead. Such had been his pace before the stops that he also leapfrogged Hamilton

and now led, with just over 4s covering the top four.

With Hamilton forced to save fuel and defending from the Red Bulls, Alonso pressed on. Just 10 laps after the stops he was 9.9s clear.

Vettel jumped Hamilton at the final round of stops, but Alonso was out of range. Indeed, Vettel spent the last few laps defending from Webber.

Sixty years to the week after Ferrari's first world championship victory, Alonso secured its 216th, coming home 16.5s ahead of Vettel.

"Give the Spaniard a sniff of victory and he seizes it," reckoned Edd Straw, who gave Alonso 10/10 in Autosport's driver ratings. "Red Bull's pit problems helped, but it was Alonso who forced his advantage mercilessly."

2012 MALAYSIAN GP

SEPANG

FERRARI F2012 (1ST)

7

Ferrari's 2012 contender was not one of its best, but Alonso managed to haul it into title contention during one of the great F1 campaigns. The first of his

three wins that season came in round two at Malaysia, with a little help from the weather.

Rain arrived 10 minutes before the start. It was enough to force most drivers onto intermediate rubber, then intensified, meaning a switch to wets before a safety-car period and, finally, a red flag.

By that time Alonso was fifth. And, after everyone pitted for inters when racing resumed, he led, following some wheel-to-wheel scrapping with Sergio Perez's Sauber. Perez became Alonso's biggest threat and both drew away from Lewis Hamilton's McLaren.



After losing out early in the stint, Perez closed in, but then Sauber appeared to blow it. The Mexican lost 6s when he was left out for an extra lap when all switched to dry tyres. But Perez kept coming and underlined the fact that, on this day, the Sauber C31 was simply faster than the Ferrari F2012. With seven laps to go Perez was just 0.6s behind the Ferrari, but then he made a mistake and ran wide, losing 5s.

Whether that was due to Sauber's radio message – "be careful, be careful, we need this position" –

or not is open to debate, but it gave Alonso the breathing space he needed to take his 28th F1 victory.

Despite the unusual rival, Alonso's win was still one against the run of play. Team-mate Felipe Massa finished 15th.

"He won a race in a car that, frankly, had no business doing so," wrote Edd Straw. "The car would not have been a contender in a straightforward dry race." >>



2003 SPANISH GP

BARCELONA

RENAULT R23 (2ND)

6

In front of his home crowd, Alonso almost jumped the two new Ferrari F2003-GAs of Michael Schumacher and Rubens Barrichello

at the start at Barcelona, but a straightline-speed deficit (9mph through the speed traps) meant it was a red one-two into the first corner. But incredible laps around the first pitstops allowed Alonso to jump Barrichello and the Renault chased after Schumacher.

Alonso's Michelins were working well, helping to make up for the Renault's shortfall of 85bhp, and he kept Bridgestone-shod Schumacher under pressure.

With the Bridgestones generally better at the start of a stint, Schumacher was able to build a small buffer. He was helped further after the second stops when Alonso was held up behind Ralf Schumacher's Williams.

Alonso closed during the final stint, but Michael kept him at arm's length to take victory. Alonso still beat Barrichello by more than 12s and the next-best Michelin runner by almost a minute. It had been the sort of relentless run that would become an Alonso hallmark, in only his 21st F1 race.

"This just might have been the race when Schumacher inwardly confirmed the identity of his eventual successor," opined Autosport reporter Mark Hughes.

Nigel Roebuck agreed: "This was the weekend when Alonso truly emerged as a future star. The young man could hardly have done anything better."

Alonso's first F1 win came almost four months later in Hungary, but this was better. The Spanish drive earned Alonso a 10/10 in our driver ratings, his victory 'only' nine.



2007 EUROPEAN GP

NURBURGRING

McLAREN MP4-22 (1ST)

5

'Race of the year' and 'world champ plays rain to perfection' was how Autosport described Alonso's late victory, which came amid the

McLaren-Ferrari spy scandal and Lewis Hamilton's sensational rookie season alongside Alonso.

Kimi Raikkonen qualified on pole for Ferrari, with Alonso just pipping Felipe Massa to prevent an all-red front row.

A downpour just as the race began caused chaos, and even allowed F1 debutant Markus Winkelhock's intermediate-shod Spyker to lead for a time. Hamilton was one caught up in the drama, picking up a puncture after being hit by Robert Kubica's spinning BMW Sauber.

Most cars pitted at the end of lap one, Raikkonen continuing because he slid wide. As the rain worsened, cars flew off the road, including Hamilton's. The race was red-flagged, with Winkelhock leading from Massa and Alonso.

Everyone chose intermediates for the restart, and Massa and Alonso soon overcame Winkelhock. After 12 laps both switched to dry-weather tyres.

McLaren couldn't adjust Alonso's front wing, costing him time and resulting in a compromised

set-up. "It left him with a more oversteery balance than ideal," wrote Mark Hughes in our report. "As the dry phase of the race got under way, Massa began to gradually ease away."

A recovering Raikkonen closed on Alonso, but the McLaren held firm and was still ahead when the Ferrari retired with a hydraulics leak. But Massa seemed out of reach: after 34 of the 60 laps he was 8.3s clear.

Alonso's front wing was successfully adjusted at his next stop – on lap 38 – and he nibbled away at the gap, but Massa still seemed in control. Until rain returned with eight laps to go.

Massa and Alonso both dived in for another tyre change on lap 53, the gap now down to 3.5s. The Ferrari, which didn't tend to keep its tyre temperature as high as the McLaren in wet conditions, was a tricky proposition in the wet and Massa fell back towards Alonso. By the end of lap 55 they were together.

"The move when it came was dramatic, the climax of a fantastic contest," wrote Hughes.

Alonso got a run on Massa exiting Turn 4. With the Ferrari on the inside approaching Turn 5, Alonso went around the outside. Massa slid wide and touched the McLaren, but Alonso was through and on his way to a victory against the odds.

2005 JAPANESE GP

SUZUKA

RENAULT R25 (3RD)

4

Having stated "today wasn't a day to fight" on his way to securing his first world crown at Interlagos, Alonso was in much more combative mood next time out at Suzuka. The

race is largely remembered for Kimi Raikkonen's last-gasp victory, but Alonso was just as impressive.

Thanks to the lottery of a rain-hit qualifying session, Alonso lined up 16th, with outgoing world champion Michael Schumacher 14th and Raikkonen's McLaren 17th. All three made brilliant progress on the first lap, Schumacher coming round in seventh, Alonso eighth and Raikkonen 12th.

"That was a product of bold, incisive racecraft," reckoned Autosport's Mark Hughes, though Alonso had run across the chicane astroturf while battling Jacques Villeneuve's Sauber.

They were then helped by Juan Pablo Montoya crashing his McLaren and bringing out the safety car. At the restart, Schumacher jumped Christian Klien but, when Alonso tried to overtake the Red Bull at the chicane, Klien braked late and the Renault took to the runoff. Alonso backed off to allow Klien back ahead, then slipstreamed past towards Turn 1.

He chased after Schumacher, only to have to slow down when race director Charlie Whiting decided Alonso had to hand the place back. The team protested – and won its case – but by then Alonso had already allowed Klien back through...

Alonso was soon by once more and catching Schumacher. On lap 20 of 53, Alonso got into the Ferrari's slipstream exiting Spoon Curve,



Schumacher moving to the left to cover the inside for the fast-approaching 130R left-hander. Alonso switched to the right and drove clean around the outside. His entry speed was 206mph.

But the Ferrari was fuelled to run longer than the Renault, so Schumacher jumped ahead again at the first round of stops. In fact, Alonso briefly fell back to eighth, the time lost during the Klien debacle proving crucial.

"The slower traffic he dropped into after his stop – that he would otherwise have avoided – cost him around 9s in the five laps after rejoining," reported Hughes. "It was this that not only allowed Schumacher back in front but also for Raikkonen to get ahead of the Renault for the first time."

Alonso cut through the traffic once more and, after 29 laps, was on the tail of Raikkonen, as the McLaren pressured Schumacher. Kimi soon made it past the Ferrari and Alonso didn't waste much time either.

"He did it beautifully, dummying Michael

into thinking he was trying to pass at the chicane, forcing Schuey to run wide there, making the Ferrari slow onto the straight as they began lap 33," wrote Hughes. "It was then relatively simple for Alonso to cut around the outside on the approach to Turn 1."

With Raikkonen up the road, Alonso continued his charge. He overtook Jenson Button's BAR and closed on the Williams of Mark Webber. On lap 49 he attacked on the run to Turn 1.

"Webber moved right to discourage him, leaving him not quite a car's width," reckoned Hughes. "It was a hard, no-compromising move and most anyone but Alonso would have capitulated. Instead, he simply took some grass as well. He was through, with yet another breathtaking demonstration of the art of passing."

While Raikkonen secured his famous late win, Alonso took third. He had made 14 overtaking moves to Raikkonen's 11 and the Renault's fastest lap was just 0.059s slower than the McLaren driver's – and nearly a second faster than anyone else's. >>

THE McLAREN-HONDA YEARS

Rating Alonso's McLaren-Honda drives is rather tricky, not least because of his regular proclamations that the latest performance was his 'best ever'.

Although there were some highlights in 2015 – including fifth in the Hungarian GP – Alonso had a slightly inconsistent campaign and was outscored by team-mate Jenson Button. But things improved thereafter and Alonso was one of the star performers in both '16 and '17. He scored 10/10 in Autosport's driver ratings four times during that period.

His first came at the 2016 Belgian GP. Thanks to 60 places of penalties for engine changes, Alonso started at the back, but



gained 10 spots – including passing Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes – on a chaotic first lap. Having started on the hard tyre he was able to rise to fourth by the end of an early safety-car period. After the restart he lost places to Hamilton, Sergio Perez's Force India and the Ferrari of Sebastian Vettel, but held off both Williamses and Kimi Raikkonen's Ferrari to take seventh. "A brilliant

virtuoso performance," reckoned Autosport's Ben Anderson.

It was a similar story in the Malaysian GP. Alonso started at the back and gained 10 places on lap one. He made the most of an aggressive three-stop strategy to reach seventh and was closing on Perez at the finish.

Alonso felt McLaren's 2017 chassis, the MCL32, was a good one, and he scored 10/10s in

China and Abu Dhabi. He started the Chinese GP (left) in 13th, but completed lap one in eighth. He impressed in the damp and looked set to score points until he was forced to retire with driveshaft failure with 23 laps to go.

Alonso started 11th in the Abu Dhabi season finale. In a typically relentless performance, he harassed Felipe Massa's Williams in the first half of the race and got the better of his former Ferrari colleague for ninth, finishing more than a minute ahead of team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne.

It was a fitting way to finish a season in which Alonso took third in our F1 driver top 10 despite being down in 15th in the points.

"IT WAS ARGUABLY
ALONSO'S FINEST
WET-WEATHER DRIVE"



2006 HUNGARIAN GP

HUNGARORING
RENAULT R26 (RETIRED)

3

This race is best known for Jenson Button *finally* breaking his duck in F1, but it could have been one of Alonso's finest wins.

Thanks to a two-second qualifying penalty Alonso started on row eight. Also penalty-afflicted were Michael Schumacher (11th) and Button (14th).

In the tricky conditions on race day the Michelin intermediate proved much better than the Bridgestone equivalent, but even so Alonso's progress was remarkable. He was up to sixth by the end of lap one – five spots ahead of the similarly Michelin-shod Button.

Renault team-mate Giancarlo Fisichella allowed Alonso past on the next tour and the Spaniard quickly closed on Schumacher – up to fourth and the best of the Bridgestone runners. Schumacher defended hard, but Alonso used his extra grip to go around the outside of the Ferrari at Turn 5.

Up ahead, Rubens Barrichello's extreme wets were already overheating and he pitted at the end of lap five. Alonso was now third and ready to challenge the McLarens of Kimi Raikkonen and Pedro de la Rosa.

De la Rosa held off the Renault for some time, but the McLaren stopped first, on lap 16 of 70, allowing Alonso to get within 7s of leader Raikkonen before the Finn came in next time around.

Button came in at the same time, having risen to fourth before the pitstops began, but Alonso stayed out. He kept increasing his lead over Raikkonen, sometimes by as much as 3s per lap. The gap was 39s when Raikkonen clashed with Vitantonio Liuzzi's Toro Rosso, bringing out the safety car and allowing Alonso to make his stop, though eradicating his lead.

With de la Rosa also pitting, Button was now second. After the restart at the end of lap 31, Button's Honda (fuelled slightly less than the Renault) initially lost ground in traffic but then started to edge towards Alonso. After 43 laps they were together, 20s clear of de la Rosa.

But Button, who had to stop earlier than Alonso, couldn't wait for the track to dry. He stopped on lap 46 and stayed on the same intermediate rubber, being short-fuelled in the expectation that he would be in again soon for dry tyres.

"Honda was settling for a safe second rather than trying for a risky win," reckoned Mark Hughes. But the team was to receive a bonus.

Alonso pitted at the end of lap 51 and went straight on to dry tyres. This should have been the final step on the way to a special win, but instead a problem with the right-rear wheel spat Alonso off on his out-lap, ending his race.

"A faulty wheel-locking mechanism cost him what would have been a brilliant victory," wrote Hughes. It was arguably Alonso's finest wet-weather drive.

2005 SAN MARINO GP

IMOLA

RENAULT R25 (1ST)

2

Perhaps more than any other race, this represents a changing of the guard. Or at least that Alonso was worthy of taking over Michael

Schumacher's mantle as world champion.

This was the year of GPs being run on one set of tyres. A trait of the Bridgestones used by Ferrari was that they sometimes didn't come up to temperature for qualifying but did provide excellent race pace.

Imola was an extreme example. Schuey qualified 13th, but then stormed through the field in the race, with a fastest lap 1.2s quicker than the next best. He would have won but for a superb defensive drive from Alonso.

Before the tense duel at the end, Kimi Raikkonen's McLaren had looked set to disappear into the distance from pole until driveshaft failure on lap nine. That put Alonso's Renault into the lead.

Just before the first stops, Schumacher was still only 10th, 36s behind Alonso. But once in clean air he unleashed the Ferrari's pace to such a degree that he had leapt to third once the first pitstops had been completed.

Schumacher caught Jenson Button's BAR at more than a second per lap and snatched second place in traffic. After the second round of stops, the Ferrari was a little more than a second behind Alonso and so, for the final 11 laps of the 62-lapper, Alonso had the seven-time world champion all over him.

Alonso was running with the same engine that he'd used to win in the heat of Bahrain and had to run with reduced revs, and his Michelins' degradation was higher than that of Schumacher's Bridgestones. But somehow Alonso crossed the line 0.2s ahead. It was a statement of intent.

Autosport's Nigel Roebuck was effusive: "As an example of intelligent, tactical driving against a clearly faster car, it was peerless."



ALONSO
IN STATS311
STARTS32
WINS22
POLES23
FASTEST
LAPS2012
EUROPEAN GPVALENCIA
FERRARI F2012 (1ST)

1

There were so many strong candidates for this list that you could make a case for not having this at number one. He certainly needed a slice of luck,

but his 2012 drive in Valencia was Alonso at his street-fighting, swashbuckling best, and it's a race he has referred to over the years.

While Sebastian Vettel took a dominant pole in his revised Red Bull – by 0.324s – the Ferraris narrowly failed to make it into Q3 and Alonso lined up 11th.

Alonso jumped three places on the opening lap, Jenson Button's McLaren one of the victims. "Alonso had been prepared to risk a lot in those early moments," reckoned Autosport's Mark Hughes.

On lap 12 of the 57-lapper, Alonso made it by

Nico Hulkenberg's Force India for seventh and he got a big bonus at the first pitstops. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber), Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) and Pastor Maldonado (Williams) had slow stops and Alonso jumped all three.

After passing several cars attempting a one-stop strategy (and therefore leaving their stops much later), that meant Alonso was soon running fourth.

When a Heikki Kovalainen/Jean-Eric Vergne clash brought out the safety car and triggered more stops, Alonso gained another place thanks to problems during Lewis Hamilton's tyre change.

At the restart on lap 34, Alonso "timed his move to perfection" to go around the outside of Romain Grosjean's Lotus to snatch second, "his raw desire and audacity very much on display",

enthused Hughes in our race report.

Second to the apparently unbeatable Vettel would have been a great result from 11th, but Alonso got a bonus later on the same lap when alternator failure forced the Red Bull out.

Alonso thus had the lead after 34 laps, but Grosjean wasn't done. The Lotus attacked, Alonso holding firm and then being left clear when another Renault-related alternator problem ended Grosjean's challenge.

With eight laps to go, Alonso was concerned about his rear tyres having fallen off the cliff, but his closest rivals were in the same boat and he stayed out, crossing the line 6.4s clear of Raikkonen.

His emotional celebration with his home crowd showed how much the win meant to him. ❧

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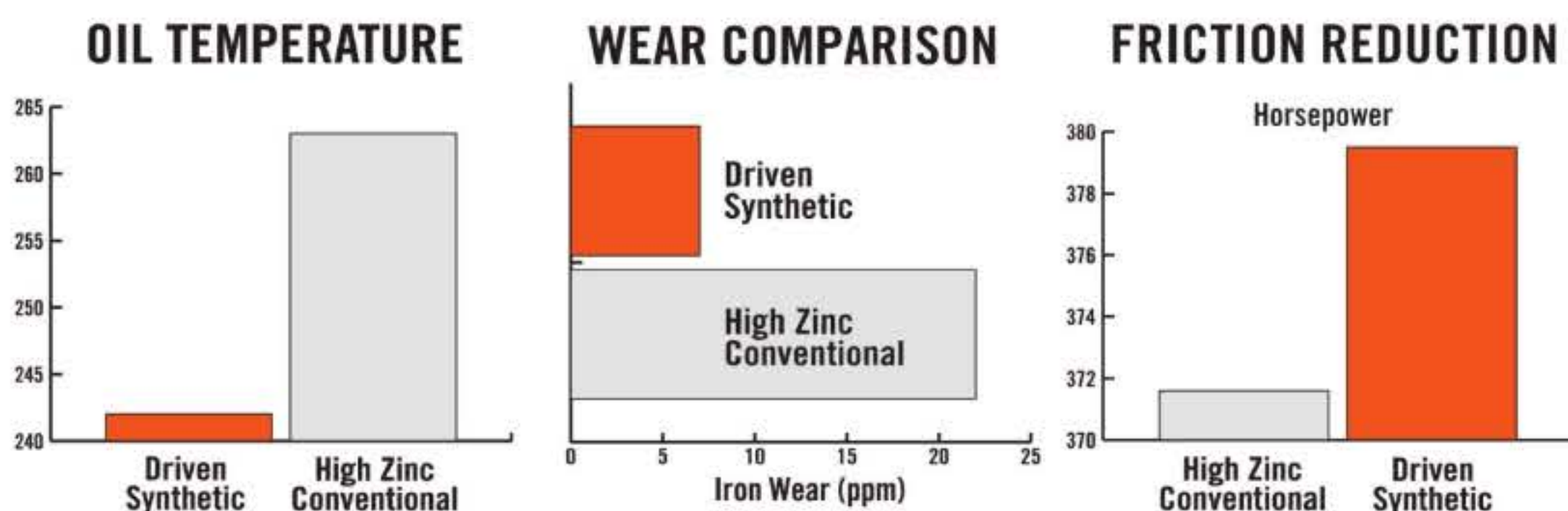
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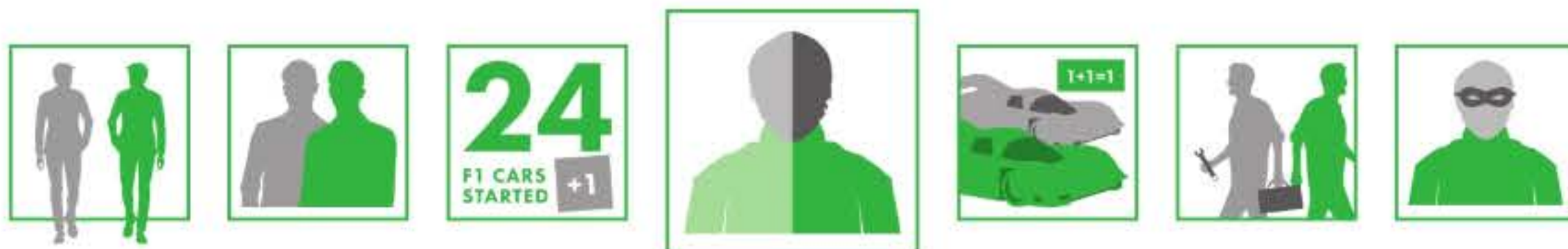
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MOTORSPORT'S GREAT PRETENDERS



We take a look at the times when not all things in racing have been what they appeared, from brotherly shenanigans to cars pretending to be something they're not

GARY WATKINS

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport
IMAGES



Main: Nelson pretending to be Brendon in team shot.
Inset: the man himself in 2012 line-up

WHEN BRENDON HARTLEY WASN'T BRENDON HARTLEY



Brendon Hartley and Murphy Prototypes got a slating on social media after scrutineering for the 2013 Le Mans 24 Hours. Hartley had declined to sign autographs after the traditional team photograph, and the twitterati weren't happy. It was a bit harsh, given that young Brendon wasn't present at the time. Nor was he even in France.

There was, however, a fake Brendon Hartley in the set of Murphy overalls with his name embroidered on the waistband in the team set-up shot. To be fair he didn't look too dissimilar from the driver who was busy making a name for himself

in sportscars that year. That's because it was the elder of the Hartley brothers, Nelson, a bit of a star on the New Zealand dirt-track scene.

The real Brendon Hartley was still hours away from making it to Le Mans as a result of a deal arranged by Greg Murphy, owner of the team that had given the Kiwi his break in sportscars and also his manager at the time. Hartley undertook a handful of Grand-Am races in a Starworks Daytona Prototype that year, and one of them was at Mid-Ohio on the Sunday before Le Mans week.

It shouldn't have been a problem for Hartley to make scrutineering on the Monday, only there was a hiccup in his travel arrangements. At some point

on the drive to the airport he realised that he'd left his passport in his kitbag in the truck. That led to some frantic calls, a rendezvous with the Starworks truckie on the side of the interstate and a missed flight.

Murphy came up with the idea of putting Nelson in the team line-up, but it was team manager Malcolm Swetnam who had to call time on the illusion.

"People were asking Nelson for autographs and he was signing them, so I said, 'That's enough,'" he recalls. "Then I noticed on twitter that we were getting slagged off for refusing to let 'Brendon' sign autographs." >>

FALSE START FOR HEYER

24
F1 CARS
STARTED +1

The organisers of the 1977 German Grand Prix were ahead of their time in terms of political correctness. The grid boards at Hockenheim weren't held aloft by what would have been termed 'dolly birds' back then, rather by members of the local kart club. But when it came to keeping tabs on who actually started the race, they were definitely in the dark ages.

There was an imposter out on the circuit for the opening stages of the event. Hans Heyer took the start at the wheel of an ATS Penske PC4 despite having failed to qualify, and no-one in race control appeared to notice. The German tin-top legend has

the kart club to thank for his solitary F1 start.

The event volunteers included many of Heyer's old friends; he'd been a member of the club. They turned a blind eye when he snuck out onto the circuit after lining up as a reserve in the collecting area. It mattered not that there had been two non-qualifiers quicker than him.

"I spoke to the 'grid girls' and I persuaded them to leave the gate open and then give me a signal," recalls Heyer, who promptly lined up on the side of the track and joined the race after the rest of the field had taken the start.

His grand prix was short-lived, lasting just nine laps. But it wasn't brought to an end by the black flag, just a simple gear-linkage failure.



THE FAKE 962



The impecunious Team Davey squad had entered a pair of Porsche 962Cs for the 1990 World Sports-Prototype Championship without having the funds

to run two at every round. In fact, it owned only one car. But it still needed to scrutineer two at each race to avoid punitive fines, resulting in a series of deals and escapades that culminated in an ingenious identity swap at the Montreal race in September.

The second Porsche over which the scrutineers cast what was clearly a cursory eye in Canada was not all that it seemed. It wasn't a 962 at all, rather an example of its short-wheelbase predecessor, the 956, of six years' vintage. So it was a Group C car, but one that had been obsolete under the regulations since the end of 1985.

Team owner Tim Lee-Davey can reveal today that the second of its cars that day had been begged and borrowed for the occasion from a collector by the name of Chris MacAllister from Indianapolis. And it didn't matter that the car he blagged was an ex-Trust Racing 956 because, he explains, "the rules didn't say you actually had to pass scrutineering".

Team Davey's antics that year – including presenting a car without an engine – hadn't gone down well with the WSPC officials, so the men in blazers decided that the cars needed to go forwards and backwards



under their own power in scrutineering. The borrowed Porsche fulfilled that requirement, but Lee-Davey reckons the 962C imitator remained incognito throughout technical checks.

"My memory is that it stayed under a cover all the time and we just lifted it up to open the door, start the thing and put it in gear," he says. "I don't know whether the FIA were oblivious to what it really was or just chose not to look too closely."

The success of this ruse resulted in Lee-Davey plotting an even more outlandish scheme to



overcome his car shortage at the next race, the series finale in Mexico City.

"I was going to hire an original-style Volkswagen Beetle from Hertz, put a sheet over it and take it to scrutineering," he explains. "Alain Bertaut [an FIA steward and Automobile Club de l'Ouest rules boss] got wind of my plan, put his head in his hands and told me not to make the FIA look stupid. He suggested I write a letter instead, using the words *force majeure* very forcibly."

By way of a post-script, Lee-Davey isn't



actually the real name of our subject. He was christened plain Timothy Davey, the name he goes under today. He added the Lee – after his early racing exploits had featured in the BBC's *Big Time* series – at the suggestion of Brands Hatch boss John Webb, who'd taken the young wannabe under his wing.

"John said there were too many drivers with similar names," recalls Lee-Davey. "My dad's name was Lee Davey and his caravan company in Kent was called Lee Davey Caravans, so I added Lee to my surname."

MARK STANDS IN FOR MICK



Aussie bike legend Mick Doohan was a visitor to the 2016 Bahrain World Endurance Championship event courtesy of his son Jack, now a Red Bull junior, competing in an event on the adjacent kart circuit that weekend. He was introduced by Porsche driver Mark Webber to WEC boss Gerard Neveu, who decided that the five-time 500cc world champion would make a good honorary starter for the event.

Only Neveu also met one of Webber's oldest friends that weekend, another Australian called Mark Thewlis. Say Mick and Mark quickly in your best Aussie accent, and you might get an inkling of what happened next.

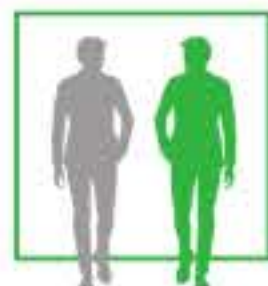
Somehow when the invite was made by Neveu to brandish the green flag, it went to the wrong man. It seems that there was a last-gasp



attempt to rectify the mistake, but Doohan was on the wrong side of the track. That meant there was only one living motorsport legend on the grid waving the cars away from the echelon line-up to start the formation laps. It was a slightly bemused looking Tom Kristensen standing next to someone who most definitely wasn't Mick Doohan. >>



IDENTICAL TWINS PLAY GAMES



Motor racing was very much a family affair for Tim Atkinson and his late brother Gregg. They shared a succession of Formula Ford 1600s at the back end of the 1970s and into

the '80s, and went racing with their other siblings and mother. Having a car between them meant picking a championship each to chase at the beginning of the season and sticking with it. Or that was how it was meant to work.

Tim and Gregg were not just brothers, but twins of the identical kind, and that allowed them – unofficially, of course – to mix and match their races if they so chose. That's what happened in the 750 Motor Club FF1600 series race at Donington Park in September 1981.

Gregg was chasing the 750 title that year, while Tim had become a bit of a circuit specialist at Donington courtesy of its own one-circuit series. So for the crucial penultimate round, Gregg hatched a plan for his brother to drive their Hawke-based Agent DR2.



From left to right: Tim, Gregg (in car), Vicki (sister), Maureen (mother) and Arthur (other brother)

"Gregg was going for the championship and he suggested that I should drive, because I was quicker around Donington," recalls Tim. "He just told me to make sure I finished second."

Tim came home behind race winner Tony Trevor

masquerading as Gregg, who was watching from the sidelines in his brother's jacket, to secure the Wilkes FF Challenge. No-one was the wiser, save for their mother Maureen. She, reckons Tim, was "probably the only person who could tell us apart".



TVR didn't make the finish despite Jordan's best efforts

CAINE NOT SO ABLE



The rules at the Le Mans 24 Hours are pretty draconian when it comes to repairing a car if it conks out on track. Only the driver is permitted to work on the thing. The

RaceSports Salisbury team bent that regulation a tad in an ultimately fruitless attempt to get one of its TVR Tuscan T400Rs back to the pits in the 2003 edition of the French enduro.

Michael Caine had been forced to pull over at the end of the Mulsanne Straight during the night after a propshaft joint failed on the car he shared with Mike Jordan and Tim Sugden.

The team knew that Caine wouldn't be able to fix the problem, so a posse including Jordan hiked it down to Mulsanne Corner.

"Cainey is a great little driver, but he doesn't know what to do with a set of spanners," says Jordan, who reckoned that as one of the drivers of the car he might just be permitted to have a go at fixing it. "I got talking to one of the marshals and asked him if he liked the TVR."

"When he said that he did, I suggested that it would be better if it was out on the track than stuck behind the barrier. He eventually agreed with my suggestion that I should swap places with Michael."

Jordan then spent what he remembers as

"about an hour and a half" getting the car up in the air using a jack borrowed from the friendly marshal – another no-no under Le Mans rules – and a pile of logs so that he could jury-rig the propshaft joint with cable ties.

With the temporary fix completed, Caine was strapped back in and told by Jordan that one false move would undo the repair.

"Unfortunately there was a bit of rough ground for him to go over to get back on the track," recalls Jordan. "Michael had to dip the clutch, and that was that. I wasn't going to have another go at repairing it, and besides I was out of cable ties."



QUALIFYING TWO FORDS



The R+D Motorsport squad had a problem as qualifying for the 1991 Spa 24 Hours drew to a close. One of its pair of Group N Fords, a rent-a-car to be raced by

a couple of local drivers and team money man Ken Grundy, hadn't made the cut. And a non-start would mean that two thirds of the hire fee wouldn't be coming its way. That's when team manager Malcolm Swetnam hatched a cunning plan to make sure the race didn't turn into a financial disaster.

Among the drivers in the team's lead entry, a three-door Ford Sierra RS Cosworth, was club legend Ian Flux. He remembers being called into the team's truck, handed Grundy's overalls and told to put them on by Swetnam because he had an undercover job to do in the team's four-door Sierra Sapphire rental car.

"Ken was five foot nothing and four feet wide, so they weren't really my size," recalls the experienced Fluxie. "I had to put his

helmet on and go out and qualify the car."

Fluxie managed the feat without too much difficulty. He puts the one-second deficit to his time in the three-door car down to the late hour. "I thought I was finished for the day and it was getting late, so I'd probably had a beer by then," recalls Flux (below). "But I was definitely happy afterwards, because Malcolm bunged me an extra 500 quid for my efforts."



POWER AND NO GLORY

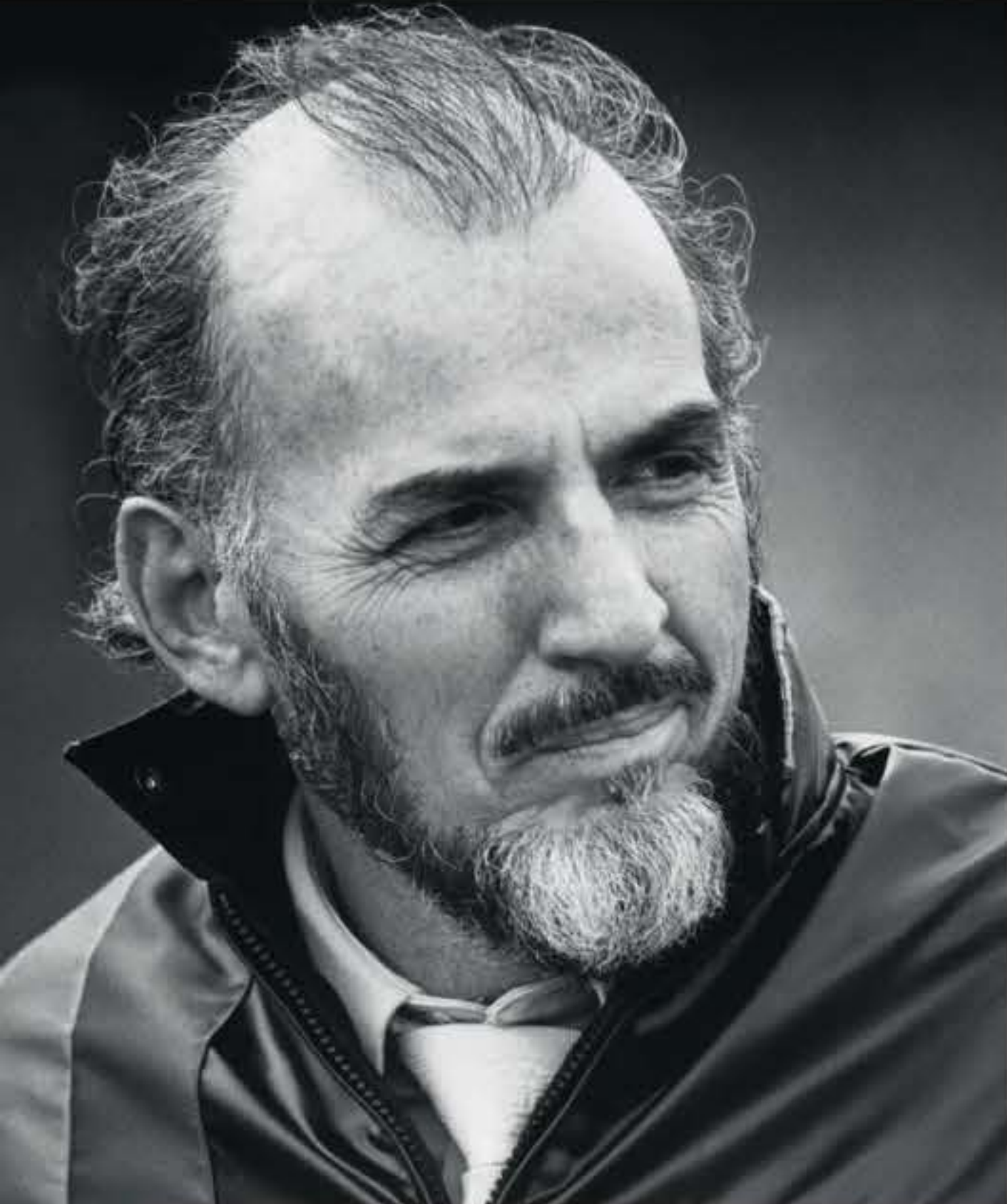


Serial hoaxer Karl Power is most famous for stealing a spot in the team photograph on the pitch with Manchester United ahead of its 2000-01 Champions

League quarter-final defeat to Bayern Munich, but he also managed to make it onto the podium ahead of the celebrations proper at the 2002 British Grand Prix at Silverstone.

It took some daring to pull it off with his mate Tommy Dunn, but it didn't have quite the impact of his Old Trafford escapades, nor striding out onto the pitch at Headingley during an England v Australia Test match. Power had the right kit on those occasions, but his plain red Nomex at Silverstone made him an implausible Michael Schumacher impersonator. *W*





THE SHADOWMAN AND HIS QUIXOTIC CARS

Don Nichols's Formula 1 marque was no more successful than most others from the United States — but winning wasn't his only goal

PETE LYONS

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: PETE LYONS AND  **motorsport**
IMAGES

I don't think the idea ever was to make money. It was to make an art piece, an active art piece that was not only attractive but high performing, and unique, and innovative. Something really innovative in an area where the innovation could be shown and proven, which of course is motor racing.

"I'm a creator of beauty. I like the hardware — I like the artistic aspect of the hardware. That's about all I can say about my motivation. It wasn't very well thought out."

Don Nichols and aesthetic sensibilities; these may not be the first terms linked by people who knew the man during his international racing ventures of the 1970s. The American entrepreneur, who died last year, possessed all the requisite ambition, imagination, drive and daring; also an air of cultivated mystique mixed with courtly bonhomie, a salesman's glib palaver delivered in stately language underlain by a wry, mischievous sense of humour, perhaps as well an overly stubborn sharpness of the business pencil. But an artist's soul?

Yes. All things of beauty powerfully attracted him: art, handcrafted jewellery, fine firearms. When interviewing prospective car designers, Nichols took into account a graceful hand at the drawing

board, and most Shadow Cars were indeed lovely to the eye. Machines of advanced concept, the best were elegantly drawn and finely crafted by a masterfully talented team.

Shadow cannot claim a place among the great marques of history, but during its 12 years on track it did win a handful of races in Can-Am, Formula 1 and Formula 5000. Nichols claimed to have fathered more than 100 of his beloved objects of action art, and most still survive these long decades later, reverently restored and often enthusiastically shown at speed. For their custodians today, it is mainly about the splendid race cars.

But so many of the Shadow stories such people tell centre on the Shadowman himself, the tall, taciturn, innately enigmatic former athlete, D-Day paratrooper and Battle of the Bulge survivor, longtime Army Intelligence officer and (so some say) government spy.

Well, what about that spy stuff? I risked a direct shot: did you work for the CIA? The old man gazed back at me, his long, white-bearded face a mask, silent for an extended moment.

Finally, in his soft Missouri drawl: "I can't talk about that. Ah, CIA and Military Intelligence, Counter Intelligence... not proper, I don't think, to discuss it."


 A black and white photograph of George Follmer in his Shadow DN1 Formula 1 car. The car is dark with white accents, featuring the number 16 on the front wing and 'GOODYEAR' on the side. Follmer is wearing a helmet with a blue and white design. The background is a blurred racetrack.

George Follmer presses on in his Shadow DN1 at the 1973 Dutch GP

Such a denial of candour was rare, however, as I interviewed Nichols through many days and many, many hours through the fall of 2013. My wife and I would meet him early of a misty morning at his storied race shop, an anonymous steel warehouse in an unlovely part of Salinas, over the hill from Monterey, California.

The Wizard's Cave, I called his lair. A high, cavernous space lined with three levels of ramshackle wooden flooring, it was crammed to its rafters with racing treasures: complete cars or monocoques, suspension elements and engine components, body panels, racks of metal stock and boxes of junk, design drawings, pictures, banners, trophies, filing cabinets, memories.

The old Wizard was nearing 90 then, and still lean enough (he stated with pride) to wear the old US Army dress uniform still in his closet at home. He would sit with us for hours in his shabby office, bent into a rickety old swivel chair, answering our questions, or trying to. Ofttimes the memories came hard, sometimes not at all.

But then there'd be a sudden spark and he'd leap up and dash out across the shop floor to find something he wanted to show us. He knew just where it was and, much spryer than I, he'd clamber like a young gymnast up and up through tiers of rough timber scaffolding. He remarked that he had erected this structure with his own hands 20 years before.

● THE PATHFINDER

Donald R Nichols was an only child and essentially grew up an orphan: "I don't remember my mother at all." Born in 1924, on November 23, Don estimated he was two or three when his mother took him along in a taxi on some errand or other into the countryside

around Eldon, Don's birthplace in the Midwestern state of Missouri. A sudden, violent summertime tornado struck the vehicle and ripped it apart. Mrs Nichols was killed. Her toddler was flung so far into the woods that it was late in the evening, hours later, before a search party holding hands in the dense undergrowth stumbled across him. Little Donnie spent the next year or more living in a hospital, recovering from many severe injuries.

Despite his childhood trauma, the youth grew up tall, strong and keen on sports. In school he played American football and especially enjoyed running in track events. But in 1942 he left before graduation, misrepresented his age (17) and joined the army: "I was afraid the war was gonna end and I would miss it."

He didn't. In the early hours of June 6 1944, 19-year-old private Nichols of the 101st Airborne parachuted into the darkness of Nazi-occupied France several miles inland from the Normandy beaches. Almost immediately an exploding shell knocked him into oblivion.

"I was in the Pathfinders, which was the group that jumped in advance to set up the signal devices so planes would know where to drop the paratroopers," he explained. "We went in an hour or so early. It was a big deal to be first out of the plane. I always enjoyed hazardous duty-type activities."

"We were the first down and we attracted the attention and got the artillery coming in. I was one of the first ones hit. So I didn't remember too much about France."

Upon discharge from hospital in Britain, Nichols went back to jumping into war. He was wounded again during Holland's Operation Market Garden, and again in Belgium's Battle of the Bulge. That time, he survived only because the four 9mm rounds from a *Schmeisser* >>

Maschinenpistole impacting his midriff were stopped by packs of explosive carried in his jacket.

Don had just turned 20. Warfare suited him. "It was a young guy's excitement," he said. "I was thinking about having fun and doing the land-rush, daredevil stuff." Thus, when peace stopped his play, he quickly found civilian life far too dull and soon re-enlisted: "I liked the military life, the activity. I enjoyed the kind of people, and I was

"THE COCKPIT WAS SO SHALLOW THAT FOLLMER'S FEET SPLAYED OUT SIDeways TO TWO PEDALS"

always in a... let's say a distinguished unit, an aggressive unit."

Military Intelligence seemed his best chance to continue the combative life he craved. After learning Japanese, he went with wife and children to Cold War duty in Japan. And here's the period that Don kept veiled: "There was always something exciting to do that I'm not at liberty to discuss."

But he did clarify one point of frequent confusion on the internet: he was not USAF Major Donald Nichols, famed for "positive intelligence" commando exploits in Korea: "He was a little before my time. I never met the person."

Our Donald Nichols finally left the army, but not Japan. He liked the country, the people and their artistic culture — and the opportunities for a world-savvy entrepreneur. "It was easy to make money, because the Japanese wanted to import stuff and they didn't know how to do it, so I set up a company," he said. Bringing in racing tyres that he acquired the evening after grands prix was one major part of his business, and it kept Don active in the sport as an occasional driver and race-team owner. He even took a role in the creation of Fuji International Speedway, working initially with NASCAR.

Late in the 1960s Nichols, now wealthy, resettled in Los Angeles and started looking around for his next interesting venture. He looked into the sportscar racing scene. There he found Trevor Harris.

● THE KNEE-HIGH CAR

A radically imaginative engineer, Harris had a small shop and big ideas. He outlined his concept for an ultra-low race car with such minimal aerodynamic drag that it would be master of

any straightaway. Don was helpless before Trevor's infectious enthusiasm. Well, how much would it take to build it, Don asked? "Oh, I think we can do it for 40 or 50 thousand dollars," is the answer he remembered.

A year later project costs were about to break a million. That's when the test car started wearing number roundels showing bold \$ signs. "The Dollar Car," Don dubbed it with a chuckle.

"We just wanted to have fun," explained the financier. "The idea was, we'll build the car and we'll race it and see what happens. We were just trying to think creatively about how to make the ultimate racing machine. Not talk to these guys who had started with covered wagons towed by mules... We were trying to approach this from a space-age basis and see if we couldn't make something that was just totally different."

Make what, exactly? A car for the Canadian-American Challenge Cup, North America's boisterous young series that welcomed any wild idea. To Nichols, the Can-Am was "an exhibition of creative thinking and Trevor certainly was an expression of free thinking".

With Harris and another early partner, master fabricator Wayne Hartman, Don set up Nichols Advanced Vehicle Systems (AVS), acquired a space large enough to house his ambition, installed the most advanced tooling of the day, and hired the best craftsmen available. They set to work on five radical new, black-anodised monocoque chassis. Officially the type designation was AVS 1.

About the marque moniker Shadow, some say it was a wry reference to Nichols's own obscure career as a 'spy'. Others cite a PR story claiming Don was a fan of an old radio drama about a sleuth



Very low AVS 1 Can-Am racer was radical, but wasn't a success for Shadow

UOP
sponsorship
allowed development
of cars such as the
Mk3



called The Shadow. Perhaps both explanations carry some truth, but both Nichols and Harris stated that the name arose during a shop-bench racing session. Could we make a race car that had zero frontal area? Well, it would have to be truly two-dimensional. Like its shadow.

Not even Harris could achieve that, but his creation was indeed so startlingly low that Nichols always called it “The Knee-High Car”.

Innovation in racing is one thing; function is another. Firestone had to work out how to make the tiny tyres, Harris had to fit brakes into the ultra-small wheels, and gearing issues also arose from those small wheels. Ducting enough air into radiators tucked right into the originally very long tail of the car was another problem, and so was developing a narrow-profile, low-drag engine-intake system to feed the huge seven-litre Chevy.

Meanwhile George Follmer, a fearless competitor who would drive anything, had to adapt to a cockpit so shallow that his feet splayed out sideways to just two, sharply angled pedals; the clutch had to be worked by a hand lever.

Construction began in 1968, with the goal of racing the following year, but all of '69 was eaten up by development work. Work which went wasted in major respects when rules were imposed on the formerly free-formula Can-Am that outlawed some of Harris's design concepts.

Much-revised, the wildly novel AVS-1 finally debuted in 1970's two opening rounds, but lasted few laps of either. As the team left the second event a drunk driver swerved across the two-lane road's centreline and crashed Shadow's trailer into the ditch, severely damaging the race car inside.

Nichols had run out of money. He had in fact been forced to spirit his cars out of his shop to avoid them being seized in a suit about payments. But he was able to scratch and claw his way to one further Can-Am, when he brought a second, heavily revised car to Mid-Ohio, round five. Intrepid Vic Elford took on the challenge, but again the car didn't finish. Shadow disappeared from the scene.

● THE SHADOWY SPONSOR

Have you ever heard of a company called Universal Oil Products? Well, sure you have – by way of all those glossy black Shadow race cars with big white ‘uop’ logos all over them.

But other than that, would you know the name? Well, maybe if you happen to be a player in the international petrochemical industry. UOP does catalytic cracking, building rigs for oil producers to turn crude into lighter products, which include petrol but much else besides. UOP is huge in that world. And only there. UOP – it's now a division of Honeywell – couldn't care less if it never rings a bell with you, the motoring public. You're not its customers.

Neither UOP nor AVS knew of the other's existence when, sometime during 1970, the increasingly desperate Nichols hired a young man to sit at a phone with a directory of Fortune 500 companies, simply making cold calls.

Against all odds, when the youngster reached the ‘U’ he struck paydirt. At the time, environmentalist pressure was on to adopt lead-free fuel, but consumers were sceptical about performance. Nichols's proposal caught the attention of a bright spark at UOP management, who saw value in demonstrating that race cars burning unleaded fuel produced with UOP's process would still be plenty powerful.

His coffers recharged, Nichols plunged back into his quest to create a Can-Am winner. For a second-generation model, to be called the Shadow Mark II (without mention of AVS), he hooked up with English-born former race mechanic Peter Bryant, who in 1969 and '70 had designed, constructed and campaigned two models of ‘Titanium Car’. Driven with brio by Brit Jackie Oliver, this T122 had shown promise – although once it did overreach itself by trying to fly – but then Bryant lost control of his project.

Through successive designs by Bryant and then fellow Brit Tony Southgate, UOP Shadows grew ever more conventional, and ever more competent. Oliver showed real speed in 1972's Mark III, and in '74 – now alongside Follmer as the team's first full-time co-driver – he won the Can-Am championship with Southgate's DN4 (the letters honouring employer Don Nichols). Never mind it was against thin opposition in a shortened final year of the declining series; those factors were none of Shadow's doing, and a win is a win.

● UP TO FORMULA 1

Back in 1970, Nichols had no vision of expanding into international grand prix competition. As he recalled: “We were kind of enamoured of Can-Am... the big American engine idea. I think when Jackie came along, that's when he brought my focus into F1, saying, ‘Why not?’ And, ‘If you have a good sponsor, F1 is a place where good sponsorship allows you to do development and succeed.’”

UOP saw the value of carrying its message to the entire world, so in the summer of 1972 Nichols went to Britain to talk with designers. Southgate impressed him with his visionary approach, his quick, artistic hand at the drafting table, and also his connections with London's Imperial College and its windtunnel.

For a place to build next-generation Shadows, sponsor UOP's division Bostrom (a seat-making firm) offered a derelict building in Northampton. “It was a condemned building,” Don remembered with a laugh. “The floor was caving in, it was full of holes. That's where we built the first F1 car.” This was the DN1. >>



Formula 1 highlight came when Tom Pryce (left) won the 1975 Race of Champions at Brands

The fledgling US-branded team — one of very few, and the first since Dan Gurney with his Eagles — failed to make 1973's first two GPs, but a pair of glossy black Shadow-Ford Cosworth DN1s did arrive for round three at Kyalami in South Africa. Drivers were Oliver and Follmer — a raw newcomer to F1, but 1972 Can-Am champ aboard a 1000bhp Penske Porsche 917/10 turbo. Both were plagued with new-car troubles, and Oliver had to retire, but his rookie team-mate brought his DN1 to the finish. In sixth place. A grand prix point in his first try.

The next round was Spain, where in Barcelona's swooping Montjuich Park Follmer did it again — third this time. This was lookin' good! But that was as good as it would look that year, apart from Oliver taking a third place of his own in Canada.

The next season opened with the team moving into far better premises, Southgate improving his basic design into a new DN3 (close relative of that year's finally successful Can-Am DN4), and new drivers Jean-Pierre Jarier and Peter Revson taking over F1; Oliver and Follmer concentrated on Can-Am.

Then tragedy. In pre-race testing at Kyalami, Revson's car broke a front-suspension part and fatally impacted a steel guardrail.

It was an era when savage death was frequent, and some tried to pretend they were hardened to it. But the component failure put the designer through a very dark time, and the team's buoyancy was

gone. Jarier carried on, but a third place in Monaco was his best result. Brian Redman and then Bertil Roos tried the other seat before speedy young Welshman Tom Pryce came aboard. On one occasion he seized a thrilling third-best starting spot, but his sixth place finish at the Nurburgring provided his only point.

DN5 was the designation for 1975's F1 machine, which proved to be very good. It was still the era before ground-effects, and Southgate continued the concept of a narrow monocoque fuselage for good penetration, with hip-mounted water radiators taking advantage of the natural high-pressure area just ahead of the exposed rear wheels. At the front, he tucked the front-suspension springs out of the airstream by using rocker arms. Further development of the engine-intake airbox yielded a jaunty forward cant to maximise air delivery to the rear wing. According to the Imperial Collage windtunnel, the DN5 enjoyed more downforce than any of its rivals that year.

This was the Shadow that Jarier placed on pole for both South American races of 1975, and which Pryce drove to non-points victory at Brands Hatch. Decades later, Nichols said that first F1 win remained his fondest memory from his Shadow years.

But if these results suggested slow but encouraging improvement, history was about to turn cruel. UOP suddenly pulled its lavish sponsorship. Five seasons of motor racing had given the petrochemical developer all the publicity about lead-free gasoline it wanted — maybe more than it wanted, to go by how abruptly the senior manager was terminated and how brusquely the new man cancelled the deal with Nichols: "He just called me in and I got a summary dismissal."

Racers being racers, the Shadowmen did not give up, but it was ever harder to keep the wheels turning. Oliver took on the challenge of hunting sponsorship, and over the next couple of years he managed to decorate the cars with a variety of new liveries. But financing never came close to prior levels. Shadow's progress ground to a halt.

A well-tuned crystal ball would have shown the long-sought first GP win two years ahead, when Alan Jones in a DN8 scored his own maiden victory in Austria in 1977. But then it also would have foreshadowed the tragic loss of Pryce in South Africa earlier the same year — the second death suffered by the team at Kyalami.

The future held no further joy. There was a courtroom contest between Nichols and Oliver, who had broken away to form his own team and taken key Shadow personnel with him, as well as drawings for that year's Shadow DN9. Eventually the Arrows cars that resulted



Nichols said he made more than 100 Shadows during his team's 12 years

"WE TRIED TO MAKE ATTRACTIVE CARS AND DO PROGRAMMES THAT APPEALED TO US"



were ordered returned to Nichols, but most of the disaffected staff stayed with Oliver. (As Ollie quipped in a later communication with this author: "He kept the house, I got the kids.")

Don kept soldiering on, somehow appearing at the first few GPs of 1980. But performances were dismal. Time had come. To clear a debt to Theodore Racing owner Teddy Yip, Nichols signed over his current rolling stock and closed Shadow's doors.

Where does this organisation stand in motor racing history? Based on statistics established from the start of work late in 1968 through the first weeks of '80, it would be hard to claim great success. In the Big-Block Can-Am era Shadow did win a championship, the only nominally American constructor to do so. In GP racing the team earned one victory, the same number achieved by Penske, Eagle and, in a far different era, Duesenberg. Unlike those others, Nichols truly stayed the difficult international course for many seasons.

What does a venturesome man do upon awaking from a racing dream of a decade's duration? Turn to military vehicles, naturally.

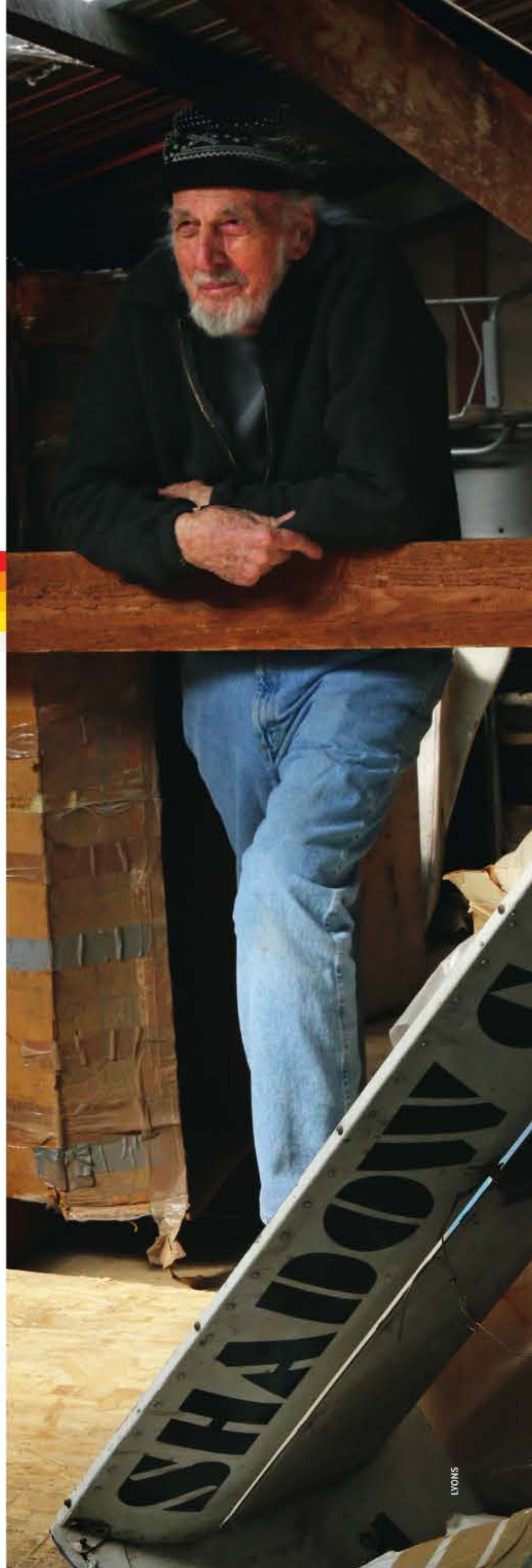
Don's long and enthusiastic service in the army kept his eyes open for opportunities there, and he perceived a need for small, lightweight combat machines easily transported by air. With Harris, his first designer and longtime friend, Nichols Advanced Vehicle Systems produced several prototypes for consideration by the armed services. Alas, none landed that all-important government contract.

Nichols continued to market his trove of old Shadow cars and components (plus, it was whispered, new cars he represented as old ones). His Wizard's Cave became a haunt for vintage racers and collectors who will long honour this quixotic, creative, competitive man and his gallant fighting machines. He was 92 when he died on August 21 2017.

"It pleases me," the old warrior once remarked in his slow, thoughtful way, "that we were able to make attractive equipment, cars that were extremely well received, and we were able to find sponsors and support.

"It's satisfying to recall that we had an opportunity to do things that we didn't always do well, but we tried to do them in an innovative and creative and, I suppose, exciting and appealing way. We tried to make attractive, well-decorated cars and we tried to do programmes that appealed to us, or to me personally. It was something I had ability to control – our participation and our expression.

"We thought it was an artistic expression." ✽



WHAT WAS WRITTEN IN THE MAGAZINE THIS YEAR, WHEN, AND BY WHOM

BA Ben Anderson
GA Gary Anderson
LB Lawrence Barretto
SB Stefan Bartholomaeus
JB Jack Benyon
CB Charles Bradley
KC Karun Chandhok
RC Roberto Chinchero
SC Stuart Codling

AC Adam Cooper
JC Jack Cozens
LD Lewis Duncan
TE Tom Errington
DE David Evans
PF Paul Fearnley
GF Glenn Freeman
RH-G Rachel Harris-Gardner
MJ Matt James

AK Alex Kalinauckas
GK Graham Keilloh
MK Matt Kew
VK Valentin Khorounzhiy
JK Jamie Klein
RL Robert Ladbrook
PL Paul Lawrence
SL Stephen Lickorish
AL Alasdair Lindsay

SMA Stefan Mackley
DM David Malsher
DMA Dan Mason
SM Scott Mitchell
JNE James Newbold
JNO Jonathan Noble
JP James Page
MPA Mark Paulson
GP Giorgio Piola

MP Marcus Pye
HR Hal Ridge
JR James Roberts
NR Nigel Roebuck
AR Anthony Rowlinson
MSA Matt Salisbury
JS Jeremy Shaw
PS Peter Scherer
MS Marcus Simmons

ES Edd Straw
IT Ian Titchmarsh
KT Kevin Turner
AVDB Andrew van de Burgt
AVL Andrew van Leeuwen
GW Gary Watkins
RW Rob Watts

Autosport Awards

Voting nominations (Nov 8)
All the night's winners (Dec 6)

Autosport International

Show preview pt1 (Jan 4)
Show preview pt2 (Jan 11)
The 2018 highlights (Jan 18)

British Touring Cars

Season preview (Apr 5-MJ)
1. Brands Hatch (Apr 12-MJ)
2. Donington Park (May 3-MJ)
3. Thruxton (May 24-MJ)
4. Oulton Park (June 14-MJ)
5. Croft (June 28-MSA)
6. Snetterton (Aug 2-MJ)
7. Rockingham (Aug 16-MJ)
8. Knockhill (Aug 30-MJ)
9. Silverstone (Sept 20-MJ)
10. Brands Hatch (Oct 4-MJ)
Season review (Oct 18-MJ)

Club Autosport

The Alfa racer who rolled, then won (Jan 4-JB)
2017 championship round-up (Jan 4-JB/SL/SMA)
How Porsche picked its UK junior (Jan 11-SL)
Rating the new series of 2017, and introducing this year's offerings (Jan 25-JB/RL/SL/SMA)
Nathalie McGloin: paraplegic trailblazer (Feb 1-SMA)
How long until halo joins the club? (Feb 8-SMA)
UK racer's Daytona 24 Hours adventure (Feb 15-GW)
Hot hatches on a high (Feb 22-SL/JB/MJ/MK/SMA/MPA)
Is Ginetta Junior facing an unlucky year? (Mar 1-SL)
Things to look forward to in 2018 (Mar 8-SMA/JB/MJ/PL/RL/SL/MP)
Can Monger win in British F3? (Mar 22-SMA)
British GT season preview (Mar 29-RL)
BTCC supports preview (Apr 5-SL)
RGB track test with Anthony Reid (Apr 12-KT)
Thruxton's birthday highlights (May 31-MP)
Damon Hill tries Team BRIT's Aston Martin (June 21-JB)
From hillclimbing to Le Mans (June 21-JB)
Silverstone Classic preview (July 19-MK)
Motorsport and mental health (Aug 2-JB)
Jon Minshaw: British GT's nearly man (Aug 23-JNE)
60 years of Monoposto (Oct 25-GK)
Revolution Cars (Nov 1-MP)
Radical's new dawn (Nov 8-BA)
British GT season review (Nov 15-JNE)
BRDC F3 season review (Nov 15-SMA)

TOCA supports season review (Nov 29-SL/DMA)
The 2018 club racing champions (Dec 13-SL/SMA)

DTM

1. Hockenheim (May 10-TE)
2. Lausitzring (May 24-JB)
3. Hungaroring (June 7-MS)
4. Norisring (June 28-MS)
5. Zandvoort (July 19-MS)
6. Brands Hatch (Aug 16-JC)
7. Misano (Aug 30-MS)
8. Nurburgring (Sept 13-TE)
9. Red Bull Ring (Sept 27-MS)
10. Hockenheim (Oct 18-MS)
Paffett's DTM title (Nov 15-MS)

European F3

Season preview (May 10-MS)
1. Pau (May 17-MS)
2. Hungaroring (June 7-MS)
3. Norisring (June 28-MS)
4. Zandvoort (July 19-MS)
5. Spa (Aug 2-MS)
6. Silverstone (Aug 23-MS)
7. Misano (Aug 30-MS)
8. Nurburgring (Sept 13-TE)
9. Red Bull Ring (Sept 27-MS)
10. Hockenheim (Oct 18-MS)
Season review (Nov 1-MS)

F1 launches

F1 launches: Red Bull RB14, Williams FW41, Haas VF-18 (Feb 22); Mercedes W09, Ferrari SF71H, McLaren MCL33, Renault RS18, Force India VJM11, Toro Rosso STR13, Sauber C37 (Mar 1)

Fifth Column

Nigel Roebuck

Brawn should call Ferrari's bluff (Jan 4)
Pirelli's compound interest (Jan 11)
A great racer, and a great man (Jan 18)
Why we can't say goodbye to the halo (Jan 25)
Reborn in the USA (Feb 1)
Alonso's star team-mate (Feb 8)
F1's imbalance of power (Feb 15)
Circling around a dangerous subject (Feb 22)
A saga without end (Mar 1)
When racing didn't stop for snow (Mar 8)
A missed opportunity (Mar 29)
The safety car dance (Apr 26)
Still racing in two worlds (May 31)
Law and disorder (June 28)
'Heavy metal' hammered (July 26)
Goodbye to all that (Aug 30)
Role reversal (Sept 27)
Contrasting times (Oct 25)
Out with the old (Nov 29)

Formula E

2. Marrakech (Jan 18-SM)
3. Santiago (Feb 8-SM)

4. Mexico City (Mar 8-SM)
5. Punta del Este (Mar 22-AK)
Formula E's street challenge (Mar 29-AK)
6. Rome (Apr 19-AK)
Techeetah: FE's giant-killers (Apr 26-AVDB)
7. Paris (May 3-AK)
8. Berlin (May 24-AK)
Formula E takes motor racing back to Switzerland (June 7-AK)
9. Zurich (June 14-AK)
FE's German takeover (June 21-AR)
10. New York (July 19-AK)
Why an F1 champion has bought into Formula E (July 19-AK)
Season review (Aug 16-AK)
Why Massa is taking on the challenge of Formula E (Sept 27-AK)
BMW sets the pace in pre-season testing (Oct 25-AK)
Inside Formula E's Gen2 racer (Nov 15-AK)

Formula 2

Season preview (Apr 5-AK)
1. Bahrain (Apr 12-AK)
2. Baku (May 3-JB)
3. Barcelona (May 17-JB)
4. Monte Carlo (May 31-JB)
5. Paul Ricard (June 28-JB)
6. Red Bull Ring (July 5-JB)
7. Silverstone (July 12-JB)
8. Hungaroring (Aug 2-JB)
9. Spa (Aug 30-JB)
10. Monza (Sept 6-JB)
11. Sochi (Oct 4-JB)
12. Yas Marina (Nov 29-JB)

GP3

Jack Benyon

Season preview (May 10)
1. Barcelona (May 17)
2. Paul Ricard (June 28)
3. Red Bull Ring (July 5)
4. Silverstone (July 12)
5. Hungaroring (Aug 2)
6. Spa (Aug 30)
7. Monza (Sept 6)
8. Sochi (Oct 4)
9. Yas Marina (Nov 29)

Grand prix features

Nigel Mansell speaks out on F1 (Jan 4-JR)
Ferrari's fastest car (Jan 11-AC)
Farewell Felipe Massa (Jan 11-BA)
What the halo means for F1 teams (Jan 18-AC)
The big stories of 2018 (Jan 18-BA/LB/JNO)
The battle to lead Red Bull (Feb 1-LB)
McLaren's plan to win again (Feb 8-BA)
The big questions ahead of the F1 season (Feb 15-KC)
Under the skin of F1 testing (Feb 15-GA)
Charles Leclerc - Raikkonen's replacement (Feb 15-AK)

Can Red Bull end Mercedes' domination? (Feb 22-BA)
Paddy Lowe's plan for a Williams revival (Feb 22-ES)
Martin Brundle on the F1 grid (Feb 22-NR)
Have Merc's rivals missed their chance? (Mar 1-BA)
Can Ferrari finally defeat Mercedes? (Mar 1-AC)
No more excuses for McLaren (Mar 1-JNO)
Renault: a sleeping giant awakens (Mar 1-JNO)
Who's hot and who's not in F1 testing (Mar 8-ES)
Technical focus (Mar 8-GA/GP)
Gary Anderson's verdict (Mar 8)
The truth about Renault's engine (Mar 8-ES)
What can we expect from Toro Rosso? (Mar 8-LB)
F1 season preview: has Mercedes moved the goalposts? (Mar 15-ES)
Technical focus (Mar 15-GA/GP)
Trackside verdict (Mar 15-KC)
Hamilton versus Vettel (Mar 15-BA)
F1 drivers under pressure (Mar 15-BA)
Ocon: rising star (Mar 15-SM)
McLaren: faster but still fragile (Mar 15-ES)
Carlos Sainz Q&A (Mar 15-AC)
Toro Rosso: Honda's chance for redemption (Mar 15-LB)
Sauber: can Alfa Romeo boost a revival? (Mar 15-AC)
Kubica: can he get back in a race seat? (Mar 15-ES)
Halo: the truth (Mar 15-BA)
Track guide (Mar 15)
Team by team (Mar 15-GA)
Calendar and TV info (Mar 15)
Red Bull gunning for Mercedes (Mar 22-JNO)
The hurdles that could thwart Vettel (Apr 5-ES)
Jim Clark's 10 greatest drives (Apr 5-KT)
Can Mercedes tame its latest diva? (Apr 26-ES)
Time for Verstappen to throttle back (May 10-ES)
Formula 1 pre-qualifying (May 17-JP)
McLaren's false dawn (May 24-ES)
Williams FW08C track test (May 24-KC)
Bottas: the unluckiest driver of 2018? (June 7-ES)
Vettel's 50 wins (June 14)
How the French Grand Prix was revived (June 21-ES)
Honda's Red Bull redemption (July 19-SM)
Why Ricciardo has jumped ship to Renault (Aug 9-ES)
Why Kubica is crucial to Williams (Aug 16-ES)
Why Alonso is leaving Formula 1 (Aug 23-ES)

Can Lando Norris thrive at McLaren? (Sept 13-SM)
Tech focus: McLaren MP4/4 (Sept 13)
Remembering Ronnie Peterson (Sept 13-MS)
Peterson's top 10 F1 drives (Sept 13-KT)
Is Leclerc Ferrari's next world champion? (Sept 27-SM)
Gasly: Red Bull's new star (Sept 27-ES)
Gary Anderson's windtunnel FAQ (Sept 27)
Russell's F1 break with Williams (Oct 18-SM)
Why Williams has been on the skids (Oct 18-ES)
Mike Hawthorn: Britain's first F1 champion (Oct 18-PF)
Graham Hill's 10 greatest races (Nov 1-KT)
Why Lewis Hamilton won't rest (Nov 8-JNO)
Season review: how Hamilton took his best title (Dec 6-ES)
Top 10 drivers (Dec 6-ES)
F1 bosses' top 10 (Dec 6-JNO)
Mercedes v Ferrari: the development war (Dec 6-GP/GA)
Tech highlights (Dec 6-GP/GA)
Did Red Bull fall short in 2018? (Dec 6-AC)
Formula 1's thrilling Class B title fight (Dec 6-ES)
Force India's miracle (Dec 6-ES)
Alonso's big quotes of 2018 (Dec 6-BA)
McLaren's post-Honda wake-up call (Dec 6-SC)
How Honda rehabilitated itself (Dec 6-SM)
The rise of Leclerc (Dec 6-SM)
How Kubica made it back to F1 (Dec 6-AC)
Best race drives of 2018 (Dec 6-ES)
How the halo proved itself (Dec 6-JNO)
Liberty and the year in politics (Dec 6-AC)
Top 10 stories online (Dec 6)
The year in numbers (Dec 6)
When was F1's greatest era? (Dec 13-PF/NR/MS/AVDB/GF/ES)

Grand prix reports

Edd Straw

1. Australia (Mar 29)
2. Bahrain (Apr 12)
3. China (Apr 19)
4. Azerbaijan (May 3)
5. Spain (May 17)
6. Monaco (May 31)
7. Canada (June 14)
8. France (June 28)
9. Austria (July 5)
10. Great Britain (July 12)
11. Germany (July 26)
12. Hungary (Aug 2)
13. Belgium (Aug 30)
14. Italy (Sept 6)

15. Singapore (Sept 20)
16. Russia (Oct 4)
17. Japan (Oct 11)
18. USA (Oct 25)
19. Mexico (Nov 1)
20. Brazil (Nov 15)
21. Abu Dhabi (Nov 29)

Have-a-go hero

Alex Stone, rallying for Down's syndrome awareness (Jan 4-**JB**)
Will Power's A1GP cameo (Feb 15-**DM**)
Felix Rosenqvist's early international adventure (Mar 15-**AK**)
Tony Kanaan's Suzuka 'prize drive' (Apr 26-**DM**)
Brad Jones's ALMS call-up (July 12-**SB**)
Jochen Mass tests a Williams (Nov 29-**MK**)

IndyCar

Josef Newgarden's tough road to the top (Jan 4-**TE**)
Season preview (Mar 8-**DM/TE**)
1. St Petersburg (Mar 15-**DM**)
2. Phoenix (Apr 12-**DM**)
3. Long Beach (Apr 19-**DM**)
4. Barber (Apr 26-**DM**)
5. Indianapolis (May 17-**DM**)
Indianapolis 500 preview (May 24-**DM**)
6. Indianapolis 500 (May 31-**DM**)
7. Detroit Belle Isle (June 7-**DM**)
8. Texas (June 14-**DM**)
9. Road America (June 28-**DM**)
10. Iowa (July 12-**DM**)
11. Toronto (July 19-**DM**)
12. Mid-Ohio (Aug 2-**DM**)
13. Pocono (Aug 23-**DM**)
14. Gateway (Aug 30-**DM**)
15. Portland (Sept 6-**DM**)
16. Sonoma (Sept 20-**DM**)
Season review (Oct 18-**DM**)

In the paddock

Silence of the damned (Jan 4-**SM**)
NASCAR's identity crisis (Jan 11-**TE**)
Williams's big risk (Jan 18-**BA**)
All sorted, then chaos (Jan 25-**MJ**)
New model army (Feb 1-**SM**)
F1 makes the right call (Feb 8-**KT**)
WTCR stars align (Feb 15-**JC**)
Burning BTCC bridges (Feb 22-**MJ**)
The halo in the flesh (Mar 1-**ES**)
Statute of livery (Mar 8-**SM**)
Big-name game (Mar 8-**DE**)
Long road ahead for Renault (Mar 15-**ES**)
Rise and fall (Mar 22-**ES**)
In with the old (Mar 22-**MS**)
Promises, promises (Mar 29-**ES**)
The challenge of change (Apr 5-**ES**)
A crucial weekend (Apr 5-**AC**)
Gambling on power (Apr 12-**ES**)
Mag-nificent Kevin? (Apr 19-**ES**)
Lessons to learn (Apr 19-**BA**)
The man the big three should want (Apr 26-**ES**)
Why Hamilton is off his game (May 3-**ES**)
Passing notes (May 3-**AC**)
Exploding the Spanish GP myth (May 10-**ES**)
Balancing act (May 10-**GW**)
How do you solve a problem like Romain Grosjean? (May 17-**ES**)
Why you need to think again about Monaco (May 24-**ES**)
Decision time for Red Bull (May 31-**ES**)
Return of the Hulk? (June 7-**ES**)
F1's hardest cuts (June 7-**AC**)
Coming to America (June 14-**ES**)
Freedom of movement (June 21-**ES**)

In Alonso's shadow (June 28-**ES**)
Party like it's 19.99(km) (June 28-**CB**)
Record breakers (July 5-**ES**)
Fearing the British GP (July 5-**AC**)
Be more like Kimi (July 12-**ES**)
Charles in charge (July 19-**ES**)
WTCR under pressure (July 19-**JC**)
The £40 million question (July 26-**ES**)
Rally Finland – season highlight (July 26-**DE**)
A fight to remember (Aug 2-**ES**)
Saving Force India (Aug 2-**AC**)
Nothing ventured... (Aug 9-**ES**)
IndyCar at a crossroads (Aug 9-**TE**)
Lessons from the past (Aug 16-**ES**)
The switch to electric (Aug 16-**MJ**)
Mutual benefits (Aug 23-**ES**)
We won't Rock you (Aug 23-**MS**)
Marriage of convenience (Aug 30-**ES**)
All change please (Sept 6-**ES**)
Pulling up the ladders (Sept 6-**AC**)
Law and orders (Sept 13-**ES**)
The Revival's rising pace (Sept 13-**KT**)
Man of the moment (Sept 20-**ES**)
A bright spark (Sept 20-**KT**)
Nowhere to hide (Sept 27-**SM**)
Haas's correct call (Oct 4-**ES**)
It's Giovinazzi's time (Oct 4-**AC**)
De Ferran's big task (Oct 11-**ES**)
Orange-tinted specs (Oct 11-**MS**)
Subjugate to dominate (Oct 18-**ES**)
Root and branch (Oct 25-**ES**)
Aiming high (Nov 1-**ES**)
Kvyat's second coming (Nov 1-**AC**)
Change of mindset (Nov 8-**ES**)
Loeb's win is no disgrace (Nov 8-**DE**)
How great is Mercedes? (Nov 15-**ES**)
Ending on a high (Nov 22-**ES**)
Kubica's true grit (Nov 29-**ES**)
Play the team game (Dec 6-**ES**)
Waiting on the wings (Dec 6-**AC**)
Mission minnow (Dec 13-**ES**)
Has McLaren chosen the right F1 junior? (Dec 13-**JB**)

Introducing

Jari Huttunen (Jan 11-**AL**)
Guan Yu Zhou (Feb 1-**MS**)
Arthur Rougier (Mar 1-**AK**)
Christian Lundgaard (Mar 29-**RW/AK**)
Anthoine Hubert (Oct 4-**JB**)

McLaren Autosport BRDC Award

How you can help pick the UK's next star (Sept 13)
Award tests (Nov 29)

MotoGP

Season preview (Mar 15-**JK**)
1. Losail (Mar 22-**JK**)
2. Rio Hondo (Apr 12-**JK**)
3. Austin (Apr 26-**CB**)
4. Jerez (May 10-**VK**)
5. Le Mans (May 24-**JK**)
6. Mugello (June 7-**JK**)
7. Barcelona (June 21-**LD**)
8. Assen (June 28-**JK**)
9. Sachsenring (July 19-**JK**)
10. Brno (Aug 9-**JK**)
11. Red Bull Ring (Aug 16-**JK**)
12. Silverstone cancelled
13. Misano (Sept 13-**JK**)
14. Motorland Aragon (Sept 27-**JK**)
15. Buriram (Oct 11-**JK**)
16. Motegi (Oct 25-**JK**)
17. Phillip Island (Nov 1-**AVL**)
18. Sepang (Nov 8-**JK**)
19. Valencia (Nov 22-**LD**)
Season review (Dec 13-**JK**)

Motorsport memory

V10 screams and meeting Johnny Herbert (Jan 18-**SMA**)
F1 in the flesh lives up to the hype (Feb 8-**DM**)

Sunstroke and passion ignited at Brands DTM (Mar 8-**JNE**)
1998 Le Mans 24 Hours (Apr 19-**SC**)
F1 at Mallory Park (June 21-**PS**)
2003 ASCAR (July 19-**MK**)
Tyrrell P34 (Nov 8-**GW**)

Obituaries

Bob King (Jan 11)
Dan Gurney (Jan 18)
Gerard Welter (Feb 8)
Rudi Eggenberger (Feb 15)
Henry Hope-Frost (Mar 15)
Bernard Boyer (Mar 29)
John Miles (Apr 12)
Stuart McCrudden (Apr 12)
Harry Stiller (May 17)
Martin Birrane (June 14)
Dave Maraj (July 26)
Mo Nunn (July 26)
Sergio Marchionne (Aug 2)
Barrie Williams (Sept 13)
Don Panoz (Sept 20)
Tony Dickinson (Nov 1)

Pit+Paddock

Loeb back to the WRC for three rallies (Jan 4)
Alonso begins his Daytona challenge (Jan 11)
Sirotkin beats Kubica to Williams seat (Jan 18)
Russell joins British F2 super-rookies (Jan 25)
Alonso commits to Toyota after Daytona (Feb 1)
New start times for F1 (Feb 8)
Controversy over Alonso-inspired calendar change (Feb 15)
Renault RS18 revealed (Feb 22)
F1 testing could indicate closer fight for 2018 (Mar 1)
Formula E's new racer (Mar 8)
Does IndyCar's new aero kit work? (Mar 15)
BTCC king Sutton's Aussie adventure (Mar 22)
F1 breakaway series threat grows (Mar 29)
Subaru's 2018 BTCC struggle (Apr 5)
Liberty presents F1 plan to teams (Apr 12)
F1 forced to consider pitstop changes (Apr 19)
F1 fuel change to allow more pushing (Apr 26)
Can Wehrlein use DTM for F1 return? (May 3)
Crucial McLaren upgrades ready to go (May 10)
Honda cautious of Red Bull pressure (May 17)
Vettel: Pirelli not behind Spanish woe (May 24)
Why Citroen fired Kris Meeke (May 31)
Alonso tops Le Mans test (June 7)
World Rallycross goes electric for 2020 (June 14)
Hypercar theme for top Le Mans class (June 21)
Massive pile-up hits WTCC (June 28)
Hamilton/Ricciardo key to F1 market (July 5)
McLaren revamps leadership again (July 12)
F1 teams pull back on new engine rules (July 19)
Hamilton deal triggers F1 silly season (July 26)
What next for Force India? (Aug 2)
Ricciardo sparks driver-market chaos (Aug 9)
What salvation means for Force India (Aug 16)
Norris could join Sainz at McLaren (Aug 23)

Did the halo save Leclerc at Spa? (Aug 30)
Norris signs McLaren deal (Sept 6)
Leclerc gets Ferrari race seat (Sept 13)
F1 2021 breaks cover... or does it? (Sept 20)
The case for third cars in F1 (Sept 27)
Ogier signs for Citroen (Oct 4)
Toyota saves Meeke's career (Oct 11)
Aston Martin joins the DTM (Oct 18)
Albon's possible Toro Rosso deal (Oct 25)
Hamilton matches Fangio (Nov 1)
Button's Super GT title showdown (Nov 8)
Alonso commits to 2019 Indy challenge (Nov 15)
Will the F1 2019 aero changes work? (Nov 22)
Kubica gets F1 race seat (Nov 29)
FIA study shows halo saved Leclerc (Dec 6)
The F2 team you've never heard of (Dec 13)

Reports – miscellaneous

Daytona 24 Hours (Feb 1-**GW**)
Race of Champions (Feb 8-**GK**)
Bathurst 12 Hour (Feb 8-**AVL**)
Daytona 500 (Feb 22-**TE**)
Sebring 12 Hours (Mar 22-**GW**)
Goodwood Members' Meeting (Mar 22-**MP**)
Nurburgring 24 Hours (May 17-**JK**)
Monaco Historique (May 17-**IT**)
Le Mans Classic (July 12-**KT/MK**)
Goodwood Festival of Speed (July 19-**MP/MK/JNE/RH-G**)
Silverstone Classic (July 26-**MP/KT/MK**)
Spa 24 Hours (Aug 2-**GW**)
Goodwood Revival (Sept 13-**MP**)
Bathurst 1000 (Oct 11-**AVL**)
Petit Le Mans (Oct 18-**JS**)
Macau Grand Prix (Nov 22-**MS**)
GT World Cup (Nov 22-**JC**)

Special features

Alonso's Le Mans attack starts at Daytona (Jan 25-**ES**)
Dan Gurney's greatest races (Jan 25-**KT**)
Bernd Rosemeyer's greatest moments (Feb 1-**PF**)
Stars remember Formula Renault 3.5 (Feb 8-**BA/RC/GF/DM/SM/MS/AVDB**)
Great car: Dallara T12 (Feb 8-**MS**)
Daytona 500 preview (Feb 15-**TE**)
Gordon Shedden's big gamble (Mar 1-**MJ**)
Goodwood Members' Meeting preview (Mar 15-**MP**)
World Rallycross preview (Apr 12-**HR**)
James Rossiter: nearly man makes it (Apr 26-**MS**)
Rolf Stommelen: underrated trailblazer (Apr 26-**GW**)
Volvo S60 WTCC track test (May 10-**BA**)
Silverstone World Rallycross preview (May 24-**HR**)
Looking back at Racing Steps Foundation (July 5-**MS**)
Mattias Ekstrom profile (July 5-**TE**)
Goodwood Festival of Speed preview (July 12-**MP**)
Spa 24 Hours preview (July 26-**GW**)
How VW conquered Pikes Peak (Aug 9-**DE**)
Zandvoort at 70 (Aug 9-**MS**)
Giant killing with a touring car legend (Aug 9-**BA**)
Goodwood Revival preview (Sept 6-**MP**)
Dan Gurney's flying Brabham

(Sept 13-**MK**)
100 circuits not out (Oct 25-**AVDB**)
Why Audi has quit World Rallycross (Oct 25-**HR**)
Yann Ehrlacher: from zero to WTCR hero (Nov 8-**JC**)
Darren Turner's long-awaited Goodwood win (Nov 8-**KT**)
Macau Grand Prix preview (Nov 15-**MS**)
How Porsche made the fastest car in the world (Nov 22-**TE**)
Formula E's new support act (Nov 29-**AK**)
Johan Kristoffersson's almost perfect World Rallycross season (Dec 13-**DE**)

Supplements

Engineering (Jan 11)
Performance (Feb 1)
Historic racing (Feb 15)
Engineering (Mar 1)
Karting (Mar 29)
Performance (Apr 5)
Engineering (May 10)
Le Mans preview (June 7)
Performance (June 14)
Engineering (July 5)
Performance (Aug 2)
Lola (Aug 9)
BTCC at 60 (Aug 16)
Engineering (Sept 6)
Rally GB (Oct 4)
Performance (Oct 11)
Engineering: mobility special (Nov 1)
Performance (Dec 13)

Top 5

Alfa Romeo racing cars (Jan 25)
Special helmets (Feb 22)
Rare F1 liveries (Mar 22)
Penske sportscars (Oct 11)

WEC

Gary Watkins
2017 season review (Jan 4)
Alonso's Le Mans quest with Toyota (Mar 22)
2018 season preview (May 3)
1. Spa (May 10)
LMP1 privateers at Le Mans (June 14)
2. Le Mans (June 21)
3. Silverstone (Aug 23)
4. Fuji (Oct 18)
5. Shanghai (Nov 22)

WRC

David Evans
Season preview (Jan 25)
1. Monte Carlo (Feb 1)
2. Sweden (Feb 22)
3. Mexico (Mar 15)
4. Corsica (Apr 12)
5. Argentina (May 3)
6. Portugal (May 24)
7. Italy (June 14)
8. Finland (Aug 2)
9. Germany (Aug 23)
10. Turkey (Sept 20)
11. GB (Oct 11)
12. Spain (Nov 1)
13. Australia (Nov 22)

WTCR

Jack Cozens
Season preview (Apr 5)
1. Marrakech (Apr 12)
2. Hungaroring (May 3)
3. Nurburgring (May 17)
4. Zandvoort (May 24)
5. Vila Real (June 28)
6. Slovakia Ring (July 19)
7. Ningbo (Oct 4)
8. Wuhan (Oct 11)
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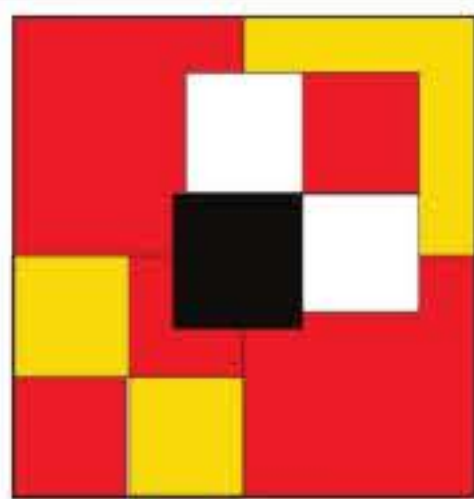
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RICHARDS OFFERS INCENTIVES TO HELP NEWCOMERS

MOTORSPORT UK

Motorsport UK has revealed its first major change to help competitors and volunteers after its rebrand from the Motor Sports Association.

Chairman David Richards stated at last month's relaunch of British motorsport's governing body that "we are going to behave differently from now on", and promised new benefits.

Motorsport UK's new membership programme is part of its plan to offer incentives to people signing up to take part in motorsport.

Discounts on personal accident cover (via JLT) and competition and road-car insurance (Adrian Flux), plus deals at Halfords, Protyre, DFDS Ferries, Grand Prix Racewear and outdoor retailer Ellis Brigham have been confirmed. All 2019 competition-licence holders will be automatically enrolled in the programme.



"Perhaps in the past we have been guilty of not doing enough to put our licence holders front and centre of the organisation and taken for granted their annual licence renewals," said Richards.

"This is the next logical step following our change in name and identity, helping ensure that we deliver on our promise and deliver tangible benefits to our customers.

"Additionally, I am delighted that we are able to extend this programme to all our volunteer marshals and officials as our way of saying thanks. Without them our competitors would not be able to enjoy the sport we are passionate about."

The move comes as the organisation aims to stimulate grassroots participation in motorport, with Richards and new chief executive officer Hugh Chambers wanting to focus more on customer service. Visit motorsportuk.org/Membership/Join-Us for more information.

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ROCKINGHAM 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 recruit Lando Norris both took to Carlin GP2 machines and performed donuts and burnouts on the start/finish straight, while the new-for-2019 Revolution Prototype, driven by James Abbott, also circled. The venue will now be closed to motorsport as it becomes a car-storage facility, a testing venue and auction site. **Photograph by JEP**



MICHELIN CLIO CUP

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

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

This is significant given that 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 when they are replaced

in the top Clio series, which supports the British Touring Car Championship.

“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,” said championship promoter Richard Colburn. “We really want to celebrate the Clio ‘family.’”

The series has established itself as a stepping stone to the UK Clio Cup – this year’s runner-up James Dorlin won the Michelin title in 2016.

Colburn added that he was “very encouraged” by the interest in a taster day held last month.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

MG building new racer for club market

MG CAR CLUB

The MG Car Club has been working with MG Motor UK to develop a new MG3 racer in an attempt 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 is sufficient interest, a full standalone series is planned for 2020.

“The reasons for doing it are twofold,” 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 has 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 £2000-£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.”

STEPHEN LICKORISH





Barnicoat gives McLaren GT3 strong race debut

GULF 12 HOURS

Ben Barnicoat is confident that 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 – which was a race winner in British GT – with fellow factory drivers Joe Osborne and

Rob Bell. Barnicoat was chosen to partner former McLaren GT regulars Shane van Gisbergen and Alvaro Parente in a works-entered car for the season-ending enduro.

The 720S was leading at Yas Marina 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.

Barnicoat said McLaren had taken the positives 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 Autosport.

“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. I think we did a very good job.”

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 Michal Broniszewski capitalised on McLaren’s misfortune to take the team’s fourth straight win in the event.

JAMES NEWBOLD

Caldwell wins on ‘bit of fun’ GT debut

GULF 12 HOURS

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

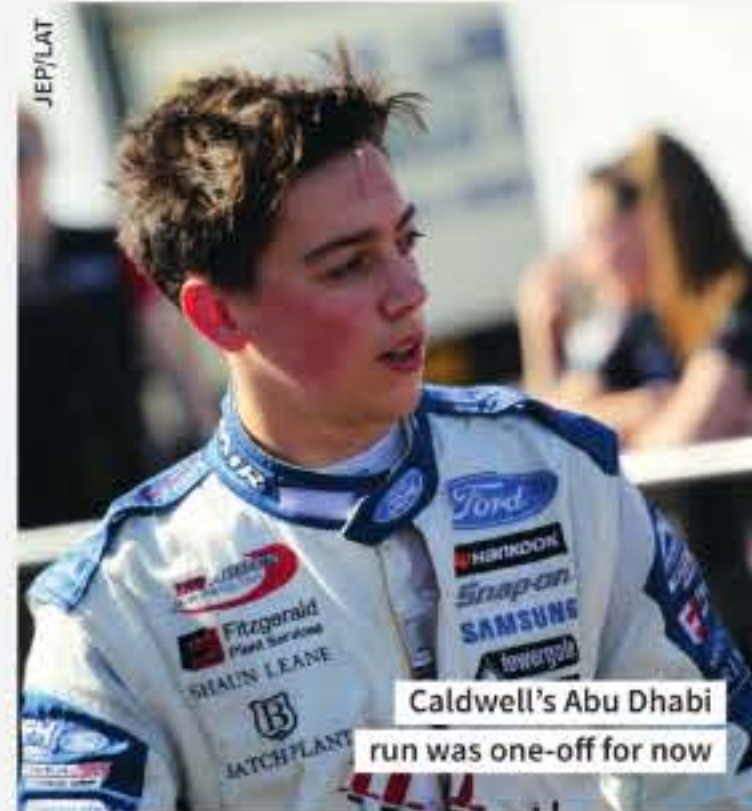
“The first part of the race went really well – there were a few safety cars and I ended up doing a double stint, which was

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 afterwards I adjusted quite quickly.”

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

JAMES NEWBOLD



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RYAN
MOTORSPORT INSURANCE



Hill wowed on his debut at last year's Silverstone Classic

Hill gets full-time Elan gig

HISTORICS

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 Lotus was owned by Richard Wheeler, and now its new keeper 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 [Rob's father] 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 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, showcasing 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.

PAUL LAWRENCE

In2 Racing joins Ginettas

GINETTA JUNIOR

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 '06, has signed Junior TKM karter Zak Taylor as its first driver for the 2019 season.

In2 racers will also get a chance to test the team's Carrera Cup car at the end of 2019.

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

The squad also competed in British GT in 2017 with a pair of McLaren GT4s.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

IN THE HEADLINES

MONGER'S AWARD

BRDC British Formula 3 frontrunner Billy Monger was presented with the BBC Sports Personality of the Year's Helen Rollason Award last Sunday. Named in honour of the first female presenter of BBC's Grandstand, who died from cancer, the award was given to Monger in recognition of his sensational return to racing in BRDC British F3 despite suffering a double leg amputation after a crash in 2017.

MERCEDES PAIR TO BGT

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.

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 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 Anglo American Oil Company.

DAY JOINS NEW SERIES

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 will continue working with the pairing next year.

WHITE'S HSCC 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 more than 20 years and will stand down at the end of this month.

STUDEBAKER FOR SALE

The rare 1965 Studebaker Lark Daytona 500 most recently raced by Nick Whale will be offered for sale by his Silverstone Auctions 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.



MEMORIES OF 2018

Special anniversaries for Chevron and the Thruxton speedbowl ranked among the highlights of a thrilling racing season

MARCUS PYE

There's never a dull moment in the life of a peripatetic motorsport scribe and speaker, which is what keeps me enthused about my abiding interest since childhood. As ever, there was plenty to keep me occupied over a 28-event season. Ask me to pick one highlight and – while a day of days at Thruxton's 50th Anniversary event in June was wonderful – I'd plump for the race celebrating another half-century, that of the extraordinarily gifted Derek Bennett's immortal Chevron B8 at the Historic Sports Car Club's Oulton Park Gold Cup in August. My all-time favourite car at its spiritual home. Unbeatable!

CHANGE OF SCENERY AT GOODWOOD

I wasn't at Oulton Park in March 1975, thus Formula 5000 cars running in the snow at Goodwood's 76th Members' Meeting was an unwelcome novelty. The demonstration, marking half a century since the stock-block V8 category made its debut in the US, needs to be re-staged for the UK's landmark anniversary next year. Having raced the monsters, I felt for their drivers as I did the marshals facing hypothermia. Let's hope the event's switch to April works in 2019. After many years leading the commentary team from atop the pits, I also found a change of

location – following a reshuffle as the loss of fevermeister colleague Henry Hope-Frost sank in – to the St Mary's tower for September's 21st Revival hit hard. Its remoteness made writing reports more difficult, but the aces' speed through the adverse-camber left was a revelation. Witnessing Peter Chambers's Cortina somersault (mercifully without the fire of Peter Procter's Anglia roll in '66) haunts me still.

FRENETIC FORMULA FORD FROLICS GET FIERY AT CADWELL

I'm sorry Formula 1, but nowhere was single-seater racing closer than in Historic Formula Ford this season. The HSCC Pre-1972 action was hairy to watch from the sidelines, particularly the second leg of Donington's championship opener in which the top eight or nine competitors scrapped in a frantic slipstreamer reminiscent of Silverstone's greatest races of the '70s. While there was contact (mostly accidental) in the height of battle, former champion Nelson Rowe's cartwheel out of Cadwell Park's Sunday race was too close to 'my' commentary box at Charlie's bend for comfort. Not having seen a racing car roll for ages, I'd had a premonition the previous night, and so watching the drama unfold in real time was uncomfortable, since he was beyond



"I FELT FOR THE F5000 DRIVERS AS I DID THE MARSHALS FACING HYPOTHERMIA"

Drivers braved the snow at Goodwood to put on a Formula 5000 display

J BLOXHAM
motorsport
IMAGES



Rowe's horrific Cadwell shunt happened just in front of Pye's box

WALKER
HAWKINS



Pye's Merlyn was in the thick of FF1600 title battle thanks to Mitchell

marshals' reach until the field had sped past. That fellow racer Callum Grant and two spectators righted the blazing Crossle, freeing Nelson unhurt, was remarkably courageous. I then saw three more rolls in other classes in close order thereafter...

DOUBLE VICTORY COLOURS THRUXTON '50' GOLD

My first visit to Thruxton, for 1973's British Automobile Racing Club Championship Finals, meant I'd missed almost six years of its history. Having made my race debut there in Clive Wood's FF1600 Van Diemen in '81 and finished a knackered third in a '96 BOSS Formula race in an F3000 Lola powered by a 3.5-litre F1 DFZ, I love the place. But watching Ben Mitchell score a Historic Formula Ford double in my ex-Rob Cooper Merlyn Mk20 at the uber-fast Hampshire airfield track's 50th Anniversary celebration brought greater elation – and an early 60th birthday present. Commentating when your own car is competing is surprisingly difficult, utterly nerve-jangling, but that glorious summer weekend brought a dream result. Six wins from 17 starts weren't ultimately enough for Ben to lift the long-craved HSCC crown, but reflected a superb achievement in a car he prepared and ran on a budget. As most did in period.

HISTORIC F2 RECAPTURING ITS GLORY DAYS

Thruxton's Easter Monday European Formula 2 Championship rounds were eagerly awaited in the 1970s, and whetted my appetite for the sociable category in its ultimate two-litre guise where BMW, Hart, Cosworth and Ferrari power (among others) crossed swords. More than an F1 feeder class, it had long attracted grand prix drivers – including world champions – against whom the next generation measured itself. As a Historic promotion, F2 has battled on in the shadow of FIA Masters F1, successor to Thoroughbred GP launched in '96. But rising DFV costs and diversified calendars have seen the tide turn dramatically this season, record F2 fields reflecting value and rewarding promoter Roger Bevan's efforts. I enjoyed the Brands Hatch and Zandvoort races, noting unprecedented international interest in F2 from its 1600cc ('67-'71) and '72-'78 eras and budget carburetted FAtlantic classes. HF2 grows from five to six double-headers at period venues in 2019, centred on the Silverstone Classic. One day Thruxton?

MORGAN TRIKES IN DONINGTON THRILLER

Morgan Super Aeros, with JAP or Matchless V-twin engines, have fascinated me since I first witnessed Gary Caroline and >>



Thruxton 50th meeting was a fitting way to mark the circuit's anniversary

JONES



Historic F2 is a category on the rise at the moment with expanding grids

J BLOXHAM

CLUB AUTOSPORT MEMORIES

Bill Tuer tussling on track many moons ago. Although I've sighted these machines only occasionally on the road, in recent years the intrepid Sue Darbyshire has flown the racing flag, regularly starring in Vintage Sports Car Club races in the diminutive machines. I've not seen many dedicated Morgan Three-Wheeler Club championship rounds, but Donington Park's in June – on the VSCC's programme, with laid-back passengers hiding behind scuttles, looking at the sky – was sensational. That the ACU-sanctioned series successfully matches the 'Moggies' of the 1920s and '30s with the current S&S-engined/Mazda-gearboxed 5 Speeders from Malvern was proven in a breathless photo finish. Rob Pyke/Petra Rarko in their modern car beat traditionalists Chas Reynolds/Steve Ash to the chequered flag by 0.38s, with pole and fastest-lap setters Austin Smith/Julia Perry 0.43s behind in their late trike.

CHEVRON DISCIPLES REUNITE FOR B8'S 50TH BIRTHDAY IN SPIRITUAL HOME

Chevron cars stole my heart from the moment I saw a 'B8' at Great Auclum hillclimb in 1969. I've raced several of Derek Bennett's legendary designs – and co-owned a B8 all-too-briefly. Back at Oulton Park, where in July '66 Peter Gethin shook down Digby Martland's 1600cc Ford twin-cam engined prototype (later dubbed B3), a grid of GTs celebrating the 50th anniversary of the best-selling production B8s of '68-69 was a wonderful tribute to quiet genius Bennett, who died 40 years ago following a hang-gliding accident. Being among the cars was wonderful, and taking the ex-Roger Heavens and Tony Birchenough example up for Paul Owens and fellow ex-Chevron artisans to see in the UK for the first time since '71 a privilege. Fittingly, the event also marked the first time on track since '71 for Bennett's own B4, the first BMW-powered GT and first Chevron to race in the US.

DUTCH TREAT: ZANDVOORT AND DAF MUSEUM – AND A KEBAB SHOP

I've only missed Zandvoort's annual Historic Grand Prix event once (due to a clash with the UK August Bank Holiday weekend), but it remains the friendliest of festivals. A huge Porsche presence draws fanatics aplenty to see a broad church of the marque's most iconic machinery displayed and driven. Seeing the 906 camera car – which provided television station ZDF with dramatic footage from the 1966 Nurburgring 1000Km – casually parked outside a kebab shop after Saturday evening's traditional racing car



cavalcade into town was surreal. Dutch enthusiasts' reaction to Briton Tony Hazlewood's DAF V8 Super Saloon at the event – where it met 55 Coupe cousins – was extraordinary too. I also visited the splendid DAF Museum at Eindhoven, where its Variomatic transmission-equipped 1000cc F3 cars of the '60s and Huron hillclimb sportscar are on show.

QUEEN VICTORIA REIGNS AT SPA SIX HOURS AS PART OF HSCC EMPIRE

Belgian motorsport historians may know different, but I venture that very few female competitors have won races at Spa-Francorchamps outright. Briton Vicky Brooks's victory in the opening HSCC race supporting September's Six Hours was thus very special. Vicky demonstrated form there last year in dad Bob's two-litre Lola-BDG T212 but, facing Leo Voyazides' mighty Cosworth DFV-engined Lola, entered again and relished the challenge. Shocked to see the Greek slither off the track at Les Combes on the opening lap, Ecurie Papillon Speciale protege Brooks kept her cool, fighting off strong opposition from Kevin Cooke (March 75S) to strike gold. Outgoing club CEO Grahame White recognised her triumph with a special award. 🏆



AUTOSPORT'S MEMORIES

From specially modified rally cars to trackside views of hard-fought TOCA rounds, it's been a busy one for the Club Autosport team

JACK BENYON, STEFAN MACKLEY AND STEPHEN LICKORISH



JACK BENYON
GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

My memory of the year is easy. There's no political consideration afforded to this – it was just purely my favourite memory of the year and it involves

Billy Monger, a rally car and a very special supplement of Autosport.

Regardless of Billy's new-found fame, he is genuinely one of the nicest, most unassuming drivers I've ever met, and his father Rob is the perfect 'Jack-the-lad' counterpart. The pair joined Autosport at Gloucestershire Rallyschool for Billy's first go in a rally car, complete with hand controls, thanks to Andy Gwynne.

In a similar vein, credit to ex-Autosport editor Andy Hallbery and the brains behind the Mobility Special in Autosport in October, Johanna Writebend. Her story is as inspiring as Billy's, and the duo's passion for supporting equality for people with disabilities must be recognised. I was honoured to play a small part in their fantastic vision.



CHICANE



STEFAN MACKLEY
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

My standout memory from the past year I'll admit is a completely selfish one, but something that I've wanted to do for more than two decades.

I got the chance to take part in a race – the second Rockingham Citroen C1 24-Hour event in August. Hardly the easiest race to begin with, but one which – as I look back on it – really ranks among the best things I've ever done.

My highs and lows from the experience were shared in the pages of the October edition of Autosport Performance as the first part of our Get Started in Motorsport series. It got even better just two weeks later as I was given the chance to drive Spa-Francorchamps on a track day courtesy of RSRSpa. Since one of my earliest motorsport memories is the 1998 Belgian Grand Prix, getting the chance to drive the circuit is something I'll never forget.



HOLBORN



STEPHEN LICKORISH
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

There is always plenty of drama among the British Touring Car Championship's support series at the Brands Hatch finale. And this year was no

exception, especially with all five titles still up for grabs. You never quite know what bizarre sequences of events will unfold. And it was the Porsche Carrera Cup GB that again provided the most unexpected moment of the weekend. Dino Zamparelli was perfectly placed to serenely take the crown – after four years of trying – in race one. But his lead evaporated in one moment of pure drama. Zamparelli had spun after encountering coolant from Lewis Vaughan's stricken car. His title bid was effectively over and Tio Ellinas went on to take the spoils in race two. Seeing a distraught Zamparelli after that first race will stay with me for a long time. He was a broken man and it was clear just how much he wanted the championship. Such passion is what makes motorsport.



BATHIE

TOP 10 CLUB DRIVERS OF 2018

There was no shortage of standout performers over the past 12 months, so it was a tough task to whittle down to what we consider are the 10 best

COMPILED BY STEPHEN LICKORISH

ENTRIES BY PAUL LAWRENCE, STEFAN MACKLEY, DAN MASON, MARK PAULSON AND IAN SOWMAN

10

BEN RUSHWORTH
750MC HOT HATCH

Rushworth didn't win the 750 Motor Club Hot Hatch title – that went to Class C rookie Michael Winkworth – but he wrapped up the top division with multiple overall wins in his Honda Integra DC2. The 2016 MG Metro Cup champion also spread his wings to appear in the Honda VTEC Challenge, taking four wins. His YouTube videos – complete with narration from the cockpit – are more entertaining than the average onboard, too.



9

PETER DE LA ROCHE
FJHRA FORMULA JUNIOR

In the diamond jubilee season for Formula Junior, Cheshire youngster de la Roche secured a second Junior title on the bounce with an exemplary campaign in Pat Barford's Lola Mk3. A year earlier, in the rare BMC Mk2, de la Roche won the crown and a single late-season outing in the Lola set out the 2018 stall. Despite a couple of clutch dramas, he was unstoppable in his class and turned in a perfect score to win the crown by a handsome margin.



8

JOHN DAVISON
HSCC GUARDS TROPHY
HSCC HISTORIC ROAD SPORTS

Running two cars to win two championships is a tall order, but Davison proved more than up to the job by adding the Historic Road Sports title to the retention of his 2017 Guards Trophy crown. With his Lotus Elan 26R (below), Davison was again the class of the Guards Trophy GT field and even a non-finish at his favourite track of Croft did not hinder progress. In his Road Sports Elan he dealt with the rapid and sometimes wide Morgan +8s to claim the title.



7

JOHN MICKEL
BARC UK LEGENDS

Once again the UK Legends series was hotly contested, but nobody could match the consistency of 'legend of Legends' Mickel as he took a fourth consecutive crown. Stephen Whitelegg kept him honest, but Mickel's determination shone through, particularly with a sublime comeback at Donington Park. In the gravel at Redgate on lap one, Mickel was still recovering the deficit as the safety car came in, yet missed out on victory by inches in a three-car rush to the flag.



HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Adam Southgate
BRSCC Porsches

Ben Palmer
Michelin Clio Cup Series

Tom Smith
Equipe GTS

6

JAMES KELLETT
BARC GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

The Ginetta GT5 Challenge is regarded as one of the most competitive categories in the UK, so to win the title is an impressive feat. Kellett may have won the crown in 2015, but he had not raced since and his return to the series didn't guarantee a repeat victory. But again he was the man to beat, with five wins and an additional 10 podiums from 16 races, wrapping up the title in the first race at the Donington Park finale.



5

MARK BURTON
750MC LOCOST

Speed event graduate Burton dipped his toe into the Locost water at the end of 2017, getting top-six results at Donington Park. The 35-year-old started his first full season of racing in style with a pole and a win at Castle Combe, and four wins in a row at Brands Hatch and Croft meant the championship was all but over by mid-season. In a category where racecraft and strategy matter as much as raw speed, this was an impressive effort from SRB Racing's lead driver.



4

STEVEN DAILLY
BRSCC BMW COMPACT CUP

Dailly's 2017 Compact Cup title came only after the exclusion of chief rival James Gornall, but this year no-one could touch the Scotsman. He wasn't quite able to match his unbeaten record of '15 in the Scottish Compact Cup, but it took until the final race of the season for Dailly to finish outside the top two – and even then he was third. In a competitive field, Dailly was a class above and had sewn up the championship with a meeting to spare.



3

WILL BLACKWELL-CHAMBERS
BRSCC MAZDA MX-5

Blackwell-Chambers clinched his third successive Mazda MX-5 title, his second with the BRSCC in the ultra-competitive series that's so well subscribed that it fills two grids. He began his consistently strong season with a hat-trick at Brands Hatch and held firm against a strong challenge from fellow Michael Comber Racing man Sam Smith, even after Smith went on a run of eight wins in 10 races. It will be fascinating to see how Blackwell-Chambers fares in the MX-5 SuperCup if he can find the funds to graduate.



2

NIALL MURRAY
BRSCC NATIONAL FF1600

After a year away, Murray picked up where he had left off on his return to the Formula Ford 1600 National Championship. In a dominant season, from 20 races contested he scored 11 wins – including the championship's first weekend hat-trick at Castle Combe – and was able to skip the last meeting having already clinched the title. Just missing out on a third Brands Hatch Festival win sets up the tantalising prospect of a return to the blue-riband event next year.



1

CAMERON JACKSON
HSCC HISTORIC FF1600
FJHRA FORMULA JUNIOR

It was a memorable year for Jackson, who won a fiercely contested Historic Formula Ford 1600 title and added a class crown in the UK Formula Junior Championship. Armed with David Wild's Lola T200 from the Neil Fowler stable, Jackson was always at the core of some epic FFord dicing and mastered the effective Lola in style against the Merlyns used by his rivals. The short-wheelbase Lola suited Cameron's karting background and a run of six wins from August ultimately made him a clear champion.



TOP 10 CLUB RIVALRIES OF 2018

Team-mates colliding, drivers getting banned, the weather causing problems – there was a plethora of intense battles across club racing this year

COMPILED BY STEPHEN LICKORISH

ENTRIES BY DOM D'ANGELILLO, PAUL LAWRENCE, DAN MASON AND IAN SOWMAN

10

BILLY ALBONE v THE MIGHT OF MITTELL

Spire driver and reigning champion Albone faced a Mittell onslaught in his bid to retain the RGB Sports 1000 crown

Spire Sports Cars lead driver Albone retained his crown in the rebadged RGB Sports 1000 Championship, but faced an onslaught of opposition from the ranks of Mittell Cars drivers. Newcomer Chippy Wesemael laid down a marker with pole for the snowed-off Donington Park opener, but didn't record a win until his title hopes were gone. Team-mate Paul Smith did, and a double at Pembrey maintained the possibility of a first crown for Mittell since 2015. It put Albone and Spire on warning, twice forcing them into late car switches.



9

DANIEL FRENCH v JAMES MURPHY

Incredibly, a fastest lap proved to be all the difference between these Caterham Roadsport protagonists in 2018

The deciding factor was 0.028 seconds. The realisation across French's face that he had lost the Caterham Roadsport title by such a narrow margin was plain to see. He had done everything right in a damp finale at Silverstone by romping to victory, after his season-long rival Murphy had done the damage the previous day with a last-lap pass on French to take the win and set up a decider. Ultimately it all rested on the fastest-lap point, and French was denied by Tom Allen's late flyer.



8

PATRICK FLETCHER v JACK KINGSBURY

A new rival for multiple Clio 182 champion Fletcher arrived and made the title battle hot up once again in the popular series

In 2015 and '16 the Clio 182 rivalry was between Fletcher and James Bark, who won one title apiece, but in '17 'Patch' found it more straightforward. Not so in '18, when the previously rapid but sometimes wayward Kingsbury appeared to have settled down, taking a win in the season-opening weekend at Oulton Park. Fletcher amassed more victories than Kingsbury by seven to three, but at Pembrey Fletcher was excluded and forced to count a zero-score, leaving the result in doubt until the Snetterton finale, where Fletcher sealed it.



7

THE WEATHER v CLUB MOTORSPORT

Too wet, too hot, too snowy and too British. The weather created a number of challenges for clubs this season

For a nation that loves talking about the weather, there was plenty to discuss this year. Things didn't get off to a good start when the 'Beast from the East' snowed off the 750 Motor Club's season opener at Donington Park. But the big issue was heavy rain and it produced some farcical situations – we had British GT and F3 'winners' of 'races' that lasted just a handful of laps behind the safety car. And the resurfaced Silverstone track allegedly contributed to the woes as a MotorSport Vision Racing meeting was abandoned.



6

BEN ROWE v SHAUN TRAYNOR

These perennial rivals clashed again in the 750 Motor Club's MR2 Championship, and got too close for comfort at times.

The 10th anniversary MR2 Championship pitched Rowe against 2015 and '17 title winner Traynor. With the reigning champion a non-starter for the Brands Hatch opener, Rowe took two victories and added three more through the season, always holding the upper hand over Traynor. The Castle Combe meeting – a replacement for a snowed-off Donington – proved decisive, with contact at Bobbies between the two sending Rowe down the order, and leaving him with too much to do at the Snetterton finals.



5

JASON BURGESS v GRAHAM ROSS

MG Trophy battlers got a little too close at times in their quest for tin-top glory during a tough campaign.

Ten points separated 2018 champion Ross from Burgess after a season of twists and turns in the MG Trophy. The rivalry got physical during the penultimate round at Oulton Park when the championship rivals collided at Old Hall, with Ross coming off much worse. With words exchanged, hands shaken and stewards deeming it to be a racing incident, Ross managed to complete repairs for the final round of the season, taking the championship with third and second-place finishes.



4

CAMERON JACKSON v BEN MITCHELL

Historic Formula Ford 1600 is one of the most competitive series out there and provided one of the hardest-fought title battles too.

During another epic season of Historic Formula Ford, Jackson and Mitchell emerged as the key title contenders and their wheel-to-wheel competition ebbed and flowed until the closing stages of the season. There was often little to choose between Jackson's Lola and Mitchell's Merlyn and when Jackson missed Oulton Park for the birth of his son, Mitchell took a slender advantage. But the rain of Brands Indy was pivotal as Jackson won twice while Mitchell finished one race second and one in the gravel.



3

JACK DOOHAN v DENNIS HAUGER

Two closely matched Red Bull drivers can only lead to one thing, and sure enough this British Formula 4 pair did collide.

One point. That was all that separated Red Bull juniors Hauger and Doohan at the end of a British Formula 4 season in which they were incredibly evenly matched. Both quickly got up to speed as they graduated to single-seaters from karts and the podiums soon racked up. But it wouldn't be Red Bull team-mates battling each other without a collision, and sure enough Hauger clashed with Doohan at Rockingham, putting the pair out and denying both of them the chance to finish third in the standings.



2

ED PITHER v BILL COWLEY

Old foes were back at it again in 750 Formula this year, with Cowley even banned for a race. And both lost out.

It's a return appearance for Cowley in this category, and his 2018 contest with Pither certainly had echoes of his '17 spat with Robin Gearing, culminating as it did with a collision at Cadwell Park. Until that point, Pither's self-built PRS always finished ahead of defending champion Cowley, but damage sustained at the top of the Mountain ruled him out of several races. Cowley, meanwhile, was excluded from that race but with no result declared, an alternate sanction was applied. Suspended from Snetterton, Cowley lost his title to Mark Glover.



1

PAUL RIVETT v JAMES DORLIN v MAX COATES

Renault UK Clio Cup crown-contending trio that fought as hard on the track as away from it, with the title decided after the finale.

There have been some incredible Renault UK Clio Cup title battles over the years. But 2018's has to be one of the most ferocious. Rivett, Dorlin and Coates were very evenly matched and had some thrilling battles on-track, but off-track the accusations, protests and hatred were flying. There was controversy aplenty, but it looked like Dorlin had snuck the title from his rivals' grasp at Brands Hatch. However, a post-season court case decided the outcome as Rivett successfully appealed an exclusion for contact with Coates.



NATIONAL PICTURES OF THE YEAR

*Throughout the season our photographers captured some superb images.
Here's Autosport's best selection from 2018...*

COMPILED BY STEFAN MACKLEY





It's go, go, go for the Historic Formula Junior series
at Castle Combe's Autumn Classic meeting.

OLLIE READ

Blast from the past: a Benetton B190 performs a demo run during a club meeting at Brands Hatch.

GARY HAWKINS



Ford Mustang of Craig Davies and Jason Plato gets sideways at the Oulton Park Gold Cup.
STEVE JONES



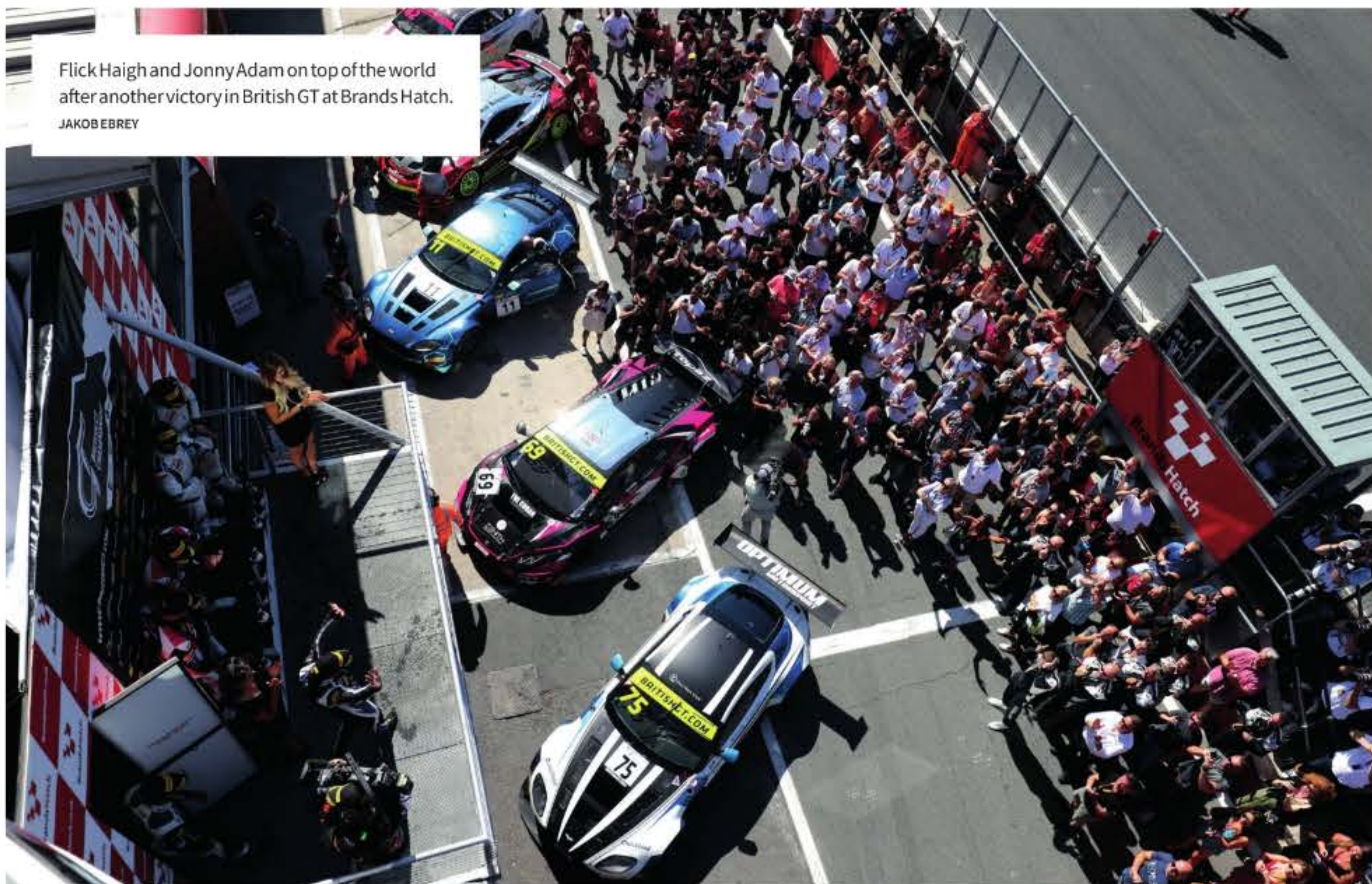
Things get too close for comfort at the start of a Caterham race at Snetterton.
RICHARD STYLES



Dave Nixon's Rover 220 Tomcat Turbo gets some air at Oulton Park during the MG Cup.
MICK WALKER

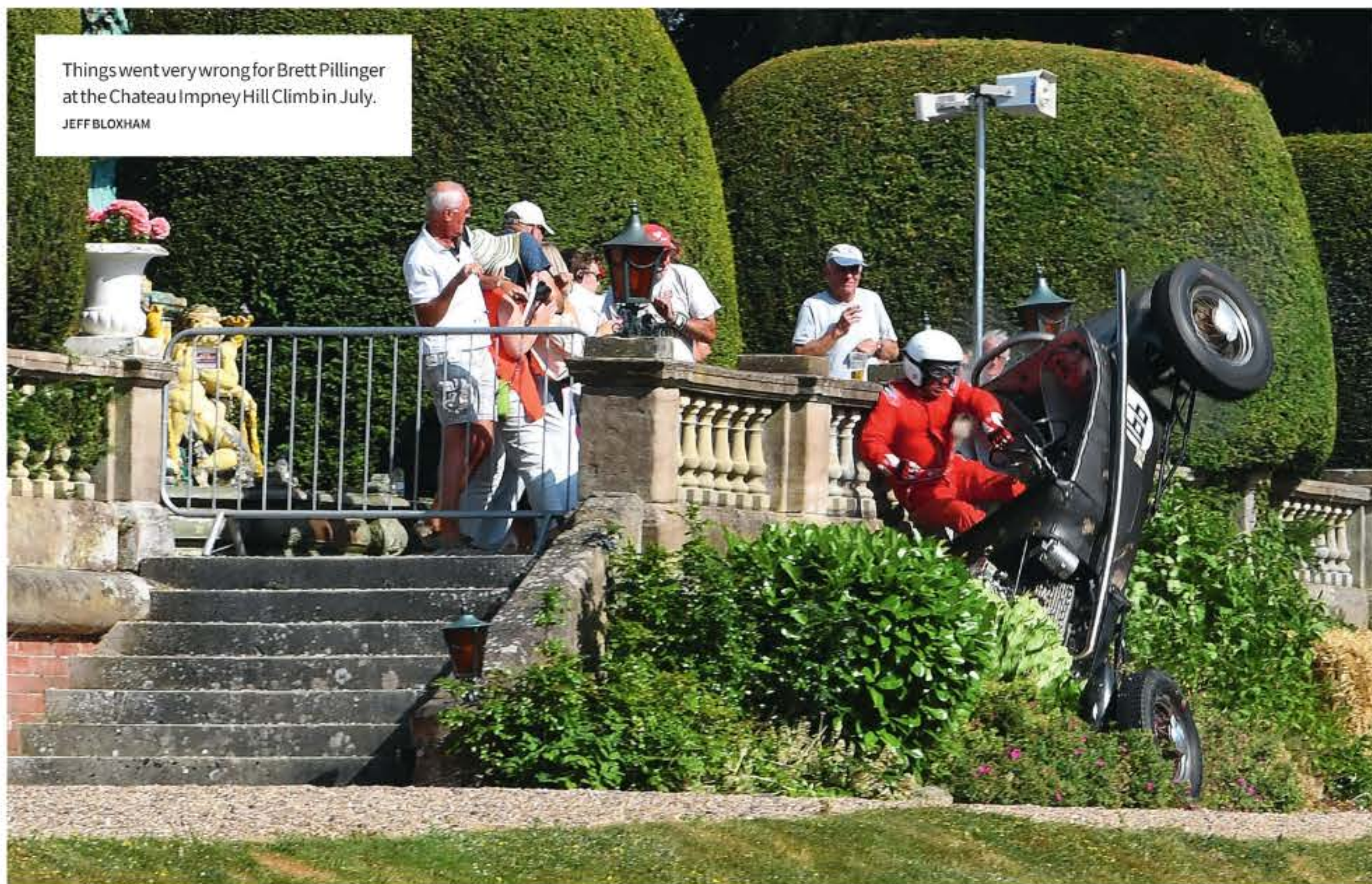


Flick Haigh and Jonny Adam on top of the world after another victory in British GT at Brands Hatch.
JAKOB EBREY



Things went very wrong for Brett Pillinger at the Chateau Impney Hill Climb in July.

JEFF BLOXHAM



Ash Sutton leads the way in a Ford Lotus Cortina at the Goodwood Revival.

GARY HAWKINS





SPANISH RACING'S RESEARCH AND REFUGE CENTRE



AUTOSPORT VISITS MOTOR & SPORT INSTITUTE

The Teo Martin Motorsport name will be familiar to followers of the GT Sport package – the team competes in International GT Open and the supporting Euroformula Open single-seater championship.

Wind the clock a little further back and Teo Martin was the outfit that bought the DAMS squad's Formula V8 3.5 assets, competing in the series until its 2017 demise. Before that, it ran cars for the Sevilla, Roma and Sporting football clubs in the shortlived Superleague Formula series.

History lesson over; the team exists today as much more than an operation running BMW M6 GT3s and Dallara Formula 3 machinery. That's because the grand vision of the outfit's eponymous founder was completed in October, when the Motor & Sport Institute



opened its doors for the first time.

Located in the city of Alcorcon, south-west of Madrid, the 15,000m² complex is dedicated to education, motorsport and technology.

The ground floor houses the workshop, where GTs and single-seaters can be seen being worked on behind glass doors. In the building's basement is the Esports



DTM, rally and GT machinery all feature among Martin's impressive collection



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



To mark Michael Schumacher's 50th birthday, we're reflecting on how he single-handedly changed what it means to be a Formula 1 driver. Through his unprecedented levels of fitness, commitment, and a win-at-all-costs competitive mentality, he broke the mold and blazed a trail to greatness. Autosport is joined by special guest Pat Symonds, Schumacher's former engineer and now F1's chief technical officer, to discuss the seven-time champion's impact and legacy. Go to <http://bit.ly/SchumacherF1>



The old HRT F1 fleet has been rehomed



Teo Martin Motorsport runs BMW M6 GT3s in International GT Open

WHAT'S ON

UK MOTORSPORT

Mallory Park BRSCC

December 26

Plum Pudding meeting: Sports Cars, Open Saloons, motorbikes

"THESE CARS FORMED SPAIN'S MOTORSPORT LANDSCAPE OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES"

department, including what's believed to be the world's first sim racing academy.

A 'bio-engineering' centre has sections dedicated to biomechanics, physiotherapy, recovery and physical training, as well as a pool area, climate control room, hyperbaric chamber and nutrition centre, all focusing on helping athletes work on their performance and injury rehabilitation.

Then there's the technology and innovation area that includes departments specialising in vehicle dynamics, powertrains, machining, metrology,

CNC, CAD, and 3D printing, plus a composite shop and a paint shop.

All of these facilities serve not just the team, but also a wider educational purpose. The MSi has set up a partnership with Madrid's Francisco de Vitoria University, and it is hoped that the cream of the student crop will eventually join Teo Martin Motorsport.

As laudable as this enterprise is, Autosport can't help but have our attention grabbed by what's on show upstairs, as that's where Martin's impressive car collection has found a new home.

Over the years, the MSi founder gathered around 70 competition cars of all shapes, sizes, disciplines and eras – starting with a Lancia 037 rally car that he acquired to compete in himself during the 1980s.

"I never really considered myself a collector – I just bought what I liked and never got rid of anything," he told *Classic Cars* magazine in May 2017. That approach resulted in the Lancia

being joined by an assortment of competition cars, ranging from contemporary World Rally machinery through to touring cars, GTs, prototypes and single-seaters.

A fair chunk of the collection is made up of cars that formed the Spanish motorsport landscape over the past few decades. They include an array of Super Tourers, as well as some rather peculiar machines like the silhouette SEAT Toledo GT and the Cupra GT.

When local Formula 1 squad and perennial backmarker HRT collapsed in 2012, Martin acquired all its entire assets. So all the team's cars be found at the MSi – in fact the 2010 racer is mounted to a wall above the coffee shop.

Although much of the MSi will remain restricted to team members, students, pro athletes, business partners and VIPs, the collection and the sim racing academy will open to the public in February.

PIOTR MAGDZIARZ



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Nigel Mansell (Williams-Honda FW11B) and Michele Alboreto (Ferrari F1-87) wait to join the track in the busy Jerez pitlane at the 1987 Spanish Grand Prix.

Mansell qualified on the front row, just over half a second behind team-mate Nelson Piquet, but the battling Briton got ahead on the first lap and dominated the race from then on, finishing 22 seconds

ahead of Alain Prost's McLaren-TAG MP4/3. Alboreto started from fourth on the grid but was forced out with engine problems after 67 laps of the 72-lap race, although he was classified 15th.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

QUIZ

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN?



WHO IS THIS?

This celluloid racer was a Grand Prix star who battled with triumph and tragedy on and off-track.

After enjoying assumed success with some of the biggest names in the sport, he was forced to take a chance with an unknown quantity as his star had dimmed.

With no option but to throw in his lot with an ambitious newcomer, initially it appeared that the gamble had failed, that the cultural divide was too much to bridge.

At a time when danger lurked around every corner, he played a key role as a soap opera unravelled around him, but all the petty feuding was cast into perspective when his fiercest rival paid the ultimate price.

This led to his thrilling climax, where he prevailed in sensational style. Old animosity was thrown aside, but he was ultimately left alone to ponder his fate...

ON THIS DAY

1 Karl Wendlinger will be 50 on December 20. Name the F1 teams he drove for.

2 December 27 is Jerome d'Ambrosio's birthday. What car was he driving when he scored his career-best F1 result?

3 Andre Pilette died on December 27 1993. With whom was he sharing when he finished second in the 1960 Le Mans 24 Hours?

4 It will be Jean-Christophe Boullion's birthday on December 27. Where did he score his only BTCC podium?

5 Hans Stuck was born on December 27 1900. Where was his only official European Championship GP win?

NAME THE HELMET



LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

Who, what, where, when Toranosuke Takagi, Toyota TF102, Paul Ricard, May 16 2002. **Who is this?** Bob Wollek.

On this day 1) 1953 and '54. 2) Silverstone, 1977. 3) It was the last for a normally aspirated CART/Champ Car.

4) Jarno Trulli. 5) Jordan. **Name the helmet** Mark Webber.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE



**KUBICA ON HIS AMAZING
F1 RETURN - ON SALE JAN 3**



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