THE RED BULLETIN

ISSUE 56, BAHRAIN, SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2006

AN ALMOST INDEPENDENT F1 NEWSPAPER

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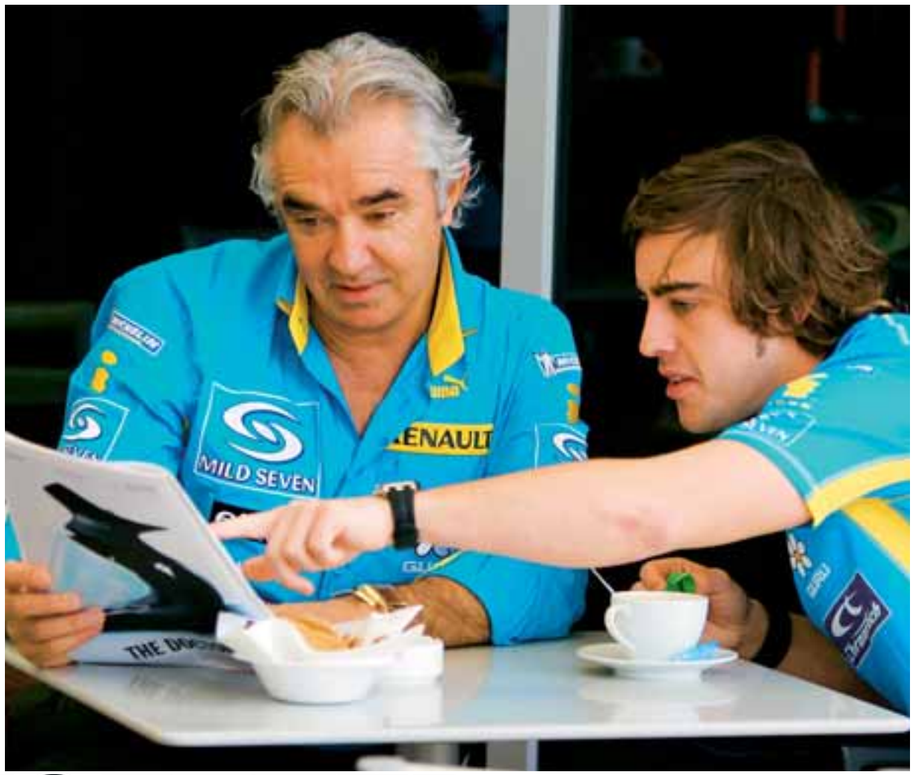
SAKHIR 06

RALF SCHUMACHER UNLEASH THE BEAST



SEEMS SEVERAL OF YOU have taken up the challenge set by our panel of experts in Friday's Bulletin. As well as creating intense interest among the world champions (right), we've also had other punters throw their hats into the ring. For example, Fabio Seixas of Folha de Sao Paulo, Brazil, thinks Alonso will retain the title but McLaren will get the constructors', that we'll be hearing lots of the French national anthem and there'll be only one wet race (hmm, where could that be?). You still have time to get your season bet in to us. Just e-mail your predictions to the questions below to *secret.service@theredbulletin.com* by midnight tonight together with your name and a contact number. If you're in the lead when we finish in Sao Paulo, you will win a prize.

Answers to these please:
1 Driver champion?
2 Champion constructor?
3 Most retirements?
4 Most poles?
5 How many wet races?
6 Fastest lap king?
7 Most often played national anthem?
8 Most out-qualifying of a team-mate?
9 How many black flags?
The first league table will be published on Friday in Malaysia.



PACESETTER

MF1



TIAGO MONTEIRO'S five most recently dialled numbers on his mobile:

1 My dad
2 My sister – it's her birthday
3 My uncle – it's his birthday too
4 My PA Karin
5 Adrian Burgess

The Red Bulletin
The bulls in your china shop
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FERRARI



SCUDERIA FERRARI'S punishing test schedule got a whole lot more punishing on Wednesday. With the surprising news that Super Aguri F1 has actually brought some cars along with them, Schumi headed down to the FIA Foundation's Think Before You Drive campaign stand for a spot of crash testing. He'll be ready and braced for a Sato collision this time.

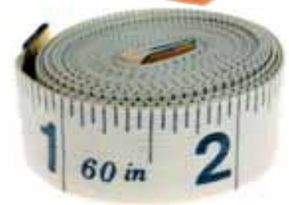


CLUB 500

TALES OF YESTERYEAR
THIS WEEKEND: FREDDIE AF PETERSEN

Bahrain may not be everyone's choice for the opening race, but we've been to stranger. Argentina was the opening race 1977. In those days the country was run by the military and the paddock was packed with soldiers to protect us from 'communist terrorists'. We tried to carry on as usual until the fire extinguisher in Mario Andretti's car exploded. The soldiers drew their weapons, pointed them in every direction and hit the ground. Officers barked orders and told us to take cover. Everyone froze. Except for a lone Lotus mechanic who, thinking nothing was wrong, came out of the garage looking for a new fire extinguisher and was promptly arrested. It was several hours before they finally agreed to let him go.

● **This weekend is Freddie's 509th grand prix.**



JEAN ALESI: daredevil racing driver; wine connoisseur and now, apparently, an expert on the size of the male member. We were confused too, but have a look at www.jean-alesi.org We were innocently doing some pre-season research when we stumbled on it… honest.

PACESETTER

MCLAREN

PERFECTION is a hands-on affair for the Ronster. He was spotted in the garage getting all artistic with some Emirates airlines transfers. And what a lovely job he made of them too. Unfortunately, Emirates' most photogenic cabin crew weren't around to admire Ron's handiwork. They were meant to attend yesterday's photo call to announce the airline's sponsorship of the Woking squad but had to cancel at the last minute as their flight was delayed.

WINGS FOR LIFE

Wings for Life, the charity of choice of The Red Bulletin, was set up by Heinz Kinigadner in summer of 2003 after an accident in a charity race left his son Hannes wheelchair-bound. The aim is to raise funds to support research into spinal injuries, an area in which medical resources are still lacking. Heinz said: "I have spent eight months with my son Hannes in the rehabilitation centre and I've seen so many young guys under 20 years of age who are using a wheelchair. This cannot be allowed to go on. Nobody should have to spend the rest of their lives wheelchair-bound." With the support of Red Bull and other institutions as well as the organisation of charity events it is possible to raise the necessary funds and push toward cutting-edge discoveries and treatments to cure paralysis and associated conditions caused by spinal cord injury. If you'd like to get involved and help Wings for Life, further information can be obtained from:

WWW.WINGSFORLIFE.COM

PHOTOS: SUTTON IMAGES, JIRI KRENEK-COVER ILLUSTRATION: DENIS MUJAKOVIC

FOUR COMMENTARIES

BACK TO THE FUTURE

THE REASON AGURI IS SUPER
BY JUSTIN HYNES

1 Hello Super Aguri. Hello future. It seems an incongruous thing to say of a team running a four-year-old chassis out of a rented home in the wilds of Oxfordshire in England, but the hope must be that this is the shape of things to come. Sure, they're six seconds off the pace but the presence of an 11th team on the grid is the most welcome sight in Formula One since Fernando Alonso lapped Michael Schumacher at the Hungaroring in 2003 and guaranteed most of the media centre a job for 2004 (no offence, Michael, but that universal dominance schtick was becoming just a bit wearying).

I'll insert the small rider of an apology to my paymasters here, but since the purchase of Minardi by Red Bull last year, the rechristened Toro Rosso has lost some of its underdog allure. Minardi had the cachet of being like a rescue mutt. You know it's ugly, a mixture of all sorts and pretty ungainly, but there's a solid pedigree in there somewhere and it's impossible not to love, especially when it expresses such undying loyalty, boundless enthusiasm and pugnacious determination.

And with Super Aguri trundling away at the back of the grid, there's another mutt to root for. If they make it to the grid we'll applaud their application and grit. If they make it to the finish line there's sure to be a small smile of appreciation. If there isn't then we're a paddock full of soulless, corporate drones.

The politics of Aguri's presence are hard to ignore: the latitude that has been granted to the fledgling team is all too obvious but ultimately those things don't matter. That Aguri Suzuki found his way into the closed shop of the paddock is to be celebrated and the powers that be thanked for a little backwards forward thinking.

Look at this way: a partial return to the golden age of privateer teams running their squads out of Nissen huts is just the kind of self-referential appeal F1 needs. Formula One should have its share of plucky backmarkers breeding driving talent, developing engineering nous and notching the occasional result against the odds. It is the equivalent of the peculiarly English romance of the FA Cup, a football competition where a village team of amateurs can dream of playing Manchester United at Old Trafford.

'A partial return to the golden age of privateer teams is just the kind of appeal F1 needs'

And if they never match the pace of the manufacturer-driven teams, what matter? Most football leagues operate two-tier premier divisions dominated by the few but contested by a well-supported many. If Aguri can make this work then the possibilities for David Richards, David Price and Direxiv and Roger Penske look bountiful, especially if the spat between the teams and the organisers is, as is rumoured, coming to an amicable resolution.

Super Aguri may be staring hungrily through the window watching as the plutocrats dine at the top table, but as Oscar Wilde said: "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

PIT BITCH
BY HELEN PARADYCE

2 I don't know if any of you boys are thinking of taking a 'recreational' trip to Eastern Europe anytime soon, but if you are, then my advice is don't bother. The only women left there are plug ugly, as all the beauties were shipped into Bahrain for Thursday night's Red Bull party. Quite how normal girls like myself are supposed to make an impression when the competition is as hot as this is beyond me. Actually, 65 of them were bussed out again on Friday morning, heading off to Dubai, which at least reduces the competition somewhat.

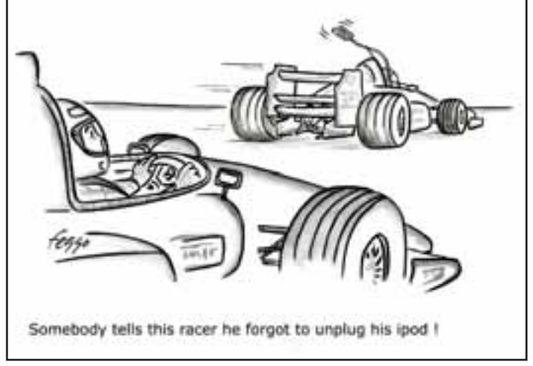
In much the same way as the nouveau riche have been known to decorate leather-bound books by the metre so as to cover the walls of the room, our hosts appear to have done the same with these women, who were definitely there for their attractive frontispieces rather than their contents. The party was supposed to be a launch for the drinks company's new livery and, thanks to overindulging in the liquid hospitality, livery is exactly how I felt on Friday morning while staring at the timing screen, (yes, I do actually take an interest in the sporting part of the weekend's proceedings).

I was bemused to see a top four made up of Kubica, Wurz, Jani and Ide. I knew the Wurz boy, but who were the others? At 31, Ide is one of the oldest rookies we have seen in a long time. I thought I might try and get an interview with him over lunch one day and that reminded me of the classic comment from one-time F1 writer Christopher Hilton. He was due to interview Giovanni Lavaggi, (known as Johnny Carwash to the English) a driver who made a decent attempt at pedalling an underpowered Minardi in the mid-90s. Hilton went to interview him in Milan and the conversation was apparently deeply absorbing. "We realised we were late for lunch," said Hilton, "So I drove..."

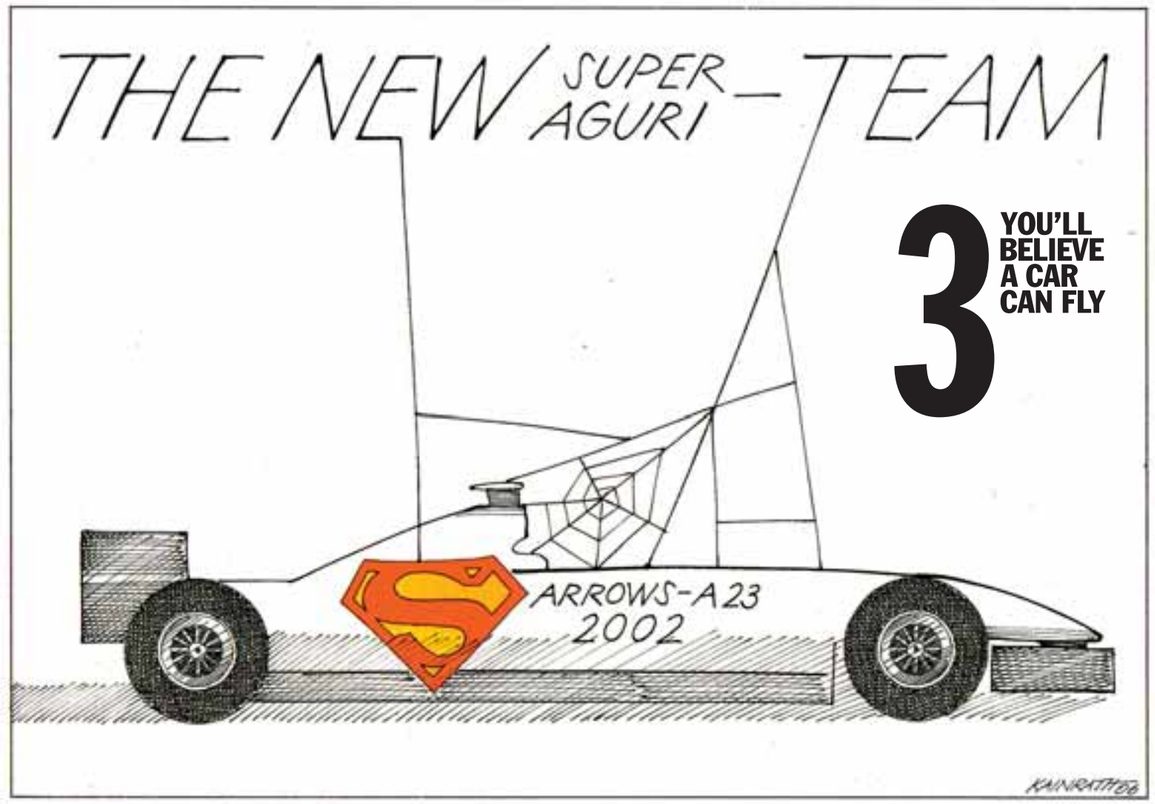
Ide is by no means the oldest rookie. Philippe Etancelin was 54 when he competed in the 1950 British Grand Prix. His career was not exactly glittering, but then he did insist on being known as Fifi.

I gather a big scandal in the local press started when Ferrari tested here last month. Michael Schumacher was allegedly allowed into the country without his dog going through Bahrain's rigorous quarantine channels. Apparently, if you're seven times world champion, you might be barking mad, but your dog is free of disease. Matters took a turn for the worse when (according to rumour) the dog bit a local man in the paddock, who wanted to sue. I told this to a colleague who asked me if it was a German shepherd. "Don't you listen?" I replied. "It was a dog not a German shepherd." Apparently, the Bahrain Animal Rights Ko-operative (or BARK) said the dog would just have its licence endorsed. Meanwhile Michael attempted to muzzle (geddit?) the Press to prevent the story spreading. The police said they were following a few leads, but so far no-one has had their collar felt.

F1 FUNNIES



ILLUSTRATIONS: KAINRATH, FEGGO



NICO ROSBERG: GOD'S GIFT
BY PAOLO COLONI

4 Every year in my job you meet many young drivers who all believe that they have what it takes to make it to F1.

They all have varying levels of talent, but it's only by giving them a shot that you find out just how good they really are.

Sometimes, however, you meet someone who makes an impact and leaves you in absolutely no doubt. Make no mistake, young Nico Rosberg is one such driver.

The first time that I heard about Nico was when he tested for Williams as a 17-year-old. Even then, what impressed me most was that this kid, who was getting his first shot in an F1 car, was so unbelievably quick.

Nico had the opportunity to test again with Williams in 2003, this time he was trying out alongside Nelson Piquet Jr.

In order to prepare him for the test, I gave him a run in our Coloni F3000 car at Jerez. He got in the car, went out, and promptly set a new lap record.

So just what is it that makes him so good? I remember looking at his data and being stunned. Nico brakes later than practically every driver I have ever seen, and somehow he gets back on the power much earlier, too.

He has the most amazing feeling for brakes. His steering, too, is pinpoint accurate. He has the ability to put together the faultless lap – and not just once, but lap after lap. I know because that's exactly what he did when he tested for us.

It's what he did in F3. It's what made him GP2 champion and it's why, at the tender age of 20, he's in F1 in 2006.

Of course, it's a huge confidence booster when you start to win, but in 2005 Nico kept his personality. He is a very nice young guy – in addition to being very intelligent.

'He has the ability to put together the faultless lap, and not just once, but lap after lap'

His technical feedback, even when we tested him in 2003, was precise and accurate. He also speaks five languages fluently, so wherever he races he has no communications problems.

The level of competition in the GP2 series last season was high, but Nico still succeeded in coming out on top, beating drivers which commentators and other experts predicted would walk to the title.

Formula One, however, will be a totally new challenge. He's got television to deal with, more media interest than he's ever known and he's competing against a field of the best drivers in the world.

He is used to winning now, but his first season in F1 is likely to be a learning year. He is fast, but he must now prove that he is a professional as well.

I have no doubts that Nico is ready for this challenge, but I believe it will take all of his maturity and intelligence not to get beaten down by the trials he will face.

I hope the money, the fame and the plaudits do not change him. But then, he has grown up in motorsport, so I doubt they will.

His father is a good and wise man, and his influence, I'm sure, will keep Nico on the straight and narrow. His spirit is one of the greatest things about him.

Nico really is very special. I believe that God has given him an amazing gift and I hope that he enjoys every corner he turns in an F1 car.

I don't know how competitive Williams will be in 2006, but I hope that they can give Nico a car which is worthy of his great talent and allows the world to see just how good he truly is.

● Paolo Coloni runs the Coloni Motorsport GP2 team.

BLACK PANTHER OR ENGLISH ROSE?

Ah, welcome. Dr Bull here, psychoanalyst to the stars. Or maybe just plain psycho. Doesn't matter. What's important is that I can tell you all you need to know about someone just by asking a few simple questions. First on Dr Bull's couch, Toyota star **Ralf Schumacher**…

So Ralf, a few simple questions. I want you to imagine you are something else. Not you. Hard to do, I know, because you are you. Oh, you aren't you? You say your name's Gordon. Can't be right. OK, next! Good. Hello Ralf. Now imagine you are something else. What would you be if you were say...

Q: AN ANIMAL?
A: BLACK PANTHER

Hmm... very interesting. Here we see Ralf's killer instinct coming out. At least, Ralf sees his killer instinct in this analogy. But what does it really mean? Is he merely a pussy cat? Someone who will purr softly and sleep 23 hours a day? Or is he truly a fearless killer, a cunning hunter, dark and mysterious? The truth be told, he's probably a mixture of both.

It's often been said that Ralf needs to feel appreciated within a team structure and that he requires his fair share of careful grooming and special treatment…

But then again he's also the driver who held up his then team-mate Juan Pablo Montoya: "just to piss him off". He even banged wheels with his brother, the undisputed leader of the pack, back when Ralf was little more than a cub at Jordan. Michael even says that his brother is a more aggressive, risk-taking driver than himself.

All of it points to a man keen to be seen as a predator. In my opinion, this is fair enough. Racing drivers are hardly likely to see themselves as turtles or stick insects or rats (unless you're Niki Lauda).

Of course, it could mean nothing at all. Remember the story of the policeman who spotted a man strolling down the street with a panther? "Take that thing to the zoo!" the policeman screamed. But the next day he spotted the same guy out with the panther. "Hey you! I thought I told you to take that thing to the zoo," yelled the cop.

"I did," replied the man, "and today I'm taking him to the movies."

Not all is as it seems...



DR BULL'S CURRICULUM VITAE:
Born: Vienna 1928
Educated: Zurich, Berkeley, Mogadishu and Brazzaville
Honours: Professor Emeritus Tahiti University, Visiting Professor Beverly Hills. Inventor of Deep Massage Analysis

Q: A PLACE?
A: DUBAI

Sandy, rocky, barren, in the middle of nowhere. Hardly what Ralf means. He insists that if he were a location then he'd be glitzy Dubai: "ample, sunny and bright". Seven-star hotels, more gold than you can shake a stick at. Or should that be stick a sheikh with?

But, by choosing Dubai, Ralf is showing that he is the veritable P Diddy of F1 racing drivers. Perhaps a Sultan of Bling. A Sheikh Ya Money, if you will.

Then again, Dubai is a bit of a Shangri-La, isn't it? Nothing there is really real. A baking hot middle-eastern outpost but also one with a massive ski resort. It's just Disneyland, but in the desert. So does that mean Ralf is really Mickey Mouse? I think not – but then again what would I know? I'm even more of a quack than Daffy Duck.

Q: A CAR?
A: MY FIRST F1 CAR

So Ralf wants to be a Jordan 197. That's an interesting choice. Why? Well, because if I said it was boring (which it is a little) you wouldn't read any more and I've got to keep you interested haven't I? Are you still there? Still reading? Good.

Well, it's an interesting choice because it was a car that was way better than anyone expected (scoring a podium for Ralf in Argentina), so given the expectations for Ralf when he arrived at Jordan in that year it's no wonder he wants to be seen as a pugnacious little warrior. Also, the car had a fetching yellow and black colour scheme. Conclusion? Ralf is a bumblebee. Or maybe Sting. Or perhaps a New York chequered taxicab.

Hmm... perhaps the first idea about him being better than people actually thought was correct. Though I do like that idea of the bumblebees.

Q: A FLOWER?
A: A RED ROSE – PRETTY BUT WITH THORNS

Finally we come to Ralf's true nature! So Ralf is a beautiful creature with a hidden threat. We were fooled by his "I'm big, sunny, ample Dubai" when all along he was hard and prickly, like Syria. Or maybe England. That's it. Ralf is in fact England. Spiky, overcast, grumpy and… no, wait. He says he's pretty. So that rules out being English. Ha! (A little Viennese humour there…)

But I digress. He's pretty but prickly, a phrase which, if Googled, brings up the French actress Audrey Tautou, who is about to appear in the appalling Da Vinci Code film. So we can conclude Ralf is either a porcelain-skinned, raven-haired Gallic ingenue with a nice line in quirky film roles or a Merovingian prince who has been protected by a secret society of geniuses down through the millennia and is therefore the Son of God... sort of. Or maybe at least related to God. Oh, you work it out. Now, I'm off. I need to lie down.



ILLUSTRATION: DENIS MIJANOVIC

BRABHAM

KYALAMI, MARCH 1976

Each race we'll take a look at a key moment from F1 history, talk to the people involved and find out where they are now. Here we rewind 30 years to witness Bernie Ecclestone's Brabham Team in the second round of the season in South Africa. It was not to be their weekend, however, with neither Carlos Pace nor Carlos Reutemann finishing the race.



NAME: GIOVANNI MANFREDINI AGE: 74
POSITION AT BRABHAM, 1976: ALFA ROMEO ENGINEER

An ex-Ferrari man, Manfredini was a close associate of the late Carlo Chiti, the co-founder of Alfa Romeo's sporting arm, Autodelta. He retired 13 years ago and lives in Maranello overlooking the Scuderia's racing department where his son Daniele works. He says: "I loved working with Brabham, but the clash of Italian and British cultures was quite an obstacle. The solution was Carlos Pace as the Brazilian driver forged strong relationships between the engine and chassis makers. But after his death things began to unravel. Had Carlos lived, then the combination of him, Gordon Murray and our engine would have been formidable." He adds: "I had not been to a race in 12 years until Bernie Ecclestone invited me to Imola last year. He is a true gentleman. He hugged me and we talked of our times together."



NAME: BERNIE ECCLESTONE AGE: 75
POSITION AT BRABHAM, 1976: TEAM OWNER

Having made (by his later standards) a small fortune in property, finance and the automotive trade, Ecclestone purchased Brabham in 1972. He was a co-founder of the Formula One Constructors' Association and in 1978 he and his lawyer Max Mosley began wrestling the FIA for commercial control of the sport. Bernie sold Brabham in 1987 in order to concentrate on his role as FIA vice-president of promotional affairs. Now F1 commercial rights holder and president of Formula One Management, Bernie is the sport's overlord. But while he may have come a long way in 30 years, his haircut remains the same.

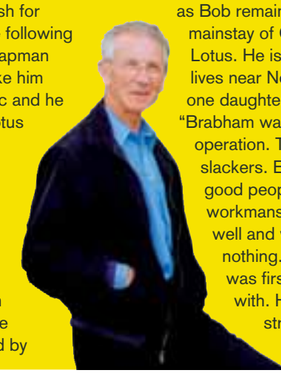


NAME: CARLOS PACE AGE: DECEASED (18.03.77)
POSITION AT BRABHAM, 1976: RACE DRIVER

Debonair and charming, Brazilian Carlos Pace's finest moment came with Brabham in 1975 when he beat countryman Emerson Fittipaldi to win at Interlagos – the circuit which today bears his name – in front of his home crowd. The change to Alfa engines in 1976 presented a technical challenge but the Paulista rose to the occasion, outclassing team-mate Carlos Reutemann. He was killed learning to fly a light aircraft when the plane crashed in a thunderstorm above the jungle in Brazil. But his image lives on in celluloid: actor Al Pacino borrowed Pace's arrow-design helmet and his car for the 1977 movie Bobby Deerfield.

NAME: BOB DANCE AGE: 70
POSITION AT BRABHAM, 1976: CHIEF MECHANIC

Bob was a well-known and highly respected mechanic throughout the 1960s and '70s, having made his name as Jim Clark's spanner-wielder at Lotus before being head-hunted by Herbie Blash for Brabham. The following year Colin Chapman offered to make him chief mechanic and he returned to Lotus to work with such drivers as Andretti, Mansell and Senna. He stayed until the team withdrew from F1 in 1994. He was then hired by the TOMS Le Mans team and when the outfit was bought by Volkswagen he worked on their Audi and Bentley campaigns. But even Lotus's F1 demise was not the end of the road as Bob remains to this day a mainstay of Classic Team Lotus. He is married to Mary, lives near Norwich and has one daughter. He remembers: "Brabham was a small, tight operation. There were no slackers. Bernie demanded good people and quality workmanship. He treated us well and we went short of nothing. Gordon (Murray) was first class to work with. He made the cars straight forward to work on."



NAME: CLIVE HOWELL AGE: 51
POSITION AT BRABHAM, 1976: MECHANIC



Clive came to Brabham straight from school and left at the end of 1979 to pursue his career in the USA working for Roger Penske. In his first five years on the team, Penske won the Indianapolis 500 three times and scooped four US national points championships as they became the dominant force in stateside motor sport. Clive is now the general manager of Team Penske and lives in Reading, Pennsylvania. He is married to Mary and is the father of two girls. "It was a long time ago," he recalls, "but I've stayed in touch with the guys – Herbie Blash, Charlie Whiting, Eddie Baker. They've all gone a long way. Eddie used to be our gopher!"

NAME: GORDON MURRAY AGE: 59
POSITION AT BRABHAM, 1976: CHIEF DESIGNER

Determined to make it as a car designer, Gordon sold all his belongings to pay the fare from his native South Africa to Britain in the hope of landing a job with Lotus. He didn't get it but was eventually hired as a draftsman at Brabham by Ron Tauranac. When Ecclestone took over the team in 1972, he made Gordon the chief designer. In 1978, he designed the phenomenally quick BT46B, better known as 'the fan car'. It was banned after one race, which it won. His cars went on to win the 1981 and 1983 world championships. Following the death of Elio de Angelis in 1986, Murray became disillusioned with F1 and took a managerial role at McLaren working on special projects. His genius for design meant Ron Dennis tolerated his penchant for Hawaiian shirts. His brainchild was the world's fastest road car, the McLaren F1, which won Le Mans at its first attempt in 1995. He also oversaw the Mercedes SLR McLaren supercar before leaving the Woking firm last year. He lives with his wife Stella near Guildford and has one son.



PHOTO: SUTTON IMAGES

IN REEL TIME

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the track you get snapped by the all-seeing Bull's Eye. Yep, while the teams were out testing our cameras were there – just for us to poke fun at them.



Winter testing can be a cold business, but dropping a match down the air intake then dancing a flamenco around the inferno is a surefire way to keep warm.



A bad case of stomach cramps brought on by dodgy Spanish seafood is the last thing you need during a busy test day...



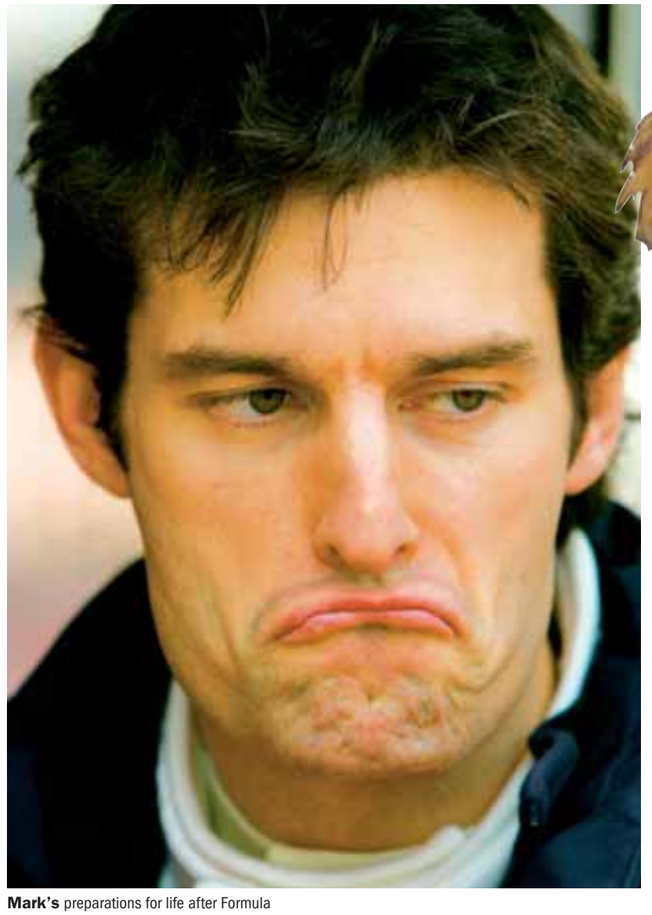
...but thankfully for **Giancarlo**, the Barcelona marshals were the souls of discretion as they formed a 'modesty curtain'.



First day in Honda overalls and the Scuderia Assassin gives **Rubens** a 'friendly' reminder that no one leaves 'la Famiglia'.



Takuma was determined to indoctrinate his new team members with his love of **Slipknot**. Lesson one: correct ways in which to salute one's favourite heavy metal band.



Mark's preparations for life after Formula One were coming on well as he perfected his **Jose Mourinho** impersonation.



BMW really should have held their fashion **merchandise launch** *before* a garlic-fuelled lunch...



It's funny how quickly you forget: first test of the season and **Jenson** and the management couldn't stop laughing at how small Anthony really was...



...**Aware they** might have offended their tiny tester, everyone on **Davidson's** table was ordered to sit on the floor for lunch...



...**but the laughs** just kept coming as **Anthony** had them all in hysterics again, with his time-honoured assertion that he would actually be a full-time race driver.

PHOTO: CRISPIN THRUSTON, SUTTON IMAGES





GLAMOUR GULF

The Formula Una world championship, which you'll doubtless agree rather overshadowed the drivers' competition last season, is up and running again. If our first 10 ladies are anything to go by, it should be a vintage year for pouting, strutting and dirty dancing with Tonio Liuzzi. To break 'em in gently Red Bull took them for a restorative sail around the island, to cure the girls' hangovers after the Arabian Nights shindig with a spot of sunbathing and a picnic on the boat. The highlight? They got to see a school of dolphins.

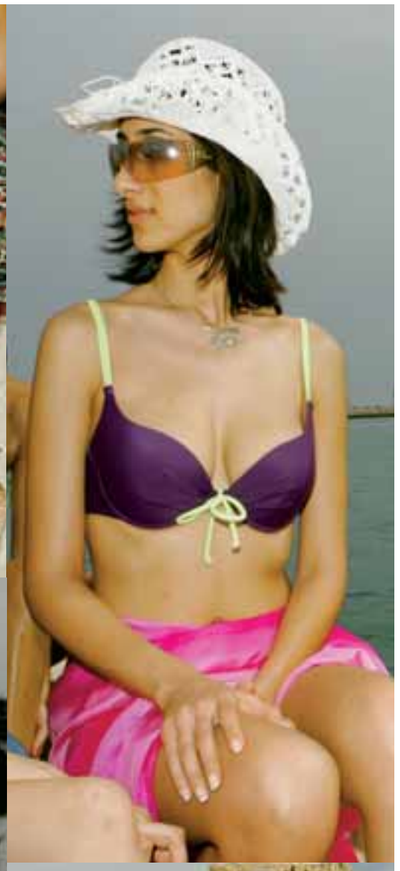








PHOTO: THOMAS BUTLER







GOLD STANDARD

Five Olympic golds testify to Michael Johnson's greatness, but it is the manner in which they were won that singles him out as the pre-eminent athlete of his generation. He talks to **Matt Youson**.

Michael Johnson has a reasonable claim to being the fastest man on Earth, but walking behind the pits here at Sakhir, his pace can best be described as leisurely. There's plenty to see and he's in no hurry. It's very different to the athletics career where often the perception was that his opposition was not his contemporaries, but history itself. His dominance over his rivals made a mockery of the word 'rival'. His superiority was not unlike that of another sportsman called Michael.

The blistering 19.32s world record that won the 200m sprint at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 remains a seminal moment in sporting history. The magnitude of improvement – eclipsing Johnson's own 19.66s – was staggering. Coming days after victory in the 400m, it made Johnson the first and only man to achieve that double. It raised an otherwise unmemorable tournament into a defining moment for the Olympic movement. His retention of the 400m title at the Sydney games in 2000 – another first – was more akin to a coronation than a victory. King Michael, long may he reign.

The F1 paddock is notoriously difficult to impress, but Johnson's presence in Bahrain this weekend has been met with something like awe. He is, however, here to be humbled, competing in today's celebrity race, driving a Holden V8 with 400hp under the hood. We know he's good on the track, but what's he like on the *track*?

He laughs. "Decent. My form is decent enough. I'm here to hang out, I'm going to enjoy watching the Grand Prix; I'll enjoy competing in the celebrity race. It should be a lot of fun but at the end of the day I don't think it will be much of a race. I think we're all dealing with our own challenge rather than challenging anybody else."

The relaxed, retired Michael Johnson presents a very different image to the absorbed athlete. Geniality has replaced the trademark ferociously focused mask. Come race time, will the focus return or is it a thing of the past?

"No, it's still there! But I've got to have it just to stay on the road and out of everybody's way. It could possibly get a little competitive – I'm going to try to stay ahead of everyone else, and if the opportunity to overtake presents, I'm going to take it. It will be interesting."

Johnson is unique. Track and field is a sport that worships technique and conformity. Values he ignored, adhering instead to a distinctive style which garnered him a nickname of The Duck, so called for its head-bobbing, short-stepping idiosyncrasies.

He resisted pressure to change and rejected the notion that a more conventional style would have improved his performance. When asked if a more regulation technique would make him faster, his response was concise to the point of brutality: "If I ran like the other runners, I would be back there with them."

In addition to three individual Olympic golds, Johnson had the honour of standing on the top step for the 4x400m at both Barcelona and Sydney. The team events, however, don't really compare. Like motor racing, you can't get to the top without the right support, but in the final analysis, athletics is an individual discipline.

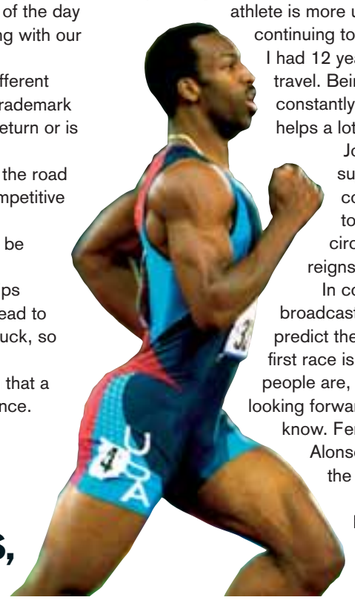
"You really don't have team events until a major championship, and then it's right at the end and it's really for fun. You get a chance to be a team and work with other guys – but that really is a very small part of the whole. You can't make a career in athletics as a relay member. Track and field is very much an individual sport – you're competing against other people to a certain extent, but you're also competing against yourself and trying to execute your own strategy."

After retirement Johnson slipped smoothly into a media career. Unlike many other sporting luminaries he made the switch seem quite straightforward; his television style is relaxed and confident, his newspaper columns are incisive – but did he find it challenging?

"Actually, it's been easy. I started the transition before I retired. A lot of the things I'm doing now – the business ventures, the media work – I was doing to some extent before I retired from athletics. It's a lot easier when you know what you want to do afterwards. I was fortunate to achieve everything I wanted in athletics and plan my retirement. I really had no desire to go back."

He has an affinity with print journalism, but says broadcasting "wasn't as easy at it looked". His approach to going to work for NBC and the BBC was, he says: "To bring that same type of focus to learning broadcast skills that I bought to athletics."

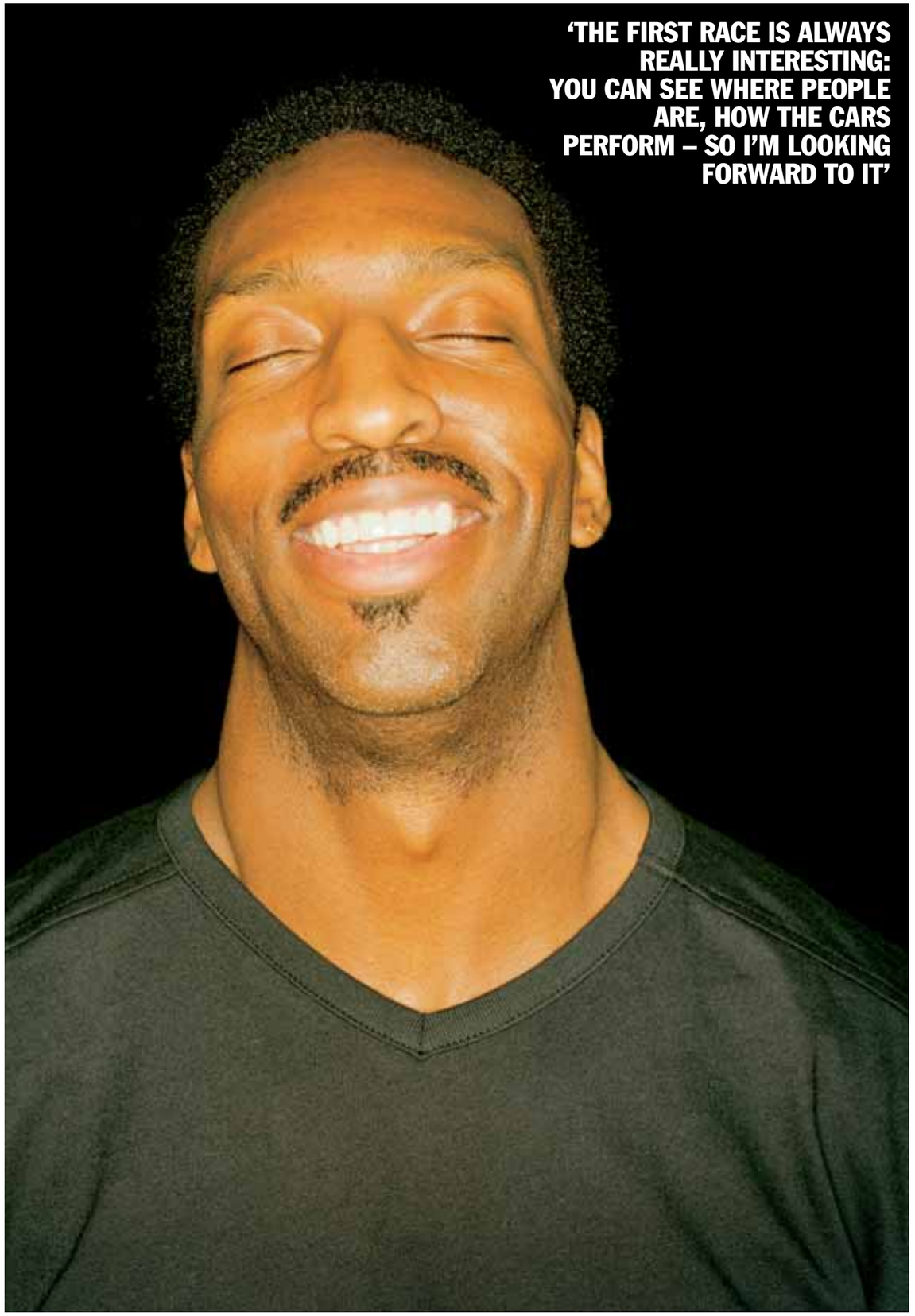
A successful academic career and a degree in marketing probably help, though Johnson asserts that his experience as a travelling athlete is more useful. "For me, it's been a case of continuing to educate myself even as an athlete. I had 12 years where I was fortunate enough to travel. Being outside of my own environment, constantly experiencing new cultures, I think that helps a lot."



'I'M GOING TO TRY TO STAY AHEAD OF EVERYONE ELSE AND IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS, I'M GOING TO OVERTAKE'

Johnson is no grand prix novice. As any superstar should, he's been to Monaco a couple of times, but also found the time to get to some of the calendar's other circuits: appropriately those where speed reigns supreme – Spa, Monza and Suzuka. In common with the other journalists and broadcasters here in Bahrain, he's is at a loss to predict the outcome of Sunday's Grand Prix. "The first race is always interesting, you can see where people are, how the cars really perform and so I'm looking forward to it. Who's going to win? I don't know. Ferrari are determined to get back on top; Alonso wants to defend his title. With all of the new rules it's impossible to judge."

On that note, Michael's hosts whisk him away for another session on the track. He's a believer in the maxim you're only as good as your last race – but maybe this one won't count.



'THE FIRST RACE IS ALWAYS REALLY INTERESTING: YOU CAN SEE WHERE PEOPLE ARE, HOW THE CARS PERFORM – SO I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT'

PHOTO: HARRY BORDEN, GETTY IMAGES

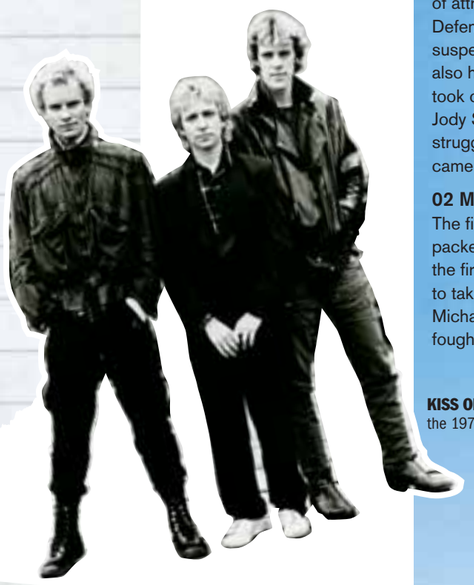
BEST FILM ACTING DEBUTS

01 **Natalie Portman** Leon
02 **Ben Kingsley** Gandhi
03 **Joe Pesci** Raging Bull
04 **Winona Ryder** Beetlejuice
05 **Lauren Bacall**
To Have and Have Not
06 **Montgomery Clift**
The Search
07 **Julie Andrews**
Mary Poppins
08 **Audrey Hepburn**
Roman Holiday
09 **Michael Caine** Zulu
10 **Anna Paquin**
The Piano



BEST DEBUT SINGLES

01 **Kate Bush** Wuthering Heights
02 **The Police** Roxanne
03 **Sex Pistols** Anarchy in the UK
04 **Oasis** Supersonic
05 **Jimi Hendrix Experience**
Hey Joe
06 **The Doors** Break On Through
07 **Joe Jackson**
Is She Really Going Out With Him?
08 **Elvis Presley** That's All Right
09 **Ian Dury and the Blockheads**
Sex & Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll
10 **Frankie Goes To Hollywood**
Relax



THE BEST OF THE BEST

IN THE BEGINNING...

How will tomorrow's race compare with the best season openers of all time? Here's our list of the most spectacular first rounds of all time, and some other rather good debuts…



BEST DEBUT ALBUMS

01 **Stone Roses** Stone Roses
02 **The Clash** The Clash
03 **Jeff Buckley** Grace
04 **Queen** Queen
05 **Oasis** Definitely Maybe
06 **Nick Drake** Five Leaves Left
07 **Joy Division** Unknown Pleasures
08 **Elvis Costello and the Attractions**
My Aim is True
09 **Rickie Lee Jones**
Rickie Lee Jones
10 **Echo and the Bunnymen**
Crocodiles



BEST SPORTING DEBUTS

01 **1985: Boris Becker** wins Wimbledon at his first attempt. At the tender age of 17
02 **1958: Pele's** first World Cup for Brazil in Sweden. Scores six goals, including two in the final which gives the samba stars the first of their five World Cup titles
03 **1914: Babe Ruth** (above) debuts as a pitcher for Boston Red Sox to help them beat Cleveland 4-3
04 **1974: Seve Ballesteros** turns pro and wins the Spanish Professionals' Championship, aged 16
05 **1880: W G Grace** scores 152 in his debut Test Cricket innings for England against Australia at The Oval, London, England

PHOTO: SUTTON IMAGES, GETTY IMAGES

BEST F1 OPENERS

01 Buenos Aires 1977

Wolf entered the fold – and won the first race of the season. Excitement came courtesy of attrition with only four cars finishing. Defending champion Hunt led but had a suspension failure. Then Watson led, but also had problems with his suspension. Pace took over but suffered from heat exhaustion. Jody Scheckter kept it together to win, Pace struggled home in second and Reutemann came in third.

02 Melbourne 1996

The first race at Melbourne was an action-packed affair as Jacques Villeneuve became the first debutant since Carlos Reutemann to take pole and Eddie Irvine out-qualified Michael Schumacher. Hill and Villeneuve fought it out for the lead with locked tyres and off-track excursions. Villeneuve covered Hill in oil, Hill won but Villeneuve took the moral victory. And Martin Brundle emerged unscathed from a high-energy, third-corner somersault.

03 Rio 1989

Senna started on pole but was bundled off at the first corner with Berger. Patrese, Mansell and Prost swapped the lead. Mansell won which was surprising given the rumour he hadn't expected the car to finish the first lap. Johnny Herbert was magnificent on his debut, bringing the Benetton home in fourth even though he was still in pain seven months after a crash left him facing possible amputation.

04 Melbourne 2002

Melbourne 2002 had everything: mayhem at the first corner, the underdogs raised their game and a local boy made a glorious debut. Half the field bumped and scraped into the first corner, Irvine managed to drag the Jaguar to fourth and Salo put the Toyota in sixth on its debut. And in his first race, Mark Webber from New South Wales hung on for fifth in the Minardi to send the crowd into raptures of delight. These days, no-one remembers that Schumacher won from Montoya and Kimi.

05 Silverstone 1950

Any list of debuts has to include the first race. The new-fangled Formula One series got off to the best possible start as, in the presence of royalty, the dominant Alfas battled it out at the head of the field with Giuseppe Farina ultimately triumphing over Luigi Fagioli and Reg Parnell.

KISS OFF: Jody Scheckter wins the first race of the 1977 season in Argentina



DISAGREE?

Not happy with our selection? Thought not. Tell us what you think should have been in our lists. E-mail *secretservice@theredbulletin.com* telling us what should be and why.

THE HOUSE OF GOD

Eleven teams – more to come – hundreds of workers, buses, trucks, offices; the paddock is a virtual city. And each part of that city has its own character. So here's our town as we see it. At each race we will look at a different aspect of the paddock, building to become the ultimate F1 virtual city. First off, the central point of our world – the Basilica of Saint Charles. And who's the man in charge? Why it's Pope Bernard himself.

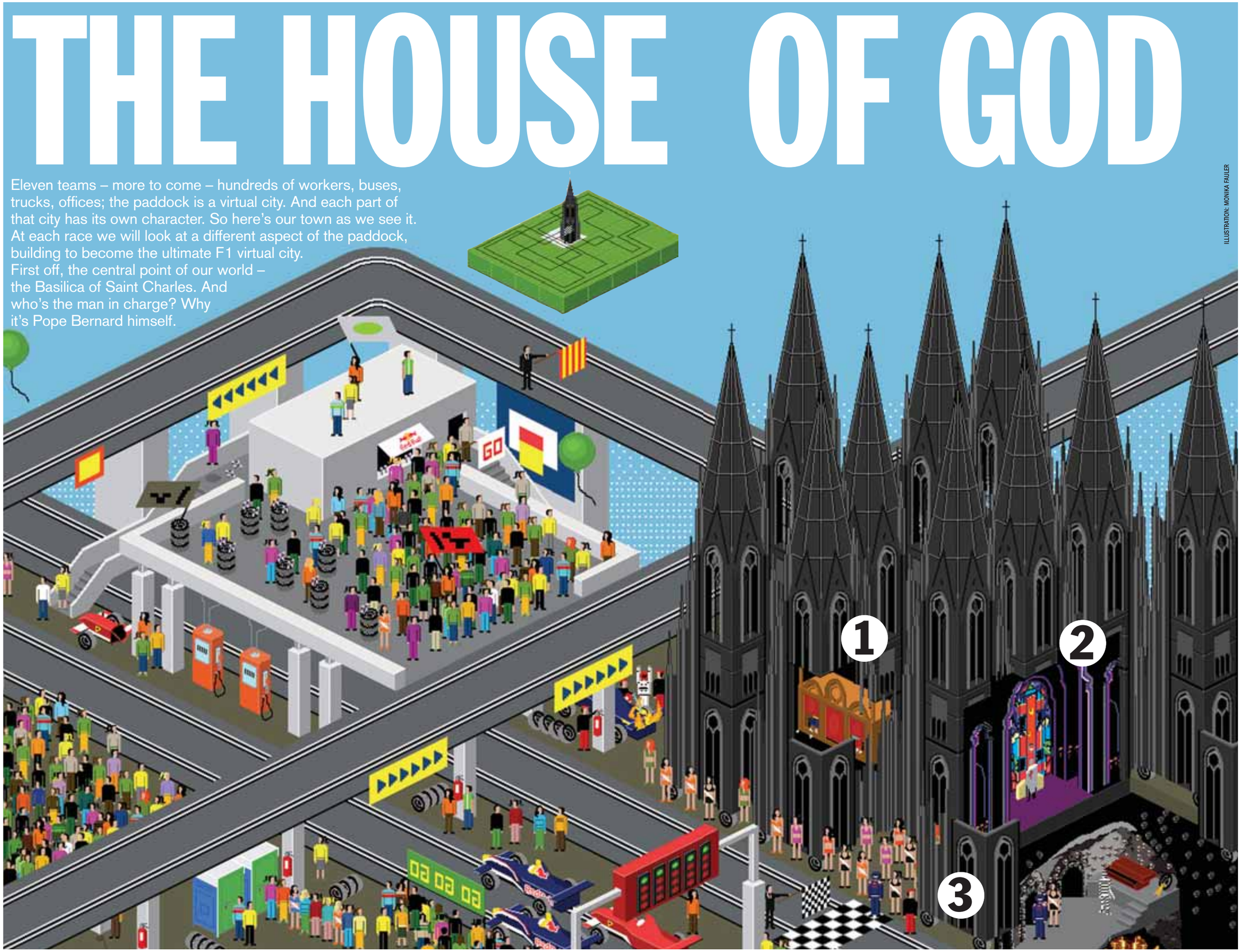


ILLUSTRATION: MONIKA FAULER

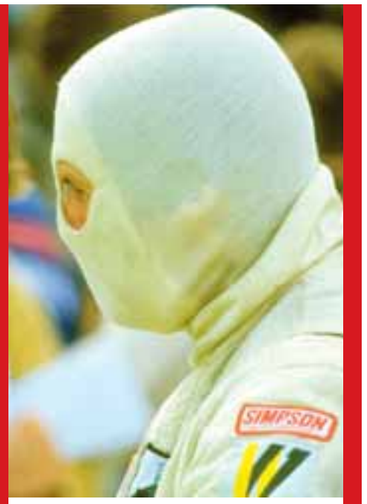
1 THE CONFESSIONAL
Like any religion, F1 has its pillars – rules by which the supreme being has decreed paddock life should be led. The confessional is where those who have strayed from the track of righteousness confess and the Pope delivers penance: having your pass cut up, your motorhome given to a troupe of monkeys or – most damning of all – losing your TV revenue.

2 THE ALTAR
Where the word of God is handed down. The zealots gather in their droves. The Pope in his ceremonial white shirt preaches the Gospel according to... himself. He relates the parables of the team owner and the sin of pride, the miracle of the annual Silverstone damnation and redemption and – the ultimate lesson – Thou Shalt Not Run Thine Own Championship!

3 THE CATACOMBS
Deep under the cathedral is the damp repository of the treasures of the religious order and the ghosts of grands prix past. The air of dread is palpable, for this is the last resting place of the enemies of the One True Faith. No-one knows how they ended up here or indeed how many there are. Apart from one man: the Pope himself.

STREET FIGHTER



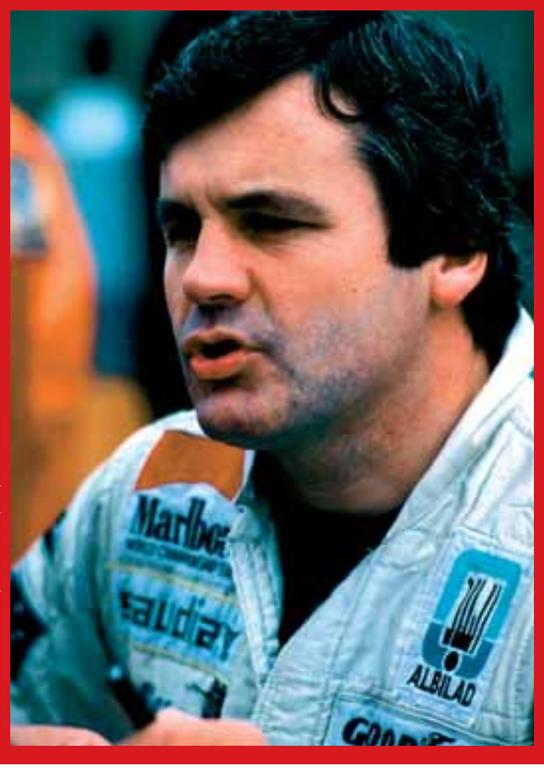


Straight-talking, hard-driving Alan Jones was a red-blooded racer who was as likely to let his fists do the talking as his driving. In 1980 he took F1's crown by force but just three years earlier he couldn't get a seat. The Red Bulletin looks back at how AJ's bullish nature and sheer grit helped him battle his way to the very top.









FRANK WILLIAMS and Patrick Head (both wearing headphones, top) discuss tactics during a practice session at Hockenheim in 1980 as Alan Jones steers toward their debut Drivers' and Constructors' titles

KING OF SPAIN. Alan celebrates victory at the Spanish Grand Prix (far left) in 1980

1978 SAW AJ and Williams (above) laying the foundations of their future success with a solid performance in Montreal

GOING THE DISTANCE on a jog with Frank Williams (left) in 1978

WORLD CHAMPION. With Williams, Jones went on to win the F1 title in 1980 (right)

PREPARING FOR BATTLE (top right) before his victory at the 1980 British GP

PHOTO: RAINER SCHLEGELMILCH, SUTTON IMAGES, DPPI, GETTY IMAGES

THE SON OF AUSTRALIAN

racing hero Stan Jones, Alan emigrated to London in the late 1960s where he made a modest living renting out tiny rooms to his fellow Antipodean travellers.

Always in his lucky red underpants, he went racing and soon made a name for himself. In 1975, Graham Hill signed AJ for F1. Hill's death spelled the end of the Embassy team and Surtees – sponsored by Durex – snapped him up. But John Surtees and Alan didn't get along and at the end of the 1976 season, his F1 career seemed over.

Then fate intervened. Shadow hired Jones in the wake of Tom Pryce's death at the 1977 South African GP and the Australian went on to take his, and the team's, first win in Austria. Suddenly Ferrari were interested, but later opted for Gilles Villeneuve.

Instead it was Frank Williams who won Jones's services. Up to that point, the team had been unspectacular, but the FW06 was a tidy package and Saudia Airlines sponsorship had finally given Williams a respectable budget. It was to be a marriage made in heaven.

"AJ was a man's man," says Sir Frank. "He was great fun to be with. He never needed any propping up mentally. It shouldn't be necessary for me to ask a driver if he's happy, or if he needs his underwear changed." Patrick Head said he was a "hard, competitive animal".

He was the same away from the track. Once he had to race with a broken hand having fought off four adversaries in a London alley and he even thumped a sponsor who had irritated him.

AJ won four races in 1979 and the following year the Jones-Williams partnership took six victories and the World Championship. In doing so, he became the template for the perfect Williams driver.

IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK

Sixteen weeks ago you couldn't wait to go home, but how long did that last? As the 2006 season begins, remember why it's better to be here than there…



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



PHOTO: THOMAS BUTLER

FABIANA VALENTI: 36

TORO ROSSO PRESS OFFICER

PREVIOUSLY: ITALIAN OLYMPIC ARCHER

"ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a little brunette girl, broader than she was tall, talking to a washing machine. She pretended it was a film camera and she was a Hollywood actress, and spoke to the 'camera' only in English.

"INSTEAD OF taking me to a psychiatrist to treat me for my unusual relationship with kitchen appliances, my parents realised my future was in either the performing arts or something linguistic. Acting wasn't my passion, so my parents sent me to a language school.

"AS WELL AS studying English I was a crack shot with an arrow. I was the number one archer in Italy when I was 18 and trained for the '88 Seoul Olympics. It was demanding but after many years, I decided to concentrate on my professional career.

"I BEGAN MY ADVENTURE in Formula One six years ago with Minardi. Last year was my first season as the official press officer. One of my tasks is to distribute press releases and other information to the media. I have plenty of experience in this area because I was a postwoman in Faenza for seven years. Yes! I sorted the mail and delivered the post. It allowed me to pay for my studies before putting my skills to the test with an import-export company.

"THIS WAS WHERE I first learnt about 'hydraulic shock absorbers', but it was in relation to cranes rather than cars. But I found sitting in front of a computer a bit tedious and yearned for travel and a more dynamic working environment.



"ON HEARING about my ambitions to travel, a friend told me Minardi might be seeking new personnel. I was in the right place at the right time and got lucky. I started as the switchboard operator and worked in logistics from time to time.

"SUDDENLY I found myself going to races. Midway through the 2004 season, the press officer Stefania Torelli decided to leave the team and I was offered the position. I said yes immediately.

"IT'S SUCH A FANTASTIC JOB and now that Minardi has become Toro Rosso, I am more motivated than ever. This really is a great opportunity for everyone – for me and for the whole team."





BEETLE MANIAC

Now we know where Christian Horner gets his fierce discipline and killer instinct. But the young Horner's eye for cutting-edge aerodynamics may have left a little to be desired when it came to choosing his first charger…