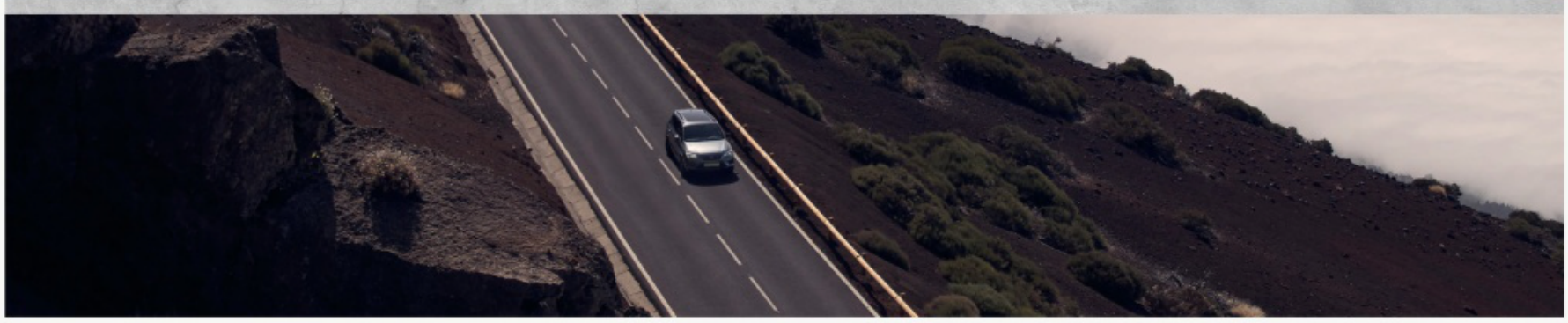
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F1 2020 YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

12 MARCH 2019

F1 2020 preview

100 PAGE SPECIAL ISSUE

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- *Can Red Bull dethrone Mercedes?*
- *Ferrari's troubled start*
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Time for Formula 1 to get going once again – hopefully

What are you most looking forward to about this season's Formula 1 campaign? We'd all like to see Mercedes challenged at the front and Red Bull looks best-placed to do that, while Lewis Hamilton surpassing Michael Schumacher's wins tally would also be something to behold. Then there's the ever-tight midfield battle, and the new contest at Renault between Daniel Ricciardo and Esteban Ocon.

We cover all this and more in our special F1 preview issue this week, which begins on page 18. The Australian Grand Prix is where all the analysis and opinion from pre-season is first tested, though the unusual nature of the Albert Park circuit means pundits are still a little tentative to predict season form even after the trip to Melbourne.

As well as ex-McLaren and Renault man Tim Wright's team-by-team rundown (p45), Luke Smith also talks to championship supremo Chase Carey about the challenges that F1 is currently facing, on p42.

The most immediate of those, of course, is COVID-19, which is becoming more and more of a health issue around the world. As we said last week, the coronavirus outbreak puts other things into perspective and it wouldn't be a surprise to see many other events follow either the Bahrain Grand Prix's move to run without spectators (p4) or being cancelled/moved altogether, such as Monza's GT World Challenge opener and Formula E's visit to Rome (p6).

Keeping that balance of being responsible and well-prepared without overreacting and panicking can be challenging at times like this, and race organisers and promoters (and competitors) are likely to take their lead from the various governments involved. We hope that all the affected areas improve as soon as possible.



Kevin Turner
Editor
kevin.turner@autosport.com

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on page 16



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Motorsport Images/Sutton; Daimler AG

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EPIDEMIC MEANS NO CROWD

FORMULA 1

Next week's Bahrain Grand Prix will be run behind closed doors as Formula 1 continues to feel the impact of the ongoing coronavirus epidemic.

After initially deciding to suspend ticket sales for the race at the Sakhir International Circuit on 22 March in order to assess the situation, Bahraini officials announced last week that the race would be going ahead as a "participants only" event behind closed doors.

"As an F1 host nation, balancing the welfare of supporters and race goers is a tremendous responsibility," the circuit said. "Given the continued spread of COVID-19 globally, convening a major sporting event, which is open to the public and allows thousands of international travellers and local fans to interact in close proximity, would not be the right thing to do at the present time. But to ensure that neither the sport, nor its global supporter base, is unduly impacted, the race weekend itself will still go ahead as a televised event."

Coronavirus has already forced the postponement of the Chinese Grand Prix at Shanghai, while events in MotoGP, Super Formula, Formula E and GT World Challenge Europe (see page 6) have also been called off as a result of the epidemic.

Bahrain has 95 confirmed cases of coronavirus at the time of writing, the highest number of any nation in the Middle East. One patient is in intensive care, but the other 94 cases are said to be in a stable condition. Bahrain reported a weekend attendance of 97,000 in 2019, with 34,000 fans attending on race day. But as the race is backed by the Bahraini government, the loss of ticket sales is unlikely to impact the grand prix as severely as those reliant on bumper crowd numbers.

It will be the first F1 race in history to take place behind closed doors, but ensures that the calendar remains at 21 rounds for the time being. Even so, concerns are continuing to grow about upcoming grands prix as countries place more and more restrictions on travel amid the epidemic.

This weekend's Australian Grand Prix will go ahead as planned after race chief Andrew Westacott said there was "not a chance" fans would be turned away.

Both Ferrari and AlphaTauri were able to travel to Australia with no issues, despite the expansion of Italy's coronavirus lockdown to cover the entire country on Monday, with the exception of only essential travel. Staff from Italian-based tyre suppler Pirelli were also able to travel and enter Australia as planned.

F1 managing director Ross Brawn has already stressed the series would not consider holding a championship round unless all 10 teams are present. Details on how the travel restrictions will impact those based in Italy after the expanded lockdown remain unclear, though.

Ferrari F1 chief Mattia Binotto said he hoped the team could help boost spirits in Italy through a difficult time for the country. "At what is a difficult time for Italy and the world as a whole, as part of a global sport, it is our obligation to try and put a smile on people's faces as they prepare to watch the first race of the season with the same sense of anticipation as ourselves," he said.

Officials in Bahrain have been working to ensure a smooth entry to the country for all F1 paddock personnel attending the race, as well as installing screening procedures on entry and specialist medical facilities on-site at the Sakhir circuit. Airlines such



Bahraini officials reported a 34,000 crowd for the 2019 running of their grand prix

IN BAHRAIN

as Emirates have, however, cut back on flights to Bahrain, complicating a much-used travel route from the UAE for many F1 teams.

F1 has also announced measures it will be introducing to combat coronavirus in the paddock, including "enhanced sanitation at the circuit, additional hand washing stations and specific medical protocols to manage any suspected cases of COVID-19. Dedicated teams of experts will be deployed at airports, transit points and at circuits to safeguard personnel, focused on the diagnosis, management and extraction of suspected cases. Bespoke quarantine points are being installed by promoters for any suspected cases."

F1 itself has also suspended all non-essential travel for its employees, in line with the advice given by Public Health England.

The FIA announced following the last week's World Motor Sport Council meeting that it has established a 'crisis cell' to oversee its response to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, headed up by the president of its medical commission, Professor Gerard Saillant.

"The FIA continues to closely monitor the situation and its implications, together with its Member Clubs and Promoters, and follows the advice of relevant authorities including Governments and the World Health Organization," it said. "The FIA will evaluate the calendar of its forthcoming competitions and take any action required to help protect the global motorsport community and the wider public, including the postponement of competitions where necessary."

No recent details have been issued on the status of the Vietnamese Grand Prix, in Hanoi on 5 April.

LUKE SMITH



Ferrari boss Binotto (right) and F1 sporting chief Brawn (centre)

FIA responds to teams' fury over Ferrari engine

FORMULA 1

The FIA had said that it was "not fully satisfied" that Ferrari fully complied with the regulations on operating its engine in 2019 following the governing body's investigation into the matter, but that it could not prove its case due to the complexities involved.

This came in response to a statement issued last Wednesday by the seven non-Ferrari-engined Formula 1 teams regarding the settlement agreed between the FIA and Ferrari over its engine.

The FIA added that any further action against Ferrari might result in a complicated legal case brought by the team.

Mercedes, Red Bull, McLaren, Renault, AlphaTauri, Racing Point and Williams all put their names to last week's statement, noting that "we strongly object to the FIA reaching a confidential settlement agreement with Ferrari to conclude this matter." They called for "transparency" and "full disclosure" on the matter.

In response, the FIA stressed that both the possibility of a settlement and the confidentiality surrounding an investigation are provided for by its own rules. It also made clear that it is unhappy with the statement from the teams, noting that "it will take all necessary action to protect the sport and its role and reputation as regulator" of F1.

The full statement read: "The FIA has conducted detailed technical analysis on the Scuderia Ferrari Power Unit as it is entitled to do for any competitor in the FIA Formula One World Championship. The extensive and thorough investigations undertaken during the 2019 season raised suspicions that the Scuderia Ferrari PU could be considered as not operating within the limits of the FIA regulations at all times.

"The Scuderia Ferrari firmly opposed the suspicions and reiterated that its PU always operated in compliance with the regulations. The FIA was not fully satisfied but decided that further action would not necessarily result in a conclusive case due to the complexity of the matter and the material impossibility to provide the unequivocal evidence of a breach.

"To avoid the negative consequences that a long litigation would entail especially in light of the uncertainty of the outcome of such litigations and in the best interest of the Championship and of its stakeholders, the FIA, in compliance with Article 4 (ii) of its Judicial and Disciplinary Rules (JDR), decided to enter into an effective and dissuasive settlement agreement with Ferrari to terminate the proceedings.

"This type of agreement is a legal tool recognised as an essential component of any disciplinary system and is used by many public authorities and other sport federations in the handling of disputes."

ADAM COOPER



Valencia track set to replace Rome due to coronavirus…

FORMULA E

A first-ever Formula E round on an unshortened permanent circuit looks odds-on to be the series' solution to the loss of the Rome E-Prix, which has been officially postponed amid the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The Italian race, set for 4 April, was due to be the next round of the championship, but now becomes the second FE event to be scuppered by the virus — the Sanya E-Prix in China was also officially postponed last month. Last week the Italian government announced that all sporting events were to take place behind closed doors until 3 April to contain the spread. Although that cut-off is one day before the original Rome date, the normal FE weekend timetable features a shakedown session the day prior to the race.

As the worst-hit European country, Italy postponed both the men's and women's Six Nations rugby matches with England, and has most notably cancelled the Rome marathon. The nation went into a country-wide lockdown on Monday.

Autosport understands that FE will keep the 4 April date available for a race in an alternative location, and this is set to be the Circuit Ricardo Tormo near Valencia, which hosts the series' pre-season testing (above).

In anticipation of further calendar disruption, all cars were transported to the Valencia track following the recent Marrakech E-Prix. During testing, the series has simulated races here over the past two seasons.

The Rome announcement raises further doubts for the remainder of the 2019-20 calendar. Thought to be most at risk are the successive inaugural Seoul (South Korea, 3 May) and Jakarta (Indonesia, 6 June) events, given their proximity to China, where the virus originated.

…AND MONZA GT RACE CANNED

Next month's opening round of the renamed GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup at Monza has also been cancelled in the wake of the quarantine measures imposed in Italy. The move was put in place after the Italian government announced the lockdown on 14 northern provinces, including Lombardy in which Monza is situated, was announced last Sunday and before its extension to the rest of the country on Monday.

Series organiser the Stephane Ratel Organisation has put in place a contingency plan revealed last month for the series formerly known as the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup. The Monza round on 19 April will be replaced by a race at Barcelona on 11 October, which was scheduled to be the GTWCE Sprint Cup finale. The sprint section of the series will now climax with a new fixture at Imola on 31 October-1 November.

An extra round of the Formula Renault Eurocup, which was due to kick off over the Monza GT weekend, has been added to the schedule at Hockenheim on 3-4 October as part of the support bill for the DTM finale.

The Creventic-run Monza 12 Hours, scheduled for 27-28 March, has shifted to ex-Portuguese GP venue Estoril.

MATT KEW AND GARY WATKINS

…as new cities close on races

FORMULA E

Amid the disruption caused by the novel coronavirus this season, future Formula E calendars look well set following initial investigations into the suitability of Cape Town and Eindhoven to host races.

Cape Town executive mayor Dan Plato had outlined the desire to add a new international motorsport event to the city, and the bid is now being fronted by e-Movement, which carries support from Jaguar of South Africa. Three possible circuit layouts have been identified following a 2019 study.

E-Movement chairman Iain Banner said: "As a starting point, the preliminary track layout and how it fits into the existing fabric of the precinct — as well as the future development proposals around the identified track — were all key factors in assessing Cape Town's suitability."

An investigation into the viability of a Dutch E-Prix has also proved successful, but formal provincial support is still required for a race in Eindhoven. The Formula Eindhoven bid was launched last year and has targeted the Brainport technology region as the potential host for an event that would start in 2021-2022.

Organisers asked BrabantSport — promoters of sporting events in the area — for three years of financial support, which prompted an investigation to be carried out by the Mulier Institute. It concluded that the event would receive widespread support from local businesses and so subsequent research will be carried out before a final verdict is given.

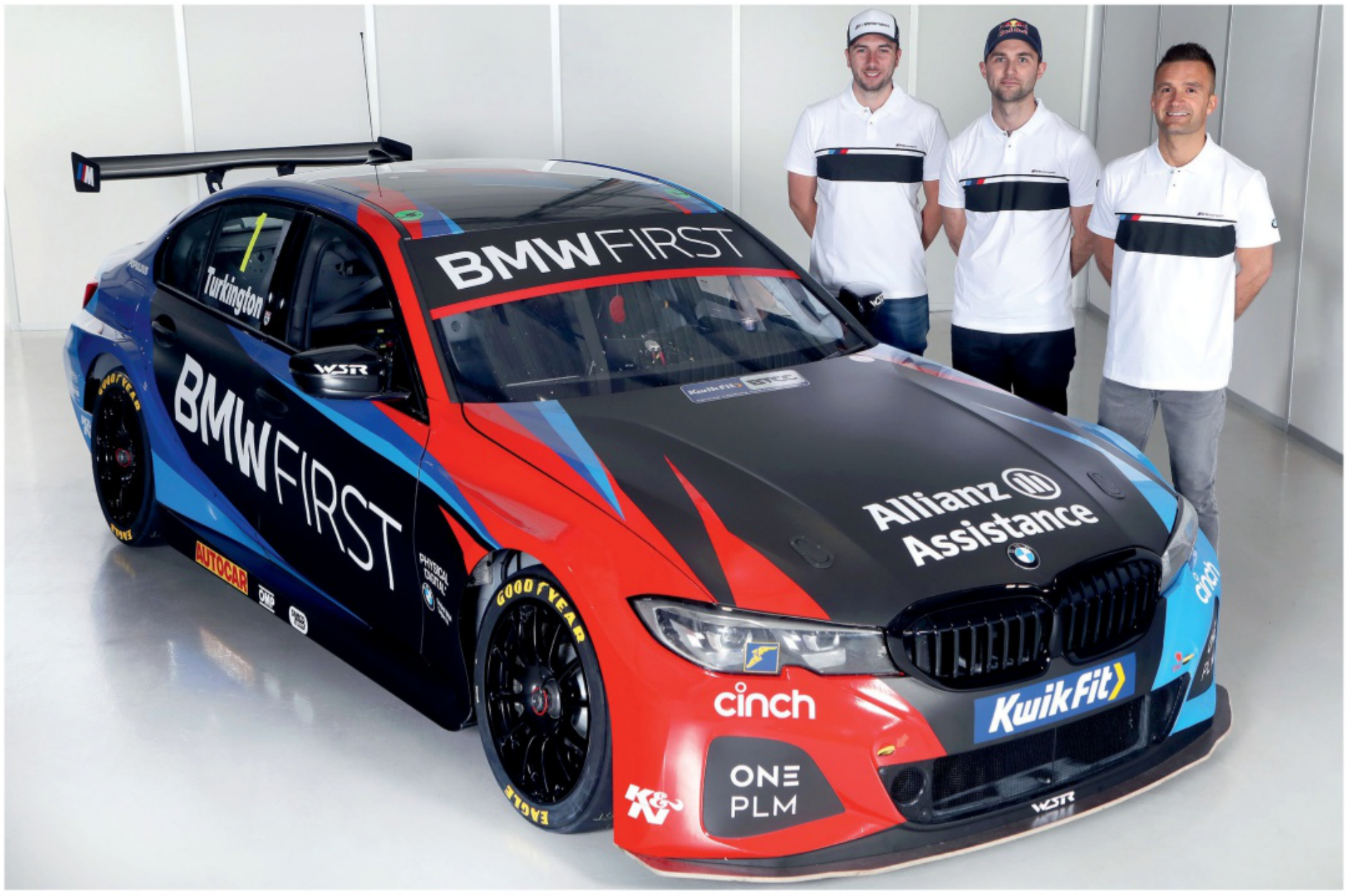
Autosport also understands that a second FE race in Germany is also being proposed. To coincide with Mercedes and Porsche joining the series, Stuttgart — where both manufacturers have their headquarters — has been tabled as a host.

MATT KEW



Cape Town already hosts World Rallycross finale, at Killarney circuit

FIAWORLDRALLYCROSS.COM



BTCC The West Surrey Racing-run Team BMW squad has ditched the Munich manufacturer's historic and cherished 'white-with-red-and-blue-stripes' livery, which adorned the 330i M Sport of Colin Turkington as he drove to victory in the 2019 British Touring Car Championship. The cars are now turned out in more-sinister hues for 2020, here shown off by (left to right) Tom Oliphant, Andrew Jordan and Turkington, who will represent the team this season.



Fisichella to race in Aussie GP support

S5000

Giancarlo Fisichella is returning to the scene of his 2005 Australian Grand Prix victory to race in the S5000 single-seater support event at Melbourne's Albert Park this weekend.

Fisichella, who has been a Ferrari mainstay in the World Endurance Championship in recent seasons, joins fellow Formula 1 veteran Rubens Barrichello on the grid. The Italian will line up with Garry Rogers Motorsport alongside Bathurst 1000 winner Alexandre Premat, reigning Australian Formula 4 champion Luis Leeds and Aussie Supercars rising star James Golding.

Not only are there F1 veterans on the grid, but also an F1 aspirant in the form of Formula 2 race winner Jack Aitken. The Williams protege will race for Team BRM in a squad that also includes Barrichello, Indy 500 regular James Davison, British F4 race winner Zane Goddard and Tom Randle, best known to UK race fans for finishing fourth in the 2016 British Formula 3 Championship.

Randle, 23, has been fighting testicular cancer, but bravely returned to the cockpit to win an Aussie Super2 race at Adelaide last month in a Nissan Altima. A postponement of chemotherapy treatment has allowed him to take up a place on the grid for this weekend's three races, with one each taking place on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

AUTOSPORT PLUS
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Lorenzo wildcard return could mean he replaces Rossi



MOTOGP

Three-time MotoGP world champion Jorge Lorenzo will return to the MotoGP grid with Yamaha at this year's Catalan Grand Prix in a wildcard outing, seven months after he retired from racing.

The 47-time premier-class race winner signed to Yamaha — with which he spent the first nine years of his MotoGP career and won all three of his top-tier titles — in the winter as its official test rider and rode on a 2019-spec YZR-M1 in last month's Sepang pre-season test (above).

During that weekend the possibility of a wildcard outing was not dismissed by Yamaha, while Lorenzo admitted he was a tiny bit more open to a full-time return after rediscovering his groove on the M1.

While no plans for any further outings have been confirmed, 32-year-old Lorenzo's wildcard is rather opportunely timed. As it stands, the Barcelona race on 7 June will be the fifth round of the campaign. Yamaha legend Valentino Rossi has made no secret of the fact that the first seven or eight races of 2020 will be where he forms his decision on whether to extend his illustrious career beyond this season.

Should he do so, he will have a full factory contract and a fully supported works bike at Petronas SRT in a swap with his 2021 works-team replacement Fabio Quartararo.

But should results be poor and he calls time, a full factory ride — albeit in a satellite surrounding — will go up for grabs. Lorenzo, linked to SRT before his ill-fated Honda switch last year, would be a prime candidate for that seat should he perform strongly on his Barcelona return and wish to step back into the fire on a full-time basis.

LEWIS DUNCAN

Grid complete with Neate, as Bushell is subbed

BTCC

Early-2010s British Touring Car Championship regular Andy Neate has taken the final seat on the series' grid for the 2020 season.

The 45-year-old — who raced a West Surrey Racing-run BMW, an Arena-operated Ford and a Triple Eight-fielded MG and has a best finish of sixth from 104 starts — completes the line-up of the Motorbase Performance Ford Focus squad alongside Rory Butcher and Ollie Jackson.

This sets the grid at 29 cars, with what should have been the 30th entry withdrawn as Honda privateer Simpson Racing has stood down, so that driver Matt Simpson can devote his attentions to his son's karting career.

Motorbase blooded its new fourth-generation Focus ST at Brands Hatch last week (right), Jackson giving the car its first laps.

Meanwhile, ex-Team Hard part-timer Howard Fuller will substitute for Mike Bushell in one of the squad's Volkswagen CCs for the first three rounds. Bushell is still recovering from myocarditis — an inflammation of the heart muscle — that struck while he was on holiday during the winter, and will not be race-fit in time.

MARCUS SIMMONS





Ghiotto puts new team on top

FORMULA 2

It was a Formula 2 veteran on top with a brand-new team as last week's three-day pre-season test concluded in Bahrain, with Luca Ghiotto leading the way for Hitech GP.

The Italian, who reversed his decision to conclude his single-seater career by signing on for another year to partner Nikita Mazepin, set the fastest time of the test with half an hour to go in Tuesday's final session. Ghiotto's benchmark was just 0.008 seconds better than what Carlin F2 rookie Jehan Daruvala had managed in the dying minutes of Monday's running.

The three-day test was F2's first collective running with 18-inch tyres, which the series is introducing this year ahead of F1 making the same switch in 2021.

New Red Bull Junior Daruvala was the only driver to top more than one of the six sessions, quickest in the afternoon of day two and the morning of day three.

Fellow rookie Felipe Drugovich made up the combined top three of the test for MP Motorsport by lapping second fastest, behind only Ghiotto, on Tuesday. Virtuosi Racing's Guanyu Zhou was runner-up to Daruvala on Monday, and that time was good enough for fourth overall.

Pedro Piquet (Charouz Racing System) was fastest on Sunday's opening day, and his time on Monday put him fifth overall.

Apart from Sergey Sirotkin driving for ART in place of the absent Christian Lundgaard — quarantined at his Renault F1 junior training camp in Tenerife due to a hotel guest having coronavirus — there was one other change to the expected drivers, when ex-GP2 race winner Tom Dillmann drove Marino Sato's car in one session for Trident to give feedback on the new tyres.

VALENTIN KHOROUNZHIY

TOP 10 TIMES

POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	**Luca Ghiotto** (Hitech)	1m41.252s
2	**Jehan Daruvala** (Carlin)	1m41.260s
3	**Felipe Drugovich** (MP)	1m41.324s
4	**Guanyu Zhou** (Virtuosi)	1m41.377s
5	**Pedro Piquet** (Charouz)	1m41.491s
6	**Mick Schumacher** (Prema)	1m41.531s
7	**Jack Aitken** (Campos)	1m41.568s
8	**Sergey Sirotkin** (ART)	1m41.602s
9	**Nobuharu Matsushita** (MP)	1m41.612s
10	**Nikita Mazepin** (Hitech)	1m41.634s

MYSTERY CLOAKS SPORTSCAR CONVERGENCE

WEC

There's been another twist in the World Endurance Championship's attempts to replace LMP1. The FIA has announced that it wants LM Hypercars and LMDh machinery to operate in the "same performance window" when they go up against each other from the start of the 2021-22 season.

"Parameters such as power unit performance, aerodynamic characteristics and weight will be aligned", read the bulletin put out after last week's FIA World Motor Sport Council in which the "general principles" of convergence between the WEC and the IMSA SportsCar Championship were approved.

What it means exactly isn't clear ahead of the revelation of further details of the LMP2-based LMDh platform over the course of the IMSA/WEC double-header at Sebring later this month. A current P2 car weighs in at 930kg, though the next breed of IMSA prototype will be heavier courtesy of a hybrid system. The LMH rules, meanwhile, lay down a minimum weight of 1100kg.

The maximum power for LMH cars is set at 750bhp, a figure that includes the output from the car's internal combustion engine and its hybrid. A current IMSA Daytona Prototype international has somewhere north of 600bhp, which will be boosted by the one-make, rear-axle hybrid system by perhaps as much as 100bhp.

How much meat we get on the bone of the LMDh rules during Sebring week remains to be seen.

GARY WATKINS

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SILVERSTONE EXPERIENCE The Duke of Sussex and Lewis Hamilton officially opened the new Silverstone Experience immersive museum last Friday. The Duke, who visited two years ago when construction of the site began, took on Hamilton in a wheel-gun challenge, before the duo met schoolchildren during a walk around the hands-on Tech Lab. One of them, a budding Pete Bonnington, is clearly talking the duo through tyre strategy…

Vergne downscales LMP2 racing

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

Two-time Formula E champion Jean-Eric Vergne is leaving a happy hunting ground this season. The Frenchman is stepping down from his European Le Mans Series drive with G-Drive Racing that yielded four wins in nine starts across 2018-19.

Vergne has opted to focus on his Formula E campaign with Techeetah after discussions with the Russian entrant, but will continue with the team at the Le Mans 24 Hours World Endurance Championship finale in June and the Spa round in April. He was due to miss an ELMS round because the cancelled Rome E-Prix clashed with the series opener at Barcelona on the first weekend of April.

"It's good for them to have the same team for the year," said Vergne, "and it's good because I have more time to work on FE and focus on Le Mans."

G-Drive Racing boss Roman Rusinov has promised a big name to drive alongside himself and "a very good silver" in the team's Aurus-badged ORECA-Gibson 07 (below). The new silver-rated driver, who replaces United Autosports-bound Job van Uitert, will then join Rusinov and Vergne at Spa and Le Mans.



CASSIDY TO MAKE WEC DEBUT

Reigning Super Formula champion Nick Cassidy will make his WEC debut at Spa.

The New Zealander is returning to the Eurasia Motorsport squad with which he contested three Asian Le Mans Series rounds in 2019-20. He will drive the team's LMP2 Ligier-Gibson JSP217 alongside former Aussie Supercars driver Daniel Gaunt and Japanese Nobuya Yamanaka as the team gears up for Le Mans.

Cassidy, who has a clashing Super GT race on Le Mans weekend, is standing in for Shane van Gisbergen. His fellow Kiwi, who contested one ALMS race for Eurasia over the winter, will lead the team's Le Mans line-up, but is unable to race at Spa because of a Supercars conflict.

GARY WATKINS

IN THE HEADLINES

SETTE CAMARA AT RED BULL

Formula 2 race winner Sergio Sette Camara has switched from McLaren to become Formula 1 test and reserve driver for Red Bull and AlphaTauri this season, a role he is sharing with ex-Toro Rosso racer Sebastien Buemi. Sette Camara was a Red Bull Junior in his European Formula 3 days in 2016, but was dropped after one season.

BANKED ZANDVOORT OPENS

The revamped Zandvoort, replete with its newly banked turns, held its first races last weekend. On Saturday, Mike Verschuur, Harrie Kolen and Erik van Loon drove their Renault RS01 to victory in a round of the Winter Endurance Championship. On Sunday it was the turn of the historics, with Ad van der Kroft and Marc Devis victorious in their Morgan.

SOWERY'S LATE LIGHTS DEAL

US-based Brit Toby Sowery is back on the Indy Lights grid in time for this weekend's season opener at St Petersburg. Sowery will line up with Belardi Auto Racing, and was second to multiple single-seater champion and Lights debutant Kyle Kirkwood in last weekend's Homestead test.

MARTINS LEADS ART ATTACK

The worst-kept secret of the European single-seater non-FIA F3 third-tier's winter was finally put out of its misery on Tuesday, when ART Grand Prix confirmed that 2019 Formula Renault Eurocup runner-up Victor Martins will lead its return to the category this season. Other Renault recruits in recent days include 2019 race winner Ugo de Wilde, who shifts to Arden, and Australian Tommy Smith, whose maiden European season will be with JD Motorsport.

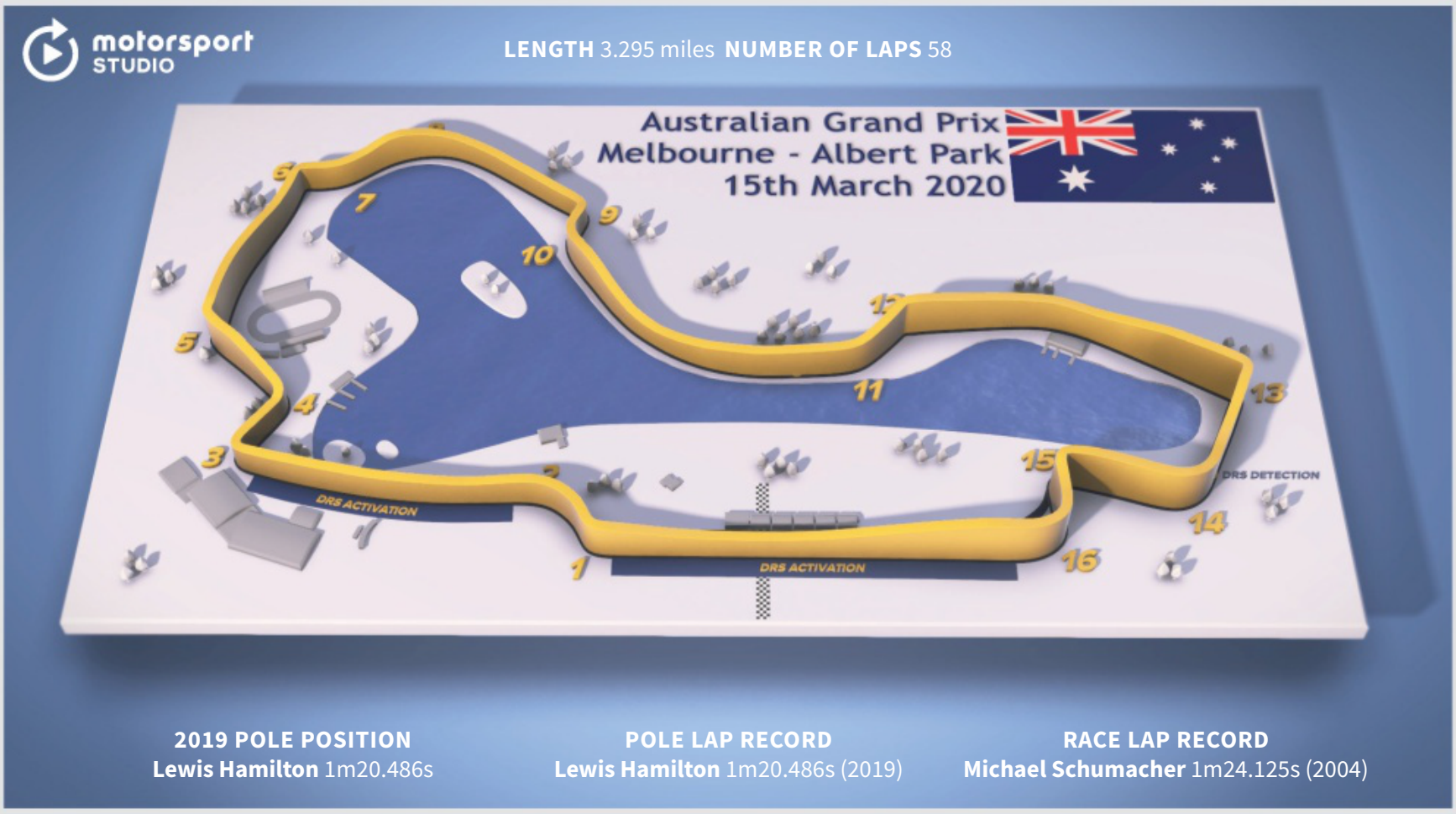
FOUR CIVICS FOR MUNNICH

German team Munnich Motorsport will run all four Honda Civic Type Rs in this season's World Touring Car Cup after acquiring the entry of KCMG, which has ended its involvement in the series. Munnich's 2019 runner-up Esteban Guerrieri and Nestor Girolami will be joined by last year's KCMG pairing of Tiago Monteiro and Attila Tassi in the squad.

NASCAR FOR MORBIDELLI

Tin-top veteran Gianni Morbidelli is the latest ex-F1 racer to join the NASCAR Euro Series ranks. He will race a CAAL Racing Chevrolet this season.

F1 AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



UK START TIMES

Friday 13 March
FP1 0100
FP2 0500

Saturday 14 March
FP3 0300
QUALIFYING 0600

Sunday 15 March
RACE 0510

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CHAMPIONSHIP - FINAL 2019 POSITIONS

DRIVERS		
1	**Hamilton**	413
2	**Bottas**	326
3	**Verstappen**	278
4	**Leclerc**	264
5	**Vettel**	240

CONSTRUCTORS		
1	**Mercedes**	739
2	**Ferrari**	504
3	**Red Bull**	417
4	**McLaren**	145
5	**Renault**	91


Ricciardo carries Aussie hopes

RACE STATS

PREVIOUS WINNERS		
2019	**Valtteri Bottas**	Mercedes
2018	**Sebastian Vettel**	Ferrari
2017	**Sebastian Vettel**	Ferrari
2016	**Nico Rosberg**	Mercedes
2015	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes
2014	**Nico Rosberg**	Mercedes
2013	**Kimi Raikkonen**	Lotus
2012	**Jenson Button**	McLaren
2011	**Sebastian Vettel**	Red Bull
2010	**Jenson Button**	McLaren


ALL PICS: SUTTON
Eddie Irvine broke F1 win duck with victory in Melbourne in 1999

MELBOURNE MASTERS	
Hamilton	188
Alonso	175
Raikkonen	157
Vettel	150
M Schumacher	135
Button	110
Rosberg	107
Barrichello	107
Coulthard	106
Massa	72

Leading points scorers for top 10 finishers at Melbourne. Races from before 2010 converted to current points system. Fastest lap point not included.

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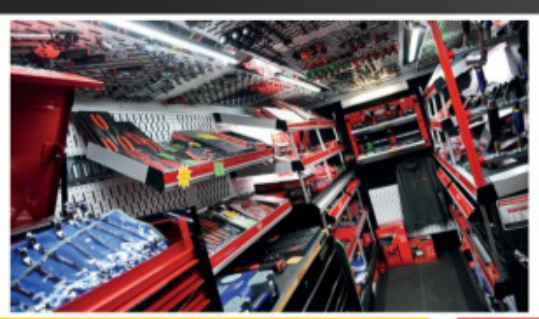


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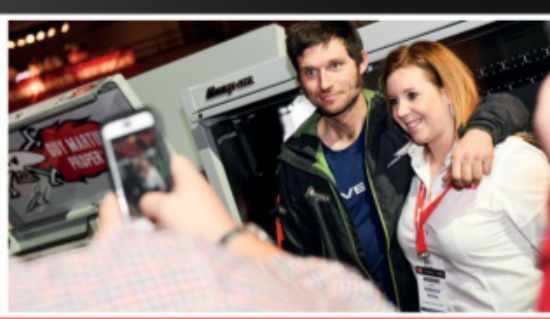
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A different kind of challenge

If the Ferrari SF1000 really is off the pace in 2020, it would probably present a different storyline for Vettel and Leclerc to the one they expected

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

If, as it expects, Ferrari is behind Mercedes and Red Bull in Melbourne this weekend, then it's not just Formula 1 fans hoping for a three-team fight for the titles who will be feeling frustrated.

Just when it seemed as if rules stability and the varying strengths of the designs produced by the top three teams (Mercedes – all-round downforce, Red Bull – peak downforce, Ferrari – engine power) would set up a battle for the ages in 2020, pre-season testing led to Ferrari insisting it had slipped back.

For Charles Leclerc and Sebastian Vettel, the 2020 season was supposed to be about taking the fight to Lewis Hamilton, while also resuming their own private battle for supremacy at Ferrari. But although that particular fight will continue even if Ferrari is off the pace, the potential lack of a world title on the line changes the dynamic of the intra-team squabble.

There are individual concerns for both Vettel and Leclerc if Ferrari is indeed a firm third in the pecking order. Vettel is heading towards the latter stages of his F1 career, and still does not have a contract beyond the end of the season about to begin. He also has a worrying trend that he could do with correcting in 2020 – ending up with underwhelming season results when his car has not been in overall title contention.

This first materialised in 2014, when Vettel was eclipsed by newcomer Daniel Ricciardo at the Red Bull team with which he had clinched the previous four world titles. And after a rejuvenating season with three wins and third place in the drivers' championship during his first campaign with Ferrari in 2015, the following year he ended up fourth behind Ricciardo and the Mercedes duo, as Ferrari took no victories. Some of his driving in 2016 indicated he wasn't getting the best out of the compromised machinery. Again, Vettel proved he could bounce back with two consecutive second places in the 2017 and 2018 standings, but errors that crept in during the second of those seasons continued last year and he ended up fifth – his worst result for Ferrari and lowest since 2014.

> **"There are concerns for both Vettel and Leclerc if Ferrari is a firm third in the pecking order"**

So, just when Vettel would have hoped he could secure a turnaround in his results with the SF1000, he may have to find other ways to shine – at least in the early part of the season (assuming it goes ahead as expected given the ever-developing coronavirus situation), as Ferrari maintains that it can recover.

Leclerc has been riding the crest of a career wave since he first started in the junior categories. His 13th place with Sauber in his rookie F1 season is the only time he has finished lower than fourth – from Formula Renault 2.0, through Formula 3, GP3 and Formula 2 (both of which he won). Without Ferrari's reliability issues in Bahrain and Russia, and *that* clash with Vettel in Brazil, Leclerc may well have secured third place last year.

Leclerc didn't take long to prove he belonged at the highest level in 2019, with his pole and moral win in Bahrain. Although he had to work to cut out the early-season errors that cost him in Azerbaijan and Monaco, by the time Ferrari hit its purple patch after the summer break it was only Vettel's undercut advantage in Singapore that stopped Leclerc taking all three of the team's 2019 wins.

But up-and-coming drivers can sometimes suffer when it comes to dealing with setbacks – frustration can set in when their seemingly irresistible rise has to pause. That was perhaps behind Max Verstappen's poor run of form at the start of 2018, occurring while Ricciardo scored wins on the other side of the Red Bull garage. But Verstappen was able to quickly arrest that slide, and arguably turned in some of the strongest drives over the remainder of that season, starting with his podiums in Canada and France, and then his triumph in Austria.

Fortunately, Leclerc has recent experience he can draw upon – his single season with Sauber. Although Leclerc arrived in F1 as a dominant F2 champion (and the first rookie winner of that title in eight years), it took him four races to produce what many had expected from him with sixth in Azerbaijan, which followed errors in Bahrain qualifying and the race in China. A run of five races without points in the middle of that season could have punctured his confidence, but he held on and secured a promotion to Ferrari to seal his rapid rise to the front of the F1 grid.

It could be the case that Ferrari's pre-season predictions are wide of the mark, with Valtteri Bottas referring to a "weird game" at the end of testing regarding the form rival teams had shown. But, if not, it could be an interesting test for both Vettel and Leclerc.

Underwhelming cars can, of course, also provide drivers with opportunities to enhance their reputations. Most of the greats have a headline-grabbing performance in unfancied cars – Vettel is the only driver to have won in a Toro Rosso, for example.

If Leclerc or Vettel can produce performances such as Verstappen's wet-weather masterclass to take third in Brazil in 2016, or carry a difficult car into title contention as Fernando Alonso did in 2012, then Ferrari's 2020 season may not be so frustrating to follow after all.

P26 IS FERRARI ALREADY IN TROUBLE?

WIN

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YOUR SAY

Some of your pictures even caught the attention of my young son and drew him from his iPad, especially the Formula Ford images in Marcus Pye's retrospective

STUART JAMES NORMAN

Focus on club motorsport is welcomed

As someone who was disheartened by the shenanigans of the end of last year, I applaud your efforts since December and your 'return'! We read of and see many changes of staff and regular contributors leaving. These seem to be replaced quickly, with possibly exciting newcomers (Tim Wright) for F1 now. I'm excited to see Tim's future offerings; ditto your rally columnist's replacement.

But most praise of all should be directed towards your unexpected extra effort (in my opinon) for club motorsport. Your latest national supplement (27 February) is fantastic. Some of your pictures even caught the attention of my young son and drew him from his iPad, especially the Formula Ford images in Marcus Pye's retrospective.

I hope your readership will support you with your new route and this will reflect in competitor numbers in these strange times by people being drawn in by your publication.

Stuart James Norman
By email

Memories of a first taste of racing

I was fascinated by your article on the three Fs (13 February). The Grand Prix d'Europe at Silverstone in 1950 was the first motor race that I went to. There must have been a main entrance to the circuit somewhere, but my friend and I followed others across a field, through a gap in a hedge, and we were in!

There were four Alfas with the three Fs and Reg Parnell in the fourth. I hesitate to disagree with all the pundits at Autosport but, according to my lap chart, Fangio led the first three laps and Farina only hit the front on the fourth.

There was also 500cc races, with two heats and a final, in which a young Stirling Moss featured, finishing second in the final. It was all very exciting and started my enthusiasm for motor racing, which continues to this day.

WR McConnel
By email

Interesting! The accounts we can find tally with our lap chart... — ed

PICTURE OF THE WEEK



Kiwi rally star Hayden Paddon drove his Hyundai i20 AP4+ to victory in the inaugural Ben Nevis Station Golden 1200 Hillclimb in Central Otago, New Zealand

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The countdown to the start of the Formula 1 season is almost over. Here's Autosport's essential guide

F1 season preview 2020




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RED BULL CONTENT POOL



Red Bull

Is Red Bull ready to dethrone Mercedes?

Alex Kalinauckas

A quick car, an ever-improving Honda engine and a stronger team-mate for Max Verstappen may all mean the team can now challenge for the title again

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

For at least one more year, before the 2021 rules revolution, Formula 1 is going to be (unofficially) a two-class championship. That means only six cars can realistically expect to pick up victories. In a dream scenario, Ferrari and Red Bull would build on their progress of last season and take the fight to Mercedes. But, judging by the pre-season testing form in Spain and the downbeat sentiment coming from Ferrari, it's up to Red Bull to lead the charge.

The team spent 2019 learning and bonding with a new engine supplier, and overall its first Honda-powered campaign must be considered a success. Although the team ended up one down on its win tally compared to its score with Renault engines in 2018 (four that year and three last season), given Honda's difficulties with McLaren and a 2018 season bedding into the Red Bull camp with what was then called Toro Rosso, such success wasn't guaranteed.

Going into the new campaign, which at the time of writing is still set to get under way in Melbourne this weekend, expectations are for more progress from the Red Bull-Honda alliance. But, with Ferrari's projection that it is behind its two 'Class A' rivals at this

"Our targets are very high this year. We've got some fierce opponents but we do have strength in depth"

stage, there's additional expectation towards Red Bull from anybody hoping that the 2020 season is going to be one for the ages, with more than Mercedes in contention. And there *are* some indications that suggest this could indeed be the year when F1's previously dominant squad finally closes the gap.

For a start, Honda has made "a big step up", according to AlphaTauri team boss Franz Tost. His squad will run the Japanese manufacturer's engines for a third year, with Red Bull entering its second campaign of an effective works partnership shared between the energy-drink giant's two F1 teams.

"If you look at how the power unit is fitted into the monocoque, »



RED BULL CONTENT POOL

and if you would compare this to the first year, then there's a big difference," adds Tost. "Everything is optimised: from the electric boxes to the water pumps and oil pumps, and all this kind of stuff, to get a better centre of gravity, and better weight distribution. This of course helps; this is a performance differentiator and they made big steps forward also from the reliability side and from the performance side."

As a result of Honda's development — with the improved chassis integration again highlighted — Red Bull team principal Christian Horner says: "Of course, our expectations grow and our targets are very high this year. We know we've got some fierce opponents but we do have the strength and depth within our team to put a real challenge together."

As well as the RB16 packing additional punch for 2020, Red Bull will be banking on its operational abilities to help close the gap to Mercedes. Unlike Ferrari, and to a certain extent the reigning champion squad, it has a proven track record when it comes to strategy calls. And if there's a team willing to take an extra risk, it's Red Bull.

The main beneficiaries of this slickness will of course be Red Bull's drivers, Max Verstappen and Alex Albon. While Albon goes into 2020 embarking on his first full season with the senior Red Bull squad, Verstappen will be expected to lead the line and pile the

"For me it doesn't matter who I'm fighting as long as we're fighting for first. That's the most important"

pressure on Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas (as well as keeping Red Bull ahead of Charles Leclerc and Sebastian Vettel, who surely won't be *that* far adrift for Ferrari when the real action starts).

Verstappen is still only 22 years old, which seems both somewhat remarkable and totally unsurprising at the same time, given he's now a veteran of 102 grand prix starts and has eight wins to his name after his triumphs in Austria, Germany and Brazil last year. He's utterly at home at the front of the pack and is absolutely ready to fight for a world title. During winter testing last month he seemed to exude a certain air of confidence regarding Red Bull's form, which delivered the second quickest time of testing overall.

"For me it doesn't matter who I'm fighting as long we're fighting for first," Verstappen says of the expected pecking order going to the first race. "That's the most important — if it's a pink car, a silver car or a red one we're fighting against, that all doesn't matter. If it's a six-time world champion, if it's a rookie in the car, for me it's all the same. I just want to win. That's what we're here for as a team

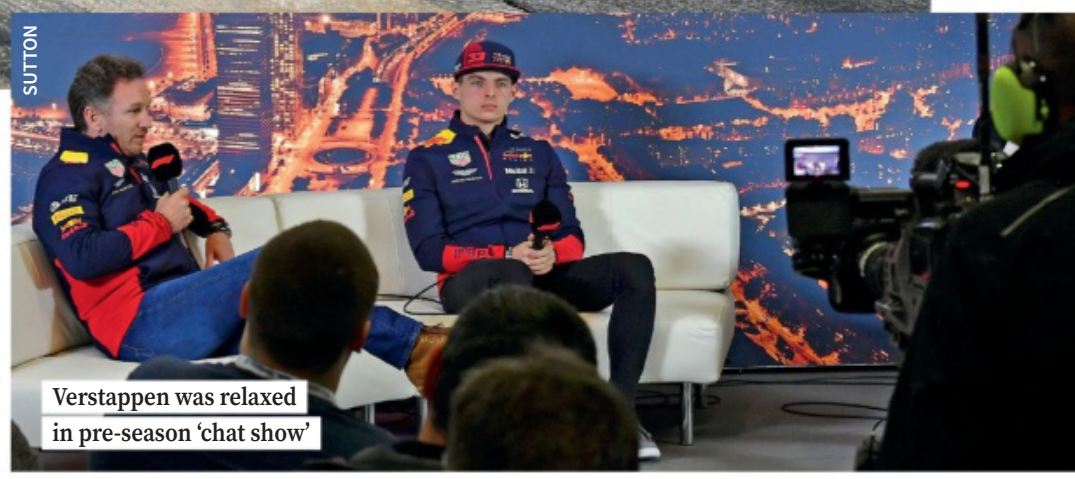


Red Bull is looking to close the gap to Mercedes in 2020



SUTTON

Verstappen used testing to find the limits of the RB16


SUTTON

Verstappen was relaxed in pre-season 'chat show'

as well. So, I just hope that from the start now we can be really competitive and immediately start fighting for those positions. In the end, when you look back over the years and you see the results, you're not going to think about if you were fighting a rookie or a world champion. For me it is like that."

Verstappen was speaking during an official F1/FIA press conference organised during the second test at Barcelona last month. These took a new form compared to the usual format of desk-parked drivers answering questions from the floor. As part of an experiment undertaken by F1's organisers, the press conferences instead began as a 'chat show', with the participants answering questions from host Tom Clarkson, before those from the assembled media.

It was here that Verstappen's confidence was really clear — away from the frankly unsightly horde of reporters and cameras waiting to his hear his thoughts at the back of the Red Bull garage during the team's regular testing media sessions. Sitting alongside Horner, he happily explained how the team is finding its time in Spain, putting the several spins he had across the six days — including a red flag-causing dip in Barcelona's Turn 5 gravel trap — down to trying to find "the limits of the car. I think that worked pretty well — by having a few spins I knew where the limit was."

Horner is enthusiastic about what he sees as Red Bull's main strengths going into 2020. It may not have won a world title since 2013, back when it was Vettel racking up the wins and championships, but it's worth remembering that, even though Ferrari has been Mercedes' closest challenger in recent seasons, Red Bull dominated the first half of the decade just gone, and scored the only non-Mercedes wins in 2014 and 2016, when Ferrari did not (although it did in 2015).

Red Bull has serious pedigree, which it will need to call upon if it is to beat the team that claimed the mantle of modern F1's best.

"We've got a very strong team — our driver line-up, the strength and depth that we have within the team," says Horner. "I think our engine partners are a key aspect as well, which has been the missing ingredient for the past few years. And that relationship with Honda we saw really grow during the course of last year, with the three victories we achieved, the [two] pole positions."

Horner highlights Red Bull's driver line-up as a key asset, but arguably this was its big weakness last year. After Daniel Ricciardo's shock departure to Renault for 2019, Pierre Gasly was swiftly plucked from Toro Rosso and promoted to the senior squad. But it was Gasly's gap to Verstappen that exposed Red Bull — most visibly at last season's Hungarian Grand Prix. Had Gasly been able to run with his team-mate, even if it was behind Hamilton in third on the road (and not a lapped sixth by the chequered flag), Mercedes would surely not have been able to make the switch to two stops that ultimately won it that race. After which, of course, Gasly was demoted back to Toro Rosso...

Albon then did enough to secure his seat in the Red Bull line-up for 2020 and, while he still has his own performance gap to Verstappen to close, it did appear as if he was making progress on that front in the latter races of 2019. What boost he might have enjoyed had he been able to secure a podium in Brazil before Hamilton's unfortunate intervention will never be known.

"The positive thing is that at least [regarding] the direction, we're happy," Albon says of his feeling with the RB16, which features an innovative multi-link lower wishbone on its front suspension. "The things we were working on during the end of last year and then coming through to this year, we seem to have just got the car in the right directions. I think it's a good base, especially coming into the start of the year. And, of course, upgrades will be coming through the year, especially during the early phase of it. So yeah, everything's quite positive.

"To be honest, I'm not looking around [at rival teams] too much. I think they're clearly hiding something. But we're focusing on our own programme and we'll see, come Melbourne, what's been going on."

Albon mentions early upgrades, but at least in theory Red Bull shouldn't need these to play catch-up as it did last year. This is because the rules from 2019 remained stable going into the new season, so the team can't again be tripped up by the reworked front wings.

Making a slow start has been Red Bull's second major weakness in recent years, but that *should* be less of a factor this time around. When asked if the lack of rule changes mean a chance for Red Bull to pick up early momentum — or at least preserve that with which it ended 2019 — Horner says: "That's always the »

"We always try to improve every single aspect and so far the car's been feeling good. Definitely an improvement"



REDBULL CONTENT POOL

Horner is careful not to underestimate rival Ferrari before first race

dangerous thing about pre-season testing, trying to draw too many conclusions. Ferrari looks a little understated at the last couple of test [days], but they started to wind it up, and I think it would be foolish to underestimate them going into Melbourne. Mercedes are the reigning six-time world champions, so they're very much the favourites. Their form looked strong [in testing]. And, of course, you want to have your issues in testing, not when you're racing [regarding Mercedes' reliability issues]. Winter testing can sometimes be a little deceptive, but I think it's going to be the same teams ultimately fighting at the sharp end of the grid this year."

There was a sense in testing that Red Bull — probably more than any other team — did not show its full hand. The team spent the first test piling on the laps, and finished the second with 780, the fifth highest tally of any team. But by completing its long running in the opening test, which is traditionally given to proving reliability, it masked its potential when the other teams went for performance runs over long and short distances in the second.

Red Bull wound up with the second-best time of testing overall, but Verstappen's 1m16.269s in the second test was set on the C4 rubber — the slightly harder compound of the soft tyres in Pirelli's testing range — which suggests he could have topped Bottas's 1m16.196s had Red Bull wished too. While testing times are largely meaningless, some sources have suggested that Red Bull's gap to Mercedes is pretty small.

"We always try to improve in every single aspect and I think, so far, the car's been feeling good," says Verstappen. "Definitely an improvement from last year but that's also what we wanted, so there were no real surprises there. And then for us it was just mainly doing laps, and not really looking too much at lap times in testing.

"Testing doesn't really give you anything in terms of real lap times because Melbourne is so different. I always prefer to wait and see what happens — and not only in Melbourne, because Melbourne can be a funny grand prix as well, where sometimes things can go really well for you or not. So, you need a few GPs to get a good read at it. I just don't really focus too much on testing. I think what is the most important for us is to test all different kinds of things on the car, so we know when we have oversteer or understeer, and what we have to change to make it faster or better. And just do a lot of laps to see that every part on the car is holding on well."

For all Red Bull appears to have going for it ahead of the 2020 season, it must be acknowledged that Mercedes goes into the new campaign as the heavy favourite once again. The six-time double world champion squad came away with the best time in testing and the highest number of laps completed, although it does have an engine-reliability issue to solve (see page 28).

If any squad is going to have a chance of dethroning Mercedes, it is going to need F1's leading team to slip up to a certain extent. Red Bull is adept at maximising its chances when the opportunities open up, but it will have to regularly force Mercedes into errors, as well as use all its might off-track to try to destabilise its mighty rival.

And then there is the driver line-up again. While there is no doubt that Albon made significant progress during his half-season in the RB15, a Verstappen-Albon combination appears to be weaker than the Hamilton-Bottas tandem that Mercedes knows how to wield so well.

But if, and at this stage of the year 'if' really is the key word, Red Bull can bring it all together, then F1 can look forward to an enticing fight for supremacy in 2020. A good thing for Red Bull, then, that the team effectively has two home races to look forward to, thanks to Verstappen, with Zandvoort joining the calendar in addition to the Orange Army's regular pilgrimage to the Red Bull Ring...



Red Bull's tactical nous means it is well placed to pressurise Mercedes

S BLOXHAM



Albon will be expected to provide support for Verstappen at least

SUTTON

Albon's proper full-season chance at Red Bull



RED BULL CONTENT POOL

This time a year ago, Alex Albon had just completed his first two tests in Formula 1 machinery. Now he's switched to a different team, managed to collect 92 points from his rookie campaign, and moved to Monaco. He's a full-on F1 driver now…

Albon was polite and understated throughout his junior single-seater career, assets he's not lost since all that F1 glamour has arrived. During his ultimately disappointing debut season in Formula 2 in 2017, he had another quality that it doesn't look like he's lost in F1.

"I want to be up there, fighting Mercedes, fighting Ferrari, fighting Max. That will come"

Ahead of 2017's Baku F2 round, Albon broke a collarbone in a mountain bike training accident. He missed the Azerbaijan event, but was back just two weeks later – in time for the Red Bull Ring races, where he collected second in the sprint race. This steely determination, yet not overt aggression, is again evident when Albon discusses the possibility of clashing with Max Verstappen in 2020.

"Obviously, I want to be up there, I want to be fighting Mercedes, fighting Ferrari, fighting Max, of course," he says. "At the minute I'm focusing on myself more than anything. That will come sooner hopefully than later but it's being with the car, having that winter with the team [that is important]. It's still quite a new relationship – it's been five months, six months – so we're still learning together.

"It's having that winter period to sit down with them, kind of really look at the areas where I wanted a bit more feedback on how I'm doing and things like that. And just with the team working together, with the simulator and everything, just having that time. Really, when you're in a race year, you're just always at the track and most of the time it's FP1 straight away. So, it was good to have that time away from the circuit where we could really kind of relax and speak about the goals and focuses for this year."

Albon feels Red Bull's RB16 is "definitely more usable, in terms of you can really feel the car". When it comes to shaping how the team will upgrade the car, he explains he and Verstappen offer "similar" feedback, which should not only assist Red Bull's engineers, but will reduce the chances of the pair disagreeing over development directions.

"It feels nicer to drive, it really does," Albon adds. "I think there were always areas last year where we felt the car was a little bit weak in some places. But, with Max and I, we have quite similar feedback comments. So, coming over the winter it was kind of clear what direction we wanted to go in. Coming already straight into the first test, the car definitely felt better. So, we've made a step forwards."

Albon does not have his F1 and Red Bull future secure beyond 2020 but, if he can start strongly and back up his team-mate, his chances of avoiding Pierre Gasly's fate in 2019 will be greatly reduced.



DUNBAR

Ferrari

Is Ferrari already in trouble?

Alex Kalinauckas

Testing has not looked good and there is already talk of switching focus to 2021, so what's really going on at the famous Italian squad?

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

Ferrari hoped that the SF1000 would be a Mercedes-beating machine. But many indications from winter testing suggest this may not be the case when the Formula 1 season gets under way. And although Ferrari insists it can turn things around over the course of a campaign, there are already questions about whether the team will soon choose to switch its focus to the 2021 rules revolution.

In 2019, Ferrari had a downforce deficit in slow corners compared to Mercedes and this, allied to various team and driver errors, ultimately cost it the title. To make up for this, Ferrari has designed its new car to be better in the twisty stuff, but that's come at a price.

"We can feel the car is better – I think [Barcelona's] sector three [which has several slow-speed turns] feels better," Sebastian Vettel said during last month's second pre-season test. "We also know that it does come with a trade. We still have some work to do; we are slower than we want down the straights because we are a bit draggy."

Although both Vettel and team-mate Charles Leclerc feel that the new Ferrari has indeed got more downforce than its predecessor, when viewed trackside at Barcelona it seemed they were struggling with understeer. Vettel, who is known to need a strong front end, later said he felt the Mercedes W11 looked more "at ease" on-track, which matches trackside observations, with Red Bull's RB16 also looking good in comparison.

But the biggest problem Ferrari faces in its downforce duel with Mercedes and Red Bull is that it looked to be the slowest of the big three in that crucial final sector. The segment includes the left-hand hairpin at Turn 10, as well as the tight chicane of Turns 14/15, and there Mercedes was on top on the final day of testing, when Valtteri Bottas set the second test's fastest time, by 0.285 seconds compared to the quickest Red Bull effort, and 0.371s to Ferrari's best.

The main strength of 2019's SF90 was its engine potency, which it rode to three wins (which should have been five when Leclerc's



Ferrari has lost its edge on the straights, and it's not too hot in the twisty bits either

Bahrain reliability heartbreak and the Russian Grand Prix implosion are taken into account). Without an engine packing considerable punch — enough to draw the attention of rivals and the FIA — there is surely no way Leclerc could have defied the Mercedes drivers in the way he did at Monza on his way to a thrilling victory.

But, judging by Ferrari's testing form, which team boss Mattia Binotto insists was "our true performance" and that his team was "not hiding", straightline speed has gone from being Ferrari's main strength to possibly its key weakness.

The squad was clocked running considerably slower than its customer teams during the first test, and during the second test a gap remained. It was initially assumed that Ferrari was running with its engine powered down for the first test, where reliability is key (it nevertheless suffered an engine failure on the final day). But the turn-up in power some had expected never seemed to arrive. Again, this could simply be Ferrari trying to protect its power unit, and the team was keen to point out that the draggier car was another reason why top-speed figures were down.

But then came the bombshell message from the FIA that it had reached a "settlement" with Ferrari regarding the make-up of its engine in 2019. The announcement alone, which enraged the seven non-Ferrari-powered teams, doesn't answer the questions regarding Ferrari's straightline speed deficit at Barcelona, and its timing — 12 minutes before the end of the second test — meant no explanation could be sought at that event.

Conceivably, Ferrari could still enter qualifying for 2020's first race, turn up the power to '11' and still come out on top in the power stakes. But Binotto, speaking with one day of testing remaining, said that the SF1000's engine was "not as strong" as in 2019.

Ferrari potentially not being in the hunt for the world title would seem to ease the pressure on the Leclerc-versus-Vettel narrative a touch. But even when Lewis Hamilton wrapping up last year's title seemed a formality, they still found a way to trip each other up — most memorably in the Brazilian GP.



Binotto has reaffirmed Ferrari's commitment to "first option" Vettel

SUTTON

After the off-season speculation grapevine linked Hamilton with the vacant Ferrari seat alongside Leclerc from 2021, Binotto again moved to reinforce his launch-event comments that Vettel is the team's "first option" for next season, this time adding: "It will very soon come to finish the discussion."

Seat changes for next year are already in the minds of drivers, team managers and silly-season aficionados, but the phrase "switching focus to 2021" is going get ever more familiar over coming months.

Although Binotto said "at the start of the season, we [will] certainly keep pushing on 2020 as much as we can", when asked about the impact of developing the SF1000 versus the team's efforts for next year, he added: "If I see after a few races, and we understand that the gap is too big, then maybe [switching to 2021 is] a consideration that we can take into account."

It would be very foolish to write off Ferrari before the season has properly begun, and this *could* indeed be an elaborate bluff after the team was stung by its testing-versus-Melbourne form in 2019. But there can be no doubt it's going into the 2020 campaign on the back foot, right when it needed to make an impact from the off.

"We still have some work to do; we are slower than we want down the straights because we are a bit draggy"

Mercedes

Hamilton's quest to match a record he won't look in the eye

Alex Kalinauckas

The six-time champion will level Michael Schumacher's seven titles if he takes the 2020 crown. But, to him, there are more important things to focus upon

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES





Hamilton will be looking to build an early lead in the 2020 championship

MAUGER

When Michael Schumacher secured his seventh Formula 1 World Championship crown at the 2004 Belgian Grand Prix, he set a record that seemed as if it would stand the test of time. Indeed, back then it seemed inevitable that he would go on to take more titles, before Fernando Alonso and (for 2005 only) the no-tyre-changes rule intervened.

Ahead of the 2020 season, Lewis Hamilton can do what once seemed so unlikely: match Schumacher's title haul.

The significant recent increase in races per season has helped Hamilton rapidly close in on Schumacher's all-time leading wins tally of 91, and the 2010 points shake-up has long since taken modern F1 racers clear of Schumacher's previous record of 1369 (from 2006 and his first retirement, which he took to 1566 after his Mercedes comeback), with Hamilton currently leading Sebastian Vettel by 3431 to 2985.

But for Hamilton, the prospect of matching the ultimate historic F1 milestone is "not something that I think about".

"I always say that numbers are not really a massive thing for me," he adds. "I plan to be here a little bit longer — so hopefully I get there. We shall see."

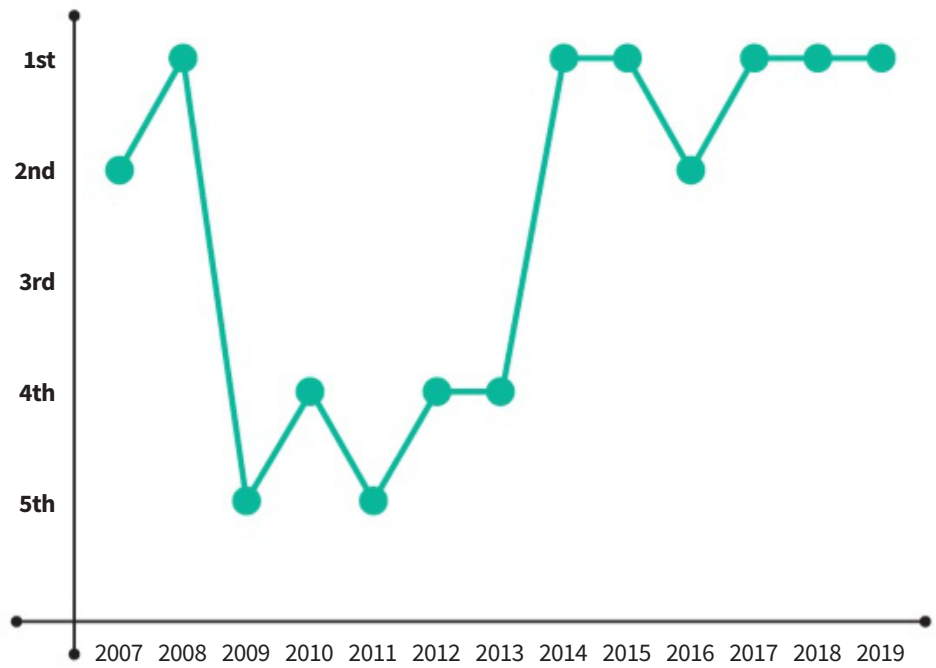
Not being focused on statistics or records is a mantra Hamilton has long held. For those on the outside, it would seem natural to have Schumacher's title record as a goal on the horizon. But in focusing on making impending history, it's entirely possible that the initial targets of race wins and the 2020 crown could be missed. It's not for nothing that sportspeople are doggedly fixated on the next race, the next match, the next opponent — it helps keep them grounded and centered on the immediate objectives that bring the bigger prizes. Focus is key.

It's slightly frustrating for any publications needing headlines, and is in a way slightly sad, that drivers can't revel in the same excited speculation about 'what ifs?' and upcoming momentous events during the time they live through them for fear of missing them altogether. But such an approach is entirely understandable.

For Hamilton, it has been an undeniably successful one since his move to Mercedes for 2013 and then the start of the team's domination of the V6-turbo-hybrid era. There's no sense in stopping that thinking now, no matter how interesting it would be to hear him really discuss the prospect of matching Schumacher.

Now that testing is out of the way, Hamilton's path to a seventh title — which would be his sixth in seven years and fourth in a row — is clear. If, as expected, Mercedes is again ahead of its competitors at the first race, he must start strongly.

Hamilton's championship position from his 13 F1 seasons



Much has been made of Fernando Alonso's comments that a slow start to the season is a "weak point" that Hamilton's rivals have failed to exploit. Hamilton certainly has an up-and-down record at Albert Park since 2014, with one win, four second places and a DNF, but that spark-plug-rubber-tube-splitting-induced retirement in 2014 is the only time he has failed to score in the opening race in that period. At the same time, his six-race wait for a first win of the season in 2016 coincided with his only defeat in Mercedes' dominant run, even if (un)healthy doses of reliability issues and mind games ultimately conspired to cost him against Nico Rosberg that season.

Valtteri Bottas managed to score an early hit against Hamilton in the season opener a year ago but, apart from his victory in Azerbaijan three races later, he failed to stop Hamilton's march to six wins from the first eight races (which should have been reduced by one thanks to Charles Leclerc's reliability-spoiled Bahrain brilliance). It appears that Bottas is not willing, or is unable, to destabilise Hamilton in the way Rosberg managed during their time as team-mates vying exclusively for the world title, and this will surely be a consideration for Mercedes again when it comes to deciding Bottas's place in its 2021 driver line-up. It's probably fair to say that Hamilton is also a more complete driver than he was in 2016, when he made several poor starts.

So, assuming Hamilton can again build an early advantage »



Hamilton says team is working hard to address engine-reliability issues that affected W11 in testing

against his team-mate and other rivals, then he just needs to redeploy the formula that took him to the brink of Schumacher's record at the end of last year: drive within himself when needing to, and devastate the opposition when the opportunities are there.

The question of which of Red Bull or Ferrari will offer the main opposition to Mercedes is open for debate after winter testing, but it seems as if the team in blue is set to start the year as the main threat. Here, Hamilton and Mercedes can draw on their advantage both when it comes to the strengths of the W11 (downforce, dual-axis steering innovation etc) and the possible weakness in the Red Bull driver line-up, which cost the team against Hamilton and Mercedes in Hungary last year. Pierre Gasly is no longer around, but Red Bull will need Alex Albon to be supplying full support to Max Verstappen from the off in 2020.

But all of this assumes that Hamilton's potentially historic season will be a smooth one. Mercedes may have taken the top spot in testing, but the six days at Barcelona revealed that the W11 has a possible reliability weakness — after two car-stopping engine issues at the works team, and customer squad Williams having to use three power units — that will be giving Mercedes cause for serious concern.

"Is it a concern? Yeah, for sure," says Hamilton. "Normally in the pre-season testing we have much more confidence in the reliability, so it has not been perfect. It is definitely not an easy or relaxed scenario for us, but I have every confidence in the guys back at the factory, that they're analysing and can do the best they can to try and make sure we start again on the right foot.

"It was a difficult winter last year, and I think it's been a difficult winter this year. Ultimately there was a period of time we've had with this V6 turbo where we were just gaining and eventually you get to the point of limited returns — how much more can you squeeze out of the V6 turbo? How much further can you go? We are kind of in that peak top-speed area now, where there is a km/h more or a km/h less you are going to gain for a lot of investment.

"But I fully believe in and trust in the guys to be methodical with the way they move forwards and the engine is actually very good. It's just again an improvement from last year. It's just not quite where we want it to be reliability-wise, but I am sure they are back at the factory now working hard to rectify whatever the issue is."

Whatever the outcome of Hamilton's 14th F1 campaign, he is clearly not looking outside the championship when it comes to his future. His contract with Mercedes is up at the end of this year, although he insists he's in no "particular rush" to address this as the two parties are "aligned" on their goals when it comes to talks.



Hamilton could equal Schumacher's record seven titles in 2020



"Barcelona revealed that the W11 has a possible reliability weakness that will be giving Mercedes cause for concern"

Formula E, where Mercedes has just entered a works squad, appears not to interest him for now, and leaving F1 ahead of the 2021 rules revolution seems an unlikely step. In fact, Hamilton is forthright on his views on what needs to change in the championship, which suggests he does not intend to go anywhere else any time soon.

"Racing is what needs to improve," he says when asked what he makes of F1 cars potentially being significantly slower in 2021 compared to the current designs, which are predicted to break lap records galore this season. "I think: 'reduce aero and give us better tyres'.

"That's a very important line there: we need better tyres. We've been talking for years and years about tyre degradation, thermal degradation, and we sat in the meeting room with Pirelli in Brazil and [they said], 'We've never heard of the thermal deg, this is the first time we hear about it!' So we're trying to communicate with them better. The target letter, I don't know who's written it this year but they obviously didn't do a good job for the 2020 tyres. But I hope for 2021 that we have a better target and one that they're able to meet or a manufacturer is able to meet."

Hamilton has proved that outside concerns do not distract from his performances on track — and indeed Mercedes giving him the freedom to enjoy his life away from F1 is credited as playing a major part in his success. So while he can't let any worries about the performance of the 2021 cars or his contract negotiations get in the way, history suggests these won't be too much of an issue.

Hamilton has the blueprint and momentum to take another title in 2020. Even if he won't acknowledge it, he stands on the brink of history with Schumacher's once-out-of-sight tally now firmly on the horizon. His methodical approach to building a winning season may seem somewhat relentless, but there will be plenty of time to savour his success once it is ultimately secured.

What Bottas needs to do



Valtteri Bottas's challenge for the 2020 Formula 1 season remains the same one he has faced since he joined the Mercedes squad three years ago: how to beat Lewis Hamilton in equal machinery?

At his first attempt in 2017 he finished a creditable third, given his late step up from Williams following Nico Rosberg's shock retirement. In 2018, he was pushed back to fifth in an underwhelming season, when Hamilton made the difference against Ferrari. But last year, Bottas was able to rejuvenate his fortunes to clinch second in the standings, even if Hamilton quickly overcame his early-race deficit to establish a commanding championship position by the summer break.

With Mercedes starting the new season as the favourite, Bottas must again field the same questions about his plan to defeat Hamilton. "If I want to reach my goal, which is the world title, then that means I need to beat my team-mate as well," he says. "For sure, that will be a high focus for me, but how to do it in the best way is to focus on myself".

After his most successful F1 season in 2019 – he also improved his best win haul from three in 2017 to four – Bottas feels he is "very developed from last year".

"I feel I'm able to progress since last year. The only matter is in the races, not testing, but I feel good"

"I had a good break and had some time to take a step back again from F1, and that way, process everything from last year," he adds. "And I also started quite early all the work with the engineers, generally for preparing for this season, and based on my feeling in the car, in testing so far, I feel I'm again able to make progress since last year. The only matter is in the races, not testing, but I feel good, in a good mindset, and just waiting for the season. I've been waiting for quite some time for the season to start."

Like everyone else looking to unseat Hamilton, Bottas needs to make an early impact. Winning in Melbourne for the second consecutive year would simply be the best of starts.



Racing Point v McLaren

The battle for the midfield

Stuart Codling

Racing Point's Mercedes lookalike was the surprise of testing, but were its drivers holding back? And will the improving McLaren team be able to compete?

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

"We wanted to make a big splash," said Racing Point team principal Otmar Szafnauer ahead of the Silverstone-based squad's 'livery launch' by a mountain lake in Mondsee, Austria, home of new title sponsor BWT. Well, Racing Point certainly made a splash — not so much with the lakeside photos, which depicted last year's car in this one's colours, but certainly when its new RP20 pulled out of the garage in the first pre-season test looking for all the world like a clone of the 2019 Mercedes W10. And it's fair to say that the ripples are still being felt as the other runners in Formula 1's tightly contested midfield cry foul.

But while it's relatively easy to 'clone' a successful F1 car — a substantial portion of the photographers in the paddock earn their crust through 'spying' on behalf of teams — it's far more challenging to understand what made that car so competitive, from the overall concept down to the granular details. In its previous existence as Force India, Racing Point earned a reputation for making scant resources go a long way. Until its financial circumstances became terminally chronic in mid-2018 (prompting the takeover by Lawrence Stroll's consortium), it was regularly at the head of the midfield group, finishing fifth in the constructors' championship in 2015, then fourth in the following two seasons. It achieved that by spending what development monies it had wisely, iterating through known and well-understood concepts, and racing cleverly to maximise every opportunity on the track. So while adopting an entirely new car philosophy, even a successful one, isn't necessarily a short cut to success, Racing Point has form in optimising the return from its assets.

It's this that has got rivals rattled, not least McLaren, which achieved the coveted fourth spot last year against concerted opposition. Carlos Sainz Jr believes Racing Point has been masking its true pace throughout testing and that it and AlphaTauri are the most threatening to McLaren's position.

"The team [McLaren] doesn't have a clear picture of how far we are from the top three," he says. "But we will see immediately in FP1, FP2 [in Melbourne], when we will run the same fuel loads or more or less.

"On the midfield, the Racing Point — they've been very quick the whole of the two weeks. They hit the track on the first day and they did a [1m]17.3s. And since then they haven't improved much because I don't think they want to — but that 17.3s on the first day, I think it impressed all of us and they're going to be quick, very quick. I think the Racing Point and even the AlphaTauri, I would put them as probably the most dangerous guys to beat."

After almost a decade of mediocrity and self-denial, along with boardroom-level turbulence that led to the ousting of guiding light Ron Dennis, McLaren has regained competitive focus on and off-track over the past 18 months. But it's still partially in





McLaren's Sainz and new tech boss James Key field questions at testing

MAIN PICS: MAUGER SUTTON

Racing Point* and McLaren in the turbo-hybrid era



* Known as Force India prior to the 2018 Belgian Grand Prix. ** If the points the team scored prior to the purchase by the consortium led by Lawrence Stroll had been added to the points scored after, it would have finished fifth in the constructors' table.

transition: last year's MCL34 chassis benefited from the steadying presence of former chief engineer Pat Fry acting as a temporary stand-in, while newly appointed technical director James Key observed a period of gardening leave, having left Toro Rosso. While the MCL34 represented a huge competitive step over its predecessors, the new MCL35 had a new man at the conceptual tiller.

Key has resisted the kind of wholesale change adopted by Racing Point, though, describing the MCL34 as "very much the father of much of the concept of the 35". Much of this year's McLaren is iterative, especially at the front end, while the aggressively minimal packaging of the cooling apertures, sidepods and the bodywork around the gearbox is simply on-trend. "There's been a lot of work on rear suspension too," said Key at the MCL35's launch, "so I suppose from the cockpit backwards there's a very different approach to what we've had before."

In Barcelona during the two pre-season tests, the MCL35 looked well-sorted and free of vices while Autosport's staffers were watching trackside. Analysing lap times set during testing is fraught with peril given the vagaries of fuel loads, different tyre compounds and track conditions, and whether any of the drivers are actually going for it. When Lando Norris bolted on the sort of tyres he would use in the Spanish Grand Prix and attempted a race simulation in the second test, he spent most of it bottled up behind Antonio Giovinazzi's Alfa Romeo, rendering the lap times »



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MCL35 evolution of 2019 car with major changes "from cockpit backwards"

TEE

of little relevance. Still, the gut feel of Autosport personnel present — including former F1 driver Karun Chandhok — was that the Renault-powered MCL35 is strong enough to be perhaps the fifth-fastest car on present form.

Based on our trackside impressions and a less-impeded race simulation by Sergio Perez on representative rubber — ie the C2 and C3, which will be used at the Spanish Grand Prix in May — Autosport believes the RP20 is probably the fourth-fastest car. In terms of single-lap pace, both Racing Point drivers were clearly holding back, and this has not sat well with rivals. There is talk of one or more teams lodging a protest against the car in Melbourne, though Racing Point technical director Andrew Green is adamant that his team has done nothing wrong.

"I don't know what they've got to complain about," he says. "What we've done is completely legal. And if other teams haven't taken the route we've taken, that's their decision. They had the opportunity to do exactly what we did, but they elected not to. It's something that we've been wanting to do for a very long time but haven't had the budget to do. This was a natural thing for us to do. Absolutely 100%."



Andrew Green hopes RP20 will pick up points from start of season

DUNBAR

"Both Racing Point drivers were clearly holding back in testing, and this has not sat well with rivals"

Green's rationale for 'cloning' the Mercedes is to accomplish something Racing Point — in its present and previous guises — has traditionally been unable to manage for lack of budget: to run at the sharp end of the midfield from the very beginning of the season. Last year's car was fundamentally compromised at the conceptual stage by development going on hold when the previous owners ran out of money. The Mercedes-powered RP20's raison d'etre is to bag as many points as possible from the off and require minimal in-season development, enabling Racing Point to focus on the new 2021 rule set.

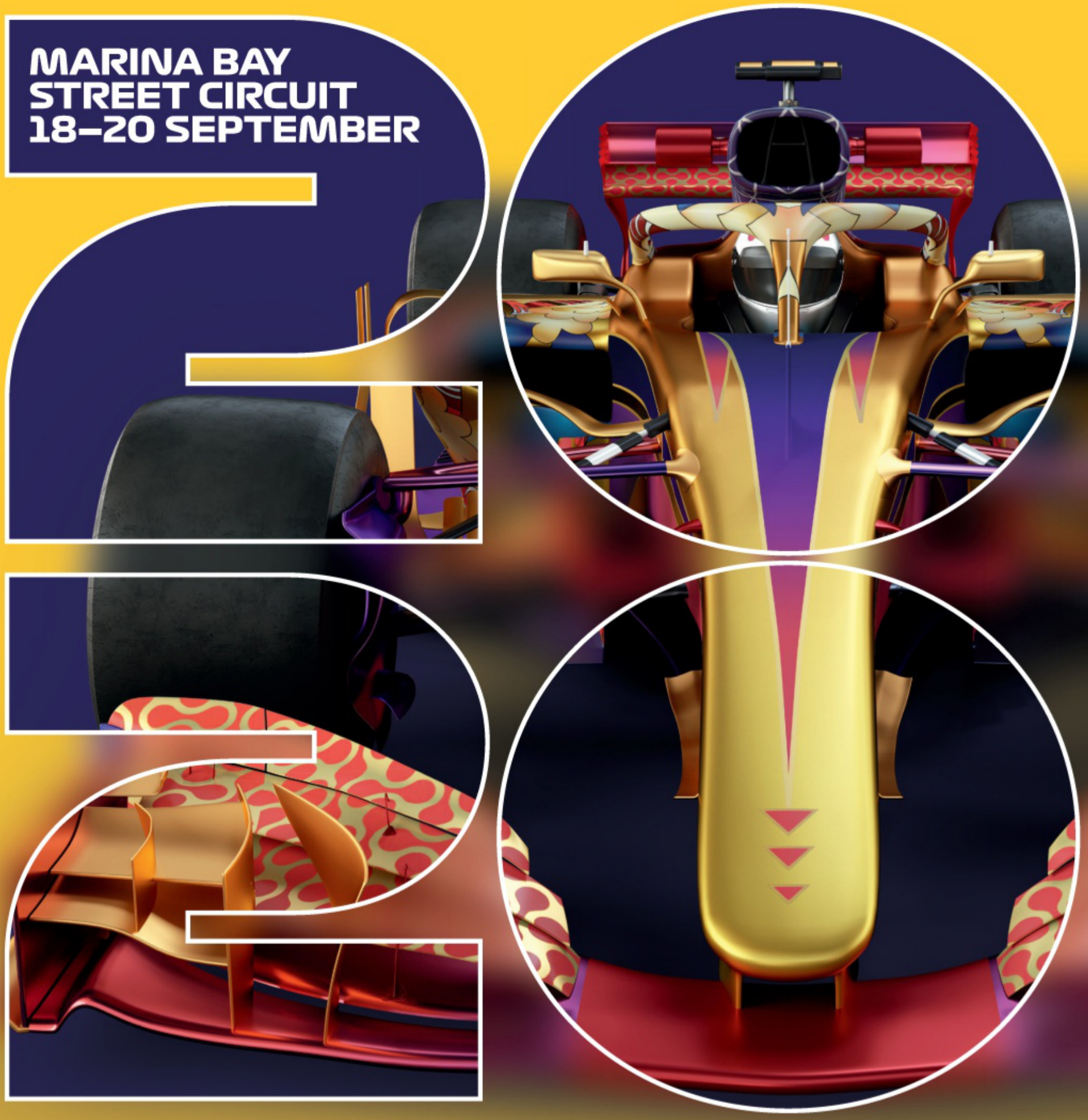
"It was always the strategy to come out of the blocks fast," Green says, "because we knew the rest of the year was going to be very challenging for the next year's regulation. We couldn't do a slow start and look to upgrade the car through the season as we did last year. That's not going to be possible. So it was really important we gave ourselves a good foundation to go racing. There will be a couple of upgrades to this car and then we are on to the next year.

"We couldn't go this route earlier. Our hands were tied financially and had been for many years — we had to carry over a huge amount of components from one year to the next. And it wasn't possible to do a reset like we've done."

Under Lawrence Stroll's ownership, Racing Point is evolving into a team with ambitions beyond heading the midfield — and if it achieves that this year it will just be a means to an end. Lawrence is looking forwards, not back...

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The rest of the best of the rest



McLaren's Sainz marked AlphaTauri as a possible threat in midfield

HONE

Assuming Racing Point and McLaren head the midfield battle behind the leading triumvirate of Mercedes, Red Bull and Ferrari, how to sort the pecking order of the rest?

The supreme caginess exhibited by all teams at the pre-season Barcelona tests makes it challenging to decode: over the three days of week two, just half a second separated the fastest laps of the top seven drivers.

If we just look at the notional midfielders and consider Antonio Giovinazzi's tardy 1m19.670s in the Alfa Romeo as an outlier, 1.3s separates the fastest from the slowest – and they weren't all set on the same tyre compound. In many cases, the gaps were narrow enough for fuel weights of 10-20kg to make the difference.

On outright lap time Renault was third fastest in the second week of testing, thanks to a Daniel Ricciardo qualifying simulation on C5 tyres on the final day. But the C5 – Pirelli's softest – wouldn't otherwise be used in Spain and has a tendency to degrade over just one 'push' lap at Barcelona unless carefully prepared, so test times

"AlphaTauri looked more benign out on track, with not quite as much understeer"

set on it can barely be considered representative. On long runs, Renault's average pace was decent but, viewed trackside, the drivers looked like they were battling understeer on the sharper corners.

AlphaTauri headline times were slower than Renault's but the AT01 looked more benign than the RS20 out on track, demonstrating understeer but not quite in the same quantities. On the face of it, these two teams are equally matched in terms of pace, but McLaren's Carlos Sainz singled out the AlphaTauri as a potential threat.

Also laying down similar ballpark lap times to the rest of the midfield, the Alfa Romeo C39 looked very understeery at the beginning of the second test. The team appeared to be able to dial some of that out but the car remained a handful at times – Kimi Raikkonen spun on the penultimate day.

The Haas VF-20 looked the unfriendliest of the midfield cars, although it was still capable of setting respectable lap times. Both Kevin Magnussen and Romain Grosjean had spins over the course of the two tests; on track, the car looked like it was struggling for balance, and both drivers seldom hit the same line from one lap to the next. Part of that can be accounted for by the team running varying set-ups to learn as much as it could about how such changes affect the car's behaviour.

"We tried many different things, different aero paths and different settings, so we haven't really optimised for the track," said Grosjean. "So I'm not too worried.

"We're trying much more varied set-ups and various options on the car than we did last year. My biggest focus is how we get the car to feel good, to make our systems to drive well, and to have as many set-up options as possible for when we get to a track and we've got issues."

Williams clocked up the second most laps during the second Barcelona test and George Russell set the 10th fastest time, which was a more encouraging performance than last year's troubled pre-season. But rookie Nicolas Latifi lost track time to a Mercedes engine problem and described himself as not fully ready for the season. And Russell said: "Realistically we are still the slowest car."



TEE

Williams seemed slowest in testing, Latifi losing time to engine problem



MOV/RENAULT F1 TEAM

Ricciardo v Ocon

F1 2020's most intriguing team-mate battle

Alex Kalinauckas

Renault's new driver pairing could prove explosive, but with a potential top-three seat at stake the drivers are intent on playing it cool

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

In the congested Formula 1 midfield, no team can afford to have its drivers throw away points. This means no underperforming in qualifying, no needless race-offs, and absolutely no intra-squad clashes on-track.

Renault heads into the 2020 F1 season with a target to "fight for P4" in the constructors' championship, per team principal Cyril Abiteboul at its launch event in Paris last month. It will be attempting to get there thanks to a rejigged driver line-up, with Esteban Ocon replacing Nico Hulkenberg alongside Daniel Ricciardo, creating possibly the spiciest line-up on the grid.

At Ferrari and Haas, Charles Leclerc and Sebastian Vettel, and Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen, come into the new season with the consequences of team-mate wars fresh in their minds. At Renault, with an ambitious target set, it is a factor worth considering before the campaign gets under way. After all, Ocon, who spent 2019 on the sidelines as Mercedes' reserve driver following Lawrence Stroll's takeover of what was Force India, has quite a history in this regard.

In 2017, Ocon and then-team-mate Sergio Perez were banned from racing each other after clashes in Azerbaijan and Belgium, a move that was enforced again a year later after Perez ran Ocon into the wall and out of the race in Singapore. Then there's also the explosive incident with Max Verstappen at the 2018 Brazilian Grand Prix, which cost the Red Bull driver the win when they touched as Ocon attempted to unlap himself.

In Ricciardo, Renault has a proven race winner, who has


Fourth place in Italian GP was the peak of Ricciardo's maiden season with Renault

PORTLOCK

"Both drivers will be aware that at this stage there is the opportunity to move up to one of the big three teams"

shown time and again that he's not afraid to make a bold move. He's a popular figure and a high-profile character never far from the limelight. He showed well against Verstappen during their time as team-mates at Red Bull, but the tension was often clear.

As well as achieving Renault's aims, both drivers also have their own agendas to settle in 2020. Ricciardo's deal with the team runs out at the end of this season and, while Ocon is under contract until the end of 2021, he retains his links with Mercedes, which will continue to manage his career. Both drivers will be aware that at this stage there is the opportunity to move up to one of the big three teams, with only Verstappen and Leclerc currently tied to long-term deals at Red Bull and Ferrari respectively.

While a year out of racing is never ideal for any driver — especially an up-and-coming one — Ocon at least got the chance to learn from the best at Mercedes, and says he arrives at Renault "a lot stronger than I was" at the end of 2018. "[I have] a lot more knowledge on the technical side," he adds, "but also on the other aspects of the organisation, the way they see things in different conditions, and the way they behave in any situation. Now, I have an eye on all of that, which is completely different than even if I was driving [last year]."

Ocon is also clear that "what happened in Force India is not something I want to redo again", and he understands that the kind of atmosphere that clearly pervaded between him and Perez will not benefit Renault's chances to progress — and by extension his own. "The atmosphere is a lot better between me and Daniel than it was with Checo," explains the 23-year-old Frenchman. "So I think if we can keep working like that — even though it's going to be »

The other potential rifts


SUTTON

The dynamics of the midfield driver line-ups will provide intriguing subplots to Formula 1 in 2020.

At Alfa Romeo, Kimi Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi are in much the same situation as they ended 2019. Raikkonen continues in F1 as he still enjoys racing towards the end of his career, while Giovinazzi is still out to show what he can do at the highest level.

Pierre Gasly and Daniil Kvyat seem to be rejuvenated and settled at the rebranded AlphaTauri (formerly Toro Rosso) squad, but both remain at the whims of Red Bull and will need to continue to impress Helmut Marko, Christian Horner and Franz Tost in 2020.

McLaren ended 2019 as the 'Class B' winner and the bond between Carlos Sainz Jr and Lando Norris was one of the joys of last season. The team will hope the positivity between its drivers endures, with one eye on returning to the big time in 2021.

Racing Point is owned by Lance Stroll's father Lawrence, but Sergio Perez has been the team's lead driver in the points since 2015, and it seems unlikely that this will change in 2020. But with the Mercedes-like RP20 looking a hit in testing, the atmosphere may change if greater points are at stake.

"The Mercedes-like RP20 looks a hit in testing, so the atmosphere may change with more points at stake"

At Williams, George Russell will surely be looking to be even more of a leader in his second season – he isn't afraid to tell teams what he thinks – with Nicholas Latifi learning the ropes in his rookie year. But you never know how things will go if the pressure builds up…

Given they spent much of last summer seemingly unable to avoid each other, it will be interesting to see how Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen go about racing each other when Haas needs to recover its form and position in the pack.


Norris and Sainz enjoy cordial bond

TEE



different on track – it's going be a lot better. Of course, it can always happen on the start or something but, you know, in the race like it happened [with Perez] it was not acceptable."

From Ricciardo's side, he naturally views Ocon's clashes with Perez and Verstappen as totally separate issues, solely between the parties involved, and he's also clear that he's not letting the past cloud his judgement when it comes to forging a relationship with a new team-mate. "I can't take that into my relationship with him," says the 30-year-old Australian. "I need to build something with him and I have every intention of building something positive. For sure, on Sundays we're going to race it out and maybe we'll bang wheels at some point, but it's our best intention to try to get this team in a good place before they start losing energy focused on managing us. They need to manage a better race car [first]."

It's easy and understandable for drivers to want to play down potential flashpoints ahead of a new campaign – it's the correct and mature thing to do, after all – but at the same time there's always a delicious element of needling going on beneath the surface.

"I'm prepared for competition, but I'm not prepared for fun and games," says Ricciardo. "If down the track fun and games appear then I'll deal with that at the time. But I'm certainly coming in with an open mind and positivity, as opposed to, 'Oh shit when, when's it going to blow up?' I'm not thinking like that."

Renault cannot afford to let its team-mates go to war, even if Abiteboul insists "that's not something we've had to worry too much about for the time being". The 2019 season turned out to be an underwhelming one for the manufacturer, which had previously been bullish about its intentions to close the gap to the 'Class A' squads of Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull. It opted to play down expectations at its season launch and knows it will have to prevail in another huge fight to reclaim fourth. All its focus needs to be

"Ocon needs 2020 to be the year he reminds the F1 world how good he can be, that he is the 'anti-Verstappen'"

on beating McLaren and the rest of 'Class B', with pre-season testing suggesting that Racing Point is leading the way in the midfield heading to the first race.

So Abiteboul will have to trust Ocon and Ricciardo to produce when it matters and work together, which is his approach going into the campaign. "Frankly, I think that they've got the experience, they've got the level of professionalism," he says. "I like to believe also that they have the peace of mind to deal with this sort of situation. But if I need to step in, I will step in."

Ricciardo needs 2020 to be the season when he builds on the foundations he established with Renault last year. He has a fine reputation, but needs to shine fully if he is to make a move to another top team for 2021, or if he sees enough in Renault to commit himself there for the future.

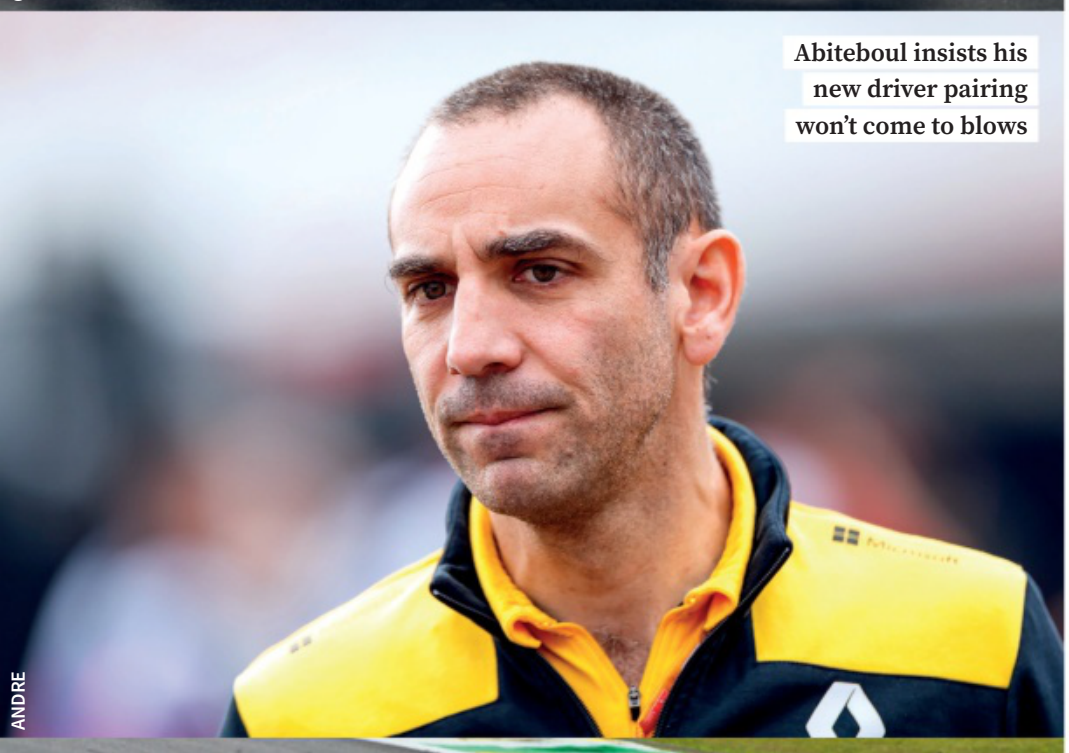
Ocon needs 2020 to be the year he reminds the F1 world how good he can be, that he is the 'anti-Verstappen'. He has time on his side, but can't afford to take too long getting back up to speed. At Renault he has a home for now and, while the door at Mercedes has closed for the time being, a successful returning season will go some way to making sure it isn't shut forever.

And Renault *needs* 2020 to be the year it firmly makes progress back towards the front, with big opportunities possibly coming with the 2021 rules reset. Keeping its drivers working together towards that goal will be important, even if that could take the flavour out of an attractive storyline for the year ahead.



Perez (left) and Ocon had a series of high-profile incidents during 2017

GORIA



Abiteboul insists his new driver pairing won't come to blows

ANDRE



Ocon wiped Verstappen out of Brazil 2018 win when he tried to unlap himself

ETHERINGTON



Pre-season testing suggests Renault is off the 'Class B' pace

MOY/RENAULT F1 TEAM

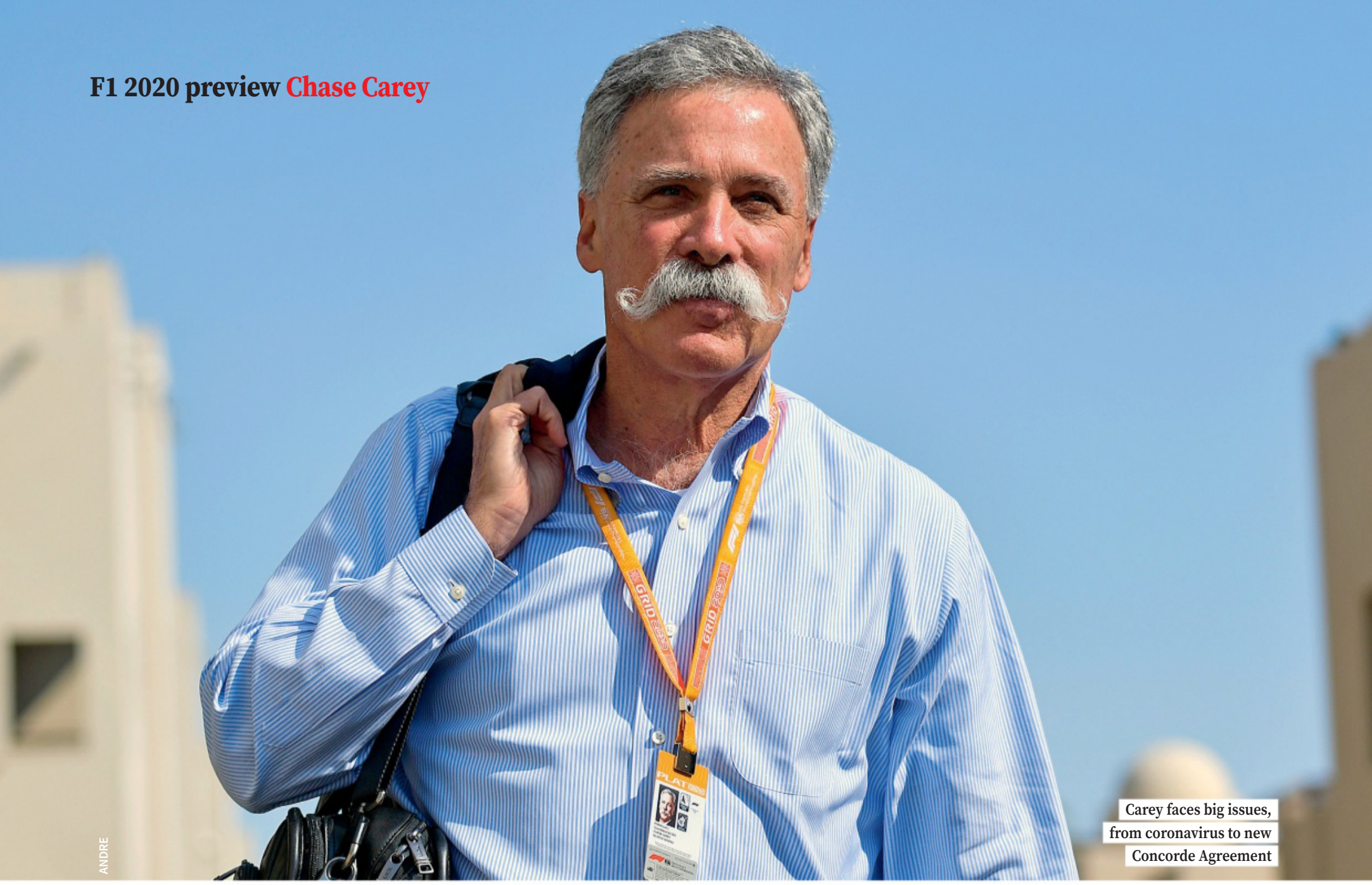
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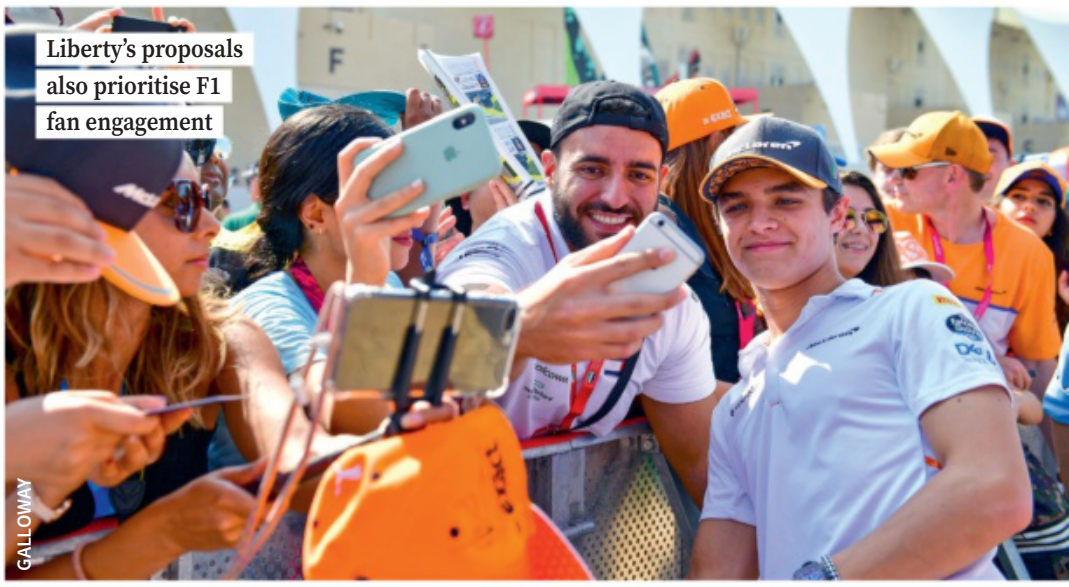
ANDRE

Carey faces big issues, from coronavirus to new Concorde Agreement



MAUGER

It could be tough to find a new 2020 slot for the Chinese GP



GALLOWAY

Liberty's proposals also prioritise F1 fan engagement



FORMULA 1

Can Carey get all the teams signed up and not compromise the new rules for 2021?

Chase Carey

Looking at the bigger picture

Luke Smith

Formula 1 is facing many challenges as we head into the 2020 season, so we caught up with the man in charge to see what comes next

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

Over three years have passed since Liberty Media completed its acquisition of Formula 1 and Bernie Ecclestone's reign ended. But his successor, Chase Carey, continues to face new challenges. When he sits down with Autosport for one of his first exclusive interviews of the season, he is juggling an unprecedented situation for F1: the impact of a health epidemic — coronavirus — on the world championship.

"You're in uncharted territory," Carey says of the virus spread that has already resulted in the cancellation of the 19 April slot for the Chinese Grand Prix. "It's tough to get too far down the road on the situation where everyone is dealing with it real-time. I think we are certainly aware of the issue. The health and safety of our people is priority one."

While doubts still linger over other races on the 2020 calendar, Carey admits that finding a new date for China will be "challenging": "We've started to wrestle with contingencies, but I think once you're into the year with dates locked, it's a pretty full schedule." The health crisis is a matter bigger than sport, but one F1 is trying to handle as best it can while minimising disruption.

Carey has been looking beyond 2020 for some time now. Sitting down with all the teams to pin down the 2021 regulations proved to be a baptism of fire for F1's CEO and chairman in F1's political vagaries. "It's certainly had its unique elements!" Carey says with a smile when asked about the challenge of dealing with the tendency for self-interest within F1. "It's a sport with a rich history, a cast of characters — dynamics that in many ways are part of what makes it special. But there were also things that the sport needed to get on top of that it hasn't."

Greater cost control and an improved on-track spectacle were two big target areas for F1's rulemakers, both addressed in the regulations that were finalised last October. The next challenge for Carey is to get the commercial terms set under the new Concorde Agreement, due before the end of the year, while considering the varying interests of teams through the grid. "We've got agreements on the table, and we're comfortable," says Carey. "We've put together a proposal that is fair to everybody. I think the sport will be better for the fans, for the teams, and better for everybody."

The 10 teams looking to put pen to paper on the new commercial terms are eager for greater clarity on what F1's future will look like with an ever-changing landscape in the automotive industry. Amid suggestions of a future switch to electric power, Carey makes it clear that he does not see it as the definitive answer. Instead, he leans on the continued development of hybrid technology, as well as reaffirming F1's commitment to new fuel technologies.

"Electric has become a little bit of a silver bullet," he says. "I think it will be part of the answer, but I think the answer is going to be a number of things. A combustion engine with synthetic fuels, other types of technology and energy recapture will be the most important elements to the solution."

Liberty's commitment to new power solutions contrasts greatly with Ecclestone's premiership, with the former CEO being a long-standing critic of the V6 hybrid formula. "The years preceding us mostly was all people crapping on it," says Carey, "as opposed to saying, 'This is the most efficient engine, it's an incredible piece of technology, and really a step for the sport.'"

F1's environmental considerations reach beyond its power units, as reflected in its extensive sustainability plan announced last October, with the goal of being carbon neutral by 2030. "It is an important message and an important statement," adds Carey. "It's looking at every element of the business, and trying to identify how do we address that. All of these things have a lot of moving parts, but it's about going through and looking at our business end to end, and evaluate where there are steps that we need to take to achieve our sustainability goals."

"Bernie saying, 'I wouldn't buy a ticket', some of that stuff... Usually in life, if you have issues, you fix them"

But some challenges facing F1 remain the same no matter who's in charge, such as new races. Grands prix in Vietnam and the Netherlands lifted the calendar (initially at least) to 22, but the hope for Liberty is that this number will rise to 24 or 25 in the future.

Carey remains coy when asked about plans for a new race in Saudi Arabia, as early as 2023, only saying F1 is "engaged in discussions in every continent that has people living on it right now" — but that, he says, is a great sign of interest in F1, "the interest that wasn't being tapped into because the sport wasn't doing things that you need it to do," Carey adds. "Bernie saying, 'I wouldn't buy a ticket', some of that stuff... it's complaining, not fixing. People complained about problems, but they weren't doing anything about it. Usually in life, if you've got issues, you fix them."

The new boss has made clear that he is not the same as the old boss, both in actions and words. Expect that approach to remain as more challenges are thrown Carey's way through 2020 and beyond.

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Autosport's technical expert and ex-Formula 1 engineer is your guide to the runners and riders of 2020

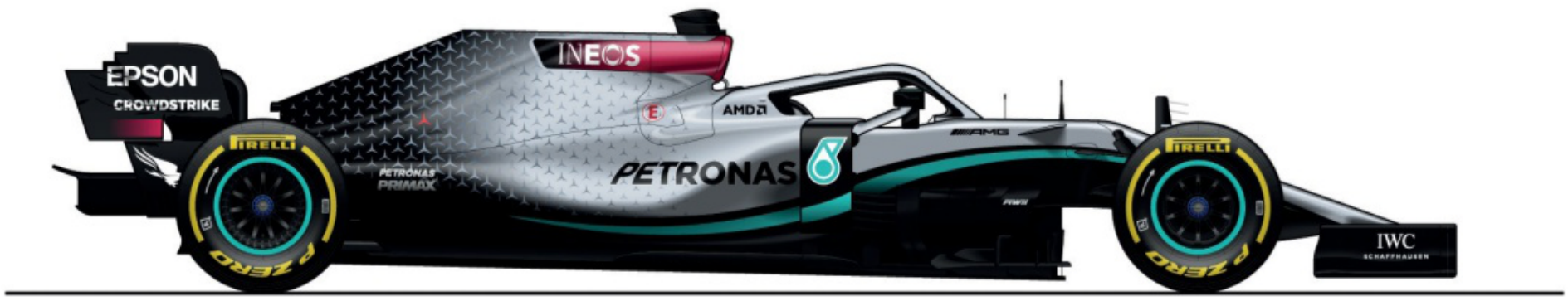
ILLUSTRATIONS **CAMILLE DEBASTIANI**



SUTTON

Mercedes

CAR MERCEDES W11 ENGINE MERCEDES M11



STARTS 210 | FIRST GP FRANCE 1954 | WINS 102 | POLES 111 | FASTEST LAPS 75 | 2019 1ST

There's no doubt that Mercedes is still the team to beat. During the second Barcelona test, neither Lewis Hamilton nor Valtteri Bottas was able to beat Bottas's time of 1m15.732s from the last day of the first test, but that time was set when arguably conditions were at their best. It has been an impressive if controversial display.

The long runs certainly put everyone else in the shade, the Silver Arrows able to run consistently in the 1m19s on the medium C3 tyre. Even on two sets of the harder C2, Bottas put in a race distance and then continued running, performing constant-speed tests on the main straight and around Turn 3, gathering important aero information.

The W11 is apparently festooned with all manner of innovations, according to technical director James Allison, the most obvious being the dual-axis steering system. Whether the team goes on to race this idea remains to be seen, as it has raised questions as to its legality. There are certainly advantages on circuits that have long straights, the system also allowing the tyres to be worked harder in twisty infield sections.

It's interesting to see how Mercedes keeps the front of the car flat when cornering by connecting the two rockers with a small link, but they react together in a straight line. That's unlike other teams, such as Red Bull, which have an obvious third damper to limit the amount of front-end movement on the straight – Mercedes must use another way to achieve this.

Hamilton has alluded to the fact that Mercedes still has a few engine problems to sort out and this was borne out by Williams having two engine changes over the two tests.

Given its record and the resources at hand, I'm sure Mercedes will still be at the head of the field, but will it be the year that Bottas finally shines?







#44 LEWIS HAMILTON		#77 VALTTERI BOTTAS
1ST	2019 POSITION	2ND
35	AGE	30
250	STARTS	139
AUSTRALIA 2007	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2013
84 WINS	BEST FINISH	7 WINS
88 POLES	BEST QUALIFYING	11 POLES
47	FASTEST LAPS	13

LEWIS HAMILTON

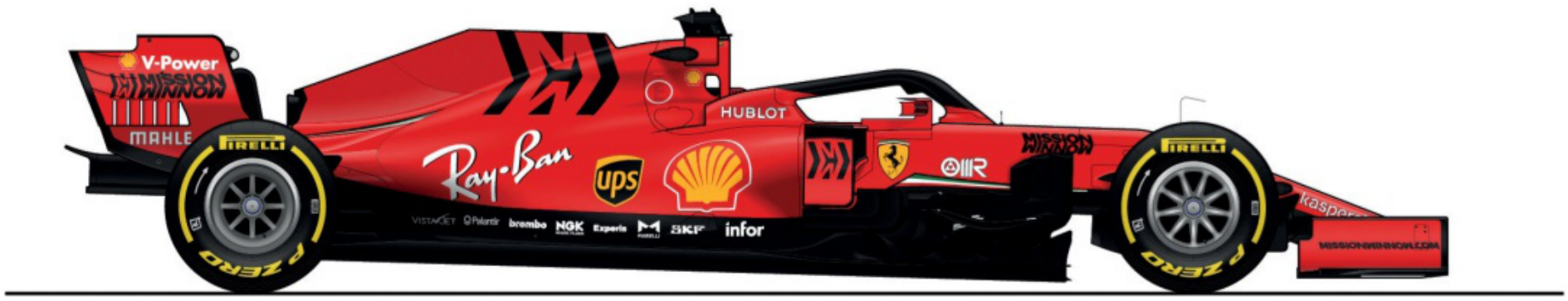
If only the art of trophy-engraving were as simple as working on a keyboard, the FIA would just have to press 'command C' and 'command V' on this man's name every year. Will the F1 gong go to Hamilton for a Schumacher-equalling seventh time? You'd have to say it's more likely than not, especially as the new W11 has shown blistering form in testing – far better than the W10 did this time last year. And then it won the first eight races…

VALTTERI BOTTAS

After a thoroughly lame end to 2018, he was skating on thin ice going into last year, with Esteban Ocon waiting in the wings ready to step into the Mercedes line-up for 2020. But from a superb Melbourne win onwards, he made huge strides forward to collect three further wins on his way to his maiden runner-up championship finish in F1. That's not a great stat when you're in the best car, but not so bad when Hamilton's your team-mate.

Ferrari

CAR FERRARI SF1000 ENGINE FERRARI 065



STARTS 990 | FIRST GP MONACO 1950 | WINS 238 | POLES 228 | FASTEST LAPS 254 | 2019 2ND

We know something is inhibiting the team other than having to run a legal fuel system, but to blame the lack of straightline speed on a draggy car sounds ridiculous given all the data and windtunnel information Ferrari has. Being 11mph slower on the main Barcelona straight compared to Alfa Romeo, which uses the same engine, shows something is drastically wrong.

While Sebastian Vettel was able to wring out a sub-1m17s time, albeit on the soft C5 tyres, the team was still shy of Mercedes' pace.

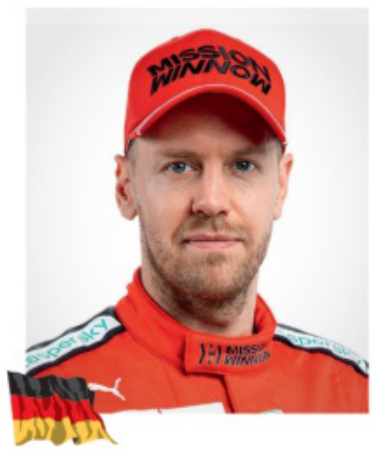
I'm surprised the car looks so simple compared to the Mercedes, with the exception of the complex array of elements in front of the sidepods. Perhaps this is where the problems lie (like Haas), in that they are creating a low-pressure area and not feeding the 'Coke-bottle' area and diffuser efficiently. The engine cover is tightly pulled in around the engine and cooling parts, so flow to the rear wing should not present a problem.

Charles Leclerc finished the last day of testing a solid fourth and a 1m16.360s lap must have been encouraging for the team, but we're used to seeing the red cars always around the top three places. But Ferrari did manage the highest number of laps during the second test, which shows the reliability is there.

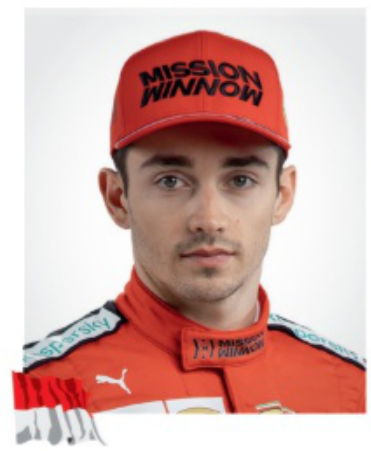
I saw Ferrari trying an alternative front pushrod articulated bracket (the part attached to the upright), either because of a failure or a slightly different geometry. It's been reported that, although slow-speed performance has been improved, there was still an element of understeer and the badly grained tyres at times were testament to this.

I suspect Ferrari will be somewhat deflated after testing. It's not where it expected to be, and there'll be furious analysis going on at Maranello to figure out how to rescue the situation.





#5 SEBASTIAN VETTEL



#16 CHARLES LECLERC

5TH	2019 POSITION	4TH
32	AGE	22
240	STARTS	42
USA 2007	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2018
53 WINS	BEST FINISH	2 WINS
57 POLES	BEST QUALIFYING	7 POLES
38	FASTEST LAPS	4

SEBASTIAN VETTEL

The four-time champion was overshadowed by his team-mate in 2019. Encouragingly, this will have rammed down the throats of the Maranello suits how much their stupendously conservative driver choices of previous years cost them. So, if this is another year of driving slightly slower than Leclerc and binning it every so often, he *should* get the flick. But if he can maintain his late-2019 improvement (barring Brazil), he should be reprieved.

CHARLES LECLERC

Damn that winter testing malarkey. Everyone thought this superstarlet was going to lead Ferrari into a 2020 title battle. Then, at Barcelona, the SF1000 looked not so good. And by the way, was its predecessor running legally anyway? *If* Ferrari really is behind, this will provide a further test for Leclerc: one of pulling a team up and lifting morale. He's already passed the previous one: damaging the morale of the veteran in the other car.

Red Bull

CAR RED BULL RB16 ENGINE HONDA RA620H



STARTS 286 | FIRST GP AUSTRALIA 2005 | WINS 62 | POLES 62 | FASTEST LAPS 65 | 2019 3RD

Red Bull is probably the darkest horse in the field – a team that didn't show its true pace.

Again, benefiting from a strong Honda engine package, Red Bull racked up an impressive number of laps over the six days in Spain and, although at the start the car looked rather skittish in both drivers' hands, by the end Max Verstappen was able to set impressive long-run times.

The front suspension has been tweaked to include a one-piece front lower wishbone forward leg (as seen below), maybe due to a unique double front bulkhead design, leading to less space for normal attachments but also, because the rear leg of the said wishbone is separate, allowing two smaller bearings to take the load at the upright.

Team members were seen measuring the overall track width with a gauge a couple of times during the first test, suggesting that it is on the limit.

The way the steering arm has been positioned, it looks as though Red Bull has taken inspiration from a Citroen 2CV in that on lock it winds on more castor, which in turn with the articulated pushrod lowers that front corner, therefore putting the front wing closer to the ground.

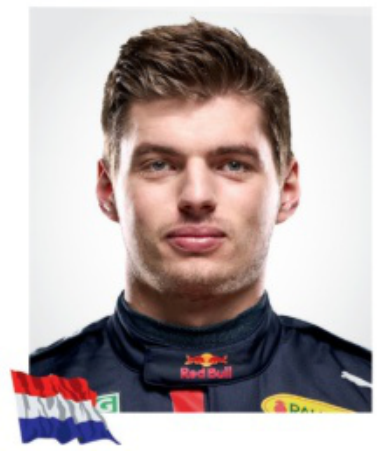
Benefiting from continuity within the team should help Alex Albon back up Verstappen and put the team closer to Mercedes. He looked more at ease with the car once they had sorted out his seat, which seemed to not fit him correctly at the start of testing.

The team concentrated more on longer runs, getting the RB16 to work on the harder C2 and C3 tyres rather than going for glory on the C5. But, using the C4 tyre, Verstappen ended the last day in second place, just 0.073 seconds behind Valtteri Bottas, who was on the softer C5.





#23 ALEXANDER ALBON



#33 MAX VERSTAPPEN

8TH	2019 POSITION	3RD
23	AGE	22
21	STARTS	102
AUSTRALIA 2019	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2015
4TH	BEST FINISH	8 WINS
5TH	BEST QUALIFYING	2 POLES
0	FASTEST LAPS	7

ALEXANDER ALBON

The amiable Anglo-Thai's slowburner of a junior career flowered into a cracking Formula 2 campaign in 2018, and he proved worthy of his surprise shot at F1 with Toro Rosso in 2019. So much so that he replaced Pierre Gasly at Red Bull mid-season. It's unusual for Albon to go into a winter knowing exactly what he's doing, so the stability should help him – which he needs, as it's imperative he gets closer to Max Verstappen's pace.

MAX VERSTAPPEN

Has been doing a great job of winning more races than the competitiveness of his engine should allow, and destroying the reputations of drivers who have earned their place in F1 under the FIA superlicence rules his very existence precipitated (and under which he would not have qualified to be on the grid). Red Bull's first year with Honda gave him three wins and third in the points. Testing suggests he could make a big step on from that.

McLaren

CAR McLAREN MCL35 ENGINE RENAULT E-TECH 20



STARTS 863 | FIRST GP MONACO 1966 | WINS 182 | POLES 155 | FASTEST LAPS 154 | 2019 4TH

Both drivers have reported that the MCL35 is a lot more forgiving than the 2019 car and lap times suggest they can be consistent on long runs. Carlos Sainz Jr seems more comfortable with the car than Lando Norris, but maybe it's because he was on home turf (or actually asphalt).

The car looks like an evolution of the MCL34 and, although McLaren finished a good fourth in last year's constructors' championship, I don't think the team has made big enough strides to better that this year.

The front suspension takes its lead from the likes of Mercedes and Racing Point, with the top wishbone pick-up point on the front upright hung out on an extreme proboscis-like bracket. This leaves the top wishbone quite flat and will induce more camber change on bump.

McLaren too has adopted the articulated front pushrod designed to lower the front corner on extreme lock.

A new front-wing assembly was tried (McLaren personnel attempted to emulate the Ferrari human shield but failed!). There didn't appear to be a huge difference in the make-up of the flaps but, given the secrecy around its arrival, it might have been just stronger bracketry to stop the flexing.

Once again, long-run progress was not startling, but maybe different set-ups were being tried, which masks the car's true pace.

McLaren's history suggests it should be up at the front fighting for victories, but the reality of the past few seasons means that's still a little way off. The team's improvement under Andreas Seidl in 2019 was impressive and the hope must surely be to nibble away at the gap to the Big Three, while holding off the factory charge of Renault.





#4 LANDO NORRIS



#55 CARLOS SAINZ JR

11TH	2019 POSITION	6TH
20	AGE	25
21	STARTS	102
AUSTRALIA 2019	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2015
6TH	BEST FINISH	3RD
5TH	BEST QUALIFYING	5TH
0	FASTEST LAPS	0

LANDO NORRIS

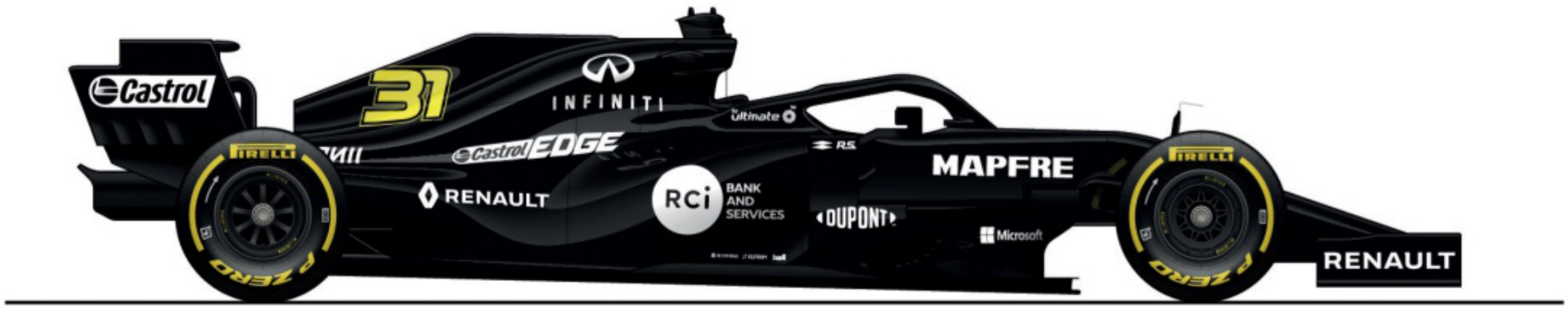
The first Ginetta Junior graduate to make it onto the F1 grid came with a load of hype that had barely abated throughout his rise to the top – and usually with plenty of justification. His race performances in 2019 were a little outshone by his team-mate, but he had plenty of pace in qualifying – again, a reflection of his junior career, where his one-lap stats were incredible. Happy-go-lucky and determined, he's one half of a terrific line-up.

CARLOS SAINZ JR

From his time at Toro Rosso, we thought he wasn't quite as exciting as Max Verstappen; from his period at Renault, we thought he was on a par with piece-of-midfield-furniture Nico Hulkenberg. How wrong we were. His move to McLaren showed he's a star, as the team improved hugely under Andreas Seidl and with a pair of motivated young drivers who focused on driving rather than criticising their equipment.

Renault

CAR RENAULT RS20 ENGINE RENAULT E-TECH 20



STARTS 383 | FIRST GP BRITAIN 1977 | WINS 35 | POLES 51 | FASTEST LAPS 31 | 2019 5TH

It looks as though Renault has actually caught up with its customer team – McLaren – and certainly Daniel Ricciardo was looking a lot happier towards the end of Barcelona testing, when he was able to post a time only 0.08 seconds slower than Valtteri Bottas in the Mercedes. This was backed up by new team-mate Esteban Ocon, who was another tenth and a half further back.

A lot of work has gone into the bargeboard area, with some strange looking teeth-shaped elements in an effort to turn the air past the sidepods and into the 'Coke-bottle' area and diffuser. A different, tighter engine cover was tried but required some last-minute fitting repairs.

The front wing flaps show a slightly different approach, with fatter outboard shapes on the top element and longer chord on the third as the team searches for more front downforce. The outer part of the top element is also the only front-wing adjustment, which explains its shape.

Unlike other teams, it doesn't look as though Renault is blowing the air through the front wheel, although it did look as though they were taking pressure readings around the brake drum.

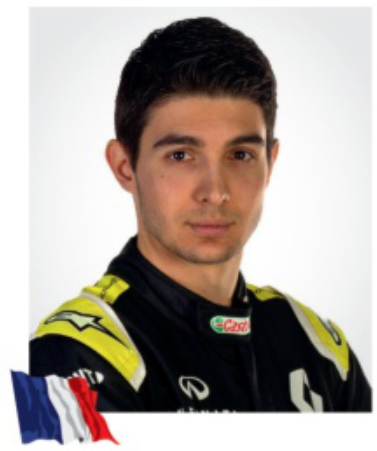
Testing of the RS20 got off to a slow start and the team appeared to be battling with getting the rear rideheight sorted, but by the last two days the car was able to run more consistently, with Ricciardo undertaking longer runs before bolting on the soft rubber.

Last season has to be considered something of a disappointment, and Renault will be aiming to get closer to the front in 2020, as well as jump back ahead of its customer team. It would be good to see the squad nearer the front of the pack, as we know what Ricciardo is capable of with a decent package under him.





#3 DANIEL RICCIARDO



#31 ESTEBAN OCON

9TH	2019 POSITION	MERCEDES PIT
30	AGE	23
171	STARTS	50
BRITAIN 2011	FIRST GP	BELGIUM 2016
7 WINS	BEST FINISH	5TH
3 POLES	BEST QUALIFYING	3RD
13	FASTEST LAPS	0

DANIEL RICCIARDO

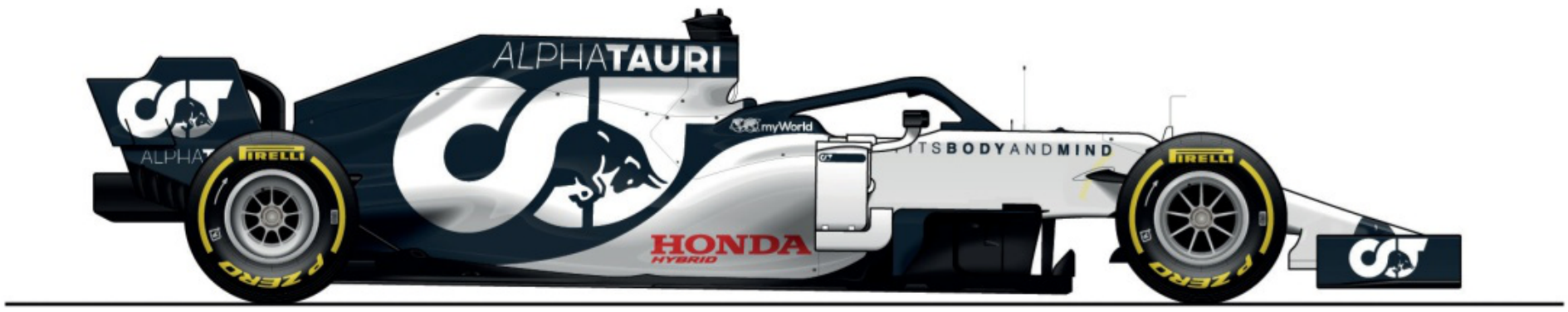
The Australian's bank balance will have nicely improved last year, and the form he carried over from Red Bull was enough to pretty much finish off the career of Nico Hulkenberg. Remains a force in F1, good enough to carry the 2019 Renault to three top-six grid positions. Will the RS20 be better? It looked quick enough in testing, but that's inconclusive. And he also now has the distraction of an ambitious Esteban Ocon in the sister car.

ESTEBAN OCON

This is the big chance for a driver given a full-time seat at the team with which he enjoyed some FP1 outings in 2016. He should never have been off the grid anyway in 2019 and, after a year at Mercedes as reserve, he needs to prove he deserves a slot in one of the top teams, and that means beating his team-mate. His speed should be up to it; racecraft-wise he is good, if not as razor-sharp as some of the masters – and they include Ricciardo.

AlphaTauri

CAR ALPHATAURI AT01 ENGINE HONDA RA620H



STARTS 268 | FIRST GP BAHRAIN 2006 (AS TORO ROSSO) | WINS 1 | POLES 1 | FASTEST LAPS 1 | 2019 6TH

The latest team with a new name (until Racing Point becomes Aston Martin), the old Toro Rosso squad is perhaps trying to distance itself from big brother Red Bull and looks to be doing a pretty good job. Armed with a repackaged Honda engine, this team could spring a few surprises this year so long as it keeps Daniil Kvyat and Pierre Gasly under control.

AlphaTauri obviously still has access to certain components from Red Bull and seems to have packaged them well, particularly around the rear suspension and a tightly sculptured engine cover that feeds air nicely to the rear wing.

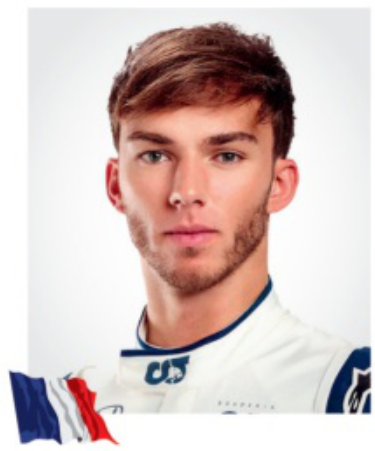
The front wing and nose certainly look to be one of the most interesting areas, with wide, spread pylons helping to stabilise the front wing assembly. The undercut of the nose helps direct the air onto a flat plane feeding directly onto the T-tray, not using fences as most other teams have done. The flap arrangement does differ from Red Bull's in that the team has opted to keep the inboard section more heavily loaded, thereby channelling more air through to the bargeboard section.

Looking at the front suspension, it is similar to the Red Bull in that AlphaTauri has kept the top wishbone pick-up on the upright low, which means that the wishbone itself rises towards the chassis, giving less camber change on bump. The third damper is exactly the same and the 'junior' team has also adopted the multi-link top wishbone.

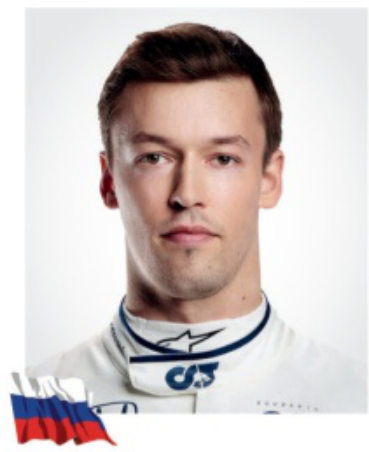
There were interesting battles going on between Gasly and Alex Albon in the Red Bull during the tests, with long-run pace similar, and honours were pretty much even.

Toro Rosso was a fine sixth in the constructors' championship last year and there are signs that AlphaTauri can fight for a similar spot in 2020.





#10 PIERRE GASLY



#26 DANIIL KVYAT

7TH	2019 POSITION	13TH
24	AGE	25
47	STARTS	93
MALAYSIA 2017	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2014
2ND	BEST FINISH	2ND
4TH	BEST QUALIFYING	4TH
2	FASTEST LAPS	1

PIERRE GASLY

After a woeful half-season with Red Bull, he refound his mojo with a return to the Toro Rosso squad, where his F1 career had started. Second place in Brazil was a superb result and, ironically, allowed him to pip Alex Albon to seventh in the points. He's staying on at the team, which under its new name of AlphaTauri will try to become the first woolly jumper to win a GP since Gerhard Berger's Benetton was victorious at Hockenheim in 1997.

DANIIL KVYAT

How do you motivate yourself when you've already been rejected as not good enough for your employer's top team? That's a question that applies to both Kvyat and Gasly. At the first try, Kvyat proved he couldn't, and was ousted from Toro Rosso at the end of 2017 by… Gasly. After a year on Ferrari's testing books, Kvyat was a driver reborn on his TR return in 2019. It's a handy line-up and Kvyat, like his team-mate, is capable of good results.

Racing Point

CAR RACING POINT RP20 ENGINE MERCEDES M11



STARTS 30 | FIRST GP BELGIUM 2018 | BEST FINISH 5TH | BEST QUALIFYING 3RD | FASTEST LAPS 0 | 2019 7TH

Racing Point is another team to have raised the pulses of journalists and team principals due to the unveiling of what appears to be a very close relation of the Mercedes W10, only in pink. Granted, the team uses the same windtunnel as Mercedes and is maybe privy to some of the data, but there's no doubt that the car is rapid. Sergio Perez says the RP20 is the best racing car he's ever driven, and Lance Stroll impressed at times, putting in some fast tours on the C4 tyre.

There are subtle differences between the 2019 Mercedes and 2020 Racing Point around the front wing flaps and bargeboards, which you would expect. But, as technical director Andy Green has said, why shouldn't they follow Mercedes' lead? He seems somewhat surprised that other teams haven't done the same.

The car looks planted in the quick corners and the change of direction in the final part of the Barcelona circuit is impressive.

The front suspension looks strikingly like the Mercedes', with the front top wishbone attachment to the upright and the articulated pushrod, but there the similarities end, according to Green, with all internal workings being in-house designs.

The rear bodywork is squeezed in tightly to the engine and ancillaries in a similar way to the Mercedes' and has the same shape of shark fin. The rear wing main element looks to have quite an aggressive nose-up attitude, suggesting the team is looking for more performance.

I'm not sure Racing Point has quite made the step to worry the top teams, judging by the long-run times, but they were focusing on shorter outings in search of the best set-up. The RP19 was only the ninth fastest car on average last year, but the 'pink Mercedes' looks like it'll be further up the pecking order.





#11 SERGIO PEREZ



#18 LANCE STROLL

10TH	2019 POSITION	15TH
30	AGE	21
176	STARTS	62
AUSTRALIA 2011	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2017
2ND	BEST FINISH	3RD
4TH	BEST QUALIFYING	2ND
4	FASTEST LAPS	0

SERGIO PEREZ

A consummate professional who bashes his head against a midfield glass ceiling year after year, and now holds a tally of 74 finishes from seventh to 10th in a grand prix. Another season of much the same seemed to be beckoning, only for the so-called 'pink Mercedes' to show a great turn of speed in testing. So, could the Mexican add to his total of eight podium finishes? There's probably a fairly good chance of that.

LANCE STROLL

Apart from a cluster of eye-opening results, F1 has been a much tougher deal for a driver who had a better F3 record than contemporaries Leclerc, Russell, Albon, Giovinazzi etc. Last year was the first full season since his dad took ownership of the team formerly known as Force India, and Stroll's points tally was less than half that of Perez. Will a step forward in competitiveness for Racing Point make him a more regular points scorer?

Alfa Romeo

CAR ALFA ROMEO C39 ENGINE FERRARI 065



STARTS 131 | FIRST GP BRITAIN 1950 | WINS 10 | POLES 12 | FASTEST LAPS 14 | 2019 8TH

This team has produced an efficient package, backed up by the C39's prodigious DRS-assisted straightline speed of 208mph on the second day of the first test that also helped Kimi Raikkonen top the timesheets using the relatively soft C4 tyres. Raikkonen managed a couple of spins during his testing stints, but on the whole looked happy with his steed. He did, however, cause a red flag at the end of the day when he stopped just before Turn 9, maybe out of fuel?

It was good to see the team using its reserve driver, Robert Kubica, at the tests. He ended up fastest driver on the first day of the second test using the softest C5 tyre, showing again that the car is working well on a one-lap basis.

The C39 looks like a good progression from last year, while employing certain elements around the rear – notably the main exhaust and wastegate tailpipes – as used by the other Ferrari-powered teams.

The biggest departure is the treatment of the top engine inlet that has a triangular roll hoop element immediately in front of a large air intake.

The front wing adjustment seems to include moving three of the outer portions of the flap elements together, suggesting they provide a greater range, therefore the adjustment will be quite fine.

But, as with most of the mid-pack teams, Alfa Romeo is unable to get the consistency on long runs, so may be able to qualify well but could slip back during races. Antonio Giovinazzi in particular seemed to be struggling with long-run pace, with a particular drop-off after 15 laps.

Alfa Romeo started 2019 quite strongly, then fell back a little in the final part of the season, so it will be interesting to see how it can develop the C39 during the campaign.





#7 KIMI RAIKKONEN



#99 ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

12TH	2019 POSITION	17TH
40	AGE	26
312	STARTS	23
AUSTRALIA 2001	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2017
21 WINS	BEST FINISH	5TH
18 POLES	BEST QUALIFYING	7TH
46	FASTEST LAPS	0

KIMI RAIKKONEN

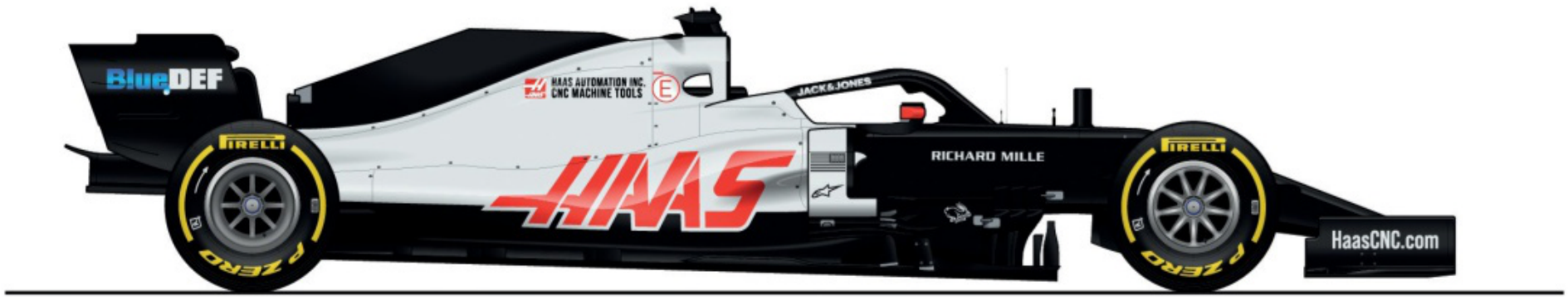
The veteran only needs to hang around for one more year to line up on the 2021 grid boasting that he made his F1 debut half his lifetime ago. As things stand, his 2001 Australian GP start came when Lando Norris was just 15 months old. He truly found his late-career metier last season back with his old Sauber mates at the team now known as Alfa Romeo. He's still good enough to lead the attack with what should be a solid midfield car.

ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

One of the nicest guys to ever sit in an F1 car, this swashbuckling Italian had an occasionally promising if perhaps unfulfilling maiden full season at the peak of the sport. He fared respectably in the head-to-head qualifying battle with Raikkonen, but his results were found wanting. A season in which he draws level with – or betters – his team-mate is vital for the long-term future of this driver who arrived at the top as a Ferrari protege.

Haas

CAR HAAS VF-20 ENGINE FERRARI 065



STARTS 83 | FIRST GP AUSTRALIA 2016 | BEST FINISH 4TH | BEST QUALIFYING 5TH | FASTEST LAPS 2 | 2019 9TH

One team trying to change an *annus horribilis* into an *annus mirabilis* is Haas, and certainly on the first day of testing, in the hands of Kevin Magnussen, the VF-20 looked a better package than its predecessor. But it does seem that Haas has a problem getting the C3 tyre to work over a long run compared to the harder C2. This seems to have been the team's Achilles' heel last year and I'm not sure it is on top of the problem. Haas was one of the only teams not to break into the 1m16s during Barcelona testing.

A couple of unfortunate breakages and a clutch issue hampered running during the second test, contributing to Haas racking up the fewest laps in total, Magnussen in particular having the least amount of running time.

Having said all this, the car didn't look too bad through the final twisty section of the lap (if you ignore the number of times Romain Grosjean locked up at Turn 10), so it leaves me to believe that it's the quick corners where they are suffering. This is down to lack of downforce, which then compounds the theory that Haas can't switch the tyres on sufficiently.

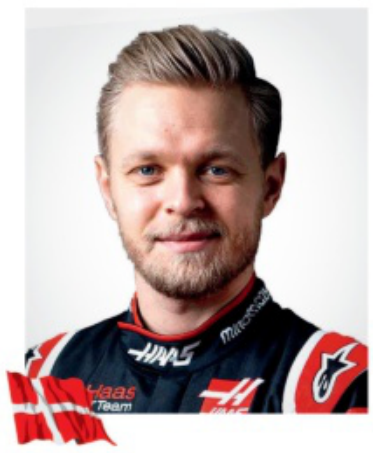
The architecture of the car shows that the team has concentrated a lot in channelling the air through the bargeboard area, but there's such an array of elements that maybe this has not achieved what they were looking for once the air reaches the 'Coke-bottle' area and the diffuser. Also, the changes to the rear wing and the V-shaped cut-outs in particular are contributing to drag rather than speeding the air and producing the downforce needed. Experimenting with different T-wings shows Haas is trying to help the rear-wing elements.

I don't expect to see Haas any further up the grid, which is a pity as it seems the future of the team may lie in its performances this year.





#8 ROMAIN GROSJEAN



#20 KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

18TH	2019 POSITION	16TH
33	AGE	27
164	STARTS	102
EUROPE 2009	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2014
2ND	BEST FINISH	2ND
2ND	BEST QUALIFYING	4TH
1	FASTEST LAPS	2

ROMAIN GROSJEAN

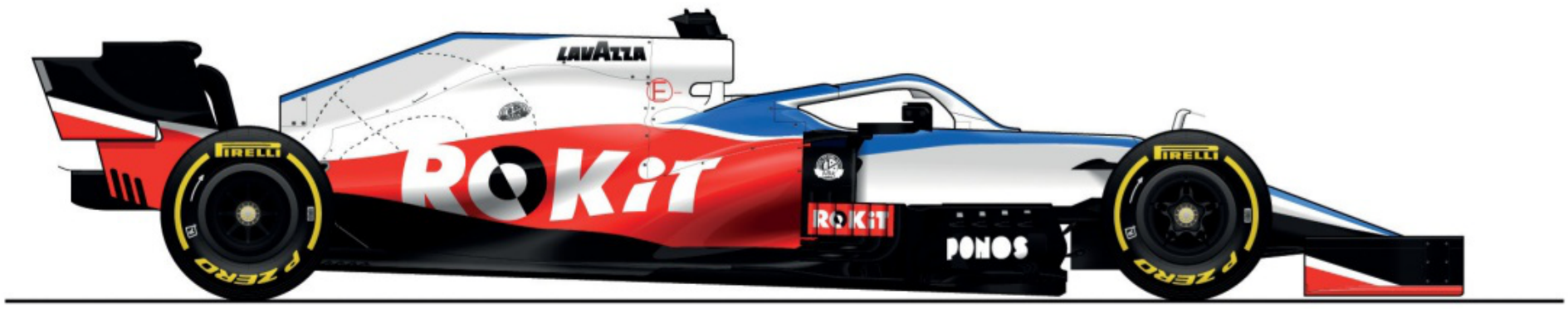
Occasionally brilliant, and often maddening, this maverick shows no signs of mellowing. If there was a championship for locking brakes, or turning in to other drivers when they're fully alongside you, he'd be unbeatable. Then again, if he got into a frontrunning car worthy of his talent, maybe he'd be able to cut down on the desperado stuff. The new Haas looks unlikely to be that, so stay tuned for more peaks and troughs in 2020.

KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Was ninth in the points in 2018, but now he's entering his fourth season with Haas it has to be said his career is stagnating a bit. What a shame that is for a driver who finished second on his debut with McLaren in the 2014 Australian GP, and has not finished on the podium in the intervening 101 starts. Good enough to match the superfast Grosjean, will probably take his now customary late-race, new-tyred Singapore fastest lap.

Williams

CAR WILLIAMS FW43 ENGINE MERCEDES M11



STARTS 727 | FIRST GP SPAIN 1977 | WINS 114 | POLES 128 | FASTEST LAPS 133 | 2019 10TH

The legendary team has endured a couple of uncompetitive seasons, not helped by disruptive personnel changes, but there are signs that the tide may be beginning to turn. Just to make a point, Williams put the first car onto the circuit on day one of testing with George Russell driving.

The FW43 is maybe what the team should have produced last year because, compared to its competitors, it looks a little behind on design, in particular the shape of the nose and front-wing layout. Having said this, there was a slightly different front flap array, more like the Mercedes', tried during the second test.

The team's track time was hampered by engine problems, but on the circuit the car doesn't look as though it gives the drivers much confidence in the quick corners. A lot of work was dedicated to set-up changes that helped in the braking area such as at Barcelona's Turn 10, but the changes of direction are not crisp.

Hopefully Williams will have learned a lot about the wake off the front wing and wheels, having run a huge array of sensors during the test. But it's how you control that wake and use it with the bargeboards to then feed the diffuser and rear wing – and at the moment that seems to be Williams's weak point.

The inclusion of Nicholas Latifi, who will give Russell a run for his money, is a shrewd move. Although a rookie, he should be able to help with development. Members of the team have reported that the atmosphere within the squad is already lighter with his inclusion.

Williams's long-run pace is still a little behind the others, although it may start to worry teams such as Haas and Alfa Romeo during races.





#6 NICHOLAS LATIFI



#63 GEORGE RUSSELL

2ND IN F2	2019 POSITION	20TH
24	AGE	22
0	STARTS	21
N/A	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2019
N/A	BEST FINISH	11TH
N/A	BEST QUALIFYING	14TH
N/A	FASTEST LAPS	0

NICHOLAS LATIFI

Hasn't topped a single-seater qualifying session since he prevailed over a dismally small British F3 grid in 2013, and he's certainly not going to do that in a Williams. But Canada's 'other' fabulously wealthy F1 driver is no mean racer, and will certainly not disgrace himself. He has a deft touch that makes him strong in fast corners, and his work rate is regarded highly. Don't make the mistake of writing off the 2019 F2 runner-up.

GEORGE RUSSELL

He's super-fast, intelligent, articulate and was good enough to beat the much-vaunted Lando Norris to the 2018 F2 crown. So it's an indictment of modern F1 that such a talent's greatest motivation has been trying to beat his team-mate to 19th on the grid out of the 20-car field. He had a perfect qualifying score against Kubica last year, and without any random happenings you'd predict a similar pattern against Latifi.

Technical analysis

The tech war of F1 2020

Jake Boxall-Legge, Giorgio Piola and Tim Wright

There's no change to the chasing of an advantage through the most intricate of design details, even while some choose to imitate and others innovate

Because 2020 is the final year of the current technical rule set, you could be forgiven for thinking that innovation would be at a premium. But that proved to be incorrect during pre-season testing, and the intricacies on the fleet of 2020 Formula 1 cars have proved that attention hasn't drifted to next season's new regulations just yet.

Of course, there have been instances of teams drawing inspiration from the leading squads — some more than others — but pre-season testing was rocked by Mercedes' engineers somewhat reinventing the wheel. See, F1 designers *can* innovate within a tightly regulated environment...

Sure, Mercedes' dual-axis steering (DAS, for acronym fans) seemed to be one of those seminal moments of technical wizardry, but there's also a number of common trends emerging in 2020's F1 designs. Let's take a look at the teams' technical developments for the new year.

Mercedes

When Lewis Hamilton first eased the steering wheel of his **Mercedes** W11 towards him while barrelling down the straight of the Barcelona circuit, it caused something of a hullabaloo among the paddock. Perhaps Mercedes had no idea how much of a commotion the internally named DAS would cause — but it's most likely that it did. Technical chief James Allison called it only "the tip of an iceberg", and you wonder just how colossal the iceberg really is; in truth, it's one that has sunk every single competitor over the past six seasons.

Mercedes has been metronomic in its development in those seasons too, and has continued its 'marginal gains' approach to continuously add performance to its cars. The W11 didn't receive the sudden and dramatic overhaul between pre-season testing weeks that its forebear had — if anything, there are still multiple visual cues from the W10, but with a few key tweaks to maintain plenty of room for development.

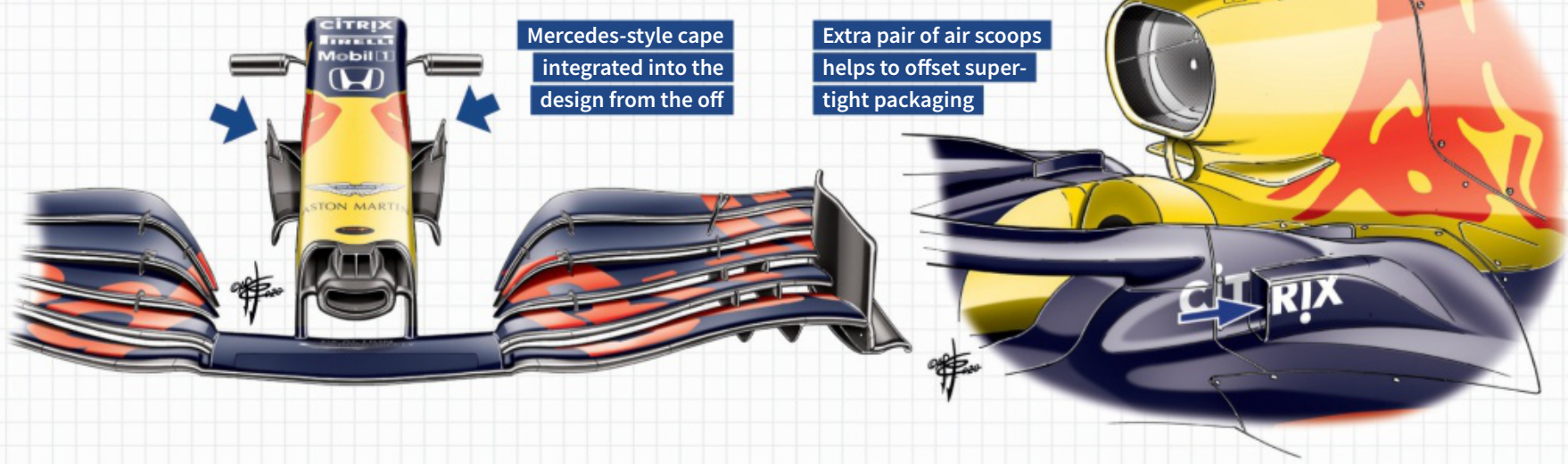
At its launch, there were two main changes to the formula. First, the inclusion of the letterbox sidepod inlets, made possible by moving the side impact structure downwards; and second, an overhauled bargeboard design. By changing the inlets, Mercedes has been able to close up the sidepods — the standard inlets are more susceptible to receiving some kind of blockage from the suspension components, which reduces the mass flow rate of air passing through. The powertrain has a certain cooling demand, which can be achieved through either opening the inlet further, or reducing the blockage. The latter should also offer the W11 a little more leeway in its packaging.



Mercedes says DAS is just the tip of a tech iceberg

But the DAS is the biggest talking point. It's an excellent idea; increasing the toe out in the corners gives the car more grip, while bringing the toe back in for the straights reduces the overall drag and tyre scrub produced. But Mercedes has been surprisingly loquacious when discussing its new innovation — is it to prove to the FIA that it has nothing to hide, or is it to distract from something more important under the skin?

Red Bull



Is **Red Bull** simply a pretender or a genuine contender? The team emerged from testing with an air of quiet confidence, proving to have a car that was not only a significant upgrade over last year's, but one with no clear reliability concerns. A handful of spins suggested that the RB16 was somewhat skittish, but Max Verstappen was quick to suggest that the off-track excursions were just a process of finding the limits.

At the launch, one of the biggest visual markers of the new car was the thinner, reconfigured nose section, achieved by tapering in the bulkhead to reduce its cross-sectional area. This gives the team more room to play with, using a Mercedes-style cape to enhance the car's front-end downforce capabilities. Although the team used one last year, it was rather shoehorned in midway through the season, but the bespoke design developed to suit the cape has given Red Bull more flexibility.

In week two of testing, the team also had adornments to its new cape; a pair of fins appeared to energise and drive airflow outwards, while further upgrades appeared as Red Bull dialled in its RB16 for Melbourne.

As Red Bull and Honda continue to develop their relationship, the two have been able to shrink-wrap the packaging of the powertrain, creating some very tight sidepods to shorten the path of the air towards the rear of the car. In doing that, the cooling set-up will be at its absolute limits, giving Red Bull the need to trial some additional ventilation in races where temperatures are high. Next to the halo mounting point, an area that commonly has a number of replaceable panels to open out the cooling, Red Bull also explored the effect of using an extra pair of scoops.

The team has also continued to push the envelope with its suspension package, opting for a multi-link lower front wishbone to give the RB16 the ability to change its rideheight with yaw and steering lock, having experimented with that last season with a similar upper wishbone. Red Bull must hope that its innovations and second season with Honda will help the team rise up the order.



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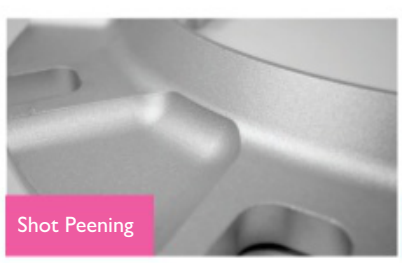
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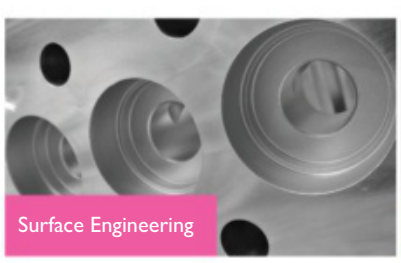
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Fuel-flow brouhaha has dominated the headlines

SUTTON motorsport IMAGES

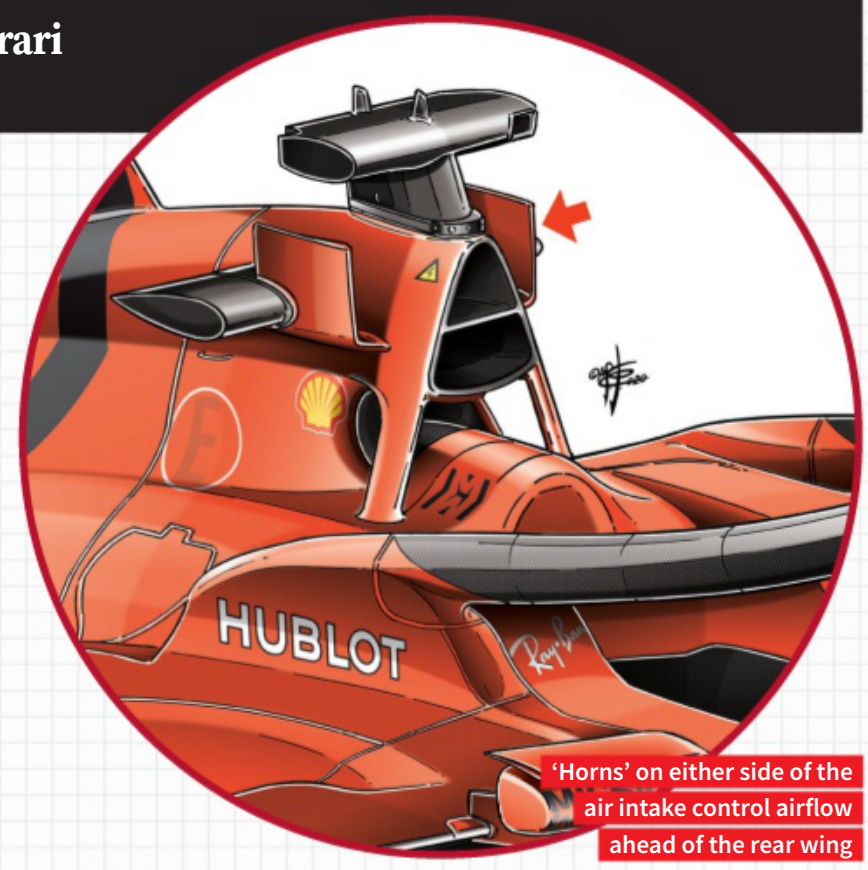
Ferrari

After 2019 promised so much, **Ferrari** had some clear weaknesses to explore when developing its SF1000, particularly with performance in the low-speed corners where it just didn't possess the overall downforce to cope. Although the Singapore update addressed some of those concerns, it didn't manage to carry Ferrari to a revitalised end-of-season run as the team was embroiled in power unit legality concerns.

Those issues, and the FIA's announcement that it had reached a settlement with the team, bled into the early days of 2020 — just as Ferrari was completing an insipid pre-season testing run. While the team was careful to manage expectations this time around, the new SF1000 just seems to be lacking in all of the areas that made the SF90 shine, including the pace on the straights.

Engine controversies aside, the SF1000 seems to have compromised on the low-drag nature of the previous car, with the front wing beefed up to dial in some greater front-end downforce at the expense of less straightline speed. The team has also added great complexity to its bargeboard package to control the airflow from the front end more adeptly, as it had seemingly more licence to explore clever aerodynamic developments.

For example, the smaller air intake above the driver's head has allowed the team to install small 'horns' on either side to control airflow ahead of the rear wing. The sidepod inlets have also been tightened up, while the team has been exploring new rear wing concepts throughout testing to attempt to give the SF1000 more balance.



'Horns' on either side of the air intake control airflow ahead of the rear wing

But it's the engine where the focus of the media still lies, and the 2020-spec power unit seems to have had its wings clipped by the fuel-flow furore. The allegations appear to suggest that Ferrari bypassed the intervals at which fuel flow is measured, determining when the fuel flow sensor's measurement intervals were and then creating a variable fuel flow around those intervals to transcend the 110kg/h limit. Of course, the public isn't privy to the full story — but the truth will surely out.

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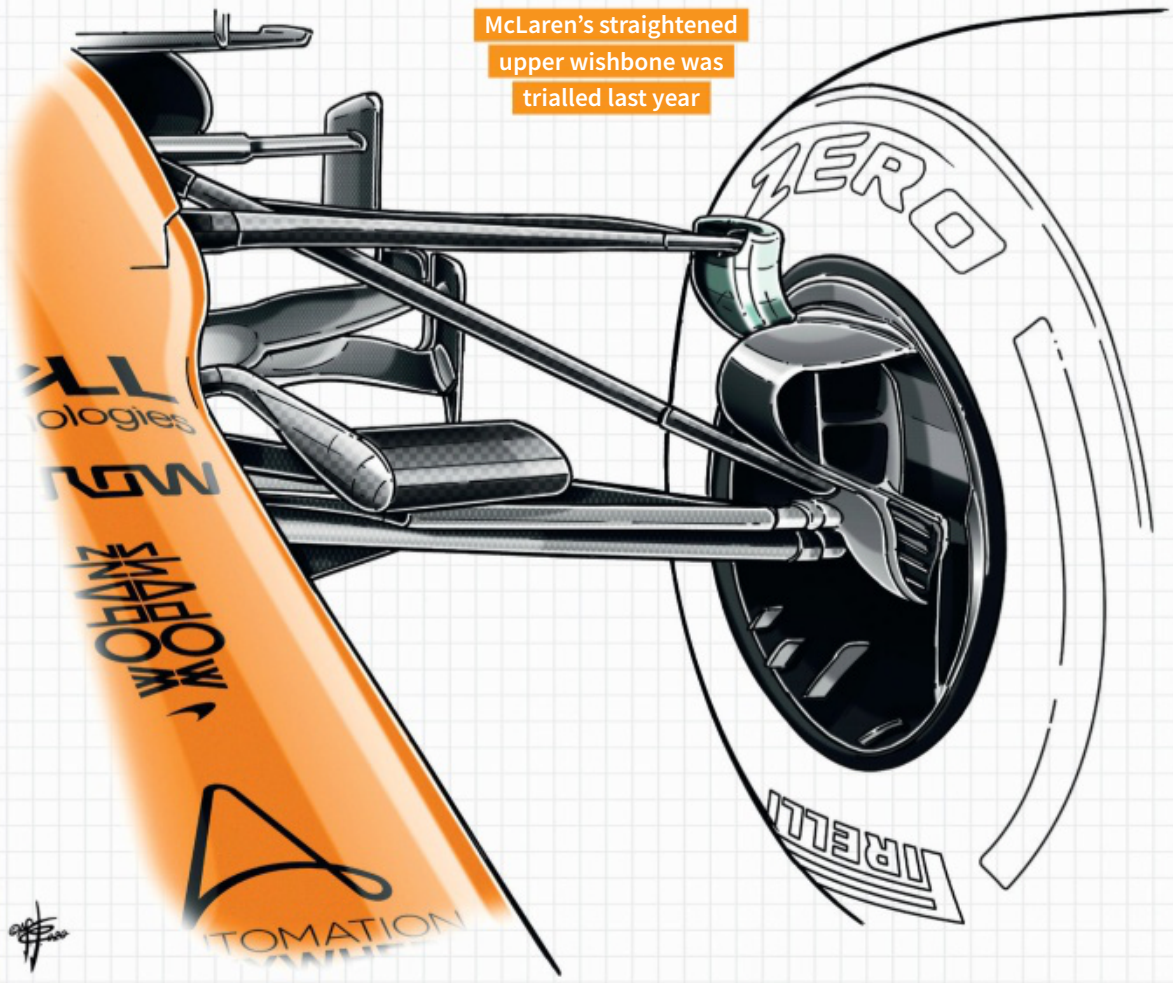


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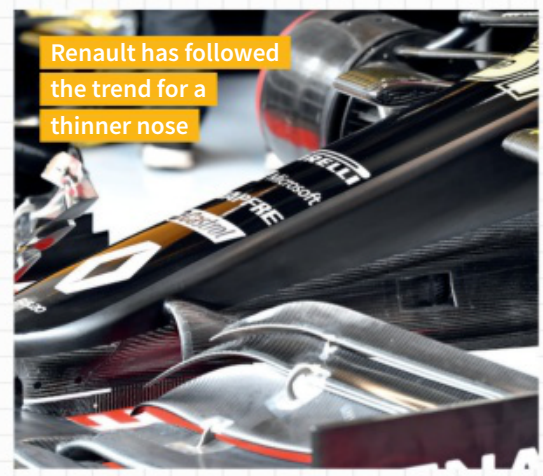
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The midfield fight





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The 2020 F1 season seems set for another midfield royal rumble, where similarly resourced teams battle for the lower reaches of the points. Last year, **McLaren's** resurgent form was able to trump that of its rivals and, although occasionally coming under fire from the midfield mainstays, the team was able to hold its own en route to fourth place overall.

The MCL35 has a reworked aero package to help the team retain its best-of-the-rest billing, retaining the key concepts it used to great effect last year but with tweaks to keep it fresh. For example, the front wing concept remains largely the same as last season and keeps the inboard-loaded wing philosophy, but endplate changes should give the team more ammunition to replace the tools lost to the cars at the end of 2018. The nose is thinner, like Red Bull's, to give more credence to running the cape design too, while the team has included the suspension design trialled in practice last year to straighten out the upper wishbone.



Furthermore, the sidepods are even tighter than last year's, opening up much more of the floor and the upper face of the diffuser. Everything seems representative of the right development path, and signs suggest that McLaren would, ordinarily, be set to secure fourth overall once more… Until **Racing Point** emerged with its RP20, pejoratively referred to as the 'Pink Mercedes'. And although there are differences to last year's title-winning car, the similarities far outweigh those; everything from the front wing to the engine cover echo the W10 and, although the bargeboards have a few different elements here and there, the concept appears to be the same.

But why wouldn't Racing Point indulge in replicating last year's championship winner? It's a low-risk strategy and, if it's unable to understand the concept, then it begins 2021 with a clean-sheet design regardless. Racing Point has been remarkably bullish about its decision to drop its own concept, and tech chief Andrew Green has labelled his rivals' consternation as frustration over neglecting to follow suit.

Renault is the other team primed to be among the top midfielders, although it has also elected to run a muted pre-season test programme to dispel any immediate hype. The concept remains reminiscent of the RS19's, but the Enstone engineers' process of evolving that concept has been to largely troubleshoot the design and enact fixes that also add performance.

One clear change is the trending design to a thinner nose, which looks Mercedes-esque in form. The team also uses a much more segmented front wing concept, retaining a stronger load on the outboard area and opening up the outwash capabilities in the centre. This should provide a stronger level of front-end downforce, but it seems to be an area in which the car is still struggling.

...and the rest



Alfa Romeo has experimented with rear wing mountings

Although **Alfa Romeo** was well among the midfield battle last season, it could rise no further than eighth overall. The Sauber-run team probably should have provided a sterner challenge to Racing Point, but its penalties in Germany were also compounded by the team's struggle to keep both drivers within the points simultaneously.

The C39 heralds the continuation of Alfa's radical front wing design, which underwent a couple of changes during testing as the team works out the best arrangement for the rest of the car. Keeping its compact sidepods, Alfa also spent the second week of testing trialling new bits of bodywork, although that suggests it doesn't quite know its best aero set-up yet. A larger shark fin at the rear has been offset by reverting to the smaller fin it had last year, as it also experimented with rear wing mountings.

Confusingly, one of its biggest rivals in 2020 will be **AlphaTauri**, creating an Alfa/Alpha battle among two arguably 'beta' teams. Continuing on the technical path it created in its Toro Rosso days, the team continues to use Red Bull non-listed part designs from last season – including the multi-link upper suspension system. There are also other Red Bull-influenced design cues, such as the tightly packaged bodywork and the lozenge-shaped air intake, but it retains its front-wing design philosophy too.

Technical director Jody Egginton, having been behind the team's switch to taking more parts from Red Bull, explains that the decision to do so improves the overall reliability, which helps the team focus on other areas of the car and gives it more scope to take advantage of any opportunities that present themselves. The team managed two podiums last year and, with a stronger package behind it, AlphaTauri should be poised to repeat that.

Haas struggled in 2019 with a car that was not equipped to keep its tyres within the ideal working range during the races. One of the culprits was, allegedly, the front wing, which led the team to experiment with a Ferrari-style wing. The VF-20 looks distinctly similar to last year's Ferrari too, although the team has kept its curved-slot rear wing endplate to manage the airflow shed off the rear of the car. The switch to a triangular air intake should clean up the flow to the rear of the car, which was often difficult to manage when the tyres had fallen out of range. Further complexities have also been added to the floor and bargeboards.

Although George Russell still suggests that the **Williams** team will be at the back, the team looks vastly improved compared to 12 months ago. The FW43 comes bearing much tighter packaging, with greater attention to detail to troubleshoot the weakest areas from last year.

"We've paid significant attention to understanding



AlphaTauri mixes Red Bull non-listed part designs with its own knowhow

MAUGER motorsport IMAGES



SUTTON motorsport IMAGES



Haas has switched to a triangular air intake to clean up flow to the rear

SUTTON motorsport IMAGES

the problem areas of the FW42," says design director Doug McKiernan, "and we've carefully chosen parts of the car to develop, those that would give us the most performance for the resources we have."

The team explored the effects of new aero parts too, installing a new front wing in the second week of testing, bearing a pair of splits in the wing tips to further tighten up the vortex produced there. It also explored new rear wings and engine covers to determine the best arrangement at the rear. That's a huge step from last year, and Williams has much to be happy about. Does the revival start here?



Williams has much tighter packaging; team has targeted bang-per-buck performance gains

New rules for 2020



DUNBAR motorsport IMAGES

Tweak to position of mirrors will give drivers better view of what's behind

Since the current rules are in their final year, there are no real changes to the formula – only tweaks to iron out issues and also stop teams exploiting certain loopholes.

Firstly, the addition of a second fuel-flow sensor – independently monitored by the FIA – should eliminate any chance of circumventing the 110kg/h fuel flow limit. With a different interval to the one already in the car (and which the teams are not privy to), this means that any attempts to pump more fuel in between intervals will be nigh-on impossible.

"Any attempts to pump more fuel in between intervals will be nigh-on impossible"

There are also a few minor changes to the clutch rules, and pull-type paddle-activated clutches are now mandatory for each driver. The clutch signals used by the standard ECU will also be heavily monitored by the FIA to limit any advantageous mapping.

Should a team wish to use two clutch paddles on the steering wheel, each paddle must now be identical in form, motion and mapping, and drivers may be asked to demonstrate that both paddles work identically. Furthermore, the paddle must work linearly with the clutch, meaning that the drivers' actions must be wholly representative of the engagement of the clutch.

Rear-view mirrors have also been moved further inboard, reflecting complaints from drivers who have struggled to see clearly through them.

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All the races

Start times are UK

1 AUSTRALIAN GP
Melbourne
15 March
Start time: 0510

2 BAHRAIN GP
Sakhir
22 March
Start time: 1510

3 VIETNAMESE GP
Hanoi
5 April
Start time: 0810

4 DUTCH GP
Zandvoort
3 May
Start time: 1410

5 SPANISH GP
Barcelona
10 May
Start time: 1410

6 MONACO GP
Monte Carlo
24 May
Start time: 1410

7 AZERBAIJAN GP
Baku
7 June
Start time: 1310

8 CANADIAN GP
Montreal
14 June
Start time: 1910

9 FRENCH GP
Paul Ricard
28 June
Start time: 1410

10 AUSTRIAN GP
Red Bull Ring
5 July
Start time: 1410

11 BRITISH GP
Silverstone
19 July
Start time: 1510



PORTLOCK/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

12 HUNGARIAN GP
Hungaroring
2 August
Start time: 1410

13 BELGIAN GP
Spa
30 August
Start time: 1410

14 ITALIAN GP
Monza
6 September
Start time: 1410

15 SINGAPORE GP
Marina Bay
20 September
Start time: 1310

16 RUSSIAN GP
Sochi
27 September
Start time: 1210

17 JAPANESE GP
Suzuka
11 October
Start time: 0510

18 UNITED STATES GP
Austin
25 October
Start time: 1910

19 MEXICAN GP
Mexico City
1 November
Start time: 1910

20 BRAZILIAN GP
Interlagos
15 November
Start time: 1710

21 ABU DHABI GP
Yas Marina
29 November
Start time: 1310



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CAN ROSSI HEAD INDYCAR'S NEW ERA?

The aeroscreen is here to protect the drivers' heads. And the nearly-man of IndyCar is kicking on to give Andretti Autosport a title

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES



ABBOTT

Alexander Rossi doesn't want to talk about Andretti Autosport's final pre-season test day. Not because anything went drastically wrong; more because it all went so well, and he doesn't want to give Autosport any specific technical details.

"A lot of information was gathered, it was really good, and I feel like the team is working at the highest level it's been at since I joined four years ago," says the California-born Rossi, who this weekend at St Petersburg begins his bid to claim his first IndyCar Series title. Second in the championship in 2018, and third last year, he continues: "I feel like this has been our best off-season and we're all feeling very encouraged.

"I don't think we've focused on one area, even though we identified road courses as a weakness for us in the second half of 2019. We've taken the approach as if we struggled at every type of track last year, and need to improve our approach across the board.

"THE MINDSET OF EVERYONE FROM DRIVERS TO ENGINEERS TO CREW MEMBERS IS REALLY POSITIVE"

Now we've had two really strong tests [Circuit of The Americas for Spring Training in February, and the 2 March test on the Sebring short course] in terms of the data collected and verification that the off-season development went in the right direction.

"We've also taken a big step forward in terms of off-track preparation like pitstop practice. The mindset of everyone from drivers to engineers to crew members is really good and positive – but with emotions held in check."

Certainly Rossi sounds confident enough to downplay the effects of the new-for-2020 IndyCar aeroscreen. The Red Bull Advanced Technologies-developed device (see panel, page 70) has presented a hurdle for all IndyCar team engineers as they tackle the thorny problem of ameliorating the effect of revised weight distribution now that the centre of gravity is higher and further forward than before. Adjusting the car's handling is less of an issue than ensuring the front tyres aren't overworked. »


LePAGE

Rossi is confident after testing with Andretti squad…


LEVITT

…but reigning champ Newgarden will be tough to beat


NKP

Dixon is always a force and Ganassi has bolstered tech staff


LePAGE

Power is one of the fastest around and always a contender

IT'S SAFER – BUT CAN THEY SEE WHERE THEY'RE GOING?

THE PROS AND CONS OF THE AEROSCREEN

The introduction of Red Bull Advanced Technologies' aeroscreen – which from low and head-on looks unfortunately bucket-shaped but from most other angles looks svelte – means there will be seven crew members per car allowed in the pitlane during a pitstop: four tyre changers, one airjack operator, one fueller and one aeroscreen attendant.

The rules stipulate that the attendant may only work on the aeroscreen and its tear-offs, must remain in control of all tear-off materials, must remain behind the pitwall until the car comes to an absolute stop and may only work while the car's rear tyres are in the air.

Driver wariness regarding the amount of air that reaches the cockpit since the aeroscreen's installation has also prompted fresh stipulations from IndyCar. Helmet ducting will be mandatory at all road, street and short-oval tracks, but is not allowed for the Indy 500 nor Texas 600. The helmet manufacturer will provide the attachment, but the ducting hose can only be attached with a quick disconnect system approved by IndyCar.

Nose-inlet cooling is mandatory for road, street and short-oval tracks and again is not permitted at the Indy 500 and Texas Motor Speedway. The tube inlets may be sealed using tape or a cover provided there is no change to the intended shape, while the front-duct exit port, optional at all events, must remain open on the bottom, but may be trimmed to change or direct the airflow.

One driver who did not wish to be named said: "I'm worried about slower tracks in the summer or whenever we're running behind the pace car at 60mph… The shape of the airflow once it's in the cockpit and when there's air coming over the top of the cockpit means none of it seems to really reach the helmet area. We've got the hoses to connect to the helmet but I don't know how much ram effect we're going to get."

Graham Rahal agreed it was "quite toasty in there" following his most recent test at Sebring, but has no issue with vision through the screen, even in the wet conditions encountered during Spring Training at Circuit of The Americas.

"Visibility is great," he said. "I followed someone through a puddle and a ton of water came up on the aeroscreen and it dissipated immediately. Better than what we would have experienced before [the screen was introduced]."

Felix Rosenqvist observed after the COTA test: "In terms of cooling, it was better than expected. Also, visibility was really good. The only thing was when the sun got low there was a lot of glare going on. I think honestly the biggest difference is the way it affects the car handling in terms of weight and aerodynamics."

That's a view with which Will Power concurs – "The car feels just a little bit more lazy going from turn-in to apex" – and is understandable given that the device weighs around 65lb and has shifted the centre of gravity forward 0.6% and up 15mm. But as Alex Rossi observed, Firestone has come through with revised tyre compounds that deal with new weight distribution and transference, so it may not have been the big deal everyone made out beforehand. Except, of course, the drivers' heads are far better protected.

"We don't have all the details yet, because obviously we've only done a day and a half of testing and they've been on relatively high-grip tracks," Rossi explains. "We lost a whole day plus a morning of Spring Training due to bad weather at COTA, and now we've tested at Sebring, which was rubbered up and it behaves more like a road course than a street course on days like that. So with St Pete being relatively low grip, our views may change regarding how the weight of the screen affects the tyres.

"But that said, I think we've got a general idea of what the aeroscreen does and the effect isn't hugely dramatic. It changes set-up philosophies a little bit, but no one's having to reinvent the wheel: it's all pretty manageable. Firestone is coming with different solutions to deal with the change, and at Sebring we ran the 2020 St Pete-spec tyre and it seemed good, and we're content with the fall-off."

Rossi shows similar equanimity when discussing engine performance. "I guess after the past couple of years anyone on either side of the fence is concerned about potential for Indy," he says. "Has Honda [the Andretti team's supplier] caught up at the top end? Has the opposition [Chevrolet] made the same amount of progress and retained an edge? We don't know. But all the other tracks in the series are very different formats from Indy, and we simply don't know about any of them at this stage. We'll see when we get to St Pete, but if there is a problem it's not one we need to focus on at this stage."

The million-dollar question then is whether Rossi is finally going to be able to topple Team Penske and Chip Ganassi Racing to earn Andretti Autosport its first IndyCar championship since Ryan Hunter-Reay took the 2012 crown.

"Look, I go into the season with the same mindset every single year – to win," he says. "During our [contract renewal] negotiations in the middle of last year I told the team there were a lot of things I wanted, areas where I thought we all as a group needed to be better. They were receptive to what I was saying, and a lot of those changes have been implemented.

"And now I can see the progress – big things, little things, people things – and I think everyone is happy with what's been done and I can't see any areas where we're lacking. So to answer your question, I believe we're better placed than ever before to challenge for the title."

THE RIVALS TO ROSSI

Of course, taking on Penske and Ganassi is one part of Rossi's 2020 mission, but he also has to overcome the challenge from within the Andretti Autosport camp. Hunter-Reay seemed to lose his mojo last year but, providing his confidence has returned, the 2012 champion and 2014 Indy 500 winner is well capable of beating everyone on his day.

The same could be said of a man at the other end of his IndyCar career, (nearly-)20-year-old Colton Herta, who scored two wins and three poles in his rookie season last year. By switching from the start-up Harding Steinbrenner Racing team, which had a technical partnership with Andretti Autosport, to become a fully subscribed member of Michael Andretti's squad, Herta no longer has even a tissue wall between himself and the others. If that really does make a difference, it should help all involved and may uncover some secrets. Rossi, for example, says that although he loves working with Jeremy Milless as his race engineer, it's useful to have Herta's race engineer Nathan O'Rourke on hand too.

Both Marco Andretti and Zach Veach have been doing revision – to the extent that during the off-season Marco even went back to Rob Wilson's High Performance Driving course to improve his technique – so that they aren't seen as the lame ducks in the team, but they can't yet expect to join the title-challenging group. Just a podium or two would be regarded as a first step back to respectability. Still, Jack Harvey, driving for the Meyer Shank »



LEVITT

Rahal finds it 'toasty' in car with aeroscreen

Racing team – which now has a technical partnership with AA – is a more likely candidate for top-three finishes.

Chip Ganassi Racing has re-expanded in the off-season to become a three-car team, Marcus Ericsson joining fellow Swede and fellow IndyCar sophomore Felix Rosenqvist, along with five-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon. With the shutdown of the IMSA/Le Mans arm of the team following Ford's decision to end its successful GT programme, there has been a significant reshuffle at Ganassi's fabulously successful squad.

Chris Simmons, who steered Dario Franchitti to three consecutive titles (2009-11) and two Indy 500s (2010 and 2012) and then won two more championships with Dixon (2015 and 2018), has become Ganassi's competition manager, replaced as race engineer on Dixon's car by Michael Cannon. The latter has arrived from Dale Coyne Racing, perhaps crucially armed with knowledge of how to set up the current breed of IndyCar on ovals – the area in which Ganassi has proved most inconsistent since the current car arrived in 2018. With CGR managing director Mike Hull continuing to call strategy, it's near-impossible to imagine Dixon failing to be a title contender.

The team's technical director Julian Robertson will again serve as race engineer for Rosenqvist, who won last year's IndyCar rookie of the year title and finished sixth overall in the points table. The 28-year-old took well to IndyCar and, after a wobbly middle third to the season, regained his composure and should be a regular victory contender this year. Team manager Barry Wanser and Chip Ganassi himself will run him from trackside.

Ericsson will be engineered by Brad Goldberg, who ran the Richard Westbrook/Ryan Briscoe Ford GT, and who also teased the very best out of Charlie Kimball while the Californian was at Ganassi. Goldberg should be ideal for taming Ericsson's overenthusiasm in qualifying and bolstering the ex-F1 driver's self-confidence when being directly compared with a legend and one of the most versatile twentysomethings in racing today.

Team Penske has won four of the past six IndyCar Series titles, and all three drivers responsible for that success remain onboard. Two-time and reigning champion Josef Newgarden is clearly only getting stronger, blending great speed with race day savvy. He's an instinctive fighter, but 95% of the time remembers when to rein that in and not push his luck if he's to reach the season finale still in the title fight.

Will Power has been the fastest IndyCar driver over a single lap for the past dozen years and also one of the masters of fuel-and-tyre-saving on race day. His only significant flaw remains his lack of anger management when outrageous fate or a team screw-up damages his potential; you can almost see the smoke coming out of his ears in such circumstances, and it sometimes results in a driving error that further hurts his race result and therefore impedes his path to a second championship. Perhaps team owner Roger Penske stepping back from calling Power's strategy (to focus on minor things such as running the series and Indianapolis Motor Speedway) and being replaced by the soothing tones of Ron Ruzewski will help in that regard.

The other Penske driver is 2019 Indy 500 winner Simon Pagenaud, who usually doesn't have the same scintillating pace as Power but is better able to prevent irritations from reflecting in his driving and therefore is more consistent at amassing points. Moreover, last year he bounced back from a poor 2018 to look like a potential champion once more. He heads into the new season in strong spirits, and it's safe to say that Penske's trio will be absolutely formidable once more.

BEST OF THE REST COULD BE BEST OF THE BEST

There are newcomers and relative newcomers that we expect to mess with the big three teams quite regularly. While Rosenqvist and Herta were expected to shine as rookies in 2019 – brilliant talents with great cars – this year's fresh crop of full-timers has the opportunity to elevate previous 'B-class' teams to 'A-class' status.


ABBOTT

Herta was a star 2019 rookie and is a threat…


LEVITT

…and Rosenqvist was – and will be – exactly the same


ABBOTT

Dark-horse rookie for 2020 looks like Japan refugee Palou…


LEVITT

…while Askew has climbed the ranks in the US to IndyCar

"NEWGARDEN IS CLEARLY ONLY GETTING STRONGER, BLENDING GREAT SPEED WITH RACE DAY SAVVY"

Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports has morphed into Arrow McLaren SP, has switched from Honda to Chevrolet (if you need to ask why, read the last five years of Autosport back issues), hired Craig Hampson as R&D engineer, and ditched James Hinchcliffe and 2019 rookie Ericsson for the past two Indy Lights champions, Oliver Askew and Patricio O'Ward. Expect O'Ward to take the gung-ho, knife-in-the-teeth approach and be the better qualifier, Askew to be the more analytical driver who keeps the tyres under him for a whole stint and avoid error.

Ed Carpenter Racing has flushed out the sporadically fast Spencer Pigot and Ed Jones and replaced them with Askew's biggest rival in Lights, Rinus van Kalmthout – who has shown strong pace in pre-season testing – and Conor Daly, who finally gets a chance to run a whole season. Well, kind of/maybe. He gets an extra ECR entry for the Indy 500, but the other four ovals will see him cede his seat to team owner Ed Carpenter. As we went to press, it was still unconfirmed whether he'd reprise his role as Max Chilton's sub at Carlin. Trevor Carlin's mighty little team has also yet to reveal whether former F1 driver and IMSA ace Felipe Nasr will get the majority of the rides in his other car, and how many (if any) starts former F2 contender Sergio Sette Camara might make.

The other bright new star to watch is at Dale Coyne Racing, where funding from Team Goh has allowed 2019 Super Formula rookie star Alex Palou to cross the Pacific and jump in a car that will be run by Eric Cowdin, a man who has won races with Penske, Ganassi and Andretti. Palou, who shone in tricky conditions in Japan, arrives effectively as a replacement for Sebastien Bourdais, although Santino Ferrucci has switched to the Vasser-Sullivan backed arm of the DCR squad. Coyne was disappointed to lose Hampson to Arrow McLaren SP and Cannon to Ganassi, but an Olivier Boisson/Cowdin combo is a strong one, and DCR now has a sim programme to help bridge the gap to the big teams.

Bourdais will run at least four races in the #14 car of AJ Foyt Racing – another team that has been through an off-season shake-up. He will give up this ride to mediocre Lights graduate Dalton Kellett for the other road/street-course races, while Tony Kanaan will step in for ovals. The second Foyt car will be driven full-time by Kimball.

NOTABLE CHANGES FOR 2020

The introduction of the aeroscreen has naturally added a pitlane complication; but, aside from that, the replacement of Pocono Raceway with 0.75-mile Richmond Raceway, slightly lowered pit speed limits, and an increase in turbo boost to 1.5-bar for Indy 500 qualifying, IndyCar's other notable change for 2020 will be a poor one: the reintroduction of engine-related grid penalties.

A full-season entry is allocated four engines in a season that covers approximately 10,000 miles including race weekends, team tests and open tests, so both Chevrolet and Honda will be required to declare an approximate mileage limit of 2500 per engine. Henceforth any car that has its engine changed before a manufacturer's predetermined mileage limit has been reached will suffer a grid penalty in the next race – a six-place drop for road/street courses and a nine-place drop on ovals. It's disappointing to appreciate that a driver who is leading at the season opener and suffers an engine blow-up will not only lose a substantial number of points there, but will also be penalised at the next race, unable to start higher than seventh on the grid.

You can only hope it won't have an influence on the championship, which in all likelihood will be fought out by Rossi, Power, Dixon and Newgarden.

ENTRY LIST

NO	DRIVER	TEAM/ENGINE
1	**Josef Newgarden**	Team Penske/Chevrolet
12	**Will Power**	Team Penske/Chevrolet
22	**Simon Pagenaud**	Team Penske/Chevrolet
4	**Charlie Kimball**	AJ Foyt Enterprises/Chevrolet
14	**Sebastien Bourdais**	AJ Foyt Enterprises/Chevrolet
5	**Patricio O'Ward**	Arrow McLaren SP/Chevrolet
7	**Oliver Askew**	Arrow McLaren SP/Chevrolet
8	**Marcus Ericsson**	Chip Ganassi Racing/Honda
9	**Scott Dixon**	Chip Ganassi Racing/Honda
10	**Felix Rosenqvist**	Chip Ganassi Racing/Honda
15	**Graham Rahal**	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing/Honda
30	**Takuma Sato**	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing/Honda
18	**Santino Ferrucci**	Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser-Sullivan/Honda
55	**Alex Palou**	Dale Coyne Racing/Honda
20	**Conor Daly**	Ed Carpenter Racing/Chevrolet
21	**Rinus van Kalmthout**	Ed Carpenter Racing/Chevrolet
24	**Sage Karam**	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing/Chevrolet
26	**Zach Veach**	Andretti Autosport/Honda
27	**Alexander Rossi**	Andretti Autosport/Honda
28	**Ryan Hunter-Reay**	Andretti Autosport/Honda
88	**Colton Herta**	Andretti Harding Steinbrenner Autosport/Honda
98	**Marco Andretti**	Andretti Herta Autosport/Honda
31	**Felipe Nasr**	Carlin/Chevrolet
59	**Max Chilton**	Carlin/Chevrolet
60	**Jack Harvey**	Meyer Shank Racing/Honda
81	**Ben Hanley**	DragonSpeed/Chevrolet

CALENDAR

DATE	VENUE
15 March	St Petersburg
5 April	Barber Motorsports Park
19 April	Long Beach
26 April	Circuit of The Americas
9 May	Indianapolis
24 May	Indianapolis 500
30 May	Detroit Belle Isle
31 May	Detroit Belle Isle
6 June	Texas Motor Speedway
21 June	Road America
27 June	Richmond
12 July	Toronto
18 July	Iowa Speedway
16 August	Mid-Ohio
22 August	Gateway
6 September	Portland
20 September	Laguna Seca

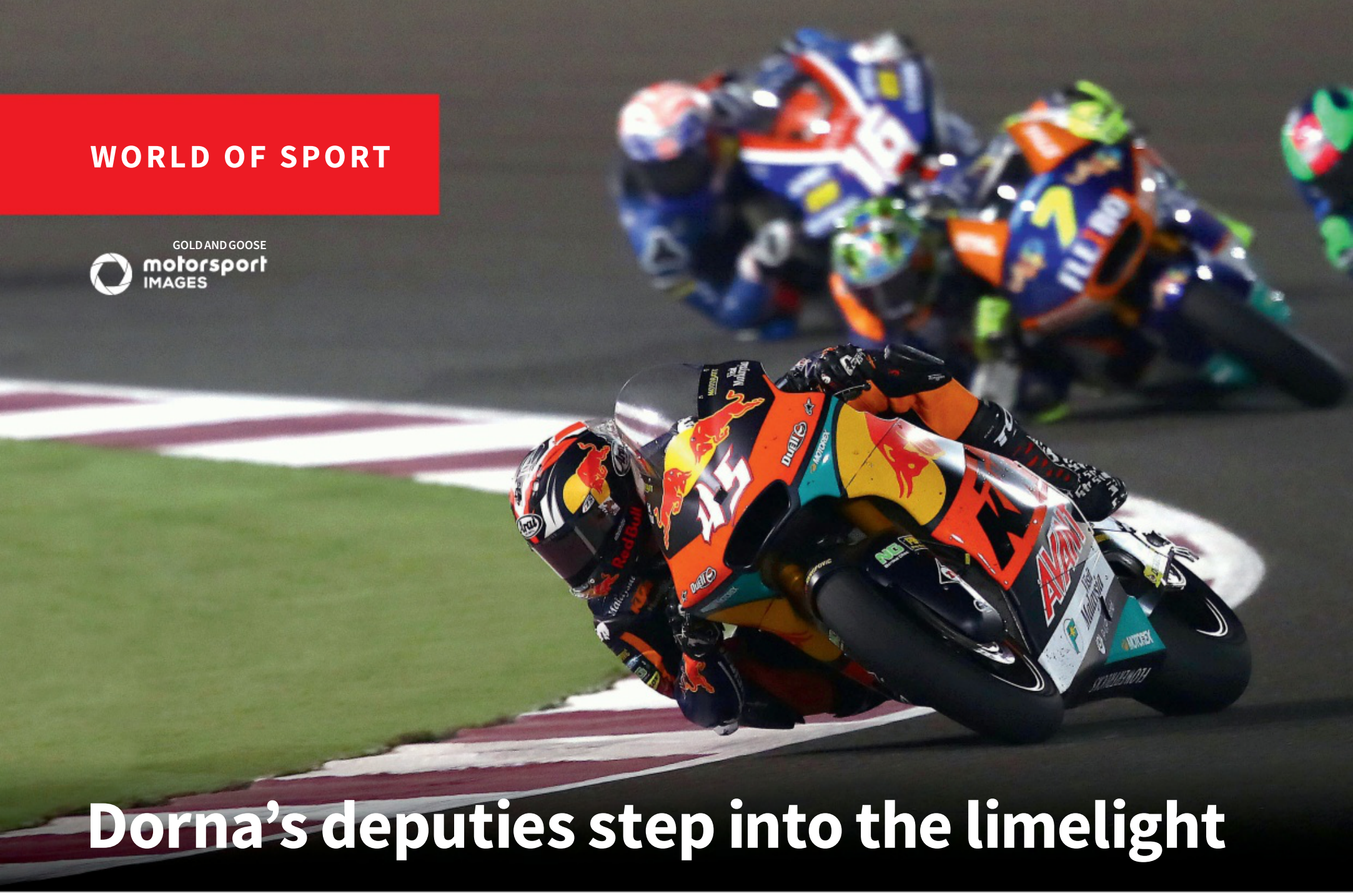


BAKER

NEXT WEEK

ST PETERSBURG REPORT
19 MARCH ISSUE

There's always drama on the palm-tree-lined Florida streets of St Pete, and the race can often throw up a surprise winner. Which of the expected top dogs will trip up?



Dorna's deputies step into the limelight

MOTO2/MOTO3
LOSAIL (QAT)
8 MARCH
ROUND 1/20

Last weekend's MotoGP season-opener radiated an odd atmosphere, for the first round of 2020 carried on without the flagship premier class. Tighter quarantine procedures in Qatar on those travelling from Italy as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak meant Dorna Sports had to cancel the MotoGP race.

The weekend went ahead, though, with the Moto2 and Moto3 classes — already present for a test last week — co-headlining the racing bill at Losail.

Pre-weekend, social media was awash with so-called fans of motorcycle racing calling for the Qatar event to be cancelled outright: 'no one cares about the other classes', they claimed. Falsely.

Moto3 is a sure-fire way to give your cardiologist cause for concern, while Moto2 is enjoying an entertaining period since its new Triumph-powered era started last year.

All-weekend viewers were treated to a spectacle. Moto3 was as mad as ever; 19 riders at the halfway stage of the 18-lap contest were in victory contention — at world championship level! A nerve-shredding final lap ensued, where Aspar's Albert Arenas kept it tidy and held the Petronas Sprinta Honda of John McPhee at bay by just 0.053 seconds to secure a landmark 100th grand prix win for KTM.



Arenas snared KTM's 100th GP victory

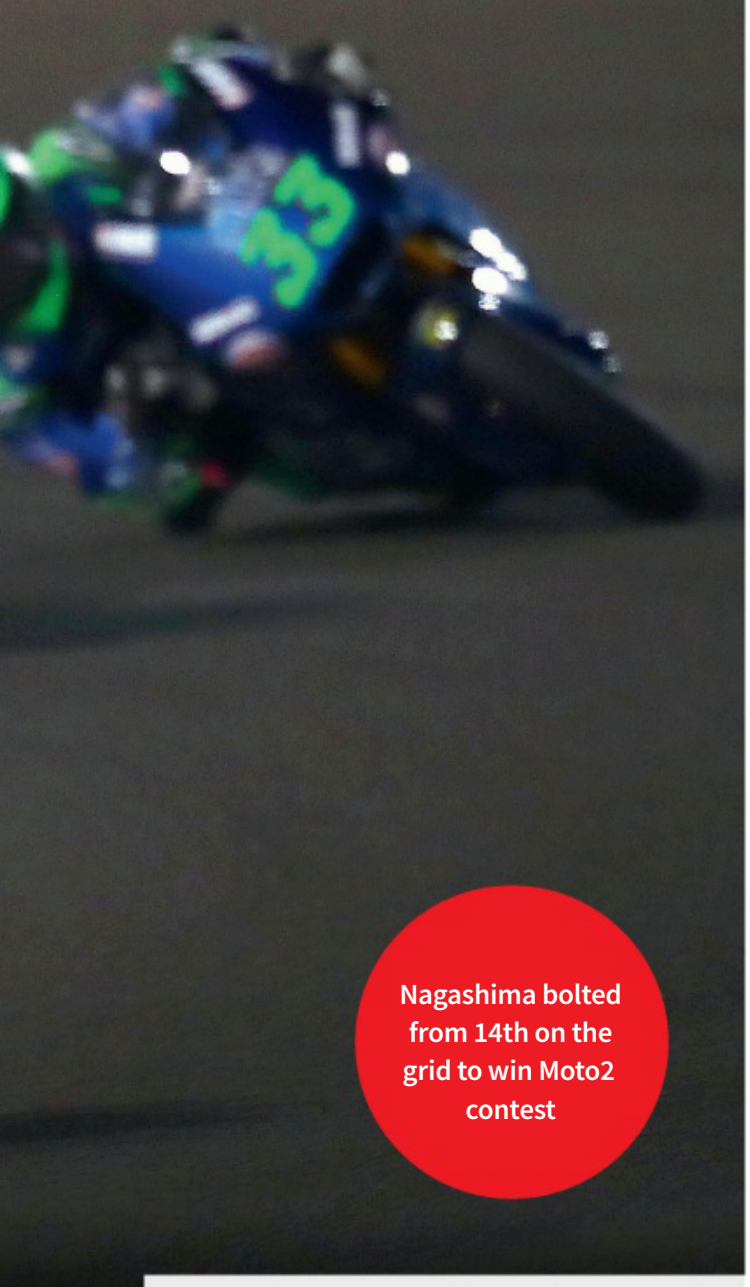
In Moto2, Joe Roberts made history when he became the first US rider since 2010 (Kenny Noyes at Le Mans in Moto2 and Ben Spies at Indianapolis in MotoGP) to secure pole. On Sunday, 27-year-old father of three Tetsuta Nagashima rose from 14th on the grid to take a shock maiden win on his first outing with Ajo Motorsport — beginning the new decade the same way his fellow Japanese star, former All-Japan Superbike team-mate and late "hero" Shoya Tomizawa did in Qatar in Moto2's first race at the start of the last.

To be fair, Dorna has long pushed Moto2 and Moto3 and treats them as equals rather than sideshows, but that often hasn't been enough to find a large audience.

"We are trying to promote Moto2 and Moto3 always, they are very important categories," Dorna CEO Carmelo Ezpeleta said. "We have always maintained that the MotoGP World Championship is three categories. I think it's one of our big assets."

But with no MotoGP and the prospect of Qatar hosting the only racing we'll see for a while, Dorna's blanket coverage of the event — from pre-event press conference to practice, qualifying, race and post-session press conferences, just as it would for MotoGP — did much to capitalise on the increased interest in Moto2 and Moto3.

Pieces of grand prix history that only the hardcore would have acknowledged were now headline stories, and all could share in the genuine emotion of those breakthroughs



Nagashima bolted from 14th on the grid to win Moto2 contest

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2
LOSAIL (QAT)
Tetsuta Nagashima
Ajo Motorsport (Kalex)

MOTO3
LOSAIL (QAT)
Albert Arenas
Aspar Team (KTM)

NASCAR CUP
PHOENIX (USA)
Joey Logano
Team Penske (Ford Mustang)

NASCAR XFINITY SERIES
PHOENIX (USA)
Brandon Jones
Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Supra)

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for Roberts and Nagashima.

For the riders themselves, a strong showing in Qatar could be career-changing. MotoGP teams take a keen interest in what goes on in Moto2 and Moto3 and the riders will have had their full attention. With a number of MotoGP places up for grabs for 2021, Qatar was a significant opportunity for its future stars to state their intent.

Above all, though, this odd Qatar weekend was a chance to show just how healthy MotoGP's feeder categories are and how safe and exciting the future truly is.

LEWIS DUNCAN

Logano ignites title bid with first Penske win at Phoenix

NASCAR CUP
PHOENIX (USA)
8 MARCH
ROUND 4/36



NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Phoenix win puts Logano second in Cup standings

For a team as decorated as Penske, it was remarkable that before last weekend's race at Phoenix Raceway the squad had failed to record a win in the spring NASCAR Cup event.

Joey Logano, the 2018 champion, would in the end comfortably hold off fellow Ford Mustang driver Kevin Harvick to become the first double winner of 2020. But for the first half of the race, a Penske victory was a far-fetched outcome.

Pre-race points leader and highest Penske qualifier, fifth-starting Ryan Blaney, was taken out of the running on lap 65 in an otherwise uneventful opening 75-lap segment. Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin made contact with Brad Keselowski and then collected Blaney. That not only ended Blaney's afternoon early, but effectively ruined Hamlin's race and left Keselowski with a sizeable dent in the rear bodywork of his Mustang.

Although Logano moved up to third, the true gap to Harvick and Chase Elliott was hidden by the fact that there were only a handful of true racing laps late in the stage, owing to the Hamlin and Blaney caution.

Stage two was a much better affair all round for Keselowski, and where Logano's hopes took a hit. On lap 136, under another caution period, his crew allowed a loose wheel to stray into the pitlane. That brought a drivethrough penalty.

To his credit, Logano fought back and led midway through the stage before Keselowski took the honours.

Lap 300 brought the deciding factor as to who would win. A Ross Chastain spin brought out the yellow flags, leaving the teams with a dilemma: pit for fresh Goodyears and recover through the traffic, or stick it out on fading rubber? Keselowski opted for the former, Logano the latter.

Logano then saw out overtime to claim his 25th Cup win, while Keselowski could only muster 11th.

Behind Harvick, Kyle Busch was third for Joe Gibbs Racing, with the next best Toyota Camry of Hamlin in 20th. Kyle Larson was the best Chevrolet Camaro finisher in fourth.

JAKE NICHOL



Decisive late tyre call boosted Logano to second win of 2020

NKP motorsport IMAGES

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MOTORSPORT UK KEEPING TRACK OF CORONAVIRUS

NATIONAL RACING

Motorsport UK chairman David Richards says the governing body will not overreact to the coronavirus outbreak in the country. As Autosport closed for press, six people in the UK had died after contracting the virus while over 300 had tested positive.

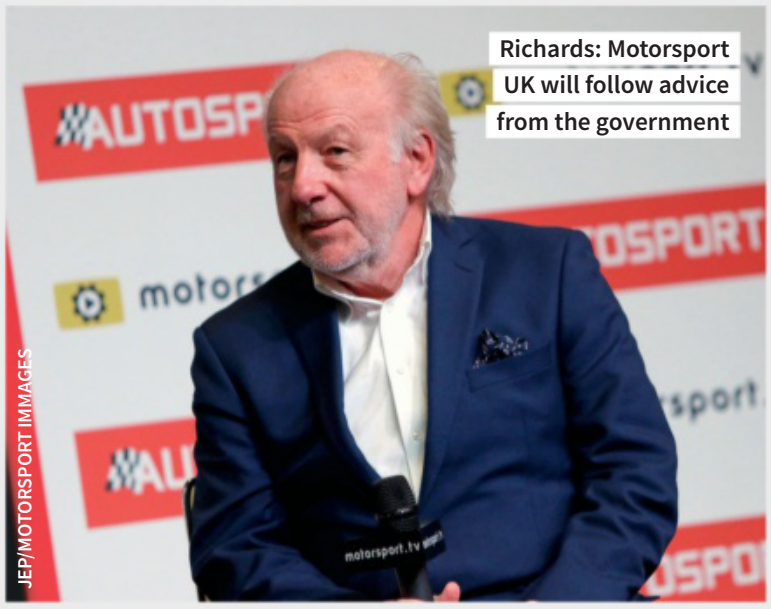
A number of events across the world, including the Chinese Grand Prix and the Rome E-Prix, have been cancelled or postponed. Richards says Motorsport UK is continuing to monitor the situation in the UK.

"It's early days today and all we can do is follow government advice when it comes to this and look at the best practice," Richards told Autosport. "Clearly it's a concern to everybody but we just have to see what happens next and react accordingly. I don't think we necessarily need to pre-empt any decisions and nor do we need to overreact.

"I know there was a statement that came out on Monday morning – and we had somebody attending a meeting – on government advice on sports. Sometimes some of these issues are outside your control and outside your hands."

Some of the UK's largest motorsport events, such as the British Touring Car Championship and the Silverstone Classic, attract tens of thousands of fans. In some European countries, large gatherings have been banned and, when asked whether larger UK motorsport events could be axed, Richards says the governing body will follow government advice.

"I think that [events being cancelled or postponed] depends on legislation and recommendations from the government," Richards said. "If government advice was



that large crowds of more than 5000, like it is in Paris, should be banned or dissuaded then clearly we would have to follow that advice. Hopefully, fingers crossed, it doesn't come to that situation."

When asked whether smaller club-level events would be impacted, Richards says he thinks "that's less likely".

The club circuit racing season is due to start next weekend, while the opening BTCC round and Goodwood Members' Meeting are scheduled for 28-29 March.

Leading circuit operator MotorSport Vision has said that anyone who has already bought tickets for an event that gets postponed would be able to use those tickets at the rescheduled meeting. If an event is cancelled completely due to coronavirus fears, MSV says it will give a full refund to ticket holders.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

BTCC veteran Collard for Brit GT

BRITISH GT

Multiple British Touring Car Championship race winner Rob Collard will make the switch to endurance racing this season and compete in the British GT Championship with Barwell Motorsport.

The 51-year-old, who last season competed with Power Maxed Racing in the BTCC, will share a Lamborghini Huracan GT3 with Lambo GT3 Junior Driver Sandy Mitchell to create a Silver-Silver pairing.

Barwell team principal Mark Lemmer said of Collard: "From what he said to me, he wanted a new challenge. Rob is a great driver but it's yet to be seen how he's going to adapt from a low-powered touring car to a high-powered GT car. He's never driven Spa before or the Silverstone Grand Prix layout so there's challenges ahead. Like me, he's getting older in years but he's still a very capable driver.

"Originally we were going to be able to run in Pro-Am because of Rob's FIA Bronze grading for being over 50, but British GT wanted him to run in the Silver class because he's too experienced."

Collard has already had a two-day test at Paul Ricard and will conduct further running ahead of the season opener at Oulton Park on 11-13 April.

"After 20 years in the BTCC I was looking for a fresh challenge in motorsport," he said. "Watching my sons Ricky and Jordan's fantastic success over the last few seasons racing in GT3 and GT4 in Europe, I have definitely had my head turned and wanted to try something new."

STEFAN MACKLEY



Collard (left) will join Mitchell in a Huracan GT3 this season

Webster returns for full campaign with Team Parker

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Former Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion Josh Webster will contest a full season in the series this year.

The 2014 title winner returned to the Carrera Cup grid from the second round of last season for his first campaign in the series since 2015. After finishing runner-up in the points last year, he has targeted another title bid for this season and will remain with Team Parker Racing.

"It will be an interesting year with some new faces to the championship, but I'm looking forward to it and think I can go out there and win it this year," said Webster, who will join reigning Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion Harry King in Team Parker's Pro line-up.



Webster was Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion in 2014

"I wasn't looking at going anywhere else. A few teams approached me over the winter, but I wasn't going to move away from Team Parker. I am not the only Pro in the team now, so I can bounce off Harry and we can work together."

Another Carrera Cup race winner who will be on the grid again this year will be Lewis Plato. He finished fourth last season for Motorbase but will now switch to the Valluga Racing squad for his fifth year in the championship.

IN THE HEADLINES

STELLER ADDS TO GT STABLE

Steller Motorsport will run a 2020-spec Audi R8 LMS GT3 car in the British GT Championship this year. The squad won two races in its debut season in GT4 last year, and will operate a car in the lower class again. Team principal Gary Blackham said: "We've committed to the cars and to the championship and have filed entries in both the GT3 and GT4 classes, with work under way now to fill the seats in both cars."

MINISTOX CHAMP TO FIESTAS

One-time British champion Jenson Brickley heads a group of Ministox drivers who will switch to circuit racing this year as they compete in the Fiesta Junior Championship. Brickley, who won the British title in 2018 and added the National Points Shootout last year, will be run in Fiesta Junior by crack squad Jamsport. He will be joined on the grid by fellow short-oval graduates Briannie and George Davis, with Sid Smith also set to make the switch once he has reached the age of 14.

RADICAL CHAMPIONS RETURN

Father-and-son pairing Chris and Daniel Headlam, the reigning Radical Team Challenge champions, will remain in the series this year with Lanan Racing. Also joining the grid this season will be Audunn Gudmundsson and Tom Ashton with the Radical Works Team.

MALIN STAYS PUT IN GT5

Richardson Racing has retained Josh Malin for a second season in the Ginetta GT5 Challenge. The 2018 MaX5 champion took one win and a further five podiums last season (below) to finish fifth in the standings. "Having taken my first win last year, the goal has to be to add to that and challenge for the title, and I have a lot of hunger and desire to push for that goal during the year ahead," said Malin. Karting graduate Blake Angliss will also join the squad.



Hedley moves to single-seaters with JHR and targets title



JEP

Ginetta Junior champion Hedley

BRITISH F4

Runaway Ginetta Junior champion James Hedley will switch to single-seaters this season and is plotting a British Formula 4 title bid with the JHR Developments squad.

The 16-year-old Hedley will therefore renew his rivalry with 2019 Ginetta Junior runner-up Zak O'Sullivan, who will race with Carlin in F4 this year.

"I'm super-happy to be doing F4 because I don't know how my dad got the budget together, and [sponsor] Hendy have been great with their continued support," said Hedley. "I've always wanted to go down the single-seater route because my aim is to get to F1, and F4 is the first stepping stone.

"I've only had two days of testing in the dry and had to go to Spain for that. We went to Valencia, which is a great circuit, and I was only a tenth off the lap record. We haven't done a lot of testing, but every time we come back and go against people that have kept on testing we are fastest or on the pace. It makes me feel very confident."

Team boss Steve Hunter says it is "exceptionally good news" to sign Hedley, and added: "His confidence is going to be up [after dominating Ginetta Junior]. James should be up at the front and challenging for wins. There's still a lot for him to learn and we will take each race as they come."

Hedley joins Ginetta GT5 Challenge racer Abbi Pulling plus French and Danish F4 race winner Mikkel Grundtvig in the three-car line-up of JHR, which ran Sennan Fielding and Ayrton Simmons to the runner-up spot in British F4 in 2016 and 2018 respectively.

"I couldn't really ask for a better three drivers," said Hunter. "Abbi has astounded me and has been coming on in leaps and bounds, and Mikkel has been very impressive too."

Another likely title contender this year will be Luke Browning. He finished sixth in the standings in his rookie single-seater season last year with Richardson Racing after scoring two wins, and has switched to Fortec Motorsport for his second F4 campaign.

"The objective, of course, is to compete for the championship," said Browning, who topped the media day testing times at Donington on Monday. "I proved myself as a race winner and regular podium finisher last season, so there's no reason we can't build on that this time around."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

FIA decision opens door for halo in Formula 4

BRITISH F4

The World Motor Sport Council has rubber-stamped plans for a halo-fitted Formula 4 car to be introduced for next season.

F4 was the final part of the FIA's single-seater ladder yet to feature the halo cockpit-protection device as F1, F2, FIA F3 and Regional F3 categories all already use the concept.

It is up to individual F4 championships when they decide to introduce the new machine. They can begin using the halo-fitted car from 2021 but do not have to switch cars until 2024 at the latest.

Originally, the new second-generation car was not due to become available until 2024, with series able to fit 'halo update kits' to the existing machines prior to this point.

But that interim step has now been discarded as all categories will now make the move direct to a car that is fully designed around the halo rather than it being retrofitted.

FIA F4 was first introduced for 2014 and was created to be the initial rung on the single-seater ladder for drivers graduating from karting.

At present, there are 12 different FIA-backed F4 championships across the world, with Australia dropping out for 2020 but Argentina joining.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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GT5 Challenge runner-up will race in GT4 Supercup

Nicosia graduates to the next rung of the Ginetta ladder

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Ginetta GT5 Challenge runner-up Geri Nicosia will step up to the GT4 Supercup for this season.

Nicosia has raced in the GT5 series for the past three seasons after graduating from Ginetta Junior, and makes the move to G55 machinery with AK Motorsport.

"I'm really excited to get the season under way with the guys at AK Motorsport, moving another rung up the Ginetta ladder at the same time," said Nicosia. "Ginetta have had great success with their GT4 car around the globe, and the live ITV4 coverage is something both myself and my sponsors have become accustomed to over the years, so it's great to be back out on the big stage!"

Assetto Motorsport has also confirmed another three drivers for its GT4 Supercup programme. Joining G40 Cup champion Chris Salkeld will be fellow former G40 Cup graduates Mike West, Martin Wills and Lee Goldsmith.

Smith remains with B-M Racing

FORMULA FORD

Rory Smith will remain with B-M Racing for 2020 as he sets his sights on the BRSCC Avon Tyres National Formula Ford Championship title.

Smith was third in last year's championship standings, but will be aiming for title glory in 2020 as he remains with the Medina-equipped B-M line-up for a third consecutive year.

Speaking about his plans for the season, Smith said: "There was lots of careful consideration over the winter as to what we wanted to do with the season this year and I think it just made the most sense just to go for the National campaign again.

"There's no doubt in my mind in terms of which team to go with. I think we'll definitely put a good campaign together in the coming year."

B-M Racing team boss, Andy Brickles added: "We're very excited for Rory to come back on the squad. I think last year he had pace to challenge for the title but we had a very unlucky year."

Smith forms part of a three-car line-up in the National championship for B-M, with the team confirming that Jamie Sharp and Tom Ward will race alongside him.

Meanwhile, American 19-year-old Grant Palmer will drive for Cliff Dempsey Racing in this year's National FF1600 Championship. Palmer joins fellow American teenager Bryce Aron and last year's Formula Ford Festival winner Jonathan Browne at the team, which continues to run Ray chassis.

ROB HANSFORD & STEVE WHITFIELD

IN THE HEADLINES

ALFA ROMEO CELEBRATED

The 110th anniversary of Alfa Romeo will be marked at the Silverstone Classic via two celebratory races. More than 50 entries are expected, with the grid spanning the 1950s to the mid-1980s. Organised by the Historic Racing Drivers Club, which runs its own Classic Alfa Challenge, there will be a race apiece on the Saturday and Sunday of the event, which takes place on 31 July-2 August.

YORKSHIRE FESITVAL IS GO

The Yorkshire Motorsport Festival has been officially launched and will take place on 26-28 June near Holmfirth. "There are some great events of this type in the UK," said event joint managing director Michael McErlain, "but they are all based somewhere near London. A few like-minded enthusiasts thought that something of this nature was long overdue in the north and committed our time and funding to get it off the ground." The competitive focal point of the Festival is the Wolfstones Speed Hillclimb - Yorkshire's first closed-road speed event this century.

SCOTT BACK IN RALLYCROSS

Two-time British Rallycross runner-up Andy Scott will return to the championship this season. The Scot guided three-time British Rally champion Mark Higgins to the BRX title in 2018, but stepped back because it was 'pretty clear that the series was not being properly policed'. But with new management 5 Nations at the helm, he will return at the wheel of his Peugeot 208 RX.

VARRONE TEAMS UP WITH CDR

Argentinian Nicolas Varrone will start the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship this season with Chris Dittmann Racing. Varrone (below) competed in three rounds last season with Hillspeed, taking a win at Spa and a further podium at Silverstone. "It's been a long winter, so I can't wait to get the new season started at Oulton Park," he said.





Willmott has stepped back from frontline GT racing after crash

JBLOXHAM

Ex-GT racer Willmott to share Studebaker with Jordan

HISTORICS

Long-time GT driver Adrian Willmott has called time on his frontline racing career following a heavy impact in one of Century Motorsport's BMWs during testing last season, but will continue to contest historic events with the ex-Nick Whale Studebaker Lark Daytona that he acquired over the winter.

The 2002 Formula Palmer Audi champion, who competed in Formula Ford 1600 and F3 in the 1980s, enjoyed his first run in the Studebaker at Goodwood last Wednesday at the Historic Racing Drivers Club test day in wet and greasy conditions ahead of the Pierpoint Cup race at this month's 78th Members' meeting.

"The car has been rebuilt and re-liveried by JRT [Jordan Racing Team] and I'm looking forward to sharing it with Mike [Jordan]," said Willmott. "It was a bit hairy out there this morning, and I'm not sure that we'll be able to match the Ford Mustangs, but it's going to be fun trying."

Willmott, 57, has extensive experience of competing in Aston Martins having contested the British GT championship with a DBRS9 GT3 for three seasons between 2008-11, then saddled a Vantage GT4 and raced a period DB4 GT at home and at Le Mans classic events on numerous occasions.

He had been due to share Century's BMW M6 GT3 with 2018 GT4 champion Jack Mitchell last year but the testing crash limited Willmott to just racing in the season-opening Oulton Park event.

MARCUS PYE

Bathurst winner Murphy makes historic debut

HISTORICS



LAMBERT

Bennett debuted Elfin 600B at Phillip Island

Four-time Bathurst 1000 winner Greg Murphy, 47, was among the stars of a 500-strong entry in the Victorian Historic Racing Register's Phillip Island Classic Festival of Motorsport.

On his historic debut, the New Zealander qualified compatriot Peter Sturgeon's JPS BMW E30 M3 fifth for the popular Group A & C Touring Car contest and finished third in four of the five races. Polesitter Brian Sala and Chris Stillwell, son of Australian legend Bib, won two apiece in Ford Sierra RS500s and Duncan McKellar the finale in an M3.

Murphy also aced two of the five-litre Touring Car Super Sprints in a Holden Monaro. Gary Collins (Holden Commodore VE) won the other in which Murphy was third, ahead of event patron Larry Perkins, the Australian Formula Ford champ and F1 racer in a Commodore.

Jonathan Miles, driving a Van Diemen RF89, scored a five-race clean sweep in the 50-car FF1600 contest for which Briton Richard Tarling qualified Ecurie Australie's Quest FF86 fifth, and grabbed third in the opening stanza. The former UK Historic champion was joined by Adrian Reynard (Reynard FF84), Chris Hodgen (Swift DB1) and Don Boyack (RF89).

Laurie Bennett debuted the ex-Garrie Cooper Elfin 600B in the M&O pack from which Andrew Newall topped the sportscar group first time out in his Chevron B6.

MARCUS PYE





Lickorish prefers all sorts

One-make racing is becoming an increasingly significant part of the club scene. It's great that some grids are booming, but the spice of variety must be savoured

STEPHEN LICKORISH

It's an attention-grabbing picture. Accompanying Matt Kew's analysis of the success of the Classic Sports Car Club in our recent edition of the national racing supplement (Autosport, 27 February, page 11) is an image from one of the club's earliest events. Our resident Snetterton snapper Richard Styles has not just taken a nice pack shot, it's the stunning array of cars that are included within the picture that grabs the eye.

Leading the way is Chris Beighton in a Sunbeam Tiger, there is the heavily modified BMW E30 of Clive Anderson in second, a trio of Chevrolet Camaros, Bob Searles's Aston Martin DBS V8, a TVR Griffith, a Chevy Corvette and so on. It really is quite a sight from a club meeting. And it got me thinking.

Club racing used to be the preserve of engineers tinkering with their own concepts in their garages or modifying existing machines into some truly unique 'specials'. But now, one-make racing has become ever more prevalent and sights like that Snetterton picture are becoming fewer and further between.

It is understandable that single-make championships are becoming increasingly common. After all, at a time of rising costs, it's far cheaper to go out and buy a Citroen C1 and convert it to race spec than develop your own prototype machine. It also limits the number of variables when you're racing, becoming more about driver ability than how well the car is designed.

> **"It's far cheaper to buy and convert a Citroen C1 than develop your own prototype"**

The racing is often closer too, and more accessible.

To put it into context, out of the 150 different English series that held at least four race events last year, 70 of them were one-make — that's 47% of the total. As well as the plethora of different Mazda MX-5 or BMW categories, that number also includes a diverse range of categories, from the Ferrari Challenge UK to EnduroKa. Alongside the 99 C1s on the grid for the 24-hour race at Silverstone last year, many of the other one-make series attract very large entries. In fact, the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Mazda MX-5 Championship for Mk1 models had the largest average of any UK series last season, with 57 cars spread across its two grids, and the Compact Cup is another top performer, averaging 40.

But this was certainly not the case in decades gone by. One-make categories used to be very much the exception to the rule, particularly at a time when a much larger proportion of club series were for single-seaters. One of the rare exceptions was the Ford Escort Mexico series, while occasional celebrity races were held with everyone competing in the same machinery.

It's also interesting to compare the average grids of the 70 one-make series with the 80 multi-marque divisions. The numbers are actually very close. The less prescriptive series lead the way, perhaps unsurprisingly as by their nature they are open to a far wider range of cars, and feature an average of 23 cars per race. As for the single-make categories, their 2019 average is 21. But before moving on from the stats, it's also worth bearing in mind the impact the CSCC has on this. None of its core series are one-make and, given its popularity, it has quite an influence on the figures. Take out its categories from the equation and the averages are even closer as the multi-marque value falls to 22.

The increasing popularity of single-make racing can be seen among the categories that have recently been launched. Of the 20 classes either started last year or due to begin in 2020, 11 are one-make: 55%. More evidence of the direction of travel club motorsport is heading in.

Even in historics, changes have been noticed. Increasingly, single-make races are being run for cars that would have never competed on their own in period. Special celebration events have filled grids, such as the Jaguar Classic Challenge and the Historic Racing Drivers Club's Classic Alfa Challenge offering.

There is clearly no denying that one-make racing is becoming an increasingly important part of the UK's club motorsport scene. And that brings both positives and negatives. If one-make series are more affordable and attract a new generation of drivers, then that is most certainly to be commended and welcomed. But does that mean multi-make categories have to be expensive? Certainly not. Take the Clubmans Sports Prototype series that also featured in the February supplement. That includes a variety of constructors — even if most entries are Mallocks — and yet it's a very cost-effective way of going racing.

One of the other problems is that some one-make series have a limited shelf life. As soon as a car becomes older, drivers may want to switch to more modern machinery and that can be hard to do if it's a very prescriptive one-model class. But that's not a universal problem, as some categories cater for a variety of models from one manufacturer rather than just one.

What would be a larger problem is if the kind of image from that 2004 CSCC meeting became a thing of the past. Club motorsport should be a place to celebrate a diverse range of machinery and, alongside a bunch of popular one-make contests, long may that continue.



LOOKED LIKE A SHARK, HANDLED LIKE A WHALE



BOOK REVIEW
SHARKNOSE V6
RRP €124.90

When did Ferrari reach its Formula 1 nadir? A winless 2014 season in which it was beaten to third in the constructors' standings by Williams deserves a mention, and the team only mustered a sole podium during a dreadful 1973 season. But arguably 1962 was even more shambolic, with the abject failure of the beautiful 'Sharknose' 156 V6 — the subject of a new book published by McKlein.

Coming the year after Ferrari had stolen a march on the British teams for the start of the new 1.5-litre era, when only an inspired Stirling Moss could lay a glove on the scarlet cars, in 1962 Ferrari failed to win and was totally left behind by BRM and Lotus. Reigning champion and team leader Phil Hill finished in the top three in the first three rounds, but scored no further points as Ferrari fell to sixth in the points behind Cooper, Lola and Porsche.

Ferrari was forced to miss Rouen due to an industrial strike, and only one 156 appeared at Aintree, where Hill retired. Ricardo Rodriguez's sixth at the Nurburgring was little better. An incensed Enzo Ferrari sent an armada of five cars to Monza, but Willy Mairesse lost third place on the final lap to Bruce McLaren's Cooper. Ferrari was absent from the last two races, and rumour has it that the Commendatore ordered the cars to be scrapped and buried under the factory floor.

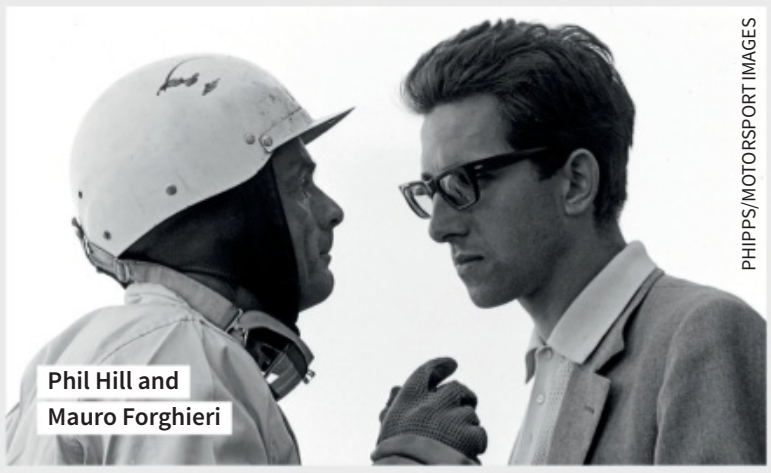
Authors Jorg-Thomas Fodisch and Rainer Rossbach leave readers in no doubt as to where they believe the blame lies. On the eve of the 1962 season, chief engineer Carlo Chiti and six other senior staff left in protest at Laura Ferrari's constant interference in the affairs of her husband's team, leaving a 26-year-old Mauro Forghieri in charge of modifications.

In a foreward to the book, Forghieri admits that he didn't feel confident enough to force through the changes required. The 156's handling flaws, masked by a superior engine in 1961, were brutally exposed.

The authors draw heavily from contemporary reports by Gunther Molter, Richard von Frankenberg and Heinz Ulrich Wieselmann in German magazine *Auto Motor und Sport*. There's also Wieselmann's damning appraisal of Ferrari's performances at Monaco in 1962 — "It understeers very strongly, the driver does not so much steer the car as force it... But it still has a bit more power than the others."

Weighing in at a hefty 432 pages, the book covers all grand prix appearances — including non-championship races — of the Sharknose cars in the 1960-62 seasons, and goes in-depth on the battle between Hill and team-mate Wolfgang von Trips in 1961 that ended in the count's death at Monza. Impressively, it also charts the fortunes of the car's Sharknose cousins, 246SP and 196SP, in the world sportscar championship between 1961 and its final appearance as a works entry on the 1963 Targa Florio, with a full set of results.


McKLEIN


PHIPPS/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Phil Hill and Mauro Forghieri

The major drivers of the period are profiled by Hartmut Lehbrink, and each entry includes the reflections of Enzo Ferrari himself from his memoirs. On 'Wild Willy' Mairesse, the Old Man is particularly blunt: "In a way, he was the ideal test driver because he subjected the car to such stress and strain that its defects would emerge within a few laps..."

Technical staff, too – including engine guru Vittorio Jano, car builder Medardo Fantuzzi and Forghieri – are given detailed profiles, although the most space is afforded to Chiti, who went on to co-found the disastrous ATS effort.

One of the book's strongest assets is that its photos, many of which were previously unreleased, are in colour, captured by legendary French photographer Bernard Cahier. His shot of a drifting Richie Ginther at Reims in 1961 is especially worthy.

Two closing chapters deal with private projects conducted by Jan Birkens and Jason Stuart Wright, the former commissioning a replica of the yellow-liveried 156 that Olivier Gendebien raced at Spa in 1961 – widely regarded as the definitive 156 copy – and its new owner's efforts to make it even more authentic.

It's anorak heaven, and a well-deserving addition to any self-respecting Ferrari fan's collection of coffee-table tomes.

JAMES NEWBOLD

autosport.com/podcast



The novel coronavirus has wreaked havoc on the 2020 motorsport calendar. Formula 1 has announced a race behind closed doors, Formula E has officially called off two of its events, while the MotoGP premier class missed its season opener in Qatar altogether. The Autosport correspondents discuss the unprecedented impact that COVID-19 has had already on the racing season.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Australian Grand Prix
Formula 1 World Championship
Round 1/22
Albert Park, Australia
15 March
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sun 0400
TV **Highlights** Channel 4, Sun 1410, Sky Sports F1, Sun 1600

Australian Supercars
Round 2/15
Albert Park, Australia
13-15 March

S5000
Round 1/7
Albert Park, Australia
13-15 March

Rally Mexico
World Rally Championship
Round 3/13
Leon, Mexico
12-15 March
TV **Live** BT Sport 3, Sat 1700, Red Bull TV, Sat 2300, BT Sport ESPN, Sun 1700
TV **Highlights** Red Bull TV, Sat 0400, BT Sport 3, Sat 0600, Red Bull TV, Sun 0400, BT Sport 2, Sun 0430, BT Sport 1, Mon 0300, Red Bull TV, Mon 0400, ITV4, Tue 2230
Live coverage on wrc.com
All live service via WRC+

IndyCar Series
Round 1/16
St Petersburg, USA
15 March
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sun 1830

Indy Lights
Round 1/10
St Petersburg, USA
14-15 March

NASCAR Cup
Round 5/36
Atlanta, USA
15 March
TV **Live** Premier Sports 2, Sun 1730

UK MOTORSPORT

British Rally Championship
Round 2/6
West Cork Rally
14-15 March



ANDRE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

HOSPITALITY AT THE HOME OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

PROMOTIONAL FEATURE



For British motorsport fans, some of the best news of last year came when Silverstone Circuit chiefs announced that a five-year contract extension for the Formula 1 race had been agreed with Liberty Media.

It meant that the British Grand Prix will remain at the historic venue and on the F1 calendar until 2024 at the earliest, joining MotoGP, the British Superbike Championship and the British Touring Car Championship as the headline events at the circuit.

MATCH Hospitality also reached an agreement of its own with Silverstone Circuit: to become its Official Hospitality Partner, offering packages that cater for all budgets and race day experiences.



MATCH Hospitality's Tsarsky Lounge product at the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™

Founded in 2007, MATCH Hospitality is a global industry leader in the development of commercial hospitality programmes for major sporting events, including the Nitto ATP Finals and the FIFA World Cup™, for which it is the Official Hospitality Rights Holder.

This latest tie-up with Silverstone means that MATCH Hospitality will rejuvenate some of the circuit's most famous hospitality spaces for this year's event, while introducing a range of new experiences. With unrivalled views of the track, guests can watch drivers and teams tackle some of the fastest and most challenging corners in British motorsport.

MATCH Hospitality has announced a range of hospitality categories for the British Grand Prix, each with its own particular benefits. Trackside provides the most casual race day experience, with a venue overlooking the high-speed Copse corner, where fans can enjoy a street-food menu and drinks.

"MATCH HOSPITALITY WILL REJUVENATE SOME OF THE CIRCUIT'S MOST FAMOUS HOSPITALITY SPACES FOR THIS YEAR'S EVENT, WHILE INTRODUCING A RANGE OF NEW EXPERIENCES."

The Ignition Club is the location of choice for racing enthusiasts, offering views of six corners – Copse through to Becketts on the outside of the circuit and then the Farm to Aintree infield section – and an extensive daily menu that features top British cuisine.

The most luxury hospitality package on offer at the 2020 British Grand Prix is Apex House. It's billed as "the ultimate dining experience featuring bespoke dishes created by a soon-to-be-announced celebrity chef". There's also the prestigious Fusion Lounge, which includes access to the exclusive Race Day After Party.

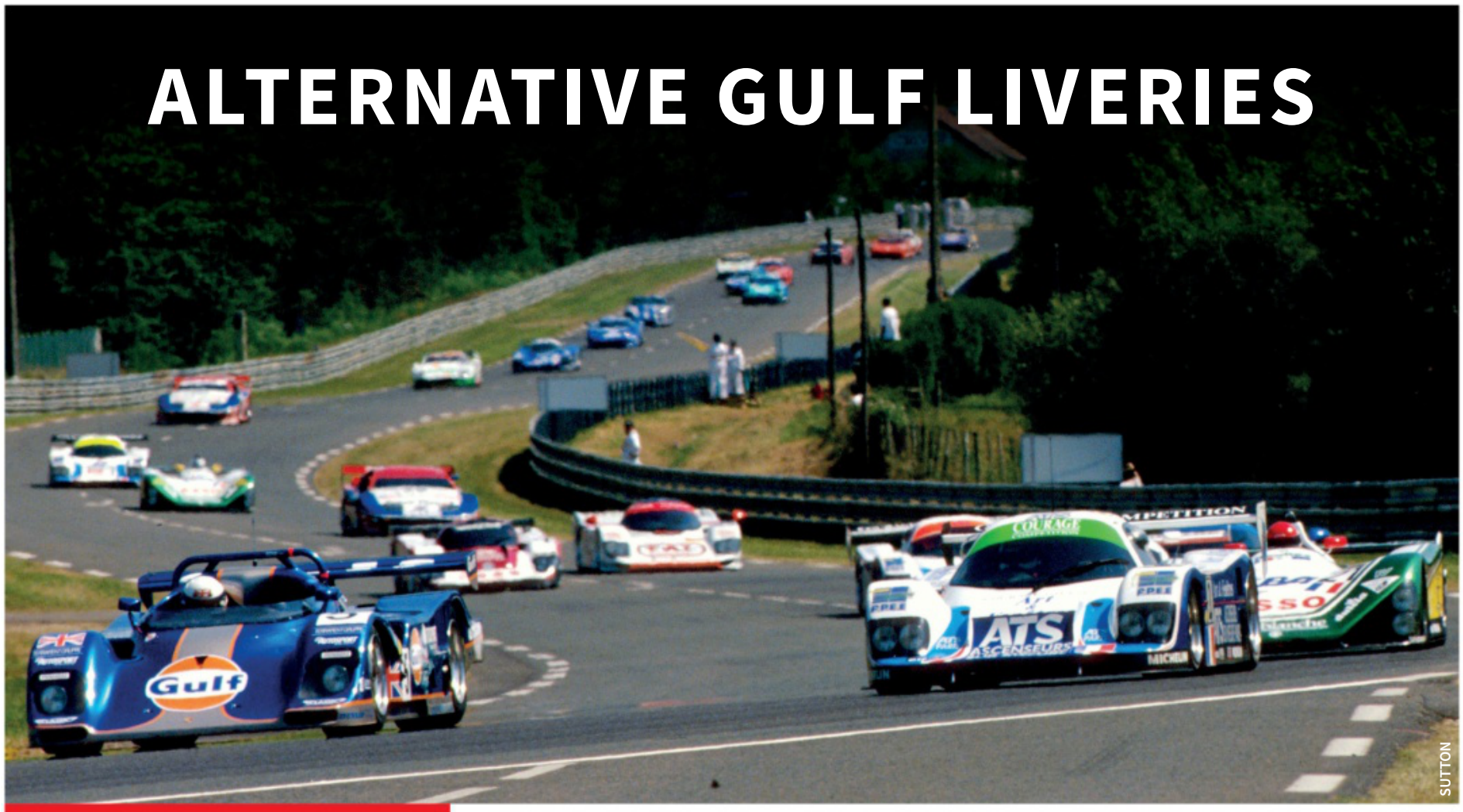
To view the full range of experiences at the Formula 1 Pirelli British Grand Prix 2020 or the MotoGP™, BSB and BTCC with MATCH Hospitality, head to **www.silverstone.co.uk/hospitality**

You can also make a booking via the website or get in contact by email (**silverstone@match-hospitality.com**) and telephone (**+44 (0) 20 3763 6130**).



TOP FIVE

ALTERNATIVE GULF LIVERIES



As Gulf Racing Fuels returns to motorsport, here are five times those famous blue-and-orange colours adorned something that wasn't quite a Ford GT40, Porsche 917 or McLaren F1

MATT KEW

PHOTOGRAPHY
motorsport IMAGES

5 2013 SUBARU IMPREZA

Finnish national rally driver Juha Salo (no relation to Mika) frequently joined the World Rally Championship fraternity for his home round. He enjoyed sustained backing from Gulf, which led to his Mitsubishi E9, E10, Subaru Impreza and Peugeot 208 T16 all wearing the official livery. We've gone for the Impreza in this instance, though, because Salo did finish the 2013 event in 14th, as opposed to crashing out.



4 2016 AGURI FE SPARK

Without any hint of irony, Gulf struck a deal with the Aguri Formula E team in 2016. All-electric cars wearing the branding of a petroleum company… But this venture into FE formed part of Gulf's slow recovery after a calamitous merger with Chevron at the end of the last century. And the tie-up had some logic as Gulf provided the cars of Antonio Felix da Costa and Salvador Duran with lubricants for the powertrain.



3 2001 AUDI R8

For 2001, ex-Formula 1 driver Stefan Johansson bagged Gulf sponsorship for his Johansson Motorsports-entered Audi R8. Most notably, he sewed up the European Le Mans Series crown with one win. Johansson contested only half of the 10-round American campaign but still ranked ninth in the LMP900 standings. At Le Mans, however, electrical gremlins forced a retirement after only 35 laps.



2 1976 TYRRELL 007

Privateer Alessandro Pesenti-Rossi entered four Formula 1 World Championship races during the 1976 season. He made his debut at the Nurburgring in dark-blue Gulf colours before switching to the lighter set-up. Driving a Tyrrell 007, first introduced two years earlier, Pesenti-Rossi didn't score a point, but did qualify three times and finished each of those races. His best result was 11th in the Austrian GP.



1 1994 KREMER K8

Topping this list is a car that tipped its hat to Gulf's motorsport origins. The Kremer K8 employed a darker blue – as seen when the company first sponsored a car for the 1967 Daytona 24 Hours – when it finished sixth in the 1994 Le Mans 24 Hours. The K8 also reunited Derek Bell with the famous brand, after he'd won the race alongside Jacky Ickx in a Mirage GR8 in 1975 to conclude a three-year stint with Gulf.



FROM THE ARCHIVE

There's something endlessly fascinating, vicariously thrilling and even a little terrifying about images from a very particular era of rallying that would likely give a present-day crowd marshal a dose of the screaming abdabs. Here's one such: Jean-Luc Therier and co-driver Michel Vial in full, spectacular flight in their Porsche 911 SC on Rally Portugal in 1981, the local fans revelling in the up-close craziness. The French duo, who'd won the previous year's Tour de Corse, fell by the wayside on SS24 of 46 after a fuel system failure.

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McKLEIN
PHOTOGRAPHY



A profile of a future racing star

12 March 1965

One half of the pair that would go on to secure Porsche's first of a record 19 Le Mans 24 Hours victories was profiled by Autosport this week in 1965.

Richard Attwood was still climbing through the ranks in 1965, racing full time in British F2 with Midland Racing Partnership and regularly starting F1 races with Tim Parnell in a Lotus-BRM.

Attwood's first car race at Goodwood, in a Standard 10 in 1959, was discussed in Bill Gavin's piece, before it expanded on his time in Formula Junior and F2.

"There's an air of solidity about Richard Attwood," wrote Gavin. "Nobody expresses fear about Richard, and all recognise that it is ability, a well-matured ability, that gives him the pace to challenge the best on those rare occasions when he has a really competitive car.

"Richard's attitude to racing is refreshingly relaxed, as is his attitude to life; this makes him splendid company."

Attwood described his unsuccessful 1964 campaign with MRP: "Up 'till last year, I had always treated with suspicion drivers who blamed their mediocre performance on their cars, but before long I found myself doing just that. Our cars were OK until everybody got their machines developed.

"We didn't bother to develop ours because they were only meant as a stop-gap until [Lola founder/designer] Eric [Broadley] produced the monocoque F2 car. But Lola was too much involved on the Ford GT programme and what small improvements we did try on the Type 54s only made them worse. It really was a disastrous year."

Things would improve for Attwood, who would go on to win Le Mans with Hans Herrmann in a 917 in 1970.

Elsewhere in the 12 March 1965 issue, the Ford GT's maiden international win in the Daytona 2000Km was reviewed and editor Gregor Grant previewed the final year of F1's 1.5-litre formula.

CRAIG WOOLLARD



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