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26 NOVEMBER 2020

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Ricciardo
on leaving
Renault and
proving he's
still got it**

**'I've learned
how to build
something in the
last two years'**

RICCIARDO

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TRACK TEST SPECIAL

**Driving the new GT2 racers
and a Red Bull F1 title winner**





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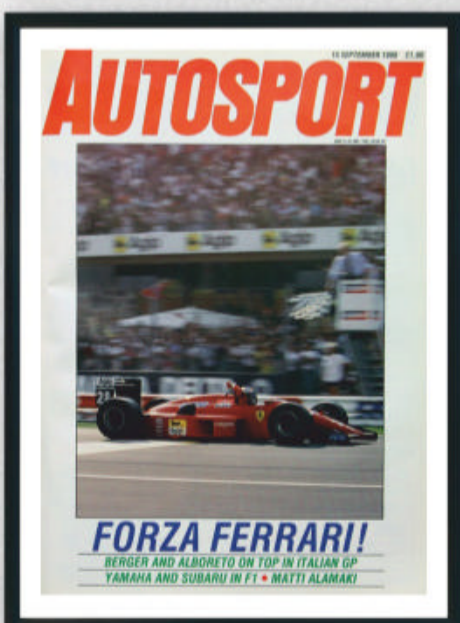
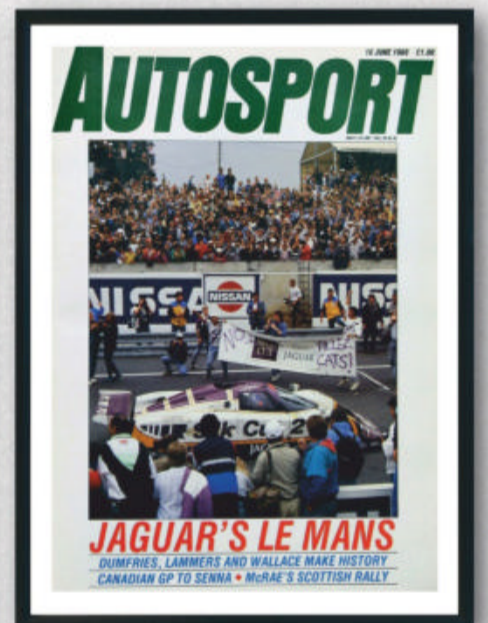
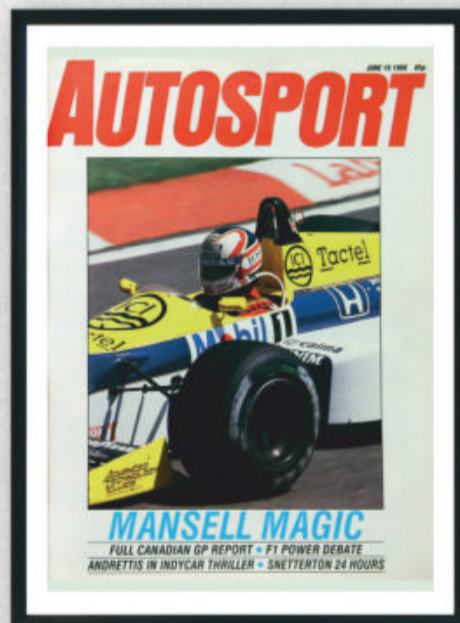
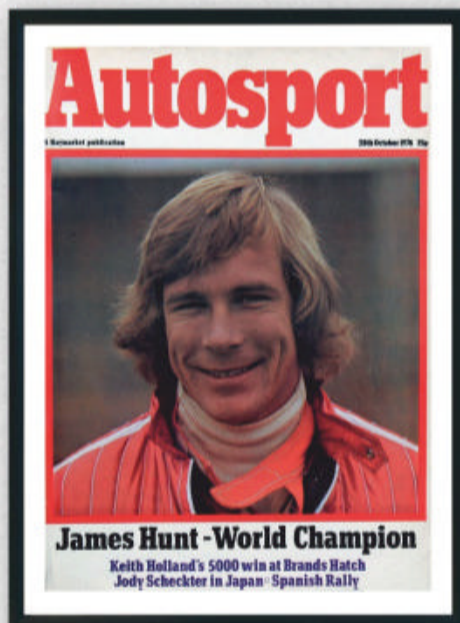
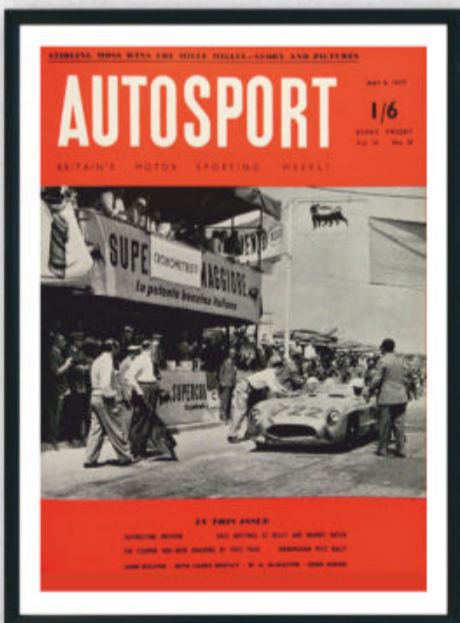
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real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Data correct at Image for illustrative purposes only.

Autosport 70

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Still looking for his chance to beat Lewis

Daniel Ricciardo has been one of Formula 1's top drivers for several years now. Since getting the better of four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel at Red Bull in 2014, the likeable Australian has been worthy of a title tilt, if only he had the right machinery.

Red Bull never quite provided that as the Mercedes steamroller got going in the early years of the turbo-hybrid era. Ricciardo then matched up very well to rising star Max Verstappen, something that people now appreciate more given how much his successors have struggled.

Ricciardo's move to Renault was bold and risky, one that he felt he had to take given Verstappen's growing status at Red Bull. Renault hasn't been able to provide Ricciardo with a winning car but, as he shows in his interview with Alex Kalinauckas on page 20, the 31-year-old has been able to learn while also underlining his class.

Ricciardo's move to McLaren for next year won't guarantee success, but the team is on the up – and is getting a driver it *knows* can compete with the best. Let's just hope the much-vaunted 2022 rule changes level the playing field so Ricciardo can prove it.

- Our 70th birthday special is still available. All current print subscribers will receive a copy of the 196-page celebration for free. If you wish to order a copy, please go to: autosport.com/autosport70th



Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
3 DECEMBER**

Bahrain GP report, WEC and BTCC reviews, and our Christmas gift guide feature next week



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James Moy/Renault F1 Team

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RED BULL WANTS IMMEDIATE HONDA DECISION



RED BULL

FORMULA 1

Red Bull aims to make a decision on its future Formula 1 engine supply by the end of this month as it seeks a freeze on powerplant development beyond 2021.

Red Bull and sister team AlphaTauri are currently without an engine supplier from 2022 after existing partner Honda announced at the start of October that it would be quitting F1 at the end of next year. Instead of seeking an alternative supplier, Red Bull is eager to take on Honda's power units to use beyond 2021, on the condition that it can agree to a freeze on engine development with the other manufacturers.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said there had been "quite productive discussions" with both F1 and the FIA about engine plans in recent weeks, and that it would be wasteful to let Honda's power units go unused.

"Obviously there's some key elements that need to be in place before making any commitment on future engine plans, regarding engine freezes and so on," said Horner. "Our preferred option would be to continue with the power unit that is in the car next year, obviously rebadged as something else, if we can make an agreement with Honda regarding the use of the IP and the product moving forward.

"It would be a great shame to see those engines just in a warehouse somewhere in Japan. Subject to what the regulations are, the preferred route would be to find an agreement to continue with those power units."

A rebadging of Honda's power units could mean a revival of the TAG Heuer name on Red Bull's engines.

Amid the team's fall-out with former supplier Renault in 2015, Red Bull rebadged the power units under the name of the watch brand from 2016-18 – officially racing as 'Red Bull Racing TAG-Heuer' – before linking up with Honda last year.

But Red Bull has faced opposition from its rivals over the proposed engine freeze since opening discussions. Although Mercedes is in favour of putting a halt to development, both Ferrari and Renault have stated they would not be in favour of the move.

Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto said last month

"RENAULT AND FERRARI HAVE BEEN VERY DIRECT, SO I DON'T SEE A FREEZE HAPPENING"

that F1's priority concerning engines had to be an outline of the next generation of power unit, which is set to be introduced in 2026. Ferrari CEO Louis Camilleri was more emphatic, saying the Italian manufacturer was "firmly against freezing power units", believing it to be "against the spirit of F1".

Renault F1 boss Cyril Abiteboul said that he was also against the plans as Renault felt engine development could be "a very important platform for us".

In the face of this opposition, Red Bull has been lobbying for F1 and the FIA to push through an engine freeze by its own accord, highlighting its importance in the best interests of the series. But Mercedes chief Toto Wolff said without a change in position from Ferrari or

TOP 10 HORRIBLE ENGINE PSEUDONYMS

OK, if you're reading this mag we can assume you're a purist. So, like us, if Red Bull rebadge Honda engines, you'll probably still call them 'Hondas'. Here are more atrocities from marketing people who use words like 'brands' and 'synergies'...

1 PLAYLIFE**1998-2000: Benetton**

As if the Renault V10's metamorphosis to Mecachrome and Supertec wasn't cruel enough, this conjured up images of Benetton's Flavio Briatore shmoozing on a yacht in Monaco. Truly awful.

2 EUROPEAN**2001: Minardi**

Paul Stoddart bought Minardi for 2001 and renamed its Ford Zetec-R (see #8) after his European Aviation company. Ironic considering Stoddart isn't even European, but there you go.

3 ACER**2001: Prost**

At first hearing it sounded like a tribute to 1978 Scotland World Cup hero Asa Hartford, but the French team's Ferrari V10s were actually so named in honour of a Taiwanese computer company.

4 TAG HEUER**2016-18: Red Bull**

Red Bull brought back the 'TAG' name (see #5) for a redubbing of its marriage of (in)convenience with the Renault V6, and made it even worse by 'tagging' Heuer onto the end. Back again in 2022?

5 TAG**1983-87: McLaren**

This jewel of a Porsche V6 turbo was named after Mansour Ojjeh's Techniques d'Avant Garde, but sounded like a kids' game, a scratchy thing in your clothing, and the German for 'day'.

**6 PETRONAS****1997-2005: Sauber**

We're giving this one a little leeway because at least a fuel company – in this case Sauber's title sponsor – is a proper racing supplier. But everyone knew these were Ferrari V10s.

7 SUPERTEC**1999-2000: BAR/Williams/Arrows**

The Renault V10 had already been renamed Mecachrome, and now took on another new guise. It just sounded like two 'racey'-sounding words being welded into a ghastly whole.

8 FONDMETAL**2000: Minardi**

Ah, Minardi again...! Italian wheel magnate Gabriele Rumi had F1 form as the saviour of Osella (although the Fomet name was sick-inducing). This was a redub of the Ford Zetec-R V10.

9 ASIATECH**2001-02: Arrows/Minardi**

This was at least an attempt to get a genuine Asian F1 team up and running. But it was undertaken with a renaming of Peugeot V10 engines, which weren't much good as Peugeots.

10 MEGATRON**1987-88: Arrows/Ligier**

It sounded like a 1960s idea of futurism, but this new name for BMW turbos – in deference to a subsidiary of Arrows backer USF&G – wore better than expected over its two years.



Red Bull wants to keep its Honda engines, but is hoping for development freeze

Renault, an engine freeze was off the table.

"I think two of the power unit manufacturers not agreeing means it can't come into force [and] can't be implemented," said Wolff. "They will have their reasons why they are rejecting that. I guess we also are apprehensive of the situation Honda and Red Bull are in. Renault and Ferrari have been very direct with their positions, so unfortunately I don't see [a freeze] happening."

Should Red Bull be unable to get an engine freeze agreed to, its most likely alternative would be to rekindle its former partnership with Renault. Under the sporting regulations, Renault would be obliged to supply Red Bull and AlphaTauri with power units should the teams lodge a request with the FIA, although requiring this regulatory trigger is thought to be unlikely.

With teams permitted to begin development on their 2022 car designs from 1 January, Red Bull is hoping to imminently finalise its engine supply plans beyond next year. Horner said that while Red Bull technical chief Adrian Newey was content with leaving a decision late, the team ideally needed to know what it would be doing by the end of this month.

"Adrian's always the last of the late brakkers on those kinds of things, so he'll wait out for whatever the best option is," said Horner. "But of course there are some practical things that need to be decided. Engine stuff is such a long lead time. If we were to take on a project like that, then it's quite a lot of work behind the scenes that would obviously need to happen. Really by the end of this month, we need to be firming up on a position."

LUKE SMITH



Top Audi team WRT plans move to LMP2 for Le Mans

WEC

The Belgian WRT squad is aiming to add Le Mans 24 Hours honours to its bulging CV of victories in the big sportscar enduros. The multiple outright winner of the Spa and Nurburgring 24-hour classics with Audi GT3 machinery is working on a move into the LMP2 ranks of the World Endurance Championship in 2021.

Team boss Vincent Vosse believes he is closing on a deal to run a car in P2 next season. Le Mans is the focus of WRT's aspirations, which is why it is favouring the WEC over the European Le Mans Series. "We're close to an LMP2 programme," said Vosse. "The main thing is that we have to do Le Mans, because it is so commercially important, and our only way to guarantee that is to race in the WEC."

Vosse, whose team made a one-off in the ELMS at Spa in 2016, explained that should the plans come to fruition, he would run an ORECA 07 chassis: "Clearly if you want to be competitive, especially if you are just entering, you have to run an ORECA."

A move to P2 by WRT wouldn't necessarily come at the expense of its programme in the DTM, according to Vosse. He didn't rule out continuing in the German-based series after its switch to GT3 machinery next season.

"It would be a tough job to do them both, but we like challenges," said Vosse, who suggested that WRT's standalone DTM operation (above) could switch to the P2 programme and that its GT3 team could field cars in

the new-look German-based series. "We are talking about the DTM: we know GT3 well, so it would make sense to be there."

The LMP2 grid in the WEC looks likely to hold up whether or not WRT makes the field. Both United Autosports and TDS Racing, which runs the Racing Team Nederland entry, have aspirations to expand their programmes next season.

"We're trying hard to have two cars next year and we haven't run out of opportunities yet," said United boss Richard Dean, whose team would also run at least one more car from its ELMS squad at Le Mans.

RTN looks certain to return to the WEC after putting a plan to move to the IMSA SportsCar Championship for 2021 on hold, according to team sporting director Mark Koense. "The idea was to go to IMSA next year, but COVID has got in the way of that: if we were going to do it, we already need to be preparing now," he said. "It's not fully decided yet, but we expect to be back in the WEC."

TDS boss Xavier Combet explained that he is working on a second car to join the RTN entry. The Jota Sport squad is also aiming to field a pair of ORECA's under its own banner after the likely end of its programme with Jackie Chan DC Racing.

DragonSpeed has already announced its return to the WEC with a line-up including two-time Indianapolis 500 winner Juan Pablo Montoya, while ELMS regular Inter Europol is also graduating to the world championship.

GARY WATKINS

Ganassi back in IMSA top flight

IMSA SPORTSCAR

Chip Ganassi Racing will return to the top flight of North American sportscar racing in 2021 after a five-season hiatus. The team that took five Grand-Am drivers' titles between 2004 and 2012 will field a Cadillac in the Daytona Prototype international ranks of the IMSA SportsCar Championship next year.

Ganassi is moving back to the top class of IMSA with one of the General Motors brand's Dallara-based DPi-V.Rs after four seasons running the Ford GT in 2016-19 and then a year on the sidelines of sportscar racing in 2020. It is looking to rekindle the success at the sharp end of the grid that took it to six overall Daytona 24 Hours victories and 46 outright wins across Grand-Am and IMSA in a 12-year stint fielding Lexus, BMW and then Ford-powered Riley Daytona Prototypes.

"We can't wait to get back to IMSA and fight for the overall win after several years in the GT Le Mans class," said Ganassi (below), whose team took class honours at Daytona with Ford in 2017 and 2018. "Our relationship with General Motors has expanded from the NASCAR Cup Series and we couldn't be happier. Partnering with Cadillac is a tremendous opportunity for our team and we want to start delivering for them in January at Daytona."

Cadillac vice-president Rory Harvey welcomed Ganassi to the fold, describing the team as a "great addition to our IMSA line-up". The team joins Action Express Racing and JDC-Miller Motorsports on the Caddy roster for 2021.

Ganassi has yet to announce drivers for its sportscar return.

Meanwhile, Wayne Taylor Racing has recruited ex-Penske ace Ricky Taylor and Filipe Albuquerque for its switch to the Acura model in 2021. Alexander Rossi and Helio Castroneves join for the enduros.

GARY WATKINS





FRENCH GT Aurelien Panis was one of four sons of French Formula 1 race winners in the top 10 in the first race of last weekend's finale of the GT4-based French GT series at Paul Ricard. The difference is he shared the race-winning CMR-run Toyota GR Supra with his dad – 1996 Monaco GP victor Olivier Panis! Behind the Panis pair were Nicolas Prost (fourth, Alpine-Renault A110), Anthony Beltoise (ninth, Audi R8 LMS) and Adrien Tambay (10th, Audi). Ricardo van der Ende, the 1999 Formula Ford Festival winner, clinched the Silver title with Benjamin Lessennes in a BMW M4. **Photograph by SRO/Bogaerts**

Ogier defers retirement to stay with Toyota

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Six-time World Rally champion Sebastien Ogier will stay with Toyota in the World Rally Championship in 2021, deferring his plans to retire from the top echelon of rallying for at least another year.

Autosport revealed back in July that Ogier had expressed his intention to contest the 2021 WRC season with Toyota, and that the Japanese marque was not willing to look for drivers outside its current line-up. It has now been confirmed that Ogier, who joined from Citroen for 2020, will stay for a second season. He is again expected to team up with Elfyn Evans and Kalle Rovanpera.

“This 2020 year was not as long as expected, I would say,” said Ogier. “We had a short season with a few rallies. I really enjoy working with the team, enjoy driving this car. I’m very happy to finally announce and confirm that I will drive one more year in WRC with Toyota Gazoo Racing.”

Ogier stated last year that he would retire from the series at the end of the 2020 season, but the impact the coronavirus has had on the WRC calendar has prompted him

to extend his career. The 2020 WRC season is set to feature just seven events, with several high-profile rallies – and even some new events such as the Ypres Rally in Belgium – cancelled due the pandemic.

“It was not my initial plan, but this 2020 year is very particular for everybody on this planet and somehow the fact that I had to stay like most of the people at home this year, I didn’t do the last season I expected to do and ending my career on such a strange season was not great,” he explained.

“So for sure that was one of the reasons to change my plan about retirement.”

Ogier sits second in the drivers’ standings heading into the season finale at Monza next month, following a lone victory in Mexico before the pandemic took hold, but faces a 14-point deficit to championship leader and Toyota team-mate Evans.

Hyundai, meanwhile, will field Dani Sordo in its third car on Rally Monza. The Spanish veteran has won the event twice in five starts, and has been rotating the seat with nine-time World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb and Craig Breen.

RACHIT THUKRAL





Ciceley switches to BMW

BTCC

British Touring Car Championship team Ciceley Motorsport will run a pair of BMW 330i M Sports next year in place of its Mercedes A-Class warhorses.

The Lancashire squad will take delivery of two BMWs from the marque's official team West Surrey Racing as it gears up for the BTCC's new hybrid era in 2022. The Mercedes was introduced in 2014 and has been a race winner in Adam Morgan's hands even this year, and Ciceley has the cars – on which BTCC homologation does not run out until the end of 2023 – up for sale.

Team boss Russell Morgan, the father of Adam, said: "This has been an incredibly

hard decision, made even more difficult by the fantastic job our lead engineer Steve Farrell and Adam have done with the Mercedes this year. We have to look to the future, the hybrid era of BTCC will be upon us before we know it and we must, as a team, be ready for the next challenge."

WSR chief Dick Bennetts added: "They are a professional team with a strong engineering mindset, so the WSR-designed-and-built cars should give them everything they need to become title challengers."

Ciceley will take delivery of its first BMW in the second week of January, with the second following one month later, and is planning to go testing alongside WSR at the beginning of March. While Morgan

has never raced a rear-wheel-drive car in the BTCC, he has plenty of experience of the format from events such as Goodwood and his Ginetta GT4 title-winning days. The team is also looking for a frontrunning driver to lead the attack with Morgan.

Ciceley commercial director Norman Burgess told Autosport: "It's a little bit of a settling-into-his new-shoes year for Adam. Our aim is to find a driver who can keep Adam honest or beat him, and help us move forward as a team so we can have a go at the teams' championship. We've had a good time with the Mercedes but it is a race-winning car, not a championship-winning car, and we aim to resolve that."

MARCUS SIMMONS

Brian Joscelyne 1934-2020



OBITUARY

Brian Joscelyne, who died on 9 November, was an urbane gentleman racer able to indulge his passion through sportscar racing's most exciting period. For 10 years he and Dorset Racing partner Tony Birchenough (1934-2014) enjoyed many

adventures as privateers in an increasingly professional world, conquering Europe's greatest circuits.

A chartered surveyor, Joscelyne and elder brother Ben were gifted an Aston Martin 15/98 by their father, Lewis Hamilton Joscelyne, an ardent motorsport fan, in 1954. Thus began an

association with the marque on which he became an authority. Brian subsequently acquired a DB3, then a DB3S to race, then campaigned Bob Owen's ex-Camoradi Maserati T61 'birdcage'.

Joscelyne joined forces with Birchenough and his Chevron B8 in 1971, when they won their class in the

Spa 1000Km. A Lola T212 followed, then T290, which (in various guises) took the Dorchester team to Le Mans five times. Brian raced it there thrice, finishing a Fuel Efficiency index-winning 18th in 1979 (pictured) with AMOC pal Nick Mason, Richard Jenvey and Birchenough. Their final race together scooped a class win at the Nurburgring in 1981.

It is as a gifted photographer and historian that Joscelyne will be more widely remembered. "Brian was the sweetest man – he never married, but was comfortable in his own skin, and his camera accompanied him everywhere," recalled Kay Birchenough, Tony's widow. Indeed, Palawan Press had just published a stunning anthology of his racing work. A fitting tribute to a generous soul who lived in the past, yet raced into the future.

MARCUS PYE



➔ P40 LOEB ON HIS DAKAR CHALLENGE

ANDROS TROPHY Nine-time World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb will be back in action in the upcoming Andros Trophy ice-racing series in France. Loeb, who contested two rounds of the now all-electric series last winter, will line up for the opening Andorran round on 18-19 December with his own Sebastien Loeb Racing team, before heading off to the Dakar Rally and then returning before the end of the season. Reigning champion Aurelien Panis is going for another title, while Nicolas Prost will compete for the Renault-backed DA Racing team.

Hydrogen project for Dakar

DAKAR RALLY

A hydrogen-powered contender will take on the Dakar Rally in 2024. Former World Rallycross team GCK Motorsport has launched a four-year off-road programme, starting with an all-electric vehicle and culminating in a hydrogen machine.

French freeriding skier and rallycross driver Guerlain Chicherit's squad has already started testing the new GCK e-BLAST 1. It won't contest January's Dakar event in Saudi Arabia, but will test



on the same terrain before competing in selected off-road events later in the year.

Based on the Dakar-winning Peugeot 3008 DKR chassis, the e-BLAST 1 is powered by a bespoke electric powertrain and 150kW battery. It generates 340bhp and 1000Nm of torque.

While the e-BLAST 1 is competing, GCK Motorsport and sister companies GCK Technology and GCK Energy will work on its hydrogen project. The hydrogen car will tackle some of the sections of the 2023 marathon and the aim is to have a two-car Dakar entry in 2024.

"I've been working on bringing together my passions for motorsport and technology with my vision for a sustainable future," said 2009 FIA Cross-Country World Cup winner Chicherit. "I'm super-excited to bring together forward-thinking specialists in their fields to produce ground-breaking work that will make a difference."

KING HOPES TO INVADE EUROPE FOR SUPERCUP

PORSCHE SUPERCUP

Porsche Carrera Cup GB sensation Harry King is targeting a campaign in the manufacturer's Supercup next year after dominating the BTCC support series in his first season as Porsche GB's Junior driver.

The 2019 Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion won 12 of the 16 Carrera Cup races this year with Team Parker Racing. Traditionally, the GB Junior spends two seasons in the Carrera Cup before moving on to race internationally, but King feels ready to make that jump now.

"I think what I've done this year shows I am prepared to make that step into an international series but raising the budget is a difficult task," said King. "Regardless, as a Porsche Junior I have a two-year deal, and I'm only in my first, so whatever happens next year I know I'll be driving a 911 GT3 Cup car somewhere, which is never a bad thing to say the least!"

TPR boss Stuart Parker added: "We'll do everything to help him achieve his dreams. Does the kid deserve to go on [to Supercup]? God, yes. If we can help him, will we? Yes."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



STYLES/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

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IN THE HEADLINES

ILOTT, AITKEN F1 TEST

British Formula 2 talents Callum Ilott and Jack Aitken will each take part in the post-season Formula 1 test at Yas Marina. Ferrari junior Ilott will be back behind the wheel for Alfa Romeo, while Aitken shares duties at Williams with Roy Nissany. The Israeli gets his third FP1 outing of the season at this weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix.

JACQUES ON CHANNEL 4

Another F2 (and FIA Formula 3) graduate going to F1 is the junior categories' Sky Sports commentator Alex Jacques. He is taking over the Channel 4 mic from the departing Ben Edwards, with David Coulthard continuing in the expert analyst role.

ROSSI IN GULF 12 HOURS

A bunch of motorcycle stars have been in the news with plans to compete on four wheels. MotoGP superstar Valentino Rossi will make his second start in the Gulf 12 Hours, which has moved to Bahrain, on 9 January. He will race a Ferrari 488 GT3 with half-brother and Moto2 runner-up Luca Marini plus Alessio Salucci. Meanwhile, Petronas Yamaha ace Franco Morbidelli will contest next month's WRC season-closing Rally Monza in a WRC3-class Hyundai.

FIGHT STILL ON IN REGIONAL

Two points separate Ferrari juniors Gianluca Petecof and Arthur Leclerc in the fight for the Formula Regional European title, with one round to go at Vallelunga. Leclerc took a second and a third last weekend at Imola, but retired with sensor failure while leading the other race, while Prema team-mate Petecof scored a best of third. A third Prema driver, Oliver Rasmussen, retains an outside chance after gearbox failure ruled him out of the opener. Patrik Pasma (KIC Motorsport) won two races, while Guatemalan Ian Rodriguez – formerly an Indy Pro 2000 and Italian F4 ace – won the other on his series debut with RP Motorsport.



Chadwick goes electric off-road

EXTREME E

W Series champion Jamie Chadwick will make her competitive off-road racing debut in 2021 after joining Veloce Racing for the inaugural Extreme E season.

The global health crisis forced W Series to cancel its 2020 campaign, with Williams F1 development driver Chadwick instead racing in the Formula Regional European Championship for Prema Powerteam. She lies 10th in the points with a round to go, with a best result of third at Misano.

Chadwick, the 2015 British GT4 champion, tested the ODYSSEY 21 XE car in France last week and will gain more seat time at Motorland Aragon next month.

"I have been involved with Veloce for a very long time and they are like a family to me, so I am incredibly honoured to be their female driver for what is such an exciting and important race series," she said. "I can safely say that testing the car was one of the best and most fun experiences I have had in my career so far."

BLOMQVIST BACK ON FE GRID

In more electric news, the NIO 333 Formula E squad has recruited 2018 Spa 24 Hours winner Tom Blomqvist to partner

Oliver Turvey next season, when the team introduces an all-new powertrain. Blomqvist already has limited FE experience – he contested six races for Andretti in the 2017-18 season before replacing James Calado at Jaguar in Berlin last term.

"To be back in Formula E full-time is fantastic as the series has gone from strength to strength and I feel very proud to be back on the grid," said Blomqvist.

NIO's fellow backmarker team Dragon Racing has retained Red Bull and AlphaTauri F1 reserve Sergio Sette Camara for 2020-21 after the Brazilian impressed on his six appearances for the team in Berlin. This will likely prevent him from a second Super Formula outing this year. Sette Camara snared pole at Sugo before crashing out, but now faces travel restrictions with FE pre-season testing commencing in Valencia on Saturday. Nico Muller is likely to be kept on in the sister car.

FE has also announced its 2021 Saudi Arabia double-header will form the championship's first night races, with both events delayed by five hours to a 2000 local start time. The track will be illuminated by low-consumption LEDs, fuelled by fully renewable vegetable oil.

MATT KEW**AUTOSPORT****Delivered straight to your door****SUBSCRIBE NOW**www.autosportmedia.com

F1 BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX PREVIEW

LENGTH 3.363 miles NUMBER OF LAPS 57

Bahrain Grand Prix - Sakhir
Bahrain International Circuit
29th November 2020

2019 POLE POSITION
Charles Leclerc 1m27.866s

POLE LAP RECORD
Charles Leclerc 1m27.866s (2019)

RACE LAP RECORD
Pedro de la Rosa 1m31.447s (2005)

UK START TIMES

Friday 27 November

FP1 1100
FP2 1500

Saturday 28 November

FP3 1100
QUALIFYING 1400

Sunday 29 November

RACE 1410

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TYRE ALLOCATION

HARD

MEDIUM

SOFT

INTERMEDIATE

WET

CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

DRIVERS			CONSTRUCTORS		
1	Hamilton	307	1	Mercedes	504
2	Bottas	197	2	Red Bull	240
3	Verstappen	170	3	Racing Point	154
4	Perez	100	4	McLaren	149
5	Leclerc	97	5	Renault	136



RACE STATS

BAHRAIN GP WINNERS

2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2017	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2016	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2010	Fernando Alonso	Ferrari
2009	Jenson Button	Brawn



BAHRAIN MASTERS

Top 10 points scorers for grands prix at Bahrain International Circuit. All races converted to current points system.	L Hamilton	183
	K Raikkonen	163
	S Vettel	160
	F Alonso	117
	F Massa	98
	N Rosberg	96
	V Bottas	70
	J Trulli	60
	J Button	59
	M Schumacher	53

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Why F1's smiling fighter can take McLaren to the next level

Daniel Ricciardo on leaving Renault and proving he's still got it

'I've learned how to build something in the last two years'

RICCIARDO

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The flaw COVID helped fix

The pandemic-enforced delay to the F1 season allowed a window of opportunity to iron out reliability issues that threatened to upset the Mercedes appletart in Australia

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Mercedes' march to its seventh title double has looked as serene as ever in 2020. Ahead of the final three races of the season, it has scored 12 wins and 13 poles, and only lost its 100% record in qualifying in tricky conditions in Turkey. But, had the campaign started as expected in Australia, Formula 1's dominant squad might well have run into a "painful" problem.

Unlike its predecessor, with which it shares much of its design DNA, the W11 had been the class of the field in winter testing. It topped the times in both tests at Barcelona in February, where Mercedes stunned onlookers with the innovation it had packed onto the car – dual-axis steering, in particular – ahead of a season that was supposed to be the last before F1's latest rules revolution came into effect.

But despite its headline pace, the W11 had a clear weakness. An engine failure hit Valtteri Bottas during the first test, and Lewis Hamilton missed more time when one of his runs during the second was struck by an oil-pressure anomaly. The team had to swap engines twice, while customer squad Williams had to change powerplants three times over four days.

Mercedes had hinted ahead of testing that it was having some trouble with its updated engine, with High Performance Powertrains boss Andy Cowell (who has since announced that he is leaving Mercedes after a period of transition) saying it was

“They felt a bit wounded that they didn't have the best engine. They weren't happy with that”

“fighting a few little issues as ever”.

The team was nevertheless very pleased with the work it had done to address the cooling weaknesses that cropped up in 2019 and felt it was a significant step forwards in terms of power. But, as teams flew to the Australian season opener that never was, the reliability problems remained, despite a fix being introduced for the bearing problems that had struck during the second test.

“To be fair, COVID came at a very good time because that engine was in a lot of trouble at race one, as it would have been – there was a problem that [HPP] just struggled to find out,” says Mercedes chief designer John Owen. “Literally they needed a day longer that they didn't have. Anyway, the race season didn't start and immediately they managed to zero in on the problem. But it would have been quite painful for us if that had been the first race.”

All F1 squads had to shut down for 63 days during the spring COVID lockdowns, as part of urgent cost-saving measures. The various engine divisions had to do likewise, but for 49 days. All of this was built into the four-month gap between the aborted Melbourne event and the season finally getting under way in Austria, where Mercedes ultimately crushed its opposition.

It used the time well, both on the aerodynamic side and on the engine. Mercedes said the new-spec engine that went to Austria was “because we have made reliability updates since [Melbourne]”.

Other than the sensor problems that gave Mercedes a scare in the season opener, reliability issues have not plagued the W11, as might have reasonably been feared had the season got started as expected (with the team losing just one finish, Bottas at the Eifel Grand Prix, to a power-unit problem).

The W11 has proved to be excellent. It broke F1's lap speed record at Monza and has returned Mercedes' performance advantage over its opposition to levels it had not enjoyed since the first three years of the turbo-hybrid era. The supertimes average gap (based on fastest times of each weekend and averaged over the season) between Mercedes and Ferrari in 2019 was 0.149%; now it's up to 0.683% over Red Bull (but was around 1% at the start of the season).

This incredible achievement was the result of Mercedes essentially committing to throwing everything it had at its 2020 design during its run of defeats during the middle phase of 2019. The initially problematic engine upgrade was a response to Ferrari's controversial superiority in the power stakes in recent years. That advantage was wiped away ahead of the season with the Italian squad's settlement with the FIA.

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff has previously explained how the progress his squad felt it needed to make to stay ahead in 2020 led to an “irony” that meant it was “pushed by some of our competitors to absolutely new levels”.

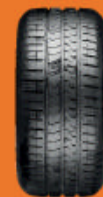
Owen explains how that drive was felt on the engine side: “They felt a bit wounded and got beaten up for the fact that they didn't have the best engine last year, seemingly. They decided they weren't happy with that. And they've really tried very hard there. There's a lot of blood, sweat and tears going into the engine.”

As it has now made history for Mercedes and Hamilton, it's worth considering how one of F1's most impressive cars came to be, and how things could have gone differently but for the strange circumstances of 2020. The W11 was Mercedes' almighty answer to an ever-growing threat, which has resulted in another season of domination, while the threat has essentially vanished.

Although the car will be largely carried over to 2021, the upcoming downforce cuts will inevitably reduce speeds. So, as F1 heads off to the final three races of this most unusual of seasons, it is entering the true swansong of a remarkable machine. ❄️

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Keeping in a forward Guia

The Macau Grand Prix didn't take place as we know it last weekend, but credit to everyone for keeping it alive for local competitors in this strange year

MARCUS SIMMONS

I'm not normally one to wear a hat – unless it's a woolly one to keep out the cold – but this week I'm raising metaphorical headgear to the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee for keeping its event, of which last weekend's running was the 67th edition, alive through the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.

The Macanese government immediately introduced very strict measures to control the spread of the virus, with the result that its population has been COVID-free for months and was very little affected even in the early period. But the knock-on effect of that was quarantine measures that meant any visitor had to spend 14 days in a hotel room before even being allowed out into the rest of the hotel, let alone the streets. Therefore the traditional Macau Formula 3 Grand Prix, fought out by the category since 1983, was gone for 2020, ditto the GT World Cup, and likewise the Macau Guia counting for the World Touring Car Cup. The quarantine measures had made it simply impossible logistically for international teams to travel to Macau.

Those three headlining events did run last weekend, but with a very local flavour compared to what the appreciative Macanese crowd is used to, and in a way that took the event back to its formative years of the 1950s. Instead of F3, the Macau Grand Prix doubled up as the final round of the Chinese Formula 4 Championship; the GT Cup had a GT4 class added to the usual

“One-off deals mean you'll often see the names of glitzy Macanese hotels emblazoned on the cars”

GT3 field; and the Guia counted as the finale for the TCR China series. But even the quarantine measures couldn't keep a good man down, and Macau addict and 2012 World Touring Car champion Rob Huff went through his hotel isolation regime in order to bid for his 10th Guia win at the wheel of an MG 6.

To be fair, the F4 field acquitted themselves pretty well, and after an early safety car the race ran uninterrupted to the finish. Macanese youngsters Charles Leong and Andy Chang – both of whom have contested the F3 GP – remained close throughout, especially when a backmarker delayed Leong on the penultimate lap. That Chang was even in position to pressurise Leong was a relief to him, as he'd smacked the barrier at the Solitude esses with a rear wheel on the opening lap. And credit to Allen Lo, Stephen Hong and Kang Ling (if you're an F3 junkie, you may remember

him from the crash-infested 2015 European F3 season) for a highly entertaining battle for fourth. They kept the Macau GP flame burning.

Do the international teams want to return? Of course they do. “It's my first missed Macau since 1988,” says Carlin boss Trevor Carlin, who first went as a member of the Bowman Racing team owned by his uncles Steve and Vic Hollman. “It's all a bit odd not doing the jetfoil from Hong Kong and all that stuff in November.” And it's a draw for the FIA F3 Championship drivers too. “It's one of those races everyone is desperate to do,” adds Carlin. “We have it as an option in their contract because it's non-championship, and all our drivers this year wanted to do it.”

Carlin says that contesting Macau is “not cheap”. “The biggest issue is you lose all your equipment for a period of time, so you can't do any testing,” he explains. “You've got your labour costs, your travel costs to a degree. If you do a full rebuild, relivery it, and pre-Macau testing, it all ramps up.”

Freight is offset by the Macanese organisers paying for the cars to travel by air to the event, and by ship for their return, but the lengthy sea voyage keeps the cars out of testing action for longer – not so much an issue in the new FIA F3 era, where testing is banned outside the official sessions, but in the pre-2019 days teams would often pay for their cars to be flown back to Europe. On the other hand, teams or drivers can do one-off deals with local sponsors, which is why you'll often see the names of glitzy Macanese hotels emblazoned on the cars.

For 2021? As you'd expect, Euroformula Open promoter Jesus Pareja is pushing as usual for his series to combine with Japan's Super Formula Lights equivalent to step into the breach and revive the pre-2019 philosophy of F3 for the Macau GP, should things fall through with the FIA F3 brigade. This was causing some consternation to Prema Racing boss Rene Rosin, who has been almost ever-present at the race since childhood, when I spoke to him a couple of weeks ago, because as far as he's concerned it's an event for FIA F3 cars.

As you'd expect, Carlin is more relaxed – he does, after all, have teams in both FIA F3 and EFO. “I don't know about the other teams because it's not something I've discussed with them,” he says, “but if it's going ahead I would love to do it, with whatever cars are going there. If it's Euroformula and SFL cars we'd be as keen as if it's FIA F3 cars. We would have gone and supported some F4 drivers if the quarantine thing hadn't been so strict.”

If the Macau GP bounces back in an international format in 2021, go and find a hat ready to doff not only to the local organisers, but the racing-mad teams who make the event what it is. ✎

P52 MACAU REPORT



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YOUR SAY

Two-second pitstops are invisible – make them longer with fewer people involved and room for error

DAVID FIDGEON

Ideas to revitalise Formula 1

Formula 1 – hopefully not the same old, same old in 2021! Some ideas:

- 1 Trackside team maximum 10 per car and only four for pitstops. Rotate staff to cope with the intense race calendar. Two-second pitstops are invisible – make them longer with fewer people involved and room for error.
- 2 One tyre compound for all races and for all teams. All the soft/hard/medium compounds is an expensive nonsense, just look at the last race.
- 3 Impose a standard floor for all cars to cut downforce. See the last race to see the benefits of reduced downforce.
- 4 Introduce success weight penalties. It works in just about all other forms of racing to break up the running order.
- 5 Disband the technical working party. They've done nothing and missed a major opportunity for serious change during the COVID pandemic. Can we hope the FIA bans all political posturing that is damaging our sport?

David Fidgeon

By email

Stand up for sustainability

It was gratifying to see Lewis Hamilton's comments (Pit+Paddock, 15 October) opposing the desecration of forests to create a new circuit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I'm sure we all agree that the historic Interlagos circuit needs preserving?

Come on Formula 1, don't let yourself down over this. You've done such a brilliant job in getting our sport up and running in such difficult circumstances this year. Wouldn't it be folly to go against our new brilliant environmental sustainability goals?

Chris Walden

Beverley, East Yorks

Consign internal combustion to history

When considering new engines, should Formula 1 not consider the fuel cell? Formula E has conventional 'electric'



covered. Like it or not, it has to be environmentally acceptable. Leave internal combustion engines in F1 to the historic scene, which seems acceptable.

Chris Davis

By email

All tired out at the end of the race

Ordinarily we say 'it's all about the tyres'. However, at Silverstone Lewis showed he could win with only 75% of them; finishing in Istanbul he had even less...


Graeme Innes-Johnstone

Elland, West Yorks

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'I NEVER HAD ANY PERSONAL DOUBTS. I STILL HAVE IT'

Daniel Ricciardo is one of the few proven grand prix winners on the current Formula 1 grid. It's been a while since he stood on the top step of the podium, but he knows he can do the job – both for Renault now and McLaren next year

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY RENAULT AND 

RICCIARDO'S F1 STATS

STARTS **185**
WINS **7**
POLES **3**
FASTEST LAPS **14**

It speaks volumes for the frequency and authenticity of Daniel Ricciardo's famous smile that Formula 1 has still seen plenty of it since 27 May 2018.

That was the day he won the Monaco Grand Prix for Red Bull – his seventh F1 triumph. It was a race of redemption for the Australian, after he had painfully missed out on victory in the same race two years earlier. Leaving Monaco, he was within touching distance of the championship lead – third behind Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel, with more than double the points total of team-mate Max Verstappen.

Come the end of the season, Ricciardo languished in sixth, bottom of 'Class A' by 77 points. Verstappen had won twice after Monaco, but Ricciardo had done no better than six fourths, his summer and season run-in dogged by nightmares.

Yet there was a strong undercurrent to the second half of that season: Ricciardo's decision to leave Red Bull and join Renault for 2019. That call was largely about striking out on his own from the team and organisation that had brought him through to F1 and all of those wins (and getting away from 'Verstappen's squad?'), with a hefty salary increase added in...

But the first season of Ricciardo's Renault relationship was not particularly happy. The team finished fifth in the constructors' championship – down from the fourth it had achieved the year before. The RS19 produced inconsistent downforce levels through long corners, as the team struggled to understand how to cope with the disrupted air passing down the car behind the front wheels.

Ricciardo's best finish in the first season of his lucrative two-year deal was fourth at the Italian GP, as Renault notched up another underwhelming campaign since rejoining F1 as a works entry in 2016 – it promised much but delivered little as it tried to take on the bigger squads while committing smaller budgets.

In total, the gap between Ricciardo's Monaco win and his third place in the 2020 Eifel GP spanned 29 months – 46 races without a podium. But the smile rarely dimmed, and the belief behind it absolutely did not.

"I never had any personal doubts from that point of view," says Ricciardo. "And I think even though last year we didn't really show the consistency, there were still moments when I at least reiterated to myself that I still 'have it', 'I still belong here'."

"Like the qualifying in Canada – that was still relatively early in the season – where I qualified on the second row [fourth]. And I still wasn't particularly obviously at home with the car. We were still trying to figure it out. But I was like, 'OK, if I can pull this out, then I've still got a bit in the tank.'"

"I never lost that. And I think even this year before the >>>

MOY/RENAULT

podium [at the Nurburgring], when we started running top fours, top fives, it just felt like it always had. Nothing felt foreign, nothing felt different.”

His third-place finish at the Nurburgring required a bit of luck, which isn't to denigrate his drive that day, but more to reinforce that F1's 'Class A' now comprises only the ever-dominant Mercedes duo and Verstappen, and something generally needs to go wrong to knock them from their regular podium perches.

But someone has to be best of the rest and, on that cold day in Germany, it was Ricciardo and Renault, once the safety car had ended Sergio Perez's hopes of catching up in his Racing Point. The smile was back on the podium, even if its wearer forgot his trademark 'shoey' celebration.

“When I did make it to the podium in Nurburgring, that feeling – jumping out of the car and hugging the team and all that – it really felt like the first podium all over again,” he recalls. “That emotion was really fresh. It's not like I forgot how to do it, but in a way I forgot how high the emotion was. And that was really nice to feel again.”

Renault had to come a long way to reach its first podium since the 2011 Malaysian GP, when the squad was owned by Genii Capital and called Renault in name only, for contractual reasons. ‘Team Enstone’ then spent the next two seasons enjoying a glorious run of underdog competitiveness as Lotus with Kimi Raikkonen and Romain Grosjean, before Raikkonen left as the turbo-hybrid era began. With that came a major dip in form as the Renault engines the team still ran were underpowered compared to Mercedes' effort. Following the team's financial challenges, Renault returned in 2016 with a targeted podium return within three years, but the wait would go on and on.

Renault team boss Cyril Abiteboul has offered his thoughts on how 2019 was tough because other squads had gained more compared to his own. Renault customer McLaren certainly enjoyed a strong resurgence last year, as it scored its best constructors' championship position since 2012 – 54 points ahead of Renault.



2018 Monaco GP win was emotional and redemptive

‘IT FELT LIKE THE FIRST PODIUM AL

This year the competition is even fiercer, with Racing Point's controversial RP20 boosting it well ahead of Renault and McLaren in the downforce stakes, even if the pink-liveried squad seemed to squander that benefit at many early opportunities. Nevertheless, Racing Point now leads the three-way fight for third by five points over McLaren and 18 over Renault, while the team that vacated that critical place in the 2020 standings – Ferrari – is now only six behind Renault after the Italian team's fine finishes in Turkey.

Given how close and feisty things are in F1's midfield, it's little wonder that it was Renault that took the lead on challenging the legality of Racing Point's design, before withdrawing its protest once it was satisfied the FIA had moved to prevent a repeat situation in the future. This saga dominated the early races of the current campaign, which somewhat overshadowed the progress the team had been making.

Expectations regarding Renault's form after winter testing were rather murky, with its attentions turned towards the upcoming regulation changes, at the time scheduled to come into effect for 2021. The team had made a significant overhaul of its technical structure, with Nick Chester leaving as 2019 ended and Pat Fry taking his place in February as chassis technical director. While that car will have to wait another season before seeing action, and under a different name following Renault's decision to rebrand its F1 squad as Alpine from next season, its current design also made a delayed debut. But it came with an immediate boost. >>



Return to the podium at this year's Eifel GP rekindled sense of joy



HONE

L OVER AGAIN'

HONE



LEAVING RED BULL VERSUS LEAVING RENAULT



SUTTON

Daniel Ricciardo is about to make his second exit from a Formula 1 team in three years, as he heads to McLaren two years after swapping Red Bull for Renault.

Back in 2018, after causing a summer of intrigue and speculation thanks to his decision to switch to Renault and not sign a fresh Red Bull deal in the week after the Hungarian Grand Prix, the narrative was about a driver departing the team that had given him his big break, albeit with a reportedly large salary as part of the deal.

This time, he's swapping one midfield team for another, and made the call to depart Renault before the RS20 had even turned a wheel in anger, thanks to the pandemic delaying the 2020 campaign by four months. It was during this time that the Sebastian Vettel/Carlos Sainz Jr/Ricciardo seat-hopping occurred.

So how does it feel to be on the move again?

"I'll be honest, it's never easy, or it's never something that's super-comfortable," explains Ricciardo. "In a way, it's like breaking up with a partner. There's always a bit of, I don't know, sadness.

"But I don't think it's awkward anymore. The awkwardness went

a long time ago. I've built some relationships and obviously made some really good ones in the team, so knowing that you're leaving most of that – that's probably where a bit of the sadness comes in.

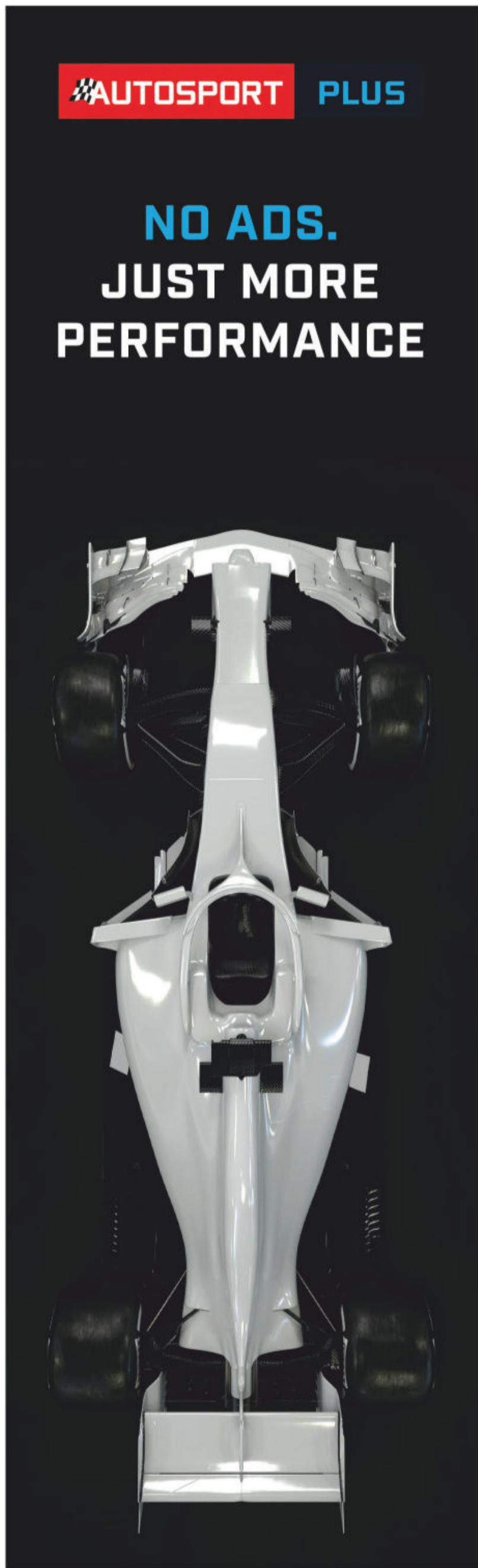
"Then again, I'm excited to now learn from another team with a lot of history in the sport, and who I believe have a lot of good people behind them. So that's exciting for me.

"I feel like I've left a positive mark here at Renault. And I feel like I leave with respect, and I think that's really important. We'll see now what the future brings. But it's never easy."

"IT'S LIKE BREAKING UP WITH A PARTNER. THERE'S ALWAYS A BIT OF SADNESS. BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S AWKWARD ANYMORE"



SUTTON



It was obvious from the Austrian GP that Renault had built a decent car

Renault is not alone in having found something beneficial during the spring coronavirus lockdowns – Mercedes used the extra time to address a major engine reliability problem. And like other squads, Renault used the time available once the 63-day factory shutdowns ended to enhance a development package that should have arrived once the first quarter of the expected 2020 season had been completed. And it worked well immediately – something that had been another key weakness for the squad to fix in previous seasons.

“Getting to Austria [in July],” says Ricciardo, “I remember FP1 – and Austria was a bad track for us last year – I was like, ‘Wow, yeah, I feel I’ve got confidence right now with this and then it feels a bit easier.’ [After] driving in F1 for a few years, you know what’s gonna work. Traction really is king. You want entry stability and all of these things, but if you can get the power down and get to full throttle earlier, it’s just such a big gain on exits, and it carries you all the way through to the next corner.

“I just felt like the rear of the car was happier, traction was better. And I was like, ‘This is a nice little step we’ve just made.’”

Although Ricciardo retired from the season opener due to a radiator weld failure, Renault had unlocked something significant in the RS20’s development potential, despite the design being largely carried over from the underwhelming RS19.

But the opening three rounds resulted in just a trio of eighth places, one for Esteban Ocon at the Red Bull Ring, the other two for Ricciardo, as Ocon retired with a repeat cooling problem in the Styrian GP, then finished 14th in Hungary. At Silverstone, Renault improved, with Ricciardo’s fourth place in the British GP and Ocon coming home two places behind.



Midfield battle with McLaren and Racing Point has been close



TEE

When F1 reconvened for its second 2020 race at the British venue, Renault made another breakthrough in setting up the RS20. At the time, Ricciardo called it hitting a particular “sweet spot”. “I guess I probably can’t say the exact thing we changed, which was like, ‘Well, that was it,’” Ricciardo starts, cryptically, the famous smile flashing. “But, basically, it was just something a bit aerodynamically with the car.

“It felt like what we did there just gave me the confidence to push the car on the entry. It just felt like I got more rear grip, more rear downforce. And I was able just to start to carry some speed in and be a little bit less timid with the car.

“You see all the top cars, particularly the Merc, they can just really chuck a car on the entry and they really trust the rear is going to stick. And I felt like that was the first time I’d really had that. And it was quite a noticeable step.”

Renault went into the 70th Anniversary GP with added hopes due to strong practice and qualifying pace, but came away disappointed with just two more points as Ricciardo spun on his fall to 14th from fifth, although Ocon rescued eighth with an impressive one-stop drive. Spain was Renault’s lowest point, but then came Spa and Monza, where the team had scored its best results of 2019.

The similarities between the Belgian and (regular) Italian F1 venues are clear, thanks to the high-speed nature of Spa’s first and second sectors (even if it also has the high-downforce, technical second sector to factor in). And this has been where Renault has been most at home of late, on the low-downforce tracks.

At Spa, Ricciardo was on a charge, setting the race’s fastest lap as he surged to within four seconds of an unlikely podium behind Verstappen in the closing stages, with Ocon finishing just one place behind. Renault’s return to Monza was ultimately trumped by AlphaTauri’s glory with Gasly (and McLaren was the midfield team to beat in normal conditions before the red flag anyway), but it still came away with handy points, Ricciardo again leading the line.

At Mugello, an entirely different type of venue, he finished an excellent fourth, overtaking Valtteri Bottas at the final restart and then just losing out in a battle against Alexander Albon’s Red Bull after the Mercedes driver had recovered to second. Nevertheless, the result illustrated that the RS20 was not be typecast. Renault’s year-on-year progress was underlined again the next time out at Sochi, where Ricciardo deployed “uncomfortable” set-up changes, which led to his best result at the track. Then came the Nurburgring, that podium, and all the talk of Abiteboul needing to get a tattoo to satisfy a bet he had made with Ricciardo “after a few beers” at the 2019 British GP...

While the Portuguese and Turkish races did not bring the >>





When Daniel Ricciardo signed for McLaren to replace the Ferrari-bound Carlos Sainz Jr, it did not end the knock-on effects of Maranello's decision to move on from Sebastian Vettel. It left Renault with a hole, which it filled with a Formula 1 great: Fernando Alonso.

The Spaniard has opted to end his time in the alternative pastures of the World Endurance Championship, IndyCar and the Dakar Rally, rejoining the team where he won his two Formula 1 world titles.

The coronavirus pandemic cost-saving measures mean the new cars F1 is hoping will close up its competitive order have been delayed until 2022. It is to this opportunity that Alonso is staking his hopes of further F1 glory, and he acknowledges that 2021 will primarily be about getting ready to seize that chance – if it comes.



“HE’S REALLY PUSHING. YOU SPEND A FEW MINUTES WITH HIM AND YOU’RE STRAIGHT AWAY MORE MOTIVATED”

Ahead of his F1 return, Alonso has been sampling recent Renault machines to get him back up to speed. After an outing in the current car – a 100km filming day at Barcelona last month – he said “the car is outperforming me at the moment”. Four days in a 2018 Renault this month followed, split over a pair of two-day tests in Bahrain and Abu Dhabi.

On 2020 race weekends, he follows the action on a computer Renault has provided that displays the onboard feeds from the RS20s, as well as radio communication to Ricciardo and Esteban Ocon. He also uses this to follow the team’s debriefs and strategy meetings remotely.

“He wants more days in the car to get used to the team, the systems, the procedures – to fine-tune his seating position, the steering wheel, everything,” says Renault team executive director Marcin Budkowski. “But also, he hasn’t driven the car for two years and they are bloody fast cars – he needs to get back in shape, get back in the rhythm, so he’s taking any opportunity he can to drive.”

“In terms of his enthusiasm, in terms of his determination, he’s been at the factory to do some seat fittings, and I took him around to show him how things had changed since he was there at Enstone a number of years ago. His motivation is incredible. He’s really asking everybody, pushing, and you spend a few minutes with him and you’re straight away more motivated. So, it’s great for the staff to be exposed to someone like this who is not only a great champion but also is so motivated for next year and the next years to come.”

high-profile results Renault had been aiming for – Ricciardo has spoken of how the squad was disappointed to ‘only’ be fourth at Mugello, demonstrating how much it now expected – they sandwich a second third place of the year. This came at Imola, aided by Racing Point pitting Perez under the late safety car. But, again, Ricciardo put himself in the position to capitalise, and drove excellently on old tyres while those running behind him at the late-race restart were picked off by drivers on fresh rubber.

But something has been looming over Ricciardo’s season. In five weeks’ time he will no longer be a Renault employee, and in just over two he will drive his last race for the manufacturer.

Ahead of the delayed 2020 season even starting, Ricciardo’s signing for McLaren was essentially the last link in the chain of driver swaps triggered by Ferrari’s decision to drop Sebastian Vettel and hire Carlos Sainz Jr.

The reaction from Renault, which knew well before COVID-19 was headline news that it had work to do to convince Ricciardo to stay, was initially, and somewhat understandably, icy. In the press release announcing Ricciardo’s exit, Abiteboul said: “In our sport, and particularly within the current extraordinary situation, reciprocated confidence, unity and commitment are, more than ever, critical values for a works team.” But given the success that has followed, things have thawed.

“Of course we will miss him, but we will also miss the character,” says Renault’s team executive director Marcin Budkowski. “He’s a smiley, engaging character, which is a pleasure to work with. Daniel walks in the room and suddenly the mood in the room picks up because his smile and his enthusiasm are infectious.”

That’s certainly coming across to Autosport – Ricciardo is no less smiley and engaging when doing interviews over Teams.

“I feel really good – I do,” he says of his current perspective. “Obviously, the decision was made before the start of the season. So that was already done, and I was able to put it behind me.

‘DANIEL WALKS IN

“I put that to 2021, and really just put it all into Renault. And I was trying to convince the team that I was going to give it everything I had, and [saying], ‘I’m not thinking about McLaren yet, and I’m not worried about that side yet, I’m gonna do everything I can here.’

“But it’s really the results that speak louder than words, so I really had to make a point to have a strong year, to show all this intent to deliver. And I have, and that’s been really rewarding for me personally, but also to see the team show faith and excitement in me, even with the news, that’s been really cool.”

Ahead of the final three races of the season, the fight for third place is very finely poised thanks to Racing Point’s resurgence in Turkey. But Ricciardo also has a personal goal, as he’s now just four points behind Perez in fourth place in the drivers’ standings, which he had held prior to the trip to Istanbul Park.

Bahrain was a double-DNF disaster for Renault last year, where Ricciardo and Nico Hulkenberg also made contact – a flash point in an intra-team battle that ultimately did not ignite. So, it returns there this weekend facing something of a question mark, while it will need to improve on a non-scoring finish in Abu Dhabi to boost its standings chances at the last. In between, though, the Bahrain ‘outer-loop’ layout that will host the Sakhir GP should play to the team’s strengths.

One of these strengths is a committed Ricciardo, despite his imminent departure. “I’m moving on, but I would much rather move on on this note, than a year of struggles and all that,” he explains. “I don’t want to leave and it be like, ‘Oh well, Daniel came here for two years, well that was a waste, we got nothing out of it.’ So, I feel



MOV/RENAULT

like I've given something to the team.

"As far as constructors [points/places] and all that, I'm obviously all in with Renault this year. I'm gonna do everything I can to keep them third in the constructors and obviously I want to hold on to fourth in the drivers [we're speaking to Ricciardo on the media day before the Turkish GP]. So yeah, there's no fun and games and I think that has to be also respected from McLaren as well."

Although Ricciardo is a Renault driver for now, with 2021 so close – so desperately close for us all considering the horrors of 2020! – it feels right to end with a look to the future.

McLaren is getting one of F1's best drivers, one that topped Autosport's annual ratings in both 2014 and 2016. A fierce but friendly racer, who has enhanced his reputation by succeeding – in midfield terms at least – by securing silverware for a team that had long missed the podium. But it's also getting a driver in his prime, still one of F1's most exciting racers, and, of course, *that* smile.

But McLaren is a team largely on the same path as Renault – seeking a return to the promised land of wins and title glory. It will enjoy Mercedes power after so many years of engine misery, with plenty of chassis problems at the same time, and it will gain a driver who now possesses important skills to help in that quest. These are skills he has learned and honed at the team he will now leave – on good terms at least.

"I know a little bit about McLaren's plans for next year, for sure," Ricciardo concludes. "But I feel like there's not really much more I can do at the moment, as far as setting myself up there. And I've got a job to do here.

"I'm also taking something with me [into 2021]. I've learned a lot, how to build something in the last two years, which will carry me not only for next year, but for the next probably five years.

"Being able to be in different organisations gives you a chance to learn more and to grow – to be a sponge, really. And I still feel I'm young enough and certainly motivated enough to do that." ✨

THE ROOM AND THE MOOD PICKS UP'

OCON'S 2020 FORM – AND HIS QUALIFYING DEFICIT TO RICCIARDO

The main casualty of Daniel Ricciardo's decision to join Renault for the 2019 Formula 1 season ended up being the driver who is now his team-mate.

Esteban Ocon was facing the exit at Force India, once its assets had been acquired and re-entered as a separate entity by Lawrence Stroll's consortium, and Ricciardo's impending arrival at Renault scuppered a deal that Ocon and his Mercedes backers thought they had secured with the French manufacturer.

He had to spend a year on the sidelines before



DUNBAR

Renault opted to jettison Nico Hulkenberg and bring in Ocon, signed for two years and on a guarded secondment from Mercedes, to which he retains links.

There have been flashes of the promise he had shown during his first two and a half years

in F1, but overall it has been a slowburn return. He sits 12th in the championship, with a best result of fifth (at Spa). In qualifying, he trails Ricciardo 13-1.

"After my year out, I thought coming back it would take a little time to get back into it, to

get integrated properly into the team, and try to work the way I've done at Force India," he says when asked what's behind that imbalance. "But it took a little bit more time than I thought.

"And the way the season is condensed as well, you don't have much time to

reflect on the race – you go straight into another one. That's how it's been with the triple-headers. So, we didn't have proper time to analyse everything and come back, and make it apply; we had only two days to get to it [before] straight away, get back to the fight.

"I think recently my performance has been better in qualifying – I'm closer to where I think I need to be. There are still things that we can do better, but overall I'm happier now at the end of the season than I was earlier. It's a better step."

SEASON
REVIEW

DIXON WINS IT AT THE START

Three wins on the trot gave the Chip Ganassi Racing superstar the cushion he needed to hang on for a sixth title in the face of Josef Newgarden's late challenge

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES



It was the year when everything had to be kept in perspective, because during a pandemic nothing is as important as protecting lives. But livelihoods also need protecting, and in order to allow the IndyCar Series' teams to survive by fulfilling their agreements with sponsors, the show had to go on.

Easier said than done, even for a man with the foresight of Roger Penske, who officially took charge of Indianapolis Motor Speedway and IndyCar in early January. Ever-changing restrictions in various states in response to the coronavirus played havoc with the series schedule, and so as well as the investment already made to upgrade facilities at the Speedway, suddenly Penske Entertainment Corp had to help subsidise events that were allowed only a limited number of spectators and vendors, or none at all.

As for activities at the track, all involved knew that the series as a whole had to do the right thing. Sure, there remain deluded folk in denial of COVID-19's contagiousness, but there would be no foolhardiness on The Captain's watch, and so for paddock personnel, IndyCar imposed strict protocols that followed CDC guidelines.

Some hurdles were impossible to overcome, however, and it would take too long to fully recount the depressing chronology of event postponements and cancellations after the series' last-minute withdrawal from the season-opener at St Petersburg in March. So to keep it short... St Pete was eventually rescheduled for October as the season finale, the Grand Prix of Indianapolis was shifted from mid-May to early July, and the Indianapolis 500 was pushed back to the third weekend in August. Gone altogether were the races at Barber Motorsports Park, Circuit of The Americas, Long Beach, the double-header at Belle Isle (Detroit), Toronto, Portland, Laguna Seca and the planned return to Richmond. To help get the number of races to 14, the events at Road America, Iowa Speedway, World Wide Technology Raceway (Gateway) and Mid-Ohio became double-headers, while a new event, the Harvest Grand Prix on IMS's road course, was added in early October, and it too was a two-race affair.

Yet when the field gathered for the new season opener at Texas Motor Speedway in June, some of those changes hadn't even been mooted, and few of them were set in stone. Everything, it seemed, was in a state of flux. Perhaps it's little wonder, then, that the team most adept at adapting, Chip Ganassi Racing, and the most experienced ace on the grid, Scott Dixon, won the first three races of the year.

But let's be clear, they weren't just superb at winging it: the Ganassi brain trust had also done superb work in the extraordinarily elongated off-season, adapting their Honda-powered cars to the new weight distribution and aeroflow caused by the mandatory aeroscreen. Michael Cannon, newly arrived from Dale Coyne Racing, was Dixon's race engineer but dismissively described himself to Autosport as a tuner: the grassroots re-engineering of Ganassi's cars, he said, was largely the domain of his predecessor and newly appointed competitions director Chris Simmons, and technical director Julian Robertson.



Roger Penske had a lot on his plate in first year in charge...

Whoever deserves the credit, in Texas CGR was a league ahead and, had Felix Rosenqvist not crashed out of second place in the closing stages and Marcus Ericsson not had a pitlane issue, Dixon believes the team could have scored a 1-2-3. Two of the Chevrolet-engined Team Penske cars, those driven by 2016 champion Simon Pagenaud and by 2017 and 2019 title winner Josef Newgarden, suffered severe tyre vibrations two thirds of the way into their stints, but salvaged second and third respectively. The other, driven by 2014 champ Will Power, was taken out of contention by a bad pitstop. It would be a recurring theme.

Dixon's second win, at GP Indy, owed more to good fortune as Power and Newgarden were hobbled by a race-day yellow, but the Kiwi was in another league from the rest of his opposition and left behind Graham Rahal, who was hobbled by a two-stop strategy.

When his three fastest opponents suffered pitlane mishaps in Road America race one – Newgarden stalled, Power and Rahal had slow crew members – Dixon's third straight win was sealed. The #9 Ganassi crew, and Newgarden's #1 Penske equivalent, were near flawless this year.

Dixon couldn't always produce the magic. His car's tricky nature at Road America was accentuated in dirty air so, when he lost time to low fuel pressure during an in-lap for one of the pitstops, he could salvage only 12th. Later in the season he had a horror weekend at Mid-Ohio. He cooked his rear tyres during Saturday qualifying and had to climb from 17th on the grid in a race where there were no yellows, and so could manage only 10th. The next day he spun out of third place, had to charge hard and claimed another 10th. >>

“IT'S LITTLE WONDER THAT THE MOST EXPERIENCED ACE ON THE GRID WON THE FIRST THREE RACES OF THE YEAR”



...including getting series started behind closed doors in Texas



Newgarden won St Pete but charge came too late

DOLE

“YOUNG MEXICAN O’WARD, IN HIS FIRST FULL INDYCAR SEASON, PROVED HE’S A CHAMPION OF THE FUTURE”



Pagenaud had a tough year, but won in Iowa

CANTRELL

At the Harvest Grand Prix, he and the team couldn’t get the car to work on Firestone’s primary compound and he could manage only ninth and eighth. But he had created such an enormous points cushion by then – second and fifth in Iowa, an unlucky runner-up finish at the double-points Indy 500, a win (his 50th) and a fifth at Gateway – that his sixth title looked like a formality at St Pete. And so it proved.

Reigning champ Newgarden gave it a damn good go, though. Having stalled in the pits in Road America race one and been slow the following day, he was set to dominate the first race in Iowa until a yellow flew just after he’d pitted and left him buried in the pack and a lap down. This caution period had been caused by Power losing a front wheel after another pitcrew screw-up, but a loss for two Penske drivers proved a gain for the third. Pagnaud – who’d had to start at the rear of the field when his car died in qualifying – was the prime beneficiary and he came through to win. The next night, Newgarden and Power finished 1-2 and, while the Chevrolets were left gasping by Honda in the Indy 500, Newgarden was the highest-finishing Bowtie boy in fifth. Unlucky with yellows again in Gateway race one – his 12th place on a day that Dixon won left Newgarden 117 points down! – he again bounced back in style to win race two, before adding victory in the Harvest GP race one and the season finale at St Pete, by which time the gap was down to just 16 points. He could only rue the missed opportunities earlier in the year.

So too could team-mate Power. Five poles but only two wins; three other podiums but no further top-fives. On days when a race ran relatively smoothly he proved capable of dominating, but his pitcrew let him down four times, he let himself down three times, and fate in the form of ill-timed cautions killed his winning chances twice.

Chip Ganassi’s disappointment with Rosenqvist’s shunt in the season opener was soothed somewhat when the Swedish sophomore turned in a truly stellar drive in Road America race two and passed long-time race leader Pato O’Ward with just two laps to go to score his first win. But sadly this didn’t open the floodgates for Rosenqvist, and he would score only one more top-five finish over the remainder of the season, doubtless one of the reasons why Ganassi didn’t take up the option on his services for 2021.

So Rosenqvist has now joined Arrow McLaren SP to partner O’Ward, and he’ll be aware that this direct comparison with the young Mexican will be demanding. O’Ward, in his first full IndyCar season, proved he’s a champion of the future. He took four podiums and a pole, but also completed all but three of the season’s laps, knowing exactly when to push and when to avoid making any >>



ROUND BY ROUND

LEVITT

Texas

- 1 Scott Dixon
- 2 Simon Pagenaud
- 3 Josef Newgarden

Ganassi proves a cut above, Dixon dominating from second on the grid, and Rosenqvist coming through from ninth to run second until crashing. Pagenaud and polesitter Newgarden struggle with tyre vibrations but salvage podium finishes, while team-mate Power is third until a bad pitstop. Honda issues hobble Hunter-Reay, Rossi and Rahal from the start.

Indianapolis

- 1 Scott Dixon
- 2 Graham Rahal
- 3 Simon Pagenaud

Power and Harvey lead from the front row until they and Newgarden are wrong-footed by a caution before they’ve made their second stops. Power’s problem is compounded by stumbling away from a pitstop. Dixon, who makes his second stop early, easily outpaces all other three-stoppers still in contention. Rahal runs a two-stopper to take second just ahead of Pagenaud.

Road America 1

- 1 Scott Dixon
- 2 Will Power
- 3 Alex Palou

Dixon scores his third consecutive win, but only after polesitter Newgarden stalls in the pits, RLLR struggles to get fuel in Rahal’s car at his first stop, and the Penske #12 crew fumbles Power’s tyre change. That drops Power to second and he spends the remainder of the race holding off sensational rookie Palou, whose Coyne car has passed Hunter-Reay and earns a podium.

Road America 2

- 1 Felix Rosenqvist
- 2 Pato O’Ward
- 3 Alexander Rossi

Rahal and Hunter-Reay crash out on lap one after contact with Power. Meanwhile polesitter O’Ward drives into the distance, chased by Palou and Herta. Dixon, Newgarden and Power are no threat, but Rosenqvist is sensational in the final two stints, hunts down O’Ward, and passes him on the penultimate lap to maintain Ganassi’s unbeaten record.

Iowa 1

- 1 Simon Pagenaud
- 2 Scott Dixon
- 3 Oliver Askew

Daly takes Carlin’s first IndyCar pole, but Newgarden is dominant until caught out by a yellow when Power crashes after losing a wheel. The caution period leaves Newgarden a lap down, and flips Pagenaud – who had a mechanical issue in qualifying – towards the front, chased by Dixon and rookie Askew. VeeKay and Herta escape injury after a violent shunt.



O'Ward (leading) starred, but couldn't hold off Rosenqvist at Road America

MILLER



Herta was best of Andretti squad, and won at Mid-Ohio

CANTRELL



Sato won Indy 500 for the second time

LEVITT

Iowa 2

1 Josef Newgarden
2 Will Power
3 Graham Rahal
 Newgarden gets his revenge, leading 214 of the 250 laps to head home Power, who holds off an early challenge from the impressive Daly, and a late challenge from Rahal, who has clawed his way up from 19th. The driver who should have at least split the top Penske cars is O'Ward, but he suffers a poor pitstop. Team-mate Askew salvages sixth behind Pagnaud and Dixon.

Indy 500

1 Takuma Sato
2 Scott Dixon
3 Graham Rahal
 Andretti takes pole but turns anonymous on race day. Dixon leads 111 laps, his principal threats initially being the Andretti Autosport cars of Hunter-Reay – who loses places in several pitstops – and Rossi, who is penalised after contact with Sato in pitlane. Sato takes over as Dixon's prime opponent and holds the lead with five laps to go when Pigot crashes, and the race ends under caution.

Gateway 1

1 Scott Dixon
2 Takuma Sato
3 Pato O'Ward
 Power leads from pole, but a caution period falls badly for his pitstop strategy and later he also gets a puncture. His closest pursuer is O'Ward, who jumps him at the first round of stops and leads the most laps, but is passed by Sato, who suffers a bad stop that allows Dixon ahead. The two-time Indy winner closes down Dixon but can't find a way past.

Gateway 2

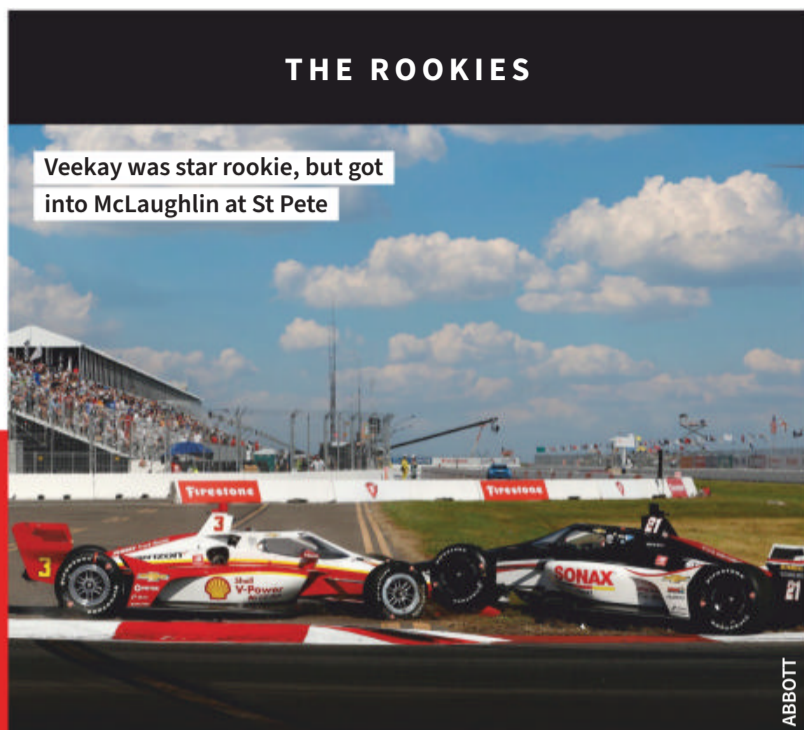
1 Josef Newgarden
2 Pato O'Ward
3 Will Power
 Newgarden, O'Ward, Power and Sato all lead for long spells – and the first three finish in that order, but polesitter Sato grazes a wall on the last lap and finishes ninth. The main excitement comes from VeeKay, who takes his Ed Carpenter Racing car around the outside of Herta, who just saves his car from the wall but not before Dixon passes him for fifth.

Mid-Ohio 1

1 Will Power
2 Josef Newgarden
3 Alexander Rossi
 Power takes pole and leads for all but the pitstop cycle to finally nail his first victory at Mid-Ohio, leading home Newgarden in a Penske 1-2. Andretti Autosport is back on pace, Hunter-Reay qualifying second and Rossi finishing third. Rahal holds off Hunter-Reay in the closing stages, while Dixon climbs from a poor qualifying to claim 10th when Daly runs low on fuel.

Mid-Ohio 2

1 Colton Herta
2 Alexander Rossi
3 Ryan Hunter-Reay
 In a wet but drying qualifying session, Herta takes pole ahead of Ferrucci, with whom he plays hardball at Turn 4 and prevails. Ferrucci rejoins the track and takes out Rosenqvist and Palou. Dixon runs second until passed by Rossi, then spins to the back of the field. Off-strategy Sato leads 16 laps, before Hunter-Reay completes Andretti Autosport's first 1-2-3 in 15 years.



THE ROOKIES

Veekay was star rookie, but got into McLaughlin at St Pete

ABBOTT

The three full-time rookies this year had a particularly tough job. In response to the pandemic, IndyCar restricted track time on race weekends and deleted in-season testing.

Super Formula graduate Alex Palou, driving for the Honda-powered Dale Coyne Racing with Team Goh, scored a fine third at Road America in only his third outing, qualified third for the next day's race, turned the fastest lap in Indy 500 qualifying, and twice more qualified in the top six. Team owner Coyne said the Spaniard needed to work a little on his racecraft, but was very sad to see him depart to Chip Ganassi Racing for 2021.

Oliver Askew, the 2019 Indy Lights champ, scored a podium in his Chevrolet-engined Arrow McLaren SP car at Iowa but, after a heavy shunt at Indy, he was off the pace at Gateway and Mid-Ohio and missed the Harvest GP due to late-diagnosed concussion. In his absence, the team announced he was being released at year's end, but he came back for the finale at St Pete, and was in the top 10 until being knocked into a tyre wall.

The man Askew beat to the Lights crown, Rinus VeeKay, got off to a calamitous start by shunting twice at Texas Speedway, but thereafter settled down at Ed Carpenter Racing, while never losing his aggression. He was Chevy's top performer in Indy qualifying, his pole position and podium in the Harvest GP were impressive, and his fighting drives at Gateway were brilliant. His Rookie of the Year title is well deserved.

wild moves. He also benefited from Arrow McLaren SP taking great strides in the off-season, so that its cars rolled off the truck with strong set-ups – vitally important given that all events bar the Indy 500 and the Harvest GP were reduced to two days and therefore offered less practice time than in years gone by.

In stark contrast, this worked out badly for the Andretti Autosport team, which struggled immensely for the first two thirds of the season despite flashes of promise from Jack Harvey (in the Meyer Shank Racing team that pooled its engineering talent and data with Andretti Autosport), Ryan Hunter-Reay, Colton Herta and

“HERTA BANKED POINTS WHEN THE CAR WASN'T GREAT AND FOUGHT FOR VICTORY WHEN IT WAS”

Alexander Rossi. Their race-day pace struggles were often exacerbated by mediocre or poor pitstops. This latter problem came under a harsh spotlight at Indy when four AA cars qualified in the Fast Nine, and both Rossi and Hunter-Reay appeared to be victory contenders in the race until pitlane mishaps.

All came good at Mid-Ohio, however, and Herta thoroughly deserved to be the man who reaped the ultimate reward. All season long he emulated his former Indy Lights team-mate O'Ward in banking points when the car wasn't great and fighting for victory when it was, and that third place in the championship is no fluke.

Other single-race winners of course included Takuma Sato, who passed Dixon for the lead late on at Indy and then discovered it was the winning move when the race finished under caution. He was also strong at Gateway. But elsewhere Taku was generally unimpressive compared with team-mate Rahal.

Pagenaud, after reviving his career in 2019, slipped back into the shadows for most of 2020. The Frenchman takes longer than Power and Newgarden to build confidence and speed, and this year there was far less time for both that and for backtracking his fundamentally more individual set-ups once he found they made him no quicker. On his best days Pagenaud can be one of the aces, but 2020 proved there are others of similar talent who can reach their peak performance more often, and unless he rediscovers his 2016, 2017 or 2019 form, it's hard to imagine Penske renewing his contract at the end of next year. ❄️

Indianapolis

1 Josef Newgarden

2 Alexander Rossi

3 Rinus VeeKay

VeeKay takes pole, has a gripping battle with Herta, but Newgarden's crew and his pace across both types of Firestone get him onto the tail of Herta, who cracks under pressure and slides long, allowing Newgarden through to win. Rossi passes Rosenqvist, Herta and VeeKay to claim second. VeeKay scores his first podium and Power saves the moment of the season to claim sixth.

Indianapolis

1 Will Power

2 Colton Herta

3 Alexander Rossi

The second race, being 10 laps shorter, pushes most drivers into a fuel-save two-stop strategy. Power takes pole and leads from start to finish, withstanding pressure from first Rossi and then, more severely, from Herta. Newgarden climbs from ninth on the grid to finish fourth just ahead of O'Ward, but Dixon suffers his fourth straight poor race and can only salvage eighth after qualifying 15th.

St Petersburg

1 Josef Newgarden

2 Pato O'Ward

3 Scott Dixon

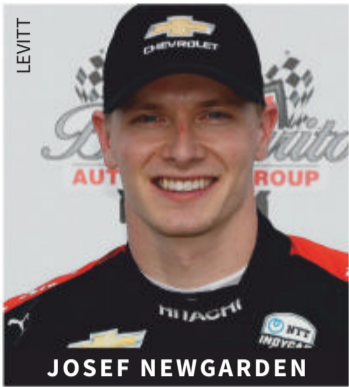
Power takes pole, but a gearbox glitch costs him places and a shunt puts him out. Rossi then dominates until crashing. Nearest rival Herta makes too many errors to take advantage, so Newgarden – up from eighth on the grid – is unstoppable in the closing stages. Dixon claims third and the title, while Bourdais impresses for AJ Foyt Racing and scores fourth.



DOLE

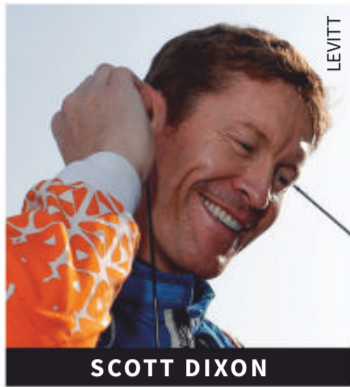
Dixon reflects on his sixth IndyCar crown

INDYCAR TOP 10 DRIVERS OF 2020



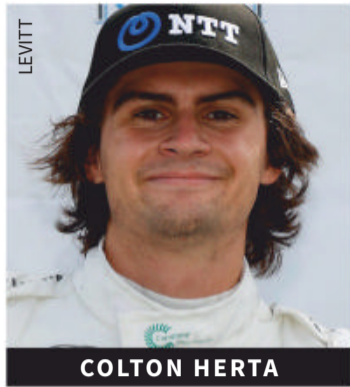
JOSEF NEWGARDEN

1 Drove with the aplomb we've come to expect, able to rebound or at least compose himself if a difficult qualifying session or badly timed caution period set him back. Finished ahead of Dixon in eight of the 14 races, winning four.



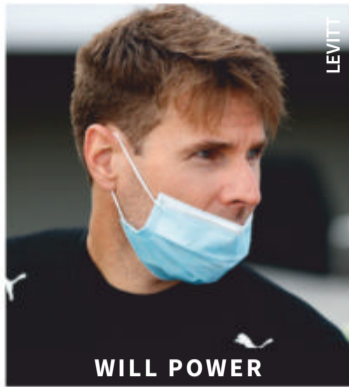
SCOTT DIXON

2 Able to capitalise on his and his team's virtues and on others' mistakes, while making few of his own. Very unlucky to miss out on Indy 500 glory. Poor showings at two late-season double-headers knocks him off the top spot here.



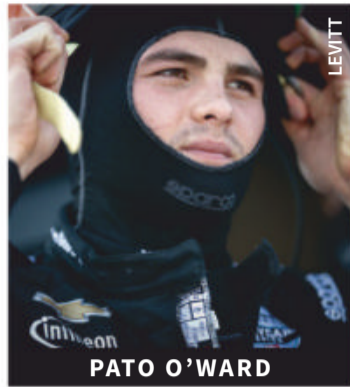
COLTON HERTA

3 So much for that fabled "difficult sophomore season". Herta managed to find the consistency lacking in his rookie year without losing any of his pace, and frequently showed the way to far more experienced team-mates.



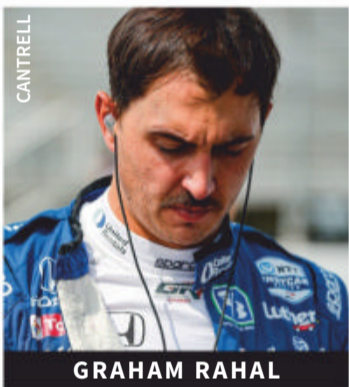
WILL POWER

4 Shockingly unlucky with pitcrew miscues and cautions costing him wins and podiums, and driving errors also costing two podiums. On raw pace, he remains the best and he's often unmatched in races – while all's going 'normally'.



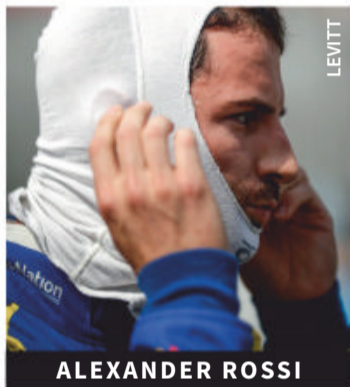
PATO O'WARD

5 Arguably the revelation of the season, not because he was quick – everyone knew that – but because he made so few errors, despite several tempting opportunities to overreach himself. A champion in the making.



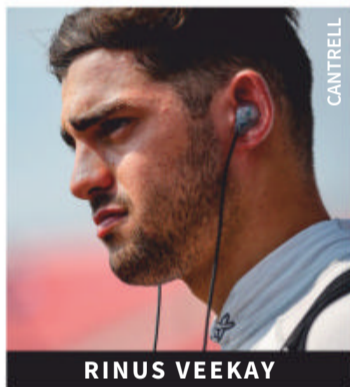
GRAHAM RAHAL

6 Some doubts remain over Rahal's ability to help steer the technical direction of the team, but he's as mistake-free as any of his peers, remains consistent, and can turn on the pace or dig out of a hole when required.



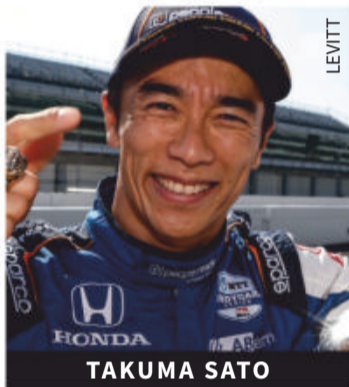
ALEXANDER ROSSI

7 Rossi's biggest problem was Andretti Autosport's struggle for pace for two thirds of the season; in those circumstances, a five-podium haul is impressive. But crashing out of the lead in the finale was costly and will eat at him in the off-season.



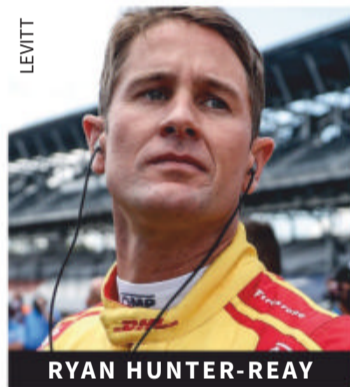
RINUS VEEKAY

8 A terrible start – two crashes in Texas – but his self-confidence was soon rebuilt in Ed Carpenter's nurturing environment. The Rookie of the Year outpaced team-mate Conor Daly on road and street courses and was undaunted by ovals.



TAKUMA SATO

9 If he hadn't won the 500, Taku wouldn't be top 10. He showed up badly compared with team-mate Rahal – less consistent and plain slower on road and street courses. But he was perfect in practice, qualifying and the race at Indy.



RYAN HUNTER-REAY

10 Last off-season the 2012 champion recovered his pace, but it coincided with Andretti Autosport treading water for much of the season and delivering him bad pitstops at crucial moments. RHR has more wins in him.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	PTS
1	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing	1	1	1	12	2	5	2	1	5	10	10	9	8	3	537
2	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske	3	7	14	9	5	1	5	12	1	2	8	1	4	1	521
3	Colton Herta (USA)	Andretti Autosport	7	4	5	5	20	19	8	4	6	9	1	4	2	11	421
4	Pato O'Ward (MEX)	Arrow McLaren SP	12	8	8	2	4	12	6	3	2	11	9	22	5	2	416
5	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske	13	20	2	11	21	2	14	17	3	1	7	6	1	24	396
6	Graham Rahal (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing	17	2	7	23	12	3	3	18	20	4	4	7	7	9	377
7	Takuma Sato (JPN)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing	24	10	9	8	10	21	1	2	9	17	18	18	14	10	348
8	Simon Pagenaud (FRA)	Team Penske	2	3	12	13	1	4	22	19	16	18	6	16	10	6	339
9	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Andretti Autosport	15	25	19	3	6	8	27	22	14	3	2	2	3	21	317
10	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA)	Andretti Autosport	8	13	4	22	16	22	10	7	11	5	3	19	16	5	315

11 **Felix Rosenqvist** (Chip Ganassi Racing) 306; 12 **Marcus Ericsson** (Chip Ganassi Racing) 291; 13 **Santino Ferrucci** (Dale Coyne Racing) 290; 14 **Rinus van Kalmthout** (Ed Carpenter Racing) 289; 15 **Jack Harvey** (Meyer Shank Racing) 288; 16 **Alex Palou** (Dale Coyne Racing) 238; 17 **Conor Daly** (Ed Carpenter Racing/Carlin) 237; 18 **Charlie Kimball** (AJ Foyt Enterprises) 218; 19 **Oliver Askew** (Arrow McLaren SP) 195; 20 **Marco Andretti** (Andretti Autosport) 176; 21 **Zach Veach** (Andretti Autosport) 166; 22 **Max Chilton** (Carlin) 147; 23 **James Hinchcliffe** (Andretti Autosport) 138; 24 **Tony Kanaan** (AJ Foyt Enterprises) 106; 25 **Ed Carpenter** (Ed Carpenter Racing) 81; 26 **Dalton Kellett** (AJ Foyt Enterprises) 67; 27 **Helio Castroneves** (Team Penske/Arrow McLaren SP) 57; 28 **Sebastien Bourdais** (AJ Foyt Enterprises) 53; 29 **Sage Karam** (Dreyer & Reinbold Racing) 32; 30 **JR Hildebrand** (Dreyer & Reinbold Racing) 28; 31 **Fernando Alonso** (Arrow McLaren SP) 18; 32 **Spencer Pigot** (Citrone Buhl Autosport with RLL) 17; 33 **Ben Hanley** (DragonSpeed) 14; 34 **James Davison** (Dale Coyne Racing) 10; 35 **Scott McLaughlin** (Team Penske) 8.



THE RETURN OF GT2, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

SRO boss Stephane Ratel was worried about the disappearance of the amateur – or ‘gentleman’ – drivers who used to be the bedrock of GT3. So he invented a new category

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY CURB STONE





If you're already confused by the myriad of categories – and different names for them – that make up the landscape of international GT racing, then be prepared for a new addition.

The class is called GT2 and, no surprise, it's the brainchild of Stephane Ratel, the architect of GT3 and GT4, as well as the short-lived GT1 division of the early 2010s.

Ratel, the world's premier promoter of GT racing by some chalk, saw an opening – or rather a need – for a new class. His realisation was founded on the gradual disappearance of the amateur driver from many of the series he promotes around the world.

That's why he came up with the idea of a new breed of machinery that fits between the existing GT3 and GT4 categories he created back in the 2000s. Ratel wanted to create a class for cars that were easier to drive, and cheaper to buy and run. "I said let's take the spirit of GT4 cars, simple cars to drive and run, but not to castrate

them in terms of power," says Ratel. "That is how the idea for a new class came about."

Something given the working title of 'GT4+' was briefly considered, but increasing the power of GT4 machinery to the levels required to hit Ratel's performance target wasn't possible. When he found out that the name 'GT2' wasn't trademarked in the realm of sport and entertainment, a new category was born.

Fitting in a new category between GT3 and GT4 and calling it GT2 is not as counterintuitive as you might think, argues Ratel. GT2 sits above GT3 in what he describes as the "pyramid of power". "We have based it on power," explains Ratel. "A GT4 is 350 to 450bhp, a GT3 is 500 to 550bhp, and GT2 is 630 to 700bhp. It makes perfect sense."

That's the selling point of GT2. More power, and lots of it. He reasons that the amateur or 'gentleman' driver is unable to exploit the cornering speeds of the latest generation of high-downforce >>



TECH SPECS

	Audi R8 LMS GT2	Porsche 911 GT2 RS Clubsport
Engine	5.2-litre normally aspirated V10	3.8-litre twin-turbo flat-six
Power	640bhp	700bhp
Torque	550Nm	750Nm
Transmission	Seven-speed S-tronic	Seven-speed PDK
Weight	1350kg	1390kg
Price	€338,000	€405,000



Porsche 911 GT2 RS Clubsport's appeal to collectors likely to limit numbers on the grid

GT3 cars, cars he calls “space rockets”. But, he contends, anyone can press the loud pedal with their right foot.

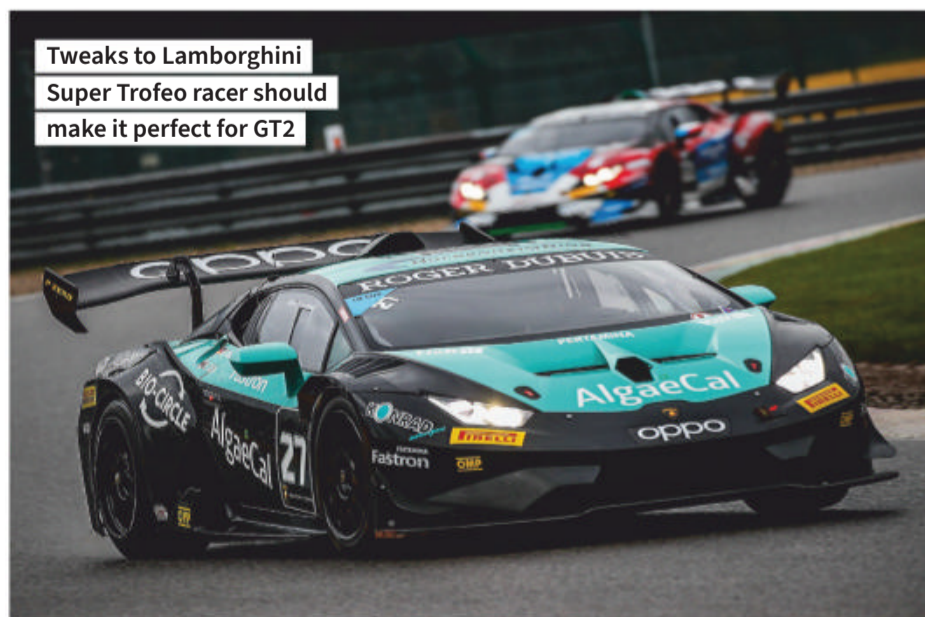
“Hitting an apex at 100km/h when you feel comfortable at 80 is a big jump to make,” he explains. “The truth is that the latest GT3 cars take a lot of driving because of the downforce. But it doesn’t really matter if you are Lewis Hamilton or Stephane Ratel when you accelerate out of a corner.” (Ratel is an occasional racer himself, with a collection of cars in his garage and a couple of starts in the Le Mans 24 Hours to his name.)

“The idea is to compensate for cornering speed with performance in the straight line. I wanted a car that is not intimidating to drive like a GT3 but is still almost as quick. We have seen that in the hands of a gentleman that a GT2 will achieve very similar lap times to a GT3.”

That explains his initial plan, outlined at the Stephane Ratel Organisation’s traditional press conference at the Spa 24 Hours back in July 2018, for the new cars to race alongside GT3 machinery in the double-header one-hour sprints it runs around the world. That meant what is now the GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup and its North American and Asian counterparts.

“We are losing the amateurs in GT3, that is fact,” he says. “At Imola for the first round of the GTWCE Endurance Cup this year we had 46 cars and one Am car. In our GTWCE sprints, they are long gone: we haven’t welcomed an Am car for a long time. And we know that once they are gone, it is very difficult to convince them to come back.”

“THE IDEA IS TO COMPENSATE FOR CORNERING SPEED WITH STRAIGHTLINE PERFORMANCE”



Tweaks to Lamborghini Super Trofeo racer should make it perfect for GT2

He was less convinced that GT2 was necessary in the UK: “When you have a series like the British GT Championship where a full grid is signed and paid up by Christmas, you don’t think about adding another category.”

Audi and Porsche were the first to unveil machinery for the new category, the former with the R8 LMS GT2 and the latter with the 911 GT2 RS Clubsport and the retro-bodied 935 version of the same car. GT2 appeared to have momentum when a grid full of Porsches – both ‘normal’ GT2 Clubsports and 935s – took part in a special one-make race on the undercard of the Spa 24 Hours last year. Ratel was suggesting at that time that six manufacturers on the grid from the get-go of the new category this year was a realistic hope.

But Ratel’s original plan hit a snag when it emerged that the cars, in particular the Porsche, would struggle to do an hour on a tank of fuel. Fitting the prerequisite fuel capacity into a car with 700bhp wasn’t possible, which meant he had to scratch the idea to incorporate the cars into his Sprint series.

Ratel wasn’t deterred and thought again. He found a home for GT2 in his anything-goes GT Sports Club Series for amateur drivers to get the category off the ground. A pilot event at the Barcelona round on the bill of the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup in September 2019 was meant to coincide with the launch of a third GT2 project. It didn’t happen.

Ratel has no problem revealing that the third marque was McLaren, which opted against pushing ahead with its GT2 programme last summer. Its decision was a double disappointment, he says, because he lost a manufacturer and “the three others who were considering GT2 ended up staying on the fence”.

Again, Ratel wasn’t deterred. His vision for GT2 called on the premium manufacturers already involved in GT3 building cars so, when he didn’t get the required take-up, he turned to what he calls the “special tuners” who have been important in so many of the categories he has launched over the years.

Among their number was Prodrive, which built the Ferrari 550 Maranello GTs that raced in SRO’s FIA GT Championship from 2001 and at Le Mans and elsewhere under the Automobile Club de l’Ouest’s rules. More pertinently they incorporated Reiter Engineering, which developed the Lamborghini Murcielago that raced in FIA GTs from 2003 and on into the FIA GT1 World Championship, the Italian manufacturer’s Gallardo for GT3, and then a KTM GT4 contender. The German operation run by Hans Reiter, who engineered at Schnitzer in the 1990s on its touring car and sportscar programmes, has now produced the KTM X-BOW GT2 with a 600bhp turbocharged five-cylinder Audi engine.

“I understand that it is difficult to commit to a new programme in the current times, so I thought, ‘OK, if the manufacturers need a proven success before they commit, then we will go back to our friends the tuners,’” says Ratel. “Good old Hans. He has been in at the beginning of so many new categories.”

There are also other projects out there, such as the JUBU ZP Zero, a car based on the Lotus Exige chassis and powered by a twin- >>



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turbo version of the British car's Toyota V6 powerplant. The Austrian tuning specialist has already been out testing with a car that has more than a hint of the Lotus GT1 that raced in FIA GTs in 1997.

The category has also been opened up to the Lamborghini Super Trofeo Huracan one-make racer. One of the marques that was sitting on the fence, Lamborghini has been invited to come up with a kit to reduce the downforce of a car that already has more power than the GT3-spec Huracan. "It's right there in the GT2 performance window," says Ratel. "The only difference between this car and the others is that it has a little bit too much downforce."

Now that Ratel has four or five GT2 cars ready to go, he has created a series specifically for the class after deciding against mixing them with GT3s in GT Sports Club events. It will be called the GT2 European Series and will encompass five dates, starting at Monza in April and incorporating races on the bill of the British GT

Championship round at Silverstone in June and the Spa 24 Hours in July. Each weekend will encompass two 50-minute races, which will be open to one and two-driver and pro and pro-am line-ups, with a pro being defined as a silver-rated driver over 30.

GT2s will also be able to race alongside GT3 and GT4 cars in a series run under the GT America banner, which will have a race on the Nashville IndyCar Series round next August.

The aim is to have 16 cars racing in the standalone GT2 series next year. "That's what we need next year and we are working on it," says Ratel. "But it's like when you open a restaurant, you never know how many people are going to walk through the door. If you ask me how many of each car I want, I'd say four of each. That's the magic number."

Ratel concedes that he is struggling to attract Porsches in the numbers he'd hoped for a car being made in large numbers – 200 Clubsports and 77 of the limited-edition 935s. He suggests that the majority of the cars are destined for "the hands of collectors" who have no plans to race them. He seems more confident in attracting Audis and has bought an R8 LMS of his own, which he intends to place with a team for next year. "When you start something you have to put your hand in your pocket," he says.

Ratel has maintained over the past 18 months or so that he wasn't about to give up on GT2. He almost suggests that it *has* to work, hinting that the GT3 category could be approaching some kind of tipping point. The implication is that GT2 might offer some kind of insurance policy or a fallback position should GT3 hit problems. "At some point the costs will get out of hand in GT3," says Ratel. "We have very little margin to support more costs across our platforms."

"I am not giving up on GT2: it will be a success, I promise you that. The look of the cars is there, the power is there and the running costs are there. I don't know whether it will be two years or longer. But one day it will be a success, period." ❄

ERIC VAN DE POELE'S VERDICT ON THE NEW BREED OF GT2

If you've got the chance to put a driver behind the wheel of a couple of brand-new GT racers at Spa-Francorchamps, then who better than Eric van de Poele? Not only does the former Modena Lamborghini, Brabham and Fondmetal Formula 1 racer have a record five wins in the Spa 24 Hours, but he's also raced just about every kind of sportscar – prototype and GT – in a long career that included two victories in the Sebring 12 Hours.

Van de Poele sampled the Audi R8 LMS GT2 and the Porsche 911 GT2 RS Clubsport at a trackday run by SRO's Curbstone organisation. The difference between the new breed of GT2 and a GT3 car – examples of which he has raced include a Ferrari, BMW and Maserati – was apparent even in the handful of laps he managed in each car.

"Both the Audi and the Porsche were much softer than a GT3 car and didn't feel nearly so nervous," he says. "Both manufacturers have built cars that inspire a lot of confidence straight away. You have got a lot of power with the cars – they were both hitting 260km/h [160mph] at the top of the hill after Eau Rouge – but the delivery is very linear with the normally aspirated Audi and the turbocharged Porsche.



"The Porsche gave a little more confidence straight away, probably because it was a bit softer set up. The Audi was stiffer and I would say a bit better set-up on the day, but I'm sure that with a little work on the Porsche you could bring it up to the same level.

"The good thing about these cars is that they are not going to throw an inexperienced driver

off the road after two corners. There's a lot of electronic assistance – ABS, traction control and stability control – and if you get a big oversteer, the car will correct it. But the good thing is that you can adjust the sensitivity of the systems."

The braking capabilities of the two cars impressed van de Poele in different ways. "The Audi was very stable on the brakes, although I have to admit that I didn't like the initial feel – the brakes were a little bit too soft for me," he explains. "The Porsche had a harder pedal with a better bite, which I definitely preferred. But under braking the car moved around a little bit more: you were having to make tiny steering corrections like you would in a GT3 car."

Van de Poele has only ever raced a 911 on one occasion, a guest appearance in the Porsche Supercup on home turf at Spa in 1993 that yielded a podium, but the try-out in the Clubsport brought memories flooding back.

"The Porsche is still very much a 911; you can feel those inherent characteristics," he says. "You can still feel the engine is right at the rear of the car. And like the Supercup car I drove, it had a gear lever if you didn't want to use the paddleshift."



Pandemic has hampered testing, but Loeb is now getting as much seat time as he can



WHY LOEB IS JOINING UP WITH PRODRIVE

The nine-time World Rally champion is heading to the Dakar Rally with an all-new project, and is joining up with the team he often fought against in the WRC

SERGIO LILLO

PHOTOGRAPHY **McINTYRE/PRODRIVE** AND



Nine-time World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb remains as committed as ever after 19 years at the top level of the sport. Since returning part-time with Citroen to the WRC in 2018 and continuing with Hyundai in 2019 and 2020, he's managed to add a victory and a further two podiums to his incredible statistics. And now he's decided to get involved in Prodrive's first Dakar Rally project: the Bahrain Raid Xtreme.

Together with his long-time co-driver Daniel Elena, Loeb will drive one of the two BRX T1 4x4s that the British team will line up on the 43rd edition of the Dakar, which runs in Saudi Arabia from 3-15 January 2021. After completing their first desert test in Dubai, Loeb spoke to Autosport.

What led you to join a new Dakar Rally project?

Well, each time that I did the Dakar Rally, at the end... sometimes I was disappointed, sometimes I was happy, but afterwards when I think what I did it's always an incredible adventure. I saw some landscapes that I would never have seen if I didn't do this race. It's a kind of adventure that you share with your team, your co-driver...

“DAKAR IS ALWAYS AN INCREDIBLE ADVENTURE THAT YOU SHARE WITH YOUR TEAM, YOUR CO-DRIVER”

It's a nice experience that I enjoy. Now it's been two years since I decided to go back to WRC – I had a great opportunity with Hyundai in the new cars, I enjoyed it a lot, but I think it was also time again to retire from WRC, as it's complicated to do only half a season like this with only a little test and be competitive in these conditions.

So I think it was a new motivation again to come back to the Dakar. I was interested in the project, I had good contacts, good propositions with different teams, and finally I decided to go with Prodrive, with Bahrain Raid Xtreme Team, because the presentation they made me, how the car is looking and the motivation they have about this project were exciting.

Why did you decide to be involved in a new project from zero and not opt for other teams more established in the >>

BRX T1 lacks a buggy's vast suspension travel but offsets that with better balance and handling

INSIGHT LOEB'S DAKAR SWITCH

discipline, such as Toyota?

Why? Because... for sure, at first I was interested in going to a team with experience like Toyota or go back with a [private] team with a Peugeot car, that we know how it works, but Prodrive really wanted to show me the project. I went there and after seeing the presentation and how the car is made, with lots of work on the centre of gravity, I realised that if I have to do a car, I would think in exactly the same way. I didn't know how to do it better to have an efficient car. I saw a lot of motivation too, a big factory, with a lot of possibilities to work and create new parts. I was really impressed about how serious this project looked, and then I think it could be interesting to start from zero with a new team like this, to build the car around me and to do it like I want. Maybe it was the best solution, despite we know it can be tricky in the first year, that we have still a lot of work to do.

When did you decide on Prodrive?

Not for some months. Before I saw the project seriously, I was hesitating quite a long time. But from the point I went there [Prodrive's HQ] and saw everything, when I came back I was nearly sure that it was what I wanted. I was convinced when I was in the factory. I think it was maybe just after the first lockdown.

You said in 2018 after Peugeot's exit that time should pass until you would compete again on the Dakar, but in 2019 you returned, and now again. What does the rally mean to you?

It's the only race that I did where you have that part of adventure and where you discover some amazing places that you will never see anywhere else. I was very competitive last Dakar I did [he finished third with a private Peugeot 3008 DKR run by PH Sport]. We were unlucky sometimes, we had some troubles, and things like that, but on the performance side I had a very good feeling with the car, I was able to push and to do the best times in the stages several times [he won four stages in Dakar 2019]. But I didn't win. That is also a motivation that I had to come back and to try to do it again.

You have a new team-mate with Nani Roma [who won the Dakar on bikes in 2004, and for cars in 2014].

How has the relationship with him begun?

I think we have the same feedback about the car. Nani is



Loeb enjoyed his stint with Hyundai but has called time on the WRC

someone that I know from the past. We've never worked really together, but we saw each other a few times around the rallies and he is always someone that I like. He is simple, he is normal, he is very motivated and has a lot of experience, so we can share a lot of things and I think we can do a really good job together. So I'm happy to work with Nani in this project.

You've driven three different cars in rally raids after your four participations in Dakar, if we take into account the Maxi version of the Peugeot 3008 DKR. What has surprised you the most about this BRX T1?

The Peugeot 2008 DKR, I think it's better we forget about it [he laughs]. Then the [RWD] 3008 DKR and the 3008 DKR Maxi, on the performance I think there wasn't a big difference. With the new car the biggest difference is that it's a 4x4 one, so all the regulation is different. It's a lot of advantage for the buggy in some conditions, with their suspension travel, with the lowest weight, their bigger wheels, they can adjust the tyre pressure from the cockpit. So if it's rough, camel grass, dunes, very fast section is always good for the buggy. So I'm discovering all of this in the 4x4. I have the feeling that the suspension still works well; it's not the same travel, but the strong point of this car is the balance and the handling.

When you're on gravel tracks like rally roads it's much better and much more precise to drive this car. It's a compromise, I think. What can make the difference is also the type of rally. If the rally is only very fast, with lots of dunes and rough sections, it would be better for the buggy. If you have some tracks, the 4x4 can perform better. The feeling with the car is really nice, I enjoy more driving this one than driving the buggy. When you are in some little tracks

4WD BRX T1 is closer to Loeb's WRC experience than his previous Dakar buggy





Getting involved in a project from zero intrigued Loeb, and Prodrive's strength in depth convinced him

you have lots of fun in the car and you can really push it hard. It's difficult to analyse now what would be better. We have a good car, but we'll see how it is compared with the buggy in the Dakar.

So you have to adapt your own driving style a bit less than in the past with this car?

Yes. On the driving side, I had not really to change my driving style for the tracks, but I had to adapt it in the dunes, because I was used to driving a two-wheel-drive buggy there, and now with a narrow tyre with a lot of pressure you can go down in the sand quite easily, but you have four-wheel drive to escape the bad situations. It's a different approach in the dunes – I have to get used to it, for sure, but at the end it's going well. I'm confident we can achieve something good if we don't have any big trouble during the Dakar.

How well has the testing in the Middle East gone?

First we tried to set up the car, to find the best compromise that we can before doing a lot of kilometres. We did that, and we have also had some little problems that stopped us during the test, so we couldn't always do exactly what we wanted. But at the end, the problems we had are always nearly the same, and it's something we'll get solved quite easily. Overall, I was happy about the performance of the car, about the solidity, the reliability. We could break the gearbox, the engine, different things, but it didn't happen. There was some transmission stuff or things like this that got broken sometimes.

I'm quite confident that in the next test in December, we will have all the package for Dakar and I'm quite confident that it won't break a lot. The car is very compact, so that makes it

“IT'S MY LIFE TO DO RALLYING. I WANT TO BE THE FASTEST GUY OUT THERE. THAT'S MY MOTIVATION”

quite agile, nice to drive. I'm quite confident we will do something good. Maybe the first year we know it is always complicated. I think no one came to Dakar first year and won, but we are working hard and at the moment it's not so bad.

Do you believe it is already possible to compete against the two established teams, Mini X-Raid and Toyota, in January?

I hope so. We are not going there to be behind. I always want to win, so the goal is to do our best, to be ready and to be able to compete. Then, like I said, we haven't been able to compare directly to another car [in performance] and we don't have a lot of kilometres, so it's a bit difficult to know.

With all this chaos with COVID, which has limited races and tests for everyone, maybe Prodrive is playing in a more equalised field...

Yeah, for sure. But if you look at the Toyota or the Mini, they have been competing for years in the Dakar, so they know all the key points of the competition. For us it's a bit different – that's why

we're trying to drive a lot and to test a lot, now that it's possible to go and test in the desert. The project had a little delay because of the pandemic, so now that we are able to drive the car, we are trying to do it as much as possible.

Is there anything from the WRC that you can use on the Dakar too, or do you have to reset yourself 100%?

I think the experience of driving in WRC is always good, because you need to be on the top all the time, it's no margin, it's on the limit every time. For me it helps to keep thinking on the driving, to keep the feeling, and being on the limit when you want. The fact that I have been driving this year in WRC has benefited me in these kind of things.

After 19 seasons as a professional rally driver, where do you find the spark that starts the fire, the motivation?

Oof... it's my life. It's my life to do rallying, the competition is my life and today I don't feel old and still enjoy it. Now with this new challenge, I'm even more excited, because I know we try to work all together to bring a new project. And at the end it's me and Daniel in the car who need to work to achieve the goals, so all this preparation and the way we are doing it... I don't need to find motivation, I like what I do. When I'm sitting in the car I want to be the fastest guy out there. That's my natural motivation.

You have had a Dakar legend as a team-mate in the form of Stephane Peterhansel [13 times a winner]. What have you learned from him, especially after your amazing battle in 2017?

When I was driving with Peugeot all my team-mates were strong and had a lot of experience – not only Peterhansel, also Carlos Sainz was driving with me. For sure, I had some things to learn from them. It was more general stuff. When you were discussing things together I understood some things. For the rest, I had to build my own experience. But for me and Daniel it was a benefit to work with some very experienced drivers like them.

You will race this year against Sainz again. He took his third Dakar win last January. How much has he surprised you?

I think he is one of the drivers today in Dakar who is pushing the most. He still has this aggressive driving style from WRC; he's always pushing on the limit all the way as he can. And if the co-driver is doing a good job, I'm confident he can still continue to win. He is one of the best drivers in the Dakar. I was happy for him this year, as he is not so young anymore and still to have this fighting spirit he has is just incredible.

Will he be your main rival this time?

The main rival will be myself, my co-driver and the car [at the start]. Then, if Carlos can be the main rival at the end, for sure I will be happy. It would mean that we will be in the game and that's what we need to work for. I hope we'll be able to compete with them.

And after Dakar, where will we see you?

Well, I know what I will do next year after Dakar [laughs].

Maybe Extreme E?

I don't know. I cannot say what is the plan, but you will know it soon. I have one. 🌩️



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THE WAIT OF EXPECTATION

Despite the strangest of years, Johnathan Hoggard was ready for his first F1 test

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

Patience is not normally high on the list of attributes people think racing drivers need. But there are times when it's important, such as when they're looking to time an overtaking move. Or when they are preparing for their first outing in a Formula 1 car.

Thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, it's hard to be certain of the timing of anything in the first half of 2020. And that means 2019 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award winner Johnathan Hoggard doesn't know exactly when he'll get the chance to sample F1 machinery, to go with the £200,000 he's won. Or fit in much racing after the Daytona 24 Hours run he's had courtesy of winning the Sunoco Whelen Challenge.

Fortunately, Aston Martin Red Bull Racing finds a suitable gap between the UK's two national lockdowns to get Hoggard his chance to drive a 2012 Adrian Newey-designed RB8 around the Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit.

Hoggard arrives off the back of a successful FIA F3 test with Jenzer Motorsport at Barcelona as he considers his 2021 campaign, but he soon needs to call on that patience again as the track is damp and there is the odd sprinkling of rain. He has done some sim running with Red Bull the previous Friday, though it has no model of the RB8 so he's used a GP2 car with more grip and downforce. He completes an installation lap, in wet-tyres-shod RB8 chassis #2, but then stays in the garage.

Happily, the Red Bull team has put the whole day aside for Hoggard's test, so everyone is prepared to wait that little bit longer. And what's an hour or two after months – or perhaps more accurately years – of waiting to follow in the footsteps of former Award winners such as David Coulthard, Jenson Button, Paul di Resta, George Russell and Lando Norris?

Understandably, Hoggard hasn't learned too much from his single tour. "It's really fast!" he says. "It's really [about] making sure the seat is OK, the radio works, the normal sort of stuff. There's still a bit of standing water so we'll wait for it to dry."

"That first lap – and the day – will stay with you forever," enthuses judge and Aston Martin driver Darren Turner, who >>



“THE MAIN THING IS HOW MUCH POWER IT HAS, ESPECIALLY ON FULL THROTTLE, AND THE DOWNFORCE WITH THE BLOWN DIFFUSER”

won the Award in 1996 and had his F1 test just a few months later.

“I remember seeing Dean Smith [the 2009 Award winner] do his F1 test the day before me, in the wet,” adds 2008 winner, current judge and Formula E racer Alexander Sims. “The next day was dry and I thought, ‘Thank God for that!’ But the demo tyres were rooted after three laps...”

Aside from the judges and Red Bull team, there are some key figures around to support Hoggard, including his mother and father, and Richard Dutton, boss of the Fortec team that ran him to the runner-up spot in the 2019 BRDC F3 Championship last year.

Every now and again the 2.4-litre engine is fired up and Hoggard ventures out for a look at the circuit in his road car but, with conditions continuing to improve, the wait continues. “It’s nice having the whole day – there’s no rush or pressure,” reckons Hoggard. He seems utterly unperturbed by the prospect of handling an unfamiliar machine with 750-800bhp, though he does concede that the V8’s power is “more than enough for today!”

Just after three o’clock, fresh slick Pirellis finally go on and Hoggard prepares to go out. It’s windy and there are still a couple of damp patches at Club. Hoggard plays himself in gradually, with a 1m50s first flyer. He completes two more laps, each faster than the one before, then comes in.

Hoggard stays aboard and, after a few car checks, soon goes out for a longer run. He immediately looks more comfortable and better his previous best on the first flying lap. He unofficially gets down to within three seconds of Kimi Raikkonen’s fastest lap from the 2012 British Grand Prix. Comparison is always tricky, thanks to different rubber, a new surface and different conditions,

but Hoggard is running without the RB8’s KERS.

The soon-to-be 20-year-old gets out after this run and looks at the data. Some spots of rain have people glancing at the sky, trying to second-guess the weather, but Hoggard goes out for his final run just before five o’clock. Now his patience is rewarded.

There’s another step up in performance – Hoggard even bounces off the rev limiter exiting Club on one lap as he comes onto the straight that bit faster – and finally records an unofficial best of 1m36s flat. That’s 1.4s away from Raikkonen’s 2012 mark, still without KERS and on Pirelli’s demo tyres. It’s clear he’s getting into the zone.

Hoggard sits in the car for a moment before climbing out and allowing himself a brief smile. Then he has a quick debrief.

“Really good day,” is his initial summary. “I got a bit nervous with the shower just before the final run, but it cleared up OK. It’s a dream come true to drive an F1 car, especially around Silverstone GP. It was amazing feeling the power and the downforce. I was learning as much as I could.”

An extra factor he has to consider, which even current F1 drivers



Blown diffuser requires an alien technique, but Hoggard adapted well



The waiting is rewarded as Hoggard gets to push on in the dry with slick rubber

MAUGER

2019 SPONSORS AND PARTNERS





PRESSING ON WITH 2021 PLANS

don't have to grapple with, is that the RB8 is from the era of the powerful blown diffuser, which helps pin the rear – if you have the confidence to apply the power. It requires a technique that Sebastian Vettel mastered, giving him an edge over Mark Webber on the way to the German's third world crown in 2012.

"The main thing was how much power it has, especially on full throttle, and the downforce with the blown diffuser," explains Hoggard. "You get on the power and it really does stick."

"With this car it's got the blown diffuser so there was a little bit of advice on how to get the best out of it," says Red Bull's Simon Rennie, who is running the test. "It's a bit of a foreign thing for drivers – to believe that more throttle will make the car more stable – but any advice we gave he was acting on in the next run."

Getting a feel for the tyres, another key modern motorsport requirement and one that is part of seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton's armoury, is another consideration. "The front tyres were graining quite a lot," adds Hoggard. "As I was driving better the tyres were going."

Rennie agrees: "As he was improving, the tyres were dropping off, so he didn't get many opportunities with the peak of the tyres. You only really get that when you know the car."

Rennie is impressed with Hoggard, but isn't surprised, having been present for his Award tests in MotorSport Vision F2, Ligier LMP3 and Aston Martin Vantage GT3 machinery last year. "He did a good job," he says. "From seeing how he performed at the Award tests and how well he adapted to the three cars, I expected him to do a good job. He got straight on with it, there were no scary moments and he progressed with each run."

Knowing how hard to push in such a test is surely always tricky, but Hoggard was clear he wasn't just going to cruise around: "It was a case of be confident and sensible, building up nicely. I had a couple of oversteer moments on traction, but it's got so much grip."

"I was trying not to leave anything on the table. It could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity so to leave something on the table would have been something I'd have regretted. I want to go again."

There's no more time for that today, but the ultimate goal of a more permanent F1 berth remains. Back to the hard work of climbing the junior single-seater ladder – and more patience. ❄

The ramifications of the coronavirus pandemic changed the look of motorsport this year in a way not seen before. One decision taken early was not to run the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award in 2020.

With potential finalists for the Award – selected from the best-performing British drivers in junior single-seater categories – having doubts over their calendars, the move was made in May to cancel the event.

It's the first time since the Award began in 1989, when future 13-time world championship grand prix winner David Coulthard was the victor, that it has not been held.

Nevertheless, chairman of the judges and ex-Formula 1 driver Derek Warwick believes it was the correct move. "We were very disappointed we had to postpone the Award for the first time since its inception, but it was the right decision given the circumstances of this extraordinary year," says Warwick.

"What has been positive is the relationship we have with Aston Martin, which joined the Award as a new partner in 2019. Their enthusiasm has been a massive boost for the Award, we made decisions together – Aston Martin, the British Racing Drivers' Club and Autosport – and it was great that last year's Award winner Johnathan Hoggard got his F1 run with Red Bull at Silverstone."

Planning for the 2021 Award has already begun, and Warwick is keen to ensure that the momentum from 2019 will be maintained. "We're all flat-out for next year," he adds. "We know there have been some outstanding young British talents competing across many eligible categories in 2020 and we're really looking forward to assessing them next year."

"I think the Award is a season highlight for everyone involved, including the judges and the finalists, and it's great to be looking ahead and thinking about selecting the 32nd winner in 2021."





AUTOSPORT

AWARDS 2020



The 2020 edition of the Autosport Awards will be online, with increased digital coverage, and celebrate the best of the motorsport season.

The annual extravaganza has been one of the highlights of the year for nearly four decades and attracts key motorsport figures, including Formula 1 champions and World Rally stars.

Due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the Awards night cannot take place at its traditional venue, Grosvenor House hotel on Park Lane, but the key awards will still be voted for and announced across multiple digital platforms, including autosport.com.

Nominees for International Racing Driver of the Year, British Competition Driver of the Year, UK National Driver of the Year, Moment of the Year, Rider of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Racing Car of the Year, International Rally Driver of the Year and Rally Car of the Year can be found in the following pages. A new award, the Esports Driver of the Year, has also been added in recognition of this growing branch of motorsport.

You can vote for the candidate you think performed best in each category during the season. The winners will then be announced in December, again across multiple digital platforms, as well as in Autosport magazine.

Planning is already under way for the 2021 Autosport Awards, taking place once again as a physical event scheduled for 12 December, with some exciting new features.





INTERNATIONAL RACING DRIVER

PRESENTED BY PIRELLI

Open to professional racing drivers competing at an international level

SCOTT DIXON

In a championship as competitive as IndyCar, it's remarkable that Dixon managed to secure his sixth crown in 2020. Winning the first three races was crucial as Penske's double champion Josef Newgarden put on a late charge, but the Chip Ganassi Racing star held firm to take the title by 16 points.



ANTONIO FELIX DA COSTA

The Portuguese arrived at DS Techeetah with double champion Jean-Eric Vergne as his team-mate. But rather than settle in second place, da Costa was a phenomenon. A hat-trick of pole positions and race wins mid-season earned him a brilliant Formula E title.



LEWIS HAMILTON

It was another remarkable season for Formula 1's benchmark driver. First he matched and then broke Michael Schumacher's all-time wins record, then he helped Mercedes to a seventh consecutive constructors' crown before continuing his march towards his seventh drivers' title.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

That F1 races in 2020 were often three-way fights between the two Mercedes drivers and Verstappen showed just how brilliant the Red Bull ace is. The Dutchman was miles ahead of the rest and is clearly ready for a championship challenge, but when will he get the chance?



INTERNATIONAL RACING CAR

PRESENTED BY PIRELLI

Open to racing cars competing in any class of circuit racing



AUDI RS5 DTM

In the final year of the DTM's Class 1, Audi dominated. BMW managed just two wins from 18 races as Abt and Rosberg-run RS5s set the pace. Five wins from the last six races brought Rene Rast his third crown, over early pacesetter Nico Muller.



DS E-TENSE FE20

Such was the speed of the black-and-gold cars that DS Techeetah brushed the opposition aside. Four wins from 11 races meant the team wrapped up a second successive constructors' title, doing so with a 77-point advantage over Nissan e.dams.



MERCEDES F1 W11

Many figures in the Formula 1 paddock believe the W11 could be the team's best car yet. It started the season with a pace advantage not seen since the 1990s, and clinched the constructors' title with four rounds to spare.



TOYOTA TS050 HYBRID

It's not exactly a new design, but the TS050 secured its Le Mans 24 Hours hat-trick in 2020. Not only that, but it also remained the car to beat in the World Endurance Championship despite success penalties designed to help the rival privateer teams.



INTERNATIONAL RALLY DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to professional or semi-professional rally drivers in international events

ELFYN EVANS

Alongside six-time World Rally champion Sebastien Ogier at Toyota, Evans has been incredibly consistent this year. He has finished in the top four in each of the six rallies so far and, with one round to go, has a 14-point lead as he bids to become the first British WRC champion since 2001.



THIERRY NEUVILLE

The perennial WRC bridesmaid, Neuville started the season well with a victory on the Monte Carlo Rally. Things got away from the Belgian after that, but second places in Turkey and Italy have kept Neuville – winner of more 2020 stages than anyone else – in mathematical title contention.



SEBASTIEN OGIER

Having finally lost his crown in 2019, Ogier made the switch to Toyota to take the slot vacated by world champion Ott Tanak. Predictably, Ogier was immediately a factor at the front, winning round three in Mexico, although a retirement in Turkey could prove costly.



OTT TANAK

The reigning World Rally champion made a bold move in leaving Toyota and heading to Hyundai for 2020. Things did not start well, with an enormous accident on the Monte Carlo Rally in January. But Tanak bounced back and won his home event in Estonia as the truncated season restarted in September.



RALLY CAR

OF THE YEAR

Open to cars competing in rallying from international to national level



FORD FIESTA WRC

It was always going to be tough for the M-Sport squad to take on the manufacturer teams of Hyundai and Toyota, but the Fiesta has remained a solid performer. A highlight of the season was Teemu Suninen's third place in Mexico.



HYUNDAI i20 COUPE WRC

The i20 has won rallies with three different drivers – Thierry Neuville, Ott Tanak and Dani Sordo – in 2020, helping Hyundai to a narrow lead in the manufacturers' table with one round still to go. Will it be enough to retain its crown?



MINI JCW BUGGY X-RAID

Rally raids are among the most gruelling events, and the Mini Buggy has been a standout over the past couple of seasons. Carlos Sainz and Stephane Peterhansel took a Mini 1-3 on the Dakar Rally, split only by Nasser Al-Attiyah's Toyota.



TOYOTA YARIS WRC

Like Hyundai, Toyota has won half of the season's rallies so far. The Yaris, which won this award last year, hasn't had the pace advantage it enjoyed in 2019 but, if Rally Monza goes Toyota's way, it could end up as a double title winner.



BRITISH COMPETITION DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to British drivers competing in categories at international level

MIKE CONWAY

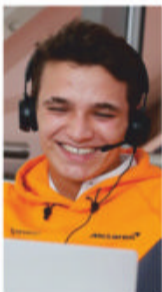
One of Toyota's leading World Endurance drivers for several seasons, Conway again impressed during 2020.

Sharing with Kamui Kobayashi and Jose Maria Lopez, Conway probably should have won the Le Mans 24 Hours, but did get some consolation by securing the last LMP1 WEC title.



LANDO NORRIS

Norris continued his rise in 2020, increasing his profile in Esports during racing's hiatus, then impressing with McLaren. He and Ferrari-bound team-mate Carlos Sainz were once again evenly matched and helped the squad get into the fight for third place in the constructors' standings.



OLIVER ROWLAND

The nuances of Formula E can be tricky to master, especially for someone with a flat-out nature, but Rowland won a race in his second full season and finished fifth in the standings. He was only one point behind Nissan e.dams team-mate and 2015-16 champion Sebastien Buemi.



GEORGE RUSSELL

Improvements from Williams for 2020 have allowed Russell to get involved in more midfield battles than in his first F1 campaign. There have been some stellar drives and Russell has comprehensively outperformed rookie team-mate Nicholas Latifi, but points have been hard to come by.



RIDER

BY TATA COMMUNICATIONS

Open to riders competing in any of MotoGP's three racing categories or equivalent

JOAN MIR

In the absence of six-time champion Marc Marquez, Suzuki rider Mir was the most consistent campaigner in his sophomore year. The Spaniard's haul of six podiums and European Grand Prix victory put him in command of the championship and he claimed the crown with a round to go.



FRANCO MORBIDELLI

Morbidei has arguably been the biggest surprise of 2020. Though his talent was never in doubt, his run of three victories on 2019-spec machinery vaulted him to lead Yamaha rider late in the season. With a bit more luck, the Italian could well have challenged harder for the world title.



JONATHAN REA

The king of World Superbikes fended off a stiff challenge from series debutant Scott Redding on the Ducati to claim his sixth world title. A further 11 wins added to his tally puts him one away from a century of WSBK victories, cementing him as the greatest Superbike rider ever.



ALEX RINS

Overcame an early-season shoulder injury to storm back into title contention late on with victory at Motorland Aragon, as well as three other podiums. Perhaps Rins would have been Suzuki's first champion in 20 years without his early-season woes, but he more than proved that he is a frontrunning MotoGP rider.



RICHARD MILLE ROOKIE

OF THE YEAR

Open to professional drivers in their first season in their respective categories

PAUL DI RESTA

It may seem strange to describe an ex-DTM champ and the veteran of 59 grands prix as a rookie, yet di Resta counted as just that in the 2019-20 World Endurance Championship. The Scot impressed in his first full season in LMP2, and took the title together with Phil Hanson and Filipe Albuquerque.



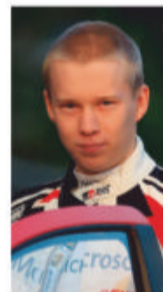
OSCAR PIASTRI

This Australian had combined fantastic racecraft with pace to win the 2019 Formula Renault Eurocup crown, and he needed all those racing smarts in his rookie FIA F3 season in 2020. Piastri won a three-way final-race fight for the crown with Prema despite never qualifying on the front row.



KALLE ROVANPERA

Son of 2001 Rally Sweden winner Harri Rovanpera, the 2019 WRC2 Pro champion has underlined his rising star status in his first full season in World Rally Car machinery. The Finn, who turned 20 in October, joined Sebastien Ogier and Elfyn Evans at Toyota and took his first podium and stage wins.



YUKI TSUNODA

Carlin this season got its cheerful, humble, maximum-attack Japanese successor to Takuma Sato. Red Bull and Honda protege Tsunoda has been an utter star in his rookie F2 season, with three poles, two wins and, the signals are, a graduation to F1 for next year with AlphaTauri.



NATIONAL DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to drivers racing in the BTCC, British GT or at FIA F3/GP3 level

PHIL KEEN

Keen missed out on the British GT title *again*, but remained the championship's star performer in 2020. Despite an influx of young talent, the 37-year-old remains the benchmark. As well as his two wins alongside Adam Balon, Keen also set fastest lap in seven of the nine races in a Barwell-run Lamborghini.



HARRY KING

Twelve wins from 16 races, 13 fastest laps, unbeaten in qualifying until the finale and a driving style that wrings every bit of performance – and more – out of the Porsche Carrera Cup GB machine. King has been spectacular to watch and enjoyed incredible success this season, winning the title at a canter.



ASH SUTTON

With the old BMR Subaru BTCC team effectively folding at the end of last season, it was a risk for Sutton and mentor Warren Scott to transfer the BMR Engineering staff to Laser Tools Racing's new Infiniti project. But Sutton drove the wheels off it, was the BTCC's master overtaker, and was a deserving champion.



COLIN TURKINGTON

The old Turkington/WSR/BMW combination remained the one to beat in the BTCC and the Northern Irishman only narrowly missed out on a fifth crown in 2020. As usual, he was the king of maximising the points while on heavy success ballast. He remains the classiest performer in the series.





ESPORTS DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to competitors in top-level virtual motorsport contests

SEBASTIAN JOB

The 20-year-old British Red Bull competitor was crowned world champion in the Porsche Esports Supercup this year. Battling off some of the world's top drivers on the iRacing platform, his victory was made even more impressive by the margin over 2019 champion Josh Rogers.



JARNO OPMEER

Dutch driver Opmeer has placed himself as the firm favourite for the 2020 F1 Esports title with several dominant performances. He's also crossed over into other platforms, most notably as part of the Veloce Esports entry that finished fifth in the 24 Hours of Le Mans Virtual.



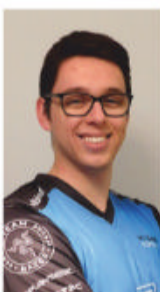
JOSH ROGERS

Despite conceding his Porsche title, the Australian Coanda Simsport driver had another impressive year. Rogers was part of the winning GT class line-up in the 24 Hours of Le Mans Virtual. He also had impressive performances in Formula E's Race at Home challenge and leads the Supercars Eseries.



NIKODEM WISNIEWSKI

It has been a huge year for Williams Esports, and Wisniewski has been a pivotal figure in the team's success. Overall victory in the 24 Hours of Le Mans Virtual – with team-mates Louis Deletraz, Raffaele Marciello and Kuba Brzezinski – was probably the highlight of an impressive 2020.



MOMENT

PRESENTED BY MARELLI

Open to the standout moments from international-level motorsport



KTM'S FIRST VICTORY

The 2020 MotoGP season was full of shocks, and any number of moments could easily take this spot. But rookie Brad Binder's sensational run to give KTM its first series victory in just his third race in the Czech Grand Prix is our pick.



DA COSTA SECURES TITLE

Despite being overlooked for a Formula 1 drive and then landing in backmarker Formula E machinery five years ago, when Antonio Felix da Costa crushed his electric rivals in Berlin, he thanked everyone who had played a part in his career.



GASLY WINS ITALIAN GP

Modern F1 teams and cars are so reliable that shock results are now few and far between. But drama, notably Lewis Hamilton's penalty for coming in when the pitlane was closed, gave Pierre Gasly a chance he took brilliantly at Monza.



LEWIS BREAKS RECORD

Hamilton has been closing on Michael Schumacher's various F1 records in recent years and in the Portuguese GP he took one of the most important. Hamilton's victory was the Briton's 92nd win, breaking the record set by Schuey in 2006.

HOW TO VOTE

TO HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE 2020 WINNERS

GO TO

awardsvoting.autosport.com

Alternatively, you can vote via email.
Please send to: awards@autosport.com



Ma leads Huff and Zhang at Melco, but calamity is just half a lap away

Huff stripped of win for Ma shunt

**MACAU GUIA
MACAU (CHN)
21-22 NOVEMBER**

Just three full uninterrupted laps of green-flag racing across the two races, and the denial of a history-making winner, made for a calamitous event unworthy of the famous Macau Guia touring car classic.

British tin-top superstar Rob Huff joined 32 contenders from local and regional TCR competition, and both the qualification race and the Guia final itself descended into farce. When the red flag forlornly fluttered, Huff was ahead when it mattered in an MG 6 he had only driven for the first time in Friday's free practice sessions, but what would have been his 10th Guia victory was taken away when he was given a time penalty for flicking Ma Qing Hua heavily into the barriers on the exit of the scarily fast Mandarin kink. It was perhaps appropriate that the laurels were inherited

by Jason Zhang, Ma's stablemate at the Teamwork Motorsport Lynk & Co 03 squad.

Huff belied his lack of experience of his MG XPower-run weapon by claiming pole position in Saturday morning's qualifying session from ex-Formula 1 FP1 Caterham and HRT driver Ma. Although Ma got ahead at the start of the qualification race, Huff was in front by the time the field reached Lisboa. Already, there had been a pile-up down the field, which caused a safety car.

Following the restart, the pack had got as far as the narrow Moorish right-hander when Huff's MG team-mate Rodolfo Avila tangled with the Audi RS3 of fellow Macau veteran Henry Lee Jr, blocking the track, causing a traffic jam and bringing out the red flag. There was time for just one lap of racing upon the resumption, and Avila's retirement meant Ma, who followed Huff home, clinched the TCR China title, for which this doubled up as the final round.

Once again, Ma was swifter away in

Sunday's final, and this time he held on into Lisboa. Huff followed him over the first lap, and got a fabulous exit from R Bend, which leads onto the start-finish straight. Ma claimed the line for the Reservoir kink, and Huff followed him into Mandarin. On the exit, a push from the MG against the rear of the Lynk & Co, still loaded up on the limit of adhesion, sent Ma spearing into the barriers. "I don't think there's anything I could have done to avoid it, and the accident was in no way intentional, but I'm glad the driver's OK," said Huff after a penalty dropped him to 23rd. Even so, it was an error you would not expect of someone of Huff's experience.

At the restart, another massive shunt at Mandarin caused a safety car, and then a red flag. Zhang, who showed flashes of promise as a 16-year-old in a season with Prema in the 2010 European Formula Abarth series, took second on the road and was promoted to victory. Another MG driver, Andy Yan, should have been next, but he also earned a time penalty for passing Sunny Wong's Lynk & Co into Lisboa literally as the safety car boards came out for Ma's crash. That meant long-time Macau support-race battler Wong was classified second, while Honda Civic privateer Lo Sze Ho was rewarded for miraculously avoiding Ma with third place.

RESULTS

1 Jason Zhang (Lynk & Co 03) 6 laps in 1h05m17.624s;
2 Sunny Wong (Lynk & Co); **3 Lo Sze Ho** (Honda Civic Type R);
4 Filipe de Souza (Audi RS3); **5 Zhang Zhen Dong** (MG6);
6 Eurico de Jesus (Honda).

QUALIFICATION RACE

1 Rob Huff (MG6) 7 laps in 58m40.405s; **2 Ma Qing Hua** (Lynk & Co); **3 de Souza**; **4 J Zhang**; **5 Wong**; **6 Lo**.



Huff had to hand back the trophy

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MACAU GP

Leong holds on as tailenders help Chang

MACAU GRAND PRIX
MACAU (CHN)
21-22 NOVEMBER

Charles Leong became just the second local driver to win the Macau Grand Prix when he took a tight victory over countryman Andy Chang on the Guia circuit.

The Macanese pair, with five starts between them in the Formula 3 version of the Grand Prix, were predictably the class of a field otherwise composed of competitors from the Chinese Formula 4 Championship. Li Si Cheng was the only other driver realistically in the mix.

Leong quickly emerged as the best of the lead trio, topping Saturday morning's qualifying session by a formidable 0.8 seconds. He then secured pole position proper by winning a crash-affected qualifying race, despite having his early lead erased by back-to-back safety car periods. The race eventually came down to a single-lap dash to the flag, with Leong holding off a brief challenge from Chang



Leong led both races all the way

at Lisboa before pulling almost a second over the rest of the lap.

It was a similar story in the main race, where Leong comfortably set the pace at the front, but still found himself under late pressure from Chang.

This time the issue was lapped traffic, and Leong's healthy lead disappeared as he came across slower cars late in the race. That made for a grandstand finish, Chang able to close right up on Leong's rear wing on the final lap. He couldn't find a way past, and Leong held on to emulate Andre Couto (in 2000) as a local winner of the Macau GP.

"I just reached one of my childhood dreams," said Leong. "I'm a bit speechless, I don't know how to describe my feelings.

I had a couple of cars blocking me through the mountain part [late in the race] and I was struggling quite a bit to get past them. In the end it was really, really close."

Li, despite front-wing damage from a touch with Chang, finished a lonely third, while Allen Lo fended off Stephen Hong and Kang Ling in the race's best battle, for fourth.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

RESULTS

1 Charles Leong 12 laps in 36m38.984s; **2 Andy Chang** +0.513s; **3 Li Si Cheng** +23.739s; **4 Allen Lo** +40.657s; **5 Stephen Hong** +42.509s; **6 Kang Ling** +42.740s.

QUALIFICATION RACE

1 Leong 8 laps in 29m57.450s; **2 Chang** +0.867s; **3 Li** +2.334s; **4 Liu Yang** +4.515s; **5 Shang Zong Yi** +13.125s; **6 Hong** +17.490s.

Favourite O'Young foiled as Ye takes advantage

MACAU GT CUP
MACAU (CHN)
21-22 NOVEMBER

Ye Hongli won a red-flagged Macau GT Cup as favourite Darryl O'Young was given too much work to do by a post-qualifying-race grid penalty.

Toro Racing Mercedes driver Ye, who crashed heavily in the Macau GP F3 race in 2016, had been best of the rest for much of the weekend, while O'Young was in a class of his own as he looked to take his second Macau GT Cup triumph.

O'Young's Craft-Bamboo Mercedes was the best part of a second quicker than Ye in qualifying, and won the qualifying race by three seconds, despite there being just one green-flag lap before it was cut short due to fading light.

But O'Young was stripped of that win thanks to a post-race investigation into a start-procedure infringement, in which officials found that he'd been too close to Ye when the race first went green.

The resulting 30-second penalty dropped O'Young to 11th on the grid for the main race and promoted Ye to pole position. It

was an opportunity he didn't waste, and he executed a flawless drive to be well in front when the race was red-flagged with two laps to go after Yao Liangbo's Merc hit the wall on the way out of Mandarin.

Officials elected not to restart the race, sealing a deserved win for Ye ahead of Team X Works Audi driver Marchy Lee.

The red flag was more bad news for O'Young, who made good early progress before finding himself in a tense battle over third with David Chen's Team TSRT Audi for a number of laps. He had finally snuck past Chen at Lisboa and set off after Lee when the race was red-flagged, only to be demoted to fourth on lap countback. That meant a podium finish for Chen, who struggled with a slow puncture throughout the race.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

RESULTS

1 Ye Hongli (Mercedes-AMG GT3) 8 laps in 23m20.592s; **2 Marchy Lee** (Audi R8 LMS) +4.804s; **3 David Chen** (Audi) +7.453s; **4 Darryl O'Young** (Mercedes) +7.846s; **5 Min Heng** (Mercedes) +16.988s; **6 Zang Kan** (Mercedes) +21.348s.

QUALIFICATION RACE

1 Ye 5 laps in 17m25.136s; **2 Chen**; **3 Lee**; **4 Min**; **5 Zang**; **6 Lo Kai Fung** (Audi).



Ye took the GT Cup honours...



...after penalty left O'Young too much to do

Tech3 graduate Oliveira scores first-class win

MOTOGP

ALGARVE CIRCUIT (PRT)

22 NOVEMBER

ROUND 14/14

MotoGP hadn't visited Portugal since the 2012 season, and before last year no Portuguese rider had ever raced in the premier class. At the conclusion of its maddest (but most welcome) campaign, Miguel Oliveira delighted his house-bound home fans with pole and a dominant win at the Algarve International Circuit.

Of all the grid, Tech3 rider Oliveira had the most experience of the rollercoaster Algarve track. But it was raw talent and an affinity with his KTM that won him the day rather than any insider knowledge. Besides, Algarve on a MotoGP bike is unlike anything the riders had faced before.

The Styrian Grand Prix winner, making his final appearance for Tech3 before his factory KTM team graduation next year, grabbed the holeshot and never looked back.

By the end of lap two his advantage over the SRT Yamaha of Franco Morbidelli stood at 1.3 seconds, Oliveira the only rider able to drop into the 1m39s bracket on lap three. He would make three more visits into

the sub-1m40s region, with only Pramac's Jack Miller able to match it – though just once, on lap 16. By this point, though, Oliveira was four seconds up the road – his metronomically consistent low-1m40s pace only wavering in the final two laps when he relented his assault on the timesheets to ensure his homecoming glory.

Morbidelli kept his 2019 Yamaha ahead of Miller until the final lap, when the Pramac rider – also making his last appearance for his team before a factory (Ducati) step up – found a way past at the Turn 13 hairpin.

Morbidelli tried to retaliate, but Miller held the line into the downhill Sagres right-hander and exacted his revenge for his Valencia defeat to come home second and secure Ducati the constructors' crown. It marked a fitting prologue to his days as Ducati's new leader as its stalwart Andrea Dovizioso bade farewell in Portugal.

Morbidelli's third (completing the first all-satellite podium since 2004) was good enough to hold onto runner-up spot in the

championship, though the fragility of Yamaha's engines came further into focus as the points he lost from his Andalusian GP retirement from a sure-fire podium could have turned the tide. The Italian finished 13 points adrift of champion Joan Mir – or to contextualise, the takings from a fourth-place finish. But championships aren't won on ifs and buts.

Mir felt "no difference" to his approach on track, despite starting his first event as the champion. The misery of his Portugal weekend started with an electronics issue that left him 20th on the grid, while another problem from early race contact forced the Suzuki rider into retirement on lap 15. But much like Morbidelli's day highlighted Yamaha's technical failings, it also showed Mir's savviness through the season to have wrapped up the title before he hit trouble.

Pol Espargaro rounded out his KTM career with fourth, lifting him to fifth in the points, with Takaaki Nakagami on the LCR Honda heading Dovizioso.



Oliveira leads from pole on final Tech3 outing



Miller, the only rider to match the winner's pace, congratulates Oliveira

The 15-time MotoGP race winner's future is uncertain as he heads into a sabbatical, but salvaging sixth from a difficult run to 12th in qualifying once again showed how much of an asset Dovizioso would be to any team.

Stefan Bradl's impressive turn as Marc Marquez's stand-in concluded with a fine ride to seventh on the Honda, ahead of Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro – who felt a podium was possible had he qualified higher than 14th. Alex Marquez, on the other works Honda, was ninth, having lost out on the rookie of the year crown to Brad Binder despite the KTM rider's early race exit.

Maverick Vinales was the leading 2020 Yamaha runner in 11th on another all-too-frequent bad day – his strong Friday form deserting him without any reason. Valentino Rossi was 12th on his final factory Yamaha team outing, while Fabio Quartararo was hit by arm pump issues, which dropped him to 14th and to eighth in the points. Just five rounds ago he led the championship.

Cal Crutchlow – who could be Yamaha's saviour as its 2021 test rider – bowed out of full-time MotoGP competition in 13th after his tyre dropped off. "Important" to get to the finish on an "emotional" farewell, the LCR rider's contribution to British sport has been immense. Media debriefs in 2021 will be a bit less fun.

There's not been a lot to smile about in 2020, but MotoGP has been one of the few truly wonderful things to have happened this year. And it all seemed impossible back in March...

LEWIS DUNCAN



Quartararo battles Vinales in trying race for Yamaha



Dovizioso finished sixth ahead of sabbatical

RESULTS ROUND 14/14, ALGARVE CIRCUIT (PRT), 22 NOVEMBER (25 LAPS – 71.333 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	Tech3 KTM	41m48.163s
2	Jack Miller (AUS)	Pramac Ducati	+3.193s
3	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	+3.298s
4	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	KTM	+12.626s
5	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+13.318s
6	Andrea Dovizioso (ITA)	Ducati	+15.578s
7	Stefan Bradl (DEU)	Honda	+15.738s
8	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	+16.034s
9	Alex Marquez (ESP)	Honda	+18.325s
10	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Avintia Ducati	+18.596s
11	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Yamaha	+18.685s
12	Valentino Rossi (ITA)	Yamaha	+18.946s
13	Cal Crutchlow (GBR)	LCR Honda	+19.159s
14	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Petronas Yamaha	+24.376s
15	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	+27.776s
16	Danilo Petrucci (ITA)	Ducati	+34.266s
17	Mika Kallio (FIN)	Tech3 KTM	+48.410s
18	Tito Rabat (ESP)	Avintia Ducati	+48.411s
R	Lorenzo Savadori (ITA)	Aprilia	22 laps-accident
R	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	15 laps-electrical
R	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	2 laps-accident
R	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Pramac Ducati	0 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 102.385mph. **Fastest lap** Oliveira 1m39.855s, 102.869mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Oliveira 1m38.892s; 2 Morbidelli 1m38.936s; 3 Miller 1m39.038s; 4 Crutchlow 1m39.156s; 5 Quartararo 1m39.199s; 6 Bradl 1m39.204s; 7 Zarco 1m39.238s; 8 Vinales 1m39.260s; 9 P Espargaro 1m39.284s; 10 Rins 1m39.467s; 11 Nakagami 1m39.531s; 12 Dovizioso 1m39.587s.

QUALIFYING 1 1 Crutchlow 1m39.250s; 2 Morbidelli 1m39.276s; 3 Binder 1m39.390s; 4 A Espargaro 1m39.762s; 5 Bagnaia 1m40.019s; 6 Marquez 1m40.049s; 7 Rossi 1m40.058s; 8 Petrucci 1m40.091s; 9 Savadori 1m40.174s; 10 Mir 1m40.290s; 11 Rabat 1m40.427s; 12 Kallio 1m41.753s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Mir 171; 2 Morbidelli 158; 3 Rins 139; 4 Dovizioso 135; 5 P Espargaro 135; 6 Vinales 132; 7 Miller 132; 8 Quartararo 127; 9 Oliveira 125; 10 Nakagami 116; 11 Binder 87; 12 Petrucci 78; 13 Zarco 77; 14 Marquez 74; 15 Rossi 66; 16 Bagnaia 47; 17 A Espargaro 42; 18 Crutchlow 32; 19 Bradl 27; 20 Iker Lecuona 27; 21 Bradley Smith 12; 22 Rabat 10; 23 Michele Pirro 4; 24 Kallio 0; 25 Savadori 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Ducati 221; 2 Yamaha 204; 3 Suzuki 202; 4 KTM 200; 5 Honda 144; 6 Aprilia 51.

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2 ALGARVE (PRT)
Remy Gardner (below)
SAG Racing Team
(Kalex)

MOTO 3 ALGARVE (PRT)
Raul Fernandez
Ajo Motorsport
(KTM)



Morbidelli in third marked first all-satellite podium since 2004

SEASON REVIEW
10 DECEMBER
ISSUE

In-depth analysis on how Joan Mir claimed his first top-flight title in what was a strange MotoGP season, a breakdown of all the races and Autosport ranks its top 10 riders of the year.

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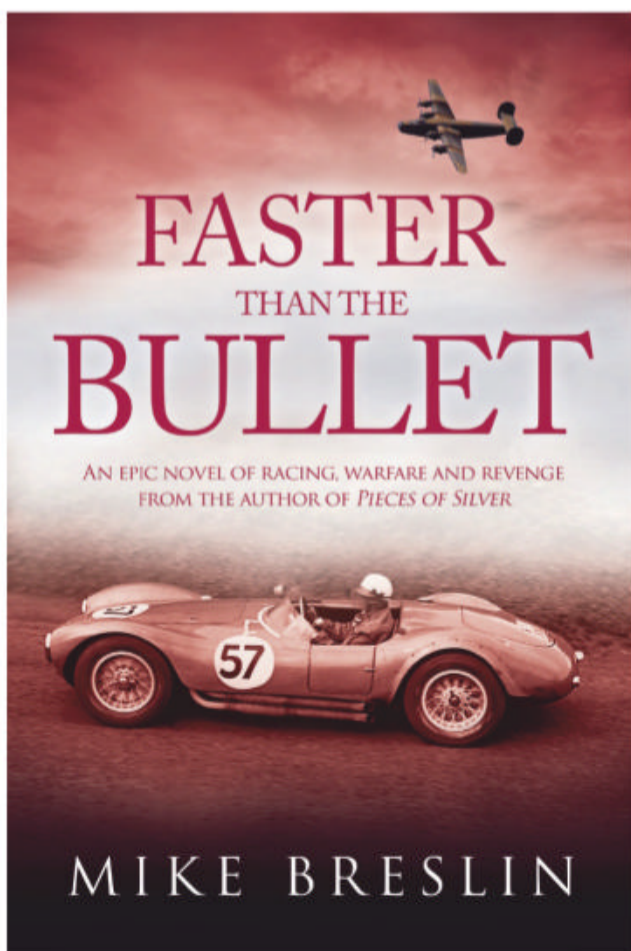
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Faster than the Bullet by Mike Breslin

If it's an exciting, historically accurate motor racing and wartime thriller you're after then Mike Breslin's latest novel, *Faster than the Bullet*, ticks all the boxes. *Autosport* said of the book: 'Breslin has come up with a winner – a thriller with more surprise twists than the *Futa* and *Raticosa* passes', while *Business Money's* verdict was: 'Faster than the Bullet is my novel of the year ... It is an extraordinary tale.'

Displaying the sweeping scope and attention to detail that characterised Breslin's critically acclaimed previous motorsport novel, *Pieces of Silver*, this action-packed epic encompasses some of the most harrowing events of WW2 while also giving a vivid and authentic insight into the perilous world of 1950s motor racing, all culminating in a thrilling finale at the 1954 Mille Miglia.

Faster than the Bullet is available as a 450-page large format paperback (£11.99) or as a Kindle edition (£3.99)

Amon Cup will honour Chris Amon, who won the 1966 Le Mans 24 Hours in a Ford GT40



GT40 RACES AND UK-BASED

MOTOR RACING LEGENDS

Leading historic race promoter Motor Racing Legends will stage two one-make Ford GT40 races in the UK next year as part of a new initiative named in honour of 1966 Le Mans 24 Hours winner Chris Amon.

The two 80-minute Amon Cup races will be held at Donington Park and Silverstone for pre-1966 examples of the widely revered GT40, which won Le Mans four times in succession between 1966-69.

Previously, dedicated races have only been run at

the Goodwood Revival and Members' Meetings but, as owners have limited opportunities to use their cars in anger, MRL and DK Engineering have launched the new races, which are likely to admit continuation cars, and will be open to two drivers.

The first race will be held at the Donington Historic Festival on 1-2 May, the second at the Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit on 30-31 October as part of MRL's newly announced end-of-year two-day meeting.

"One of the most prolific drivers of all time, Chris Amon will forever be associated with the GT40 and

Ginetta Junior champions test Elite F3 cars

BRITISH F3

Elite Motorsport has conducted a successful first test with its BRDC British F3 machines by running three of its past Ginetta Junior champions.

The leading Ginetta squad bought two F3 cars from Lanar Racing at the conclusion of the 2020 season and will race in single-seaters for the first time next year.

The last two Ginetta Junior champions, 2019 winner James Hedley and newly crowned Tom Lebbon, were among the first drivers to sample the cars.

The 2017 champion and 2018

Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner Tom Gamble was also back behind the wheel of F3 machinery for the Snetterton test last week, and will be helping the team to get to grips with the cars.

"It was a very good test, no problems with the cars and we were close enough to the pace," said Elite team boss Eddie Ives, who says the team is continuing to receive some support from Lanar. "It's really good to be working with our ex-Junior champions and putting them in some pretty cool machinery.

"It was great having Tom Gamble helping us – he's going to be part of the development of the cars."

Ives says both British F4 race winner Hedley and Lebbon, who won the Junior crown in his rookie year, are contenders to race the cars next season. "Ginetta Junior breeds the best drivers and to put two of our ex-champions in cars would be awesome," he said.

Ives added that he has been surprised by the amount of interest generated since it was announced that the team would be joining the series, and is therefore trying to buy a third car. "We've got interest left, right and centre – I'm pushing as hard as I can to get a third car," he said.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



MOTOR RACING LEGENDS 2021 CALENDAR

1	Donington Historic Festival	1-2 May
2	Thruxton Historic	12-13 June
3	Silverstone Classic	30 July- 1 August
4	Spa Classic Six Hours	1-3 October
5	Silverstone GP Circuit	30-31 October



CALENDAR FOR MRL IN 2021

we are deeply honoured that the Amon family will present the awards at each round in person,” said Duncan Wiltshire from MRL.

MRL has also unveiled a 2021 calendar with a larger UK base than usual. Traditionally, the MRL race categories enjoy a pan-European schedule, but the uncertainty over cross-border travel due to the coronavirus pandemic for 2021 has prompted a programme with four UK events and just one trip into Europe to the Spa Classic Six Hours.

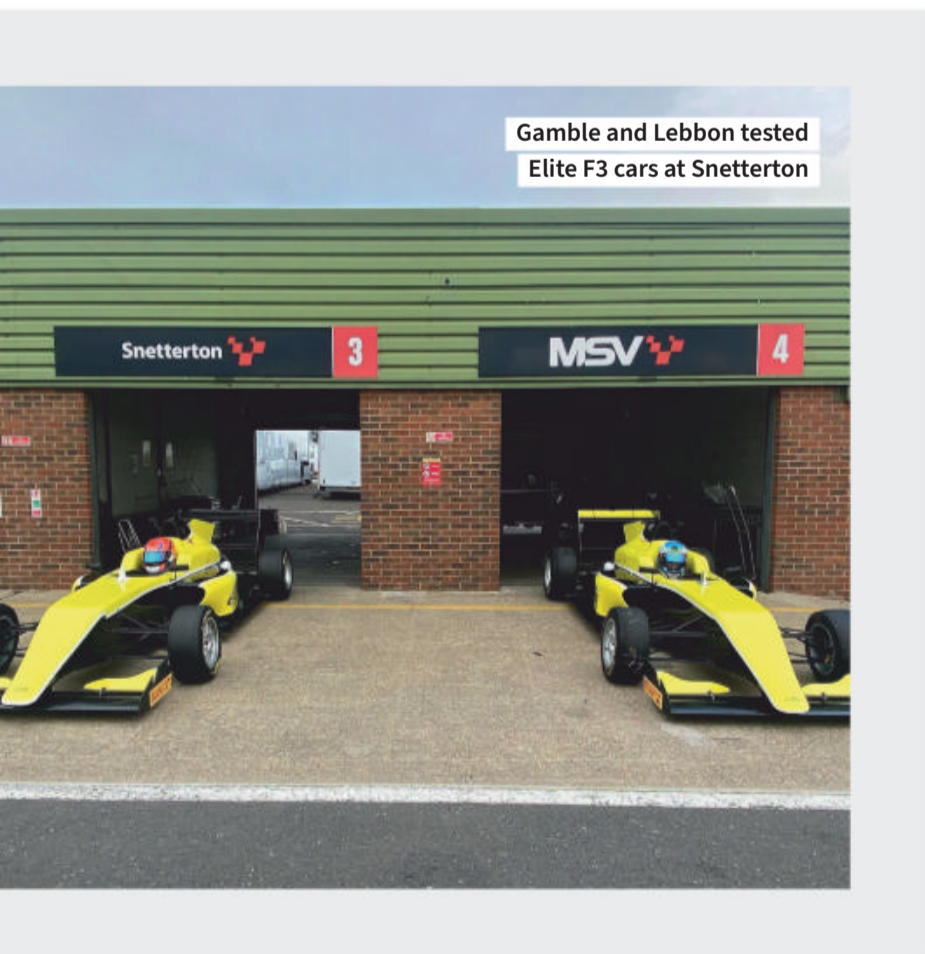
The MRL race series include Pre '63 GT cars, the Stirling Moss and Woodcote Trophies for 1950s sportscars, Historic Touring Cars from up to 1990 and Pre-War Sports Cars.

The inaugural Silverstone RAC Historic TT event was a resounding success and will grow into a two-day event next year.

“We are optimistic for next year, but we have taken the precaution of planning a more UK-focused calendar in 2021 to minimise the potential for disruption,” said Wiltshire. “We are also in discussions with MotorSport Vision with regards to supporting its Snetterton 70th Anniversary celebrations in August with an MRL grid.”

From next season, MRL will also run the Jaguar Classic Challenge, which was previously part of the Historic Sports Car Club’s roster.

PAUL LAWRENCE



New Radical SR10 to race

RADICAL CHALLENGE

The Radical Challenge will reintroduce a multi-class format next season as the new SR10 model will be eligible for the championship and will run alongside the SR3s.

A provisional six-round calendar has also been announced, featuring Oulton Park, Snetterton, Brands Hatch, Spa, Silverstone and Donington Park.

“Since its creation over 20 years ago, Radical racing has always been about making a ‘real’ sportscar racing experience accessible to enthusiasts looking to start their racing career or hobby, as well as experienced national and club racers,” said Radical CEO Joe Anwyll.

“By introducing the amazing new

Radical SR10 into the Radical Challenge we are bringing back multi-class competition and strengthening this commitment by offering another rung in the Radical racing ladder – a new challenge for longstanding Radical competitors, some of whom have been racing with us for over a decade.”

The SR1 Cup will race at five meetings next season, all of which will be on the same weekend as the Radical Challenge. This will include a shared grid with the Challenge at Silverstone and the opportunity to compete at Spa as an invitation entry.

“The positive response we had to SR1s and SR3s joining forces at Silverstone this year is something we’re going to build on next season,” added Anwyll.



Leading circuit operators set to receive government loans

CORONAVIRUS

Operators of leading UK circuits are set to receive a share of £6million of government loans to overcome the loss of spectator revenues.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport revealed a £300million package of survival funding last week for sports impacted by the absence of

spectators due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Motorsport is one of the sports to benefit from the financial support, while others like cricket and elite football have missed out.

The £6m for motorsport venues is set to be split between MotorSport Vision (which operates Brands Hatch, Donington Park, Snetterton, Oulton Park and Cadwell Park), the British Automobile Racing Club (which operates Thruxton, Croft and Pembrey),

Silverstone and Goodwood.

Governing body Motorsport UK says it has worked with operators to assess the impact of the reduced revenue from fans, but it is unclear whether smaller independent venues will receive any support.

While motorsport was able to resume in England in July, after coronavirus restrictions were lifted, spectators were not able to attend 'elite' British Touring Car Championship events. But MSV and the BARC were among those to allow a limited number of fans to watch club-level meetings.

Motorsport UK chairman David Richards said: "We are extremely grateful for the news of this loan support to the circuit venues that government has offered.

"After working with DCMS throughout 2020, we recognise that their help has been pivotal in allowing motorsport to operate for much of the season, and to have mitigated the impact of the virus on the sport.

"Motorsport is an industry that employs over 40,000 people and provides some £10billion of revenues to the economy, and at the heart of that are our fixed venue circuits. Their continued operation is vital for the sport to be sustainable and, in turn, the entire economy that hinges on them.

"We will continue to focus on managing the impact of the crisis and do whatever we can to ensure our sport builds back better from this challenge."

Championship status for BRSCC's CityCar Cup

CITYCAR CUP

The British Racing & Sports Car Club's new CityCar Cup category has secured championship status for 2021 and bumper grids are expected.

The series features Toyota Aygos, Peugeot 107s and Citroen C1s specially converted to race. Unlike the more standard cars in the C1 Challenge, these machines feature adjustable suspension and a remapped ECU.

The CityCar Cup initially began as a class within the Clubsport Trophy series this year, but attracted 15 cars for its first standalone race at Croft last month. Organisers are expecting its popularity

to rapidly rise next season.

"We genuinely thought we would end up providing a couple of places for it at the back of the Clubsport Trophy," said BRSCC chief operating officer Paul

McErlean. "But, as time moved on, quite quickly it became apparent it's growing at a rate we didn't expect.

"What we do know is Gaz Shocks have sold 38 sets of suspension up to last week. That doesn't include cars that are not at that point yet – the suspension is the last thing that people buy. With those numbers, we went and spoke to Motorsport UK [about championship status] and they were happy."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



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IN THE HEADLINES

TRUCK SPORT UK'S NEW DEAL

The British Automobile Racing Club has agreed a new commercial deal with Truck Sport UK to promote the British Truck Racing Championship. The two parties worked together on the series this year and the latest agreement will last for a minimum of three years. Truck Sport UK will particularly focus on the promotion and marketing of the championship.

LEGENDS UNVEILS CALENDAR

The Legends Cars championship has announced an expanded nine-event provisional calendar for 2021. The series had planned eight weekends of racing this year before the coronavirus pandemic reduced this to just three. Cadwell Park and Knockhill are both due to return for next year's schedule, the latter as part of a British Automobile Racing Club-organised meeting at the Scottish venue. The season is set to begin at Brands Hatch on 10-11 April.

MASTERS' NINE-ROUND PLAN

Masters Historic Racing has unveiled a nine-event European calendar for 2021, with a schedule designed to be as free from potential COVID-19 disruption as possible. The season will start with a new Donington Park meeting over Good Friday and the subsequent Saturday before visiting Brands Hatch, maintaining its traditional late-May slot on the Grand Prix circuit. Masters will then venture overseas for the first time in mid-June at Paul Ricard, the first of a series of high-profile dates across Europe that concludes at the Algarve Circuit.

NEW IMAGES OF PRAGA R1

Czech sportscar manufacturer Praga has released the first teaser images of its new R1 model (below) for 2021. The new car will feature a larger fuel cell, a significantly revised aero package, and more safety features compared to the R1 that won this year's Britcar Endurance title. The car will be officially launched next year and will form the basis of a new series within the Britcar category.



British Superkarts to return next year after new deal is put together

KARTING

The British Superkart Championships will return for 2021 after not running this year.

Motorsport UK has concluded the tender process and decided to keep the series in-house for the next three years but using the operational support of Terry Bateman and his team at Superkarting-UK. Effectively, that means Superkarting-UK will run the events at British Racing & Sports Car Club meetings.

Race director Bateman is "delighted by the involvement, support and input provided by MSUK" and that he has been able to secure the support of the BRSCC. Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers added: "We are committed to the long-term future of superkarting in the UK."

Dates were announced last week, with Cadwell Park on Saturday 10 April as the opener, followed by Mallory Park on

Saturday 22 May and the Anglesey International circuit concluding the three-round championship on 10-11 July. The British Superkart Grand Prix will be staged on Saturday 25 September at Donington Park. The dates and venues have received a mixed reaction from the Superkart paddock.

Also announced last week was a Super Series to be run by the British Superkart Racing Club alongside the British Automobile Racing Club. They have secured dates at Oulton Park, Snetterton 300, Silverstone National and Donington Park Grand Prix.

Both the British Championship and the Super Series will cater for all four of the Superkart classes: Division 1, F250 National, F450 National and F125 Open.

Further information is expected to emerge over the next few weeks.

GARY JAMES

Britcar to trial longer race format

BRITCAR ENDURANCE

The Britcar Endurance Championship will hold a two-hour race on the Silverstone Grand Prix layout next season as one event of the provisional six-round calendar.

The other five rounds – at Silverstone (on the International layout), Snetterton, Oulton Park, Brands Hatch and Donington Park – will feature two 50-minute races across the weekend.

"We don't want to be repetitive every year, we're trying to bring on new championship contenders," said series owner Claire Hedley regarding the two-hour Silverstone race.

"A lot of drivers had asked about doing

a longer five-hour race but it's so expensive to hire the track time. We put the feelers out for a two-hour race and it's gone down like a storm."

Two non-championship rounds will also be held in 2021, including a third visit to Silverstone, where Britcar will support a yet-to-be-announced international series, while the season-ending Into the Night race at Brands will return but for production cars only.

"When we did drop it [the Into the Night race] there was lots of aw-ing, and really it was the GT cars that didn't intend to do it, so that's why we have made it a production race," said Hedley.

STEFAN MACKLEY

BRSCC to split Mk1 Mazda MX-5s into two championships

BRSCC

The British Racing and Sports Car Club is splitting its Mazda MX-5 Championship for Mk1 models, which regularly attracts entries of more than 50 cars, into two categories for next season.

The MX-5 Trophy will feature the traditional three 20-minute races spread over two days, while the MX-5 Clubman category will have two 15-minute races on a single day of the same meetings, allowing drivers to commit less time to compete.

BRSCC chief operating officer Paul McErlean explained that the move arose after different formats were used amid the rescheduling that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic.

“We took a long, hard look at it and talked to some of the teams,” he said. “We can now provide a programme that is lower in terms of costs, commitment and competition.”



Mazda MX-5 Championship is one of the most popular club racing categories

McErlean says the Mk1s splitting into two categories is very different compared to the MX-5 Supercup for Mk3s forming the Supercup and the Super Series for 2018. That was so the top tier could race on the TCR UK package, but the two divisions were brought back together in 2020.

“The Mk3s ran on separate weekends, which had a big strain on teams,” said McErlean. “The Mk1s is not about whether you see yourself as a high-profile driver – it’s whether you want one or two days’ racing. A two-day Mazda programme in its traditional format is quite an investment.”

This year’s MX-5 champion Oliver Allwood admitted he’s “not sure it’s necessary”, but believes the separation will help new Mk1 drivers.

“For those coming up and learning Mazdas, it’s really hard,” he said. “So, if it’s your first or second season, a sensible move would be to go into Clubman and earn your stripes at a lower level before going into Trophy.

“If I was starting out, I would probably race in Clubman to see what it’s all about – dip my toe in the water.”

STEPHEN LICKORISH AND STEFAN MACKLEY

Modified Ford series joins up with the BRSCC

BRSCC

The Modified Ford series has joined the British Racing and Sports Car Club’s roster for 2021, with a provisional calendar for next year featuring nine meetings.

The series is open to a variety of Fords built up to and including 2010, such as

Escorts, Capris, Sierras and Fiestas. It held four meetings in its maiden season – a number of which were with the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club – and attracted strong grids.

Next year’s calendar has more than doubled and will include at least 18 races at nine meetings, including

the popular Ford Power Live at Brands Hatch and BHP Show at Lydden Hill.

“I’m chuffed to bits; it’s really down to the support of the drivers that are with us,” said series coordinator Paul Nevill. “I’m not saying I know everyone personally, but today, with social media, it’s very easy to communicate

with drivers and you feel a close association with them.

“This year I thought I could be independent, and I quickly realised circuits sell the track time to the clubs and realised we couldn’t just wander in and get what I wanted. Belonging to a club is the only way to do it.”

STEFAN MACKLEY

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Light on the horizon

There's still a lot of uncertainty but, with the prospect of 2021 being a more 'normal' year and some unexpected positives emerging, optimism is starting to return

STEPHEN LICKORISH

It's good to have some positive news for a change. The encouraging initial results of the effectiveness of some of the vaccines in development around the world finally suggest a way out from the misery the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted.

And there have been some positive developments in the national racing world recently too.

Confidence that there'll be a more 'normal' 2021 appears to be growing, and all of the clubs to have so far released their – admittedly very provisional – schedules for next year are back to what could be described as a traditional racing calendar.

Some clubs and individual series have taken the decision to begin their seasons a little later than normal, just to try to avoid getting caught up in any lingering restrictions from what is still set to be a tough winter in the grip of the virus. For example, the new Junior Saloon Car season is due to begin at the end of April, instead of the planned mid-March for this year. But some have not even done that, with the British Automobile Racing Club, British Racing & Sports Car Club and Classic Sports Car Club among those to still plan March meetings.

The overriding message is that it's better to plan for a full season over the usual timeframe and adapt if necessary, like this year, rather than be more cautious and complete the near impossible task of adding extra dates at short notice.

“The overriding message is that it's better to plan for a full season and adapt if necessary”

“What else can you do but plan for a normal year?” asks BRSCC chief operating officer Paul McErlean, who believes the club is “in a better place than we've been for a long time”, despite the pandemic. “From the BRSCC's point of view, it's business as normal in terms of planning our calendars. If we don't plan and don't get the measure of the market right, it's too late. Our calendar is no smaller than what we were planning last year. We've got more stock into our portfolio and bigger grids. If there's a [downward] trend, we're not seeing it.”

That's encouraging to hear, and the BRSCC is not alone in planning the same number of meetings as before COVID-19 struck. It's a similar story for the CSCC and Historic Sports Car Club. But a note of caution must also be sounded here. There may have been some fantastic grids during the condensed 2020 season,

but who knows what the financial position of the average club competitor will be by the start of the new campaign? It's far from certain how many will be able to return to contesting a full programme of events while, away from circuit racing, traditional stage rallying remains in the doldrums.

Even though it was a reduced season, there have still been success stories. The Britcar Trophy and CSCC Slicks Series have both had strong inaugural seasons, the Ma7da Locost grid has grown and secured championship status for 2021, and the initial signs suggest the BRSCC's CityCar Cup could feature some very large entries in its first full season next year.

Organisers have also not been put off launching more new categories amid the uncertainty. Take the new Amon Cup from Motor Racing Legends (page 66) and the new, cheaper MX-5 Clubman Championship (page 70) – and other new divisions are set to be unveiled in the coming weeks too.

And, as nightmarish as the pandemic has been for everyone, it is set to bring some positives for British motorsport. Take the MRL calendar announcement. Its 2021 season will feature a far greater percentage of UK events than normal due to the lingering concerns of travel. Even if successful vaccines are just around the corner, it will still be a long time before people move around the world with confidence. That means more competitors are set to spend their money racing in this country and provides more chances to see the stunning machinery in action on these shores.

That issue of European travel is also set to bring benefits for UK junior categories, Ginetta Junior being one such series. “We're getting interest from people who would've perhaps gone European karting but, because of the travel restrictions, it's out of the question,” says Ginetta motorsport manager Ash Gallagher.

Given the high proportion of rookie drivers on this year's grid (75%), and the likelihood that a significant number of those will continue for a second campaign, it bodes well for a possible bumper entry next season. On the flipside of the travel situation is the possible scenario that the junior single-seater series may attract fewer drivers from overseas, who may instead decide that it's best to stay in their home countries.

As the scientists have constantly advised, caution is still needed. The prospective vaccines still need final approval and, even if they are soon officially deemed effective and safe, it will still take a while for them to have a significant impact. A lot remains unclear, particularly surrounding how the early months of 2021 will play out. It has been a very difficult year for many organisers but, despite that, it seems there is more reason to be optimistic as we look towards the new season. ✨

P66 AMON CUP ANNOUNCED

THE FORMULA VEE MAVERICK WHO HAS REACHED THE TOP

For a second consecutive year, a self-built machine has won the Formula Vee championship. But James Harridge's car comes from the very humblest of origins – with some parts even salvaged from a skip

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Formula Vee is not usually an easy championship to win. The 750 Motor Club's long-running VW Beetle-engined single-seater series features constructors and engine builders that have decades of experience in the category. But, it is possible for self-built creations to still challenge the likes of the AHS, GAC and Storm (built by SG Race Engineering) machines that populate the series. Graham Gant proved that last season as, after years of toil with his own Worm's Eye View car, he finally landed the crown. And now James Harridge has achieved the same feat after a dominant 2020 campaign with the Maverick Vee he and his father built – a car with the very humblest of beginnings.

Harridge's father Dave used to compete in Formula Ford 2000 in the 1970s and 1980s, so Harridge Jr grew up in the racing world. "My dad first put me in a kart when I was six in 1992 and I did schools karting when I was 10," he recalls. "I was eight-times national schools karting champion."

The next part of the story is very familiar. Like scores of youngsters racing karts, Harridge struggled financially to make that next step and move into cars. The Harridges attended numerous race meetings over the years as they tried to find an affordable way to compete. But, in the end, they decided the cost of buying a car was too great and opted to build their own Formula Vee challenger.

They were attracted to the series by its affordability and its competitiveness. "In 2010/11, you had people coming through it like [British Touring Car champion] Ash Sutton and Mike Epps and it was a competitive formula, so it was appealing," says Harridge.

Work started on the Maverick back in 2007, but it was six years later before it finally competed in its first race. Progress on the car was slow and there was never a clear design that was followed. Instead, the Harridges made use of what they could find and attended numerous Vee events to try to work out what rivals had done.

STYLES



“LOTS OF BITS WERE MADE FROM SCRAP METAL – IT’S QUITE AMAZING HOW IT TURNED OUT SO WELL!”



“The car was made from odds and sods we had lying around,” admits Harridge. A typical example of this concerned the bodywork, which was created from scratch. The moulds were made from wood and fibreglass – and even the edge of a dustbin was used for inspiration for the shape.

“Lots of bits were scrap metal,” Harridge continues. “The trailing arms are a kart axle broken up and a lot of stuff came from the skip at Rye House kart track, with their permission! It’s quite amazing how it turned out so well!

“The biggest challenge was money and funding it. Formula Vee is a bit of a black art and not many people want to give away their secrets. We were doing it by eye – it wasn’t a CAD design, it was made up as we went along.

“We built it in my dad’s back garden, in the shed [where his karts had earlier been prepared]. When we finished the car, we got it into the garden and had to get the neighbours to take their >>



fence down to take it out through the side, as there was no access! We got there in the end.”

But the Maverick did not enjoy the most encouraging of debuts in the 2013 season finale at Donington Park. “My dad first drove it in 2013 for one last race, and it was awful and we got lapped,” remembers Harridge Jr.

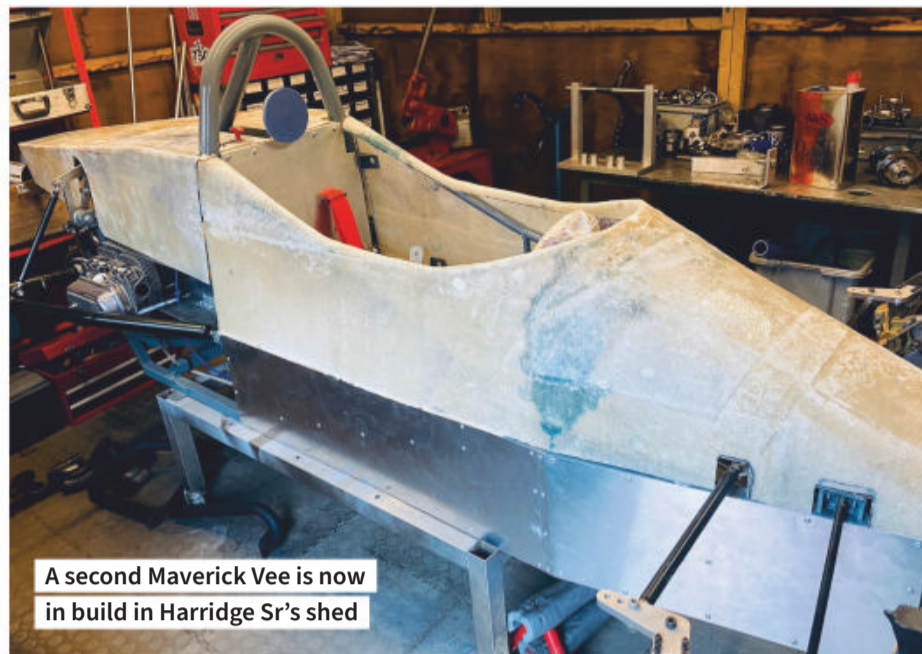
However, there were signs of encouragement. “When my dad drove it, because he had done previous racing, he knew the car handled quite well,” says Harridge. “I thought the balance was brilliant!”

Another year was spent tinkering on the car before Harridge Jr contested his first Vee season in 2015. And immediately he turned heads. In the season-opener at Brands Hatch, he pressured multiple champion Paul Smith’s AHS Dominator throughout – and Harridge says “that was a definitely a surprise to everybody”.

That proved to be one of the high points as, for several seasons, the Maverick struggled with terrible reliability. Harridge attributes this to the fact that he and his father had also developed the engine, again to save costs, and had struggled to perfect it.

“We were quick and getting pole positions and leading races, but no matter how much I tried we would blow up – and this went on for years,” he says. There were occasions when the engine did last – he took victories in the first races of the 2017 and 2018 campaigns – but it was only when he enlisted the help of Vee veteran Alan Woodward of GAC Motorsport to build the engine that the final piece of the puzzle was in place.

“He didn’t do a lot different to what we were doing, but it’s those little things that matter,” says Harridge. “That’s been the reason we’re dominating now – it’s the reliability [that’s made the difference] not the speed. It’s helped me to concentrate on the driving rather than worrying about what’s going on behind me. People didn’t really bother chasing me for a while [knowing he was unlikely to finish the race].”



But the rest of the Vee field has been doing a lot of chasing in the condensed 2020 season. Finally, the sweet spot of the Maverick was found and Harridge dominated, winning seven of the eight races to sweep to the crown. All of those hard hours spent in his father’s shed have been rewarded.

“A couple of times I was tempted to give up because I was spending all that money, which would’ve been a shame – and it’s nice to get something out of it after all these years,” he admits.

Not everyone thought the rather rudimentary machine would be destined for success, however. One of the Maverick’s key distinguishing features is its zero roll rear suspension, which Harridge says is crucial to the car’s good handling. He recalls ex-Lotus Formula 1 driver and 750MC vice-president John Miles wandering over at Snetterton one year and being very sceptical of the suspension and its lack of anti-roll bars, something Lotus fan Harridge Sr was disappointed to hear.

“John Miles said, ‘That’s never going to win a race,’” Harridge Jr remembers. “He tried to tell us it wasn’t going to work and why. He said we needed to change the suspension and we proved him wrong, bless him.” Miles died in 2018, before the Maverick had really hit its stride. “It was a shame he wasn’t able to see us winning,” Harridge adds.

Now he has landed that Formula Vee crown, Harridge has had thoughts of racing elsewhere. He has targeted a move to Formula Ford 1600, even considering adapting the Vee machine to run in the category. However, budget has again proved to be a stumbling block. “I had one offer for the Formula Ford Festival but I couldn’t it, which was a shame,” he says.

It may not be a Formula Ford, but there has been some

HOW FORMULA VEE CONTINUES TO INNOVATE AND REMAINS POPULAR

There are not many categories where you can build a complete car from scratch yourself, and long-time Formula Vee engine builder Alan Woodward, who resolved Harridge’s engine woes, believes that is one of series’ strengths.

“I think it’s brilliant,” says Woodward, whose GAC concern also began

creating its own cars from scratch in the 2000s. “The series is nearly 60 years old and there’s still innovation and the rules have stayed fairly stable.

“We had Mike Jenvey come along years ago and he did something similar. He developed his own suspension and wiped the floor with us. I redesigned my car after that – I

modified five for the start of the 2007 season and three were in the top three in the championship that year.”

Woodward has been involved in Formula Vee since 1993 and feels the series still has plenty to offer. And, when looking at the size of the grids, you can certainly see why. Twenty-nine cars competed in two of the events during

the shortened 2020 season, and Woodward believes the cost-effectiveness of the championship is a key reason for that.

“With tyres, one engine rebuild, and any damage, you can do a full season for sub-£10,000,” he says. “It’s so cost-effective and it’s a very competitive formula.”

Considering that the series is based around

the Type 1 powerplant from the original VW Beetle, sourcing parts may become ever harder, but Woodward has no immediate concerns.

“Getting good quality parts for the engine is getting more difficult, but we’re still doing it,” he says. “It’s working well, and you don’t fix something that isn’t broken.”



Change to a GAC engine has been key to solving reliability woes

more activity back in the shed in Harridge Sr's garden as work on a second-generation Maverick Vee is under way.

"It's exactly the same – with the same tubular frame – bar the front suspension, as we've done something a little bit different there," Harridge says. "It's the little things we've learned, but it's all the same [otherwise]. Hopefully, we will get that out next year – maybe we'll rent one out and have a team going."

Looking back on those early days beavering away in the shed, Harridge admits he did not initially fully appreciate the challenge of what they were undertaking.

"I don't think I realised at the time how much effort has gone into it," he says. "Everything has been made by hand,

all the welding was done by us. It's a massive task with everything [needed] to do it successfully.

"A lot of it has been learning as we've gone along. It's been a massive commitment but we get to spend some time together.

"I spend every other evening, for a couple of hours, in the garage fiddling away. It cost about £3500 to build, but the number of hours on the car far outweighs the cost!"

But, despite the colossal investment of time, what the Harridges have proven this year is that you can still build a car in a shed in the back garden – even from bits of scrap metal – and achieve success. There may generally be more professionalism now, but the stereotypical maverick nature of club racing competitors can certainly still be found. ❄



Formula Vee has managed to attract large grids this year, despite COVID-19

STYLES



motorsport
IMAGES

EVERY MINUTE COUNTS IN McRAE

DOCUMENTARY REVIEW
COLIN McRAE:
25 YEARS A CHAMPION

Twenty-six minutes to mark 25 years since Colin McRae was crowned the youngest-ever World Rally champion – aged 27 – at Chester Racecourse on 22 November 1995. That’s an undeniably tight window of television time in which to celebrate the seminal achievement of the WRC’s most famous driver, a triumph that garnered considerable page space in the national newspapers.

Making the task even harder for WRC TV, maker of the *Colin McRae – 25 Years a Champion* documentary, is that the BT Sport and WRC+ broadcast doesn’t just focus on the RAC Rally season finale or even the 1995 season as a whole. Instead, it tracks back – albeit briefly, as required – a full decade earlier to McRae’s competitive rallying debut.

At a drizzly Kames circuit in Muirkirk, site of McRae’s rallying initiation, both the famous first-generation Subaru Impreza ‘L555 BAT’ poster car and the Talbot Avenger 1600GT in which he cut his teeth have been assembled.

There’s a pleasing lesser-known snippet here. That Kames rally included some mileage on public roads. The Avenger, having just been given a gearbox transplant, didn’t possess an MoT or any road tax, so the number plates of a humdrum Avenger estate were swiftly affixed to ‘satisfy’ the law should needs must.

The tight confines of Kames are also the setting for Jimmy McRae, Colin’s five-time British Rally Championship-winning father, to give a brief track test of the Impreza. This, added to a quick recap of McRae Jr’s exploits in a Talbot Sunbeam, Vauxhall Nova, Ford

Sierra Cosworth and Subaru Legacy RS as he climbed the ladder to the WRC means 12 minutes have gone by before we’re finally recapping the 1995 season itself.

There’s a hasty summary – McRae crashing out of the Monte Carlo season opener and engine failure in Sweden as team-mate Carlos Sainz scored two wins from the opening three rounds – before the pace settles to recap the New Zealand Rally.

Contemporary interviews with McRae Sr and former Subaru World Rally Team principal David Richards help colour the picture. Sainz couldn’t partake in the event after a motorbike crash, leaving McRae to storm to victory on the stages where he’d scored his maiden WRC win in 1993 on roads reminiscent of more familiar British forest routes.

Australia is glossed over, before the infamous Spanish round. As has been well documented, McRae was fastest but lost the win after Subaru enforced a time penalty by handing in paperwork late in an effort to maintain team orders that favoured Sainz for that round only.

Finally, we’re on to the title decider, and the coverage features all of the necessary period footage – the Lanarkshire chuckles of “spot on” as McRae and co-driver Derek Ringer finish the final stage, the donuts with the Saltire flapping out of the window, and the champagne spraying on the podium.

The essential details of the 1995 season are all present and correct in *Colin McRae – 25 Years a Champion*, but, due to the constraints of the running time, there’s little embellishment.

Fortunately, for the televised legacy of McRae – boosted by the eponymous video game, which sold more than 10 million copies – there are other tributes. From earlier this year, Chris Harris’s drive of the title-winning Impreza around the grounds of



CELEBRATION



Co-driver Ringer (left) and McRae celebrate 1995 RAC Rally and WRC title win

MCKLEIN

Chatsworth House, setting for stage two of the RAC Rally, is more visceral. The drone footage and slow-motion shots make for the typically excellent *Top Gear* cinematography and are blended with an orchestral soundtrack that's altogether more emotive.

But perhaps the high-water mark remains the final episode of the BBC's 2013 mini-series *Racing Legends*. The one-hour instalment presented by six-time Olympic gold medallist and self-confessed McRae fanboy Chris Hoy offers that rare combination: it's detailed enough to appease diehard rallyists, while also captivating to a more motorsport-aphetic audience.

Compared to these, *Colin McRae – 25 Years a Champion* doesn't fill in too many blanks or quite get the hairs standing on end quite so readily, even if the footage of McRae sliding his Impreza largely one-handed through the Welsh forests will never not be cool.

MATT KEW

YouTube

youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



The wet weather during the Turkish Grand Prix produced some interesting racing, but also fascinating insight into how different aero parts affect each team. Autosport breaks down the findings from the best images taken at Istanbul Park. **Go to bit.ly/RainAero**



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In the wake of comments proposing that Lewis Hamilton's success is 'all down to driving the best car', Autosport sits down with former Mercedes Formula 1 team technical director Paddy Lowe to discuss whether Hamilton really is the difference-maker.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Bahrain Grand Prix

Formula 1 World Championship

Round 15/17

Sakhir, Bahrain

29 November

Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1405

Highlights Sky Sports F1,

Sun 1800, Channel 4, Sun 1900

FIA Formula 2

Round 11/12

Sakhir, Bahrain

28-29 November

Live Sky Sports F1, Sat 0900,

Sun 0950

Super GT

Round 8/8

Fuji, Japan

29 November

Super TC2000

Round 5

Buenos Aires, Argentina

29 November

European Rally Championship

Round 5/5

Gran Canaria, Spain

26-28 November

Highlights Eurosport 2, Fri 2200,

Eurosport 1, Sun 0130

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TOP FIVE



'ORIGINAL' GT2 CARS

With the GT2 moniker revived, we've picked the best contenders from the original iteration of the class that ran from 1994 to 1999, even if for much of that time they ran in the shadow of the GT1 greats

MATT KEW

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
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 IMAGES

3 PORSCHE 911 CARRERA RSR
 When the world sportscar championship ended in 1992, it was left to the 1994 birth of the BPR GT Series to rekindle sportscar racing at an international level. The brainchild of series co-founder Jurgen Barth, the naturally aspirated 3.8-litre Porsche 964 played a pivotal role in the revival of GT competition. After Barth's Le Mans class win in his 964 in 1993, the car came back the following year to score a 1-2-3.



5 MARCOS LM600
 Loosely based on the Mantara road car, the Marcos LM600 was king of its British GT class throughout 1995 and 1996. On the world stage, success was a touch more muted. Its V8 engine, plucked from the Chevrolet Corvette, helped the car pick up the pieces whenever the Porsche 911 wasn't winning in the 1996 BPR GT season. Three wins were clocked, but only five more podiums followed in the next two years.



2 PORSCHE 911 GT2
 Whereas it was the 964 that helped GT racing to survive, it was the twin-turbocharged 993 variant of the 911 that truly thrived. In 1996, it bagged class honours in all but three of the 11 BPR GT races. Wind on a year, four of the top six drivers in the GT2 standings of the rebadged FIA GT Championship had been driving a 993. Adding to the success, back-to-back class honours came at Le Mans in 1996 and 1997.



4 CALLAWAY CORVETTE
 Reeves Callaway had built the engine for the Aston Martin AMR1 and hot-rodged Chevrolet Corvettes. What he then masterminded for the race track was dubbed the 'SuperNatural'. The C4 'Vette's strength lay in its one-lap pace, with Almo Coppelli romping to class pole at Le Mans in 1995. The race returned second and third behind the Honda NSX. The car could have won on its Le Mans debut in 1994 but ran out of fuel.



1 CHRYSLER VIPER GTS-R
 A project with ORECA and Reynard involvement and a car powered by an eight-litre V10. Domination in the GT2 ranks of the FIA GT Championship resulted. Seven wins from 11 races were scored in 1997 as the car never finished off the podium. The next season, nine victories came in 10 events and the GTS-R won its class at Le Mans to rank 11th overall. In 1999, it was a full house: 10 wins from 10 for the Viper.





FROM THE ARCHIVE

Did someone say 'track limits'? Michael Schumacher's Ferrari 248 F1 kicks up the dust taking a no-prisoners line during the 2006 San Marino Grand Prix at Imola,

the last time a round of the Formula 1 World Championship was held at the Italian track until the Emilia Romagna GP earlier this month. The seven-time world champion started from pole

position and led 55 of the race's 62 laps. Fernando Alonso (Renault R26) finished 2.096 seconds behind Schumacher, ending the weekend with a 15-point championship lead over the German.

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McRae secures World Rally crown on British soil

30 November 1995

A typically garish 1990s cover celebrated Colin McRae's World Rally title success this week in 1995. The Scot had entered the RAC Rally season finale tied with Subaru team-mate Carlos Sainz. Despite losing two minutes to a puncture, McRae was unstoppable. He and co-driver Derek Ringer put in "one of the most awesome recovery drives in the history of the WRC", according to Autosport, to beat Sainz by 36 seconds.

"I had time to fight back and it wasn't really a problem," said Britain's first World Rally champion. "I was motivated enough and I knew I could do it. The car was good, the stages were good – very quick. Not a problem.

"I was 100% – always maximum – but I don't think I was taking any risks. No way was I going to throw it all away."

The 30 November 1995 issue also followed Michael Schumacher's first proper Formula 1 test for Ferrari, at

Estoril. The then-double world champion had left Benetton for the famous Italian team and back-to-backed the outgoing V12 engine with the new V10, both in 1995 412T2 chassis.

Ferrari was immediately impressed with Schumacher's approach, and he was pleased with progress made during the test. "It's the best racing car I have ever driven in the wet," he said. "I cannot speculate on how many races I might have won if I had been at Ferrari this year, but this car is very good.

"The Ferrari is very good in high-speed corners, where I would say it is quicker, and I don't think we could improve it a lot. In the slow corners I'm not sure what it's like compared to the Benetton, because I'm sure we have other things available to improve the car."

Schumacher would, of course, win three grands prix in 1996, but it would be 2000 before he ended Ferrari's long wait for another drivers' crown.



The McRae family helps us pick out Colin's greatest drives in our Autosport 70th Anniversary special, out now. Print subscribers will receive a copy for free. To order your copy of the 196-page celebration, please go to autosport.com/autosport70th



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Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG, United Kingdom. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. Subscription records are maintained at Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.



CIRCULATION TRADE ENQUIRIES

Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.
 Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, 28 Planetary Road, Willenhall, Wolverhampton WV13 3XT. ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG.

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