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Bank holiday racing action to savour

THE RACING SEASON NEVER FEELS TRULY UNDERWAY until Easter, and what a bumper Bank Holiday we've just enjoyed. The weather might not have done the hardy spectators any favours, but they were treated to some fantastic action.

Brands Hatch was a great start to the British Touring Car Championship, with its usual cocktail of thrills and spills. The NGTC era has come into its own, and looks set for a long future with so many different manufacturers involved. Oulton Park, Thruxton, Castle Combe (the inaugural Howard's Day), Mallory Park and Lydden also enjoyed cracking weekends despite that shiveringly-cold wind. The individual performance that really impressed me (and I shouldn't be surprised) was that of Sebastien Loeb. The nine-time world rally champion looked like a racing veteran as he began his full-time circuit career in FIA GTs at Nogaro. His McLaren v Audi battle for the lead with Nikolaus Mayr-Melnhof in Sunday's qualification race was absorbing to behold.

Just like the supremely talented Robert Kubica has made the jump the other way, Loeb's development in his new discipline is going to be fascinating to follow.

Charles Bradley

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Kurt Ahrens, Hockenheim F2, 1968

Find us on



THE BIG PICTURE

Gregor Fiskens's Trackspeed Porsche cannons into the Beechdean Aston Martin and Fortec Mercedes at the start of Oulton Park's British GT opener on Easter Monday

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This week in F1

MORE VETTEL APOLOGIES

Sebastian Vettel has apologised to personnel at Red Bull Racing's Milton Keynes base for ignoring team orders in the Malaysian Grand Prix, according to team principal Christian Horner.

The German visited the RBR factory last week for routine pre-Chinese GP preparations, but he also addressed personnel about overtaking Mark Webber against Red Bull's wishes.

"Seb said he can't turn back the clock, but he's accepted what he did was wrong," Horner told *Sky Sports News*. "He's apologised to the team and to every single member of staff for his actions because he recognises the team is vitally important."

Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko claims the working relationship between Vettel and Mark Webber can continue, despite this incident.

"Sebastian apologised in the press conference, and that was the first correct step to make," said Marko. "There was a debrief afterwards with the relevant discussions about the race and then there was a handshake between the two drivers. For us the issue is now settled."

Webber held solid lead before Vettel chose to defy orders



HONE/LAT

MATESCHITZ SAYS WEBBER COULD STAY

Red Bull owner Dietrich Mateschitz insists that Mark Webber's future at the team remains open, despite the recent team orders row. In an interview with *Speedweek*, he said that Webber was a "candidate" for 2014, along with Scuderia Toro Rosso pairing Jean-Eric Vergne and Daniel Ricciardo.



THOMPSON/GETTY

Briatore backtracks

Former Renault team principal Flavio Briatore insists he respects Christian Horner, despite saying in an interview with Italian radio station RAI that the Red Bull team boss had shown "weakness" over the team orders row. "Besides considering him a good friend, I have a lot of respect for him professionally," said Briatore, who insists his words were "misinterpreted".



THOMPSON/GETTY

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ETHERINGTON/LAT



INTERLAGOS FUTURE IN DOUBT

Question marks hang over Interlagos's future as the host venue for the Brazilian Grand Prix, with both Rio de Janeiro and a mooted new circuit at the Beto Carerro Park in the southern state of Santa Catarina also vying for a race.

Interlagos has a contract to host the Brazilian round of the F1 championship until 2015, but its long-term future is dependent on a new state-of-the-art pits complex being built, which is a contingency of the current race-hosting deal.

Rio has been gunning to regain the race since losing it to Sao Paulo in 1990, but it

would have to be staged on a new circuit as the Jacarepagua track no longer exists, having been demolished because of the upcoming Olympic Games.

The Beto Carerro project involves Hermann Tilke, who has already come up with an initial circuit design. Bernie Ecclestone is believed to have visited the park, which has already hosted a round of the World Motorcross Championship.

Sao Paulo is unlikely to be willing to lose the race because it is a major source of income for the city, and as a result a second GP in Brazil can't be ruled out.

FORCE INDIA ENGINE DEAL

Force India has confirmed that it will continue to run Mercedes engines from 2014 onwards. The Silverstone-based squad has used the German marque's engines since 2009, but the deal has now expanded to encompass a technical partnership with Mercedes to run its gearbox and hydraulics. Previously, Force India used a McLaren-supplied drivetrain. Despite some concerns about the legitimacy of such an agreement being raised last year, deputy team principal Bob Fernley has no doubts of its legality, describing it as "fully Concorde Agreement compliant".

It's easy to become rattled coming to a team like McLaren when you don't have a quick enough car. He's an intelligent guy. He is incredibly young, but he has not put a foot wrong

THOMPSON/GETTY



McLaren team boss Martin Whitmarsh talks up Sergio Perez's start to the season



FERRARO/LAT

Grosjean: cash is key to success

Romain Grosjean believes his Lotus team's hopes of challenging for the 2013 world championship are dependent on cash. "It depends on the money that we have," he said. "That is the key in F1. We know we have good people, we know they are able to make a race-winning car, we know that on development and factory tools we are there. But, then again, everything is a question of what you can put into it."

PIC HAS NO REGRETS

Charles Pic insists that he does not regret switching from Marussia to Caterham this season. Caterham has lagged behind his former team so far this year. "I had a great year with Marussia, but now I am very happy to be with Caterham for this year and the future," he said. "It's not frustrating at all."



FERRARO/LAT

Vergne not interested in Ricciardo fight

Jean-Eric Vergne insists that the intra-Scuderia Toro Rosso battle with Daniel Ricciardo is not his main focus for the season. "People want to make out that there is a big fight," he said. "I don't care. I'm here to do my job and get the best result for the team."

BRAZIL'S F1 HISTORY IN PICTURES

1973-1977 Interlagos



1978 Rio de Janeiro



1979-1980 Interlagos



1981-1989 Rio de Janeiro



1990-2013 Interlagos (shortened circuit)



COATES/LAT ARCHIVE

BIG NUMBER

37

Mercedes has scored 37 points in the first two GPs of 2013 – its best-ever haul at this stage of a campaign.

DUNBAR/LAT



Hamilton: Merc is frontrunner

Lewis Hamilton has declared Mercedes to be Red Bull's leading challenger on pace. The German marque currently lies fourth in the

constructors' championship. "We are the second-best team," said Hamilton. "To be that close and be in that position is a great feeling."



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6H GT - 6H PROTO
FUNYO - MONOPLACE

MOTORLAND ARAGON [SPAIN]

August 30-31-September 1^{er}
12H GT & PROTO
FUNYO - MONOPLACE

MUGELLO [ITALY]

April 19-20-21
6H GT - 6H PROTO
2H HISTORIC

PAUL RICARD [FRANCE]

September 6-7-8
2 TOURS D'HORLOGE
24H HISTORIC

PAUL RICARD [FRANCE]

May 31 - 1^{er} - June 2
4H GT - 4H PROTO - 2H HISTORIC
FUNYO - MONOPLACE

MAGNY-COURS [FRANCE]

October 25-26-27
6H GT - 6H PROTO - 2H HISTORIC
FUNYO - MONOPLACE

DIJON-PRENOIS [FRANCE]

June 28-29-30
3H GT - 3H PROTO - 2H HISTORIC
FUNYO - MONOPLACE

ESTORIL [PORTUGAL]

November 15-16-17
6H GT - 6H PROTO
2H HISTORIC

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Mark Hughes

MPH



Mark Webber is at his most dangerous when he's angry. So we can thank his team-mate for providing him with all the right motivation he could wish for

Whenver Mark Webber feels he's being disadvantaged, it seems to trigger in him his best stuff. Recall that Silverstone 2010 victory and the "Not bad for a number two" radio message? Assuming Sebastian Vettel escapes any significant sanction for disobeying team orders in Malaysia, Webber will feel understandably hard done-by. What might we be about to see from him?

Fighting against adversity somehow seems to free him up, pushing away what appears to be a performance anxiety that occasionally surfaces in his racing, when he seems not to be totally intuitive in his moves, as if he's over-thinking. With a bit of anger in him, that all dissolves, his shoulders seem to unknot and he flawlessly expresses the deep reserves within him.



“Webber’s never accepted being number two, snarling and railing against it to brilliant effect”

Competing at the top in F1 is hugely psychologically challenging and the pattern of Webber's performances over the years shows how that challenge is multi-faceted. On the one hand it's difficult to think of any other driver with the mental strength required to keep coming back at a phenomenon like Vettel. On the other there is this occasional tightening-up.

Even after the drubbing Mark received at Seb's hands in 2011 when the traits of the full blown-diffuser car played perfectly to the Vettel technique, there he was back on form again into 2012. Think back to Rubens Barrichello or Eddie Irvine alongside Michael Schumacher at Ferrari and how psychologically exhausted they became fighting against the overpowering thrust of a favoured team-mate. They were firmly cast in the number-two roles there and that is a position Webber has never accepted, has railed and snarled against to brilliant effect. That and his natural speed make him a great asset to the team.

That stubbornly competitive pride makes Christian Horner's job more difficult than it would be with a compliant number two – he could, for example, have done without Webber's less than helpful actions in Brazil last year as Vettel fought Alonso for the title – but it's worth it, which is why Horner keeps re-signing him.

So while there has been plenty of talk from Red Bull's rivals about how the events of Malaysia will tear the team

apart, it's not necessarily so. The race team values the feisty package that is Webber. Mark values what Red Bull gives him. He wants to win the world championship and realises his best chance of doing that as the career clock ticks down is to remain with the squad that consistently fields F1's fastest car. There is every motivation on both sides to keep this thing working.

An interesting point in the post-Malaysia Red Bull landscape is that it's Vettel who will now be under scrutiny. Knowing that the world will be looking on, how might that impact upon him in the car should he be wheel-to-wheel again with Webber? It's another psychological challenge for him, in addition to all the usual ones, and if there is one small weakness in Vettel's otherwise amazing game it is that emotion isn't always directed very productively. Think back to last year's arm flailing and throwing around of the car at Hockenheim after Lewis Hamilton frustrated Seb's challenge to Fernando Alonso by unlapping himself.

The best way for Vettel to avoid any tricky on-track confrontations with Webber will be to drive away from him, to beat him by sheer pummelling performance so that the wheel-to-wheel situation never arises; far easier said than done, though, when that competitor is Webber. Especially a Webber with his dander up, looking to right a wrong.

It seems likely that Malaysia won't be the last we'll see of this fascinating intra-team contest. ❧

This week in motorsport



10

SPECTATOR STAGES BACK FOR RALLY GB

November's Rally GB will return to stately home-style spectator stages in an attempt to draw fans back to Britain's WRC round.

The 2013 event will be based in mid and north Wales, and will mix

what were once known as 'Mickey Mouse' stages with some of the most feared forests in the world.

The route is still to be finalised, but as well as the stately homes, another addition from last season

will be night rallying, with a loop in the dark after the Conwy start.

The Great Orme stage will only run competitively on the final day and service will be at Toyota's Deeside factory.

Lada replaces Dudukalo

Aleksei Dudukalo has, as predicted by AUTOSPORT (March 31), lost his seat in Lada's World Touring Car Championship team after causing the accident that led to the withdrawal of both works Grantas from the Monza races. He has been replaced by fellow Russian Mikhail Kozlovskiy.

Kristoffersson's new ride

Johan Kristoffersson will defend his Superstars title in a Porsche Panamera (right) run by new series entrant Petri Corse after leaving the KMS Audi squad, run by his father Tommy.

Kristoffersson's move is just one of a number of high-profile driver changes to have taken place during the past week. His chief rival for the 2012 championship, Vitantonio

Liuzzi has left CAAL Racing to join fellow Mercedes squad Romeo Ferraris. Former champion Thomas Biagi has moved from the Dinamic BMW team to join him.

The new Solaris Motorsport Chevrolet Camaro, driven by Francesco Sini, topped last week's Monza test, followed closely behind by Andrea Larini's Ferlito Jaguar XF.



P44 IN-DEPTH SUPERSTARS SEASON PREVIEW

ALPINE BACK TO THE TOP

The Signatech-run Alpine squad topped last week's European Le Mans Series test at Paul Ricard, with Nelson Panciatici outpacing new Morand Morgan driver Franck Mailleux. Johnny Mowlem topped the GTE times in the best of Bam Racing's Ferrari 458 Italias.



Daly name last featured at Indy in 1989

Daly does Indy 500 race deal

GP2 racer Conor Daly will contest the Indianapolis 500 after signing a one-off deal with AJ Foyt Racing.

Daly, whose father Derek took part in the event six times between 1983 and 1989 (left), tested for the team at Sebring last December.

For all the breaking news, visit AUTOSPORT.COM

Allmendinger gets oval test

AJ Allmendinger tested for Penske at the Texas oval last week as part of his preparations for the Indianapolis 500 rookie evaluation test next month.

Tristan Vautier was also present, having his first IndyCar run on an oval for Schmidt Peterson Motorsports.

BRC OPENER CANCELLED

The opening round of this year's British Rally Championship – this weekend's Rally North Wales – has been postponed due to the level of snow and ice on the stages.

The organisers of the event are looking at future dates to run the Welshpool-based event.

Conway set to race in WEC

IndyCar race winner Mike Conway (below) and ex-Williams Formula 1 driver Antonio Pizzonia have joined the G-Drive/Delta-ADR team for the World Endurance Championship. Conway will drive one LMP2 ORECA-Nissan under the G-Drive banner with Roman Rusinov and John Martin, while Pizzonia will partner Tor Graves in the other car.



TANDY TO ELMS

Nick Tandy's first year as a factory Porsche driver will be centred around the European Le Mans Series. The Briton, who took a GT class pole for January's Daytona 24 Hours, will share Proton Competition's 911 GT3 RSR with team boss Christian Ried and Gianluca Roda.



PORSCHE UNVEILS NEW WEC COLOURS

Porsche's Manthey-run factory 911 GT3 RSRs ran in their 2013 livery during last week's World Endurance Championship test at the Paul Ricard

circuit in France, but were beaten to the top of the GTE timesheet by former Formula 1 driver Giancarlo Fisichella's AF Corse Ferrari.

Neel Jani set the pace in the LMP1 class, the Rebellion driver lapping half a second faster in his Lola-Toyota than Danny Watts' Strakka Racing HPD.



DTM TESTS OUT DRS IN SPAIN

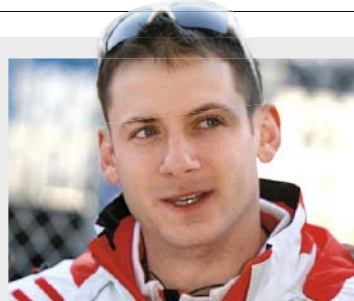
A number of top DTM drivers have urged the series to introduce the use of a DRS this year after the system was extensively trialed during last week's Barcelona test.

"This is the right way to increase overtaking and make races more interesting," said Rosberg Audi driver Edoardo Mortara.

RBM BMW driver Augusto Farfus added: "It was great to try it, and it should definitely be brought in to provide the fans with even more excitement."

The system works mechanically, with the entire rear wing assembly dropping back to flatten the central element (above). A decision on whether to introduce DRS, and in what form, will be taken at an upcoming board meeting of series promoter the ITR. Hankook's definitive-spec option tyres, which have been refined extensively since initial testing last July, could also be used in this year's series.

Gary Paffett set the fastest overall time in his HWA Mercedes at Barcelona.



Hamlin's layoff

NASCAR's Denny Hamlin will be out for at least five more weeks following the Fontana crash that left him with a compression fracture to his back.

Veteran Mark Martin replaces Hamlin for Joe Gibbs Racing at Martinsville this weekend, while the squad's Nationwide Series regular Brian Vickers will take over from the following race at Texas.

In brief

PETERHANSEL STAYS

Stephane Peterhansel will remain with the X-raid Mini team for the Dakar Rally next year. The 47-year-old Frenchman has won the last two events for Sven Quandt's team.

FORMULA E TYRE DEAL

Michelin has been named as the tyre supplier for the all-electric Formula E Championship that is due to get under way next year.

ZETA'S FR3.5 LINE-UP

Zeta Corse will run Formula 2 race winner Mihai Marinescu and Frenchman Emmanuel Piget in this weekend's Formula Renault 3.5 opener at Monza.

CHAROUZ TO LOTUS

Jan Charouz has been added to the Kodewa-run Lotus LMP2 team for the World Endurance Championship. The Czech will share one of the squad's Lotus T128s with Dominik Kraihamer and Thomas Holzer.

RALPH SANCHEZ DIES

Ralph Sanchez, the man who founded the Miami Grand Prix in 1983 – bringing Emerson Fittipaldi out of retirement – has died aged 64. Cuban-born Sanchez also founded Homestead-Miami Speedway.

KUBICA GRAVEL TEST

Robert Kubica was expected to test his Citroen DS3 RRC on gravel this week, as AUTOSPORT closed for press, in anticipation of his surface debut on the Fafe Rally Spring on Saturday.

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The Secret Driver

Hidden truths from the paddock

With pre-season platitudes out of the way, it's soon time for most of the F1 teams and drivers to face reality: this year's car isn't the weapon they hoped

Things are always the same at the start of each new season. Every team and every driver has fresh hope, new resolutions and confidence that this car is the real deal.

Of course, the numbers look amazing in the windtunnel, as the technical director never tires of telling you. But it's not just that: the CoG is lower, there's less polar moment, the kinematics have been optimised for these new tyres, the cooling has improved and there's less drag. If the numbers can be believed, this is going to be a serious weapon!

But it's the same every year at every team. And we all know there can't be 11 different constructors' champions, so plenty of people's numbers don't quite add up! But honestly, you can tell within the first five laps whether you're in deep poo!

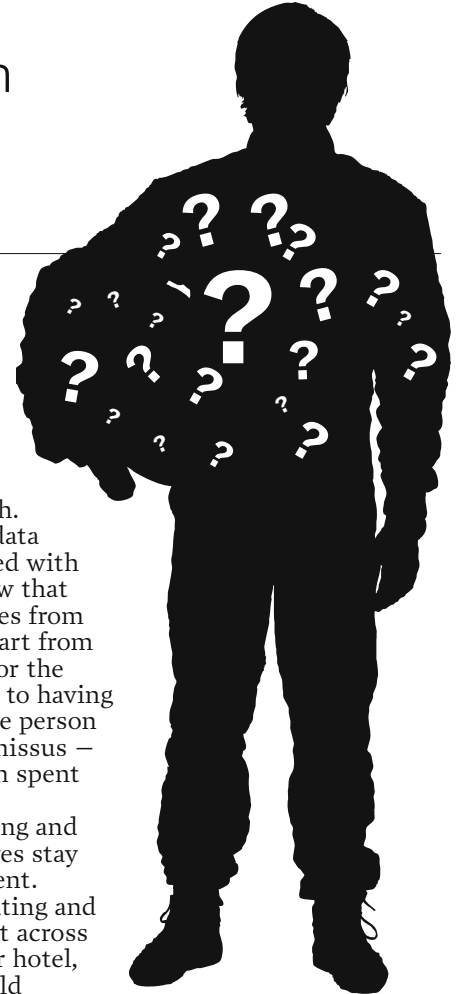
With all the simulation tools the teams now have, a control tyre and a weight distribution that's set by the rules, the set-up you're left with for the opening few races of the season is pretty much the one you leave the garage with at the end of that first day of testing.

Not that any of those in trouble would tell you that they got it wrong, or have any idea what's playing up. It can get pretty frustrating having to smile and tell the

two of the best you can do and you're a couple of seconds from pole position it makes you feel sick, especially when by the end of the lap your tyres look like chewed liquorish.

The team can see from the digital data overlays where you're losing compared with the top guys, but as a driver you know that anyway. But when you're 20,000 miles from home there's not a lot you can do, apart from feeling sorry for yourself and sorry for the technical director as he moves closer to having to perform gardening duties... But the person who's most depressed of all is your missus – she knows she's in for a whole season spent with you in a grump.

As a driver you can just keep pushing and motivating others, and hope the knives stay in the pockets of the team management. There's nothing to be gained by shouting and swearing, throwing your crash helmet across the garage and stomping back to your hotel, no matter how much better that would make you feel.



“Honestly, you can tell within the first five laps whether you’re in deep poo!”

press that everything is fine, when you know it's not. Even worse is when the team boss insists you go out on a low-fuel run to impress some potential sponsors he's brought along but you're told to tell the media that you've been focusing on doing race set-up.

But there's always that glimmer of hope that the updates the team has in development for the first race in Melbourne will change the situation, but you'd better not hold your breath! Of course all hope ends when you go out for qualifying and the brutal honesty of the stopwatch unfolds. Now there's no argument about fuel levels any more. And it's now that your worst fears can be realised.

Driving an F1 car on a fresh set of tyres and low fuel is always a great feeling. As a driver you know this is when you can really make a difference. But when you've put together a lap that you know was within a tenth or

Even though you know that the car isn't the title winner the figures suggested, the hope dies last for the driver. But on the flipside, if you're seen to be someone who can motivate the team, someone who's prepared to work the long hours as you seek to make the best of a terrible situation, that can really work in your favour.

Knowing the car's no world-beater doesn't really change the way you race, but it does change the people you're racing with. Out at the front you get to know the way certain drivers will act in different situations and how much you can put your trust in them. But further back is where the rookies tend to run – at least to begin with – and you have to learn how to race with those guys, and some of them are serious nutters.

From row four back, you're looking for a miracle race every time so it's more hostile and ruthless. It's all part of the depressing process of driving a lemon. ☹

McLAREN

WHAT WENT WRONG

In the aftermath of McLaren's worst start to a season since 2000, **EDD STRAW** looks at the decisions that have led the team to its current position and asks what can be done to put it back on track



AND WHERE NEXT?



For a team of McLaren's mighty resources it seems inconceivable to begin a Formula 1 season with no hope of challenging for a win. The grands prix in Australian and Malaysian yielded a paltry two ninth places, one each for Jenson Button and Sergio Perez. In statistical terms, it is McLaren's worst start to a season since 2000, although in the first two races of that campaign front-row lockouts and a brace of double DNFs were to blame rather than an uncompetitive car. Before that, you have to go back as far as 1994, with the desperately unreliable and underdeveloped Peugeot engines, for so dire a season opening. That year, McLaren failed to win even once.

This year the situation isn't as catastrophic as it initially appeared. In Malaysia, Button would have finished fifth and might even have troubled the Mercedes pairing ahead of him thanks to a three-stop strategy that the team is confident would have worked out. Unfortunately a disastrous visit to the pits put an end to that. This step forward was thanks to significant progress made with the car, albeit only insofar as McLaren made the best of a limited package as opposed to floundering as it did in Australia. However, the much-vaunted aggressive new McLaren concept remains a long way off being a winner on merit.

"We did a great job this weekend from where we were in Melbourne," said Button after Malaysia. "We're still not quick enough, but our race pace was good. The car is working much better. We've made some good improvements. This circuit has helped us a little because it is smoother than Albert Park, but we have been trying things, trying to understand how the aero is working.

"We have a much better understanding now and have put the car where it works at its best. I don't think we will have such a big step forward from Malaysia to China as we did from Australia to Malaysia, but every little will help."

The numbers bear him out. In Australia, McLaren's raw pace was just under 2.4 seconds off the quickest car (Red Bull). In Malaysia, the deficit was around four-tenths. Weather conditions served to make the situation look worse than it really was in Melbourne and perhaps flattered McLaren's deficit in Malaysia, but it is evidence of clear progress. Most importantly, it tallies with Button's claims of greater understanding of the shortcomings McLaren must eliminate if it is to, as team principal Martin Whitmarsh has vowed, "make this car into a winning car during the course of the year".

WHY SO RADICAL?

While reverting to last year's MP4-27, or a hybrid of it and the current car, remains a last resort, McLaren is convinced its new car can be made to work. And confidence has grown since Australia. As there can be little doubt that a 2013 machine based



on last year's concept would have been quicker now, this begs the question of why the all-new concept was pursued at all. After all, this is the final year of the current rules cycle, and the other top teams have favoured evolution over revolution.

"People say it was a crazy, foolish decision because the car was quickest [in 2012] and all we had to do was not screw it up," says Whitmarsh. "These decisions are typically taken in August/September, and you have got to view them in the context of that. This was before the final surge of development on 27 at the end of the year.

"Every critic has perfect hindsight. It is the last year of these regulations, so we asked if we believed that our fundamental product [a 2013 car based on the MP4-27] was going to be good enough to give us the development that we need throughout the year. If you look at most products, the rate of development early on is quite steep, but it potentially becomes asymptotic to some notional platform of optimisation.

"We launched the 27 competitively, but we flattened out a bit. Then we managed to come back a bit and then flattened out. During that development cycle, you have to make a decision: do you believe that this basic package is one that

has the development legs to take us through the second half of 2012 and 2013?"

While McLaren did recover in the final races before the August break last year, introducing a major upgrade at the German Grand Prix before winning in Hungary, the picture wasn't quite the same as it would be come November. In fairness to McLaren, after the break, the car turned out to be the quickest in five of the final nine weekends, including the Brazilian finale, which suggests more room for improvement was found with the 27 than expected in August, which is when the development potential question was answered in the negative.

On the flip side of the coin, you could also make a strong case that McLaren was undone by its own ambition and desire to 'out-clever' the rest, much as it was with the infamous, unraced MP4-18 of 2003. The more changes you make, the greater the chance of tripping yourself up.

After Ferrari reintroduced pullrod front suspension to F1 in 2012, McLaren was the only team to follow suit this year. It would be simplistic to put all its problems down to this. The difficulties it has had with the ride of the car suggest there have been a few issues with making it work. And given that the switch was driven by the desire to

'In statistical terms, this is McLaren's worst start to a season since 2000'



In Malaysia, Button showed progress had been made



Perez got a baptism of fire on his McLaren debut in Melbourne

reduce the aerodynamic blockage caused by a pushrod configuration, the fact that the aero map of the car isn't working as it should means that this could currently be a downside with no advantage.

RIGHT TOOLS, WRONG METHODS?

Given the calibre of McLaren's facilities (although it does a large amount of work in Toyota's windtunnel rather than in its own), it has to be down to the way the tools are used rather than their quality.

Whitmarsh accepts this. The MP4-28 has very occasionally shown a good turn of speed, not least during the first day of pre-season testing at Jerez when Button banged in a lap that looked sensational on a green track. All sort of myths have arisen about that run, including McLaren suggesting that a suspension part put on upside down allowed the car to run artificially low and make the aero work. Whatever the reason, it's clear the heart of McLaren's problem is not outright peaks of downforce, but the fact that the aero map is so inconsistent and unstable. This suggests the number crunching going on at Woking was producing accurate figures, but the focus was on those peaks rather than a car that works well throughout a wide range of rideheights. If the aero of the car only works in a very narrow band, then it might as well not work at all.

"We lost our way in the development process and ended up with a car that didn't have enough performance," says Whitmarsh. "It was too peaky, and we have had to deal with the consequences of that. You have to have aerodynamic performance over the whole operating window, and that is where we have fallen out even though we have the peaks.

"Can we blame it on lack of facility? No. Can we blame it on lack of process and interpretation? I think we've got to. It's possible to be too data driven, too analytical and sometimes not stand back from it." In other words, there's no advantage in having 'x' amount of downforce if you only have it for a small percentage of the lap.

AUTOSPORT's technical expert Gary Anderson, chief mechanic at McLaren in the 1970s, suspects that the three-element front wing is a symptom of the pursuit of outright downforce over usable downforce (see p21). This leads to the car having to run stiffer to narrow the range of rideheights that it runs in, which creates its own problems.

EARLY DENIAL OF ITS PROBLEMS

What does require some exploring is the reasons why McLaren took so long to realise just how big a hole it was in. There were suspicions the car wasn't quite right, but it wasn't until it was on the track in Australia that the problems really hit home.

"There were hints and concerns before Australia, but you have a group of highly intellectual experts who will rationalise, reason and explain, and they are not always aligned," says Whitmarsh. "Some will recognise a problem, others will be in denial about it. That's human nature. But we didn't have to get far into practice on Friday for it to become an inescapable truth.

"We weren't quick enough to pick up on it and we were a little in denial. Every team had graining tyres through the Jerez and Barcelona tests, so there wasn't the realisation. With hindsight, every mistake you make is documented, and we can see those mistakes, but we were too slow to come to terms with it."

This begs the question as to whether the loss of technical director Paddy Lowe contributed. ▶

Double diffuser
ruling put team on
the back foot in 2009



ETHERINGTON/LAT

‘The team’s record for getting out of a hole inspires confidence in the future’

18



HONE/LAT

Is three-element
front wing at fault?



Finishing on a high at 2012's Brazilian finale



Whitmarsh still faces tough times ahead...



...to give his drivers what they require

◀ With speed of the essence in F1, losing the car's project leader surely played a part in how long it took McLaren to realise the magnitude of its problem, even though those fundamental issues were created while he was still fully involved.

"Paddy was still in the company on the day of the launch and was working after it for a week or two," says Whitmarsh. "Where we are today isn't linked to his departure. He was around during this process."

"It's not great [not to have him during the troubleshooting phase]. I have a great deal of affection for him. I recruited him 22 years ago and we have worked with him a long time. We've been through some big highs and some dark moments, and I would like to leave it on that positive note. I don't want to get into recriminations and blame those no longer on the ship. The fact is that Paddy was involved in the concept, birth and development of this car, and I'd happily have him back to fix it."

So McLaren reached Australia in a hole, with Whitmarsh describing it as "one of the harder professional weekends of my life". The bumpy track, with its preponderance of medium-speed corners, highlighted the weaknesses of the car, which is generally at its best in high-speed corners where the aerodynamic load is maximised and therefore the rideheight is at its lowest. But again, there was a window in which it, albeit very briefly, worked.

"We found a balance in Melbourne that wasn't great, but was OK, which generally points to needing more grip front and rear," says Button. "But we did have to do some things with the car to help with bottoming because we were hitting the ground so hard we wouldn't have had a legal car at the end of the race – we wouldn't have had a plank and would probably have been missing half the car, too!"

TURNING THINGS AROUND

After the debacle in Australia, Malaysia became a glorified test. The priorities were to make the car run as well as it could within its limitations, but also to ensure McLaren understood exactly what it needed to work on for the significant upgrades planned for the Chinese GP.

Going into the weekend, sporting director Sam Michael admitted that although the team had a "pretty good understanding" of the problems, there was still the need to gather more data. By the end, the feeling was far more positive.

"We came to Malaysia using every time the car left the garage as a fresh experiment," says Whitmarsh. "It was set in some unusual configurations and we were modifying the car. The good thing is that we made some small performance gains, but more significant than that is that our understanding improved."

Exactly what new parts will appear in the upcoming races – with the first big hit in China and the opportunity for a second major package at May's Spanish GP – remains to be seen. But if McLaren can make the aero map less critical, run the car in more compliant trim through a wider range of rideheights and master any set-up issues caused by the change to pullrod front suspension, it will be on the right path.

"All we can do is be rational, look at the data, recognise the car isn't good enough, be creative, industrious, work together and make the car quicker at every single event," says Whitmarsh. "If we can do that at a faster rate than our competitors, we can certainly overtake them. It's as simple as that."

"The car has still got some fundamental issues, which means it is nowhere near its potential. That's a more comfortable position to be in than one when

everything is optimised, there is no separation of the diffuser, the flow all looks healthy but the car is still slow. That can be more disheartening. The fact is that we have cut and shut and fabricated things in the field that have made the car go quicker based on the data we've been able to extract."

HISTORY LESSONS

McLaren's record when it comes to getting out of a hole inspires a certain degree of confidence. Twice in recent years, in 2009 and in 2011's pre-season, it has struggled and bounced back to win races.

It's tempting to use those previous mistakes as evidence of some greater malaise at McLaren. But Whitmarsh denies any such systemic problems. In 2009, he points to the unusual interpretation of the regulations that allowed the double diffuser (it relied on air being fed through the floor to a diffuser via a hole that was defined as anything but a hole), while in 2011 McLaren hit back almost immediately.

"In 2009, the double diffuser [rule] interpretation was an extraordinary one-off incident for those who exploited it," he says. "Having been deeply involved for a long time in the interpretation of technical regulations, if anyone had come through and said this is going to be [the thing to do], I'd have said no. That was a very unusual circumstance and I'm not hard on us on that one."

"I do not believe a double diffuser should ever have been allowed. I didn't say much at the time because you have to respect the FIA for trying to do the best job that it can. But just as McLaren can make mistakes, other organisations can as well."

"The start of 2011 was the exhaust-blown [diffuser] year. There are some similarities because we took too much risk, but we were lucky to catch it early enough and did a last-minute recovery from 2.5 seconds back to being respectable in Australia."

"What we have done this year was risk by extreme innovation, risk by being bold enough to take something that wasn't bad and seek to change it to give yourself the scope to go further."

MAKING MP4-28 A WINNER

The proof of the pudding will come over the next few months. It could be McLaren fixes its problems and begins to push into the potential that its new concept might have over and above a developed version of last year's car. Or it might go round and round in circles and never be able to make the car work as it hoped. If the worst comes to the worst, perhaps it might have to dust down the old car.

The job done in Malaysia was impressive, but that's only the tip of the iceberg.

"We looked like we were in the right formula in Malaysia," says Whitmarsh. "We didn't the weekend before, so it's a step forward. We are ahead of some teams that are not idiots and are working hard to beat us, but we're not as good as the teams that have done a better job than us."

"Do I believe we can recover and win races this year? Of course. Is it ever easy to win races? No. I've been around for more than 100 wins and not one has been easy. We've got to isolate ourselves from the criticism, keep our heads down and find solutions."

With only two races gone, it's a little too early to write off McLaren's hopes. But with Red Bull and Sebastian Vettel already a long way up the road, only wins will do from this point.

With Lewis Hamilton thriving at Mercedes and throwing an even starker light on his old team's struggles, there will be plenty of column inches devoted to McLaren's travails. Now, it's all about the quality of the salvage job. ▶

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HOW TO TROUBLESHOOT A PROBLEM CAR

AUTOSPORT technical expert GARY ANDERSON has been there and done that when it comes to troublesome F1 cars. Here's his guide on how to solve a problem like McLaren

Mclaren's impressive lap time on the first day of pre-season testing at Jerez was partly caused by running too low a rideheight. Its improvement in form in Malaysia was also helped by the smoother circuit, which allowed the car to run at a lower rideheight. This appears to be at the heart of the matter.

If you were starting from scratch, you would design a Formula 1 car with a front-to-rear stiffness ratio of around 3:1. You need to supply a rideheight map for the windtunnel, and that's a good place to start. If you do it right, you will get a car that's compliant mechanically and that does not have excessively critical aerodynamic downforce. You would also want the centre of pressure either to stay stable or, ideally, move rearwards a little as you go faster (lower rideheight) to give more rear grip in the high-speed corners. In the slower turns (higher rideheight) you want it further forward to give you more front-end grip.

If you achieve this, you get a car that combats understeer in the low to medium-speed corners and is not nervous in the high-speed corners. There are cars on the grid that have achieved this, but not McLaren.

If you can't achieve this balance, you stiffen the whole car up. Maybe you run it at a ratio of 2:1, which

means if you have excessively peaky downforce, you can keep the car in the window where it works best but it's not so compliant. If the front end has to run very stiff, you can live with that even though it makes the car look horrible and you will be more prone to locking the brakes. But if the rear ends up stiffer, you're in trouble because you reduce traction and overwork the tyres.

The car has to have a stable aerodynamic map to allow the driver to use it well. Drivers can't drive to occasional peaks of downforce, they drive to the troughs. It's better to get the peak to come down and raise the low point. Usually, the peak downforce figure is what gets quoted to your boss. You might say we're developing 2000kg of downforce on this year's car compared to last year's 1800kg. I always used to quote the bottom number, saying last year was 1000kg and this year it's 1100kg – definitely a usable improvement.

All of this is just a symptom of a problem, leading me to suspect the front wing is the first area to attack. If you look at the front wings run by the other top teams, they all have multi-elements, with up to six parts. McLaren's has three elements. This means that, although your peak downforce is greater because you have fewer slot gaps, when you get a stall it's a larger percentage of the total front downforce

that is lost and the adverse affect to the airflow further downstream is more severe.

One of McLaren's fixes has been to run less front wing angle. This changes the airflow to the rest of the car, compromising how well it is working, but it does allow the wing to be more consistent and therefore ensure the car is in the usable window.

You wouldn't normally run like this except in an emergency. Usually, as the front wing angle increases, total downforce increases. The car will be designed to optimise the downforce with the front wing at or close to maximum angle, but McLaren isn't doing that. Either its numbers are wrong or they aren't being used properly.

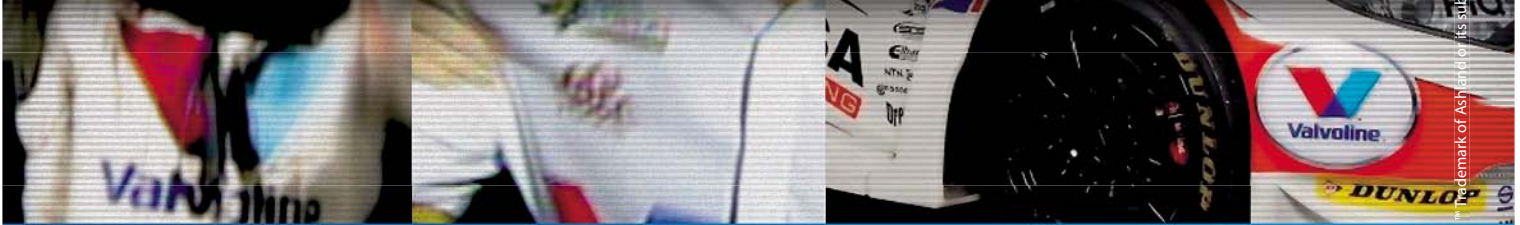
Last year, at its launch, McLaren was unsure how the car would compare to the previous one in terms of performance. By contrast, this season everyone was very confident that it had improved at least a little in all areas. It seems the critical airflow problems hadn't been recognised, perhaps because too much time was spent on basic aerodynamic development as opposed to going through a much wider range of rideheights and attitudes, which takes a very long time to run.

The concept of the car is good. It's the finer detail that needs to be sorted. As a result, expect to see a change to the front wing sooner rather than later. ❧



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Dieter Rencken

F1's political animal



The gap between the haves and have nots in F1 means some teams start each season at a financial disadvantage to bigger rivals

Can you imagine ending up on top in the 2013 FIA Formula 1 Constructors' World Championship (and, for that matter, the drivers' division) in the knowledge that three teams you beat hands down in the opening race of the season each stand to earn more in 'Bernie [Ecclestone] Money' – the teams' share of the sport's billion-pound annual revenues – even if they don't score another point all year?

Equally, imagine beating Ferrari, Red Bull Racing and McLaren in the constructors' championship, and not being eligible for any form of payout – despite having borne the full brunt of freighting cars, kit and personnel across the world while your competitors receive an allowance of ten tonnes and a score of airline tickets – per grand prix.

As things stand, those are the very real scenarios facing Lotus and Marussia respectively through to 2020, and while the latter's situation is highly unlikely to arise (certainly in the short term), the chances of the black-and-gold team lifting team honours come Brazil are not beyond the bounds of possibility. And should Lotus fail in its immediate quest, it could certainly come up trumps in any of the subsequent seven years – yet still find itself similarly disadvantaged.

Being F1, the sums are not insignificant. Assuming F1 revenues this year of £1bn, Lotus could expect to receive around £52m from commercial rights holder (CRH) Formula One Management (headed by Ecclestone on behalf of majority owner CVC Capital Partners), while a 10th-placed Ferrari stands to scoop around £65m.

means unique – the team finds itself on the same basic terms as Sauber, Force India, Toro Rosso and Caterham.

Which raises questions about Mercedes and Williams. They, too, negotiated preferential terms, although by the nature of their recent performances (and regular name changes in the former's case) their premiums are rather more modest – allegedly £7.8m per annum rising to £9.8m from 2015 for the German-owned outfit.

However, it was not all plain sailing for Mercedes. Its deal was agreed only after the board held out until September for better terms – a process that is believed to have included an element of anti-trust discussions and the appointment of Ecclestone's troubleshooter (and former driver) Niki Lauda as non-executive chairman of the operation.

Sir Frank's operation rides on the back of its undeniable sporting heritage – but, again, terms were agreed only after some hardball. It is hardly coincidental that the final offer was confirmed only after Williams plc chairman Adam Parr – a vociferous opponent of a revenue distribution structure which has teams sharing just 47.5 per cent of F1's revenues, with the CRH retaining the balance after aforesaid premiums – tendered his resignation.

At the root of this utterly inequitable system, which sees half the grid start each season with at least one hand tied behind their respective backs (both in Marussia's case), lies the absolute determination of CVC to ransack F1 for its own ends, to wit maximising returns on behalf of its

“In this inequitable system, half the grid starts with one hand tied behind its back”

According to sources with an intimate knowledge of various agreements struck last year between the CRH and 10 teams – Marussia has inexplicably been left out in the cold – as precursor to Concorde Agreement* negotiations, Red Bull Racing is on a basis of approximately £52m per annum for the 2013-2020 period, with McLaren on around £13m less.

Therefore, should one of the top three teams, collectively known as CCB (Constructors' Championship Bonus) teams, win the constructors' trophy, their subsequent rewards would be around £131m, £118m and £105m respectively, depending upon 'pot' size.

Imagine what Eric Boullier and co could do with an additional £328m (minimum) spread over seven years. Imagine the serious threat to the established order his team could mount with what effectively equates to a major sponsor who makes no livery demands. Lotus is by no

shareholders – a strategic element of which is its planned listing on the Singapore stock exchange. Long-term, lucrative contracts are a vital cog in this wheel.

Therefore, CVC has adopted the classic vulture fund modus operandi of restructuring its cash cow, much as it reorganised a raft of companies within its vast portfolio (including, for example, Samsonite) ahead of their listings.

The crucial difference, though, is that the luggage company manufactures hard products, whereas F1 was built on passion – over a period of 60 years. As CVC is bound to discover sooner rather than later, you restructure passion at your peril. ❖

*The Concorde Agreement outlines the commercial, technical and governance obligations of the governing body (FIA), FOM and teams collectively. The 2013-2020 covenant is currently under negotiation.

Bianchi thriving out of the spotlight

Questions have been raised over his temperament in the past, but Marussia is providing the perfect launchpad for the Frenchman's F1 career. By **EDD STRAW**

Jules Bianchi's prodigious pace for Marussia in the opening two races of this season seems to have taken the Formula 1 paddock by surprise. It shouldn't. While the Frenchman is perceived as an underachiever after failing to win the GP2 or Formula Renault 3.5 titles during his campaigns of the previous three seasons, his out-and-out speed has never been in doubt. After all, this is a driver who was described by his ART Formula 3 race engineer, Theophile Gouzin, as "even quicker" than Sebastian Vettel in an interview with AUTOSPORT four years ago.

Far more impressive is the way Bianchi has dealt with being on the F1 grid. He is so far comfortably the most impressive of this season's five rookies. He also doesn't expect to be at 100 per cent of his potential until May's Spanish Grand Prix, thanks to his late deal, so there is surely more to come.

Crucially, there has been no sign of the weakness under pressure that has sometimes blighted his previous seasons. Arguably, the low-pressure back-of-the-grid environment is the perfect place for his first season in F1. Bianchi came close to landing a Force India drive, missing out to Adrian Sutil, but being in the thick of the intense fight for minor points positions may have made it more difficult for him to thrive.

"Maybe it's better to start in F1 with a bit less pressure, so you can just enjoy yourself, focus more on driving and get the experience," said Bianchi. "With the pressure before, some people said I didn't do well, but I think I did because I always finished in the top three [in his previous series]. I made some mistakes, but every driver makes mistakes, even the best ones in F1."

Inevitably, this pressure-free environment will only last so long.



Bianchi continues to be part of the Ferrari Driver Academy and is by default on the radar for a future race seat with the team. If he continues to dominate the four-car battle between the Marussia and Caterham drivers at the back of the field and hassle the back of the midfield pack, the 23-year-old will inevitably come into consideration for a better seat.

Bianchi is not admitting to any such aspirations. He insists he would be happy to remain with the improving Marussia next season. But he does hint at a desire to move up the grid next year.

"For the moment, my target is to have a very good season with Marussia, to learn and to be ready for next year," he said. "I need to learn the tracks because half of them I don't know. I have to learn everything about starts, pitstop procedures – it's all new. If I stay here, I will be happy, but we will see what we can do."

"Ferrari still look at me because I'm their driver. It's really important for me to do well and to show that they did a good job in choosing me. It's very good to be with a team like

that. It's one of the best in F1, and it's always good to have their support. I hope we can do something in the future."

Key to Bianchi continuing to impress will be Marussia's cars matching or exceeding the development of the cars around him. The team is the smallest in F1, but it has had a clear advantage over Caterham in the first two GPs.

Bianchi's fastest lap in the Australian GP was only 1.180s off the best overall. While this was largely down to a combination of low fuel and super-soft rubber in his short final stint, it demonstrates that Marussia is improving. More impressive is that, on average over a race distance, Bianchi has been only a minute behind the back of the midfield on merit.

Realistically, it will be difficult for Marussia to attack the midfield pack, where Williams is currently the straggler, but keeping it within sight is a realistic possibility.

"Our target is to stay in front of the Caterhams," said Bianchi. "But we will see if we can go with the other drivers in front in the midfield – why not?"

"Marussia has made a massive improvement since last year, as has our engine supplier, Cosworth, which worked over the winter and now has much better engines, so we are able to fight a bit more closely with the midfield."

"We just have to tune the set-up more because it's a bit different from what I'm used to. As we didn't test much in Barcelona, it was difficult to arrive in Melbourne and be at 100 per cent."

"We also need to work on the aerodynamic side. Even though the team has made a massive improvement over last year, we still need more."

With Caterham planning a major car upgrade at the Spanish GP, Bianchi might not find it so easy to impress as the season goes on. However, if he can continue to drive as impressively as he has, there's no question several bigger teams will be interested in his services next year.

No pressure...



XPB/BATCHLOR

Late deal means
Ferrari junior is still to
reach his full potential

BIANCHI'S MAD & BAD MOMENTS

Jules Bianchi has earned a reputation for under-pressure blunders during his rise through the ranks. Here are four career-defining moments.



LAT

F3 Euro Series 2009

On course to seal the title at Dijon, Bianchi messes up a late-race restart, allowing title outsider Christian Vietoris to swoop from fifth to the lead and delay his rival wrapping up the series.



GP2 2011

Cracks under late-race pressure from Romain Grosjean to throw away victory on the penultimate lap at the Nurburgring, making an error under braking for the final chicane after leading 18 of 23 laps.



FERRARO/LAT

F1 testing 2012

On the morning of the third day of the first test of the new Force India, Bianchi loses the rear of the car on cold tyres. He spins into the Turn 5 gravel, hitting the tyre barrier with the right rear and ending the team's day.



Formula Renault 3.5 2012

With title rival Robin Frijns on course to go level on points in the penultimate race of the year, Bianchi makes a lunge on Kevin Magnussen from a long way back and spins, costing him a further two places and four points.

MASON/GETTY

Bottas takes the grass on his debut in Melbourne



26

Williams steadies the ship

After a period of upheaval at the top of its ranks, Williams appears to be getting its house in order. By **EDD STRAW**



TIMELINE OF CHANGE

CHARTING THE SIGNIFICANT SHUFFLES THROUGH WHICH WILLIAMS HAS GONE IN RECENT YEARS.

2005

At the end of the season, Williams parts company with engine supplier BMW and loses Nick Heidfeld.



BELLANCA/LAT



LEE/LAT

2006

Signs Cosworth engine deal, with Nico Rosberg recruited to partner Mark Webber. Adam Parr joins as CEO in November.

2007

Switches to Toyota engines, with Alex Wurz joining up and taking the team's only podium that year.



DUNBAR/LAT



FERRARO/LAT

2008

Slumps back down to eighth in the championship, with de facto pay driver Kazuki Nakajima alongside Rosberg.

Instability has been the story of the Williams Formula 1 team in recent years. While others have changed their names and ownership, in some cases more than once, one of the greatest names in the history of grand prix racing has endured its own, more subtle but no less seismic, raft of upheavals. It is this instability that the appointment of Claire Williams, the daughter of founder Sir Frank, as deputy team principal and anointed successor, is designed to address.

Claire Williams's rise from press officer to board member and now her lofty new role is explained in her guest column overleaf (p29), and it would be a mistake to write off her promotion as nepotism. Particularly given how crucial her role is in ensuring that the team has the stability to emerge as a consistent threat for victories after Pastor Maldonado's one-off victory in Spain last year.

Since parting company with BMW at the end of the 2005 season, Williams has gone through a series of upheavals. The decision to break up with BMW, rather than selling out to the German manufacturer, which instead bought Sauber, was costly. That led to a period of financial retrenchment, during which there were very serious concerns about the team's future in F1. Notably, it was forced to run Kazuki Nakajima rather than

paying for its Toyota engines.

Its engine supplier has changed more often than any other team during that period, with Cosworth (2006), Toyota (2007-2009), Cosworth again (2010-2011) and now Renault providing its power. There has also been management upheaval, with Patrick Head, Toto Wolff, Sam Michael, Mark Gillan and Adam Parr all leaving during the past three seasons.

Frank Williams remains an active team principal at the age of 70, but he only attends a limited number of races during the season. Having an on-site deputy at races is a logical move, although the key to the team realising its ambitions of re-emerging as a title-winning force will depend on it having the financial clout to take on Red Bull.

That is where Claire Williams will focus her efforts. For while it is imperative that Williams turns around its bad start to this season and is able to secure as lucrative a share of the prize pot as it can, next year is set to be more challenging financially thanks to the new V6 turbocharged engines.

"Where I want to focus is very much the budget," she told AUTOSPORT. "That's what I've been doing and will continue to be doing. We had a really good winter, we renewed all of our sponsorship, we upgraded the majority of them and we brought in a new sponsor.

"It's always a challenge to get the budget in and next year is going to be no different with engine costs set to escalate in 2014, so we're strengthening the partnership sales team that we have here working with me. That's the primary focus."

Williams is currently without a title sponsor having parted company with AT&T at the end of 2011. But even though it is without such a prominent backer, Venezuelan oil company PDVSA is believed to be investing around £30 million per season in the team.

There has been speculation over the future of this deal following the death of the country's president, Hugo Chavez, last month. Chavez was a driving force behind using the state-owned company to raise Venezuela's profile overseas, with the Williams sponsorship deal – and requirement for it to field a driver from the country – key to that strategy. But Williams is believed to hold options to continue that deal for another two years, meaning that a big slice of its income should be guaranteed even amid question marks over Venezuela's political situation.

While the team's financial outlook is murky, as it is for most, Williams's situation appears healthier than that of many of its rivals. Now it appears to have the stability of leadership it needs to confront the challenges ahead.



EXHAUSTS KEY TO CAR REVIVAL

Hopes for a Williams turnaround hinge on it getting on top of the problems with harnessing exhaust gasflow to produce downforce. Williams introduced a Red Bull-style ramp-and-tunnel Coanda exhaust in the final pre-season test, but dropped it after Friday practice in both Australia and Malaysia.

This means that the FW35 is not living up to the expectations from a promising first test of the car at Barcelona in February. The team plans to use two of its four permitted straightline-test days in the build-up to the Spanish GP to get on top of the design. In the interim, it could revert to its '12 exhaust configuration.

Part of Williams's problem is its being behind the times with such technology, having made little progress with exhaust-blown diffusers in 2011 while running Cosworth engines. This is exaggerated by the fact that simulating exhaust gasflow is a recent addition to its windtunnel. Getting consistent downforce from its exhaust is the problem.

"You cannot do it in the windtunnel," said technical director Mike Coughlan. "You've only got a single stream or a couple of streams in the tunnel. There is huge potential there because sometimes you check the floor pressure and think 'wow'. We see a direction, we just hope we can enhance it"



Plenty of changes on the pitwall in recent seasons

2009

Toto Wolff acquires a stake in the team, believed to be around 16 per cent, and joins the board of directors.



2010

Williams returns to Cosworth power and fields an all-new line-up with Rubens Barrichello and Nico Hulkenberg.

2011

Sam Michael tenders his resignation as technical director, with Mike Coughlan and Mark Gillan recruited.

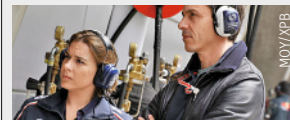


2012

Chairman Adam Parr resigns in March and Wolff is appointed executive director. Gillan leaves in December.

2013

Wolff leaves in January to take over as Mercedes motorsport boss. Claire Williams appointed deputy team principal in March.





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Claire Williams

The inside line



Williams's new deputy team principal never expected to work for the family business. And she will let on-track success prove her worth

It was far from pre-ordained that I would ever work for Williams, let alone have so senior a role as deputy team principal. I never thought I would be in this position and never dreamed about it, but I carry some responsibility to ensure that the family business continues.

This is now my 11th year with the team. Before that, I worked at Silverstone after leaving university and being offered a job as a junior in the press office. I absolutely loved it and worked my way up to running the communications team. Unfortunately, I was made redundant after three years and rather than waiting around, I went to work at Williams, just helping out in the race office. I'd always done that during school holidays, so it was a logical move before another job came along.

After a few months, though, I got a call from our then-head of marketing, Jim Wright. The press officer had handed in her notice and he said he'd love me to do the job. I said, 'Thank you very much, but have you spoken to Frank?' and suggested that he might want to do so. Frank said, 'No way', but for a few weeks Jim lobbied him and eventually managed to swing it.

asked to join the Williams board and take on the whole of the marketing side.

Various people used to occasionally mention that one day I might take over, but I was more interested in the here and now and never seriously thought about it. I never thought it would happen but in the end, Williams is a family business and while Frank didn't like having his kids working here, it is important for us to be here because of that. The family remains vital to everything the team does and my brother, Jonathan, also works here and has an important role to play.

The deputy team principal remit is far-reaching, but my primary focus doesn't change and that's to make sure we secure the budget to keep us racing. That will always be the most important part of my job. I will start learning more about the technical side and support the engineering team where or when it's appropriate to do so. I will also be involved in the governance, the politics, the Concorde conversations.

On the technical side, I'm not going to be sitting on the pitwall because there's nothing I can bring there. But I will support our strong technical team, led by Mike Coughlan, and do everything I can to

“I grew up at this team. It's my home. It's almost a family member I have to nurture”

It was an anti-nepotism thing. I completely understood that, so I never expected to work at Williams. Also, I didn't want to be seen that I was there only because of my surname, so I worked hard to prove myself. Dad gave me a very long probation period. Normally it's three months, but I got about six months or so!

I worked with Liam Clogger and Silvia Hoffer in the press office and once they left, I was promoted to head of communications in 2011. After a year or so, Adam Parr asked me after the stock exchange float to become head of investor relations and not long after I was asked to become the head of sponsorship.

It's key to have a passion for what you are selling and Adam thought that as I loved the team and could talk about it endlessly with passion, that I could do it. When he suggested it, I thought he was slightly crazy but I came to love the job and after a few months was

ensure that Williams gets back to the level of competitiveness we expect.

I'm very lucky that I get to work with Frank every day. He is one of the legendary team principals and it's fascinating to see how he operates and the respect he holds in the paddock. I have a constant dialogue with him.

I grew up at this team, swinging off chains that dangled from the roof of the race bay when I was a child and sitting on the secretary's knees typing letters. For me, this team is my home. It's a massive part of my family and I feel almost as if it's a family member that I have to love, look after and nurture.

I will let other people judge whether I deserve to be in this position. I have a lot of work to do and whether I am worthy of the deputy team principal role will be decided over the next couple of years of doing the job. ❦

Will DTM America attract US marques?

American series for cars built to DTM rules prompted talk of several manufacturers fighting it out. **GARY WATKINS** assesses how likely that is



Our artist's impression of how a 'DTM' Chevy Camaro might look

AUTOSPORT
IMAGE

DTM America is going to happen because the France family, owners of Grand-Am as well as NASCAR, doesn't announce things that it doesn't fully intend to make a reality. The big question is with whom is it going to happen? Which manufacturers will be on the grid when the series starts some time in 2015 or 2016 remains unclear.

It can be taken as read that the three German DTM manufacturers – Mercedes, Audi and BMW – will

sign up as plans for the series, announced in the form of a licensing and co-operation agreement between Grand-Am and the DTM-organising ITR in New York last week, take shape over the next year. But the idea that there could be more car makers taking part was floated by both the ITR and Grand-Am during the press conference.

A JAPANESE WAY IN

The drive for the so-called 'internationalisation' of the DTM,

or rather its rulebook, has already resulted in another agreement, this time with the organisers of the Japanese-based Super GT Series. The GT500 class will adopt much of the philosophy of the DTM regulations if not all their detail, with two significant caveats.

Super GT is abandoning V8 powerplants in favour of smaller-capacity turbocharged V6s, which will also provide the motivation for the next-generation Super Formula (nee Formula Nippon) single-seater.

The tie-up is further confused by Honda's decision to promote the next-generation NSX in Super GT, which means a mid- rather than front-engined car.

This globalisation of the DTM concept gives the Japanese manufacturers represented in GT500 – Honda, Toyota and Nissan – a route into a major US series on the bill of events run by the merged United SportsCar Racing organisation and NASCAR come 2015 or '16.

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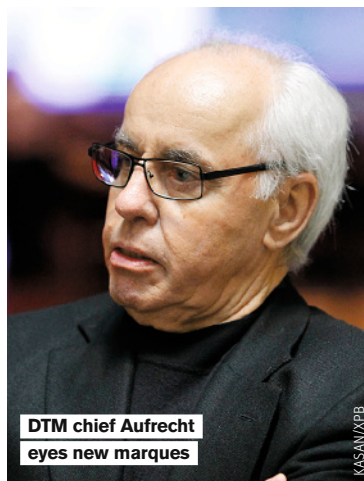
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Toyota uses NASCAR for its US image



DTM chief Aufrecht eyes new marques

GARY WATKINS
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

@gazzasportscars



CHEVROLET HAD JUST

announced its entry into the new World Touring Car Championship and I could see General Motors Racing boss Doug Duchardt in the paddock. Questions in mind and notebook in hand, I bounded up to him in anticipation.

The only problem was that he started asking me questions about the programme, which would go on to achieve phenomenal success in its final three years. I quickly found out that I knew more about it than him, and I'd even found out about it before him.

That incident highlighted the lack of an international perspective, at least when it comes to motorsport, of the US car makers. More to the point, it showed the lack of a worldwide integrated motorsport policy.

And think back to the noughties when Chevrolet was racing against itself in the ailing GT1 class in the ALMS. A proposal for a mixed schedule of events incorporating the ALMS blue-ribands and key races in Europe around its traditional participation in the Le Mans 24 Hours was put forward.

The idea was firmly rebuffed by the marketing men, the guys who write the cheques, in favour of racing in front of the adoring Chevy fans who pack out the so-called 'Corvette Corals' at the ALMS races. Americans know what they like and like what they know.



Super GT tie-up gives DTM a link to the Japanese

ITR boss Hans-Werner Aufrecht believes that the new rulebook and the US and Japanese accords offer the manufacturers who get involved an unmissable opportunity.

"It is a platform offering them the chance to race on the same technical basis and with the best global promoters in the core markets — North America, Asia and Europe," he said at the launch.

North America is definitely a core market for all three Japanese manufacturers involved in Super GT. They all not only sell a lot of cars in the US, they also make a lot. Toyota, for example, has 10 factories across North America.

But would any of the Japanese manufacturers be ready to step up to race in DTM America? Zak Brown, probably the world's foremost motorsport sponsorship broker through his Just Marketing International organisation, isn't sure, though he believes Toyota would not be a likely participant.

"One of the reasons Toyota races in NASCAR is an attempt to be

perceived as an American manufacturer," he explained. "Racing in the DTM would run counter to that, because it is a European-import."

Brown suggests that Nissan would surely be the most likely of the GT500 manufacturers to sign up, given that it hasn't had a major US motorsport programme since it ended its Infiniti-branded Indy Racing League engine supply at the end of 2002. But the company's global motorsport director, Darren Cox, suggests that it isn't likely in the short term.

"With everything going on in North America, it is going to be a case of wait and see," he said. "We will have a [Nissan-engined LMP2] car that can race in the top category of the new United SportsCar series, so we'll look at that first. Our focus is definitely on sportscar racing."

AMERICAN HOPE?

If the Japanese manufacturers aren't likely to take up the challenge of DTM America, what about the domestic US brands, the so-called 'Big Three' — Ford, General Motors and Chrysler?

Both the ITR and Grand-Am have suggested that the US motor industry is viewing plans for DTM America with interest and the 'Big Three' will all be sending representatives to the opening round of the DTM at Hockenheim later this month.

Grand-Am boss Ed Bennett explained that he had contacted the domestic manufacturers ahead of last week's announcement. "The good news," he said, "is that they're interested in this opportunity."

But how interested?

General Motors motorsport boss Mark Kent downplayed the chances of one of the GM brands joining DTM America.

"With the large footprint of programmes that we already have," he said, "there would have to be a good rationale for taking on another in road racing."

Kent also revealed that there had been no dialogue between his GM Racing department and the Opel GM brand in Germany, which last talked openly about its aspirations to return to the DTM in 2010.

"At this point we haven't talked to them," he explained. "We are still trying to understand how these multi-continent opportunities would work."

Ford and Chrysler have also made positive noises about the Grand-Am/DTM agreement. Privately, however, they all admit that a DTM project would be unlikely in the next few years.



Americans knew little of WTCC



US market is big for Audi

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Who can stop da Costa?

Red Bull's latest young charge is expected to launch himself into Formula 1 with a successful Formula Renault 3.5 campaign. **GLENN FREEMAN** talks to those most likely to stop him



There is nothing imaginative about holding Antonio Felix da Costa up as this year's Formula Renault 3.5 title favourite. It's just simple maths.

The Portuguese racer was drafted into the series following his mid-season replacement of Lewis Williamson on the Red Bull junior scheme. Despite missing the first three weekends of the season, and only scoring eight points in the first two rounds that he did compete in, by the end of the year da Costa scored the highest points scorer over the six events he had contested. In the last eight races of the season he took four wins, two second places, a fourth and a fifth-place finish. It propelled him to fourth in the standings, and set him up perfectly to launch a title challenge this year.

When asked how things have gone in pre-season (a luxury he didn't get last year), the 21-year-old opens with an ominous statement: "It has gone well, we're in good shape. I think we have made a small step forward."

Hearing that from the form driver from the end of the previous season could be very bad news for the rest of the field. But da Costa admits he is expecting a fight this year. On the opposite page, AUTOSPORT gets the thoughts of the drivers most likely to be part of that fight.

2013 FORMULA RENAULT 3.5 ENTRY LIST

TEAM	DRIVER	DRIVER
Tech 1 Racing	Mikhail Aleshin	Nigel Melker
Arden Caterham	Antonio Felix da Costa	Pietro Fantin
Fortec Motorsports	Stoffel Vandoorne	Oliver Webb
ISR	Sergey Sirotkin	Christopher Zanella
Lotus	Marco Sorensen	Marlon Stockinger
Carlin	Jazeman Jaafar	Carlos Huertas
Comtec Racing	Daniil Move	Lucas Foresti
International		
Draco Racing	Nico Muller	Andre Negrao
DAMS	Kevin Magnussen	Norman Nato
P1 Motorsport	Will Stevens	Mathias Laine
Pons Racing	Zoel Amberg	Nikolay Martsenko
AV Formula	Arthur Pic	Yann Cunha
Zeta Corse	Mihai Marinescu	Emmanuel Piget

2013 CALENDAR

DATE	LOCATION
April 6-7	Monza (I)
April 27-28	Aragon (E)
May 26	Monaco (MC)
Jun 1-2	Spa (B)
June 22-23	Moscow (RUS)
July 20-21	Red Bull Ring (A)
September 14-15	Hungaroring (H)
September 28-29	Paul Ricard (F)
October 19-20	Barcelona (E)

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STOFFEL VANDOOORNE FORTEC MOTORSPORTS

This time last year, nobody was paying much attention to the fact that newcomer Robin Frijns was setting the pace in pre-season

testing for Fortec. The Dutchman was the Formula Renault Eurocup champion of 2011, and it was felt to be too big a step to instantly be a frontrunner in FR3.5.

Frijns then rubbed everyone's noses in it by converting that form into a sensational championship

success, and his Eurocup successor Vandoorne is now trying to do the same. Based on testing, it's possible. He's even been snapped up by McLaren.

"I didn't know what to expect at first, but so far it has been really good," says the Belgian. "At every

test we have been near the top, we are competing with the other quick guys and that's what matters.

"One of the reasons I chose Fortec is because they believe a rookie can be champion, and they proved that with Robin last year. I think we can surprise people."

KEVIN MAGNUSSEN DAMS

The McLaren junior driver's rookie FR3.5 season left nobody in doubt about his speed: he took three poles last year and started 10 of the 17 races from the front three rows of the grid.

But by his own admission he lacked the maturity to regularly convert that speed into points, and he has been working on changing his approach since the middle of last season. He wasn't seriously considering a switch of teams (from Carlin to DAMS) until a one-off test with the French squad last year convinced

him to make a fresh start.

"2012 was a depressing season to be honest," he says on the eve of this campaign. "I was quick but I was never able to use that speed, I was either making mistakes or something went wrong. But I learned a lot about myself and I really had to keep my head strong. I'm confident I can change my approach."

He also refutes the suggestion that da Costa is the standout favourite among his rivals.

"He is going to be one of a lot of good drivers to beat in this championship," he says. "It's hard to point at one who is the favourite, this year is going to be about consistency."



MARCO SORENSEN LOTUS (CHAROUZ)

The Dane looked at home at this level from the start of his rookie campaign, handling the step up from German F3 with ease. And were it not for some rotten luck along the way, his 2012 season could have ended up looking even more impressive than his sixth place in the standings suggested. Two race wins were lost to late failures outside of his control, costing him 50 points that would have left him at least fourth in the table. His performances were enough to

earn him a junior deal with the Lotus F1 team for this year, which means he stays with the 'black and gold' Charouz-run squad for a second season.

"Not changing teams is good because we can use testing to try different things and get back into the rhythm rather than focus on the times," he says. "The winter was spent on development work and we've made some steps."

"When we have gone for the times we have always been in the top five, so it can't be too bad. Last year we could have been top three with better luck, so this year the aim is the same."



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At the end of February, things didn't look good for the top three drivers in last year's Formula Renault 3.5 championship. They were all facing a year sitting on the sidelines, hardly a reward for leading the way in the strongest field that series had ever produced.

But that all changed in March. Jules Bianchi, initially overlooked for a Formula 1 race drive at Force India, swooped in to take the seat vacated by budget-stricken Luiz Razia at Marussia. Two weeks later, Sam Bird was recruited by GP2 newcomer Russian Time to complete its line-up in the F1 support series. However, the third member of this 2012 trio — the FR3.5 champion

no less — did not land a break and is now facing a year where he will not get the chance to chase a fourth consecutive junior title on the F1 ladder.

Robin Frijns has built some phenomenal career momentum since he started racing in 2009, winning Formula BMW, Formula Renault Eurocup and FR3.5 titles back to back in the past three years. It was enough for renowned talent spotter Sauber to get him on its books at the end of 2012, but unlike some reserve-driver deals in F1 he is not set to get any grand prix weekend track time. Sauber was keen for him to race this year, but when the chance of a last-minute deal for the start of the GP2 season came up it stood by his decision not to risk it.

"There were some deals going on in GP2 but I wasn't happy with them," says Frijns. "I thought that if I didn't have the right team, and with a car

I don't know and on tracks I don't know, it could throw away my whole career that I have worked so hard at.

"Now I don't have anything to do. It feels like I've gone from hero to zero in one month. It freaks me out a bit. You drive your balls out to win every championship you compete in and at the end you have nothing."

Frijns has sought plenty of advice on his plight, and those close to him who have guided his career up to this point have backed his decision. "They have told me not to do it, saying it could kill my career," he adds.

Drivers can make the 'gap year' work in their favour, with Nico Hulkenberg and Valtteri Bottas both converting a year spent as a reserve driver into an F1 race seat. But they had free-practice running with Force India and Williams respectively, and also simulator work. Sauber has neither of those options available to Frijns at the moment, while Bottas admits that a year without driving at all would have been very hard to take.

"If I was doing nothing or less than five Fridays last year then I should have raced something," says Bottas. "The 15 Fridays I had kept me quite busy and got me some mileage. It was on the limit driving wise but it just worked. The year I did without racing was the right thing to do because I managed to get a race seat from it. But of course it was difficult watching the races."

Bianchi, who lost the FR3.5 title to Frijns after a controversial clash between the two in the season finale, adds that his winter of uncertainty was tough to deal with as Force India dragged its heels over deciding who to put alongside Paul di Resta.

"It was not an easy situation," says the



Bianchi landed a last-minute chance in F1

Frijns

The forgotten man

In his own words, Robin Frijns feels like he has gone from “hero to zero” since winning the 2012 Formula Renault 3.5 title. **GLENN FREEMAN** examines the Dutchman’s plight

“One year out is not the end of the world – two years out you can’t recover from”

Frenchman. “I didn’t know where I was going to end up, and it’s not positive to stay at the same level from one year to another. I had been a third driver already and the normal step was to race, so I’m really happy that it happened with Marussia.”

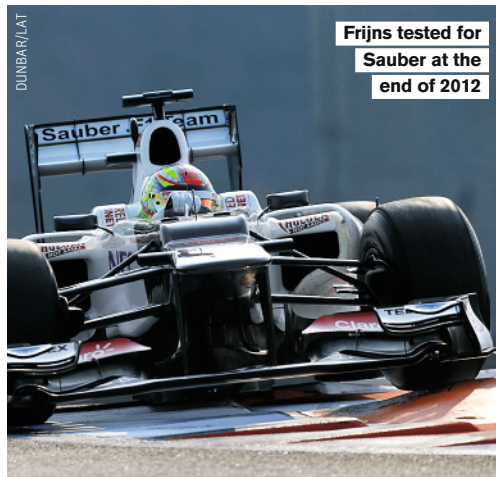
Fellow 2012 FR3.5 contender Bird had even less warning than Bianchi that he was going to be racing this year, and he admits the off-season uncertainty was a humbling experience.

“When you don’t have a drive and something comes up at the last minute it makes you realise how lucky you are,” says the Briton. “Now it feels amazing, and it makes you hungry.”

Bottas also highlights the importance of sitting in on every race weekend briefing at Williams last year. So far Frijns hasn’t been able to make similar use of his role at Sauber, as the team told him to stay at home for the opening races of the season.

Spending weekends out of the paddock will make it even tougher for Frijns to keep his profile up. GP2 champion Davide Valsecchi is also without a race drive for this year, but his reserve-driver role with Lotus at least gets him to the races and keeps his face in the paddock.

For now, Frijns can only take heart from the fact that the last time he was beaten to a championship was 2009, his first year of car racing. And by turning down any grid-filling opportunities in GP2, he can cling to the belief



Frijns tested for Sauber at the end of 2012

that a driver is only as good as his last race.

“At least I can keep knocking on doors and telling people that the last time I raced I won a championship,” he says. “If I’m at the back in GP2 I can’t say that anymore. And if I’d taken a chance with a team in GP2 and could do no better than P12 would everyone decide that I can’t continue because I can’t keep up? I’m not going to risk damaging my career like that.”

“I don’t know what’s going to happen next but I’m not giving up. One year out is not the end of the world – two years out you can’t recover from.”

Most junior racers’ careers hit a bump in the road at some point. But it would be a shame if this is the end for someone whose career CV already has as many major single-seater titles on it as Lewis Hamilton’s before his F1 graduation. ❁

FRIJNS BY NUMBERS

2 F1 TEST DAYS

3 MAJOR SINGLE-SEATER CHAMPIONSHIPS

17 WINS
IN FOUR YEARS
OF RACING

2009 CAR RACING DEBUT

6 GP2 TEST DAYS IN 2013

11/17 RACES LEADING THE 2012 FR3.5 POINTS

3RD LOWEST CHAMPIONSHIP POSITION OVER A FULL SEASON

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Audi and Sebring: a

Audi's Le Mans wins might be more famous, but the German firm's Sebring successes were extremely

40



Audi notched up its 11th win at Sebring last month

BOYD/LAT

special relationship

important to its sportscar programme. **GARY WATKINS** looks back now that an era has come to an end

Audi's 11th and final victory, at least for the time being, in the Sebring 12 Hours earlier this month cemented a connection between car maker and motor race that will outlive any race series or organiser. Sebring helped make Audi as a sportscar-racing marque, but Audi also helped to put Sebring on the map, bringing the US enduro to a wider, more international audience during the span of its 15-year involvement in the blue-riband Florida race.

Sebring, of course, is where it all started for Audi in prototype racing back in 1999. The German manufacturer used the inaugural American Le Mans Series race to blood its new R8R — at a time when Audi Sport boss Wolfgang Ullrich described the marque as “nobodies in sportscar racing” — and gave its cars a good working out over the bumps of the Sebring International Raceway.

The lessons learned that year resulted in a heavily revised version of the R8R that hit the track in time for the Le Mans 24 Hours. That car went on to bag a podium in what was arguably the most competitive ever year in the history of Le Mans. So no wonder Audi kept heading back to Sebring.

Two weeks spent in Hicksville, FL in mid-March became an essential part of Audi's season and its preparations for the Le Mans 24 Hours. Audi Sport and its Joest Racing squad undertook an endurance run with at least one of its Sebring racecars until the factory withdrew from sportscars after 2002 and then again when it returned in 2006. Even when it missed the race, in 2010, its cars were still to be found pounding the unyielding Sebring concrete the week after the event.

Audi's routine was taken up by others, even arch-rival Peugeot. It wasn't flattery, just the realisation that there are few better places to test for Le Mans than at Sebring.

“It is the perfect preparation for Le Mans,” says Ullrich, “and not because the track is in any way similar to Le Mans. It is that it is such a demanding track for the cars: if you can survive 12 hours at Sebring, you know you should be able to do 24 at Le Mans without too many mechanical issues.”

The lessons of Sebring resulted in a car that could survive the bumps and scrapes that are part of modern endurance racing, reckons long-time Audi driver and four-time winner of the 12 Hours Allan McNish.

“There are always a lot of touches and rubs at Sebring, and you need a car that can withstand all of that to win,” he says. “Go back to Le Mans 2008 when Tom [Kristensen] got tapped into a spin towards the end of the ▶

THE GREAT AUDI VICTORIES 2001

Tom Kristensen had ‘only’ won Le Mans twice when he pitched up at Sebring in 2001, but there was no doubting that he was a sportscar star in the making.

Kristensen, who shared his Joest-run Audi R8 with Emanuele Pirro and Frank Biela, took 20 seconds out of leader Rinaldo Capello in the penultimate stint. And when he opted not to take on new tyres at the final round of stops, Kristensen was suddenly in the lead.

One lap later and he was back in the pits. That amazing charge had been a little too amazing. He hadn't slowed in time as he barrelled into the pit entry and was duly penalised, leaving the way clear for Capello, Laurent Aiello and Michele Alboreto to take the win.



Audi boys took a 1-2-3 in 2001

Kristensen has few regrets about missing out on victory because Sebring 2001 would turn out to be Alboreto's final race. A month later he would die testing the R8 at the EuroSpeedway Lausitz.



The Audi/Sebring love affair began back in 1999

THE GREAT AUDI VICTORIES 2003

The Champion Audi squad would go on to dominate the American Le Mans Series, but starting 2003 it had yet to win a race. It should have broken its duck at Sebring that year, but somehow contrived to throw it away.

The Champion R8, driven by JJ Lehto, Stefan Johansson and Emanuele Pirro, had the legs of the Joest-run car and the new Bentleys and was on course for victory when an untimely yellow coincided with some unusual tactics with three hours to go. Team boss Dave Maraj opted, for reasons that have never been fully explained, to put Pirro back in the car, despite the Italian having handed over to Lehto just 70 minutes before. Pirro got cramp and had to be replaced by Johansson.

“I thought I was done and was already relaxing in the motorhome after a big steak and a bowl of pasta,” recalls the Swede. “The next minute I was back in the car and driving at night for the first time that race.”



Biela guides Joest's R8 to '03 victory

The Champion car just lost the lead when Johansson climbed aboard and, having been sent out on old tyres he had no chance of overhauling the Joest car driven by Marco Werner, Frank Biela and Philipp Peter.

“We really threw that one away,” says Johansson.



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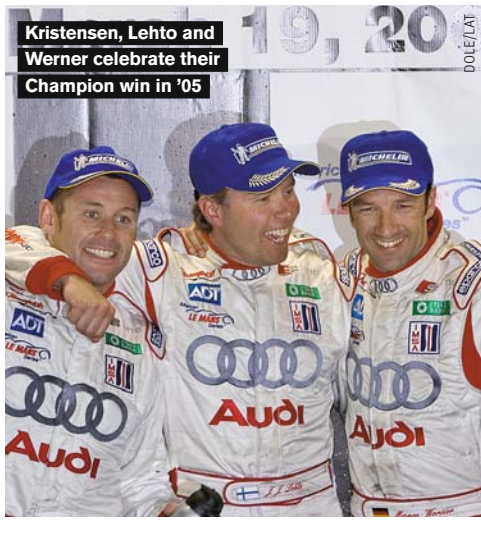
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THE GREAT AUDI VICTORIES 2005



Kristensen, Lehto and Werner celebrate their Champion win in '05

Two all-time sportscar greats going at it hammer and tongs in the final stages aboard two identical examples of one of the best prototypes of all time on the way to the closest-ever finish.

The internecine battle between the two Champion Audi R8s, their driver line-ups led by Tom Kristensen and Allan McNish, was a thriller that could have gone either way and ended up going right down to the wire. There was little to choose between them except a tactical masterstroke on the part of Brad Kettler and Mike Peters in the pit of the winning #1 car Kristensen shared with Marco Werner and JJ Lehto.

Werner had a 12-second lead over McNish when he handed over to Kristensen, who by rights should have lost the lead at the next round of pitstops because he would need new tyres and

his immediate pursuer would not.

But Champion opted to short-fuel the leading car. Somewhere between seven and nine seconds were saved, which, combined with a delay for McNish courtesy of an errant camera crew, resulted in Kristensen coming out with a couple of seconds in hand.

Kristensen pushed like hell on cold tyres to stay ahead and then used the advantage of his new set of Michelins to build a gap. McNish came back at the leader when he got new tyres at the next round of stops, but the damage had been done and he fell short by a shade over six seconds.

"Short-fuelling Tom was crucial," admits McNish today. "Without that, I'm 99.9 per cent sure that I would have done him."

race, but we survived where some cars wouldn't. That philosophy of building a car that could survive a rub here and there was partly derived from our experience at Sebring.

"Competing at Sebring every year was one of the reasons why we have turned up at Le Mans with such a strong and reliable car," McNish continues. "It hasn't been the only reason, but it has been an important one."

Audi's reasons for going to Sebring each year weren't just technical. More often than not, it grouped its Le Mans driver line-ups together for the 12 Hours. And that proved crucial over the years, too.

"The race helped gel the driving crews and the race crews as well," explains McNish. "Doing a 12-hour race gave you an understanding of how to work with your team-mates ahead of Le Mans."

Any debt of gratitude that Audi might owe Sebring has been returned. Perhaps many times over. The 12 Hours dates all the way back to 1952 and was the inaugural world championship sportscar a year later, but the race had long since lost its international importance ahead of the ALMS era.

The series founded by Don Panoz was partly why that changed, but so too was Audi's presence. Its domination of the event through the noughties could have been a turn-off, but few of the German manufacturer's victories were boring. If this author was asked to pick out the 10 most exciting Sebrings from its 60-plus year history, seasons in which Audi's triumphed would fill three, four or even more of those slots.

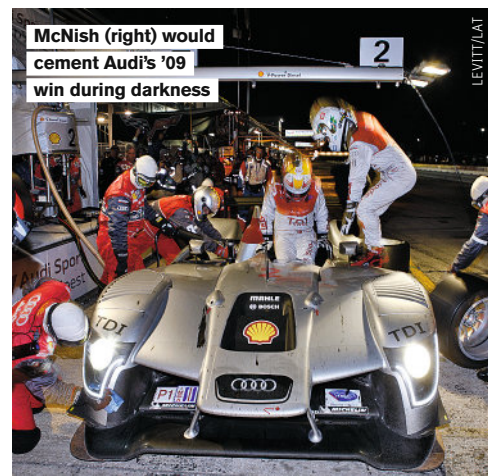
What's more, all but one of those classic races resulted from internecine Audi battles involving, at different times down the years,

THE GREAT AUDI VICTORIES 2009

Audi's new R15 TDI didn't look a match for Peugeot's 908 turbodiesel, at least not for the first two-thirds of the 2009 12 Hours of Sebring. Yet when the temperatures dropped as night fell, the German car came into its own and had the edge on the soft-compound Michelin tyre.

Allan McNish, who shared with Tom Kristensen and Rinaldo Capello, drove an amazing final stint in the knowledge that the Audi, unlike the pursuing French car, would need a late splash of fuel. A series of laps below the pole time built him the advantage he required. The Scot got in and out of the pits without losing the lead and went on to give the R15 a debut victory.

"We had a bloody quick car that year; that R15 was the best car I ever had at Sebring," says McNish. "As the night came, we hit the sweet spot and were able to nail it."



McNish (right) would cement Audi's '09 win during darkness

factory and/or privateer cars. It enhanced the standing of the event by letting its drivers race, and race hard.

Audi also made history at Sebring that even got it into the *The New York Times*. The debut victory for the new turbodiesel R10 TDI in 2006 resulted in a full-page article in the US broadsheet. Just ask yourself when you last saw a full-page story about sportscar racing in a national in the UK.

Audi, it should be pointed out, made a habit of notching up winning debuts at Sebring. The R8, R10 and R15 TDI all scored out-of-the-box victories in the 12 Hours. That won't be the case with the next Audi prototype, due to hit

the track next year. LMP1 prototypes will disappear from America with the merger of US endurance racing under the United SportsCar banner. There should be Audis racing at Sebring next year, but the Audi R8 Grand-Am GT contender won't be competing for overall honours.

Ullrich has left the door open to an entry into the Daytona Prototype class, which will become known as the Prototype division, and is promising to be back at Sebring one day even with DTM America on the horizon.

"I hope we can find a way to come back to top-level motorsport in the US," he says. "And I would prefer that we do it in sportscars." ❄



Debut diesel win for R10 in '06 made it into The New York Times

AUDI'S SEBRING WINNERS

YEAR	DRIVERS (CAR)
2000	Frank Biela/Tom Kristensen/Emanuele Pirro (R8)
2001	Laurent Aiello/Michele Alboreto/Rinaldo Capello (R8)
2002	Rinaldo Capello/Johnny Herbert/Christian Pescatori (R8)
2003	Frank Biela/Philipp Peter/Marco Werner (R8)
2004	Frank Biela/Pierre Kaffer/Allan McNish (R8)
2005	Tom Kristensen/JJ Lehto/Marco Werner (R8)
2006	Rinaldo Capello/Tom Kristensen/Allan McNish (R10 TDI)
2007	Frank Biela/Emanuele Pirro/Marco Werner (R10 TDI)
2009	Rinaldo Capello/Tom Kristensen/Allan McNish (R15 TDI)
2012	Rinaldo Capello/Tom Kristensen/Allan McNish (R18 TDI)
2013	Marcel Fassler/Oliver Jarvis/Benoit Treluyer (R18 e-tron quattro)

Marque variety
adds to the appeal
of Superstars series



44

Superstars reloaded

After a great season in 2012, the pressure is on for Superstars to deliver again this year.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN takes a look at the 2013 entry and reckons it can do just that

The International Superstars Series has a fine foundation to build on following its breakout 2012 season. Having come into last season with lofty ambitions of becoming a real player on the European touring car scene, the folk at FG Group – the company behind Superstars – pretty much pulled it off. The season had everything: star drivers, shock wins and a final-race title showdown. Even better for the Rome-based series is that it was won by a Swede driving a German car, helping quash the perception that Superstars is just a fancy word for the 'Italian Touring Car Championship'.

Of course, after a big season there is always the risk of a sophomore slump, to use an incredibly American term. The tricky part for FG is backing up what was a fascinating season of racing, and then taking it to the next step. Only time will tell if that will happen or not, but by the looks of the

field that's set to line up at Monza for round one this weekend, there's every chance the sequel will be better than the original.

LIUZZI v KRISTOFFERSSON, PART TWO

There were no guarantees that either reigning champion Johan Kristoffersson or ex-F1 driver Tonio Liuzzi would be back in 2013 but, thankfully, they're both on the entry list for Monza, and both apparently plan on running the full season.

After they staged a dramatic title fight that ran the length of the season (literally to the last race), the prospect of them re-igniting that rivalry is a mouth-watering one. And what makes it even more fascinating is that neither driver will be with the same team they were with in 2012. Liuzzi is switching from a CAAL Racing Mercedes to a Romeo Ferraris-run C63 AMG, while Kristoffersson is swapping his factory-backed Audi RS5 for a Petri Corse Porsche Panamera. The stage is set for an epic battle between the two big names.



"By the looks of the field set to race at Monza, the sequel could well be better than the original"



Audi starts as one of the 2013 title favourites



BMW's hopes rest with Berton and tweaked M3

team battle, but it will be interesting to see how Biagi fares in a car more capable of competing at the front on the faster circuits.

With Biagi gone, Dinamic BMW's hopes will fall to Giovanni Berton. The Italian didn't make many starts last year, but his second place at Vallelunga, in only his second race in a Superstars car, was sensational. While the M3s have received a bit of a makeover during the winter (some new bodywork and an overall trim down, weight-wise), it will be a big ask for Berton to compete with the Mercs, Audis and Porsches all season long, despite his obvious speed.

NEW BRANDS AND NEW CARS

Looking at the entry list for Monza, there is one new car that stands out: the Porsche Panamera. Technically, Porsche isn't new to Superstars. Back in 2010, Fabrizio Giovanardi successfully campaigned a Panamera in a handful of rounds, winning four races. With Kristoffersson at the wheel, there is a good chance the famous German marque will rack up more wins this season.

Another returning brand is Cadillac. After switching to GT Sprint with a Corvette programme last season, RC Motorsport is back with the awesome seven-litre CTS-V, to be raced by the experienced Roberto Benedetti.

However, in terms of American muscle, Solaris Motorsport is likely to steal the show with its brand new Chevrolet Camaro. An evolution of the team's old Lumina, the Camaro looks fantastic, has a lot of grunt, and was quickest in testing at Monza recently in the hands of Francesco Sini.

A LITTLE LESS ITALIAN

In line with the 'less Italian policy', the series has reduced the number of rounds in Italy from five to three – Monza as the season opener, and Imola and Vallelunga to wrap things up.

A reduced Italian focus has paved the way for an increased presence in the Eastern part of Europe, with Brno and the Slovakia Ring joining in. There will also be a trip to Algarve, after an administrative hiccup stopped the series from racing there last season.

Elsewhere, Zolder has replaced Spa as the circuit's Belgian round, while Donington Park is back, the only non-Italian circuit to be carried over from last season. ❧

5 TO WATCH

1 Johan Kristoffersson

As the reigning champ and rookie of the year, it's hard to overlook the speedy Swede. The biggest unknown is the Porsche, which didn't race at all last season.



2 Tonio Liuzzi

The ex-Red Bull F1 racer has a year's worth of extra tin-top experience coming into 2013, and should be one of the guys to beat.



3 Gianni Morbidelli

He's won Superstars titles before, and there's no reason why he can't win another. Probably has the best car in the Audi, plus stability coming into season.



4 Andrea Larini

Might not be a title contender, but one to watch at Monza. Larini has switched from Mercedes to Jaguar, and those Jags are darn fast in a straight line.



5 Thomas Biagi

For the first time in a while, Biagi will actually be looking forward to the long straights of Monza, now he has some real horsepower to play with at Mercedes.



CALENDAR

DATE	VENUE
April 7	Monza (I)
May 19	Brno (CZ)
June 9	Slovakia Ring (SK)
June 23	Zolder (B)
July 21	Algarve (P)
September 1	Donington Park (GB)
September 29	Imola (I)
October 13	Vallelunga (I)



Series will return to UK

TWO VETERANS AND THE NEW GUY

Of course, it won't just be Kristoffersson and Liuzzi fighting it out for the title. Gianni Morbidelli is back with Audi Sport Italia, and will start the season as one of the genuine favourites thanks to the Audi RS5's trick four-wheel-drive system. While he was somewhat overshadowed by team-mate Kristoffersson's heroics last season, the veteran was still devastatingly quick at times, and the Audi was, without a doubt, the best car in the field – something that is unlikely to have changed during the winter. For tracks like Imola and Zolder (where it's likely to rain), Morbidelli and the Audi are going to be very difficult to beat.

Another driver who can't be discounted is Thomas Biagi. It was obvious last season that a lack of development from Dinamic BMW – particularly on the horsepower front – was becoming frustrating for Biagi, and he's responded by jumping ship to Mercedes and teaming up with Liuzzi at Romeo Ferraris. Not only will Liuzzi v Biagi be an intriguing intra-

RACE CENTRE

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48 BTCC Brands Hatch

The UK's favourite race series returned for its 2013 edition in Kent last weekend and provided wins for old hands Jason Plato and Matt Neal, while some promising youngsters showed well, too



VIMAGES/FABRE

54 FIA GT Nogaro
Audis spoil Loeb's parade, but there's a sting in the tail



EBREY/LAT

58 British GT Oulton Park
Two wins for Porsches top a rather fiery season-opener

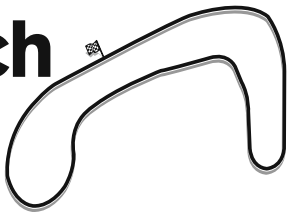


60 ERX Lydden
European Rallycross relaunched with a US winner

Brands Hatch



March 30-31
Round 1/10



RESULTS

RACE 1: 27 LAPS, 32.62 MILES

1	JASON PLATO (GB) MG (Triple Eight) MG6	24m08.734s
2	ANDREW JORDAN (GB) Eurotech Honda Civic	+2.168s
3	ROB AUSTIN (GB) Rob Austin Audi A4 (S)	+6.130s
4	SAM TORDOFF (GB) MG (Triple Eight) MG6	+7.789s
5	JEFF SMITH (GB) Eurotech Honda Civic	+8.245s
6	FRANK WRATHALL (GB) Dynajet Toyota Avensis	+13.622s
7	ADAM MORGAN (GB) Cicaloy Toyota Avensis (S)	+16.948s
8	COLIN TURKINGTON (GB) WSR BMW 125i M Sport (S)	+18.923s
9	ARON SMITH (IRL) Motorbase Ford Focus	+20.253s
10	OLLIE JACKSON (GB) Speedworks Toyota Avensis	+22.114s
11	DAN WELCH (GB) Welch Proton Gen-2	+23.129s
12	WILL BRATT (GB) Rob Austin Audi A4	+23.501s
13	JACK GOFF (GB) Hard Vauxhall Insignia	+27.349s
14	TOM ONSLOW-COLE (GB) Hard Volkswagen Passat CC	+27.999s
15	JAMES KAYE (GB) AmD Volkswagen Golf	+29.817s

Winner's average speed: 81.04mph. Fastest lap: Austin, 48.968s, 88.80mph.

Pole: Jordan, 48.387s, 89.87mph. Jack Sears Trophy winner: Kaye. (S) = Soft tyre

RACE 2: 27 LAPS, 32.62 MILES

1	PLATO MG	24m16.488s
2	JORDAN Honda	+0.989s
3	J SMITH Honda	+4.958s
4	MATT NEAL (GB) Honda (Team Dynamics) Honda Civic	+5.073s
5	TORDOFF MG	+5.454s
6	MORGAN Toyota	+5.874s
7	MAT JACKSON (GB) Motorbase Ford Focus	+6.640s
8	TURKINGTON WSR BMW 125i M Sport	+7.086s
9	DAVE NEWSHAM (GB) Speedworks Toyota Avensis	+7.295s
10	NICK FOSTER (GB) WSR BMW 125i M Sport	+7.635s
11	LIAM GRIFFIN (GB) Motorbase Ford Focus S2000	+10.360s
12	KAYE Volkswagen	+11.461s
13	JAMES COLE Hard Vauxhall Insignia	+12.776s
14	WELCH Proton (S)	+13.765s
15	WARREN SCOTT (GB) BMR SEAT Leon	-1 lap

Winner's average speed: 80.61mph. Fastest lap: Plato, 49.124s, 88.52mph.

Pole: Plato. Jack Sears Trophy Winner: Griffin. (S) = Soft tyre

RACE 3: 27 LAPS, 32.62 MILES

1	NEAL Honda (S)	25m14.772s
2	GORDON SHEDDEN (GB) Honda (Team Dynamics) Honda Civic (S)+0.083s	
3	TORDOFF MG	+1.216s
4	MORGAN Toyota	+2.171s
5	PLATO MG (S)	+3.651s
6	JORDAN Honda (S)	+4.727s
7	J SMITH Honda (S)	+6.026s
8	WRATHALL Toyota (S)	+6.430s
9	TURKINGTON BMW	+9.508s
10	M JACKSON Ford (S)	+10.133s
11	A SMITH Ford (S)	+10.611s
12	WELCH Proton	+10.994s
13	FOSTER BMW (S)	+19.150s
14	BRATT Audi	+25.176s
15	GRIFFIN Ford	+28.485s

Winner's average speed: 77.51mph. Fastest lap: Tordoff, 49.112s, 88.54mph.

Pole: M Jackson. Jack Sears Trophy Winner: Griffin. (S) = Soft tyre

CHAMPIONSHIP

1	PLATO	54	6	MORGAN	32
2	JORDAN	45	7	TURKINGTON	23
3	TORDOFF	40	8	WRATHALL	18
4	J SMITH	35	9	SHEDDEN	17
5	NEAL	34	10	AUSTIN	17

JACK SEARS TROPHY

1	GRIFFIN	2
2	KAYE	1

POINTS SYSTEM EXPLAINED

In each race: 20-17-15-13-11-10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 to top 15 finishers. Additional point for being fastest in qualifying, and for leading a lap. Jack Sears Trophy table based on number of class wins per driver.

Plato pulls ahead as rivals falter early

The Hondas were fast, but nobody put together a better weekend than the MG ace.

KEVIN TURNER reports



JASON PLATO COULDN'T HAVE ASKED FOR A MUCH better start to his 2013 British Touring Car campaign. Not only did the MG driver take two wins, but many of the cars and drivers most likely to pose a challenge to him this season had troubled weekends for one reason or another.

The Honda Civic was arguably the fastest car around the Kent circuit, but works drivers Gordon Shedden and Matt Neal were unable to capitalise, while Motorbase and WSR both suffered torrid meetings with their newer NGTC machinery.

Remarkably, reigning champion Shedden has never won at Brands and he has had some appalling luck there. In 2011 he was pitched off in free practice with a cut tyre, while in 2012 he was hit by glitches with the then-new Civic and was disqualified from a race.

He seemed ready to banish his Brands blues when he qualified second in a snow-hit session, just behind the Eurotech Honda of Andrew Jordan, but things went downhill on race day.

First there was the slide at Paddock at the start of race one that lost him several places. Shedden wasn't sure whether he was tapped by Plato or not, but the MG man was adamant there was no contact.

Then, on his comeback drive, Shedden was inadvertently shoved towards the pitwall by team-mate Neal out of Clearways, collecting enough grass in the front of the Civic that he had to pit with overheating.

A storming drive from row 10 to third in race two was then rewarded with disqualification when the car failed a rideheight test. That meant he'd have to start the finale at the back, with 27kg of ballast, and on the soft tyre that was expected to fall apart.

"It seems to be the way with me at Brands," he said. "We've shown the pace is in the car."

Team-mate Neal hadn't enjoyed the first two races much either. As he backed off to avoid the sideways Shedden in the first encounter he got a whack from Dave Newsam that seriously damaged the Civic. Ultimately he too had to pit – at the same time as Shedden – and scored no points.

Race two was better, with fifth becoming fourth after Shedden's exclusion, but it was all looking a bit too easy for Plato.

The two-time champ reckoned he could have beaten Jordan's 48.387s pole time - "Every lap I did I got baulked: I think we could have done a 48.2s" – and he looked in control in the first two races.

In race one, he followed the soft-tyre-shod Audi of Rob Austin early on before the leader's rubber started to go off. He then made his move and drew clear, only to be caught by Jordan in the closing laps.

Jordan tried a move at Clearways on the final lap, taking them both off, but such was the advantage the duo was able to recover and still finish first and second, with Plato ahead.

Plato led the second event from the off and had a three-second lead over Jordan and the charging Shedden when a late safety car appearance erased his cushion. Undeterred, he made a good restart and held on for his 76th career victory.

Plato put part of the success down to the Triple Eight squad's increased understanding of the MG6, and the help of his impressive new team-mate Sam Tordoff, who scored three top-five results.

"We've had a winter to analyse all the data and we needed to make step changes to the set-up – combination changes you wouldn't risk during a



Plato took his BTCC win tally to 76 and left Brands with the points lead

season,” said Plato. “Now we’ve got two drivers who can get meaningful data so we cover twice as much ground.

“My car was great in race two. I want the rear to move and rotate and what’s important is the rate of yaw once it lets go. If it’s too quick it’s too snappy. The car’s more useable now.”

Plato’s race three wasn’t bad either, as he took fifth on the more fragile soft tyre, but that contest did act as a reminder of Honda’s strength.

On the new soft tyre, Neal got away well to run second to the troubled Motorbase Ford Focus of Mat Jackson (more of that anon) and soon had the lead. Despite frontrunners Tordoff and Adam Morgan running on the more durable harder rubber, Neal maintained his advantage as the race went on. The only man who could get near him at the end, in fact, was the remarkable Shedden, up from the back and going strongly right to the finish despite also being on the soft-compound Dunlop.

“We always try to look after the tyre with the Civic,” said Neal. “It has good aero, which helps.

“I think the MG’s very strong. We’ve got a good package, but it’s not going to be easy for anyone.”

The result did at least mean Shedden actually left Brands with six more points than he did last year, albeit 37 behind Plato.

So, all three races were won by former champions in works cars. What of the potential challengers?

With half a season under its belt with the NGTC Focus, Motorbase was expecting better than 12th and 14th in qualifying for Jackson and Aron Smith respectively. The cars looked stiffer than in 2012, but it wasn’t translating to lap time.

“I think we did a lot more theory work than ▶



Plato celebrates with Austin (left) and Jordan



Motorbase Fords and new WSR BMWs had difficult weekends



Honda showed pace with a dominant one-two in finale

IN THE PADDOCK

Kevin Turner



Despite all the predictions of flailing rubber and drivers pulling into the pits before the end of the race, the new Dunlop soft tyre worked pretty well.

The original idea was to provide a tyre that could be faster over a race run than the standard one. That hasn't really happened, but the overriding aim of series boss Alan Gow – to add extra spice to the show – has.

Having tested on the tyre over the winter, Matt Neal was one of those expecting problems, but he was pleasantly surprised after becoming the first driver to win on the soft rubber in race three.

"That doesn't feel like the soft tyre we ran in pre-season testing!" said the three-time champion. "It does a lot for the racing – it shook it up a bit – and it's a viable tyre for any of the races over a weekend."

The softs gave a performance advantage early on, but then fell away, putting an emphasis on tyre management. Rob Austin's Audi, Neal and Gordon Shedden all took podiums on the new tyre and, because cars had different pace at different times, it did seem to encourage overtaking.

Dunlop's Michael Butler described his main emotion as "relief", while most in the paddock seemed to think it had worked well. The test now will be to see if the tyre can stand up to rather warmer temperatures – and a more abrasive surface – than befell Brands Hatch on a snowy Easter weekend.



New white-wall soft tyres lasted better than expected

◀ most and we never got the track time to prove our direction was incorrect," said team manager Oly Collins.

As the team tweaked the suspension stiffness to look for extra grip, Smith believed the potential was still there. "I reckon when we crack it we'll go from where we are right to the front," he said after qualifying.

He and Jackson didn't get the chance to find out in the races. Jackson got a face-full of grass when Shedden went off in race one, causing the Focus to overheat. Smith came home ninth with gearshift issues, and then both cars were hit by misfires in race two. Things didn't improve much in the finale.

The other big proven independent team, WSR, expected problems with its trio of new NGTC BMW 125i M Sports, but probably not quite so many.

Returning former champion Colin Turkington surprised even team boss Dick Bennetts by going fifth in the first free-practice session, but that was as good as it got.

Turkington made an atypical mistake in qualifying, spinning on cold tyres, and was hit by rookie Jack Goff. The damage was extensive and meant Turkington had to start from the back.

He did race well, however, finishing eighth in races one (despite using the soft tyre) and two (despite being taken off by Frank Wrathall's Toyota) and ninth in race three (despite a lap-one misdemeanour).

His team-mates didn't escape the drama either. Nick Foster, who was WSR's fastest man in qualifying, didn't start race one thanks to a propshaft failure, while the unfortunate Rob Collard barely got in to double figures in terms of racing laps due to overheating and an engine alarm.

"We're just trying to learn the car so I was hoping they'd all just finish," said Bennetts. "The results aren't there, but the potential is starting to show. Colin's sector times were good in the last race. It's a matter of regrouping."

Few doubt Motorbase and WSR will have better weekends. But Shedden pointed out that winning the title will require minimising the bad days.

"I think the Fords and BMWs will win races, but I expect Jason to be there at the end of the year," he said. "All of us had bad weekends last year and



Feisty Jordan hits Plato in last-gasp bid in race one

I don't think we'll be able to get away with as many this season. It'll be interesting to see who can string it together."

With Honda, Motorbase and WSR all failing to do that at Brands, it was left to the reigning Independents' champion Jordan to build up the points. Not only did he take pole, his two seconds and a sixth meant he left Brands second in the table, just nine points behind Plato.

That's the sort of performance he'll have to repeat if he is to reach his aim of challenging for the overall crown, and Jordan's attitude certainly seems more assured this season.

"You can't go into it thinking, 'it'd be nice to win the championship,'" he said after qualifying. "This is the best chance we've had so far to beat those guys. Their experience counts for a lot, but this is the year I need to take it to them."

To that end, Jordan has vowed to be more aggressive on track, even against the works Hondas.

"You've got to go for the best you can," he added. "I'll race them as I race anyone else and I'd expect them to do the same."

Jordan certainly stuck to his word, his move on Plato in race one being decidedly in the overly-robust category. He admitted he'd got it wrong: "I made a mistake, but you've got to try. I wanted to get that win.

"It's finding the balance of going for gaps, but in a measured way so you don't throw away points."

The importance of consistent scoring is something guys like Plato, Neal and Shedden know only too well. Which is why it was the MG driver who left Brands the happiest man on Sunday. ☺

ROLL OF HONOUR

Jason Plato is now the most successful MG driver in BTCC history and MG has moved ahead of Volvo in terms of series wins, with 23. They have been scored by...



Jason Plato (8 wins) • Anthony Reid (above, 6) • Colin Turkington (4) • Warren Hughes (3) • Rob Collard (2)

Fierce battle for Sears honours

ONE OF THE PLEASANT SURPRISES OF THE Brands weekend was the Jack Sears Trophy for the ageing S2000 cars.

Although it only attracted six entries, four of them looked capable of fighting for class wins and there were some tight battles.

Lea Wood's Vauxhall Vectra dominated qualifying in 16th overall, but a damper issue allowed the returning James Kaye to pip him in race one in AmD's Volkswagen Golf.

Wood non-started race two thanks to a driveshaft failure, but a gearbox oil leak for Kaye allowed Liam Griffin to snatch a late victory in Motorbase's rapid Ford Focus.



Griffin (left) and Kaye battle it out

BTCC newcomer David Nye overcame a troubled start to the weekend by leading the final race. Wood eventually passed him, only to be excluded when the Vectra failed the post-race rideheight test, leaving Griffin to win again.

"I think if we get the car right again we can be right up there," said Wood, who could perhaps be regarded as the narrow class favourite. "James is the main threat, and Liam. I'm gutted about the exclusion, but the pace was there."

For Kaye, it was yet another new touring car experience to add to his two decades of tin-top racing. "I've driven a variety of touring cars now – S2000 is completely different to a BTC car, which was different to the old Super Tourers," he said.

"This VW is a homegrown car – it hasn't had millions thrown at it – so all credit to the team. It's not a recognised S2000 car, but it's a very good package.

"We're going to do whatever we can to win the Jack Sears Trophy."

BTCC rookie Joe Girling may also be able to challenge later in the year. His Finesse-run Chevrolet Cruze should be one of the better chassis, but he was hit by a driveshaft failure before race one. With no correct spares immediately to hand, he had to miss the first two races, but Girling lapped within a second of the class best in race three.

Passat makes BTCC race debut

TOM ONSLOW-COLE BELIEVES THE NEW NGTC Volkswagen Passat CC has good potential after giving the car its debut at Brands Hatch.

The Team Hard-built NGTC machine was completed just in time for the meeting. Despite various issues, including gear-cut problems and a toe-link failure, Onslow-Cole qualified 17th, 1.8 seconds off pole, and took a best finish of 14th.

"It was touch-and-go getting here," said the seven-time BTCC race winner. "Some of the team haven't slept for quite a while.

"There have been a few little niggles, but the chassis feels good. We've got to run through the list – this is a shakedown. As we go faster, we'll see where it's at."

Team boss Tony Gilham confirmed that the two Vauxhall Insignias the squad also runs are similar enough to the Passat to speed up the learning process.

"The wheelbase is the same, they're very much the same car underneath," said Gilham, who hopes to add another VW later in the season.

"This weekend is to get the car reliable; it's the launchpad for what we're doing," he added.

"We want to be competitive and winning races, but we don't want to run before we can walk."

Team Hard's Insignia drivers, Renault Clio Cup champion Jack Goff and former single-seater racer James Cole, each scored a best finish of 13th on their BTCC debuts at Brands.



Team Hard got new Passat ready for Onslow-Cole



Austin's Audi was badly damaged

AUSTIN HOPEFUL FOR DONINGTON

Rob Austin is confident he can get his Audi A4 out for Donington Park later this month, despite a huge crash in race three, caused when Dave Newsham lost his Speedworks Toyota Avensis at Paddock, clipping Austin and sending the Audi into the wall. "The car is a mess but underneath it's not as bad as it looks," he said. "It'll be all hands on deck restoring it for Donington."

BAD BTCC LUCK FOR BRATT

Former Euroseries 3000 champion Will Bratt suffered a difficult weekend in his Rob Austin Racing Audi A4. A fuel-feed problem limited him to 15th in qualifying. He finished 12th in race one, but suffered a driveshaft failure before race two and non-started. He then raced from row 11 to 14th in race three.

WRATHALL IS BRANDS BAD BOY

Frank Wrathall lost his sixth position in qualifying after his Dynojet Toyota Avensis failed a rideheight test during the session thanks to a warped splitter. He had to start the first race from the back of the 27-car grid, but came through to sixth, and added an eighth in race three. He was also handed three points on his licence and a £1000 fine for hitting Colin Turkington's WSR BMW in race two.

PLATO'S MG TOPS SPEED TRAP

Jason Plato's MG topped the start/finish line speed trap in qualifying at 128.5mph, over 3mph better than he managed in 2012. The newly tweaked baseline boost levels also helped Honda move up the list, Gordon Shedden being third fastest at 128.0mph, over 4mph quicker than the best Civic at the 2012 Brands opener. The new WSR BMW 125i M Sports suffered, with 124.9mph being slower than the old S2000 320si managed last year.

STRONG START FOR TORDOFF

New MG recruit Sam Tordoff made an impressive start to his first full season in the BTCC. The KX Akademy member qualified fifth, less than 0.2s slower than team-mate Jason Plato, and finished fourth, fifth and third in the three races.

BIKE RACER MAKES DEBUT

Ex-Bike racer Warren Scott scored a point on his BTCC debut. The Team BMR SEAT Leon driver, who is only in his second season of car racing, treated Brands as a learning weekend. He took a best finish of 15th in race two.



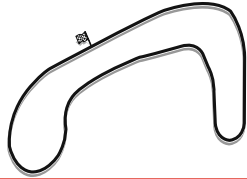
Scott had quiet BTCC debut

BTCC SUPPORTS

Brands Hatch (GB)



March 30-31
Round 1/10



Cammish won all three races as winged Formula Ford kicked off

BRITISH FORMULA FORD & RENAULT CLIO CUP BRANDS HATCH (GB), MARCH 30-31

Cammish wins at start of new era

THERE WAS A DISTINCTLY FRESH FEEL TO the opening round of the British Formula Ford Championship as the latest iteration of the EcoBoost 200 marked Ford's first foray into slicks-and-wings single-seaters since FF2000 in the 1980s. And Brands Hatch also marked the category's return to the BTCC package.

Dan Cammish bounced back from last year's back-breaking Formula Renault injury to claim pole and three fine victories to take an early lead in the title race.

The JTR driver stormed away from the start of race one and held off strong opposition to take an impressive win, despite a problem with cramp.

Luke Williams held second place initially, ahead of Scott Malvern and Lassi Halminen, but the Finn lost out when he ran wide at the exit of Clearways. Then Malvern pulled into the pits with a down-on-power Jamun Mygale.

Meanwhile, George Blundell's third place was under considerable pressure from Camren Kaminsky. The American squeezed past at Paddock and then overcame Williams as the Jamun driver's tyres went off. Kaminsky closed in on his team-mate, but Cammish held on.

Blundell clinched third when he caught Williams in the closing stages, while Halminen made a feisty recovery to finish fourth.

"Camren started to come after me, and then it started to sleet, but in the end it went perfectly," said the winner.

Cammish made all the running in race two as well, despite a determined effort – and several fastest laps – from Malvern, who closed to within four-tenths by the finish.

Williams retired his Jamun Mygale from third place with alternator failure, and then a clash at Paddock involving Kaminsky and Halminen put

them both out as well. Scholarship winner Nico Maranzana therefore picked up the final podium place. A determined charge from 10th by AUTOSPORT's Ben Anderson was rewarded with a fine fifth place, behind Blundell.

The third round completed the hat-trick for Cammish, who once again started from pole and then led from lights to flag. Williams, finally free of electrical gremlins, caught and passed Kaminsky to clinch second.

Maranzana recovered from an early collision with Malvern to finish fourth, but his team-mate spun out of contention. Halminen was fifth and Anderson held off Blundell to finish sixth.

Triple champion Paul Rivett returned to the Renault Clio Cup with a late, late deal thanks to the efforts of former Clio racer Matthew Munson and Colin Stancombe.

The Westbourne squad locked out the front row for the first round, with Mike Bushell on pole beside James Colburn, son of the team owner. Colburn started well enough, but Bushell suffered from too much wheelspin and was zapped by Josh Cook. Then Colburn slid a fraction wide at Graham Hill Bend, lost traction and could only watch as Cook seized the lead.

A little further back, Stefan Hodgetts rapidly made up ground after a poor qualifying and latched onto the tail of fourth man Alex Morgan.

When Cook had a slide at Graham Hill Bend, Colburn regained the lead, so by half-distance Cook, Colburn and Bushell were running nose to tail at the front, with Hodgetts, Morgan, Rivett, Ant Whorton-Eales and Jake Giddings locked in a fracas for fourth. Some of the spice was taken out, however, when Hodgetts put four wheels off the track (like several others) and was handed a stop-go penalty.

Despite some frantic racing, the first three remained in the same order all the way to the finish. The group behind all moved up a place after Hodgetts was given a time penalty for taking his stop-go at the end of the final lap.

Morgan seized the advantage from Colburn, Rivett and Josh Files in race two, but their progress was reined in on the first lap by a safety car out to rescue Ronnie Kloss at Paddock.

When racing resumed, Colburn made a small error at Graham Hill Bend, allowing Rivett to snatch second, although Colburn was able to jink back into line ahead of Files. The order then remained the same to the end.

"I knew I had to get away cleanly, which I did, and fortunately I didn't put a wheel wrong," said Morgan after his first day of Clio racing.

● Kerry Dunlop

RESULTS

British Formula Ford (all 26 laps) 1 Dan Cammish (Mygale M13-SJ); 2 Camren Kaminsky (M13-SJ) +0.861s; 3 George Blundell (M12-SJ); 4 Lassi Halminen (M12-SJ); 5 Luke Williams (M12-SJ); 6 Nico Maranzana (M12-SJ). Fastest lap Cammish 45.722s (95.10mph). Race 2 1 Cammish; 2 Scott Malvern (M12-SJ) +0.424s; 3 Maranzana; 4 Blundell; 5 Ben Anderson (M12-SJ); 6 Harrison Scott (M13-SJ). FL Malvern 45.720s (95.11mph). Race 3 1 Cammish; 2 Williams +2.779s; 3 Kaminsky; 4 Maranzana; 5 Halminen; 6 Anderson. FL Malvern 45.887s (94.76mph). Points 1 Cammish, 91; 2= Maranzana & Blundell, 64; 4 Kaminsky, 51; 5 Scott, 48; 6 Williams, 47. Renault Clio Cup (20 laps) 1 James Colburn; 2 Josh Cook +0.910s; 3 Mike Bushell; 4 Alex Morgan; 5 Paul Rivett; 6 Ant Whorton-Eales. FL Josh Files 52.852s (82.27mph). Race 2 (21 laps) 1 Morgan; 2 Rivett +0.348s; 3 Colburn; 4 Files; 5 Whorton-Eales; 6 Rob Smith. FL Files 52.944s (82.13mph). Points 1 Colburn, 57; 2 Morgan, 54; 3 Rivett, 48; 4 Whorton-Eales, 38; 5 Bushell, 37; 6 Files, 36.

GINETTA GT SUPERCUP, JUNIOR & PORSCHE CARRERA CUP BRANDS HATCH (GB), MARCH 30-31

Honours shared in Supercup scraps

GINETTA GT SUPERCUP CHAMPION

Carl Breeze made a fine start to this year's campaign when he stormed through from the second row and led the first race from start to finish at Brands Hatch. Pepe Massot and Tom Ingram then showed it could be another tight season by taking victories of their own.

Breeze's TCR team-mate Jamie Orton took up the chase in race one, ahead of Matt Nicoll-Jones and Ginetta rookie Rob Boston. Behind this quartet Massot was soon caught and passed by Ingram at Paddock. Nicoll-Jones raced past Orton and then chased Breeze across the line, but the 2012 champion held on.

"I've had no time to test, so this is a great start to the year for me," said Breeze, who was a late entry for the event.

Breeze made the running in race two, with Orton in his slipstream. Nicoll-Jones lost third when he briefly spun off, heralding a fine recovery drive, while Massot was on a charge himself as he moved up from 10th. He soon seized third spot from Boston as Orton squeezed by Breeze. Tom Ingram had started on slicks despite the sleet showers and as the track began to dry he moved up as Breeze slipped back. Massot completed a strong drive by taking a narrow victory over the hard-charging Nicoll-Jones, Orton and the flying Ingram.

Despite the reversed grid of race three, Breeze soon homed in on leader Ingram, only to slide into the gravel at Clearways and crash into Orton's abandoned car. Nicoll-Jones moved up to finish a close second, with Mark Davies and Andrew Watson not far behind.

In the opening round of the Ginetta Junior Championship, Tom Jackson led away from Keith Donegan and Harry Woodhead. After an early safety car period, however, Jackson lost the lead when he had a slide at Paddock. Donegan made a mistake too, and so Woodhead inherited the lead.

In the closing stages, James Palmer, son of MSV supremo Jonathan, looked impressive as he moved up to challenge Donegan for second place. But as the Irishman chased Woodhead across the line, Palmer was mugged by Ollie Chadwick, who had started from the back, and Jackson, so he had to settle for fifth.

Woodhead simply cleared off to win the second encounter as he pleased, but behind him it was absolutely manic. Front-row starter Jackson ran wide at the first corner, leaving Donegan in second place ahead of Palmer. Jackson resumed in fourth spot ahead of Jamie



Breeze won race one but does not lead the title chase

Chadwick. Her brother, Ollie, had started from the back row, but he was already sixth by the end of the first lap. Next time around Palmer executed a perfect move on Donegan as he switched from the outside to inside line at Paddock.

With only a few laps gone, Woodhead's HHC car had an advantage that stretched the length of the top straight, while Palmer had a tight, 10-car bunch leaning on his rear bumper until they became spread out as they jockeyed for position. Ollie Chadwick lost out when he careered across the grass at Surtees and then failed to find a gap in the queue!

Jackson bounced through the gravel at Paddock without losing third place, but Donegan ran wide at Clearways and then spun properly at the next corner. He failed to finish.

So Woodhead raced on to an easy win from Palmer, who by the end was comfortably ahead of Jackson, Jack Rawles and James Kellett.

Former McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award finalist Dean Stoneman made a successful switch from single-seaters to the Porsche Carrera Cup when he defeated reigning champion Michael Meadows by 0.7s to win the opening round – truly a fairy-tale debut. Meadows set the fastest

lap during his pursuit for the new Samsung Smart Motorsport squad, but that was still not enough to defeat Redline's Stoneman.

During the early laps Rory Butcher and Dan Lloyd clashed at Paddock while battling for third. Nevertheless, Butcher recovered well to finish fourth behind Lithuanian Jonas Gelzinis.

Stoneman underlined his class with another accomplished win in race two. Butcher held second initially until he was swamped by Meadows and Gelzinis as they swept by on either side of him on the way into Druids. Butcher promptly retaliated, and Meadows ended up spinning backwards and out of contention. Thereafter, Gelzinis pushed Stoneman all the way to the flag, while Lloyd seized the final podium place from Butcher with a couple of laps to go.

● Kerry Dunlop

RESULTS

Ginetta GT Supercup (16 laps) 1 Carl Breeze; 2 Matt Nicoll-Jones +0.239s; 3 Jamie Orton; 4 Rob Boston; 5 Tom Ingram; 6 Pepe Massot. **G50 winner** Reece Somerfield. **Fastest lap** Ingram 47.536s (91.48mph). **Race 2 (24 laps)** 1 Massot; 2 Nicoll-Jones +0.424s; 3 Orton; 4 Ingram; 5 Mark Davies; 6 Breeze. **G50 Somerfield.** **FL** Ingram 49.110s (88.54mph).

Race 3 (22 laps) 1 Ingram; 2 Nicoll-Jones +3.402s; 3 Davies; 4 Andrew Watson; 5 Fergus Walkinshaw; 6 Boston.

G50 Sean Huyton. **FL** Ingram 47.994s (90.60mph).

Points 1 Nicoll-Jones, 90; 2 Ingram, 80; 3 Massot, 69; 4 Davies, 58; 5 Boston, 56; 6 Orton & Breeze, 53.

Ginetta Junior (13 laps) 1 Harry Woodhead; 2 Keith Donegan +1.894s; 3 Ollie Chadwick; 4 Tom Jackson; 5 Will Palmer; 6 Jack Rawles. **FL** James Kellett 1m00.217s (72.21mph).

Race 2 (14 laps) 1 Woodhead; 2 Palmer +16.875s; 3 Jackson; 4 Rawles; 5 Kellett; 6 O Chadwick. **FL** Woodhead 56.69s (76.70mph).

Points 1 Woodhead, 73; 2 Palmer, 50; 3 Jackson, 48;

4 O Chadwick, 44; 5 Rawles, 40; 6 Jamie Chadwick, 32.

Porsche Carrera Cup (both 33 laps) 1 Dean Stoneman; 2 Michael Meadows +0.694s; 3 Jonas Gelzinis; 4 Rory Butcher; 5 Victor Jimenez; 6 Peter Smallwood. **FL** Meadows 47.612s (91.33mph).

Race 2 1 Stoneman; 2 Gelzinis +0.606s; 3 Daniel Lloyd; 4 Butcher; 5 Richard Kent; 6 Dan de Zille. **FL** Meadows 47.366s (91.80mph). **Points** 1 Stoneman, 41; 2 Gelzinis, 34; 3 Meadows 28; 4 Kent, 22; 5 Jimenez, 21; 6 Butcher & de Zille, 19.

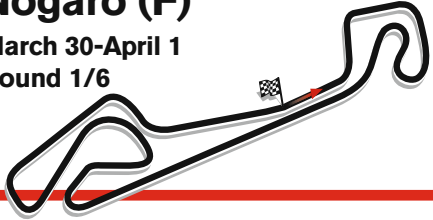


Stoneman (middle) made great transition to Porsche Carreras

FIA GT

Nogaro (F)

March 30-April 1
Round 1/6



RESULTS

MAIN RACE: 35 LAPS, 79.07 MILES

1	FRANK STIPPLER (D) EDWARD SANDSTROM (S)	1h00m25.029s
WRT Audi R8 LMS ultra; Grid-21st		
2	STEPHANE ORTELLI (MC)/LAURENS VANTHOOR (B)+8.041s	
WRT Audi R8 LMS ultra; Grid-16th		
3	MAXIMILIAN BUHK (D)/ALON DAY (IL)	+8.950s
Gravity Charouz Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3; Grid-3rd		
4	ANTHONY KUMPEN (B)/ENZO IDE (B)	+10.095s
Phoenix Racing Audi R8 LMS ultra; Grid-4th		
5	CARLOS VIEIRA (P)/CESAR CAMPANICO (P)	+15.248s
Novadriverracing Team Audi R8 LMS ultra; Grid-5th		
6	LUCAS ORDONEZ (E)/ALEX BUNCOMBE (GB)+18.050s	
Team RJN Nissan GT-R NISMO GT3; Grid-19th		
7	NIKOLAUS MAYR-MELNHOF (A)/RENE RAST (D)+18.637s*	
WRT Audi R8 LMS ultra; Grid-2nd		
8	DOMINIK BAUMANN (A)/HARI PROCZYK (A)	+31.438s
Grasser Racing Lamborghini Gallardo LP600+; Grid-11th		
9	CACA BUENO (BR)/ALLAM KHODAIR (BR)	+34.599s
BMW Team Brazil BMW Z4 GT3; Grid-7th		
10	KARUN CHANDHOK (IND)/JUAN SEYFFARTH (D)+35.056s	
Gravity Charouz Racing Mercedes-Benz; Grid-6th		

Winners' average speed: 78.54mph. Fastest lap: Vanthoor, 1m37.213s, 83.63mph. First-named driver started race.

* - 30s added to race time for pitlane infringement.

QUALIFYING RACE: 39 LAPS, 88.12 MILES

1	ALVARO PARENTE (P) SEBASTIEN LOEB (F)	1m00m20.554s
Sebastien Loeb Racing McLaren MP4-12C; Qualifying-2nd; 1m26.210s		
2	RAST/MAYR-MELNHOF	+5.323s
Audi; Qualifying-1st; 1m26.091s		
3	DAY/BUHK	+5.511s
Mercedes-Benz; Qualifying-9th 1m27.797s		
4	IDE/KUMPEN	+25.257s
Audi; Qualifying-7th; 1m27.774s		
5	CAMPANICO/VIEIRA	+25.928s
Audi; Qualifying-5th; 1m26.862s*		
6	SEYFFARTH/CHANDHOK	+41.088s
Mercedes-Benz; Qualifying-11th; 1m27.920s		
7	KHODAIR/BUENO	+47.646s
BMW; Qualifying-6th; 1m27.110s		
8	SERGIO JIMENEZ (BR)/RICARDO ZONTA (BR)+49.278s	
BMW Team Brazil BMW Z4 GT3; Qualifying-10th; 1m27.860s		
9	CLAUDIO RICCI (BR)/MATHEUS STUMPF (BR)+58.852s	
Rodrigo Competicoes Ford GT; Qualifying-13th; 1m28.334s		
10	MIKE PARISY (F)/ANDREAS ZUBER (A)+59.938s	
Sebastien Loeb Racing McLaren MP4-12C; Qualifying 8th - time disallowed		

Winners' average speed: 87.61mph. Fastest lap: Parente, 1m28.176s, 92.21mph. In each car, driver in italics set qualifying time; first-named driver started race. * - demoted 10 places on grid for yellow flag infringement.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1	STIPPLER/SANDSTROM	25	6	BUENO/KHODAIR	12
2	BUHK/DAY	21	7	CHANDHOK/SEYFFARTH	11
3	ORTELLI/VANTHOOR	18	8	ZUBER/PARISY	6
4	KUMPEN/IDE	16	9	ZONTA/JIMENEZ	3
5	LOEB/PARENTE	13	10	KEILWITZ/KENTENICH	1

PRO-AM

1	VIEIRA/CAMPANICO	31	4	BAUMANN/PROCZYK	15
2	RAST/MAYR-MELNHOF	27	5	STUMPF/RICCI	12
3	ORDONEZ/BUNCOMBE	15	6	REIP/SHULZHITSKIY	11

POINTS SYSTEM EXPLAINED

25-18-15-12-10-8-6-4-2-1 for top 10 finishers in main race. 8-6-4-3-2-1 for top 6 finishers in qualifying race.



FOR IN-DEPTH RESULTS



WRT duo won
after penalties hit
their team-mates

THE IRONY OF LAST WEEKEND'S

inaugural FIA GT Series event at Nogaro was that a slippery surface bought the fairytale start to rally legend Sebastien Loeb's full-time racing career to an end. Loeb and co-driver Alvaro Parente won the qualifying race, but wet conditions for the full-points encounter handed the advantage to Audi and, after some stewards' room activity, victory to Frank Stippler and Edward Sandstrom.

The lead Sebastien Loeb Racing McLaren MP4-12C GT3 had the edge over the Belgian WRT squad's flotilla of Audis in the qualifying race held in dry conditions on Sunday. When the 2.6-mile Nogaro track was wet, the R8 LMS ultra was the better car, and by some margin.

Loeb had sealed victory on Sunday when he did what Parente couldn't — make it past the leading WRT Audi.

Rene Rast had led through the opening stint in WRT's Pro-Am class entry and then a quicker turnaround during the pitstops gave silver-rated driver Nikolaus Mayr-Melnhof an advantage to the tune of 2.5s.

Loeb closed down on Mayr-Melnhof in just three laps, but took a further nine to pass, despite a clear advantage in straight lines and slow-speed corners. When he did finally pressure the Audi driver into a mistake, he took off and left the second-placed driver to fight off the attentions of Maximilian Buhk in the Pro class Gravity Charouz Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3.

The Audi was the better-balanced machine in the wet and looked after its grooved Pirelli tyres that much better. Loeb converted pole into the lead of the race and held onto it until the pitstops, albeit with Mayr-Melnhof shadowing him. Neither car had a great stop, but it looked initially that the WRT car's was least bad. Rast snuck out of the pits ahead of Parente, who had stopped a lap earlier, and held him off from a lap until he ran wide at Turn 5 and Parente looked up the inside.

Contact was made as Rast cut back to the racing line and the Audi half spun. The gap opened up to nearly 4s, but the R8 was on the MP4-12C's tail inside three laps.

At that point, Parente was summoned to the pits for a drive-through penalty. The misdeemeanour, it turned out, was not his but his co-driver's; Loeb had been caught undoing his belts before the car was stationary.

Rast reckoned the odds were stacked in favour of him passing Parente anyway.

"I would have tried and I think I could have done it," he said. "We improved our car a lot after the [wet] warm-up and I don't think Audi did."

Parente wasn't about to argue with the German's statement.

"After four laps our tyres were gone," he explained. "That's why I had to make a move when he made the mistake."

Parente would have struggled to hold off Rast, but the car ended up being penalised twice, once for the harness incident and, retrospectively after the race, for the clash with the Audi. Rast and Mayr-Melnhof, meanwhile, were penalised because the engine was still running throughout their pitstop, the 30s added to their time dropping them to seventh overall and second in Pro-Am.

The good news for Vincent Vosse's WRT squad was that there were two of his R8s ready to move up to ensure that the team secured a one-two result.

Stippler and Sandstrom drove a stormer of a race from the back of the grid after retiring with a blown fuse in race one.

Stippler got the car up to within sniffing distance of the top 10 and then a super-fast pitstop propelled Sandstrom to fourth after the sequence finished.

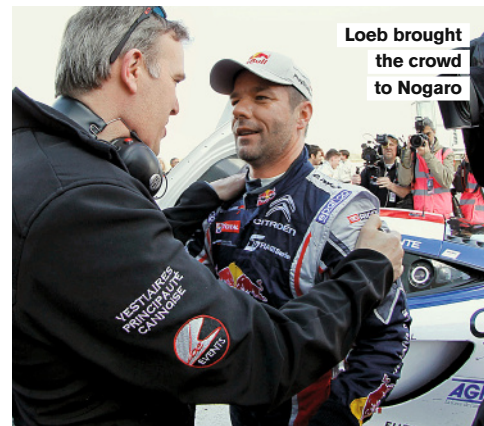
Fourth became third with Parente's drive-through, before he pulled off the manoeuvre of the race to pass Alon Day, who shared the Charouz Merc with Buhk.

The end to Laurens Vanthoor's race was no less frenetic in the WRT Audi he shared with Stephane Ortell. He overtook Parente for fifth with two laps to go and then Enzo Ide and Day on the final lap to claim what became second.

It was a thrilling race, but not what the big crowd wanted to see. The rain that cut their numbers also slashed Loeb's chances. ❄

IN THE PADDOCK

Gary Watkins



Exciting racing, a decent grid and a big crowd. Nogaro had all the ingredients to make series boss Stephane Ratel sport a perpetual smile over the Easter weekend.

He could rightly be pleased with his hard work over the winter, magicking up a pretty strong grid of a quality that looked unattainable a month or so before the series opener. It would be wrong to suggest, however, that the FIA GT Series has been born in the rudest of health.

It's doing fine, but a bit of bad luck here and some misfortune there could result in it looking a lot less healthy. A total of 22 cars took the start for the two races, a tally four down on the 26 expected. Withdrawals (see right), illness and an accident in practice accounted for the reduction.

Two of the 22, Jerome Policand's pair of ASP Ferraris, were at Nogaro on a one-off basis, which potentially leaves the grid teetering around the psychological 20-car mark.

Any sportscar grid needs quantity and quality – and the less it has of one, the more it needs of the other. There are only 10 all-pro cars at the moment, though some pretty strong Pro-Am line-ups, which means it needs numbers to bulk out the field.

BIG NUMBER

75

Percentage hit rate of one-two finishes in FIA GT competitions for the Belgian WRT squad at Nogaro. It followed up on its one-two double on its debut in the GT1 World Championship last year with another one-two in the FIA GT Series, courtesy of the Stippler/Sandstrom and Ortelli/Vanthoor R8 LMS cars.

New qualifying proves unpopular

A NEW QUALIFYING PROCEDURE

introduced for the start of the FIA GT Series did not meet with the approval of the teams or drivers at Nogaro.

The Formula 1-style knock-out system of the old GT1 World Championship had to go once the place of amateur drivers was enshrined in the class structure. In its place was a new procedure that most teams considered confusing and appeared to fail to produce the intended spectacle.

The three rounds and one-hour format of GT1 World qualifying has been retained. The new format culminated with a superpole session in which the fastest 10 cars each had two flying laps to set a time to determine the first five rows of the grid.

Stephane Ortelli suggested that the superpole would be better to be run, as it was in the FIA GT Championship in the early 2000s, over one lap and with only one car on the circuit at a time.

"We were a little bit confused on when we should leave the pits and I had a Nissan behind me," he explained. "I had to concentrate on keeping him behind me and lost focus on my own laps.

"We have too many cars on the circuit and too many laps. It would be better to go back to the old system. I liked that."

Ortelli wasn't alone in his dislike of the system, although series promoter SRO insisted that it had received no complaints.

The new system begins with two 15-minute sessions



and a different driver from each car in each one. The fastest lap of each car determines which 10 go through to superpole (though the driver in this session is nominated before qualifying starts) as well as the order of the remainder of the grid.

The system follows that introduced for last year's Spa 24 Hours Blancpain Endurance Series blue-riband. The fastest 20 cars were due to go through to superpole, which was subsequently rained off.



Ratel wants 26-28 cars per round

More cars due for Zolder event

THE FIA GT SERIES GRID IS SET TO GROW

for round two at Zolder later this month.

Up to six full-time entries could join up for the Belgian round, according to series boss Stephane Ratel.

Vita4One, which withdrew from Nogaro in the week of the race, wants to return with an all-pro line-up in a solo BMW Z4, while the ProSpeed Porsche and Reiter Lamborghini teams could join the series full-time,

Novadrivier, which ran one Audi R8 LMS ultra at Nogaro last weekend, is working on having a second out in the remainder of the six-round series.

Ratel also confirmed that the Grasser Lamborghini Gallardo, driven by Dominik Baumann and Hari Proczyk and entered on a race-by-race entry at Nogaro, will continue for the full season.

"I am working with many teams to put deals together for the full season," he said. "My objective is 26 to 28 cars at every race, and I still think that is possible."

AUDIS RUN IN OLD SPEC

All five Audi R8 LMS ultras ran in 2012 specification after delays homologating the update kit. There were a couple of 'new' parts the Audis did run, in the form of lighter wheels and steel rather than aluminium wheelnuts. The ally nuts were a major contributing factor to WRT's slow pitstops in 2012, whereas WRT topped the pit-in to pit-out times at Nogaro.

BUNCOMBES GET CREATIVE

The British RJN squad ended up seventh and second in the Pro-Am Cup with the best of its Nissan GT-R NISMO GT3s, which was shared by Alex Buncombe and Lucas Ordonez. The team had flown in a steering arm taken from Buncombe's road-going GT-R back in England by his brother Chris, and then flown out first thing on Saturday morning.

ONIDI'S SHORT DEBUT

Former GP2 racer Fabio Onidi made a short-lived international GT debut at the wheel of AF Corse's solo Ferrari 458 Italia. He crashed in the wet at the start of the first qualifying session, damaging the car he shared with Filip Salaquarda beyond immediate repair.

MORE HONOURS FOR BARTHEZ

World Cup-winning goalkeeper Fabien Barthez (below) won the Gentlemen's Trophy for all-amateur line-ups with Gerard Tonelli at Nogaro. The drive was a one-off with Jerome Policand's ASP Ferrari squad, with which he will contest the French GT Championship.



QATAR FINALE?

Losail in Qatar has emerged as a contender to host the final round of the series in November. Stephane Ratel was adamant that Yas Marina in the UAE remained the most likely venue for round six, but he did admit that there was another possibility for the 2013 finale.

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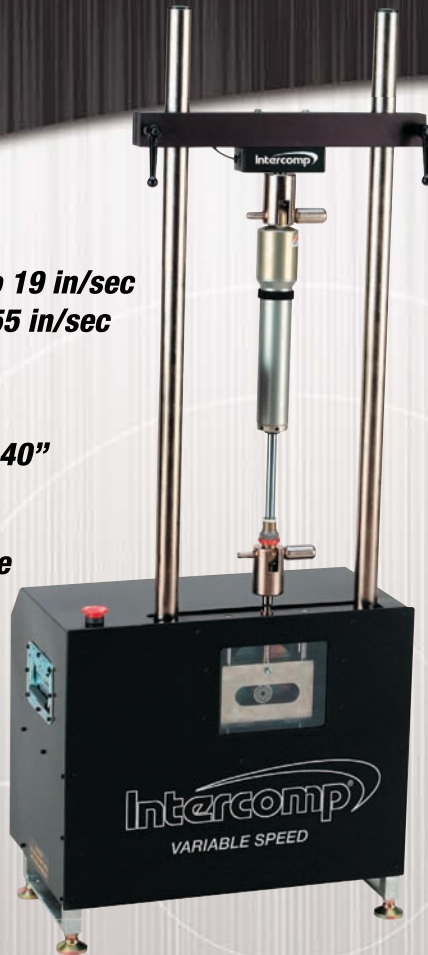
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SUPER TC2000 BUENOS AIRES STREET CIRCUIT (RA), MARCH 31, RD 1/13

Street fighter Arduzzo is unbeatable

FACUNDO ARDUZZO MADE THE BEST possible start to his Fiat career by winning the opening Super TC2000 race of the 2013 season on a brand-new 1.7-mile street circuit in downtown Buenos Aires.

Arduzzo, who only moved to the squad during the winter, qualified his Linea third behind Peugeot's Mariano Altuna and his own Fiat team-mate Jose Maria Lopez, and held his position into the first corner.

He was promoted to second when leader Altuna retired with an electrical failure on lap two, and was then gifted the lead when champion Lopez outbraked himself at a corner and tumbled down the order.

Despite persistently locking up at both hairpins as the race of attrition progressed, Arduzzo was able to open up a nine-second lead over Nestor Girolami's Peugeot, and held his advantage even after the safety car was deployed to enable several body panels to be cleared from the track by marshals.

In his attempts to regain lost ground, Lopez was soon harrying Girolami, but had his own mirrors full of Emiliano Spataro's Renault, which was suffering itself thanks to its bonnet having come loose much earlier in proceedings.



Arduzzo headed
Girolami to flag

Lopez then retired at two-thirds distance with damaged suspension. With Spataro also having fallen out of contention, 2004 series champion Christian Ledesma's Honda was promoted to the final podium spot. Leonel Pernia was the best of the

Renault drivers in fourth place.

● Tony Watson

RESULTS

1 Facundo Arduzzo (Fiat Linea), 36 laps in 47m11.137s; 2 Nestor Girolami (Peugeot 408), +1.077s; 3 Christian Ledesma (Honda Civic); 4

Leonel Pernia (Renault Fluence); 5 Guillermo Ortelli (Renault); 6 Ricardo Risatti (Honda); 7 Gabriel Werner (Toyota Corolla); 8 Bernardo Llaverr (Toyota); 9 Franco Vivian (Chevrolet Cruze); 10 Ignacio Char (Ford Focus). **Points** 1 Arduzzo, 26; 2 Girolami, 21; 3 Ledesma, 18; 4 Pernia, 16; 5 Ortelli, 14; 6 Risatti, 12.

EURO NASCAR NOGARO (F), MARCH 31-APRIL 1, RD 1/7

Vilarino victorious in France

ANDER VILARINO BEGAN THE DEFENCE of his Euro NASCAR title brilliantly at Nogaro, completing a fantastic recovery drive in race two by passing Javier Villa and Yann Zimmer in a single last-lap move to snatch an unlikely double victory.

The former Dallara Nissan World Series race winner dominated qualifying in his TFT Chevrolet and eased to victory in Saturday's opener despite his advantage being eaten away by a late safety car. He appeared to have lost any hope of adding to his

tally when he was given a drive-through penalty for hitting Frederic Gabillon on the opening lap.

Falling to sixth, Vilarino's fightback took him as high as third on the final lap, at which point he took full advantage of Villa's failed move on Gonneau Racing man Zimmer to overhaul both.

"This felt like proper NASCAR with the safety car in race one, so I'm proud to get this," said the Spaniard after the race.

Zimmer, a championship runner-

up in Formula Renault ALPS in 2011, was another to leave his moves late, the Swiss passing Romain Ianetta for second on the final lap of the opening race, which ex-GP2 race winner Villa retired from with an engine failure.

Brit Freddy Nordstrom (Rapido Racing), in his second year in the series, was fourth in the opener and sixth on Monday, while debutant Stuart Gough (T-Engineering) took 16th and 20th places.

There was a double winner in the open class in the form of 20-year-old Australian Josh Burdon, who was making his series debut with Scorpis Racing/Forza Motorsport. He was in a class of his own in the wet or dry.

● Anthony Drevet

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Ander Vilarino (Chevrolet Camaro), 18 laps in 30m06.454s; 2 Yann Zimmer (Chevy), +2.149s; 3 Romain Ianetta (Chevy); 4 Freddy Nordstrom (Ford Mustang); 5 Guillaume Rousseau (Ford); 6 Anthony Gandon (Chevy).

Open Class Josh Burdon (Chevrolet SS).

Race 2 1 Vilarino, 16 laps in 30m14.610s; 2 Javier Villa (Chevy), +0.038s; 3 Zimmer; 4 Rousseau; 5 Ianetta; 6 Nordstrom. **Open Class** Burdon. **Points** Vilarino, 95; 2 Zimmer, 84; 3 Ianetta, 80; 4 Rousseau, 79; 5 Nordstrom, 78; 6 Anthony Garbarino, 73.



Winslow had a win
and a second

AUSTRALIAN F3

Briton James Winslow leads the points after taking a controversial win at Bathurst, the Team BRM Dallara-Mercedes driver edging Steel Giuliana off the track late-on as they dived for victory, but escaping censure. He was second to Giuliana's R-Tek team-mate Nathan Morcom in race two. John Magro was second in race one.

FORMULA CHALLENGE

Third-year driver Sho Tsuboi won the opener at Fuji from Honda protege Keishi Ishikawa. Ishikawa was second again in race two, this time to another Honda-backed youngster, Tsubasa Takahashi, in race two. Shota Kiyohara and Kento Yamashita each had a third place.



Takahashi won
race two at Fuji



Wet or dry,
Vilarino was
on top

Ashburn/Tandy (left) lead title race despite robust rivals and team orders



BRITISH GT OULTON PARK (GB), MARCH 30 & APRIL 1, RD 1/7

Ashburn returns to top GT pack

WE ALL THOUGHT HE'D RETIRED AFTER last season and wouldn't be seen in the British GT paddock again, but David Ashburn now leads the 2013 championship after the first two races at Oulton Park on Easter Monday.

The eccentric Serbian drafted in Porsche factory driver Nick Tandy to be his co-driver for a "one-off" return to the category he won in 2010. The duo won the second race of the weekend, and only Trackspeed team orders in the first race prevented a clean sweep.

Former Porsche scholar Benji Hetherington led the first half of race one from pole in the Fortec Mercedes he shared with ex-Formula Renault BARC champion Ollie Hancock, chased by the Porsches of Jon Minshaw (Trackspeed) and Ahmad Al Harthy (Motorbase). Hancock still led after the mandatory pitstops, but Phil Keen (in for Minshaw) and Tandy (up to third after a rapid stop) quickly closed him down.

Keen moved aside to allow Tandy to attack the Merc, which Hancock made wide in a bid to hang on to the lead. Hancock provoked Tandy's ire by forcing the Porsche onto the grass on the run up Clay Hill, but Tandy eventually muscled his way by at Druids, which allowed Keen into second.

"He was bang out of order," raged Tandy afterwards. "Even for my standards. And I'm known as a pretty hard racer."

The Porsches dropped the Merc like a stone as Tandy built a six-second lead over his team-mate, only to throttle back over the final

four laps to allow Keen and Minshaw to take maximum points. On the podium Tandy suggested his car had developed a vibration, but it was clear Trackspeed had employed its own version of 'Multi 21'.

"We reversed positions," Tandy later conceded. "It's a team sport and I'm here to do a job."

The irony that he and Ashburn are top of the table by a "massive margin" was not lost on Tandy.

Hancock was further demoted by the United Autosports McLaren of former British GT3 champion Glynn Geddie, but reclaimed a debut podium for Fortec when Geddie's gearbox broke.

Reigning champion Michael Caine stretched his defensive skills to the limit to hold off Richard Westbrook for fourth. 'Westy' even took to the grass on the inside of Old Hall at one stage as the Motorbase and Trackspeed Porsches duked it out. Their fight was later rendered meaningless when officials excluded Westbrook's co-driver Gregor Fiskens for hitting Andrew Howard's Aston Martin into Jason Minshaw's Fortec Merc on the opening lap. Fiskens's misery was compounded by a broken starter switch in race two, which put him out at the stops. "That was a victory thrown away," rued Westbrook.

A charging Allan Simonsen was thus promoted to fifth in the Rosso Verde Ferrari 458 he shared with Hector Lester, ahead of the Ecurie Ecosse BMW of Marco Attard/Oliver Bryant and the AF Corse Ferrari of John Dhillon/Aaron Scott, which both benefited from a clash between Matteo Bobbi (Vita4One Ferrari) and Dan Brown (Triple Eight BMW) that put both cars out.

Matt Griffin (eighth) and Matt Bell (ninth) both rued pit delays they felt cost them a shot at the podium. Griffin's MTECH Ferrari was held for an extra 25s at its stop unnecessarily, while Bell's United Autosports Audi R8 was delayed by a slow puncture for co-driver Mark Patterson.

MTECH's weekend ended prematurely with engine problems in race two, but Patterson made amends for UA's race-one woe with an excellent drive to runner-up spot.

Ashburn led comfortably after Tandy had

chased poleman Simonsen "flat out" to the stops. Patterson lay fourth, but rose to second when Jay Palmer spun his Vita4One Ferrari and Howard did the same with a patched-up Aston that was later assaulted heavily by Jon Minshaw's Porsche (the race-one winner was later excluded).

Patterson began to nibble into Ashburn's lead when Colin White's Ginetta G55 caught fire spectacularly at Deer Leap, in similar fashion to the factory LNT version in race one. As Lawrence Tomlinson's finest burned to a cinder, an extended safety car period turned the race into a two-lap sprint to the flag. Ashburn made an excellent restart, but was closed down rapidly by Patterson, who finished just 0.280s in arrears.

The Ecosse BMW claimed the final podium spot when Palmer had another excursion on the final lap and fell to sixth, behind Lester and the Triple Eight BMW of Steve Tandy/Dan Brown.

Officials later handed Palmer a 10s penalty for rejoining the circuit in an unsafe manner, dropping him to 14th.

● Ben Anderson

RESULTS

Race 1 (1 hour: 33 laps) 1 Jon Minshaw/Phil Keen (Porsche 997 GT3 R); 2 David Ashburn/Nick Tandy (997 GT3-R) +1.190s; 3 Benji Hetherington/Ollie Hancock (Mercedes AMG SLS); 4 Ahmad Al Harthy/Michael Caine (997 GT3 R); 5 Hector Lester/Allan Simonsen (Ferrari 458 Italia); 6 Marco Attard/Oliver Bryant (BMW Z4); 7 John Dhillon/Aaron Scott (458 Italia); 8 Duncan Cameron/Matt Griffin (458 Italia); 9 Mark Patterson/Matt Bell (Audi R8 LMS ultra); 10 Phil Dryburgh/John Gaw (Aston Martin V12 Vantage). **GT4 winners Zoe Wenham/Declan Jones (Ginetta G50). **Fastest lap** Simonsen 1m36.130s (100.80mph).**

Race 2 (1 hour: 34 laps) 1 Tandy/Ashburn; 2 Bell/Patterson +0.280s; 3 Bryant/Attard; 4 Simonsen/Lester; 5 Dan Brown/Steve Tandy (Z4); 6 James Walker/Jason Minshaw (SLS); 7 Rob Barff/Gary Eastwood (458 Italia); 8 David Jones/Godfrey Jones (McLaren MP4-12C); 9 Caine/Al Harthy; 10 Glynn Geddie/Zak Brown (MP4-12C). **GT4 Wenham/Jones. FL Simonsen 1m35.861s (101.08mph). **GT3 points 1 Ashburn/Tandy, 43; 2 Jon Minshaw/Keen, 25; 3 Attard/Bryant, 23; 4 Lester/Simonsen, 22; 5 Patterson/Bell, 20; 6 Hetherington/Hancock, 15. **GT4 1 Wenham/Jones, 50; 2= Rick Parfitt/Ryan Ratcliffe & James May/Alex Osborne, 33.******

Simonsen leads bumper field at start of second encounter





Bailey (behind) took two GT5 wins to Davenport's one

BRITISH GT SUPPORTS OULTON PARK (GB), MARCH 30 & APRIL 1, RD 1/7

Davenport and Bailey split GT5 spoils at Oulton

BRAD BAILEY AND LUKE DAVENPORT shared the honours as the Ginetta GT5 Challenge kicked off at Oulton Park.

Davenport headed an early four-car break in the first of the well-supported races, after David Pittard spun off at Old Hall. The lead remained unchanged throughout, but a jump-start penalty handed victory to Bailey, after he had shadowed Davenport for the entire race. Will Burns and Oli Basey-Fisher moved up to complete the podium, after swapping places at Lodge on the third lap.

Davenport had better luck in the second race. He managed to keep Bailey at bay the whole time, despite the pair briefly running side by side. Pittard had been unable to shake off Basey-Fisher and lost third to him at Druids on the last lap.

Bailey led the third race initially, before losing out to Pittard on lap three. The battle continued until lap nine, when Bailey claimed the advantage at Old Hall to secure his second win of the day.

Davenport tried to oust Pittard from second at Island, but found himself on the marbles and lost out to Basey-Fisher. Then Pittard spun at Lodge on the last lap and promoted them both.

Alice Powell scored an F3 Cup double. Having beaten Alex Craven, Mark Harrison and Tristan Cliffe in race one, Powell had to play second fiddle to Craven early in race two, before passing him into Shell. She then nursed her car home with a failing clutch. Craven retained second, but had Henry Chart all over him at the flag. Harrison was fourth, but had John Cross, up from the back of the grid, on his tail as they crossed the line.

Aaron Mason's Golf won the first VW Racing Cup counter by a whisker after an entertaining

three-way battle. Jim Cartwright ousted Martin Depper from second on the third lap and soon reeled in Mason to challenge for the lead. After nosing ahead past the pits on lap seven of 11, Cartwright was unable to hold on to his newfound lead. He fell back to third after contact with Mason, but Depper upped his pace and was just inches away from snatching victory from Mason over the final laps.

The second race was led from the opening tour by Ross Wylie's Scirocco. A safety car intervened after Cartwright and Mason had come into contact, which left Wylie clear from the restart as Joe Fulbrook's Bora led the battle for second from Peter Wyhinny's SEAT and Mason. Depper closed in, too, and when Mason ran off exiting Old Hall, Depper moved in to push Wyhinny all the way to the finish for third.

Northern Saloons and Sports champion Bill Addison's Caterham held off a determined Mike Cutt to take a double win. Cutt's BMW was well clear of the third-place duel between David Botterill's Porsche 944 and Andrew Morrison's SEAT. Morrison ultimately secured two podiums.

No one else got a look in during the Trackday Trophy race, as John Dickson and Rindy Frost led from start to finish in their Honda Prelude. Mark Penny's Vauxhall VX220 claimed a distant second place late on.

● Peter Scherer

RESULTS

Ginetta GT5 Challenge (8 laps) 1 Brad Bailey (G40); 2 Will Burns (G40) +4.469s; 3 Oliver Basey-Fisher (G40); 4 Luke Davenport (G40); 5 Matthew Flowers (G40). **Class winner** Stuart



Powell dominated the F3 Cup races

Pearson (G20). **Fastest lap** Davenport 1m54.688s (84.49mph).

Race 2 (7 laps) 1 Davenport; 2 Bailey +0.180s; 3 Basey-Fisher; 4 David Pittard (G40); 5 Clive Richards (G40); 6 Burns.

CW Brian Murphy (G20). **FL** Bailey 1m54.423s (84.68mph).

Race 3 (11 laps) 1 Bailey; 2 Basey-Fisher +2.836s; 3 Davenport; 4 Pittard; 5 Richards; 6 Burns. **CW** Pearson. **FL** Bailey 1m53.417s.

F3 Cup (13 laps) 1 Alice Powell (Dallara F307); 2 Alex Craven (F307) +18.101s; 3 Mark Harrison (Dallara F306); 4 Tristan Cliffe (F307); 5 Robbie Watts (F306); 6 Chris Needham (Dallara F302).

CW Dave Karaskas (F302). **FL** Powell 1m33.567s (103.56mph).

Race 2 (12 laps) 1 Powell; 2 Craven +4.584s; 3 Henry Chart (F302); 4 Harrison; 5 James Cross (Dallara F302); 6 Watts. **CW**

James Ledamun (Dallara F300). **FL** Powell 1m33.670s (103.45mph).

VW Racing Cup (11 laps) 1 Aaron Mason (Scirocco R); 2 Martin Depper (Scirocco R) +2.666s; 3 Jim Cartwright (Golf GTI); 4 Ross Wylie (Scirocco R); 5 Joe Fulbrook (Bora); 6 Peter Wyhinny (SEAT Leon Cupra). **FL** Depper 1m54.729s (84.46mph).

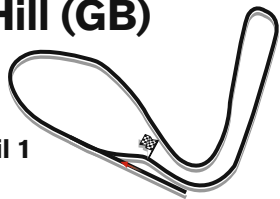
Race 2 (9 laps) 1 Ross Wylie (Scirocco R); 2 Fulbrook +1.819s; 3 Wyhinny; 4 Depper; 5 David Sutton (Golf GTI); 6 Alex Dziurzynski (Corrado). **FL** Mason 1m55.712s (83.74mph).

Northern Sports and Saloons (both 9 laps) 1 Bill Addison (Caterham R400); 2 Mike Cutt (BMW M3) +1.416s; 3 Andrew Morrison (SEAT Leon Cupra); 4 David Botterill (Porsche 944); 5 Martin Addison (Peugeot 106 Rallye); 6 Myles Collins (Peugeot 205). **FL** B Addison 1m51.532s (86.88mph).

Race 2 1 B Addison; 2 Cutt +0.842s 3 Morrison; 4 Botterill; 5 Collins; 6 M Addison. **FL** Cutt 1m51.275s (87.08mph).

Trackday Trophy (21 laps) 1 John Dickson/Rindy Frost (Honda Prelude); 2 Mark Penny (Vauxhall VX220) +24.435s; 3 Nick Cook/Peter Cook (Mini Cooper S); 4 Simon Hogg (Porsche 944S2); 5 James Clink/Matthew Parish (Renault Clio); 6 Ashley Davies/Will Lucas (Clio). **CW** Penny; Nik Grove/Philip Carney (BMW 318ti); Steve Reynolds/Jon Ridgeon (Ford Fiesta Zetec S); Gregory Barlow (BMW Compact). **FL** Dickson/Frost 2m02.265s (79.25mph).

ERX Lydden Hill (GB)



March 31-April 1
Round 1/9

FINAL

6 LAPS; 7.020 MILES

1	TANNER FOUST (USA)	4m23.844s
2	JUSSI-PETTERI LEPPIHALME (FIN)	+4.392s
3	TIMMY HANSEN (S)	+8.086s
4	JULIAN GODFREY (GB)	+11.143s
5	TIMUR TIMERZYANOV (RUS)	-2 laps
6	DAVY JEANNEY (F)	+6.267s*

*penalised for technical infringement

SEMI-FINAL 1

6 LAPS; 7.020 MILES

1	FOUST	4m26.290s
2	HANSEN	+1.027s
3	LEPPIHALME	+3.677s
4	HENNING SOLBERG (N)	+6.220s
5	PETTER SOLBERG (N)	+14.950s
6	ANDY SCOTT (GB)	+18.560s

SEMI-FINAL 2

6 LAPS; 7.020 MILES

1	TIMERZYANOV	4m24.956s
2	JEANNEY	+8.837s
3	GODFREY	+9.283s
4	STIG-OLOV WALFRIDSON (S)	+13.765s
5	KNUT-OVE BORSETH (N)	+23.819s
6	ANTON MARKLUND (S)	-5 laps

Positions after heats: 1 Hansen; 2 Marklund; 3 Foust; 4 Jeanney; 5 Alexander Hvaal; 6 Timerzyanov; 7 Leppihalme; 8 Borseth; 9 P Solberg; 10 Godfrey; 11 Liam Doran; 12 Andreas Bakkerud; 13 Scott; 14 Walfridson; 15 H Solberg; 16 Jos Jansen; 17 Peter Hedstrom; 18 Pat Doran; 19 Ronny Scheveneels.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1	FOUST	26	6	MARKLUND	16
2	HANSEN	25	7	GODFREY	14
3	LEPPIHALME	19	8	HVAAL	12
4	TIMERZYANOV	19	9	BORSETH	11
5	JEANNEY	18	10	P SOLBERG	10

POINTS SYSTEM EXPLAINED

6-5-4-3-2-1 for the top six finishers in the final plus 6-5-4-3-2-1 for the top six finishers in each semi-final and 16-15-14-13-12-11-10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 for the top 16 drivers in the intermediate classification once the heats are completed.



Foust was a popular winner



Foust stealthily reached the final, then dominated

Foust proves too fast

TANNER FOUST MIGHT HAVE GOT TO spray the champagne, but in truth it was the revitalised European Rallycross championship that had most to celebrate. Much has been made of the series' potential, its suitability for television, its appeal to 'Generation Y', and on a blustery bank-holiday weekend at Lydden Hill, it went some way to justifying the hype.

Nineteen races played out with myriad winners and an ever-changing order of favourites. Among a 19-strong field, 2003 World Rally champion Petter Solberg was the star attraction, massively committed and blindingly fast. He had an audience to play to as well: perhaps most importantly, the fans piled through the turnstiles in their thousands.

It was Foust who got to bid them the fondest farewell, the American dominating a six-car final in which his two sternest rivals, defending champion Timur Timerzyanov and 20-year-old Timmy Hansen, both fell victim to circumstance.

The extreme sports star had been at risk of failing to make the 12-car cut for the semi-finals after picking up a puncture in the first of his four qualifying heats, but thereafter he was never outside the top two in his OMSE Ford Fiesta. Victory in the first semi gave him pole for the showpiece and he took full advantage, storming away as those closest to him hit trouble.

"It's a great feeling, especially after our first heat which felt like a big penalty at the time," Foust said afterward. "It's cut-throat, but I like that. Of course you want to see Petter in the final – I followed that guy in the heat and he's crazy fast – but it was awesome all the same."

Though Foust takes an early championship lead, his status as a wildcard means it will soon be relinquished – even if he does intend to add more events in 2013.

The man in prime position to inherit the lead is Hansen, son of 14-time ERX champion Kenneth and the revelation of the weekend. In only his third rallycross event – Hansen's background is in single-seaters, where he has won in Formula BMW and FRenault – he won three of his four qualifiers and lined up on pole

for the first semi-final, in which he was eventually edged out by Foust.

His bid for overall victory was spoiled by the smallest of mis-steps at the start, for which he had to take two joker laps, but he still managed to finish fourth on the road, which became third when Davy Jeanney was penalised for a technical infringement. A haul of 25 points – one less than Foust and six clear of the chasing pack – was made all the more impressive by the revelation he had been racing without fifth or sixth gear.

"I lost them in the semi," he explained. "But I was still able to keep up with Foust. Without the double joker I'd have been second, but it's still been an absolutely amazing weekend."

Hansen was by no means the only man to suffer technical issues. After steady, if unspectacular, progress in the heats, defending champion Timerzyanov – racing a Hansen-run Citroen DS3 – started alongside Foust in the final and was a threat for victory right up until a tyre punctured on lap three.

Solberg was another to suffer from disintegrating rubber, although his maladies didn't stop there as the driveshaft, gearbox and central diff all gave cause for complaint. Running his own operation, the Norwegian and his mechanics were never cowed. When the car held, it was quick – massively so. Few could match Solberg on the dirt, his unflinching commitment earning him two heat wins and a place in the second semi.

But that was as far as he went, as a loss of power steering ruined his bid. There was still room for some magic as he and brother Henning, racing a Saab 9-3, went side-by-side in what was their first on-track meeting of the event. Henning won the battle, but neither man made the top-three cut.

Their absence took a little lustre off a final in which Foust was a comfortable victor, but it also highlighted the quality of the other races. As opening weekends go, there were plenty of positives for the new series. It was fitting, then, that it wasn't only Foust who was celebrating. ❧

IN THE PADDOCK

Sam Tremayne



While rallycross has been around for the best part of five decades, it has often been overlooked, a poor relative in the motorsport family. I confess: before Lydden Hill I'd never been to an event.

Judging by proceedings at the mile-long circuit, it's easy to see why it's gaining momentum. Bite-sized races keep the action short and sweet, and give the main attractions plenty of track time. They also mean car woes or driver errors needn't ruin a whole weekend.

Of course that's not to everyone's taste, but it's hard to argue against the potential for mass appeal, especially when, as Petter Solberg says, live TV arrives from the fourth round in Finland onwards.

The fact IMG are holding off for now is also a good thing. There are still inevitable teething problems, not least the mechanical mishaps that spring from cars coming together late on. Scheduling was by no means poor but will need to improve again for TV, when one minute of waiting is an age. On both fronts, time will yield improvements.

Talk of dislodging rallying is massively premature, but rallycross is on the up and those connected with it should be applauded for that.

MILESTONE



The new-look ERX opened at Lydden 46 years after the series was born as a television special at the Kent track. Here's Vic Elford's Porsche from that day.

Solberg: Quick, despite problems

PETER SOLBERG PLAYED DOWN THE

frustration of a multitude of mechanical issues with his self-run Citroen DS3, saying that he had anticipated – but been unable to counter – all the problems he and his team ran into. His first shakedown in the car came on the Thursday before Lydden Hill.

Clutch and gearbox woes affected his form in his opening heat, when he placed last of the 19 cars, while his driveshaft broke in his third outing, pitching him sideways on the infield dirt section at Chesson's Drift. Victories in his other two heats meant he still managed to make the semi-finals, but he could only come home fifth after power-steering failure.

"It's not a disappointment, just a dose of reality," he told AUTOSPORT. "We are not a factory team and this has come together in a short time. The problems that happened were on my list; it was nothing new or surprising, just a symptom of how quickly it has all come together. We couldn't do everything in only two and a half weeks.

"When it worked the car was quick, no doubt. That's the good thing. Now it just has to become reliable. The guys have had three hours of sleep for the past three days working on it just to get it ready. Now we have three weeks to go away and work on it, so we can change a lot."

Solberg, a four-time Norwegian rallycross champion, said the European opener had been everything he hoped for despite his issues.



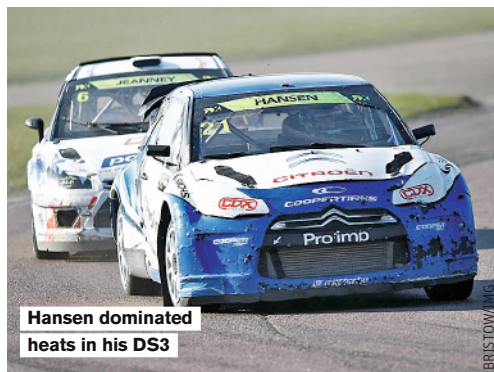
"It's been well organised, IMG and Lydden have done a great job and bloody hell there's a lot of people," he said. "This is exactly why I came. It wasn't for a logical move; I followed my heart and what I really wanted to do, and this is it. Everything is in the early stages, but I wanted to be involved in building the championship. It has a lot of potential for growth and with live TV from Finland [round four] it will be huge. It has been a real rollercoaster but I've also enjoyed it immensely."

Hansen: RX a viable career

DESPITE BEING THE SON OF A 14-TIME

European Rallycross champion, Timmy Hansen had followed a more typical career path for young drivers until the eve of this season. A race winner in Formula BMW and Formula Renault – he beat Sauber Formula 1 reserve Robin Frijns at the Hungaroring in 2011 – he says the change of discipline was a reaction to the arrival of ERX promoter IMG and a subsequent belief that rallycross can be a viable career path.

"I was weighing up my options at the end of last year and then heard IMG were promoting the championship," he told AUTOSPORT. "As soon as that happened, I looked at it in a different way. The skills from single-seaters have actually proved quite transferrable, but that's not why I moved – it's more that rallycross now has an obvious future and, if IMG play their cards right, more potential than the WRC. It's so accessible for the fans, and it's perfect for TV. For me, there's no question it's a valid career path. I really believe in it."



FOUST PLANS MORE ERX

Tanner Foust hopes to add more European Rallycross dates to his 2013 schedule, although he insists he is not looking at entering more than a handful of events. The American labelled 2012, when he won the Global Rallycross title and came third in the ERX, as a "crazy schedule".

DORAN DITCHES X GAMES PLAN



Liam Doran has shelved plans to compete in next weekend's X Games Brazil after a "baptism of fire" for his new LD Motorsport Citroen DS3s at Lydden Hill. Engine, diff, clutch, power and brake issues afflicted the 25-year-old Brit, who qualified for the semi-finals, but was unable to take up his grid slot.

TOHILL TAKES A WIN...

Irishman Derek Tohill led every lap of the TouringCar class final in his self-run Ford Fiesta. From the outside of the front row Tohill jumped poleman David Nordgaard off the line, and then withstood heavy pressure from Robin Larsson to eventually claim a 1.6s victory.

...AND SO DOES LINNEMANN

A decision to use his first lap as a joker laid the foundation of Ulrik Linnemann's triumph in the Super1600 class. The Dane started fourth but as the lead pack squabbled he made up ground, working his way up to second before Ildar Rakhmatullin ran wide at Turn 1 on the fourth lap, leaving Linnemann clear to take victory.

BRIT MAKES LYDDEN FINAL

Julian Godfrey recorded the only British Supercar win at Lydden by taking his fourth and final qualifying heat. Driving a self-entered Ford Fiesta, Godfrey made it into the final where he finished fourth, 11s down on winner Foust.

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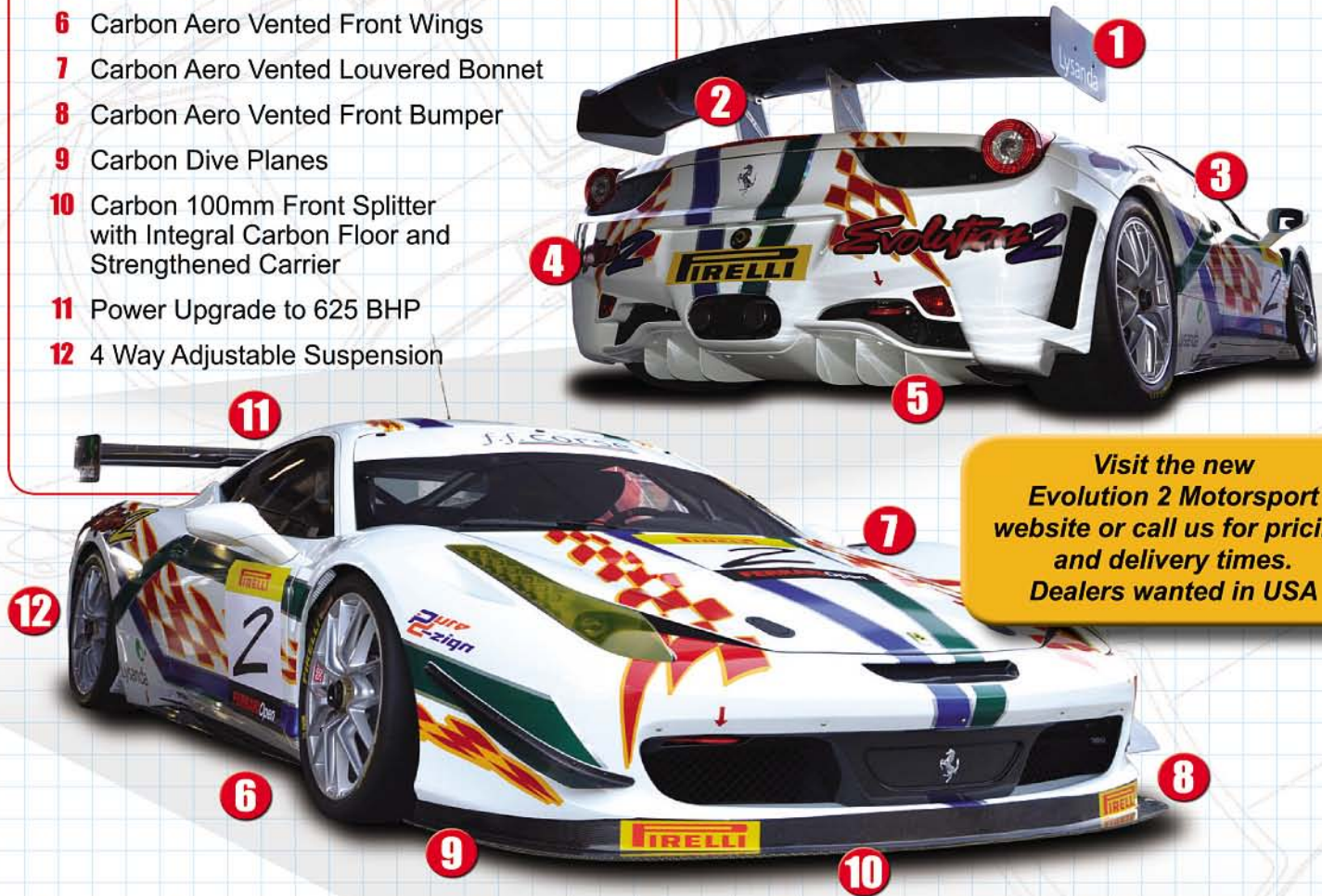
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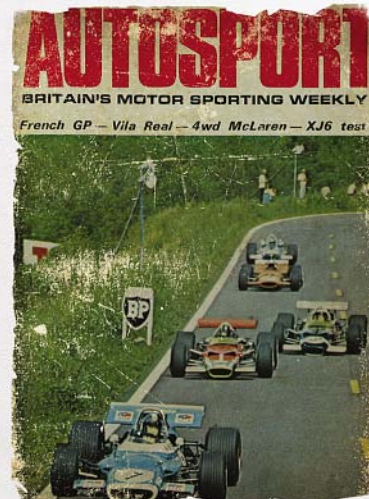
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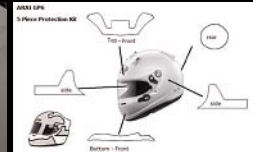


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New Formula Ford era kicked off at Brands with 12 cars

KEVIN TURNER
FEATURES
EDITOR



kevin.turner@haymarket.com

AMID ALL THE TALK ABOUT

British GT and the new era of British Formula Ford, it's been easy to overlook the Ginetta GT Supercup. But the one-make rear-wheel-drive series put on a pretty good show at Brands Hatch last weekend.

Thirteen G55 entries and four G50s wasn't bad in the context of the other BTCC supports, and the races were hard fought, with three different winners.

The quality at the front was also high: the top five finishers in race one were all former champions in one series or another, and there was a mature performance from Ginetta Junior graduate Pepe Massot to win in the mixed conditions of race two.

It all bodes well for 2013, which is just as well. The Leeds-based marque had a torrid time at the Oulton Park GT opener, suffering two serious fires (see p77). It will be a great shame if former GT Supercup racers Colin White and Tom Sharp can't make it out again.

Back in the single-seater world, FFord made a solid start at Brands. The entry wasn't huge, but to double the EcoBoost field over the winter while adding wings isn't a bad effort.

The races weren't super-exciting, but it's probably too early to know if the great wheel-to-wheel competition that made the Kent and Duratec eras so good to watch has been lost.

Within the next month, the rival Formula Renault BARC and BRDC F4 series kick off, and our man Ben Anderson takes a look at the latter on p84. All three are likely to have entries in the teens in 2013, which makes you wonder whether one series with all those drivers together would be a better idea...

Ford: 'We can grow from here'

Optimism as new-look Formula Ford gets under way. By KEVIN TURNER

LEADING BRITISH FORMULA FORD figures believe the new winged era of the series can be a success after its first outing on the British Touring Car Championship package at Brands Hatch last weekend.

After a poorly supported 2012, the category added wings and moved to the BTCC package for this season. Twelve cars ran at Brands, and more are expected to join in the coming rounds.

"We're very happy with that figure in a really difficult market," said Sam Roach of championship promoter RacingLine. "We haven't started the year with 15 cars, but there are 15 drivers committed."

"In year one of a three-year programme, we're very happy with that. There are still people out there."

BTCC BOOST

Fluid Motorsport boss Lindsay Allen, a longtime category supporter, believes the move to the BTCC bill (from British F3/GT) will help attract more drivers.

"The package is good," he said. "We probably had a bigger crowd this weekend than all of last year. With the live TV, it's only going to attract drivers, and Ford are putting a lot of effort in."

"An engineering formula at this level is better than a one-make series, and I think that the numbers will grow."

Allen expects series returnee Fred Martin-Dye to appear at the next round at Donington Park, racing a Fluid-built Sinter for SWB Motorsport. Allen could also run Matt Rao later in the year.

FAMOUS NAME TO JOIN

Sam Brabham, the 18-year-old son of sportscar ace David Brabham, will also join the grid at Donington.

Brabham will graduate from karting to race a Mygale run by JTR, which last weekend won all three Brands races with Dan Cammish.

"It's a fantastic feeling to be with one of the top UK Formula Ford teams," said Brabham Jr. "Graduating to single-seaters is my biggest challenge yet, so it's important for me to be working with a strong team and alongside experienced team-mates."

SINTER MAKES DEBUT

The second Formula Ford constructor of the EcoBoost era made its debut at Brands. The Sinter LA12 raced for the first time in the hands of series rookie James Abbott, run by Radical Motorsport.

Abbott qualified 10th, 1.1s off pole. He then finished eighth, seventh and 11th in the three races, with a best race lap 0.6s away from the fastest lap, set by Scott Malvern's Jamun Mygale.

Lindsay Allen confirmed there were no major problems: "It was good to get the car out and I don't think we're far off the pace. James is still learning and getting better."

"We can challenge. We just need more people driving the car to give us a better idea of exactly where it is."



Abbott gave the EcoBoost Sinter its race debut



Ginetta fires marred proceedings at Oulton

Nissans were able to race with no extra weight



British GT

Team anger over late GT deals

BRITISH GT TEAM BOSSES HAVE criticised championship organisers SRO for allowing the JRM Nissans to race with solo drivers at Oulton Park over Easter Weekend.

JRM originally planned to pair reigning GT4 champion Jody Fannin with ex-Porsche GT3 Cup champion Mark Cole, but decided to enter them as solo drivers in separate cars after consultation with championship organisers (see AUTOSPORT, March 28).

Both were required to take

20-second time penalties at their pitstops, but a loophole in the regulations meant neither silver-rated driver was required to run with the 65kg of ballast required by all-silver driver combinations.

UA boss Richard Dean believes this undermines the pro-am ethos of the series. "The popularity of British GT is built on its pro-am format," he said. "Allowing a silver driver to qualify in both sessions without a penalty is dropping the ball. They should have

65kg because it's the same as having two silvers in the car."

Fannin finished 12th and 11th in the two races in his Nissan GT-R, while Cole went off on oil in race one and finished 16th in race two.

Championship manager Benjamin Franassovici said he would revise the rules to ban single-driver entries from the series. "I think it's been overblown a bit, but a few teams aren't happy," he told AUTOSPORT. "It's nice to have the Nissans but this pushed the envelope."

Both Dean and Barwell commercial director Chris Needell also criticised SRO for allowing Fortec to pair former Porsche scholar Benji Hetherington with ex-Formula Renault BARC champion Ollie Hancock.

"Last year we ran Matt Bell and Charles Bateman but Benjamin said 'no more' and we've all worked to that," added Dean. "FIA GT3 fell apart because silver-silver pairings won it for three straight years. They don't bring money so teams go out of business."

British GT

Wills replaces Meins and crashes United Autosports McLaren GT

UNITED AUTOSPORTS' SECOND McLaren MP4-12C failed to race at the first British GT round at Oulton Park after historic ace Roger Wills crashed the car at the start of qualifying.

Wills was deputising for Richard Meins, who crashed the same car in testing at Oulton a few weeks ago and broke his ribs.

Wills went off at Britten's chicane – the same place that Meins had his crash – on his out-lap, damaging the car beyond immediate repair and denying ex-F1 racer Mark Blundell his British GT debut.

UA boss Richard Dean said: "At a lot of circuits it would have been a gentle off into a run-off area, but at Oulton Park small mistakes have big consequences.

"The car was only just fixed. It took the left side out last time and now the right



A rare shot of UA McLaren not in barriers

side. I'm blaming Blundell. They're both his drivers and his driver coaching is leaving a bit to be desired at the moment!"

Dean does not expect Wills to be available for further rounds, so is seeking another replacement driver.

"Richard's injuries aren't serious but they will take time to heal," added Dean.



Rivett secured late Clio Cup deal

Renault Clio Cup

Rivett returns for Clio title tilt

TRIPLE RENAULT CLIO CUP

champion Paul Rivett was a late addition to the Brands Hatch season opener last weekend and will go for the title this year.

The 34-year-old had expected to miss 2013, but a late deal got him out at Brands with Stancombe Vehicle Engineering. Ex-Clio racer Matthew Munson has given him backing through his PER HIRE firm.

"It really couldn't be any more last minute than this deal," said Rivett. "If we'd had any less time left we just wouldn't have had time to get everything prepared.

"I really can't believe I'm going to be out there racing this year."

With a lack of testing on the Clio Cup's new Dunlop tyres, Rivett qualified seventh, but raced through to a fifth and a second.

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British GT

Sharp/White season in doubt after Ginetta fire at Oulton Park

GINETTA RACERS TOM SHARP AND Colin White fear their British GT season may be over after their car caught fire at the Oulton Park season opener.

Their G55 burst into flames in the closing stages of the second race on Easter Monday. The blaze is believed to have started via the exhaust. The sister LNT G55 of Richard Sykes and Mike Simpson had earlier caught fire in race one, following an engine failure.

White, who was driving at the time of his car's fire, said: "I could smell oil and see a bit of smoke, and as I came up the back

straight I saw flames. It was too dangerous to bring into the pits so I parked it."

Fire marshals tackled the blaze, but were unable to extinguish it completely due to the scale of the inferno plus the earlier fire. "This shows we need to have more fire extinguishers at meetings," said White.

Former GT Supercup race winner Sharp said the damage would probably curtail their season. "It's really disappointing because the car's not insured so that's probably it for us," he said. "It's £230,000 to buy a car and we can't afford that."



Fire could have ended Sharp's and White's season

Renault Clio Cup

Hill misses Brands opener, but continues with Clio Cup plans

KX AKADEMY MEMBER JAKE HILL will contest the rest of the Renault Clio Cup season, despite missing the opening round at Brands Hatch last weekend.

Former Ginetta racer Hill was the final 2013 KX Academy scholar to be announced (see AUTOSPORT, March 7)



Hill now plans to make Clio debut at Donington

and will race for Scuderia Vittoria this year. A delay finalising some of the remainder of his budget meant the decision was made to postpone his front-wheel-drive debut until the Donington round later this month.

"Everybody at KX and Scuderia Vittoria have been so supportive in trying to get me out for Brands, but we simply ran out of time," said the 19-year-old, who now plans to test at Silverstone. "We felt it was better to get some mileage in and be confident for Donington and the rest of the season."

"I know the team will get me up to speed and I'm excited about joining in."

British GT

Hetherington joins Fortec as new teams make Brit GT debuts

FORMER PORSCHE SCHOLAR

Benji Hetherington and ex-Formula Renault BARC champion Ollie Hancock completed a late deal to race Fortec Motorsport's second Mercedes AMG SLS GT3 at Oulton Park last weekend.

Hetherington qualified on pole for the first race and the duo eventually finished third after leading for much of the way. Their second race ended prematurely when the car jammed in fourth gear. The sister car of historic ace Jason Minshaw and international GT racer James Walker was taken out in a first-corner incident in race one, but took sixth in race two.

Fortec earned the strongest results of the high-profile new teams to join



Triple Eight scored a best of fifth on GT debut

the series for 2013. Triple Eight managed a best of fifth in race two with Steve Tandy/Dan Brown, after AF Corse had run John Dhillon/Aaron Scott to seventh in race one.

The M-Sport Audi broke its gearbox in practice so missed qualifying, but Rembert Berg/Warren Hughes recorded a best finish of 14th in race two.

Humble Pye

The voice of club racing



Thruxton's F2 races brought back strong memories for Pye

Thruxton historic F2 meeting could be start of something big

The T-shirt weather that occasionally blessed massive crowds at Thruxton's European Formula 2 championship rounds of yore was replaced by bitter cold, but at least it stayed dry for the inaugural BARC/HSCC Easter Revival meeting at the circuit.

As architect of the historic event, Thruxton Group MD Bill Coombs – who laid the foundations of an annual spectacular with HSCC chief Grahame White, the BARC's competition secretary when it opened the airfield track in 1968 – was delighted with both the record entry and the attendance.

Marshals are canny people who love good racing. That many eschewed Brands Hatch's BTCC opener for Thruxton affirmed their love of cars of the 1950s-'80s, long before the curse of one-make classes began to knock the heart out of our then pre-eminent manufacturing industry.

Thruxton's showcase reunited landowner Henry Pelham and White, who with Geoffrey Woodhouse laid out the perimeter road course, a different challenge to those used for cars and motorcycles in the '50s. The first F2 race in '53, incidentally, was won by Tony Crook in Connaught A3. One old stager even brought the programme from his childhood to prove it!

Britain's fastest circuit remains unchanged 45 years on, which adds fascinating pathos. I've been going to Thruxton since '73, thus

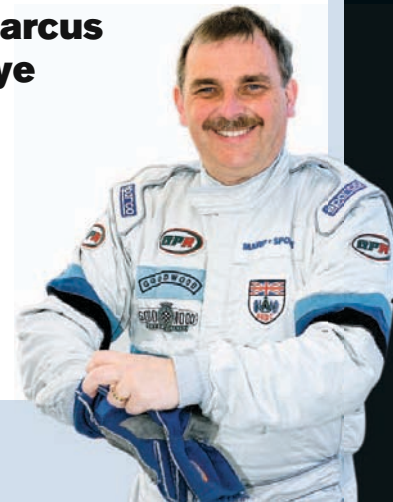
remember the buzz of anticipation as two-litre F2 fields charged into Allard corner with the rickety old footbridge as backdrop.

Back then the 1m10s (120mph average) barrier was considered magical. Top drivers strove to beat it for years. Indeed, while F5000/Group 8 pole times hovered between 70 and 71 seconds from '74-'76, it took '79 F2 champ Marc Surer and his March-BMW 792 'wing car' to break it in a race. By the end of the formula 1m07.37s was the record.

I was hugely impressed, therefore, when Historic racers Nick Fleming (Ralt RT1) and Andy Smith (March 742) bettered 70 seconds during Sunday's Jochen Rindt Trophy F2 race. And if Smith's 1m09.504s (122.03mph) debuting a newly restored car was heroic, Martin O'Connell's 1m11.597s in a Chevron B36 sportscar was Herculean...

While I adore sheer speed and gutsy driving, perhaps the sight of the weekend for me was septuagenarians Lincoln Small and David Gurney Brown battling at the back of the F2 field in their ex-Derek Bell and Kurt Ahrens Brabham-FVA BT30s. This snapshot of the Rindt era underlined the very essence of the history we amateurs love to celebrate. Here's to 2014.

Marcus Pye



"This snapshot of the Rindt era underlined the very essence of the history we love to celebrate"

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- Paul Di Resta

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Malvern had a mixed weekend at Brands

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British Formula Ford

Ford ace Malvern considers TOCA tin-top switch

SINGLE-SEATER ACE SCOTT

Malvern could make the move to a tin-top series on the BTCC bill this season.

Malvern, who won last year's Formula Renault BARC crown, drove for Jamun in the first British Formula Ford round at Brands Hatch last weekend. The 2011 British FF champion wants to continue in Ford, but is also looking at other options.

"We only really committed to do the one Ford round," said the 24-year-old. "I'd like

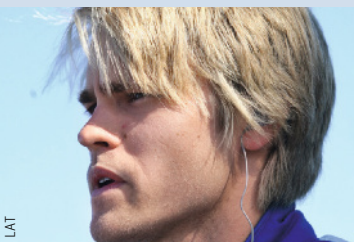
to do more, but if another opportunity comes along, I'll take it. I want to stay with the TOCA package no matter what. Whether I continue in single-seaters, go to touring cars or try GTs, everything on the package has some relevance."

Malvern believes his future lies away from single-seaters. "My career goal has shifted a bit," he explained. "Progress up the single-seater ladder is getting hard [financially]. I'd like to move to British Touring

Cars, but to be taken seriously I need to race something else with a roof first."

Despite a troubled weekend, which left him 46 points behind Dan Cammish, Malvern believes that he can still challenge for the Ford title.

"If we get the funding, I'll keep pushing with Jamun," he said. "JTR has got an advantage now, but we made a big jump forward at Brands. If we get the last piece in place, we can score lots of wins."



LAT

Buri targets British GT

Reigning British Formula Ford champion Antti Buri is looking to join the British GT grid this season, and travelled to Oulton Park to meet with United Autosports. "I'm doing Portuguese GT3 in an Audi R8 to get some experience," said Buri (above). "British GT looks very nice now and I fancy a bit of it."

Barwell Aston withdrawn

Richard Abra and Mark Poole withdrew their Aston Martin V12 Vantage from the opening round of the British GT series at Oulton Park. Barwell Motorsport commercial director Chris Needell said: "The move is down to unforeseen personal circumstances. It's a pity, because having done eight days of testing, I'm convinced they would have been on the podium here."

Late show for Geddie

Former British GT3 champion Glynn Geddie received a late call to share a United Autosports McLaren with team owner Zak Brown at Oulton Park last weekend. Geddie replaced Rob Bell, who was meant to be subbing for Alvaro Parente, but was called away because his wife Jill was due to give birth. Geddie/Brown ran third in race one before the gearbox broke, then finished 10th after a spare was fitted for race two.

Speedworks stays away

Ex-British GT squad Speedworks will not contest the series for the foreseeable future as Christian Dick's team concentrates on the BTCC. "We're not saying we'll never go back, but it's so demanding, and we want to do the best job we can in touring cars," said Dick, who ran a Chevrolet Corvette for Piers and Ron Johnson in GTs last season.

Boardley's G55 debut

Ex-Pickup Truck race winner and former Hot Rod champion Carl Boardley (below) qualified 12th on his Ginetta GT Supercup debut at Brands Hatch last weekend. He took a best finish of ninth.



LAT



Touring Car Trophy wants older racers, like Hallford's Mustang

JONES

Historics

Touring Car Trophy set to grow

TOURING CAR TROPHY BOSSES are confident the category will grow after a quiet start at Thruxton last weekend.

Prime movers David Jarman and Jonny Westbrook joined forces with the HSCC to run a four-round series for touring cars from the 1970-2000 period this season, after well-supported races at last year's Silverstone Classic. Ten cars qualified for the Thruxton opener, but Westbrook is confident more will be at the next race at the Brands Hatch Superprix in July.

"This meeting was the wrong time of year and we've had awful weather, so it

was always going to be tough," he said. "It was a big effort for the guys who were there to get there – two cars were from Scotland – and the acceptance of the HSCC has been great, so I am pleased.

"I think we'll have 25 cars on the grid for Brands. Many are in the pipeline."

Among the Thruxton entry was Peter Hallford's Ford Mustang, and Westbrook wants to attract more cars from the 1970s, as well as later Super Tourers.

"We'd love more genuine '70s cars to come out," he said. "We want to build it up with the right cars."

750MC

750 secures new Donington date

THE 750 MOTOR CLUB HAS

rescheduled last month's cancelled Donington Park meeting for June 30.

Donington had been set to host the club's opening meeting of 2013 on March 23. Heavy snow forced cancellation of the event (see AUTOSPORT, March 28), but an alternative date has now been found.

Club competitions manager Giles Groombridge said: "We're grateful to Donington. Hopefully a mid-summer date will be less susceptible to snow!"

The meeting will include races for the BMW Compact Cup, Toyota MR2s, RGB, Formula Vee, Sports Specials and Roadsports. Original entries will be carried over, but competitors who did not enter the cancelled meeting will also be allowed to race at the June event.



Compacts will be at Donington in June

JONES

Historics

Trivellato March returns to racing

THE EX-TRIVELLATO RACING TEAM

March 742 that Gabriele Serblin raced to third in Enna-Pergusa's European F2 round of 1974 made a successful return to racing at Thruxton's Easter Revival event.

Chassis 742-15 served Richard Jones in British Group 8 events after its F2

adventures. It then formed the basis of Scot Jim McGaughay's Renault 5 Turbo Special GT car in the '80s.

The car has now been rebuilt to period F2 spec, albeit with Cosworth BDG instead of BMW engine. Andy Smith finished third and second at Thruxton, taking fastest lap.



Smith lapped Thruxton at 122mph

JONES

O'Connell has a scary moment after a tap from F2 rival Fleming



STEVE JONES

HSCC THRUXTON, MARCH 30-31

Fleming fights flying O'Connell

MARTIN O'CONNELL AND NICK

Fleming were the big winners as the Historic Sports Car Club and resident British Automobile Racing Club's inaugural Easter Revival event celebrated 45 years of competition on the current Thruxton circuit.

Run at the super-fast Hampshire airfield circuit each year bar one between 1968 and the category's 1984 swansong – European Formula 2 championship rounds were, along with photogenic sportscar internationals, among the British calendar's highlights back then.

Scotsman Fleming and Midlander O'Connell gave fans a flavour of exactly why over the course of totally committed battles in both disciplines. They bagged a brace of victories apiece, although things got a bit too close for comfort in Saturday's F2 stanza.

After several lead changes, the pair collided at the Club chicane on the penultimate lap as Fleming essayed to regain the advantage. O'Connell's Chevron B40 reared spectacularly onto two wheels and clattered down across the kerbing as his rival escaped.

"It wasn't the best move," observed 1999 British Formula 3 National class champion O'Connell laconically, having made a bold attack stick there two laps previously. "Nick lunged from



O'Connell exacted revenge with Martini win

STEVE JONES

a long way back, so I wasn't happy. I really thought I was going over."

O'Connell resolved to drop Fleming at the subsequent Martini Trophy race's rolling start and proceeded to cut unprecedented lap times in Sandy Watson's Chevron B36 – culminating in a staggering 1m11.596s (118mph) best to even the score.

Sunday's F2 race was even more spectacular, for O'Connell's Fred Opert Racing Chevron and Fleming's Ralt RT1 were split by ex-Ginetta racer Andy Smith's March 742, on its post-restoration debut, as Fleming's front left tyre blistered.

Smith and Fleming smashed the 1m10s barrier, but O'Connell remained just beyond the reach of Smith, who made great progress

with the car he owns with Richard Evans. O'Connell duly received the BARC's Jochen Rindt Memorial Trophy from Murray Walker as the winner on aggregate.

Following a barrier-nudging spin at Cobb on Saturday's green-flag lap, which required a nose change, FF1600 racer Ben Mitchell (Formula Atlantic Modus M1) scored two fourths in F2 company, Sunday's sub-1m14s laps being very impressive.

Fleming hounded O'Connell in the two-litre sportscar decider, then pounced as the latter's left front tyre deflated at the complex. Martin crept back to the pits for a wheel change and hurtled back to fourth.

Cosimo Turizio retired his Osella PA6 when its throttle jammed open and Michele Liguori spun his Lola

T296 at Campbell having run with the Brits. The rapid Classic Clubman U2s of Ray Mallock and Mark Charteris thus claimed podium spots.

Having dominated Donington Park's Historic FF1600 opener a fortnight previously, Nelson Rowe scored another runaway victory over Benn Simms (see panel, right), but the vet was shadowed for every inch of the Historic FF2000 opener by Callum Grant.

After a single test in father Nigel's Delta, the teenager matched the Reynard driver's moves, but, not unnaturally, wasn't quite as confident in traffic first time out. "Callum kept me more than honest, which bodes well for more great races," grinned Rowe.

The first HSCC Super Touring double-header started with 10 cars, but Scots Stewart Whyte (ex-David Leslie Honda Accord) and Derek Palmer (ex-Laurent Aiello Nissan Primera) enjoyed Sunday's thrash in which Dave Jarman (ex-Matt Neal Primera) jinked from the back to secure third as Whyte won to complete a double.

Restarted after Neil Brown's Lotus Cortina, running fourth, rolled into Goodwood corner without injury to the driver, the Historic Saloon round featured Mike Gardiner rumbling his Ford Falcon from the pitlane to chase winner Richard Dutton's Mustang over the line.



Burroughs (left) and Tizzard lead Guards field away



Tomlin's Ferrari beat Lotus of Ford in 70s Road Sports

Former F3 racer 'Tim Davies' Cortina took a thump in its rump, but the Welshman prevented a V8 rout by ousting Warren Briggs's Mustang from third. Simon Benoy's giant-killing Imp got as high as fourth, but double champion Roger Godfrey retired his Mini Cooper S.

Sports 2000 Duratec ace Neil Burroughs drove a blinder to land a maiden Guards Trophy win for Jonathan Loader's Chevron B8. 'Sparky' bested the Colman family, Steve Hodges and Charlie Allison in B8s. Feisty Stuart Tizzard got his Lenham among them before spinning out, denying son George a shot.

Defending champion Nick Fleming (Lotus Elan) was top points scorer from the pre-66 classes, fifth overall, ahead of a great dad-and-lad scrap for early Sports Racing honours in which Mike and Andrew Hibberd (Lotus 23B) pipped Neil and George Daws (Merlyn Mk6A).

Earlier on Saturday, young Hibberd had trounced the Formula

Junior opposition. Jonathon Hughes' bold first-lap dive between Mark Woodhouse and Pete Morton annexed second, under siege from the latter, but Hibberd was gone. Stuart Roach left front-engined rivals far behind.

David Tomlin (Ferrari 308 GTB) passed and shook off Oliver Ford (Lotus Europa) for a maiden 70s Road Sports win, leaving Julian and Charles Barter unusually subdued behind. When transmission failure thwarted Historic leader Andy Shepherd's Lotus 7, Roger Waite, Peter Shaw and Larry Kennedy landed an Elan 1-2-3.

CRC champion Ian Jones (Lotus 59) found Thruxton "a ballsy circuit" on his first acquaintance with it, the Kiwi finishing way clear of Stuart Tizzard's 1000cc F3 Chevron. Tony Keele spun at the chicane while trying to rob fellow Palliser driver Andy Jarvis of third, and lost fourth to a resurgent Mike Scott by 0.002s!

● Marcus Pye

Historic FF1600

Needell enjoys FF1600 return as Rowe takes dominant win

FORMER GRAND PRIX DRIVER turned TV presenter Tiff Needell could not live with previous Historic Formula Ford champions Nelson Rowe (Crossle) or Benn Simms (Jomo), but his hard-earned third place warmed the sizeable audience and won rapturous applause from every marshals' post.

Back in the AUTOSPORT prize Lotus 69 he won in 1970, 14-times Le Mans starter Needell needed all the guile learned in his early career to reach the head of what initially was a six-car chasing pack. A classic last-lap move on Simon Toyne (Lola) into the chicane snatched the place and he joyfully punched the air at the chequer.

"That was fabulous, just like motor racing should be," exuded the 1975 Townsend Thoresen FF1600 champ on the podium, after finishing just over 20 seconds behind runaway winner Rowe. "We were overtaking three times per lap,

but the guys played it straight and made racing room. I'm absolutely exhausted but enjoyed every second.

"I scored my first win at Thruxton in May 1972 [in a Crossle 25F], so it will always be a special place for me, but to be out in the Lotus again was wonderful. If I hadn't won that car, nothing that followed in my career would have followed..."

Toyne and Andrew Ames (Jamun) wanted third just as much, while Josh West (Merlyn) battled from 17th to sixth in a race red-flagged on lap one to remove third qualifier Sam Mitchell's Merlyn 'tricycle' from the complex. Having qualified father Ray's U2 a brilliant second, Michael Mallock did not restart with a steering rack issue.

HISTORIC FF1600 (15 LAPS) 1 Nelson Rowe (Crossle 20F); 2 Benn Simms (Jomo JMR7) +18.104s; 3 Tiff Needell (Lotus 69); 4 Simon Toyne (Lola T200); 5 Andrew Ames (Jamun T2); 6 Josh West (Merlyn Mk20A). **Class winner** Daniel Pickett (Merlyn Mk20). **Fastest lap** Rowe 1m24.477s (100.40mph).



Needell loved being back in FF1600 scrap

JOCHEN RINDT TROPHY F2 (BOTH 17 LAPS)

1 Nick Fleming (Ralt-BDG RT1); 2 Martin O'Connell (Chevron-BDG B40); 3 Andy Smith (March-BDG 742); 4 Ben Mitchell (Modus-BDA M1); 5 Jeremy Wheatley (Surtees-Hart BDA TS15); 6 Chris Lillingston-Price (Tecno-FVA T70). **Class winners** Mitchell; Lillingston-Price; Paul Dibden (Ralt-Toyota RT1). **Fastest lap** Fleming 1m10.374s (120.52mph). **RACE 2** 1 O'Connell; 2 Smith +2.415s; 3 Fleming; 4 Mitchell; 5 Peter Williams (March-Hart 782); 6 Lillingston-Price. **CW** Mitchell; Lillingston-Price; Dibden. **FL** Smith 1m09.504s (122.03mph).

MARTINI TROPHY (BOTH 17 LAPS)

1 O'Connell (Chevron-BDG B36); 2 Fleming (Chevron-BDG B23/36) +28.469s; 3 Cosimo Turizio (Osella-BMW PA4); 4 Ray Mallock (Mallock-Ford U2 Mk18); 5 Michele Liguri (Lola-BMW T296); 6 Jonathan Loader (Chevron-BDG B19). **CW** Mallock; Loader; Chris Snowdon (Tiga-Ford SC81). **FL** O'Connell 1m11.597s (118.46mph). **RACE 2** 1 Fleming; 2 Mallock +29.998s; 3 Mark Charteris (Mallock-Ford U2 Mk20/21); 4 O'Connell; 5 Loader; 6 Peter Needham (Tiga-Ford SC80). **CW** Mallock; Needham. **FL** O'Connell 1m12.459s (117.05mph).

HISTORIC FF2000 (14 LAPS)

1 Nelson Rowe (Reynard SF79); 2 Calum Grant (Delta T78) +1.708s; 3 Andrew Park (Reynard SF81); 4 Colin Wright (SF79); 5 Andy Huxtable (Lola T580); 6 Michael Thurston (Royale RP30). **CW** Trevor Knight (Tiga SF78). **FL** Rowe 1m20.527s (105.32mph).

SUPER TOURING CARS (BOTH 15 LAPS)

1 Stewart Whyte (Honda Accord); 2 Derek Palmer (Nissan Primera) +18.709s; 3 Neil Smith (Alfa Romeo 156); 4 Graham Wait (Ford Sierra RS Cosworth); 5 Mark Smith (BMW M3 E30 DTM); 6 Stephen Dymoke (Alfa Romeo 156). **CW** N Smith; Wait. **FL** Whyte 1m19.152s (107.15mph) **establishes record.** **RACE 2** 1 Whyte; 2 Palmer +3.070s; 3 Dave Jarman (Nissan Primera); 4 N Smith; 5 Wait; 6 Dymoke. **CW** Smith. **FL** Whyte 1m19.330s (106.91mph).

HSR HISTORIC TOURING CARS (10 LAPS)

1 Richard Dutton (Ford Mustang); 2 Mike Gardiner (Ford Falcon) +1.247s; 3 Tim Davies (Ford Lotus Cortina); 4 Warren Briggs (Mustang); 5 Jonathan Gomm (BMW 1800); 6 Steve Shuttleworth (Cortina). **CW** Davies; Shuttleworth; Simon Benoy (Hillman Imp); Roger Cope (BMW 1800);

David Dunnell (Morris Mini Cooper). **FL** Gardiner 1m32.971s (91.22mph).

GUARDS TROPHY, GT & SPORTS RACING CARS (27 LAPS)

1 Neil Burroughs (Chevron-BMW B8); 2 Mark & Hugh Colman (B8) +45.342s; 3 Steve Hodges (B8); 4 Charles Allison (B8); 5 Nick Fleming (Lotus Elan 26R); 6 Michael & Andrew Hibberd (Lotus-t/c 23B); 7 Neil & George Daws (Merlyn-t/c Mk6A); 8 Nick Thompson/Sean McClurg (Chevron-BMW B6); 9 Paul Tooms (Lotus Elan 26R); 10 Chris Scragg (Jaguar E-type) **CW** Fleming; Hibberd/Hibberd; Scragg; Chris Atkinson/Frank Lyons (Piper-t/c); John Spiers (TVR Griffith); Allan Ross-Jones (Triumph TR4); Peter Adams (Turner Mk2); Steve Mills (MGB). **FL** Burroughs 1m24.678s (100.16mph).

HISTORIC FORMULA JUNIOR (14 LAPS)

1 Andrew Hibberd (Lotus 22); 2 Jonathon Hughes (Brabham BT6) +13.164s; 3 Pete Morton (Lightning Envoyette); 4 Jack Woodhouse (Lotus 20/22); 5 Michael Schryver (Lotus 27); 6 Mark Pangborn (Lotus 20B). **CW** Andrew Wilkinson (Lynx T3); Stuart Roach (Alexis Mk2); Robert Barrie (Lotus 18); James Hicks (Caravelle Mk3); Michael Waller

(PM Poggi). **FL** Hibberd 1m25.576s (99.11mph).

70s ROAD SPORTS (14 LAPS)

1 David Tomlin (Ferrari 308GTB); 2 Oliver Ford (Lotus Europa) +3.574s; 3 Julian Barter (TVR 3000M); 4 Charles Barter (Datsun 240Z); 5 Brian Jarvis (Porsche 924); 6 Bob Trotter (Alfa Romeo 2000GTV). **CW** Ford; Jarvis; Chris Allford (MG Midget). **FL** Tomlin 1m29.879s (94.36mph) **record.**

HISTORIC ROAD SPORTS (13 LAPS)

1 Roger Waite (Lotus Elan S1); 2 Peter Shaw (Elan S1) +2.259s; 3 Larry Kennedy (Elan S4); 4 Simon Haughton (Lotus 7); 5 Jonathan Stringer (Lotus 7 S2); 6 Martin Edridge (Ford Mustang). **CW** Edridge; Jim Gathercole (MG Midget); Malcolm Verey (Allard-Cadillac J2 BB); John Shaw (Porsche 911). **FL** Andy Shepherd (Lotus 7 S2) 1m32.256s (91.93mph).

CLASSIC RACING CARS (15 LAPS)

1 Ian Jones (Lotus-t/c 59); 2 Stuart Tizzard (Chevron-MAE B15C) +21.437s; 3 Andy Jarvis (Palliser-t/c WDB2); 4 Mike Scott (Brabham-t/c BT28); 5 Tony Keele (Palliser-t/c WDB3); 6 Josh West (Merlyn Mk20A). **CW** Tizzard; West. **FL** Jones 1m26.157s (98.44mph).

Ballard's SEAT
overcame the
Peugeot challenge



OLIVER READ

CCRC CASTLE COMBE, APRIL 1

Ballard dances to the front

A MAIDEN CASTLE COMBE SALOON win for Rob Ballard was the highlight of Howard's Day, Easter Monday's opening chapter in a brave new era of club racing at the Wiltshire circuit, run in memory of its saviour Howard Strawford by the resident CCRC in conjunction with the BRSCC.

After early leader Mark Wyatt's polesitting Vauxhall Astra tripped over veteran Anne King's MG during lappery, Ballard sizzled his SEAT Leon Cupra turbo past defending champion Will di Claudio's Peugeot 106 GTI for a well-paced success.

Adrian Slade drove his 106 GTI to a career-best third ahead of Volvo stalwart Julian Ellison and returnee John Barnard — after a decade away — in the quickest of three Astra VXRs that made their series debuts.

Top qualifier Steven Jensen was let off the hook in the FF1600 opening counter when the shadowing

Roger Orgee Jr buckled a corner of his car at Bobbies.

Adam Higgins found Luke Cooper's Swift backwards as the field scrambled into Quarry first time round and dropped to 10th having avoided contact. His subsequent rise to second earned him the Abrahams Jewellers Driver of the Day Award. James Raven, local teenager Ash Crossey and Nathan Ward — back in his old Class B Swift after 18 months — were next, ahead of former champ Ed Moore.

Andrew Shanley hurtled his now dry-sumped Radical Prosport clear of the Sports & GT pack either side of a safety car period to move Tim Woodman's Caterham from the tyre wall at Tower. Double champion Simon Tilling's SR3 Turbo broke early, while hard-compound Dunlop tyres restricted Manhal Allos' SR8 efforts in second place. Poleman Josh Smith was pleased

with third place in his Wiltshire College-run PR6.

The Mighty Mini and Super Mighty Mini double-headers were the class of the BRSCC one-make grids. Jonathan Lewis and Damien Harrington won a frenetic battle for supremacy apiece among the more basic 65bhp machines in what was an object lesson in slipstreaming between the deviations at the Esses and Bobbies.

Lewis (in the Bailey Caravans car) led most of the opener, although Ralph Budd jostled up from seventh to nip ahead briefly before retiring. Harrington, Charlie Budd, Ian Slark and David Hale were within a second of Lewis at the chequer.

Harrington and impressive 16-year-old autograss graduate Zack Booth squeezed Lewis back to third during the later race, which circuit racing debutant Booth headed boldly a couple of times. He only lost second place to Lewis by leaving a chink of a gap into Tower on the final lap. Booth is clearly one to watch.

Elliot Stafford took up where he left off at last year's Donington Park finale, triumphing both times among the 90bhp 'Supers'. He pipped Pat Ford each time, with Jamie White and Bob Bennett sharing the third places. Former Mighty champ Louise Inch, darling of the spectator banks, improved to 10th in the event closer.

Former Porsche Carrera Cup GB racer Lewis Hopkins has taken up [VW] Golf and won both Production GTI races, the second under pressure from Simon Hill until his challenger kicked up the dirt at Bobbies. Craig Roberts annihilated the 8-valve class record, but only just bested Nick Jarvis in race two.

The Mazda MX5 SuperCup opened quietly with just seven cars, but Andrew Clarkson and Matthew Davies each claimed a narrow victory over the other, and 2012 Locost champion Michael Comber did well to split them a couple of times second time out.

● Marcus Pye

CASTLE COMBE SALOONS (15 LAPS)

1 Rob Ballard (SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T); 2 Will di Claudio (Peugeot 106 GTI) +1.533s; 3 Adrian Slade (106 GTI); 4 Julian Ellison (Vauxhall Astra VXR); 5 John Barnard (Astra VXR); 6 Tony Dolley (Peugeot 206 GTI). **Class winners** di Claudio; Dolley; Russell Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa). **Fastest lap** Ballard 1m16.147s (87.45mph).

CASTLE COMBE FF1600 (15 LAPS)

1 Steven Jensen (Spectrum 011b); 2 Adam Higgins (Van Diemen J12) +12.510s; 3 James Raven (Swift SC10); 4 Ashley Crossey (Spectrum 011c); 5 Nathan Ward (Swift SC95); 6 Ed Moore (Ray GR11). **CW** Ward; Iain Houston (Van Diemen RF89). **FL** Roger Orgee (Van Diemen RF00) 1m11.791s (92.76mph).

CASTLE COMBE SPORTS & GT (15 LAPS)

1 Andrew Shanley (Radical-Suzuki Prosport); 2 Manhal Allos (Radical-RPE SR8) +4.988s; 3 Josh Smith (Radical-Suzuki PR6); 4 Darcy Smith (Radical-Suzuki SR4); 5 Chris Child (Nemesis-Vauxhall RME98); 6 Mike Roberts (ADR-Ford Prototype). **CW** Allos; Perry Waddams (TVR Tuscan-Chevrolet). **FL** Shanley 1m03.527s (104.82mph).

BRSCC MIGHTY MINIS (BOTH 13 LAPS)

1 Jonathan Lewis; 2 Damien Harrington +0.106s;

3 Charlie Budd; 4 Ian Slark; 5 David Hale; 6 Paul Chater. **FL** Budd 1m31.660s (72.65mph). **RACE 2 1 Harrington;** 2 Lewis +0.153s; 3 Zack Booth; 4 Hale; 5 Steven Rideout; 6 Slark. **FL** Slark 1m31.973s (72.40mph).

BRSCC SUPER MIGHTY MINIS (BOTH 14 LAPS)

1 Elliot Stafford; 2 Patrick Ford +0.201s; 3 Jamie White; 4 Bob Bennetts; 5 Peter Tervet; 6 Scott Kendall. **FL** White 1m24.963s (78.37mph) record.

RACE 2 1 Stafford; 2 Ford +0.136s; 3 Bennetts;

4 White; 5 Neven Kirkpatrick; 6 Kendall. **FL** Kendall 1m25.836s (77.58mph).

PRODUCTION GTI (BOTH 11 LAPS) 1 Lewis Hopkins;

2 Simon Hill +5.519s; 3 John Mawdsley; 4 James Colbourne; 5 Tim Hartland; 6 Chris Webb. **CW** Craig Roberts. **FL** Hopkins 1m21.417s (81.79mph) record.

RACE 2 1 Hopkins; 2 Hill +1.237s; 3 Mawdsley;

4 Hartland; 5 Webb; 6 Martyn Walsh. **CW** Roberts. **FL** Hopkins 1m21.259s (81.95mph) record.

BRSCC MAZDA MX5 SUPERCUP (BOTH 15 LAPS)

1 Andrew Clarkson; 2 Matthew Davies +0.275s; 3 Mike Comber; 4 Julian Taylor; 5 Simon Fleet; 6 Will Chappell. **FL** Davies 1m20.896s (83.32mph).

RACE 2 1 Davies; 2 Clarkson +6.569s; 3 Comber;

4 Chappell; 5 Taylor; 6 Fleet. **FL** Davies 1m20.384s (82.84mph).



OLIVER READ

Lewis took a win and
a second in close
Mighty Mini scraps

750MC MALLORY PARK, APRIL 1



Hodkin and the 750 Formula field get going at Mallory

Double high for Hodkin

DAVE HODKIN OVERCAME GEARBOX and electrical issues to take a double victory in the opening rounds of the 750 Formula Championship, the former Formula Vee driver adding to the two wins he recorded last season.

The two front-row starters – Daves Hodkin and Robson – both plunged down the order when the lights went out, allowing Bill Rutter to steal a march. However, Hodkin, in the HRD Mk1 he put together to win first time out at Cadwell Park, grabbed second back from Chris Gough (CGR2evo) at the Esses on lap two. He then took the lead from Rutter there two tours later.

Hodkin marched on, with Gough pleased with a runner-up finish after a wretched 2012 season. Having been 10th at the end of lap one, reigning champion Robson – in the SDAR he built 30 years ago, although it has evolved much since – relegated Rutter with just over two laps to run to complete the podium.

Hodkin and Gough repeated their one-two in the second encounter, but Rutter got revenge on Robson, passing him at the Esses on lap 14 of 17.

Billy Albone, the winner of five races last year, failed to take either start after his Batten blew a head gasket in practice.

Peter Chattin won twice in the 750 Trophy. The HSC racer, who drives back from Spain for each event, found opposition from two main rivals. The Austin 7 of Christian Pedersen led for much of race one, while Ben Myall's Gerrell Mk1 briefly passed Chattin towards the end of race two.

Lee Scott blitzed the first two Classic Stock Hatch rounds. The engine of his Ford Fiesta XR2i briefly cut out as he clattered the Esses kerbs on the opening lap, and he dropped to fourth. But he surged back to the front on lap four, surviving contact with Martin Cayzer's XR2i at the hairpin on lap two.

Andy Philpotts (XR2i) eventually took the runner-up spot, six seconds adrift, with Imran Khan – delayed in the Cayzer/Scott clash – producing a brilliant fightback to third. Alas, Khan's radiator was punctured in that incident. He couldn't fix the leak, so his racing was over.

In race two, Scott again had a six-second margin over Philpotts by flagfall, with Matt Rozier's Peugeot 205 GTi clinging on to third place.

Matt Fincham's development Renault Clio was first past the chequered flag in both Stock Hatch races, but Tom Bell took maximum points as ex-autogross drivers locked



Fincham's Clio leads the hordes of Saxos in Stock Hatch

out both podiums. Bell, in his second season, had the edge over less experienced opponents.

Paul Jarvis showed well in the early stages, running a best-ever second before Rob Drake past him on the run to Gerard's. He dropped to the back with a spin soon after, leaving Drake to defeat the combative Deegan siblings.

Bell beat Shayne Deegan resoundingly later on, with brother Lee third of the points scorers home. Drake, who made a poor start, had

a couple of offs and finished his race well down the order.

Alastair Garratt took the first Locost race, capitalising on the inexperience of Danny Andrew, who outraked himself at the Esses on the final lap when leading. Andrew bounced back with a slender defeat of Lee Bankhurst (who passed a yellow flag on the last lap, but didn't see a green) in race two, before Bankhurst took his first win since his debut in a tense finale.

● Ian Sowman



Chattin narrowly beat Pedersen in first 750 Trophy thrash

750 FORMULA (BOTH 17 LAPS) 1 Dave Hodkin (HRD Mk1); 2 Chris Gough (CGR2evo) +4.70s; 3 Dave Robson (SDAR/83); 4 Bill Rutter (Darvi Mk5); 5 Mick Harris (Darvi 877); 6 Robin Gearing (Darvi P88). **Fastest lap** Robson 50.69s (95.88mph). **RACE 2** 1 Hodkin; 2 Gough +7.67s; 3 Rutter; 4 Robson; 5 Harris; 6 Bob Simpson (SS/F). **FL** Hodkin 50.88s (95.52mph). **750 TROPHY (BOTH 14 LAPS)** 1 Peter Chattin (HSC); 2 Christian Pedersen (Austin 7) +0.89s; 3 Ben Myall (Gerrell Mk1); 4 Don Rawson (Rawson Climax); 5 John Skeavington (Austin 7 Ulster); 6 Helen Gilfillan (Centaur Mk16). **Class winners** Skeavington; Fred Walmsley (Cooper MkVII). **FL** Pedersen 59.48s (81.71mph). **RACE 2** 1 Chattin; 2 Myall +0.48s; 3 Pedersen; 4 Rawson; 5 Gilfillan; 6 Skeavington. **CW** Skeavington; Walmsley. **FL** Myall 59.43s (81.78mph). **CLASSIC STOCK HATCH (BOTH 15 LAPS)** 1 Lee Scott (Ford Fiesta XR2i); 2 Andy Philpotts (Fiesta XR2i) +5.77s; 3 Imran Khan (Fiesta XR2); 4 Martin Cayzer (Fiesta XR2i); 5 Martyn Fowdrey (Fiesta XR2); 6 Dan

Gibson (Fiesta XR2). **FL** Scott 55.74s (87.19mph). **RACE 2** 1 Scott; 2 Philpotts +6.10s; 3 Matt Rozier (Peugeot 205 GTi); 4 Cayzer; 5 Fowdrey; 6 Gibson. **FL** Scott 56.18s (86.51mph). **STOCK HATCH (15 LAPS)** 1 Matt Fincham (Renault Clio); 2 Tom Bell (Citroen Saxo) +0.93s; 3 Rob Drake (Saxo); 4 Shayne Deegan (Saxo); 5 Lee Deegan (Saxo); 6 Andrew Tibbs (Saxo). **CW** Bell. **FL** Bell 54.69s (88.86mph). **RACE 2 (16 LAPS)** 1 Fincham; 2 Bell +1.80s; 3 S Deegan; 4 L Deegan; 5 Tibbs; 6 Jake Farndon (Saxo). **CW** Bell. **FL** Bell 54.75s (88.7mph). **LOCOST (ALL 15 LAPS)** 1 Alastair Garratt; 2 Richard Jenkins +0.10s; 3 Danny Andrew; 4 Shaun Brame; 5 James McAllister; 6 Antony May. **FL** Jenkins 56.53s (85.97mph). **RACE 2** 1 Andrew; 2 Lee Bankhurst +0.06s; 3 David Boucher; 4 Brame; 5 Steve Wells; 6 Sian Stafford-Atkinson. **FL** Mathew Gilmour 56.39s (86.19mph). **RACE 3** 1 Bankhurst; 2 Garratt +0.26s; 3 Jenkins; 4 Gilmour; 5 McAllister; 6 Tim Neat. **FL** Richard Bradley 56.61s (85.85mph).

Single-seater saviour?

BRDC F4 is new for this year – and its stated aim is to solve the crippling-cost problem of professional British single-seater racing. BEN ANDERSON investigates and samples the car

The death of Formula Renault UK in early 2012 tore like an earthquake through Britain's domestic single-seater structure. Suddenly, the de facto training ground of choice for budding British F1 drivers was no more. All earthquakes create aftershocks. One of the biggest is the subsequent decimation of British F3. Another is that we now have three different series scrambling to fill the void Formula Renault UK has left behind.

FR UK's lower-level club cousin – Formula Renault BARC – enjoyed an immediate boost as a result. Last year's grids topped 20 cars, and will be strong again this year owing to the proven Tatuus FR2000 chassis and sub-£80,000 budgets. British Formula Ford has added wings to its latest generation EcoBoost cars and joined the TOCA package. Ford is trying to directly fill the vacuum left by FR UK. Coming up fast on both is Jonathan Palmer's brand-new BRDC F4 championship.

This is Palmer's attempt to fill a gap he perceives in the single-seater

market. With British F3 on its knees and FR UK no more, Palmer became concerned about the knock-on effect for business at his four circuits.

"It really came about when the new Formula Ford EcoBoost was announced in 2011," Palmer explains. "We want to see big grids in junior single-seaters across all our circuits, the way it used to be in the 1980s and '90s. I was looking forward to the

new EcoBoost car coming out, but was disappointed at the cost of it. I was very concerned that it was going to be a barrier to big grids and it turned out to be just that. I think they got carried away."

Frustrated at the lack of EcoBoost cars on Formula Ford grids last year, Palmer decided to act, though he'd "rather someone else had done it".

"But no one else was going to, so I

thought I would," he says. "I've always had a passion for affordable single-seater racing. Through Formula Palmer Audi [which ran from 1998 until 2010] and Formula 2 [2009-12] we've learned a lot, so I felt well-equipped to do this."

Palmer sat down with BRDC president Derek Warwick during last year's AUTOSPORT International show in Birmingham and thrashed out his plan for a new formula.

Entering into a partnership with the most famous racing drivers' club in the world was a key part of driving Palmer's project forward. "Both MSV and the BRDC are big brands, but more importantly both have a huge amount of expertise," says Palmer. "We're both passionate about doing the best job for the drivers. This is not a big money-making exercise."

Convinced there was a place in the world for this new series, Palmer sketched out the car he wanted for its centrepiece and charged legendary ex-Formula Ford constructor Ralph Firman with building it.

Palmer decided it had to be slicks



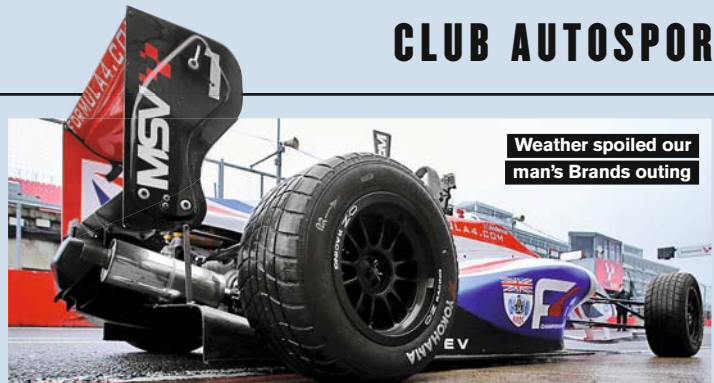
MSV's Richard Gates shows Anderson around the cockpit



JAKOBEBREY

BRDC F4 TECH SPEC

- CHASSIS** RFR-built MSV F4-013 spaceframe
- ENGINE** 2.0-litre Duratec with Cosworth electronics
- POWER** 185bhp
- GEARBOX** Sadev six-speed sequential with paddleshift
- BRAKES** AP Racing calipers
- TYRES** Yokohama slicks and wets
- PRICE** £34,250 (includes one-year engine lease)



JAKOBEBREY

DRIVING THE BRDC F4

The seemingly perpetual winter weather has hindered early running of the MSV F4-013, and also spoiled AUTOSPORT's first taste of the car that's trying to shake up this country's junior single-seater scene.

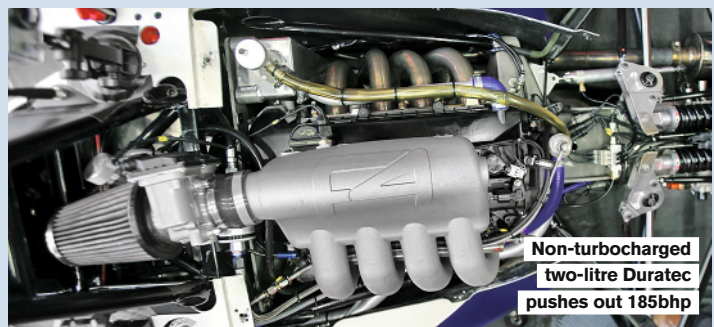
Heavy rain fell during the half-hour build up to my run at Brands Hatch's MSVR media event on March 20. This rendered attempts to gauge the car's potential redundant. The track was cold and slippery and the car was too stiffly sprung for the adverse conditions.

From the driver's perspective the car is well put together and the controls are ergonomic, though the cockpit is quite narrow and cramped. Power delivery from the Cosworth-

controlled Duratec engine is very smooth, though it does have problems starting if it's too cold.

The bespoke display on the steering wheel oddly emphasises gears over more useful information like lap times, and there is some inconsistency from the autoblip system on downshift. But these are all bugs that can easily be ironed out.

The test hack has already beaten 2012 (wingless) Formula Ford EcoBoost lap times on the Snetterton 300 circuit and MSV insiders are confident there is more to come. Speaking of which, we have a second run planned at Snetterton on April 10. So I should be able to tell you more after that. If the weather plays ball...



Non-turbocharged two-litre Duratec pushes out 185bhp

JAKOBEBREY

and wings, because "non-winged cars are an anachronism", and powered by an engine producing somewhere between 150 and 200bhp. He abandoned the turbocharged propulsion used in FPA and F2 in favour of normally aspirated two-litre Ford Duratec engines developed by Cosworth. "It's not necessary to have turbocharging for that amount of power," argues Palmer. "Turbos are effective for power, but there are complications with weight, reliability and equivalency."

Palmer also abandoned the centrally-run ethos of his previous single-seater championships, though this one will also be single-make.

"I think we made a mistake in the past," Palmer admits. "Running championships centrally is not the way to go."

But single-make is? "If you allow open competition you will drive cost up and equality down," he asserts.

Teams have been welcomed into the MSV fold but they will operate within strict technical limits. Perhaps the most unusual is sealed, non-

adjustable Bilstein dampers, specially produced for the series. This is to prevent teams finding an unfair advantage through dismantling and servicing the components. "It's an unusual step but we had to go that far," says F4 operations manager Richard Gates. "That's where better-funded teams will spend money to find an advantage and we're trying to stop that."

Only three sizes of front and rear springs are permitted and anti-roll bars are fixed in size, although they are adjustable. Teams can set wing angles, camber, castor, rideheight, and choose their own brake pads. But that's it.

Drivers get one set of Yokohama slick tyres per race weekend, but there are no restrictions on testing (the main way MSV hopes to make money from BRDC F4). The championship will feature 24 races across eight MSVR meetings, including a DTM support slot at Brands Hatch in May. Ever aware of the need for strong promotion, Palmer has also negotiated bespoke

ITV4 TV coverage for the series.

It has certainly struck a chord with the industry. The first batch of 24 MSV F4-013s sold out within a month of last September's launch, and the inaugural grid has 15 confirmed entries with three weeks still to go until the first round on the Silverstone GP circuit. Palmer is convinced MSV's attention to detail is paying off.

"Some people hold the misconception that you can produce a modern single-seater for £15,000-20,000, but you just can't do it," he says. "The mandatory FIA safety requirements add £5-10,000 to the cost of a car. Everyone thinks we need low-cost racing but it doesn't just happen, you have to implement real material things.

"I'm determined this will be the championship of choice for serious F1 aspirants all over the world," Palmer says. "We've thought very carefully about what will do the job, and six months on from launching the concept there's pretty much nothing I would change." ❄️

LEAVE US ALONE, FIA

FIA Single Seater Commission president Gerhard Berger recently outlined his vision for a new global junior single-seater formula, to begin in 2014.

Palmer feels his ex-F1 rival's utopian vision is unrealistic: "I really don't think there's a great case for commonality [of rules] across nations below F3," he says. "There are different demands for different national markets. It's such a challenge to make something affordable and each country has different levels of affluence and expertise.

"I think the market at national level is best served by letting countries choose what solution is best for their particular economy."

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THIS WEEK

LETTERS • BEST PICS • LATEST GEAR • ON TRACK & SCREEN • ONLINE

What you think of the motorsport news of the past week



Can the tyre situation be so bad when the racing is close and unpredictable?

THOMPSON/GETTY

Everyone just has to manage

With tyre management being a major issue of contention, one has to remember that the rules are the same for all.

Pirelli has played to the FIA brief and it is the job of teams to optimise the tyres to their own packages.

Although purists may argue that

Formula 1 is all about innovation and speed, rather than controlled management, the current situation does produce good, close and at times unpredictable racing and that's got to be good for the fans.

Michael Brierley, Stalybridge, Cheshire

As a long-time subscriber to

AUTOSPORT, I am always impressed by your reporting accuracy and the ways you keep the magazine fresh and 'live'!

However, I feel it necessary to express some concern over the recent changes to race results. I really don't get this – given the amount of multi-race formats, it simply doesn't make sense to print just the race-one results in full.

Ian Keyworth

By email

We think you'll approve of the changes we have made in response to feedback – ed

I have written to the FIA

pointing out that if Sebastian Vettel did not know what he was doing when he overtook Mark Webber, then I would question his mental fitness to drive an F1 car and ask them to consider withdrawing his superlicence while he

is investigated. I pointed out that a driver who was not in control of his own actions would not be fit to drive on public roads.

Dr Vernon Coleman MB ChB DSc

By email

Vettel's behaviour at Sepang

puts him in the league of other 'greatest' drivers. Senna, Schumacher and Alonso have all been selfish and ruthless, doing whatever is necessary – proper or not – when their superiority is challenged. Team orders do not constrain them.

It seems selfishness is what sets the greatest drivers apart from the merely great.

Bruce Merchant

Big Sur, California

There have been plenty of

column inches given to the debate surrounding team orders after the dramas and upsets at the Malaysian GP.

Wherever you stand in this debate, I think one thing that all can agree on is that all team orders really achieved was three drivers on the podium, none of whom was pleased to be there. A disappointment for all F1 fans, I think.

Lauren Bentley

Biggin Hill, Kent

I have now calmed down

enough to give a considered view on the lead change at the Malaysian GP.

Vettel should be suspended from the next grand prix by whoever is genuinely in charge at Red Bull for demonstrating such gross insubordination.

In my working days such breathtaking impertinence would certainly have been dealt with rather more severely.

Certain principles should be considered above mere championships.

Brian Winstone

Saffron Walden, Essex

In pictures

Our lensmen snapping from the south of France to the garden of England

LMP1 PRIVATEERS HOG THE LIMELIGHT

Neel Jani (right) topped last week's WEC test at Paul Ricard from Danny Watts (left), as big guns Audi and Toyota stayed at home



DPPI



EBREY/LAT

NOT A VERY HAPPY RETURN

Colin Turkington salvaged three points-scoring results from his BTCC return at Brands Hatch despite this off at Paddock Hill Bend

AND YOU ARE? Nikolaus Mayr-Melnhof says a big "well done" to Sebastien Loeb after their FIA GT duel at Nogaro on Sunday. Five-time grand prix winner John Watson watches on!



VIMAGES/FABRE

RED-HOT GINETTA Colin White's Ginetta G55 went up in smoke during the second British GT race at Oulton Park on Easter Monday – and it may spell the end of his and Tom Sharp's season



EBREY/LAT

In the shops

Desirable new releases

LOTUS F1 2013 CLOTHING

£5.99-£119.99 – autosport.com/shop

The new-for-2013 official Lotus F1 team merchandise includes everything from £5.99 lanyards to £119.99 team jackets, with the team cap (£24.99) and zip polo (£62.99) pictured doing their best to bridge the gap somewhere in between. The entire range features the corporate colours of the Enstone squad, as well as the logos of the official partners. Check the website for the full collection, and don't forget you can also choose items with Kimi Raikkonen or Romain Grosjean branding, depending on your specific allegiance.



EBBRO LOTUS 72E 1:20 KIT

£49.95 – grandprixmodels.com

Following plastic model firm Ebbro's stunning Lotus 49 and Gold Leaf and Rob Walker 72C 1:20 kits comes the equally fabulous 72E in iconic JPS colours (branding decals not included, but available separately). The detail of the kit is stunning, although you will have to face the dilemma of choosing between Emmo and Ronnie. We'd just build both...



EAU ROUGE T-SHIRT

£25 – t-lab.eu

This funky graphic of the Spa circuit's notorious Eau Rouge corner is part of a new series of 'great bends of the world' that have been lovingly immortalised onto four-colour, soft-cotton, heavyweight T-shirts. Also available are the Nurburgring's legendary Karussell and Monza's infamous Parabolica.



What's on

Your guide to the best events taking place in the UK and around the world – plus TV and online

On track in the UK

SNETTERTON

MSVR
April 6-7
Admission £13 on the gate each day, £16 weekend (online)
Tel: 01953 887303

Lotus Cup UK, Lotus Elise Trophy, Mini Challenge, Radical SR3 Challenge, Radical Clubman's Cup, Production BMW, Racing Saloons.

DONINGTON PARK

BARC
April 6
Admission £13 on the gate
Tel: 01332 810048

Motors TV Live Raceday for Porsche Club, Classic Formula Ford, Mazda MaX5, Citroen 2CV, Kumho BMW, Clubmans, and an MG Invitation.



OULTON PARK

BARC
April 6
Admission £13 on the gate, £10 online
Tel: 01829 760301

Legends, Pre-93 Touring Cars, Classic Saloon & Historic Touring Cars, Classic Thunder, North West Sports Saloons, Pre-83 Touring Cars & Pre-2005 Production Touring Cars, Blue Oval Saloons.

SILVERSTONE

AMOC
April 6
Admission £10
Tel: 0844 3728 260

AMOC Intermarque, Equipe GTS, 1950s Sports Cars, Aston Martin GT4 Challenge, Ferrari Classic, Ferrari Open.



ROCKINGHAM

BRSCC
April 6-7
Admission £15 on the gate each day, £10 in advance
Tel: 01536 500500

Ford Fiestas, Fiesta Junior, Toyo Tires Porsche, Mazda MX5s, Formula Jedi, Alfa Romeo, Euro Saloon & Sportscar, Nippon Challenge, MR2 Race Series.

DONINGTON PARK

MGCC
April 7
Admission £15
Tel: 01332 810048

MG Trophy, Peter Best Challenge, Metro Cup, Midget Challenge, BCV8, Thoroughbred Sportscar, Cockshoot Cup.

LYDDEN

SEMSEC
April 6
Admission TBC
Tel: 01304 831715

Saloons & Sports Car, Sports Racing Cars & Kit Cars, Open Single Seater Challenge, South East Challenge, Meridian 14/16 Challenge, RAFMSA Challenge.

PEMBREY

BARC
April 6-7
Admission £12
Tel: 01554 891042

British Trucks supported by Pickups, Caterham Graduates, Ma5da MX5s, and Welsh Sports & Saloons.

KNOCKHILL

SMRC
April 7
Admission £12 on the gate, £10 in advance
Tel: 01383 723337

Formula Ford, Legends, Minis, BMW Compacts, Sports & Saloons, Classic Sports & Saloons, Fiestas.

KIRKISTOWN

500MRCI
April 6
www.kirkistown.com

FF1600 Super Series, Formula Vee, Formula Sheane, Saloons, Sportscars, Fiestas, Ginetta Junior.

On track around the world

INDYCAR SERIES

Rd 2/16
Barber, USA
April 7
indycar.com

FORMULA RENAULT 3.5

Rd 1/9
Monza, Italy
April 6-7
worldseriesbyrenault.fr

WORLD TOURING CARS

Rd 2/12
Marrakech, Morocco
April 7
fiawtcc.com

NASCAR SPRINT CUP

Rd 6/36
Martinsville, USA
April 7
nascar.com

V8 SUPERCARS

Rd 2/14
Symmons Plains, Australia
April 6-7
V8supercars.com.au

GRAND-AM

Rd 3/12
Barber, USA
April 6
grand-am.com

SUPERSTARS

Rd 1/8
Monza, Italy
April 7
superstarsworld.com

SUPER GT

Rd 1/8
Okayama, Japan
April 7
supergt.net



AUTO GP

Rd 2/8
Marrakech, Morocco
April 6-7
autogp.org

INDY LIGHTS

Rd 2/12
Barber, USA
April 6
indycar.com/indylights

NASCAR TRUCKS

Rd 2/22
Martinsville, USA
April 6
nascar.com

On television

THURSDAY APRIL 4

0145-0245 BBC4
Motor Racing at the BBC
0300-0415 ITV
BTCC: Brands Hatch H'lights
0900-1105 Motors TV
FIA GT Series: Nogaro H'lights

FRIDAY APRIL 5

2000-2100 Sky Sports F1
The F1 Show
1230-1300 ESPN
NASCAR Now
1855-2100 Motors TV
FIA GT Series: Nogaro Highlights

SATURDAY APRIL 6

0600-0715 Premier Sports
V8 S'cars: Symmons Plains H'lights
1100-1200 Eurosport LIVE
Auto GP: Marrakech Race 1
1200-1300 Eurosport LIVE
Formula Renault 3.5: Monza Race 1
1300-1400 Eurosport
FIA Euro Rallycross: Lydden H'lights
1835-1940 Motors TV
British GT: Oulton Park H'lights
2000-2130 ITV4
BTCC: Brands Hatch H'lights
2230-0035 Motors TV LIVE
Grand-Am: Barber
2345-0030 Eurosport
WTCC: Marrakech Qualifying

SUNDAY APRIL 7

0635-0730 Channel 4
FIA GT Series: Nogaro H'lights
1050-1155 Motors TV LIVE
Superstars: Monza Race 1

1600-1800 Eurosport LIVE
WTCC: Marrakech Races 1 & 2
1615-1710 Motors TV
Superstars: Monza Race 2 Replay
1800-2230 Premier Sports LIVE
NASCAR Sprint Cup: Martinsville
1830-1930 BBC2
Donald Campbell: Speed King
2130-2305 Motors TV
Superstars: Monza H'lights
2230-2330 Premier Sports
V8 S'cars: Symmons Plains H'lights
2315-2330 Eurosport
FRenault 3.5: Monza Race 2 H'lights
2330-0000 Eurosport
Auto GP: Marrakech Race 2 H'lights
0030-0300 ESPN
IndyCar: Barber Highlights
0300-0400, 1730-1830 ESPN
NASCAR Sprint: Martinsville H'lights

MONDAY APRIL 8

0915-1100 Eurosport 2
WTCC: Marrakech H'lights
1135-1310 Motors TV
Superstars: Monza H'lights
2000-2215 Sky Sports F1
Classic F1: Chinese GP 2010
2030-2100 BBC4
Motor Racing at the BBC

TUESDAY APRIL 9

2000-2215 Sky Sports F1
Classic F1: Chinese GP 2011

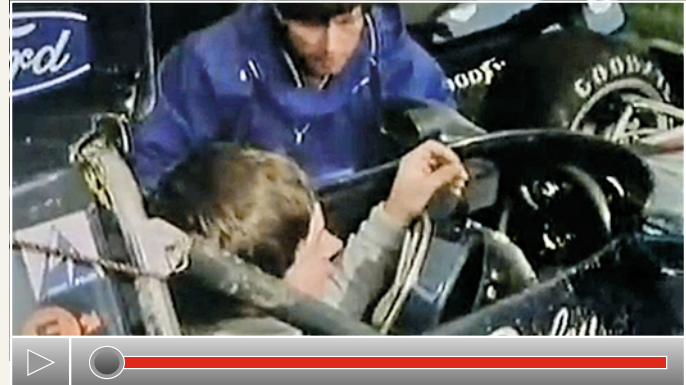
WEDNESDAY APRIL 10

1130-1200 Eurosport
FRenault 3.5: Monza Review
2000-2130 Sky Sports F1
Chinese GP 2012 Highlights

Online

HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YOUTUBE: 1975 OULTON PARK F5000 WITH DAVID PURLEY



SEARCH FOR: Formula 5000 1975 - David Purley at Oulton Park (23:31)

Motorsport TV's harshest critic *Revved Up* loves this *Go With Noakes* film in which John Noakes (he of *Blue Peter* fame) follows David Purley's attack on the big-banger Formula 5000 race at Oulton Park in March '75 (see below) so there's every chance you will too.

AUTOSPORT+

Exclusive content coming up in our premium website this week

When was Formula 1 really at its best?

Many say 'it was better back then', but when was then? AUTOSPORT's Edd Straw takes a look through F1's history to see how great the golden eras really were and how the modern-day pinnacle of the sport compares with the best the past has to offer.

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AUTOSPORT

Revved up over what's on the box



Frankenheimer's *Grand Prix* was best bit of BBC4 docs

I RECALL THAT PETROL EMOTIONAS a late '80s/early '90s indie rock band, but their moniker has recently been reborn to front a series of motor racing documentaries on BBC4. Billed as a four-wheeled *Rock 'n' Roll Years*, it's hard to understand what it set out to achieve, or who its target audience was.

If it was hardcore, dyed-in-the-wool types, then there were enough mistakes to keep the internet forums buzzing between the weekly episodes. If it was the casual viewer – really that likely on BBC4? – then it was a bitesized reminder of the role that motor racing played in the flourishing car society of the '50s and '60s. The lack of a narrator meant it lacked any

direction apart from short captions, which led into pieces that were, in the main, superficial and lightweight. Of course, the archive pictures are wonderful – given the rich subject matter of Stirling Moss, Jim Clark, Graham Hill, and Vanwall, BRM, Lotus, Cooper etc. And it was great to hear Raymond Baxter's voice again.

The highlight so far for me was footage from a *Whicker's World*, which covered the filming of *Grand Prix* in 1966. John Frankenheimer remonstrating with Monaco officials, as he's trying to shoot a movie in the streets, left me wanting to see the whole episode. Likewise clips from the Colin Chapman *Millionaire* documentary –

especially Jackie Oliver explaining his car-splitting 1968 Rouen shunt.

On the flip side, excerpts from *Wheelbase*, the 'ground-breaking' forerunner of *Top Gear*, was more bewildering than informative. Even a *Blue Peter* piece on the Lotus 49B, featuring John Noakes (who stalled it!) and Peter Purves brought more to the party.

It felt like being taught history by an art student. Like watching *Top of the Pops 2*, it was a diverting yet ultimately soulless affair. Give it half an hour on YouTube and you'd come up with better. I'll start your search at: 'Formula 5000 1975 - David Purley at Oulton Park'. **Revved Up**

Kurt Ahrens

■ European Formula 2 ■ Hockenheim ■ April 7, 1968 ■ Brabham BT23C ■ Tragedy in the rain



Ahrens (6) would start ahead of the ill-fated Jim Clark (1)

FROM A SPORTING POINT OF view the race I ought to choose is the 1000km sports-prototype race at the Nurburgring in 1970 which I won with Vic Elford in the Porsche 908.

But the event that really sticks out is the European Formula 2 Trophy race at Hockenheim in April 1968 – Jim Clark's last race. There were a lot of emotions involved.

Clark and I had to attend a live TV show the evening before the race. So we drove up to Wiesbaden, some 100 kilometres north of Hockenheim, accompanied by Eckhard Schimpf, who in years to come would broker all Jagermeister's sponsorship deals. On the way up Clark spoke about his uncompetitive Lotus, but also voiced his displeasure about Hockenheim, saying that it was a boring circuit.

After the show, the TV people took us to a local pub. We sat for an hour or so, having a bite and a beer. It was almost midnight by then, so we left to go back to our hotels.

Then the trouble started. After about 30 kilometres on the autobahn

somewhere around Darmstadt, the engine of my Mercedes 280 began pinging – clearly a sign of a worn-out crankshaft bearing. I steered right towards the next petrol station, hoping to cure the mischief with two cans of high-viscosity oil. Problem was, I left my wallet at Hockenheim, and so did Eckhard. Jim only had British pounds with him and there

seemed no way to persuade the petrol-station attendant to take it.

“But this is Jim Clark, double world champion,” I started arguing. “Yeah, anyone can tell me that,” came the clueless attendant's reply, “and I am Cassius Clay!”

In the end he ripped us off and took Clark's money, but increased the price for the oil five-fold. We crept

back to the hotel, arriving at 2am.

The next morning Jim and I laughed about the night before. He was a lowly seventh on the grid, whereas I started on the front row alongside the Matras of Jean-Pierre Beltoise and Henri Pescarolo. On a wet track with some drizzle I started quite well. I was leading when after about six laps into the race I noticed two policemen and an ambulance on the straight leading to the Ostkurve. There was a drop beside the track, so I could not see what was going on.

Then, four laps from the finish, I had a huge engine failure. It wasn't until I got towed back to the paddock after the first heat that I got the sad news. I was dumbfounded. We packed up before the second heat got started.

Then the track announcer informed the crowd, starting with the words: “Ladies and Gentlemen, please arise from your seats...”

We were on our way home before the race had finished. ✖
Kurt Ahrens was talking to Gregor Messer

Profile



KARL HEINRICH 'KURT'

Ahrens Jr claimed three single-seater titles in the 1960s. He then ran at the front in Formula 2 and made one grand prix start – at the Nurburgring in '68. He also starred in sportscar racing, winning at the Osterreicherung in '69 and at the 'Ring in '70 for Porsche. He took pole and led at Le Mans in '70, but retired at the end of that season to run the family scrapyard firm. He claimed his biggest success had been simply to survive.

NEXT WEEK F1 SUPERSTAR DRIVING STYLES
We compare Alonso, Hamilton & Vettel



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Porsche Carrera Cup GB

Rounds 1 and 2: Brands Hatch, March 30-31

Dean Stoneman could not have wished for a better start to his Porsche Carrera Cup GB campaign, with two victories at Brands Hatch and an immediate championship lead.

After two years out of racing due to serious illness, Stoneman (Redline Racing) coped with difficult track conditions, a safety car period and a determined attack from Michael Meadows (Samsung Smart Motorsport) to claim a truly memorable opening victory. Jonas Gelzinis (Juta Racing) completed the podium.

In the second race, Meadows spun out after contact, which left Gelzinis and Dan Lloyd (Team Parker Racing) to chase Stoneman home. Stoneman was also awarded the 'driver of the weekend' award, while Redline Racing was named the 'Drift team of the weekend.'

Victor Jimenez (Redline Racing) scored a Pro-Am1 double as George Brewster (Celtic Speed) Yucel Ozbek (Redline Racing) and Kyle Barnes (Redline Racing) all took podium finishes. Peter Smallwood (Parr Motorsport) topped his Carrera Cup debut with victory in Pro-Am2.

To keep up with all the latest news, images and video from the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, please visit the championship's new 'Trackside' web platform at <http://porscherracinggb.porsche.com>

Provisional 2013 Driver Championship points positions

1	Dean Stoneman	41
2	Jonas Gelzinis	34
3	Michael Meadows	28
4	Richard Kent	22
5	Victor Jimenez	21
6	Rory Butcher	19
=	Dan De Zille	19
8	Daniel Lloyd	16
9	George Brewster	14
=	Kyle Barnes	14

Provisional 2013 Team Championship points positions

1	Redline Racing	60
2	Samsung Smart Motorsport	50
3	Juta Racing	34
4	Celtic Speed	33
5	Team Parker Racing	16
6	Parr Motorsport	5

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