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Hamilton on top as F1 has lucky escape

AUTOSPORT

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3 DECEMBER 2020

How Grosjean survived F1's worst crash in years

Hamilton wins again after Haas driver escapes inferno



'I wasn't for the halo, but it's the greatest thing we've brought to Formula 1'

GROSJEAN

PLUS AUDI QUITS FORMULA E AND HEADS BACK TO LE MANS

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May attract attention.

The new Audi A3 Edition 1.

What a time to be an Audi.

Official WLTP fuel consumption figures for the new Audi A3 Edition 1 range in mpg (l/100km) from: Combined 44.1 (6.4) – 57.6

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO_2 figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect 01/09/2020. Figures quoted are for a range of configurations and are subject to change due to ongoing approvals/changes. Please consult your Audi Centre for further information.

(4.9). WLTP equivalent CO_2 emissions: 145 – 129g/km.

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

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MATCH
HOSPITALITY



F1 helped make its own luck in Romain Grosjean's fiery crash

It's been a long time since Formula 1 has experienced an accident as ferocious as Romain Grosjean's at the start of last weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix, particularly one that involves fire.

The state of his Haas, immediate inferno and damage to the barrier made the scene look more like something from the 1970s than 2020. Fortunately, the accident demonstrated how far F1 has come, thanks to so many safety features introduced, and the 34-year-old was able to (literally) walk away from an accident that would almost certainly have been fatal in previous eras (see page 6).

As Alex Kalinauckas argues on p13, there will undoubtedly be lessons to be learned from the crash, but for the moment let's rejoice in Grosjean's survival – and surely the end of the halo debate.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Lewis Hamilton retained his focus and got the job done in the Bahrain GP, his 11th win in 15 races of a remarkable campaign, though Max Verstappen was a real threat this time (p16).

As Autosport closed for press, news of Hamilton's positive COVID test had just come through, meaning he will miss the Sakhir GP. That will change the nature of the battle at the front at Bahrain's 'oval' circuit this weekend as Verstappen and Valtteri Bottas continue their battle to be runner-up. In the meantime, we wish both Grosjean and Hamilton safe and speedy recoveries.





Kevin Turner
Chief Editor
kevin.turner@autosport.com

NEXT WEEK
10 DECEMBER
Sakhir Grand Prix
Who will win in Hamilton's absence on a new F1 track?

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TW9 1AG

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Motorsport Images/Andy Hone

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The accident happened on the run from Turn 3 to Turn 4, with Grosjean hitting the inside barrier

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

HOW GROSJEAN ESCAPED

FORMULA 1

Romain Grosjean has paid tribute to the halo cockpit-protection device for saving his life in his horrifying Bahrain Grand Prix crash, which has sparked an investigation from Formula 1 and the FIA.

Grosjean's Haas hit the barrier with such force – it was recorded with a peak impact of 50G hitting the barrier at 137mph – that his car powered through it, tearing the Armco apart. The car broke in half during the impact, and fuel spilled everywhere as the tank seemed to rupture in the wreck with explosive results. Yet Grosjean was able to walk away from the wreckage before being taken to hospital for treatment to burns to the back of his hands. X-rays showed that he had broken no bones, allowing the Frenchman to be discharged earlier this week.

"An angel was with us," said Haas F1 team principal Gunther Steiner of



Grosjean looks chipper as he's wheeled to the ambulance after shunt

Grosjean's escape. And while fortune may have been with Grosjean as he emerged from the flames, there was also a great deal of science that went into his survival. It was further proof of the significance of F1's unwavering commitment to improving safety standards throughout its recent history, as the culmination of years of research and application of safety devices saved a life.

In particular, the halo has once more proved its worth, and the fact that it parted the barrier is testament to its strength. Grosjean himself was a former critic of the halo but, in a



MAIN: COATES INSETS: HONE

HIS BAHRAIN GP INFERNO

video from his hospital bed in the hours following the accident, called it the "greatest thing that we've brought to Formula 1".

"Hello everyone, I just wanted to say I am OK — well, sort of OK," Grosjean said in the video, before making reference to the white bandages on his hands. "Without [the halo] I wouldn't be able to speak with you today. Thanks to all the medical staff at the circuit, at the hospital, and hopefully I can write you quite soon some messages and tell you how it's going."

All of the safety advances did their jobs in the crash. The survival cell stood up well and, although it was charred by the flames (and the engine and gearbox were broken from their mountings as they detached from the monocoque), the cradle containing Grosjean was left relatively unscathed.

Grosjean remained conscious throughout the accident, allowing him to escape unaided from the fire. Since the introduction of the HANS device in 2003, drivers have been considerably better protected against violent head movements. The padding available within the driver's headrest ensures that any side-to-side or backwards impacts are mitigated by restricting the motion of the head within the cockpit. And the significant protection offered by Grosjean's overalls proved critical as he escaped the fire, meaning the only burns he sustained were to his hands.

F1 medical car personnel Alan van der Merwe and Ian Roberts were praised in the aftermath for their quick reactions, as they arrived on the scene within seconds to tend to Grosjean. The two marshals who attended the crash site and helped put out the fire have been recognised by the Bahraini government and royal family for their efforts.

After Steiner visited Grosjean in hospital on Monday, Haas announced that reserve driver Pietro Fittipaldi would be replacing him for this weekend's Sakhir Grand Prix. "I've been with the team a lot this season, both trackside and working on simulator sessions, so I'm familiar with the team's operating procedures on a grand prix weekend," said Fittipaldi, whose most recent full-season campaign was in the 2019 DTM, where he finished 15th. "It's going to be exciting to make my first career start in Formula 1. I'll be giving it my all and I look forward to starting in free practice on Friday in Bahrain."

Steiner said in an interview on Tuesday that Grosjean remains eager to race in next week's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix for what will be his final scheduled appearance for Haas.

MAZEPIN GETS 2021 HAAS SEAT

Haas also confirmed this week that outside Formula 2 title contender Nikita Mazepin will be joining the team for the 2021 season, after signing a multi-year deal. The Russian is set to partner F2 championship leader Mick Schumacher, who was still to be announced as Autosport went to print. "Becoming an F1 driver is a lifelong dream come true for me," said Mazepin. "I really appreciate the trust being put in me by Gene Haas, Gunther Steiner, and the whole of the team. They're giving a young driver an opportunity and I thank them for that."

LUKE SMITH AND JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

P13 OPINION



Audi set for Le Mans return as it quits Formula E series

FORMULA E/SPORTCARS

The factory Audi team will quit Formula E at the end of the 2021 season in favour of a return to top-flight sportscar racing in addition to an all-electric Dakar Rally entry in 2022.

Although the German marque will supply powertrains to customer team Envision Virgin Racing until the end of 2023, the works squad will exit FE under a revised "brand strategy".

This paves the way for a return to Le Mans 24 Hours competition. Audi exited the LMP1 class of the World Endurance Championship at the end of 2016 with the demise of its R18 programme, but will seek to add to its 13 victories in the French enduro by entering the nascent LMP2-based LMDh category that from 2023 will run across the WEC and IMSA SportsCar Championship.

A cost-effective alternative to the Le Mans Hypercar rules, LMDh cars will use manufacturer-produced bodykits and a standardised hybrid system featuring a Williams Advanced Engineering battery and Bosch electric motor.

Audi FE team principal and three-time Le Mans winner Allan McNish told Autosport: "At the end of season seven [2021], as an official Audi entry, we will stop our works involvement. Formula E was the perfect platform to migrate from traditional car technology to electric. In that respect, absolutely from a technology and sporting point of view, it has opened up so many doors."

This development comes as Dieter Gass, who led Audi's DTM success for 10 years and its FE entry, is replaced as the marque's head of motorsport by Julius Seebach – "the right person for the repositioning of the motorsport activities," according to Markus Duesmann, chairman of the Audi board of management.

An Audi exit was rumoured, and its official confirmation came just hours after Mahindra Racing became the first FE team to commit to the championship for at least the next six seasons by signing up to the incoming Gen3 regulations.

Alongside the sportscar attack, Audi will field an all-electric car in the 2022 Dakar Rally. Although the latest FE car features the manufacturer's first powertrain developed in-house, it will be directly transplanted into the off-road car, likely to resemble the E-tron SUV.

Audi has committed fully to the seventh season of FE, for which it gains full FIA World Championship status, in an effort to add to its 2017-18 teams' title success. Initially through its technical support to the Abt team in the first three FE seasons, Audi has scored 12 victories – 10 for 2016-17 champion Lucas di Grassi and two for Daniel Abt.

With the FE field capped at 12 teams, Audi's exit creates a berth for a new entrant, with chief championship officer Alberto Longo saying: "We have a kind of waiting list – teams and manufacturers – who are basically calling us on a daily basis to jump into the championship."

Honda is unlikely to fill the gap, despite its looming F1 exit. And although Aston Martin executive chairman Lawrence Stroll held talks about a potential buyout of an FE team, the manufacturer has shelved plans for its all-electric Lagonda sub-brand in recent days.

MATT KEW

Magnussen's Ganassi deal

IMSA SPORTSCAR

Haas Formula 1 driver Kevin Magnussen is set for a switch to sportscar racing in 2021 with Chip Ganassi Racing's revived IMSA team, Autosport has learned.

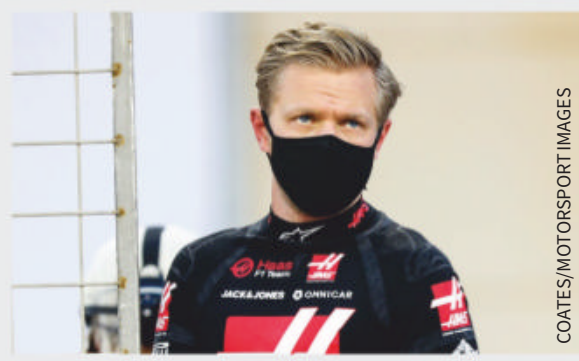
The 28-year-old Dane is understood to be one of the full-time drivers in Ganassi's single Cadillac DPi-V.R entry in the IMSA SportsCar Championship. His father Jan Magnussen, the former sportscar ace who manages his son's career, advised him to seek opportunities within IndyCar and the World Endurance Championship.

With the WEC set for a 'transition year' as the first Hypercars are introduced, Magnussen's opportunities were limited on the European sportscar scene. It is understood that in October Magnussen approached all but one of the IndyCar teams that still had a seat available, but most owners were seeking a driver who could bring money. That left Magnussen without an obvious option since his personal sponsor Jack & Jones – a Danish clothing company – has a negligible footprint in the US. But his approach to Chip Ganassi led to talks regarding the team's IMSA programme, which lay dormant this year following the end of the highly successful partnership with Ford in the GT Le Mans class.

Since Wayne Taylor Racing elected to alter its driver line-up as it switches from Cadillac to Acura for next year, that left its 2020 full-timers Ryan Briscoe and Renger van der Zande on the market. Despite Briscoe's seven-year association with Ganassi, Autosport understands that van der Zande will be confirmed as the second full-timer in the Ganassi Cadillac. Scott Dixon is set to join Magnussen and van der Zande for the four endurance rounds.

- IndyCar veteran Tony Kanaan will rejoin Ganassi's line-up for the four oval races next season, including the Indy 500. He will drive the entry being raced by Jimmie Johnson on road and street circuits.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ


COATES/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Hamilton ruled out by COVID

FORMULA 1



Recently crowned seven-time Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton will miss this weekend's Sakhir Grand Prix after testing positive for COVID-19.

Hamilton reported mild symptoms on Monday, the day after his victory in the Bahrain Grand Prix, after being informed that a contact prior to arriving in the Middle East had tested positive. The Mercedes star had three negative tests last week, the last of which was conducted before the race on Sunday, but tested positive on Monday. A re-test also came back positive.

"Lewis is now isolating in accordance with COVID-19 protocols and public health authority guidelines," read a statement from Mercedes. "Apart from mild symptoms, he is otherwise fit and well, and the entire team sends him our very best wishes for a swift recovery."

Hamilton is required to self-isolate for 10 days in Bahrain, and must return a negative test result before he is allowed back in the paddock, putting a return for next week's Abu Dhabi GP season finale in doubt.

He is the third F1 driver known to have tested positive for COVID-19 this season, following Racing Point pair Sergio Perez and Lance Stroll.

Mercedes said it would confirm Hamilton's replacement for the Sakhir GP weekend "in due course", with no announcement yet made as Autosport went to press. Its designated F1 reserve is Stoffel Vandoorne, who made his most recent grand prix start at the end of 2018 with McLaren.

Vandoorne has since been part of Mercedes' F1 squad as a reserve driver, as well as racing for the marque in Formula E. The Belgian was always due to be on site this weekend in Bahrain, flying out following the completion of Formula E's pre-season test running at Valencia on Tuesday.

An alternative would be Williams driver George Russell, who is part of Mercedes' junior programme, but a deal would need to be struck between the two teams for him to be drafted in at such short notice.

Nico Hulkenberg, who was the COVID stand-in for both Perez and Stroll at Racing Point, was not thought to be in the frame to replace Hamilton.

LUKE SMITH



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Piastri steps up to F2 with Prema

FORMULA 2

Recently crowned FIA Formula 3 champion Oscar Piastri will stay with Prema Racing for his step up to Formula 2 in 2021, and it looks certain that Ferrari junior Robert Shwartzman will stay in the Italian team's line-up alongside him.

Australian Piastri, who is mentored by Mark Webber and is a protege of the Renault F1 Junior programme, was confirmed by Prema on Tuesday morning. Russian Shwartzman, who has a slender mathematical shot at the F2 crown going into this weekend's Bahrain finale, led the 2020 points before a late-season dip in form, although he won last weekend's reversed-grid race in Bahrain.

Elsewhere in F2, Hitech Grand Prix has been tipped for some time to run Red Bull Juniors Juri Vips and Liam Lawson next season. Vips was a stand-in at DAMS for four rounds this year, while Lawson has been a race winner with Hitech's FIA F3 team.

Bahrain feature-race winner Felipe Drugovich is linked with a switch from MP Motorsport to Virtuosi Racing, whose title contender Callum Ilott has been told he will not go to F1 in 2021.

MARCUS SIMMONS



IN THE HEADLINES

HAMILTON WANTS TYRE WAR

Pirelli's new-for-2021 Formula 1 tyres took a slating following trial runs in practice for last weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix. World champion Lewis Hamilton said of the C3 compound that Pirelli "had two years now to develop a better tyre" and that F1 has "arrived with a tyre that's three kilos heavier and it's like a second worse per lap". Hamilton even suggested that F1 needs the return of a tyre war.

SAINZ EXTREME E IS GO

Two-time World Rally champion Carlos Sainz Sr will contest the inaugural season of Extreme E, as predicted by Autosport. The 58-year-old will line up with Spanish team QEV, run by ex-Formula 1 driver Pedro de la Rosa, alongside motorcycle rally-raid exponent Laia Sanz. World Rallycross king Johan Kristoffersson was set to be confirmed with Nico Rosberg's team after Autosport went to press. Kristoffersson clinched the 2020 WRX title with the cancellation of the final round at the Nurburgring.

MERCEDES BACK IN THE DTM

Hong Kong-owned GT team GruppeM Racing has become the first squad to commit to the new-look DTM in 2021. GruppeM will stay faithful to Mercedes and will run a single-car AMG GT3 in the series. Its most recent notable victory was in the 2019 FIA GT World Cup in Macau, where Raffaele Marciello took the honours.

TRS TO STAY IN THE NORTH

New Zealand's traditional Toyota Racing Series has slimmed down to three rounds for 2021 amid the country's response to the coronavirus crisis. Each event will take place on the North Island, kicking off with two rounds at Hampton Downs in late January and early February, and culminating at Manfeild. The rival Asian F3 series is adapting to COVID pressures by holding all five rounds in the UAE, at Yas Marina and Dubai.



Guenther and BMW race ahead

FORMULA E

For the second year in a row, BMW Andretti racer Maximilian Guenther departed Valencia's Circuit Ricardo Tormo as the fastest driver in Formula E pre-season testing.

Guenther's unmatched effort in the new BMW iFE.21, set on the final day of running in an unbroken six-hour session, was 3.2s quicker than his 2019 benchmark. That followed the removal of a temporary chicane on the main straight, which had been the site of regular crashes.

Again apeing the trend from last year, the rebranded Dragon Penske Autosport squad — which scored only one points finish in 2019-20 — was super-quick as Sergio Sette Camara ran to second. He was just 0.036s off Guenther, and narrowly edged team-mate Nico Muller, who ran to third but is officially only signed for testing.

Reigning champion Antonio Felix da Costa put the updated DS Techeetah software to good use by ending up fourth, with the pandemic a factor in delaying the team's new car until the Rome E-Prix in April under revised homologation rules. Nissan e.dams and Dragon have also pushed back the introduction of their new cars.

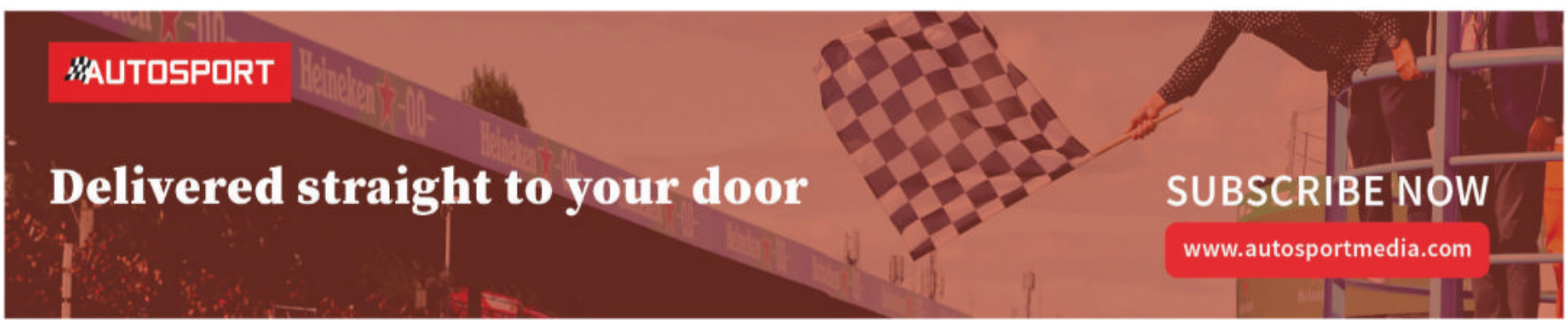
Alex Lynn, confirmed alongside Alexander Sims at Mahindra Racing, set the pace on day two. His time, set in the three-hour afternoon session, was the only one of the 10 quickest laps not to come on the final and hottest day.

Seven drivers had to sit out for 15 minutes for track-limits violations, while Mercedes' Nyck de Vries was clocked again and had to pit for 30 minutes. Team-mate and Mercedes F1 reserve Stoffel Vandoorne was 18th before departing for Bahrain.

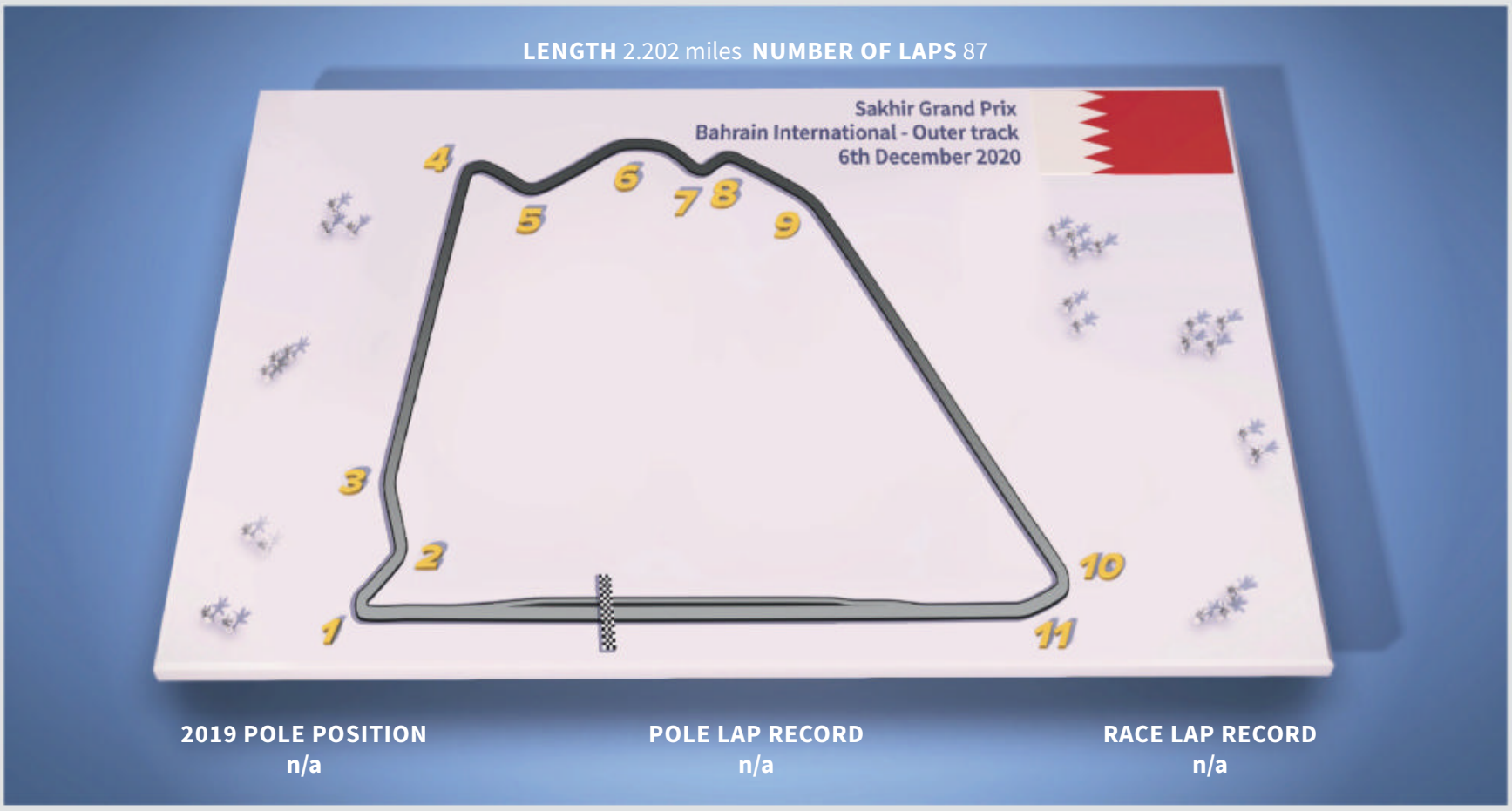
MATT KEW

TOP 10 TIMES

POS	DRIVER (CAR)	TIME
1	**Maximilian Guenther** (BMW)	1m11.760s
2	**Sergio Sette Camara** (Penske)	1m11.796s
3	**Nico Muller** (Penske)	1m11.810s
4	**Antonio Felix da Costa** (DS Techeetah)	1m11.815s
5	**Mitch Evans** (Jaguar)	1m11.880s
6	**Pascal Wehrlein** (Porsche)	1m11.908s
7	**Alex Lynn** (Mahindra)	1m11.941s
8	**Oliver Rowland** (Nissan)	1m11.943s
9	**Jean-Eric Vergne** (DS Techeetah)	1m11.978s
10	**Oliver Turvey** (NIO)	1m11.996s



F1 SAKHIR GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



UK START TIMES

Friday 4 December
FP1 1330
FP2 1730

Saturday 5 December
FP3 1400
QUALIFYING 1700

Sunday 6 December
RACE 1710

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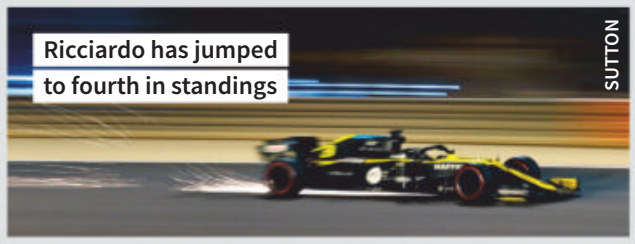
CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

DRIVERS

1	Hamilton	332
2	Bottas	201
3	Verstappen	189
4	Ricciardo	102
5	Perez	100

CONSTRUCTORS

1	Mercedes	533
2	Red Bull	274
3	McLaren	171
4	Racing Point	154
5	Renault	144



RACE STATS

PREVIOUS BAHRAIN WINNERS

2020	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2017	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2016	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2010	Fernando Alonso	Ferrari



BAHRAIN MASTERS

Top 10 points scorers for grands prix at Bahrain International Circuit. All races converted to current points system.

L Hamilton	208
K Raikkonen	163
S Vettel	160
F Alonso	117
F Massa	98
N Rosberg	96
V Bottas	74
J Trulli	60
J Button	59
M Schumacher	53

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The questions F1 must ask

In the aftermath of Romain Grosjean's crash, the specifics of the incident — the fire, the car split asunder, the pierced barrier — will help focus the ongoing push for safety

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

The images of Romain Grosjean leaping from his burning Haas VF-20 shocked Formula 1 and the watching world. The overwhelming feeling following such an incident is relief but, at the same time, the championship and the FIA now need to answer many questions about how it occurred.

This isn't a blame game. It's of course slightly inappropriate to reference a film with such a title in these circumstances, but a line from 1990's *Die Hard 2* stands out here: "Any landing you can walk away from is a good one." Because that's what happened last weekend — the advancement in motorsport safety allowed a driver to escape an incident they might not have done previously, and that should be applauded. Yet at the same time, all things can be improved.

The FIA's Safety Department will lead the investigation into Grosjean's crash, working with his Haas team, the Bahrain track and the FIA's circuits commission. Autosport understands that, at the time of writing, the plan for this weekend's Sakhir Grand Prix at the same venue is to leave the concrete blocks that were installed to allow the rest of the Bahrain GP to run in place.

Arguably the most shocking aspect of Grosjean's shunt was what happened to his car as it stuck the barrier to the inside of the Bahrain track's Turn 3 kink. The barrier was pierced in the incident, which occurred at 137mph, with Grosjean's cockpit going through the metal. The halo structure undoubtedly protected him from a potentially fatal impact. But the front of the chassis became tangled in the barrier, and it's awful to consider what might have happened had Grosjean been trapped. Thankfully he wasn't, but there is a necessary question about how the barrier performed in the incident. The are alternatives to exposed guard rails, such as tyre barriers and Tecpro walls. But such devices can be expensive to install and in any case they are not 100% protective.

"Surely, any debate about the halo's place in single-seaters has been ended by this incident"

"So much energy suddenly has to go somewhere," F1 race director Michael Masi said in relation to the barrier's role in the incident. "You look at the car, the survival cell did exactly what it is there to do and kept the driver safe and intact. The halo did what it did, from an initial observation."

Another alarming aspect was how the car broke apart. It appears as if the powertrain parts of Grosjean's car became detached from their mountings in the crash, and the investigators will want to understand what role this played in the incident. The sudden inferno around Grosjean's car was also alarming and, while there are various theories about what may have happened, it's vital that the cause is identified and explained.

The halo undoubtedly did an outstanding job, protecting Grosjean's head in the impact and keeping him conscious, which allowed him to climb out of the fire and into the waiting, heroic arms of FIA F1 medical rescue coordinator and deputy permanent medical delegate Dr Ian Roberts and medical car driver Alan van der Merwe. But assessing precisely how it and other safety devices performed in the incident and how they reacted to striking the barrier will surely lead to further understanding that may well benefit future engineering designs and safety standards.

A minor point in the grand scheme of things, but a worthy one nevertheless, was the question about the proper way to broadcast what had happened when it became clear that Grosjean had escaped. Daniel Riccardo expressed his disgust at "the way the incident was broadcast over and over". There are at least two ways of looking at it. Maybe once it was announced that he was OK, the successive replays didn't need to be broadcast to the F1 personnel on site, but at the same time many viewers would have wanted to understand what had gone wrong and confirm that Grosjean was unharmed. It must be stressed that F1's TV producers operated correctly in not showing the crash again until it was clear he had escaped.

Surely, any debate about the halo's place in single-seaters has been ended by this incident — as it should have been by those involving Formula 2 drivers Tadasuke Makino and Nirei Fukuzumi in Spain in 2018, and Fernando Alonso and Charles Leclerc at that year's Belgian GP, although it's still worth acknowledging that questioning anything on reasonable grounds should be allowed. But it demonstrates, again, how far F1 has come on safety.

So, what's next? This is a vital question in the never-ceasing project to make motorsport safer, even if risk can never be entirely removed. Only this season, the FIA has mandated the use of new fireproof suits built to an updated safety standard that must resist a direct flame for a minimum of 12 seconds. Lewis Hamilton said after winning the Bahrain race that he was "a little bit blase" about this development, but added "they had the foresight perhaps and I think that was a good move".

And that's because this is the best thing to consider about the horrifying crash — apart from knowing Grosjean is alive: that the quest for improving safety in motorsport isn't stopping, and that such valuable work will filter down and further enhance the championships that entertain us.

P16 BAHRAIN GP REPORT



Dawn of another golden age?

In a world where good news is in short supply, the announcement that Audi plans to return to frontline endurance racing could be the harbinger of a glorious new era

GARY WATKINS

Given the crisis that blights our world today, I'm sure I've not been alone in wishing for a time machine to whirl me back to a happier era. My dreams came true on Monday, at least those for the discipline of motorsport that I love, when Audi announced its return to frontline endurance racing. It felt like I'd been dumped back to the winter of 2011-12, a time when we were relishing a three-way battle between the German manufacturer, Peugeot and Toyota in the born-again World Endurance Championship coming on stream in the year ahead.

That was an exciting time for international sportscar racing. We had Audi and Peugeot, who'd been at it hammer and tongs at the Le Mans 24 Hours and then the Intercontinental Le Mans Cup for five seasons, and another grandee of the endurance world in Toyota coming to the LMP1 party in 2012 for some development races ahead of a full campaign in 2013. Porsche had already announced that it would be joining them in 2014. Sportscar racing was on the up, and many of us were predicting a halcyon age.

Peugeot, it turned out, was absent when the new era began at Sebring in March 2012. It made a shock withdrawal just a couple of months before the season. We still got our halcyon age, though, Peugeot or no Peugeot.

Now we can confidently say that the three-way battle that never was will commence after a delay of more than 10 years. Toyota and

"Audi can return to its happy hunting grounds at Le Mans, Sebring and also Daytona"

Peugeot will be on the grid with LM Hypercars, and 13-time Le Mans winner Audi with an LMDh machine based around an off-the-shelf LMP2 racer. Audi didn't put a date on its re-entry to the top flight of sportscar racing, but my understanding is that it will be 2023, the season that the LMDh class will get properly going in North America's IMSA SportsCar Championship.

Peugeot will be joining the WEC sometime in 2022, so by 2023 we will have three major manufacturers, each with a rich sportscar pedigree, at Le Mans and beyond. Porsche, too, is very much in the mix. Audi's sister marque has made no secret of its interest in the LMDh category, which will allow the same machinery to race across the WEC and IMSA. Porsche has revealed that it is evaluating the rules and says we can expect more news this year. The idea that the world's top motorsport categories are being divvied up within the Volkswagen Group can be discounted.

Audi wasn't forthcoming with details when it announced it will be quitting Formula E to return to rallying with an all-electric assault on the Dakar Rally and prototypes in LMDh. A few supplementary questions were met with "we'll be making further announcements in due course" kind of replies.

There was no insight into how it will be approaching its prototype return. Will it run a full-blown factory team as in the past with Joest? Or will it adopt the model from its GT3 programme by selling cars to customers and then putting its weight behind the best of them for the big races? My understanding is that it will be somewhere in between.

The Audi statement talked about "taking the next step in electrified motorsport" with the 2022 Dakar entry using "an innovative prototype", rather than the reasons behind its FE withdrawal. It appears that FE wasn't favoured by new Audi boss Markus Duesmann for the simple reason that the cars aren't recognisable as Audis.

And therein lies the beauty of top-line prototype racing as it has been redefined for the future. Both LMH and LMDh allow for the cars that will do battle in the WEC and IMSA to resemble something the manufacturer actually sells.

The Toyota LMH contender already out testing in readiness for next season is being developed alongside a new high-end sportscar for the road. Peugeot has made play of its ability to impart the styling cues of its road cars into its forthcoming racer.

LMDh extends the principles enshrined in the existing IMSA Daytona Prototype international category. The successors to the current DPi cars, we are told, will look the part, rather than carrying weird appendages seemingly nailed on in the name of styling.

Manufacturers need a message when they go racing. The P1 big guns got to shout about their technological credentials in the high-tech era of LMP1 hybrids, but nothing betters a racing machine that resembles a car the viewing public can buy.

Audi can now build one and return to its happy hunting grounds at Le Mans, Sebring and also Daytona, and no doubt others will follow its lead. We're pretty sure Porsche is coming, and Honda's Acura marque has given a clear intent to continue in IMSA beyond the life of its current DPi. Ferrari has talked up its prototype aspirations, and that's not to forget that boutique manufacturer Glickenhaus and WEC stalwart ByKolles, with a desire to be one, have LMH cars on the stocks for next year.

We really could be the cusp of another great age for sportscar racing. So, if I can just borrow that time machine again. I want to go to January 2023.

P32 WEC REVIEW

YOUR SAY

The halo might not be aesthetically pleasing (I must admit I wasn't a big fan), but without doubt it saved Romain Grosjean's life

MA SMITH

Thank heaven for the halo

Any doubts racing fans had about the halo have had them answered at the Bahrain Grand Prix. It might not be aesthetically pleasing (I must admit I wasn't a big fan), but without doubt it saved Romain Grosjean's life.

The pictures of the crash barrier opened wide like that, the fire and how the car split in half immediately made me think of the terrible images of the accidents of Francois Cevert, Jochen Rindt, Gerard Berger and Martin Donnelly. It shows too that there are still things that can be learned and improved upon.

The fact that Romain got out relatively unscathed was fantastic to see and a great tribute to the FIA, the car (at least the safety cell!), the medical car team, as well as the marshals.

Although accidents like this are very rare across the board of all motor racing events, perhaps some kind of outer protection for crash barriers of this type can be found to stop cars ripping them open like a tin can. It'll be expensive, but worth it.

MA Smith
By email

Would larger mirrors make a difference?

It's a testament to the safety features in the design of modern single-seater cars that Romain Grosjean survived that horrific crash. However, one safety feature that appears to have been overlooked is larger (or wider view) mirrors. I am sure Romain would have seen Daniil Kvyat had his car had larger mirrors.

Stephen Woolfe
By email

Formula 1's other heroes

We learned on Sunday that it's not only Formula 1's drivers who can be heroically fast. And some of those heroes don't even get paid.

Graeme Innes-Johnstone
Elland, West Yorks

Viewers' vote was a nice touch

The Bahrain GP showed how safety considerations have progressed over the years. Also someone was looking down on the F1 community and looking after them.

A nice touch showing the humanity of the viewers was Romain Grosjean being voted driver of the day. Wishing him a speedy recovery.

Stuart Balmer
By email



Weight penalties have no place in F1

Excellent ideas from David Fidgeon to revitalise Formula 1 (Your Say, 26 November). Completely agree with points 1, 2 and 3, but not 4. I don't think penalising, or anything else, to falsely alter the running order has any place in F1.

Yes to point 5, but as for his final comment, while I wholly support Lewis Hamilton in his campaigning this year, a problem could arise if and when other drivers follow suit, so perhaps the FIA should draw a line under such activities. Lewis can use his global popularity to further his worthy causes away from the races.

John Carter
Wimbledon

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Autosport editorial
Autosport Media UK Ltd
1 Eton Street
Richmond
TW9 1AG

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RACE CENTRE

BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX





GROSJEAN ESCAPES, VERSTAPPEN CHASES, HAMILTON WINS

The Bahrain GP will long be remembered for its terrifying fiery crash. Afterwards the world champion won again, but his pursuer was relentless

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES



Once it was clear that Romain Grosjean had emerged relatively unscathed from what was a truly horrifying crash at the start of the 2020 Bahrain Grand Prix — and the barrier his Haas VF-20 had pierced had been replaced — someone had to actually win it.

In the end it was Lewis Hamilton who came away with his 11th win of the 2020 campaign, but in his wake was an unusually and vocally frustrated Max Verstappen. The Dutchman's reaction stood out because on the occasions this season when he has split the Mercedes duo, including in that famous finish to the British GP where, had it not been for a late pitstop, he might have won, he has generally been happy to simply pick up a better result than third.

Not so last weekend, in a race that quickly boiled down to a two-horse race between Hamilton and Verstappen, who had started in the third place he's generally occupied this season behind the two Mercedes. But the event only reached that stage nearly 90 minutes after it had first begun, mainly due to the shocking accident at the initial start. As is so often the case in motorsport, one incident set off several more and, although these were not directly interlinked, the result was Grosjean's car spearing into the barrier, where it was ripped in half and ignited.

It all started with Valtteri Bottas. For the fourth time this season the Finn made a poor getaway. He said he was "slightly cautious on the clutch start", which left him "1-2% more shallow than I was supposed to be to try to avoid wheelspin", although Mercedes later insisted he had done little wrong and attributed his slow getaway to low grip on his grid spot. But the result was a slow launch that was followed by wheelspin, which cost Bottas momentum and meant he was passed by Verstappen's Red Bull and Sergio Perez's Racing Point on the run to Turn 1. He was then swamped by Alex Albon and Daniel Ricciardo going through this tight right-hander.

As a result, McLaren's Lando Norris had to check up, which brought him into a line alongside Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly. This pinched at Turn 2, causing Norris to slow again and leaving him with front-wing damage as he was caught between the Renault and AlphaTauri.

The Ferrari pair and Lance Stroll were following, and they had to go wide in avoidance as they came up to Norris's rear, which sent the Racing Point wide. The pack then concertinaed again going through the Turn 3 right kink, which slowed the group at the back of the midfield again. The drivers at the rear of the pack — including Grosjean — therefore quickly gained on those running ahead, and in reaction the Frenchman moved right across the track, striking Daniil Kvyat's AlphaTauri, right-rear to left-front, and sending the Haas straight into the barriers.



Hamilton aces the start as team-mate Bottas makes a poor getaway

MAUGER

What followed was "like something from a movie", according to Williams driver George Russell, who was following the pack after making an "atrocious" start that followed him escaping Q1 for the ninth time in 2020. The front end of Grosjean's car went through the metal barrier, with the rear of the chassis completely severed.

The impact immediately caused both parts of the wreckage to erupt in flames and the red flags were quickly flown, the race clock officially stopping just 36 seconds after it had started.

For a horrible 2m30s, the TV screens showed no replay of the accident nor broadcast any action from the aftermath, but finally Grosjean was captured sitting in the medical car, his helmet off, scorched but, most importantly, alive. He'd been forced to fight his way out of the wreckage as the blaze roared around him, a stream of fire extinguisher fluid beating back the flames just enough for him to leap out of the car, back over the barrier and into the arms of F1 deputy medical delegate Dr Ian Roberts, who had run towards the inferno after arriving on the scene seconds after the crash occurred.

"NOT TO PUT TOO FINE A POINT ON IT, IT LOOKED LIKE AN OVEN – IT WAS RED WITH FLAME"

"Not to put too fine a point on it, it looked like an oven – it was red with flame," said Roberts, who was dowsed with extinguisher foam by medical car driver Alan van der Merwe as he helped Grosjean scramble clear – his visor melted – away from the scene.

"You could see him trying to get out, and he was gradually getting himself further and further out. Once Romain was high enough then we could get him over the barrier and away. But it's a very small window because as soon as the extinguisher powder went forward, the flames were coming back pretty soon afterwards."

Haas quickly explained that Grosjean had suffered minor burns to his hands and ankles and then gave a further update that he had suffered suspected broken ribs, which was revealed not to be the case once he had been fully assessed after being flown to the nearby military hospital.

Back at the track, the FIA quickly moved to assess the damage to the barrier and decide how best to replace it. F1 race director Michael Masi went to the scene and discussed the options with the track's engineers. The solution was to cut away the deformed and destroyed metal barrier and replace it with seven concrete blocks.

"You have to consider each circuit, each level of terrain, on its own merits," explained Masi. "Here by nature, it's quite sandy ground and so forth. So structural integrity [was a consideration for the repair work]. They had concrete barriers that were available. So, the first »



Verstappen kept Hamilton in his sights despite the Red Bull's "very odd" early behaviour

part was, effectively, 'OK, this would be the best, most efficient', but obviously the best repair that could happen at that area. And the safest, most importantly."

Considering how serious the situation initially appeared, it was a tremendous achievement by all of the officials and marshals involved that Grosjean was able to escape the incident and that the race was able to resume.

When it did, it didn't for very long. The second start was slightly contentious — an equal testament to F1's fierce competitive spirit and the triviality of sport in the face of danger — as the second grid's positions were decided by the order the cars were running in when they had passed the second safety car line. This was at a few metres before the apex of Turn 1 — where the pitlane exit line ends — and ultimately meant Hamilton lined up on pole ahead of Verstappen, Perez and Bottas. Albon and Ricciardo were demoted behind the second Mercedes as its nose was just ahead at the safety car line.

Only Hamilton, Bottas, Norris and Ricciardo opted not to change tyres during the stoppage, instead sticking with the mediums on which they had taken the first start, while Verstappen, Perez and Albon switched to a different used set of the same compound. Red Bull had considered changing Verstappen to the hard tyre, but did not want to risk the harder rubber giving poorer grip for the second launch.

Hamilton again led away with ease, with Bottas challenging Perez and Verstappen ahead, before the Racing Point gave the Red Bull a firmer contest at the first corner. But Verstappen was able to repulse Perez out wide and follow Hamilton before the race was suspended again when Kvyat and Stroll came together at the Turn 8 hairpin. The clash flipped Stroll's car and put him out on the spot, with Kvyat later given a 10s stop/go penalty for causing the collision.

This time the safety car was called, and it stayed out for the next five laps, which was a critical factor in both Verstappen's defeat and his initial post-race reaction.

Once the race got under way for a third time, Hamilton aced the restart and had pulled a 0.772s lead over the line at the start of lap nine. Just two tours later, Perez had fallen more than two seconds behind Verstappen, and 10 laps after the safety car had come in he was over six second in arrears.

But Verstappen was gamely hanging on to Hamilton. This was despite his car "hopping around a lot on throttle, on low speed and medium speed — it was very odd [and] did get better throughout the race but it didn't feel so nice at the beginning". But the leader looked to be irresistibly strengthening his advantage, as across the first stint Hamilton lapped 0.391s faster on average.

The Mercedes driver came in at the end of lap 19, with Verstappen and Perez following him in at the end of the next tour. This perplexed Verstappen, who felt "we should have pulled Lewis in, instead of Lewis pulling me in". But Red Bull team boss Christian Horner explained how the early laps spent running behind the safety car had produced a knock-on effect.

"The field didn't spread out as much as you would have wanted

"THE FIELD DIDN'T SPREAD OUT AS MUCH AS YOU'D HAVE WANTED. WE'D HAVE PITTED INTO TRAFFIC"

in the first stint because of losing those eight laps," he said. "So, if we'd have pitted [first], we'd have pitted into traffic. I'm not sure what else we could have done really. He would've had a couple of cars to pass, and we wouldn't have been within the undercut. They would have been easily able to cover it."

But at this point Red Bull had at least been able to go after what Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin described as "a bit of a weakness" — Hamilton and Bottas both lacked a second set of new hard tyres coming into the race.

Verstappen took his first set of hards at the first stop, while Hamilton had another set of used mediums fitted. Over his second stint, Verstappen matched Hamilton's pace. Although he never got within 4.26s, the Red Bull driver was clearly in the hunt.



Puncture under the first safety car forced Bottas into a recovery drive

MAUGER



Slow second pitstop did little to hinder Verstappen's progress

TEE

They pitted again on laps 34 and 35, this time with Verstappen getting his wish and coming in first. But the pitstop lasted 3.044s longer than his quickest (based on total time in the pitlane) due to a problem at the rear. Even so, when things shook out following Hamilton's stop, Verstappen was just 3.776s behind at the end of lap 36, having been 5.738s adrift at the end of the tour before he came in for the slow service, without which he'd surely have emerged within striking distance.

But leaving aside such speculation, the third stint unfolded in a very similar way to the second. Verstappen gained on Hamilton and then they traded fastest times, the gap relatively stable before the Briton began to pull away. Their averages for the third stint (or, more accurately, Verstappen's whole third stint before his final stop and the opening to Hamilton's final stint) came out at 1m33.224s versus 1m33.248s, with Hamilton barely edging it by 0.024s.

It was remarkable, really. Verstappen had demonstrated the power of the undercut with his pace to close in despite his slow second stop, and this perhaps explains some of his anger at not coming in first on the opening stint too. He was driving in such a way that he hoped to pile pressure on Hamilton — sacrifice tyre life early on in a stint in the hope of forcing Hamilton to do likewise, from where Verstappen could pounce or at least force the Mercedes into tactical difficulty.

"That's what you have to do when they stop earlier than you, or you have a bad stop," Verstappen explained. "In the end, I had nothing to lose, so even if it wouldn't work out [it was worth trying]. As you could see, I could do another stop, and still [retain] second."

Before we get to Verstappen's third and final stop and the race's conclusion, it's worth considering how Hamilton had to approach this race. Despite the W11's pace advantage over the RB16, he knew of Verstappen's weapon with the extra set of more durable hard tyres (last year's mediums) going into the race, and was also wary of the Red Bull's race pace threat after Mercedes had decided to reduce its long-run data-gathering in Friday practice in a bid to better understand Pirelli's prototype 2021 rubber. His race was ultimately another example of his deftness with the tyres, executed in the face of relentless pressure. »

QUALIFYING



FIAPOOL

Bottas was perplexed by the gap between himself and polesitter Hamilton

Normal service resumed in qualifying for the Bahrain Grand Prix. For the first time since September's Russian GP, it was back to a track that's a regular on the F1 schedule, and the pack was back to its usual tricks for keeping the tyres in the perfect operating window. Drivers weren't having to work the rubber hard to switch it on, as in Turkey. The goal here was keeping the tyres, particularly at the rear, alive for the duration of a lap.

Pirelli made plenty of headlines after the drivers reacted to the prototype 2021 tyres, but it had also brought along race compounds for the two Bahrain events that were a step softer overall compared to 2019. This created two particular qualifying questions: would anyone be forced to get through Q2 on the unfancied softs just to guarantee a place in the final shootout; and would they be punished for pushing too early on the red-walled tyres on the laps that mattered?

Lewis Hamilton was in command throughout. He topped Q1 and Q2 – which was halted before anyone had set a lap when Carlos Sainz Jr's McLaren suffered a brake failure and spun – before dominating in Q3 to secure his 98th F1 pole.

Mercedes had opted to sacrifice time during the two Friday practice sessions to concentrate on learning the proposed new tyres, which the world champion said had left it with a "small compromise" on the ideal set-up. But the "night and day" difference between the new Istanbul Park surface and the older, abrasive track in Bahrain meant Hamilton could go about what he does best: using his tyre management skills to devastating effect.

"There was probably a little bit of time in Turn 1," he said afterwards, suggesting he had sacrificed time early in the lap to capitalise on fresher rubber for the final sector. "But after that it was good."

"HAMILTON WAS IN COMMAND THROUGHOUT. HE TOPPED Q1 AND Q2 BEFORE TAKING HIS 98TH F1 POLE"

Valtteri Bottas had needed to overturn a 0.244-second deficit to Hamilton after the opening Q3 runs, but first had to find at least 0.098s on Max Verstappen. He did so with a lap that felt "like there was not much more to really find", which left him perplexed by his gap to his team-mate. Verstappen ended up shuffled back to third after struggling with rear grip in Q3, and he was backed up by Red Bull team-mate Alex Albon in fourth.

Down the field, all the drivers in the top 10 progressed on the beneficial mediums, despite scares for Albon and Lando Norris (who eventually qualified ninth), and Ferrari fell from a front-row lockout in 2019 to 11th and 12th, with Sebastian Vettel ahead of Charles Leclerc, who struggled for confidence.



TRACKSIDE VIEW

Autosport's hopes of an action-packed start to first practice at the Bahrain Grand Prix are not high.

It has rained ahead of the opening support series practice sessions – Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East and Formula 2 – and this pandemic-delayed race marks the start of a run of 'dead rubber' races following Lewis Hamilton's 2020 title-clinching win in Turkey.

But when the start of FP1 rolls around, the track dry even as the clouds continue to threaten further precipitation, the pack heads out en masse – most unusual. Autosport therefore picks up our 'Mac in a Sac' waterproof and wanders the length of the paddock towards the few restricted viewing areas still accessible under the COVID-secure protocols.



We reach a fence by the pit exit with a clear view down to the Turn 1 right-hander at the end of the Sakhir track's main straight. It seems the teams have decided to eschew their usual post-installation-lap hibernation and quickly switch their drivers to the unmarked prototype C3 rubber. This means we get an early impression of the pack shooting along the main straight.

Our vantage point is between the two grandstands on the start/finish straight, essentially opposite two bumps in the asphalt that cause showers of sparks from the skid blocks of certain cars as they pass by. The AlphaTauri and Alfa Romeo cars are generating more early on, then producing less as the fuel burns off. The Mercedes machines are notably less effervescent.

The view to our right takes in the Turn 1 braking zone, the Sakhir Tower looming over our right shoulder, its gigantic rooftop flag providing a handy guide to the strength of the tailwind gusting throughout the session. There are noticeably few incidents at this spot during the opening hour, although Daniel Ricciardo, Romain Grosjean and Roy Nissany – in for George Russell at Willians for this session – have small right-front lock-ups.

"THE TEAMS HAVE DECIDED TO ESCHEW THEIR USUAL POST-INSTALLATION-LAP HIBERNATION"

The tower flag is fluttering faster as a few spots of rain start to fall at the 60-minute mark, so we opt to move across the infield towards Turns 9 and 10 – the tricky double-left complex. Here, though, there's plenty to keep an eye on, albeit from further away behind the track's drag strip barriers.

The drivers are already on the brakes as they start to turn for the second left, which is critical for carrying good momentum down the back straight. Several have moments, Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel locking up going deep, disappearing seemingly underneath the barrier that hides our view of the Turn 10 apex. There's more tyre abuse in the closing minutes, Kevin Magnussen and Valtteri Bottas giving their left-fronts particular grief.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



Vettel one of several drivers to trip up in second part of tricky Turn 9/10 complex



ETHERINGTON

Late safety car could have posed a threat to Hamilton, but in the end it stayed out until the finish

"I had to make sure I looked after my tyres the best way that I could," Hamilton explained. "There are certain ways I try to do that. Max was really quick, particularly at the get-go from every time he had a pitstop, and tyre-wise I had a slightly not as good [position] in the sense that he had the two hards, which can push more and go further.

"I was definitely, particularly in the second stint, quite conscious of trying to match the tyre life – and that's not necessarily having to do the same speed early on. I didn't want to tail off too much at the end [of each stint] and then him close the gap and undercut me. I tried to be as tactical as I could be."

Red Bull brought Verstappen in for a third stop on lap 46, after which Hamilton had a 27.518s advantage. Verstappen chomped this down to 17.392s by the end of lap 54, which works out at an average gain of 1.447s per lap. His pace was certainly scintillating – it was during this phase that he set the race's fastest lap – but it also seemed as though Hamilton had enough in hand to manage to the finish.

The biggest danger to Hamilton's lead was if there was a late safety car, coming with the threat of a final dash to the flag, during which he'd have had a tyre disadvantage. And this so nearly came to be when Perez's engine expired in flames on lap 54 as the result of an MGU-K issue.

That cost Perez, who had fallen to 40.564s behind Hamilton the lap before his problem struck, a second successive podium (out of a possible three in a row, considering his Imola performance).

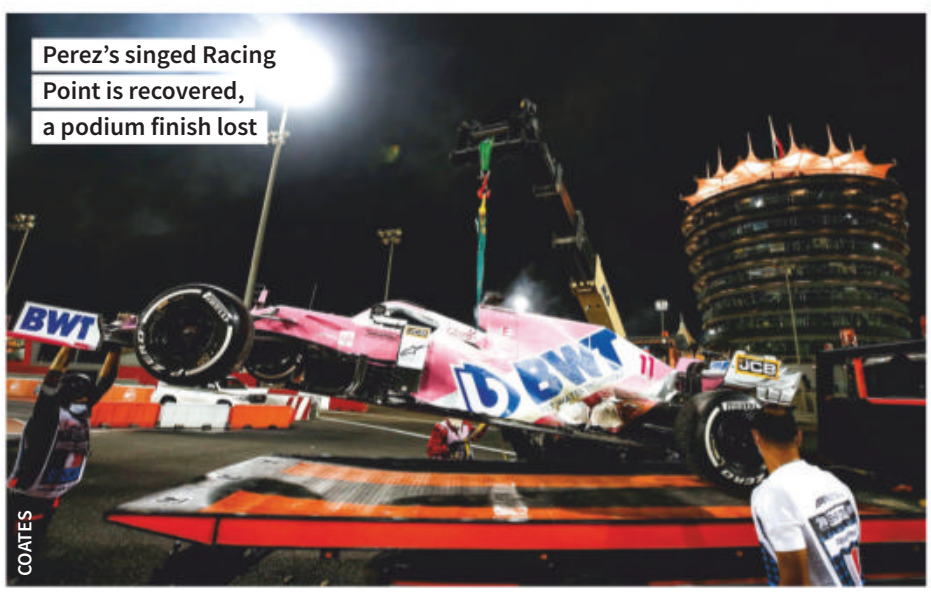
Mercedes considered pitting Hamilton during the resulting safety car, but judged it to be too fine a call, and in the end realised the incident would take too long to clear and the race would finish behind the safety car. Albon was the main benefactor of Perez's problems, as he inherited a second F1 career podium in his Red Bull.

There's a final element to consider in regard to Verstappen's post-race frustrations. This concerns Bottas and his recovery drive from a puncture under the first safety car, which dropped him from fourth to 16th at the end of lap five of 57. Although Bottas eventually recovered to eighth by the flag, the early phase of his attempts to get back up the order was characterised by his struggles to pass the much slower cars of Kimi Raikkonen and Russell. It must be noted that he was initially trying to make a one-stopper work, but Shovlin revealed Mercedes "clearly carrying a bigger wing than most" was also a factor.

This applies to the battle for the lead because, if just a few things had worked out differently for Verstappen and he had been able to make a pass on Hamilton stick, there's no guarantee the Mercedes would have been able to recover the lead, given Bottas's problems and the W11's historical issues when running in dirty air. That said, Hamilton can generally cope better with that, and the Bahrain track lends itself well to overtaking.

No matter, this race should go down in F1 folklore. It was a day where the championship's soul was on full display. This could be seen in the tremendous skill it took for Hamilton to win the race, Verstappen's ferocious will to somehow prevail, the danger the drivers face, their bravery – and the community's collective sense of relief that Grosjean managed to escape his crash.

"I HAD TO MAKE SURE I LOOKED AFTER MY TYRES THE BEST WAY I COULD. MAX WAS REALLY QUICK"



COATES

Perez's singed Racing Point is recovered, a podium finish lost

NEXT F1 REPORT

SAKHIR GRAND PRIX
10 DECEMBER ISSUE

We can all hope that Bahrain's second race in a row won't be *quite* as dramatic, although Red Bull's pace promises a proper fight for the win.

Sainz and Norris star as McLaren moves up a place

Starting on the soft Pirelli tyre was always going to be a gamble in a two-stop race, especially given the Bahrain circuit's propensity for delivering high tyre wear, but Carlos Sainz Jr pulled it off.

Sainz was saddled with a lowly 15th-place grid spot after a brake-by-wire failure in qualifying, but he gained two spots in the contentious restart order, then climbed to 11th at the second start and proceeded to make more ground following the safety car, dispatching Charles Leclerc's Ferrari on lap 12 to take seventh.

Sainz took the softs all the way to lap 21 before trading them in for mediums, and continued his ascent through the field. He overtook the Renaults of Daniel Ricciardo and Esteban Ocon, then settled in sixth and slowly began to chip away at team-mate Lando Norris. After his third stop, in which he took on new hards, Sainz made light work of the one-stopping Pierre Gasly to cement sixth, which became fifth after Sergio Perez's engine failure.

Norris was equally impressive and, despite sustaining a broken front wing in a first-lap skirmish with Gasly and Ocon, suffered no loss to his position as he changed it under the red flag.

A big haul of points for McLaren helped the team leapfrog Racing Point for third in the standings. McLaren is now 17 points ahead of Racing Point and 27 clear of Renault with two races to go.



SUTTON

Point-less Racing Point suffers double blow

Racing Point's hopes of winning the battle for third in the constructors' championship were dealt a major blow after a late retirement denied Sergio Perez a well-deserved podium finish.

Perez sat third after passing Valtteri Bottas before the first corner — just before the red flag — and was therefore able to retain the position at the restart. He then kept Red Bull's Alexander Albon four seconds behind in the first stint and maintained the gap after switching to hard tyres, while Albon took mediums, and stretched the gap out to almost six seconds entering the closing stages.

But after large puffs of smoke emerged from the rear of his RP20, Perez was forced to park up at the side of the track with four laps to go, ending hopes of a second straight podium. Racing Point confirmed an electrical issue had caused an MGU-K failure.

Perez admitted it was a "big hit" to retire so close to the end of the race, but felt Romain Grosjean's horrific accident meant disappointment was not the right feeling.

"After what happened today, you really put everything into perspective," Perez said. "For me, one podium less, one podium more, it doesn't matter. The most important thing of the day is that Romain is with us."

Perez's retirement meant Racing Point ended the day point-less. Lance Stroll had retired on the first lap after the second start when his car rolled at Turn 8 due to contact with Daniil Kvyat. The Russian's front-left wheel flipped Stroll's car, leaving the Canadian hanging from his seatbelts in the cockpit before being aided by marshals out of the car.

"We've scored two points since Monza, and there was a time where I was fourth in the world championship and things were looking really good," said Stroll. "And since then, it's just been a disaster." The result caused Racing Point to fall to fourth in the constructors' standings, behind McLaren.



SUTTON

BIG NUMBER

6

The number of places George Russell lost off the line after starting 14th, which the British racer put down to a sensitivity problem with Williams's start system that has caused the team to be inconsistent at this critical phase all season.


DUNBAR

Gambler Gasly makes a one-stopper work for sixth

Pierre Gasly pulled off an audacious one-stop strategy to finish sixth for AlphaTauri, using the early red flag to save a pitstop and get rid of the medium tyres.

After moving up to seventh prior to the red flag – but having to take the restart in ninth – Gasly rose as high as fifth on the hard tyres he had fitted during the stoppage. But the Italian Grand Prix winner was powerless to keep the faster McLarens back in the closing stages as they came by on their fresher tyres. The late safety car ensured that neither Daniel Ricciardo nor Valtteri Bottas could bear down on Gasly, giving the Frenchman sixth.

"It was a gamble, but it paid off in the end," said Gasly. "It gave me a pretty hard time in the cockpit, but we managed to get one of our best results of the year."



Q&A

MATTIA BINOTTO
FERRARI TEAM PRINCIPAL



Did you expect such a difficult race?
It is a very difficult result for us, it's quite disappointing. We were expecting to be more competitive here in Bahrain after the last races. The expectation was for a better result, but since Friday, FP1, we saw that somehow we are missing competitiveness compared to our main challengers on the track and we have not improved [from there]. I think we're missing pace in quali, we are missing pace in the race. In terms of degradation, certainly the hotter Bahrain conditions, [the] different type of asphalt, made the situation more difficult for us in terms of pace and performance. But now we've got a few days before the next race weekend, still here with the same conditions and the same asphalt. I think we need somehow to improve and to address it to be at least more competitive in the next days.

Was tyre degradation the main problem?
What has been the issue of this weekend is tyre degradation – overheating. Is it set-up, is it car package [causing it]? I think it's something we need to look at again. The conditions were quite different compared to the last races where it had been very cold and eventually slippery. Here, it was hot and the asphalt was very aggressive. But we will analyse all the data and try to see how we may better adapt our car to suit the conditions and to be more competitive in the next race.

What is the target for the final races of the year?
Now we have got two races to the end of the season. I think the target is, race by race, to try to optimise it, to look for the [best] result we can do. I don't think there is a clear objective on which we are pushing. It is more to make sure that we are optimising the package and [getting] better results.



Renault fails to deliver

Renault showed promise in qualifying for the Bahrain Grand Prix, but neither driver had the race pace to realistically challenge for anything other than the lower points positions.

Daniel Ricciardo, who was shuffled back to sixth for the second start due to the safety-car-line ruling following a good getaway, had a difficult second launch and dropped behind team-mate Esteban Ocon, even falling to the back of the field after his first pitstop.

The Australian rallied and cycled out just behind Ocon after the first round of stops, and later asked his team why he and Ocon were racing, because Ricciardo had much more pace in reserve. Dutifully, Ocon moved aside to let Ricciardo through, which proved to be the right call as Ricciardo forged ahead, but they later had to enact a repeat as the Frenchman undercut him during the second round of stops.

Ricciardo couldn't muster the pace to fight the McLarens and fell back from the pair, but might have gained a place from Pierre Gasly but for the late safety car as the AlphaTauri driver began to struggle on his ageing hard tyres.

After being passed by Ricciardo for a second time, Ocon began to drop back towards the end and lost a place to the recovering Valtteri Bottas. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc had also been catching Ocon, but the final safety car ultimately cemented Ocon's hold on ninth place.

GIORGIO PIOLA

DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA

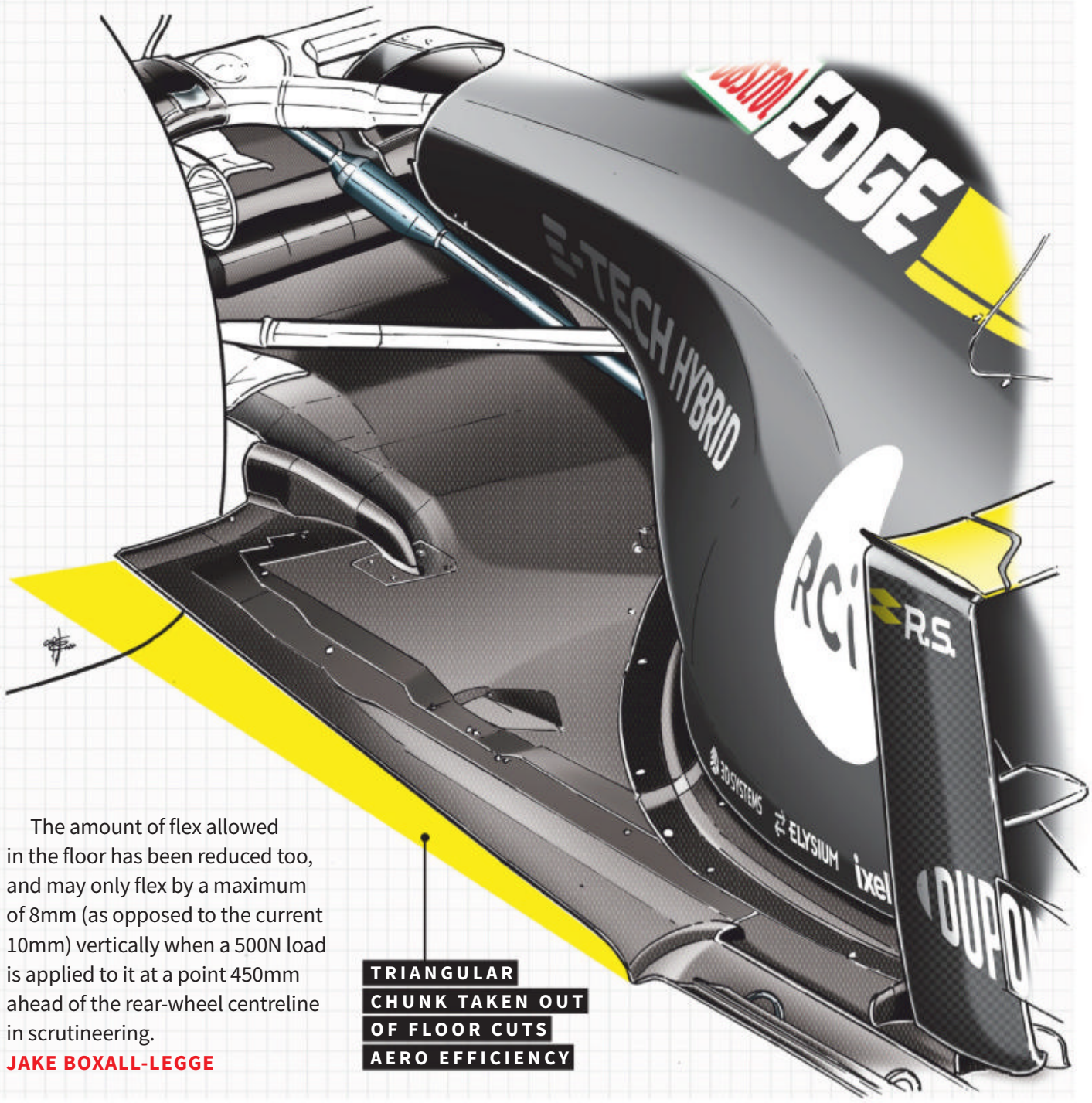
RENAULT TRIALS 2021 FLOOR IN BID TO GET HEAD START

As preparations begin for the 2021 season, the design departments of each Formula 1 team have had to acquaint themselves with the revised regulations governing the design of the floor. With a triangular chunk taken out ahead of the rear wheels, and a trim to the diffuser to boot, next year's cars will have lost some of the aerodynamic efficiency of the underbody structure, leaving them to find other ways of making up the difference.

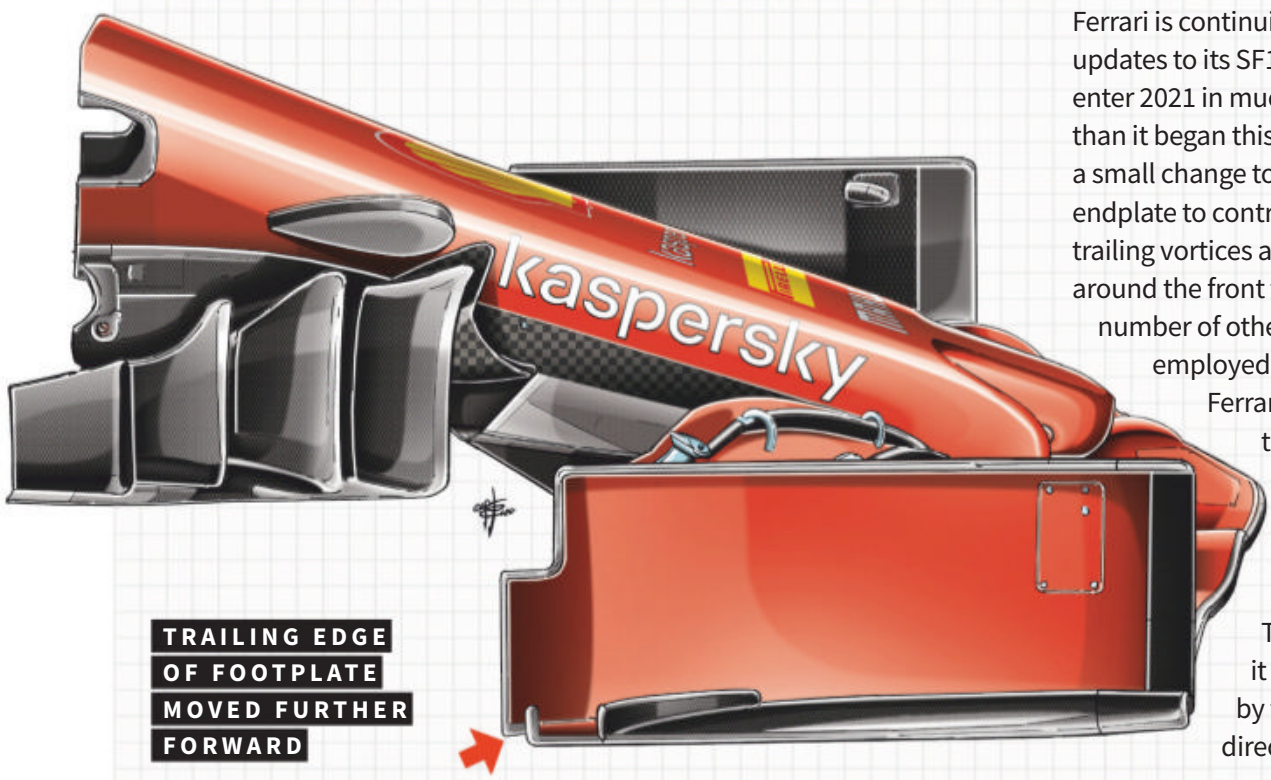
Like McLaren and Ferrari before, Renault trialled a 2021-spec floor in practice in Bahrain to get some real-world data for the revised design. The slots and cuts usually seen along the floor's edge are now gone, stripping it of some of the tools it uses to create a seal around the underside of the car to stop turbulence from reducing its effectiveness. The floor scrolls and winglets usually seen just next to the front of the sidepods remain, keeping that suction effect in play to draw airflow outwards, but the protection against the rear wheels' turbulence is all but gone.

The amount of flex allowed in the floor has been reduced too, and may only flex by a maximum of 8mm (as opposed to the current 10mm) vertically when a 500N load is applied to it at a point 450mm ahead of the rear-wheel centreline in scrutineering.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



FERRARI CONTINUES TO RING THE CHANGES WITH TWEAK TO FRONT WING ENDPLATE



Ferrari is continuing to explore updates to its SF1000 as it looks to enter 2021 in much better shape than it began this year. It has tried a small change to its front wing endplate to control where the trailing vortices are deposited around the front tyre. Following a number of other teams who have employed this measure, Ferrari has shifted the trailing edge of the footplate further forward to release any vortices sooner. This means that it can be worked by the outwardly directed endplate to send the airflow around the front tyre, slightly reworking the way it does so. The footplate retains the small vertical flap that can trip the airflow upwards, along with the outwashing fin to consolidate the mechanics at play with the endplate.

Even so, the Bahrain GP was not a particularly bountiful race for Ferrari – it scored just one point after managing to net 27 at the previous race in Turkey. It also paled in comparison to its performance last year, when Charles Leclerc was on pole and on course for victory before his power unit started to play up. For the second year in a row, it seems the powertrain once more caused problems in the desert…

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

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20 Latifi #6 *1m30.182s*

19 Grosjean #8 *1m30.138s*

18 Magnussen #20 *1m30.111s*

17 Raikkonen #7 *1m29.810s*

16 Giovinazzi #99 *1m29.491s*

15 Sainz #55 *no Q2 time*

14 Russell #63 *1m31.218s*

13 Stroll #18 *1m29.557s*

12 Leclerc #16 *1m29.165s*

11 Vettel #5 *1m29.149s*

FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m29.033s
2	Bottas	1m29.482s
3	Perez	1m30.000s
4	Sainz	1m30.018s
5	Gasly	1m30.049s
6	Verstappen	1m30.294s
7	Albon	1m30.302s
8	Ocon	1m30.384s
9	Stroll	1m30.426s
10	Ricciardo	1m30.508s
11	Leclerc	1m30.589s
12	Vettel	1m30.628s
13	Kubica	1m30.732s
14	Grosjean	1m30.832s
15	Magnussen	1m30.854s
16	Giovinazzi	1m30.896s
17	Kvyat	1m31.020s
18	Norris	1m31.392s
19	Latifi	1m32.472s
20	Nissany	1m32.801s

WEATHER Overcast, air 26-27C track 27-28C

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m28.971s
2	Verstappen	1m29.318s
3	Bottas	1m29.336s
4	Perez	1m29.403s
5	Ricciardo	1m29.462s
6	Gasly	1m29.551s
7	Norris	1m29.841s
8	Stroll	1m29.871s
9	Kvyat	1m29.900s
10	Albon	1m30.014s
11	Ocon	1m30.085s
12	Vettel	1m30.110s
13	Sainz	1m30.271s
14	Leclerc	1m30.407s
15	Giovinazzi	1m30.627s
16	Magnussen	1m30.849s
17	Raikkonen	1m30.928s
18	Latifi	1m30.973s
19	Grosjean	1m31.119s
20	Russell	1m31.636s

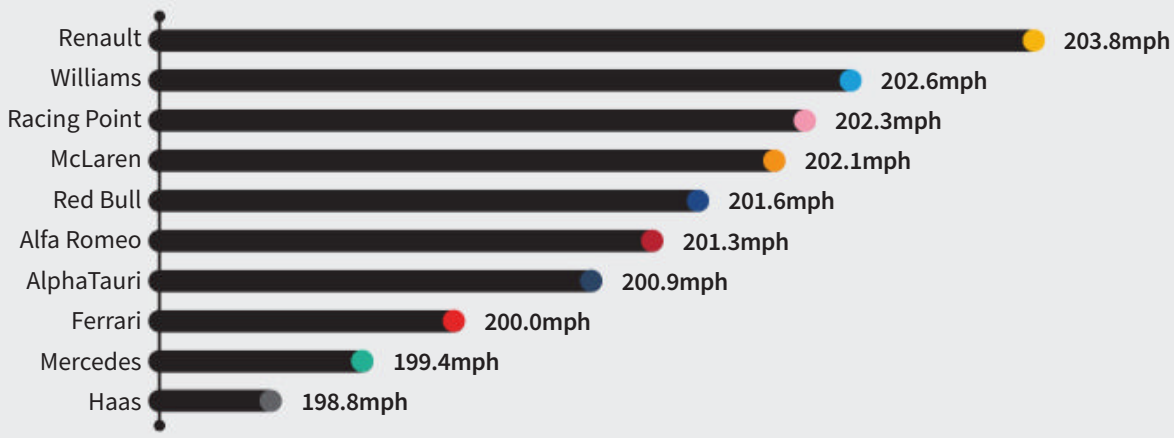
WEATHER Night, air 25-26C track 26-27C

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m28.355s
2	Hamilton	1m28.618s
3	Bottas	1m28.721s
4	Albon	1m29.018s
5	Sainz	1m29.455s
6	Gasly	1m29.472s
7	Norris	1m29.567s
8	Kvyat	1m29.585s
9	Stroll	1m29.660s
10	Perez	1m29.672s
11	Ricciardo	1m29.684s
12	Ocon	1m29.691s
13	Vettel	1m29.859s
14	Giovinazzi	1m29.970s
15	Leclerc	1m30.183s
16	Russell	1m30.559s
17	Grosjean	1m30.652s
18	Magnussen	1m30.759s
19	Raikkonen	1m30.823s
20	Latifi	1m30.917s

WEATHER Sunny, air 28-27C track 32-31C

SPEED TRAP (QUALIFYING)



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m28.343s
2	Stroll	1m28.679s
3	Albon	1m28.732s
4	Bottas	1m28.767s
5	Verstappen	1m28.885s
6	Gasly	1m28.971s
7	Sainz	1m28.975s
8	Ricciardo	1m29.005s
9	Leclerc	1m29.137s
10	Vettel	1m29.142s
11	Kvyat	1m29.158s
12	Perez	1m29.178s
13	Ocon	1m29.203s
14	Russell	1m29.294s
15	Norris	1m29.464s
16	Giovinazzi	1m29.491s
17	Raikkonen	1m29.810s
18	Magnussen	1m30.111s
19	Grosjean	1m30.138s
20	Latifi	1m30.182s

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m27.586s
2	Verstappen	1m28.025s
3	Bottas	1m28.063s
4	Ricciardo	1m28.648s
5	Albon	1m28.749s
6	Norris	1m28.877s
7	Perez	1m28.894s
8	Ocon	1m28.937s
9	Kvyat	1m28.944s
10	Gasly	1m29.008s
11	Vettel	1m29.149s
12	Leclerc	1m29.165s
13	Stroll	1m29.557s
14	Russell	1m31.218s
15	Sainz	no time

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m27.264s
2	Bottas	1m27.553s
3	Verstappen	1m27.678s
4	Albon	1m28.274s
5	Perez	1m28.322s
6	Ricciardo	1m28.417s
7	Ocon	1m28.419s
8	Gasly	1m28.448s
9	Norris	1m28.542s
10	Kvyat	1m28.618s

WEATHER Night, air 26-27C track 27-29C

NEXT RACE
6 DECEMBER
SAKHIR GP
Sakhir, Bahrain

SEASON STATS

	DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1	Hamilton	332	1	1
2	Bottas	201	1	1
3	Verstappen	189	1	2
4	Ricciardo	102	3	4
5	Perez	100	2	3
6	Leclerc	98	2	4
7	Norris	86	3	4
8	Sainz	85	2	3
9	Albon	85	3	4
10	Gasly	71	1	4
11	Stroll	59	3	1
12	Ocon	42	5	5
13	Vettel	33	3	5
14	Kvyat	26	4	8
15	Hulkenberg	10	7	3
16	Raikkonen	4	9	8
17	Giovinazzi	4	9	10
18	Grosjean	2	9	14
19	Magnussen	1	10	15
20	Latifi	0	11	15
21	Russell	0	11	12

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Mercedes	533
2	Red Bull	274
3	McLaren	171
4	Racing Point	154
5	Renault	144
6	Ferrari	131
7	AlphaTauri	97
8	Alfa Romeo	8
9	Haas	3
10	Williams	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	**11**	4	Bottas
Vettel	4	**11**	**Leclerc**
Albon	0	**15**	**Verstappen**
Norris	**7**	**7**	**Sainz**
Ricciardo	**14**	1	Ocon
Gasly	**13**	2	Kvyat
Perez	**9**	3	Stroll
Perez	**1**	0	Hulkenberg
Stroll	**1**	**1**	**Hulkenberg**
Raikkonen	**8**	7	Giovinazzi
Grosjean	7	**8**	**Magnussen**
Latifi	0	**15**	**Russell**

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying or had a serious technical problem

WINS

Hamilton	11
Bottas	2
Gasly	1
Verstappen	1

FASTEST LAPS

Hamilton	6
Verstappen	3
Bottas	2
Norris	2
Ricciardo	1
Sainz	1

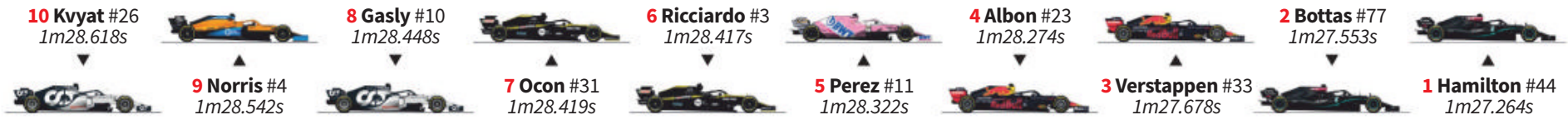
POLE POSITIONS

Hamilton	10
Bottas	4
Stroll	1

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STARTING GRID



RACE RESULTS ROUND 15 (57 LAPS – 191.54 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES
1	**Lewis Hamilton** (GBR)	Mercedes	2h59m47.515s	56	**M**u, **M**u, **H**n
2	**Max Verstappen** (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	+1.254s	1	**M**u, **M**u, **H**n, **H**n, **M**u
3	**Alexander Albon** (THA)	Red Bull-Honda	+8.005s		**M**u, **M**u, **M**u, **H**n
4	**Lando Norris** (GBR)	McLaren-Renault	+11.337s		**M**u, **M**u, **H**n
5	**Carlos Sainz Jr** (ESP)	McLaren-Renault	+11.787s		**S**n, **S**n, **M**n, **H**n
6	**Pierre Gasly** (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+11.942s		**M**u, **H**n, **H**n
7	**Daniel Ricciardo** (AUS)	Renault	+19.368s		**M**u, **H**n, **H**n
8	**Valtteri Bottas** (FIN)	Mercedes	+19.680s		**M**u, **H**n, **M**u, **M**u
9	**Esteban Ocon** (FRA)	Renault	+22.803s		**M**u, **M**u, **M**u, **H**n
10	**Charles Leclerc** (MCO)	Ferrari	-1 lap		**H**n, **M**u, **H**n, **H**u
11	**Daniil Kvyat** (RUS)	AlphaTauri-Honda	-1 lap		**M**u, **S**u, **H**n, **H**n
12	**George Russell** (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		**M**n, **M**n, **H**n, **M**u
13	**Sebastian Vettel** (DEU)	Ferrari	-1 lap		**M**u, **H**n, **M**u, **H**n
14	**Nicholas Latifi** (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		**H**n, **M**n, **M**n, **H**u
15	**Kimi Raikkonen** (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		**M**n, **M**n, **H**n, **M**u
16	**Antonio Giovinazzi** (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		**M**n, **M**n, **H**n, **S**n
17	**Kevin Magnussen** (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		**M**n, **H**n, **H**n, **H**u, **S**n
18	**Sergio Perez** (MEX)	Racing Point-Mercedes	53 laps-engine		**M**u, **M**u, **H**n, **H**n
R	**Lance Stroll** (CAN)	Racing Point-Mercedes	2 laps-accident		**M**u, **M**u
R	**Romain Grosjean** (FRA)	Haas-Ferrari	0 laps-accident		**H**n

FASTEST LAPS

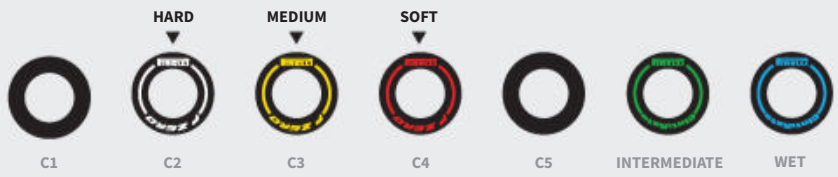
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	**Verstappen**	1m32.014s	-	48
2	**Ricciardo**	1m32.827s	+0.813s	38
3	**Hamilton**	1m32.864s	+0.850s	38
4	**Bottas**	1m33.352s	+1.338s	28
5	**Sainz**	1m33.411s	+1.397s	46
6	**Raikkonen**	1m33.573s	+1.559s	43
7	**Norris**	1m33.588s	+1.574s	53
8	**Leclerc**	1m33.625s	+1.611s	44
9	**Perez**	1m33.629s	+1.615s	40
10	**Albon**	1m33.684s	+1.670s	41
11	**Vettel**	1m33.861s	+1.847s	41
12	**Kvyat**	1m34.141s	+2.127s	35
13	**Ocon**	1m34.354s	+2.340s	37
14	**Giovinazzi**	1m34.536s	+2.522s	22
15	**Latifi**	1m34.591s	+2.577s	39
16	**Gasly**	1m34.817s	+2.803s	48
17	**Russell**	1m35.042s	+3.028s	47
18	**Magnussen**	1m35.241s	+3.227s	29
19	**Stroll**	-	-	-
20	**Grosjean**	-	-	-

WEATHER Night, air 24-28C track 26-33C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 63.92mph **FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED** 131.58mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

FP1

ROY NISSANY replaced **RUSSELL** at Williams. while **ROBERT KUBICA** replaced **RAIKKONEN** at Alfa Romeo

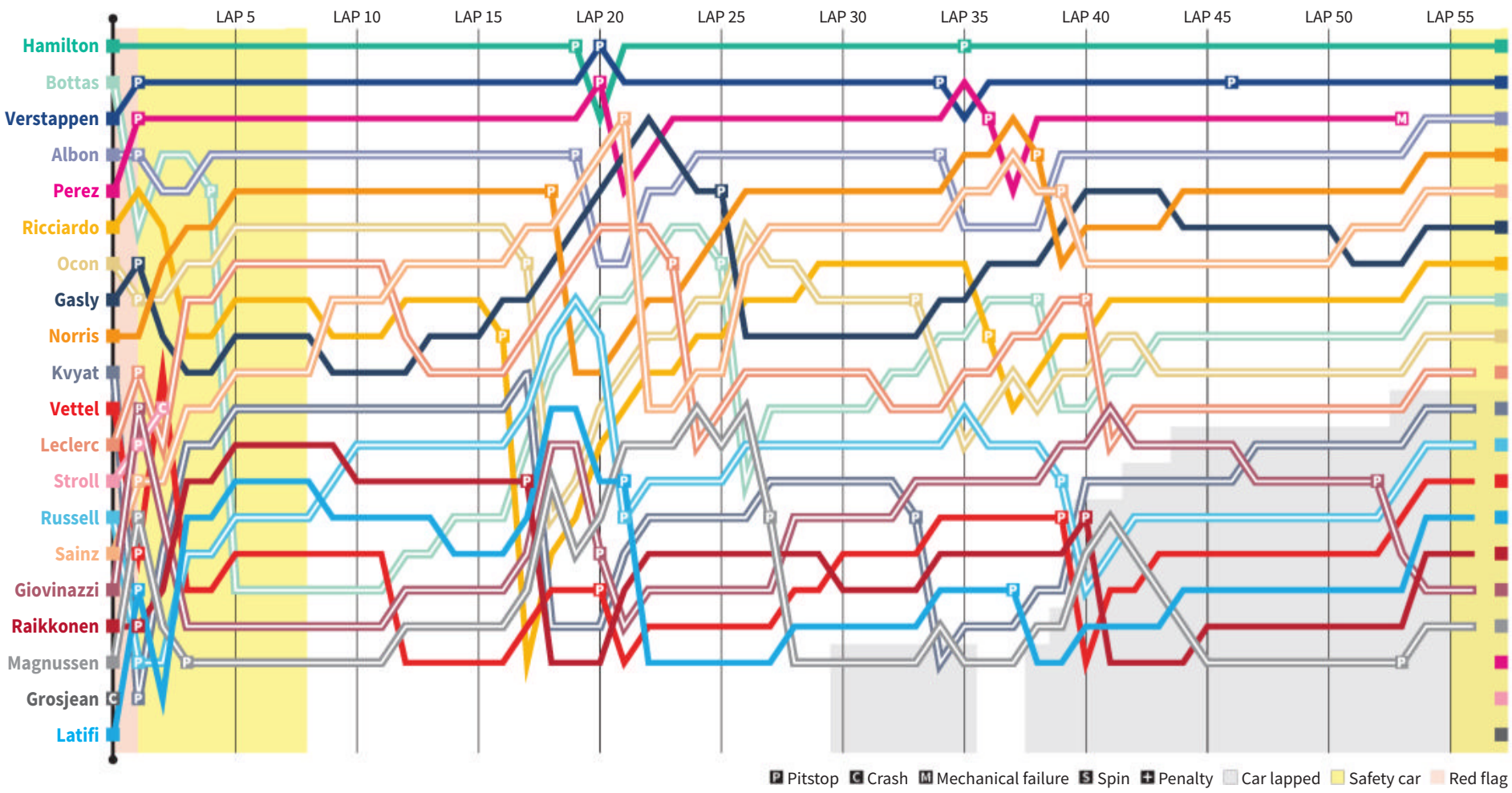
RACE PENALTIES

KVYAT 10-second penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Stroll

STAT 115
Mercedes has overtaken Williams as third most successful team for race wins

STAT 41
Verstappen now has 41 F1 podiums, matching Felipe Massa

LAP CHART What happened, when

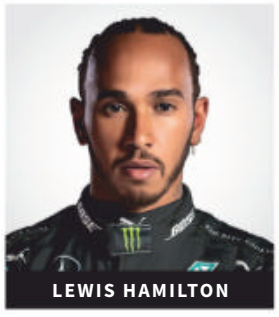


IT'S THREE OF A KIND TOPPING THE SCOREBOARD IN BAHRAIN

Lewis Hamilton, Carlos Sainz Jr and Sergio Perez deserve full marks for the brilliance of their performances this weekend, although there are two more who are oh so close

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

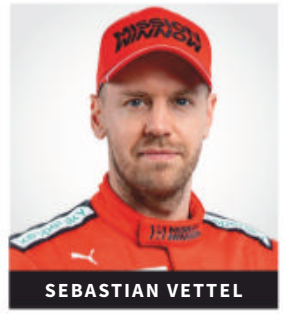
10 Another superb performance from the world champion. Despite a less-than-ideal build-up, thanks to Mercedes' efforts to learn the 2021 rubber, he dominated qualifying to take pole. Was brilliant in the race, nailing the various starts and managing his tyres to perfection.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

7 Could do nothing about the first puncture that ruined his race (nor the other under the second safety car), but earns this score for two reasons: his qualifying defeat to Hamilton; and his bad getaway at the initial start, which he suspects was down to being too cautious releasing the clutch.

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

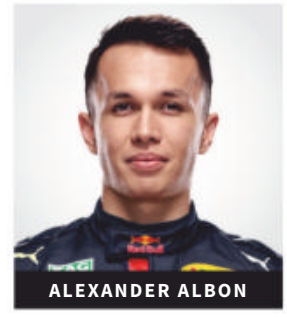
6 Was the faster Ferrari driver in qualifying as Leclerc struggled for confidence in the SF1000. Both Ferraris were caught up in the chain of events that preceded Grosjean's crash, and Vettel's race then unravelled from the second start, where he was annoyed at Leclerc's bold pass, then failed to find pace.



CHARLES LECLERC

9 Another brilliant drive in the race, but it followed his Q2 exit behind Vettel. Still, he attacked incredibly bravely at the second restart, annoying his team-mate and saving a huge slide at Turn 4 as he rose from 12th to eighth. Did excellent job to hang on to a point considering Ferrari's pace.

RED BULL



ALEXANDER ALBON

7 Drove well from Saturday onwards, taking fourth in qualifying behind Verstappen following needless FP2 accident. But he was still 0.596s slower than his team-mate, and then in the race would have been beaten by the slower Racing Point had it not been for Perez's problem.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

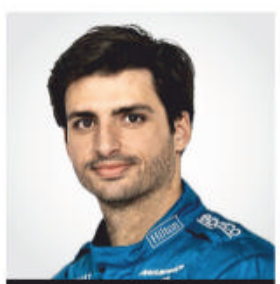
9 Possibly a fraction harsh considering his weekend performance, but he just misses a maximum score for not keeping Bottas off the front row. Raced brilliantly, defending from Perez and harrying Hamilton with a car that handled like a "kangaroo" early on.

McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

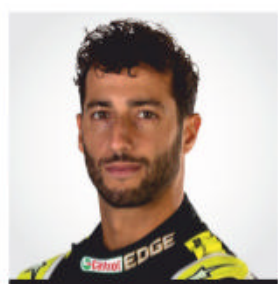
9 Loses out for qualifying near the back of the Q3 'Class B' runners and for being barely 10s ahead of Sainz, who had started 15th, when the second safety car was called. Was fortunate that the red flag meant he could change his damaged wing, but had launched well to attack Ocon and Gasly.



CARLOS SAINZ JR

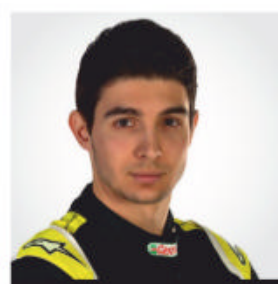
10 Is marked up versus his team-mate because of the recovery drive he put in after a brake problem left him starting 15th. Took the second start in 13th, but it was his display on softs in the first stint that was exceptional. Beat the Renaults and was chasing Norris at the end.

RENAULT



DANIEL RICCIARDO

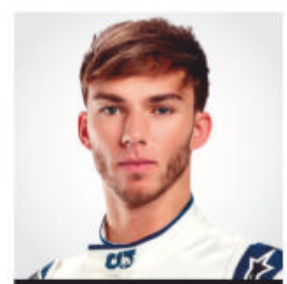
8 Had he nailed the second start as well as the first, he might have come away with a better result as it led to him making the race's earliest green-flag stop, although both Renault drivers struggled for pace in their second stints. Battled well with team-mate Ocon at times.



ESTEBAN OCON

7 Qualified just 0.002s slower than his team-mate, which was good even if it led to a 14th qualifying defeat of 2020. Lost a position at the first start but gained it back at the second, and from there was involved in some stunning battles. Was hampered by his lack of a second set of new hard tyres.

ALPHATAURI



PIERRE GASLY

9 Just misses out on a maximum as he came away third in the group taking grid spots 6-8, which was covered by 0.031s. But his race was sensational, somehow making a "gamble" one-stopper work, given the high wear factor. Worked very hard to keep his pace up and tyres alive.



DANIIL KVYAT

6 Is marked down chiefly because of the clash that flipped Stroll following the second start, for which he was found to be at fault by the stewards. Can't be blamed for the clash with Grosjean, though, and may remember the weekend best for reaching Q3 for the second time this season.



Albon had the better of Gasly on track, but it's the latter who scores highest

RACING POINT


SERGIO PEREZ

10 Another brilliant race performance, and this time he also excelled in qualifying to start fifth. Made his way past the slow-starting Bottas by the pitlane exit's end at the first start, which was critical to being third for the second start. Was nailed on for a podium before the MGU-K issue.


LANCE STROLL

7 Tough to assess Stroll given his race ended so early, but he scores lower because of his qualifying result. This was in part down to him qualifying on a used set of mediums, but that compound did not have the one-lap degradation rate of the softs and his team-mate started so far ahead.

ALFA ROMEO

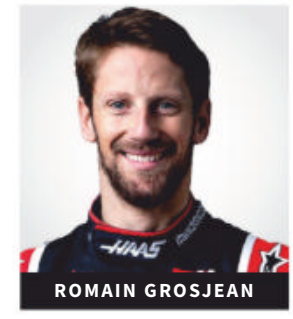

KIMI RAIKKONEN

7 Is marked down for being the slower Alfa in qualifying. But raced well considering his car was damaged at both starts. In the first he skated across the gravel on the outside of Turn 3 as he avoided the bunching cars ahead, then had a scary clash with Giovinazzi passing close to the pitwall.


ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

8 Earns this mark because it was Russell who was the 'Class C' runner to escape Q1, but was excellent in the race. Gained eight spots at start one, then did excellent job to nearly make a one-stopper work. Was ahead of Russell before Alfa gambled by stopping him under the late safety car.

HAAS


ROMAIN GROSJEAN

N/A For obvious reasons we are not giving Grosjean a score. In qualifying, he ended up 19th after he "pushed too hard" trying to "enjoy it", which probably hurt his rear tyres, but nevertheless was a good explanation to hear. Hopefully not his final F1 start, but that would also be understandable.

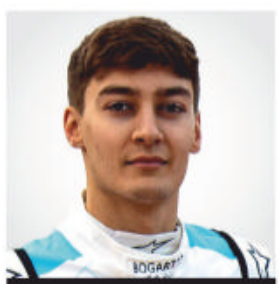

KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

7 Has to be given the benefit of the doubt considering his race was undone when he was unfortunate to break his front wing against Vettel as the Ferrari slowed to avoid Stroll's flipped Racing Point. That put him to the back, and he had a tough race from there. Beat his team-mate in qualifying.

WILLIAMS


NICHOLAS LATIFI

7 Started last for the fifth time in 2020, but this was a strong race drive, as he came home ahead of all his 'Class C' rivals bar his team-mate. Was annoyed to have braked too early for Turn 1 after the safety car restart, as that allowed Raikkonen back alongside, and Russell past too.

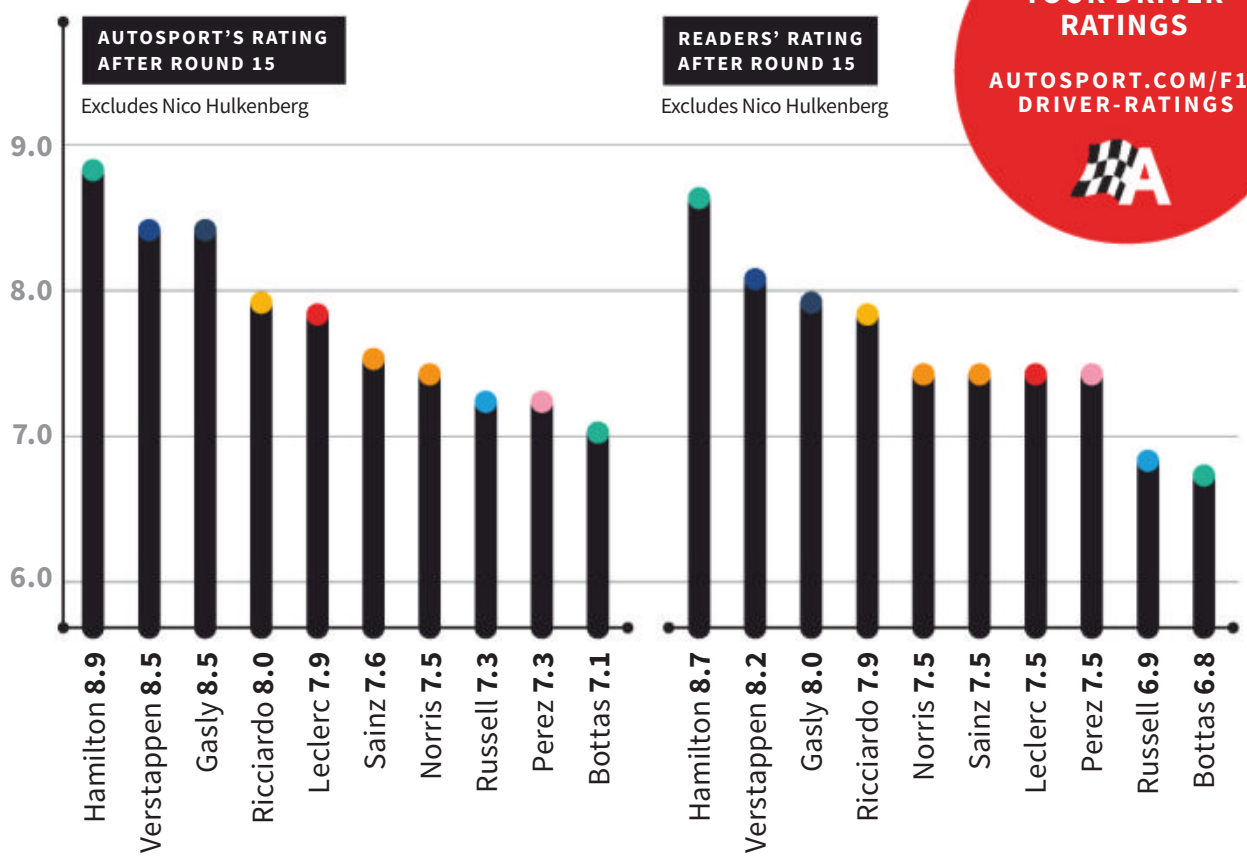

GEORGE RUSSELL

8 Another brilliant qualifying display to get out of Q1 for the ninth time in 2020. Had a terrible start, which squandered all his hard work. But raced well in battles with Giovinazzi and Magnussen and was top 'Class C' runner home – albeit thanks to the Alfas' second-safety-car stop.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS

AUTOSPORT'S RATING AFTER ROUND 15
Excludes Nico Hulkenberg

READERS' RATING AFTER ROUND 15
Excludes Nico Hulkenberg



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SEASON REVIEW

SMALL NUMBERS HAVE BIG IMPACT IN TOYOTA BATTLE

The system of success handicaps devised by the World Endurance Championship to level the LMP1 playing field in the category's swansong season ended up having a counterproductive effect

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP motorsport IMAGES

Toyota sealed a Le Mans 24 Hours hat-trick on the way to claiming a third World Endurance Championship title, and Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez finally took the crown after a trio of seasons together. But 'three' wasn't the most important number over the course of the 2019-20 season elongated by COVID-19. It was actually 0.00455.

That's what you end up with if you subtract 0.008 from 0.01255. The difference between those two numbers defined a campaign that began in September 2019 and stretched all the way to November 2020.

The two figures relate to the system of success handicaps — a modern take on success ballast — introduced for the swansong of LMP1. It was conceived to close up the competition between the Toyota TS050 HYBRIDs and the non-hybrid privateer opposition from Rebellion Racing and, initially at least, the works Team LNT Ginetta squad, and to ensure the remaining manufacturer in P1 didn't waltz away to the title.

The system penalised individual cars according to their points advantage over the worst-placed P1 entry in the championship, up to a maximum of 40 points and not counting pole position points. It all sounded very plausible — a good idea, even — when explained by the handicaps' architect-in-chief, Toyota Gazoo Racing technical director Pascal Vasselon.

But something went wrong between the formulation of the handicaps and their execution. Ahead of their first deployment at round two of the campaign at Fuji, the per-point, per-kilometre coefficient used to calculate the penalties was changed from 0.008s to 0.01255s. The increase of more than 50% had a devastating effect on the championship: it broke up the battle between the Toyotas, the only real highlight in the top class over the course of the 2018-19 WEC superseason; and it ensured that when the penalties were stacked against the Japanese cars, Rebellion as the only credible and consistent privateer entrant could win with consummate ease so long as it didn't screw up.

It is hard to interpret the increase as anything other than a panic move by the FIA Endurance Committee, the WEC's kitchen cabinet, after Toyota dominated the Silverstone opener. The TS050s, now racing in a new high-nose configuration, were a long way up the road despite a double increase in minimum weight ahead of the season under the Equivalence of Technology. The Toyotas ended up 28kg heavier than in the six-hour races at the end of 2018-19. »

ROUND BY ROUND

Silverstone 4 Hours

LMP1 Kobayashi/Conway/Lopez
LMP2 Lapierre/Borga
GTE PRO Bruni/Lietz
GTE AM Collard/Perrodo/Nielsen

The #7 Toyota has the slightest of edges over #8 during an ultra-close race before the success handicaps kick in. Kobayashi and Hartley swap positions three times over two stints, the car ahead ceding position to the car behind on instruction from the pitwall. Rebellion keeps Toyota honest, twice getting into the lead on strategy calls.

Fuji 6 Hours

LMP1 Buemi/Nakajima/Hartley
LMP2 de Vries/van der Garde/van Eerd
GTE PRO Thiim/Sorensen
GTE AM Adam/Eastwood/Yoluc

Toyota leads all the way with the #8 car. Margin of victory of just over half a minute is unrepresentative given a drivethrough for pitlane speeding garnered by Nakajima, and a couple of virtual safety cars. Solo Rebellion-Gibson R-13 comes home two laps in arrears after struggling with tyres that are too soft for the conditions.

Shanghai 4 Hours

LMP1 Senna/Menezes/Nato
LMP2 Davidson/da Costa/Gonzalez
GTE PRO Calado/Pier Guidi
GTE AM Adam/Eastwood/Yoluc

Rebellion sweeps to victory by just over a minute over the Toyotas, which are running the maximum level of success handicaps. Nato triggers a confused start by not accelerating when the lights go out, and then struggles to get his tyres up to temperature. When Menezes takes the lead after the first round of stops, he leaves Buemi in his wake.

Bahrain 8 Hours

LMP1 Kobayashi/Conway/Lopez
LMP2 Albuquerque/Hanson/di Resta
GTE PRO Thiim/Sorensen
GTE AM Bleekemolen/Keating/ten Voorde

Hopes that the success handicaps might produce a proper race go out of the window at the start. Polewinner Senna is nudged into a spin by Robertson's Ginetta and Buemi sustains minor front-end damage. Conway is four seconds up at the end of the first lap and goes on to win by more than a lap.



“SOMETHING WENT WRONG BETWEEN THE FORMULATION OF THE HANDICAPS AND THEIR EXECUTION”

Austin 6 Hours

LMP1 Senna/Menezes/Nato
LMP2 Albuquerque/Hanson/di Resta
GTE PRO Thiim/Sorensen
GTE AM Adam/Eastwood/Yoluc

Rebellion takes its second and final win of the season, this time by just under a minute. Some serious fuel saving is required over the final stages to avoid a late splash, which would have brought the second-placed #8 Toyota into contention. The extra five tenths of penalties on #7 leave it two laps down.

Spa 6 Hours

LMP1 Kobayashi/Conway/Lopez
LMP2 Albuquerque/Hanson/di Resta
GTE PRO Estre/Christensen
GTE AM Collard/Perrodo/Nielsen

Rebellion claims another pole on the resumption of the WEC, but has a nightmare during a race which is wet for its first three hours: the R-13 proves its dislike for slippery conditions again. The #7 Toyota leads most of the way after getting its tyre strategy correct, while #8 is delayed with an electrical glitch that leaves it 30s back at the flag.

Le Mans 24 Hours

LMP1 Buemi/Nakajima/Hartley
LMP2 Albuquerque/Hanson/di Resta
GTE PRO Martin/Lynn/Tincknell
GTE AM Adam/Eastwood/Yoluc

Both Toyotas are delayed but Rebellion, now back up to two cars for the first time since Silverstone, doesn’t have the speed to benefit. A delay in the pits of nearly half an hour shortly after the halfway mark leaves no way back for the #7 car, which manages to make it back up to third at the finish, ahead of the second R-13.

Bahrain 8 Hours

LMP1 Kobayashi/Conway/Lopez
LMP2 Aubry/Stevens/Tung
GTE PRO Estre/Christensen
GTE AM Bergmeister/Perfetti/ten Voorde

Rebellion’s decision not to go to the series finale leaves Toyota as the only P1 participant in the farewell race for the class. A seven-point gap between the two TS050s means the title will go to whoever wins, but the success handicaps leave the #8 unable to take the fight to the sister car.

The season can be summed up by what happened in the first two races after Silverstone. At Fuji in October 2019, the #7 Toyota of Conway, Kobayashi and Lopez was penalised by 1.4 seconds after winning the opening round, the #8 car of Sebastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima and Toyota newcomer Brendon Hartley by exactly a second. The car with the lesser penalty led every lap over the six hours and would have finished much more than 30s up the road had Nakajima not been penalised for speeding in the pitlane.

The Toyotas, with a win and a second apiece, were each pegged back to the tune of 2.74s (by reductions in their fuel and hybrid boost allocation), the Rebellion by 0.89s (with weight) for Shanghai. Such was the Swiss entrant's advantage that Bruno Senna, Gustavo Menezes and Norman Nato won by over a minute despite the last-named dropping 30s in the opening stint. The drivers of the #7 TS050 ended up winning the title, despite being more heavily penalised than their team-mates in three of the six races in which the handicaps were applied. They were equal in one, and Buemi and co were on the wrong end of the system on two occasions.

"LE MANS FOR ONCE DID NOT PROVE CRUCIAL IN THE OUTCOME OF THE CHAMPIONSHIP"

There were two telling factors in the outcome of a championship battle between two evenly matched crews. The first was that Kobayashi and his cohorts overcame a bigger handicap than the sister car to win when the WEC got going again at Spa in August after its COVID pause. The second was that the eventual champions carried less in the way of penalties at the two eight-hour fixtures in Bahrain, when more points were on offer. Had those two races been just six hours and the results the same, then Buemi, Nakajima and Hartley would have been champions by 184 to 181 points, rather than trailing 202 to 207. The rejig of the WEC resulting from COVID undoubtedly played into the hands of title winners, because they would have had to endure the greater handicap at the cancelled Sebring 1000 Miles eight-hour race scheduled for March.



Senna/Menezes/Nato Rebellion won by over a minute at Shanghai

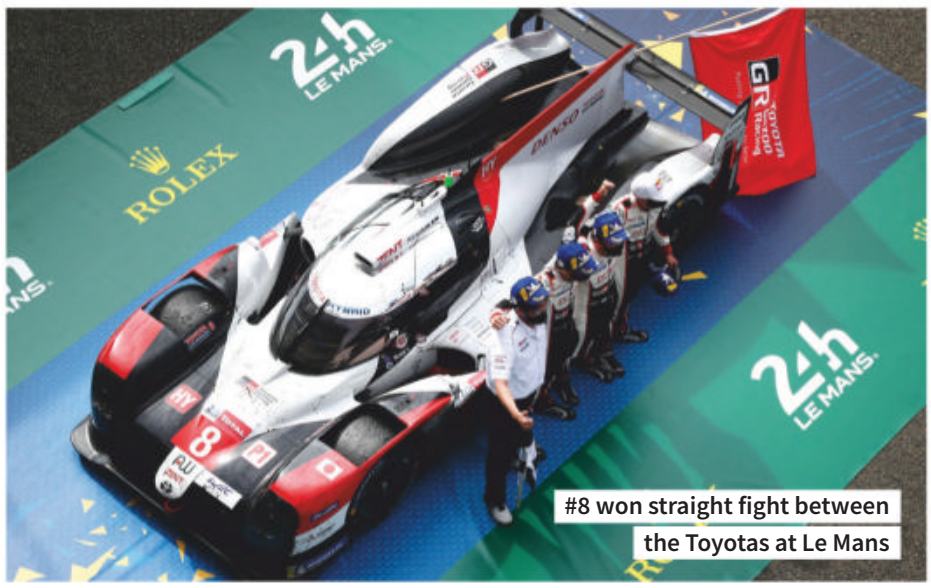
Le Mans, rescheduled to the autumn as a result of COVID, for once didn't prove crucial in the outcome of the championship, even though it was back to double-points. The handicaps system was never intended for use at the most important race of the season, partly because the EoT was perceived to have done its job in 2019, so it was a straight fight between the TS050s as Rebellion failed to replicate its form of the previous season.

Both Toyotas had problems: relatively minor braking issues on #8; a holed exhaust on #7 that cost 29 minutes. It was another dose of bad luck at Le Mans for Kobayashi, Conway and Lopez, who perhaps had the narrowest of edges over their team-mates.

Had they finally won the race, they would have been more or less home and dry in the championship. Because they didn't, it was actually better for their title assault that they only recovered as high as third behind the #1 Rebellion.

Buemi and co raced with a 0.54s handicap to the sister car at the Bahrain finale, a race at which the calculations were made only on the basis of the Toyotas' scores in the absence of any P1 opposition. The differential would have been only 0.13s had their rivals finished second at Le Mans.

It might have been possible to overcome such a deficit, whereas 0.54s was just too much. The drivers of the #8 car had no chance in the winner-takes-all shootout in the desert. Some little numbers had a big impact on the 2019-20 WEC.



#8 won straight fight between the Toyotas at Le Mans

RESULTS PROTOTYPE CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM AND CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	PTS
1	**Jose Maria Lopez** (ARG) **Kamui Kobayashi** (JPN) **Mike Conway** (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID	**1**	2	3	**1**	3	**1**	3	**1**	**207**
2	**Brendon Hartley** (NZL) **Kazuki Nakajima** (JPN) **Sebastien Buemi** (CHE)	Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID	2	**1**	2	2	2	2	**1**	2	**202**
3	**Bruno Senna** (BRA) **Gustavo Menezes** (USA) **Norman Nato** (FRA)	Rebellion Racing Rebellion-Gibson R13	10	3	**1**	3	**1**	3	2	-	**145**
4	**Filipe Albuquerque** (PRT) **Phil Hanson** (GBR)	United Autosports ORECA-Gibson 07	R	6	8	4	4	4	5	6	**90**
5	**Paul di Resta** (GBR)	United Autosports ORECA-Gibson 07	R	-	8	4	4	4	5	6	**82**
6	**Antonio Felix da Costa** (PRT) **Roberto Gonzalez** (MEX)	Jota Sport ORECA-Gibson 07	9	DSQ	6	5	6	7	6	4	**79**
7	**Anthony Davidson** (GBR)	Jota Sport ORECA-Gibson 07	9	DSQ	6	5	6	7	6	4	**75**
8	**Ho-Pin Tung** (NLD) **Will Stevens** (GBR)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) ORECA-Gibson 07	8	5	7	6	5	23	DSQ	3	**69**
9	**Gabriel Aubry** (FRA)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) ORECA-Gibson 07	8	5	7	6	5	-	DSQ	3	**67**
10	**Frits van Eerd** (NLD) **Giedo van der Garde** (NLD)	Racing Team Nederland (TDS) ORECA-Gibson 07	7	4	10	9	8	6	19	5	**58**

LMP1 manufacturers **1 Toyota Gazoo Racing 241**; 2 **Rebellion Racing** 145; 3 **Team LNT** 29.

GTE

ASTON FINALLY FLIES HIGH IN THE DRY



Aston Martin won races in the first season for its second-generation Vantage GTE in 2018-19. What was new for its second campaign was an ability to take victory in GTE Pro in the dry. That allowed Nicki Thiim and Marco Sorensen to reprise their 2016 world title and the British marque to seal the manufacturers' crown for the first time.

The Danes won three of the eight races, while the sister car shared by Maxime Martin and Alex Lynn took the most important of the car's victories at Le Mans when they were joined by Harry Tincknell. The difference between the latest Vantage's maiden season and its second was that it now had Michelin slicks under it that could hang on for a double stint.

The late decision by the Prodrive-run Aston Martin Racing squad to switch back to Michelin from the Dunlops that had helped it win the title in 2016 and Le Mans the following year with the old car counted against it over the 2018-19 season. It didn't begin testing on the French rubber until the December ahead of a season in which the tyre allocation for qualifying and the race was reduced.

Aston and Michelin basically ran out of development time ahead of the new Vantage's first race the following May. The British manufacturer's misfortune was that it had to go through the 18-month superseason, encompassing two editions of Le Mans, with the three specs of slick tyre developed in double-quick time.

The development programme for 2019-20 started straight after Le Mans 2018. The revised-construction tyres that it produced allowed the Vantage to finally compete with its rivals, now just Porsche and Ferrari after the withdrawals of Ford and BMW, in dry conditions. The car's one-lap pace, or its speed in the wet, had never been in doubt, but now it could be competitive over a full race distance.

The Astons lost a shot at victory at the Silverstone opener when the team rolled the dice on keeping the cars on slicks during what wasn't quite such a brief shower as it believed, but Thiim and Sorensen won next time out at Fuji, the latest Vantage's first win in anything approaching dry conditions. Two more victories followed for the Danes in the first of the Bahrain races and then at Austin.

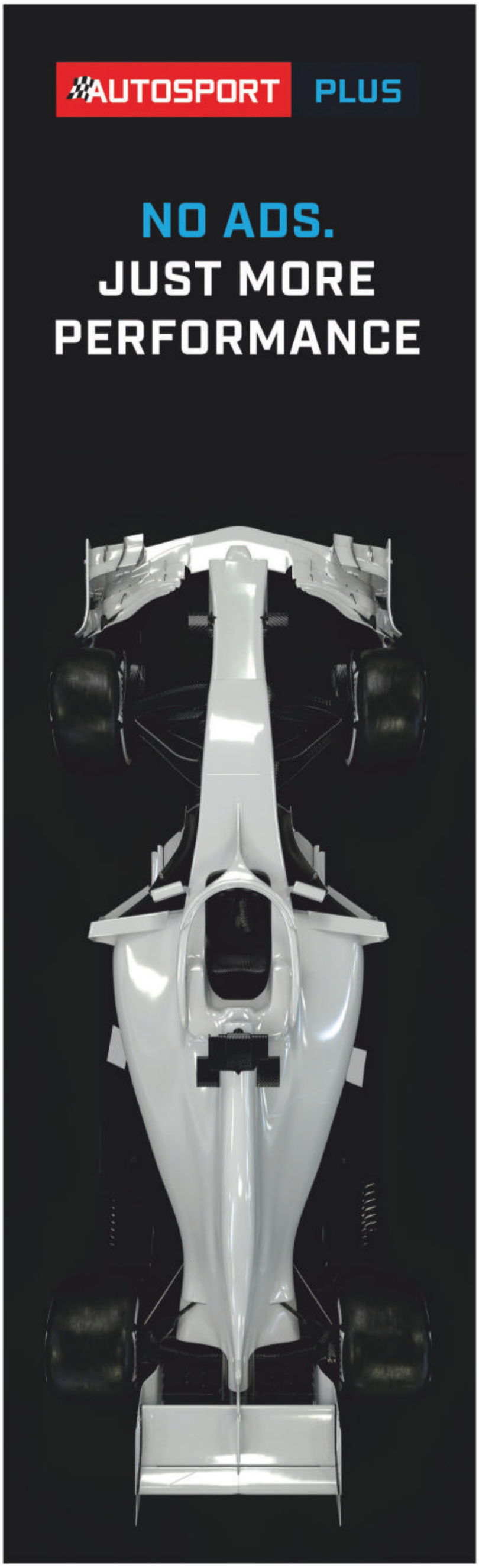
Martin and Lynn hadn't finished better than third prior to »

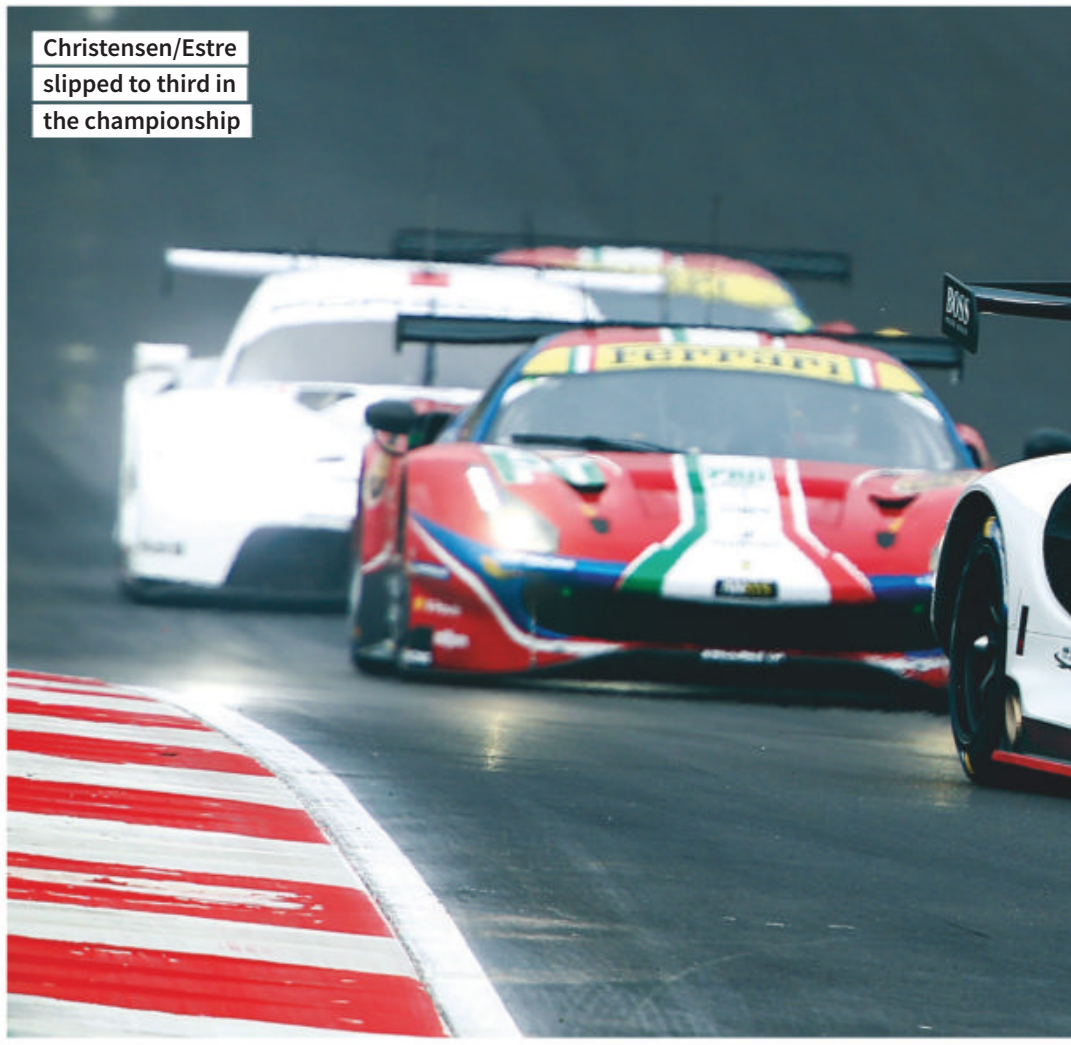
RESULTS WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP FOR GTE DRIVERS

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM AND CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	PTS
1	**Marco Sorensen** (DNK) **Nicki Thiim** (DNK)	Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE	5	**1**	5	**1**	**1**	2	3	5	**172**
2	**Maxime Martin** (BEL)	Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE	3	3	4	3	4	3	**1**	4	**160**
3	**Kevin Estre** (FRA) **Michael Christensen** (DNK)	Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR	2	2	2	7	2	**1**	15	**1**	**148**
4	**Alex Lynn** (GBR)	Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE	3	3	4	3	4	3	**1**	-	**142**
5	**James Calado** (GBR)	AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	4	4	**1**	4	3	4	2	12	**132**
6	**Alessandro Pier Guidi** (ITA)	AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	4	4	**1**	4	3	4	2	-	**131**
7	**Gianmaria Bruni** (ITA) **Richard Lietz** (AUT)	Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR	**1**	6	3	5	9	5	11	2	**111**
8	**Davide Rigon** (ITA) **Miguel Molina** (ESP)	AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	R	5	6	2	5	6	NC	3	**86**
9	**Harry Tincknell** (GBR)	Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE	-	-	-	-	-	-	**1**	-	**50**
10	**Richard Westbrook** (GBR)	Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	**48**

GTE manufacturers **1 Aston Martin 332**; 2 **Porsche** 289; 3 **Ferrari** 250.

GTE Am Championship **1 Emmanuel Collard/Francois Perrodo/Nicklas Nielsen** (AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE Evo) 167; 2 **Charlie Eastwood/Jonny Adam/Salih Yoluc** (TF Sport Aston Martin Vantage GTE) 154; 3 **Larry ten Voorde** (Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR) 119; 4 **Egidio Perfetti** (Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR) 118; 5 **Christian Ried/Riccardo Pera** (Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR) 107.5; 6 **Ben Keating/Jeroen Bleekemolen** (Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR) 101.5; 7 **Paul Dalla Lana/Ross Gunn** (Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE) 100.5; 8 **Matt Campbell** (Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR) 98.5; 9 **Ben Barker/Michael Wainwright** (Gulf Racing Porsche 911 RSR) 85; 10 **Matteo Cairoli** (Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR) 80.





Christensen/Estre slipped to third in the championship

Le Mans, a chance of victory lost on more than one occasion because they were the losers when AMR opted to split its strategies. But at Le Mans they were in the ascendency in the Aston camp and, together with Tincknell, came out on top in a battle with the AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE Evo of James Calado, Alessandro Pier Guidi and Daniel Serra.

Lynn, Martin and Tincknell looked to have the edge over the Italian car, and then Aston put the result beyond doubt when the winning Vantage was able to make it through the 24 hours without a change of brakes. Their rivals did have to change brakes, which had until September been regarded as *de rigueur* in the class.

The victory gave Martin and Lynn an outside shot at the championship, though the Briton was ruled out when he failed a COVID test before travelling to the Bahrain finale and was replaced by Richard Westbrook. A car that had got through 24 hours on one set of brakes had problems making them last over eight hours in the Middle East. All four Astons in the race needed new pads at the front, though a distant fifth place for Thiim and Sorensen was easily enough to give them the title, even though Martin and Westbrook beat them home by one position.

Calado, who took victory at Shanghai with Pier Guidi after disqualification for a rideheight infringement was overturned, had what can be described as a mathematical chance of the title



Consistency key to Collard/Perrodo/ Nielsen GTE Am title



“THE WINNING VANTAGE WAS ABLE TO MAKE IT THROUGH 24 HOURS WITHOUT A CHANGE OF BRAKES”

in Bahrain. It disappeared when Serra, who came in when the Italian was given the job of upholding Ferrari honour in the GT World Challenge Europe finale at Paul Ricard, broke a wheelrim when he tagged a GTE Am Porsche.

Ferrari might have been closer to repeating its 2017 title with Calado and Pier Guidi but for bad luck. A drivethrough penalty at Silverstone and a puncture at just the wrong time in Bahrain last year cost them points.

Porsche claimed a third win of the season in the Bahrain finale with the second iteration of its mid-engined 911 RSR. Reigning class champions Kevin Estre and Michael Christensen were the model of consistency, finishing second or winning (at Spa and Bahrain 2) when they didn’t have problems. That they did have problems in two of the races, double-points Le Mans included, left them third in the championship. A damper change in Bahrain first time around and then power-steering failure at the 24 Hours robbed them of any chance of retaining the title.

The second Porsche of Gianmaria Bruni and Richard Lietz gave the new RSR a debut win at Silverstone. They only made it onto the podium on a further two occasions on their way to seventh in the points.

Emmanuel Collard and Francois Perrodo reprised their 2016 GTE Am title with the AF Ferrari squad, this time sharing their 488 GTE Evo with new factory driver Nicklas Nielsen. Consistency was their watchword: they won at Silverstone and Spa, took an all-important second at Le Mans and never finished lower than fourth.

That contrasted with the four wins, Le Mans included, from the TF Sport Aston crew of Charlie Eastwood, Jonny Adam and Salih Yoluc. They effectively lost the title in Bahrain — twice over. Without either of the problems they encountered in the WEC’s two eight-hour fixtures, they would have been champions. A fuel filter problem did for them in the first of the two desert races, the same brake issue that afflicted the factory cars in the second.

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Swapping from Ligier to ORECA paid off for United Autosports

LAST-MINUTE SWITCH REWARDS UNITED

United Autosports made a late call — and a big one at that — just before its first full World Endurance campaign. It paid dividends. The British squad won four of the eight races, including Le Mans, and wrapped up the drivers' title with Filipe Albuquerque and Phil Hanson with a round to spare.

The team owned by McLaren Racing boss Zak Brown and Richard Dean opted to switch to the ORECA chassis from Ligier just a couple of weeks ahead of the official pre-season test at Barcelona in July 2019. It was a big decision given that the team was — note the use of the past tense — also the UK importer for the Ligier marque.

United hit its stride with the ORECA-Gibson 07, co-driven by Paul di Resta in all bar one of the races, almost immediately. It was in the mix in round two at Fuji, finishing third despite an electrical problem, and would almost certainly have won at Shanghai but for a visor tear-off partially blocking the engine intake at the start.

A first P2 victory followed in Bahrain, and after the turn of the year United embarked on a run of victories that encompassed three straight wins in the WEC and another four on the trot in this year's European Le Mans Series.

United emerged from the chassis swap with a consistency that its rivals couldn't match — across individual races or the season. Albuquerque and di Resta were more often than not the fastest of the pros, and Hanson was always up there among the best of the silver-graded drivers. The team again ran on Michelin tyres, the French supplier having the edge over rival Goodyear for much of the season.

No other car managed to win more than once. Jota Sport claimed top honours with its ORECA shared by Anthony Davidson, Antonio Felix da Costa and Roberto Gonzalez at Shanghai, and notched up a further four podiums on Goodyear tyres, and lost another to disqualification at Fuji. Third in the points behind di Resta for da Costa and Gonzalez (Davidson missed Silverstone through injury) was impressive given that the Mexican is a genuine silver more than twice the age of some of his opposite numbers.

Jota also won the Bahrain finale with the ORECA it fielded under the Jackie Chan DC Racing banner. Gabriel Aubry barged his way past da Costa with 10 minutes of the eight hours to go to seal the win on a day when Goodyear with a new tyre, the B-spec that had come on stream at Le Mans, was in the ascendancy. That gave his team-mates, Will Stevens and Ho-Pin Tung, fifth in the championship behind Davidson, though Aubry ended up seventh after missing the Spa round following a positive test for COVID-19.

Racing Team Nederland also made it into the winners' circle after a switch of chassis, from Dallara to ORECA, at the same time as it moved from the Dayvtec operation to TDS Racing. It may seem strange to say that a team blessed with the talents of Nyck de Vries and Giedo van der Garde punched above its weight, but it really did. Few would have predicted that, with bronze-graded Frits van Eerd, RTN could make it onto the podium (which they did on four occasions), let alone win (which they did at Fuji).

The Swiss Cool Racing operation claimed a solitary victory at the Silverstone opener. Its ORECA won with just Nicolas Lapierre and Antonin Borga driving when amateur Alexandre Coigny was ruled out through injury. When Coigny was in the car, it wasn't a factor.

Lapierre's departure from Signatech Alpine left the reigning champion team as a shadow of its former self. With Thomas Laurent, Andre Negrao and Pierre Ragues driving, it failed to win a race for the first time since joining the WEC in 2015.

RESULTS ENDURANCE TROPHY FOR LMP2 DRIVERS

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM (CAR)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	PTS
1	**Filipe Albuquerque** (PRT) **Phil Hanson** (GBR)	United Autosports ORECA-Gibson 07	R	3	3	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	4	**190**
2	**Paul di Resta** (GBR)	United Autosports ORECA-Gibson 07	R	-	3	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	4	**175**
3	**Antonio Felix da Costa** (PRT) **Roberto Gonzalez** (MEX)	Jota Sport ORECA-Gibson 07	5	DSQ	**1**	2	3	4	2	2	**152**
4	**Anthony Davidson** (GBR)	Jota Sport ORECA-Gibson 07	5	DSQ	**1**	2	3	4	2	2	**142**
5	**Ho-Pin Tung** (NLD) **Will Stevens** (GBR)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) ORECA-Gibson 07	4	2	2	3	2	6	DSQ	**1**	**136**
6	**Frits van Eerd** (NLD) **Giedo van der Garde** (NLD)	Racing Team Nederland (TDS) ORECA-Gibson 07	3	**1**	5	6	5	3	15	3	**130**
7	**Gabriel Aubry** (FRA)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) ORECA-Gibson 07	4	2	2	3	2	-	DSQ	**1**	**128**
8	**Andre Negrao** (BRA) **Pierre Ragues** (FRA) **Thomas Laurent** (FRA)	Signatech Alpine Elf ORECA-Gibson 07	2	6	4	5	6	**1**	4	5	**109**
9	**Antonin Borga** (CHE) **Nicolas Lapierre** (FRA)	Cool Racing ORECA-Gibson 07	**1**	5	R	7	4	2	8	-	**103**
10	**Nyck de Vries** (NLD)	Racing Team Nederland (TDS) ORECA-Gibson 07	-	**1**	5	6	5	-	15	3	**99**

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 5 LMP1 DRIVERS



SEBASTIEN BUEMI

1 Always near the sharp end of this seasonal list, Buemi moves to the top spot by dint of being the fastest Toyota driver on the two occasions that the TS050s started without success penalties and the one race in which they were equal. The Swiss was at his best as he helped to seal a Le Mans hat-trick for #8 back in September: he was well clear of his team-mates across the two Toyotas on the averages; half a second using a 50-lap sample.



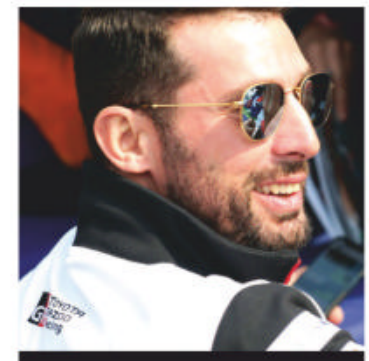
MIKE CONWAY

2 It was another strong season from the Brit, who finally secured one of the big prizes on offer in what was arguably marginally the stronger of the two Toyotas across the full season – though making judgements isn't easy with the success handicaps. He was the most consistent performer in #7, and the WEC title has helped secure Conway's position as one of the best prototype drivers of our times. All he needs now is for his fortunes to turn at Le Mans.



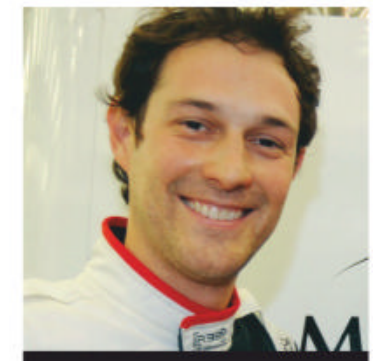
KAMUI KOBAYASHI

3 The Japanese driver played a key role in securing the title for #7 at Spa in August of this year. He again proved his wet-weather skills as he built up a lead over the sister car in the face of a bigger success handicap. Less significant in the title battle, though no less an indication of his talents, was another pole position at Le Mans. He was on to break his outright lap record from 2017 until getting pinged for track limits at Tertre Rouge.



JOSE MARIA LOPEZ

4 Lopez added the WEC crown to his three with Citroen in the World Touring Car Championship to become only the second multi-discipline FIA world title winner on the circuits after Fernando Alonso. It was fitting that he should do it in the season in which he finally put to bed the mistakes that had been part of his game in his first two campaigns with Toyota. That development was an essential ingredient in the #7 car's run to the title through the 2019-20 season.



BRUNO SENNA

5 The Brazilian was the strongest of the three drivers in the #1 Rebellion across the seven races in which it competed. Senna always performed at or near the top of his game across a season in which the Swiss entrant won two races, though team-mate Gustavo Menezes sometimes grabbed the headlines, notably at Le Mans when he pushed Toyota hard for pole. Senna was marginally the quicker of the two over the season as he went about his business in his trademark low-key way.

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 5 GTE DRIVERS



KEVIN ESTRE

1 Backed up his 2018-19 championship-winning season with another strong campaign, and would almost certainly have been rewarded with another title but for two technical issues. Only won twice together with Michael Christensen, but they were second in each of the other races that they didn't encounter problems. Estre gets top spot because he stood out at Porsche like none of his rivals at the other manufacturers – more often than not he was quickest.



JAMES CALADO

2 The Brit had an impressive season even if he only notched up a single victory in the WEC at Shanghai – and that was taken away from him and Alessandro Pier Guidi before being restored on appeal. There were some impressive drives – normally part of flawless overall team performances from AF Corse – that went unrewarded, and more when he punched above their weight on days when the Ferrari wasn't really in the game.



MARCO SORENSEN

3 The 'other' half of the Dane train at Aston Martin has perhaps lived in the shadow of Nicki Thiim down the years. That's to somehow diminish his undoubted contribution to their successes, but it was partly because it was his team-mate who always seemed to pull off the heroics. This was the season where Sorensen emerged from those shadows of his long-time co-driver and we started to talk about Sorensen/Thiim as well as Thiim/Sorensen.



NICKI THIIM

4 If Sorensen is third on this list, then Thiim has to be right behind him tucked up in the slipstream. There was little to choose between them over the course of a super-consistent season from the Aston Martin Racing pairing and, it should be pointed out, their crew. There were any number of hard-luck stories in GTE Pro over the course of the season, but it was Thiim and Sorensen – sorry, Sorensen and Thiim – who did the business.



MAXIME MARTIN

5 In a parallel universe, Martin and team-mate Alex Lynn are still celebrating their GTE Pro world crown. It's a place where there isn't COVID (so Lynn did all the rounds) and luck fell their way when AMR split its strategies. It's difficult to argue that they weren't the equal of their title-winning team-mates in 2019-20. Martin gets the nod over his team-mate on this list by virtue of shading him on the averages on the way to victory at Le Mans.

SEASON REVIEW

SUTTON PROVIDES AN INFINITI OF POSSIBILITIES

The Infiniti Q50 was completely redesigned, redeveloped and revamped by BMR and Laser Tools Racing for 2020. And the flamboyant brilliance of the driver behind the wheel was enough to snatch the title at the last gasp

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP motorsport IMAGES

The Gilles Villeneuve of the British Touring Car Championship took home the ultimate prize in 2020 after a sensational display throughout this oddest of seasons, his otherworldly natural talent, car control and racecraft allied to an insatiable appetite for overtaking. And he did so at the wheel of a completely redesigned and re-engineered car that had a total dry-weather mileage still only in double figures when the action kicked off.

Ash Sutton, Laser Tools Racing, BMR Engineering and the Infiniti Q50 pulled off a smash-and-grab heist from under the noses of the acknowledged BTCC standard setters: four-time champion Colin Turkington, West Surrey Racing and the BMW 330i M Sport. It appeared to be a season-long performance of fizzing opportunism and audacity — far removed from the softly-softly Turkington/WSR approach — but in reality you have to delve much further back even than the coronavirus-extended 2019-20 off-season to discover the roots of what transpired.

Sutton, of course, had been the (literally) blue-eyed boy of his manager Warren Scott's BMR Subaru team, winning the championship at the second attempt — and in only his fifth season of car racing — in 2017. But the Levorg was progressively handicapped out of consistent competitiveness by BTCC organiser TOCA. Meanwhile, Laser Tools boss Bob Moffat had gone it alone with his own team to run the Mercedes A-Class of son Aiden when their relationship with Merc-builder Ciceley Motorsport began to deteriorate, and had acquired the ill-fated Support Our Paras Infiniti Q50 project of 2015 for use as a bit of trackday fun. Federico Turrata, the COO of Italian engineering consultancy Hexathron Racing Systems, was working for the LTR squad on Moffat's car, and identified the Infiniti as an ideal BTCC weapon.

In mid-season 2019 came the news that Moffat would switch from the Mercedes to the Infiniti, and the Scot completed the season with the car, which had the current-spec standard RML subframe bolted in to replace the GPRM kit around which it had originally been designed. Sutton gave the car a test at Snetterton to help out, and that was a curtain raiser to BMR retiring its Subarus, and Sutton and his BMR crew moving under the LTR banner for 2020.

Key to this BMR crew is Anglo-Italian Antonio Carrozza, who had entered the BTCC paddock in the mid-2010s as a university graduate in his first job as a design engineer for the series' »

Infiniti was at its best at Knockhill, where Sutton claimed pole and two wins

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Turkington started season well, with pole and a win at Donington opener

"THE INFINITI WAS BUILT WITH FOUR YEARS OF UNDERSTANDING OF A REAR-WHEEL-DRIVE CAR WITH THE SUBARU"

gearbox supplier Xtrac. After two and a half years working on track support at Xtrac, he joined BMR in 2017, where he was performance engineer to Sutton in his first title-winning season. The following year he carried out the same role across the whole team, and in 2019 he race-engineered Sutton in his final season with the Subaru.

Now Carrozza was charged with a redevelopment of the Q50 to prepare for 2020, and this effectively happened in the image of the Levorg. "I took over the design in late October last year, and it was nice to have that car [the one Moffat had raced in late 2019] to evaluate," he says. "At least we had a baseline for everything, but there were more Subaru-based features on the Infiniti this year — there was no carryover. We took all of Ash's crew from last year and worked on winter development. We went to the windtunnel, did chassis mock-ups and it went to Willie Poole Motorsport [the BTCC chassis specialist].

"The Infiniti was built with four years of understanding of a rear-wheel-drive car with the Subaru. We'd gone down so many engineering routes with that car with the powertrain package being relatively weak on the Subaru, and that pushes down on chassis development. All the development we did on the Infiniti in the windtunnel, on chassis stiffness and on centre of gravity, it was proving better in every area than the Subaru. So we knew it'd be better, but not specifically how much better."

The Infiniti arrived at Silverstone's March BTCC media day in the small hours of the morning, and Sutton managed very few laps. Then there was the July Snetterton tyre test, and the car only got in around 15 laps before rain spoiled the rest of the two days. "In all fairness that wet testing really helps the driver direction with where we're going on set-up," says Carrozza. From its original outing at Silverstone with a 'Subaru' set-up, by the opening round at Donington Park "we were in a completely different ballpark, and the car didn't move very far all year from where we were there".

And Sutton did the rest. Qualifying was a weak point for the Infiniti — three times Sutton started the opening race of a weekend outside the top 10 — and many point to the form of team-mate Moffat, who remained engineered by Turrata, as evidence of the 2020 champion's heroism behind the wheel. Moffat, they say, was performing very similarly to how he did in the Mercedes, and a delve into the stats bears this out: his median average qualifying position across the nine rounds in 2020 was 15 in the Infiniti; and for his last nine outings in the Mercedes across 2018-19 it was »

ROUND BY ROUND

Donington Park
R1 Dan Cammish
R2 Colin Turkington
R3 Ash Sutton
Cammish profits from Turkington/Sutton contact in opener to take the lead and beat the BMW home, but the Honda struggles with ballast from there on as Turkington dominates race two. Sutton, 26th and last after the first-race incident, storms back and wins the reversed-grid finale. Ingram is in the top six in each race as Butcher gives new Ford second on its debut, after error costs him pole.

Brands GP
R1 Dan Cammish
R2 Colin Turkington
R3 Tom Oliphant
Butcher plants the Ford on pole. But he loses a nailed-on win to a late puncture, and Cammish benefits to win from Turkington. The Honda then hits power-steering (race two) and engine dramas (R3). Turkington wins race two as Butcher charges to fourth. Oliphant defends well to beat Sutton, who had qualified 14th, in finale. Ingram, fourth and second earlier, is taken out.

Oulton Park
R1 Rory Butcher
R2 Ash Sutton
R3 Adam Morgan
Cook, out of luck at first two rounds, uses unballasted BTC Honda to pass Butcher for win, only to be excluded for rideheight offence, likely caused by kerb strike. Cammish and Hill follow Butcher at flag. Sutton scythes from eighth to pass Butcher for win in wet race two. Morgan is leading Turkington and Oliphant in final race when it's red-flagged due to Jelley, Hamilton and Brown shunt.

Knockhill
R1 Ash Sutton
R2 Ash Sutton
R3 Rory Butcher
Acrobatic track suits Sutton and Infiniti to a tee and he takes pole, and holds off Turkington in each of first two races. Hill is closest challenger in race one, but gets hit by Butcher in sequel, so it's Ingram who completes the podium. Butcher starts reversed-grid race on front row and romps home to win from Proctor, after red flag caused by heavy Jackson/Bushell shunt.

Thruxton
R1 Tom Ingram
R2 Tom Ingram
R3 Josh Cook
It's a front-wheel-drive fiesta as Cammish takes pole from Ingram, but the Toyota makes better starts and Ingram beats Cammish in each of first two races. Neal hits form, taking podium in race one and letting Cammish past in next race. Electrical problem hits Turkington, so consistent results put Sutton in points lead. Cook leads home BTC team-mate Chilton and Butcher in finale.

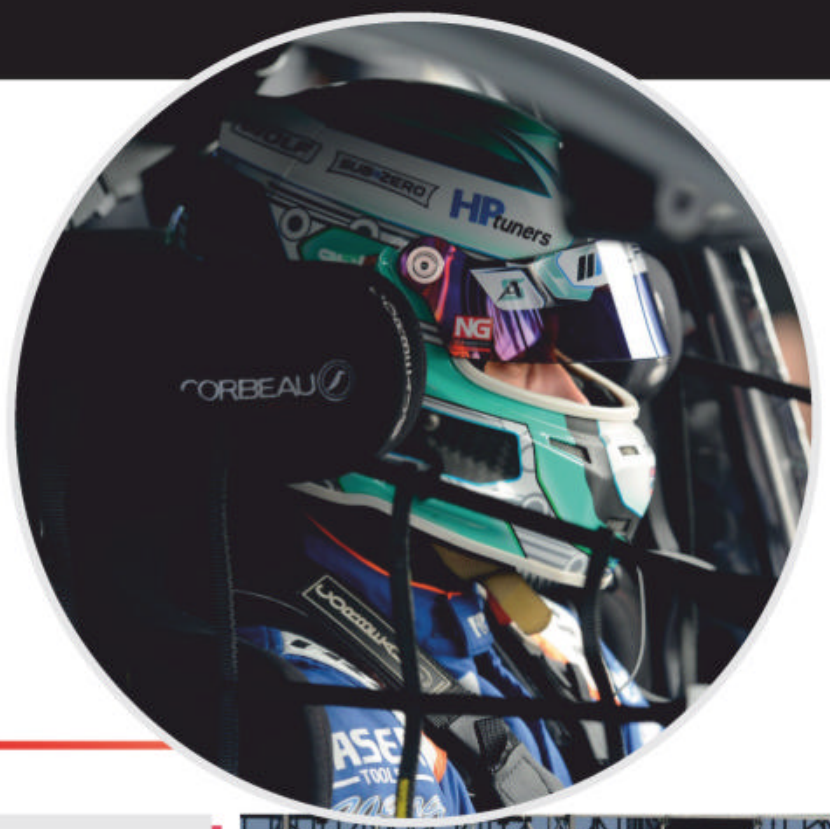
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Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship

Harry King*, Team Parker Racing
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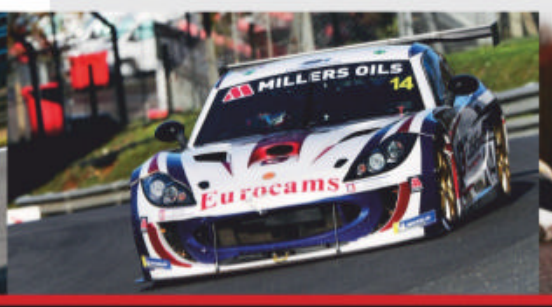
Tom Lebbon, Elite Motorsport
Michelin Ginetta Junior

*A Corbeau customer throughout his career, Harry used our Body mould Pro-seat insert

Image credits: Jakob Ebrey Photography









16, and that was with a bigger field. Single-lap pace is therefore the focus of development across the winter of 2020-21. "We need to work on making it easier to drive," admits Carrozza. "Ash is driving at 105% and that's where track limits [something Sutton fell foul of on numerous occasions] come in. We just have to make his operating window as big as possible."

But with a driver like Sutton, it doesn't seem to matter where he qualifies – or where he's bumped down to during the inevitable incidents that are part and parcel of the BTCC. Look at his opening-day recovery at Donington – spun down to last in race one after inadvertent contact from Turkington; fifth by the end of race two; reversed-grid winner. At Brands GP, where the BMR/LTR crew struggled to get the Infiniti to work in the heat, he scythed from 10th to second in the reversed-grid race *within two laps*. At Oulton Park, he went from eighth to victory in the wet second race. At Silverstone, he was 26th in race two thanks to a puncture from nerfing Rory Butcher, before storming from the back of the grid to second on the road (third after a penalty due to going off-track to pass Tom Oliphant). At Croft, he was bumped down to 14th by Butcher's contact on the opening lap, charged back to fourth, got a puncture in race two during an attempted aggressive pass on Jake Hill, and then shot from 20th to fifth in the finale.

Sutton, indeed, made a staggering 122 overtakes during the 2020 season – albeit that does include some places made up away from starts, and a handful where a car in front briefly went off track. "He doesn't need to know about the car in front or behind," points out Carrozza. "It's important that I give him the information about the cars he can't necessarily see. 'Where's Colin? How hard do I need to push?' At Croft, Colin was in the barrier but you know what Ash is like... He knew where Dan Cammish was too, he knew where Tom Ingram was [both very much in the title hunt]. The championship was looking fantastic at that point [until the collision with Hill]."



Motorbase's new Ford was mighty with Butcher at Brands GP, pre-punctures

Following that, the championship very much swung back into Turkington's favour at Snetterton, where two wins and a third put him seemingly in control heading into the Brands finale. But the gloomy November wet weather really hit the BMW for six, and the Northern Irishman was powerless to prevent the title going Sutton's way. Still, WSR boss Dick Bennetts identifies Thruxton (where an electrical failure scuppered Turkington in race one) and Croft (a rare Turkington gaffe in race two) as the costliest weekends. "If you have a problem in race one, that hurts your weekend and unfortunately that electrical problem at Thruxton put us on the back foot," he says. "And then his indiscretion at Croft, which put him among the numpties in race three [and another incident]."

The BMWs were also hurt by TOCA meddling with starting boost, designed to even out the performance of rear and front-wheel-drive cars. From the fifth round at Thruxton, the boost reduction off the startline and up to 125km/h was almost doubled from the previous figure. Two events later, at Croft, this was reined back slightly to 110km/h, but WSR was still unimpressed. "We carry that reduction a long way," argues Bennetts. "Once you're down on speed you're down on speed, and the front-wheel-drives are passing us. All I can look back to is the start-finish line at Croft, which is after the tightest hairpin on the calendar, and the front-wheel-drives are quicker than us across the line. But all I get told is, 'Dick, you won'. But you win by good drivers, relationships, engineering and teamwork. So we're probably better off finishing second in the drivers' championship!"

The RWD Infiniti, powered by the customer, Swindon-built, spec TOCA engine, appeared to be less affected than the Neil Brown- »



Veteran Neal made his 700th BTCC start at Oulton in August

Silverstone
R1 Dan Cammish
R2 Colin Turkington
R3 Ollie Jackson
It's Cammish-versus-Ingram again, and the Honda this time hangs on in opener. Ingram gets ahead in race two, and Turkington follows him through, before Ingram is hit by a puncture. So the BMW wins from Cammish and Morgan. Sutton also gets a puncture, and starts finale 26th. While Sutton stars on an oily track to take third, Jackson wins from Oliphant as Butcher barrel-rolls.

Croft
R1 Josh Cook
R2 Josh Cook
R3 Tom Ingram
Ingram loses pole at rideheight test, due to a broken wishbone. On a slippery track, Cook wins an all-privateer-Honda fight with Hill in opener. He wins next race too, after Neal is penalised for shoving Cook wide on final lap for on-road win. Ingram completes fabulous recovery to win finale from Cammish. Sutton makes mistakes in between charging drives, and Turkington crashes in race two.

Snetterton
R1 Colin Turkington
R2 Colin Turkington
R3 Ollie Jackson
Turkington is utterly supreme in cold conditions, taking pole and easing to wins in first two races, with Ingram second in each. Hill is third in opener, while Sutton takes advantage of Ingram/Butcher argy-bargy to wrest third in sequel. Jackson makes superb pass on Morgan to win reversed-grid race, while last-corner shunt between Butcher and Ingram gives third to incredulous Turkington.

Brands Indy
R1 Dan Cammish
R2 Ash Sutton
R3 Rory Butcher
Lovely drive from fourth on grid in wet opener allows Cammish to pass Ingram for win, and Sutton follows him through for second. Sutton supreme in slicks-in-damp race two, as Ingram charges back from early off to snatch second from Cammish and Turkington, who loses crown due to struggles in wet. Butcher wins final race as Ingram again stars for second.

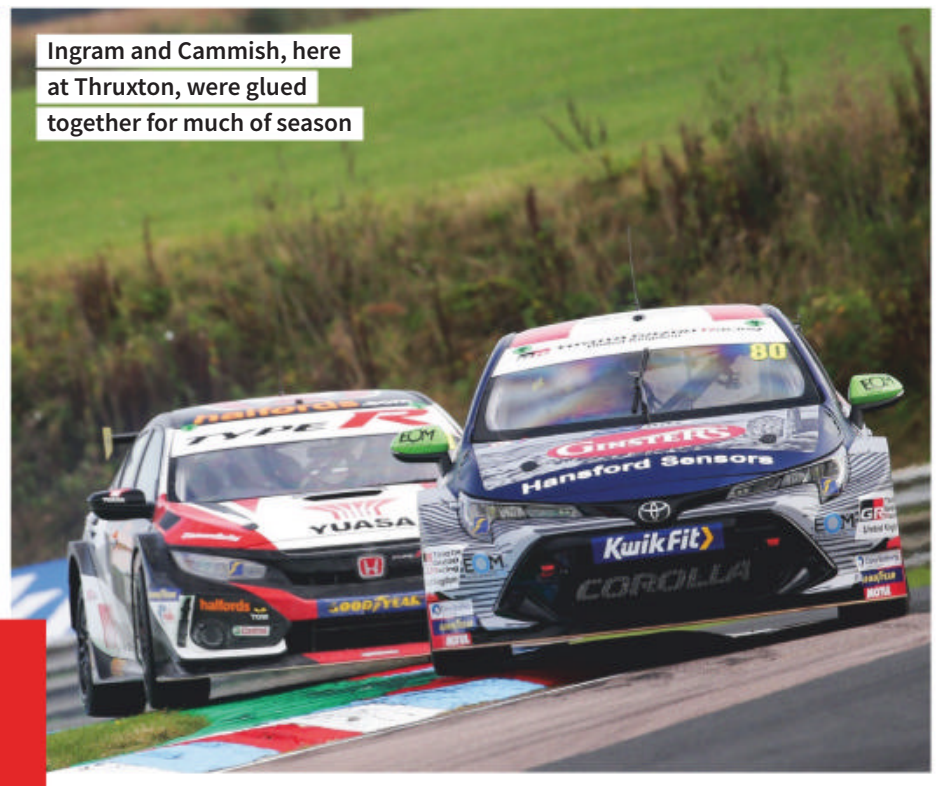

Sutton with engineer Carrozza at Brands finale

tuned BMW motors, and Bennetts believes that this has its roots in a performance-balancing measure aimed solely at the 330i M Sport in early 2019: "They reduced our boost last year when we were dominating, and the Infiniti wasn't running then."

It didn't quite work out for Turkington – although BMW claimed the manufacturers' title and WSR the teams' crown, with the vastly improved Oliphant very much key to this – but Bennetts believes his star driver is still operating at his peak. "He's 110% committed," he says approvingly. "He's determined, a very clean driver who doesn't push people off, and the reports he writes... I'm just reading the one he's done from Brands now. We just didn't give him the car he needed there."

Cammish, Ingram and Butcher very much played their parts in the title fight too. Cammish, in his third BTCC season at the wheel of the Team Dynamics-run Honda Civic Type R, and Ingram, giving the solo Speedworks Motorsport-tended Toyota Corolla its second campaign, were almost flawless, and for each it was ill-timed mechanical gremlins that scuppered their chances. Given their front-wheel-drive machinery, it's very difficult to separate the quality of their performances from those of Sutton and Turkington in their RWD cars. We had a very closely matched top four this year. Butcher, returning to his old pals at Motorbase Performance, was very strong too in the team's new fourth-generation Ford Focus, which at last gave the squad a weapon that would switch on its tyres (too much so in the heat of the Scot's puncture-strewn August Brands), but he is the first to admit that he made a couple too many errors.

The darty, rollerskate qualities of the front-wheel-drive Honda and Toyota in particular were in stark contrast to the bouncing, soft Infiniti, and Sutton sometimes looked as though he was auditioning to be a 1970s American TV cop-show stunt driver. It was fabulous to watch and, again, it dates back to his Subaru days and Carrozza's early-days BMR work with Levorg designer Carl Faux, who then went off to Australian Supercars. "One of my first jobs with Carl was to take the car to a four-post and seven-post rig, and work out chassis stiffness and vibration frequency," he says. "I worked with Carl on an XL tool to develop dampers and suspension geometry." The soft set-up is "a philosophy I've always kept because it gives the driver a wider operating window. We need to do all the work with the front axle – it's very soft but very reactive through chicanes."



Ingram and Cammish, here at Thruxton, were glued together for much of season

"ASH'S FEEDBACK IS PHENOMENAL. HE'S GOT A PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY OF WHAT'S HAPPENING ON EACH LAP"

And then there's Sutton the development driver. Don't forget his first title came with a Subaru that Turkington and Jason Plato had already raced, so there was plenty of good data. This time, it was down to him. "Ash's feedback is phenomenal," points out Carrozza. "He can pick out the features of the car and what it's doing. Sometimes he doesn't know what it's doing, but he'll take you to that portion of data because he's got a photographic memory of what's happening on each lap.

"He's a bit of an engineer's dream really – you spend more time working on the car than him. If the car is not working to his liking he will adapt his driving style and get the most out of it. You don't necessarily have to make the car perfect for his driving style. That's his strong point: adaptability." And that's why he's the exciting, Villeneuve-esque, champion of the BTCC.

P48 TOCA SUPPORTS REVIEW



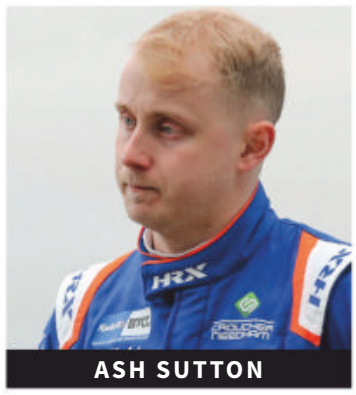
Privateer Honda stars Cook and Hill battle it out at Croft

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR
1	**Ash Sutton** (GBR)	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50
2	**Colin Turkington** (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330i M Sport
3	**Dan Cammish** (GBR)	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R
4	**Tom Ingram** (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla
5	**Rory Butcher** (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus ST
6	**Tom Oliphant** (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330i M Sport
7	**Jake Hill** (GBR)	MB Motorsport (AmD) / Honda Civic Type R
8	**Adam Morgan** (GBR)	Ciceley Motorsport / Mercedes A-Class
9	**Josh Cook** (GBR)	BTC Racing/Honda Civic Type R
10	**Tom Chilton** (GBR)	BTC Racing/Honda Civic Type R

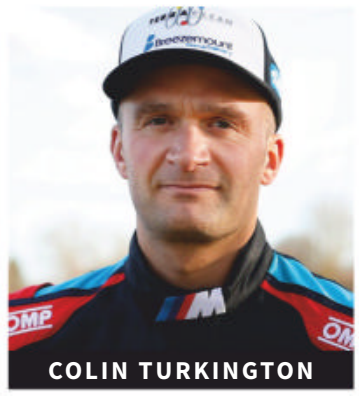
11 **Matt Neal** (Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R) 181; 12 **Ollie Jackson** (Motorbase Performance Ford Focus ST) 152; 13 **Senna Proctor** (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 141; 14 **Chris Smiley** (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 106; 15 **Aiden Moffat** (Laser Tools Racing Infiniti Q50) 105; 16 **Stephen Jelley** (Team Parker Racing BMW 125i M Sport) 72; 17 **Michael Crees** (BTC Racing Honda Civic Type R) 50; 18 **Bobby Thompson** (Trade Price Cars Racing (AmD) Audi S3) 44; 19 **Sam Osborne** (MB Motorsport (AmD) Honda Civic Type R) 29;

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



ASH SUTTON

1 Brilliant all season and was the most exciting driver around. The Infiniti was rarely the quickest car, but he was able to recover from poor grid positions and this put him in the frame to snatch the title at the last round. A stunning season.



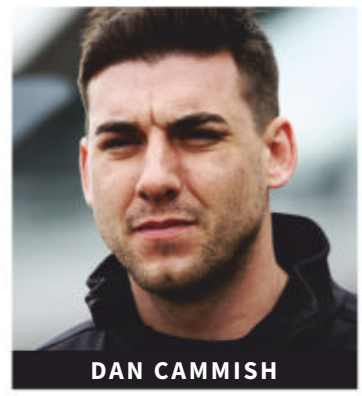
COLIN TURKINGTON

2 Worried about cold-and-wet COVID-enforced late end to season, and was proved wrong at Snetterton, but absolutely right at Brands. Before then, he drove and went about his race weekends absolutely as the consummate professional he's always been.



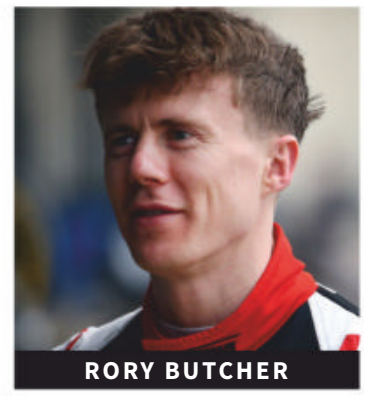
TOM INGRAM

3 Without that broken wishbone causing a failure of rideheight test and costing him pole at Croft, he could have won the title. Absolutely on the edge all season, spectacular to watch, and led comfortably more miles than anyone else.



DAN CAMMISH

4 It's really tough on him to put him at #4 when top four were so close. Without those mechanical failures at Brands, he could have taken the crown. Very committed in the Honda and indisputably one of the class acts of the latest BTCC era.



RORY BUTCHER

5 There were a fair few mistakes made, but this was his first season where he was hailed as a likely contender from the start, so let's forgive him. Blistering speed at wheel of new Ford put him in the mix at nearly every round.



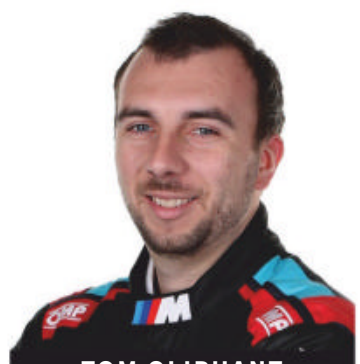
JOSH COOK

6 Led more miles than champion Sutton – behind only Ingram and Turkington – yet finished ninth in points! Ridiculous run of bad luck in first half of season, especially at Oulton and Knockhill, but an ace driver who took three wins.



JAKE HILL

7 Time and again he set the pace in free practice in the old-spec Honda, but occasionally overreached from there on. Superbly quick and determined, and getting better all the time. Showed character to bounce back from series of engine dramas.



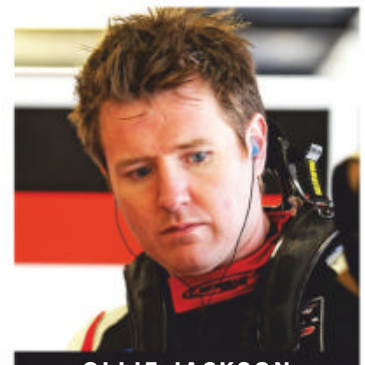
TOM OLIPHANT

8 Made a huge step forward in his third BTCC season to play his part in the success of the WSR BMWs. Was particularly impressive in defence against Sutton at Brands GP and Silverstone, and made absolutely stunning pass on Smiley at Knockhill.



ADAM MORGAN

9 Ciceley and ex-BAR F1 engineer Steve Farrell somehow extracted more speed from the ancient Mercedes, and Morgan was usually able to put himself in the mix at some point during a race weekend. Held on well for reversed-grid Oulton win.



OLLIE JACKSON

10 Was tempting to put Senna Proctor here, thanks to press-on style in new Hyundai. But you can't ignore two wins for Jackson. Made a massive step forward after nearly a decade in BTCC and backed up Butcher nicely at Motorbase.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	PTS
14	5	**1**	6	3	2	8	**1**	4	**1**	**1**	11	5	4	4	5	26	3	4	20	5	5	3	4	2	**1**	6	**350**
2	**1**	10	2	**1**	5	4	3	2	2	2	9	R	13	8	4	**1**	10	3	R	NC	**1**	**1**	3	9	4	9	**336**
1	6	7	**1**	19	R	2	4	15	6	4	6	2	2	10	**1**	2	4	10	5	2	6	6	6	**1**	3	4	**334**
4	4	6	4	2	R	6	5	R	4	3	10	**1**	**1**	5	2	25	R	13	4	**1**	2	2	8	3	2	2	**326**
3	2	11	R	4	R	**1**	2	8	5	10	**1**	6	5	3	3	14	R	5	19	11	4	4	5	4	10	**1**	**286**
6	3	9	8	7	**1**	12	6	3	8	6	4	8	6	6	R	9	2	11	7	6	14	11	12	10	15	13	**228**
R	R	R	10	R	R	3	7	7	3	8	5	22	11	9	7	7	15	2	3	7	3	5	9	6	7	3	**212**
12	8	4	11	6	R	7	9	**1**	12	14	14	4	R	R	6	3	5	9	13	13	7	9	2	11	6	5	**206**
13	10	3	21	R	17	EX	21	11	R	R	15	9	8	**1**	10	6	7	**1**	**1**	8	8	7	7	8	9	7	**196**
10	13	12	5	R	8	5	8	5	11	7	3	7	7	2	15	11	9	6	6	3	16	16	17	12	18	11	**184**

20 **James Gornall** (Trade Price Cars Racing (AmD) Audi S3) 18; 21 **Carl Boardley** (Team Hard BMW 125i M Sport) 18; 22 **Rob Austin** (Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra) 13; 23 **Jack Goff** (Team Hard Volkswagen CC) 11; 24 **Andy Neate** (Motorbase Performance Ford Focus ST) 3; 25 **Ollie Brown** (Team Hard Volkswagen CC) 3; 26 **Jack Butel** (Ciceley Motorsport Mercedes A-Class) 2; 27 **Mike Bushell** (Team Hard Volkswagen CC) 1; 28 **Nicolas Hamilton** (Team Hard Volkswagen CC) 1; 29 **Glynn Geddie** (Team Hard Volkswagen CC) 1; 30 **Paul Rivett** (Trade Price Cars Racing (AmD) Audi S3) 1.

MANUFACTURERS **1 BMW 776**; 2 **Honda** 739; 3 **Toyota** 401.

INDEPENDENT DRIVERS **1 Sutton 415**; 2 **Butcher** 348; 3 **Morgan** 298; 4 **Chilton** 287; 5 **Hill** 284; 6 **Cook** 249; 7 **Jackson** 231; 8 **Proctor** 223; 9 **Smiley** 197; 10 **Moffat** 191.


hankook
Ford


WILL BURNS
2020 GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP
CHAMPION
MILLERS OILS
Eurocams
MICHELIN
P1
202


LEBBON
P1
MICHELIN
MILLERS OILS
ELITE
CFS

SEASON REVIEW

THE FANTASTIC FIVE FROM THE SUPPORTING CAST

Controversy, close battles and a new series on the bill – there was no shortage of talking points among the TOCA support categories during 2020

STEPHEN LICKORISH

PHOTOGRAPHY **JEP** motorsport IMAGES

BRITISH FORMULA 4
LUKE BROWNING

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB
HARRY KING

MINI CHALLENGE
NATHAN HARRISON

GINETTA JUNIOR
TOM LEBBON

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP
WILL BURNS







BRITISH FORMULA 4

Even now, what happened in the British Formula 4 finale still seems barely believable. It was always going to be close, with Luke Browning and Zak O'Sullivan arriving at Brands Hatch tied on points. When Browning held off O'Sullivan to win the opener and beat him in race two as well, after O'Sullivan was penalised for overtaking as safety car boards went out, it looked to be the Fortec driver's crown to lose. And he very nearly did lose it.

The pair went off on oil at the start of race three but, while O'Sullivan soon regained the lead, Browning spun and was at the back. With rain intensifying, the race was red-flagged, O'Sullivan believing he had taken an unlikely win.

"I came into parc ferme and could see Carlin and O'Sullivan celebrating and I couldn't believe what was happening," Browning recalls. "I had beaten him in race one and race two, and race three – with a 16-point lead – should've been the easiest. I thought, how unjustified would it be losing it there?"

"I CAME INTO PARC FERME AND COULD SEE CARLIN CELEBRATING AND I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT"

Instead, it was O'Sullivan bemoaning his misfortune – as less than 75% of the race was completed, half points were awarded and the title was Browning's. "It was one of those things," says O'Sullivan, who was angered by the red-flag decision. "Everyone has their shoulda, coulda, wouldas, but it wouldn't have taken much for me to win."

Second-year driver Browning headed into the campaign feeling under pressure. It was his fifth season of car racing and he knew nothing less than the title would be enough. "I was thinking, 'If I've not won this, that's my career over' – that's how important it was for us," Browning admits. "At some point, you've got to ultimately win a championship to move up the ranks."

But getting on the grid at all was a challenge as he initially only had the budget for three rounds. It was therefore just as well he moved into the points lead with an impressive hat-trick at Oulton Park in event three. Despite building a 57-point advantage, he struggled at the slipstreaming tracks such as Thruxton and Silverstone and O'Sullivan reeled him in. In the end, O'Sullivan fell four points short, but still found it "a really good learning experience".



Browning took vital win over O'Sullivan in Brands Indy opener



STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	**Luke Browning**	412.5
2	**Zak O'Sullivan** (left)	408.5
3	**Casper Stevenson**	328
4	**Alex Connor**	265
5	**James Hedley**	249
6	**Abbi Pulling**	191.5



Harrison took important victory at Snetterton, while Zelos had a knockback at Silverstone (inset)


King was almost always at the front of the pack

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

One strike of a Recticel chicane marker at Donington Park and a 0.002-second deficit in qualifying for the Brands Hatch finale were all that separated Harry King from absolute Porsche Carrera Cup GB perfection.

Without clouting that barrier, Porsche GB Junior King would not have dropped behind Team Parker Racing team-mate Josh Webster in the season-opener and that would have taken his win tally to 13. Had he not encountered engine trouble when leading at Knockhill, that would have been another triumph. And had he not suffered two punctures while out front at Thruxton – on a weekend where plenty of others had such woes – suddenly, you are looking at an undefeated King.

"I certainly didn't expect to win it in the fashion we did," says King. "With the Porsche Juniors, they'd usually have a learning year in the first year and follow it up with success in the second. Then, after qualifying at Donington Park, my ambitions and expectations for the year changed – I was on pole there, and it was then I thought we could be in for a strong year."

And it was not just the results that were so impressive, it was the manner of his victories. King's overtaking ability was sensational – notably when recovering from starting 10th at Knockhill.


PORSCHE

STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	**Harry King**	167
2	**Josh Webster** (left)	121
3	**Matthew Graham**	80
4	**Lorcan Hanafin**	70
5	**Will Martin**	69
6	**Scott McKenna**	60

"I feel my confidence from overtaking comes from feeling totally comfortable in the car, working as one," he says. "I think a bit of it's down to the days of Ginetta Junior, which was like a playground for learning and testing racecraft, and I've developed the ability to react quickly and make calculated decisions, which is perhaps what sets me apart."

Of that there is no question, as he produced one of the most dominant displays seen for a long time.

MINI CHALLENGE

It's not very often that a champion admits they seriously considered pulling out of a series in the middle of what proved to be a title-winning season. But that was the case for Mini Challenge champion Nathan Harrison.

The three-time runner-up staked an early claim with a second and a win in the opening two races, before gearbox woes struck in the third Donington Park contest and in the Knockhill opener. Considering the competitiveness of the field – which included 2018 champion Ant Whorton-Eales, Renault UK Clio Cup ace Max Coates and regular tin-top frontrunner Dan Zelos – Harrison thought his title chance had gone.



STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	**Nathan Harrison**	465
2	**Dan Zelos**	433
3	**Ant Whorton-Eales**	427
4	**Max Bird**	399
5	**Lewis Brown**	384
6	**Max Coates**	374

"We were massively down after Knockhill – and just didn't think this championship was meant to be," says Harrison. "We were going to pull the plug and thought we could save the money for next year. If you had asked me at the start of the year, I thought there was more chance of pigs flying [than winning the title] but you've got to never give up. The pressure was off and I was just going for race wins."

Sure enough, pole and victory in the first races at Silverstone and Snetterton launched Harrison back into the title fight. A tough weekend in Norfolk for Whorton-Eales and Zelos being bundled out of a podium spot in the second Silverstone race hampered their charges, helping Harrison to win.

All in all, it was not quite the first season on the BTCC bill Mini Challenge organisers were expecting. The series was affected the most by the COVID-19 pandemic after a consultation between stakeholders led to the campaign being reduced from eight to five weekends, a decision Harrison believes was the right one. Consistency, therefore, was never more important and that led to some close but, unfortunately, largely processional races at the front. »

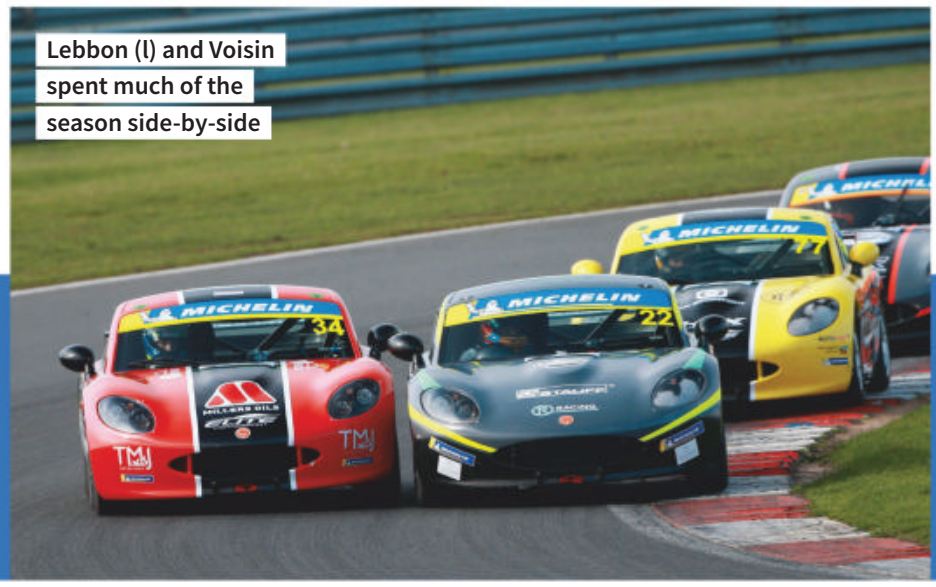
GINETTA JUNIOR

Elite Motorsport has been the driving force in Ginetta Junior recently, but faced an uphill task to continue its sequence of fielding the champion. With a shortage of second-year drivers, Elite needed one of its six rookies to win the crown – a feat never managed before. Until now.

Up stepped Ginetta scholar Tom Lebbon. "Rookies have always struggled in the first quarter of the year," says Elite boss Eddie Ives. "They always come on strong and the key is to be strong from round one."

And that is exactly what Lebbon did. Taking a double pole at Donington Park was some way to make an entrance. Although he got shuffled back, taking a best result of second, it was still an impressive debut. And, after some close battles with Bailey Voisin, he took his maiden win at Brands Hatch.

"I think COVID helped us a little bit," continues Ives. "We were more prepared in August than we were in March because we had a bit of time off to prep the cars and more testing in June and July, and that helped."



Lebbon (l) and Voisin spent much of the season side-by-side

For the first half of the season, Voisin and Lebbon were never separated by more than a handful of points and had some brilliant racing together. Lebbon was first to break away, as Voisin was involved in a pile-up in the second Thruxton race. But next time out at Silverstone it was Lebbon's turn to have a shocker. He was demoted from the opening win to 11th for contact, ended the second contest upside down and struggled in race three. Voisin's lead was now 74 and Lebbon admitted he "thought it was all over".

STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	**Tom Lebbon**	528
2	**Josh Rattican**	519
3	**Bailey Voisin**	516
4	**Georgi Dimitrov**	386
5	**Sebastian Hopkins**	320
6	**Tom Edgar**	304

However, he then hit a purple patch of form and Voisin had a nightmare at Croft, an engine infringement sending him to the back. And a lack of time for Voisin to progress in the stop/start Brands finales enabled Lebbon to triumph.

"We had such a good season – we had the most wins and led the championship for the majority, but the end result wasn't what I wanted," says R Racing driver Voisin, who fell to third. That was because Josh Rattican was on a late-season charge as his rivals lost their consistency and came incredibly close to snatching the title.

"WE WERE MORE PREPARED IN AUGUST THAN WE WERE IN MARCH, AND THAT HELPED"

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

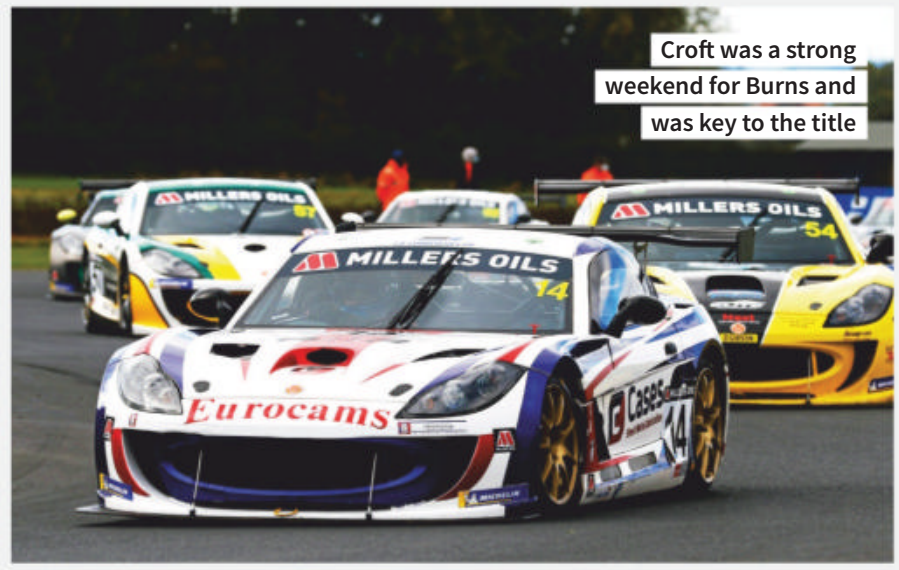
Of all the British Touring Car supports, the Ginetta GT4 Supercup was perhaps the hardest to predict a champion for after its opening 2020 events. Will Burns, Tom Hibbert and Gus Burton swapped the points lead weekend to weekend and locked out many of the early-season podiums.

But that pattern all changed at Croft, the sixth of eight events. Burns says he "got into a rhythm" in North Yorkshire for the rest of the season that propelled him to a comfortable crown. Two wins and a second at Croft, while Hibbert struggled and impressive rookie Burton dropped back with damage in the finale, allowed Burns to open up a lead he then extended at Snetterton. Had he not been caught out by Rob Boston Racing team-mate Joe Marshall-Birks in the third race, Burns would have grabbed the title with a meeting to spare.

For Burns, there was a sense of relief as he finally secured the crown after two near-misses. "I did feel quite a bit of pressure. I had so much weight on my shoulders as I didn't want to be finishing runner-up for a third time – it would be borderline embarrassing," he admits. "That wasn't from anyone else, that was just [pressure] from myself but now that weight has been lifted."

Burns says battling Harry King last year helped him to "up his game" for 2020 and target consistency. One area he particularly focused on was qualifying – and that was shown by him only once starting outside of the front row.

Hibbert and Burton failed to show the same consistency, Burton's charge dented by being the unfortunate victim of first-lap contact at Thruxton and Snetterton. Adam Smalley, meanwhile, grew stronger as the year wore on and is set to be a real contender if he is back next year.



Croft was a strong weekend for Burns and was key to the title

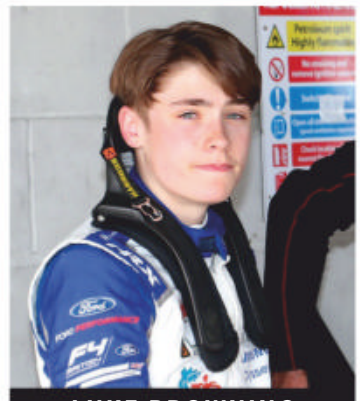


STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	**Will Burns**	534
2	**Gus Burton** (left)	495
3	**Tom Hibbert**	466
4	**Adam Smalley**	462
5	**Jamie Falvey**	382
6	**Joe Marshall-Birks**	332

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS


HARRY KING


LUKE BROWNING


ZAK O'SULLIVAN


TOM LEBBON


BAILEY VOISIN

1 How could it be anyone else? This has to be one of the simplest decisions over who should be number one in a top 10 ranking. King was sublime this year – there are not enough superlatives to describe his Carrera Cup performances. None of his rivals, including 2014 champion Josh Webster, could get close. Twelve wins and 13 fastest laps from 16 races, and seven poles from eight qualifying sessions are very impressive statistics, and his overtaking prowess made him brilliant to watch. And he is still only 19.

2 The fact that Browning and Zak O'Sullivan arrived at Brands Hatch for the finale tied on points says all you need to know about how evenly matched the pair were in British F4 this year. But second-year driver Browning gets the nod for his brilliant Oulton Park hat-trick and delivering when it really mattered in races one and two at Brands, while O'Sullivan made a critical error in passing under yellow flags. Browning had the pace to have likely won the title anyway, even if the finale had not been cut short.

3 O'Sullivan so nearly profited from the rollercoaster Brands Hatch final race to take the F4 title and would have been a very worthy champion. The single-seater rookie – still only in his second year of car racing, compared to Browning's fifth – really hit his stride in the latter half of the season to reduce Browning's 57-point lead to nothing. His move around the outside of Browning at Paddock was sensational, but his error in Brands race two proved very costly. Certainly marked himself out as a future star.

4 A history-maker deserves a high spot in this top 10. Yes, the chances of a rookie winning the Ginetta Junior title for the first time increased this year with three-quarters of the grid being first-year drivers, but that takes nothing away from Lebbon's achievement. To qualify on pole for the first round was a signal of intent. Had some brilliant battles with Bailey Voisin over the season and responded terrifically to a nightmarish Silverstone by finishing no lower than second in the final seven races.

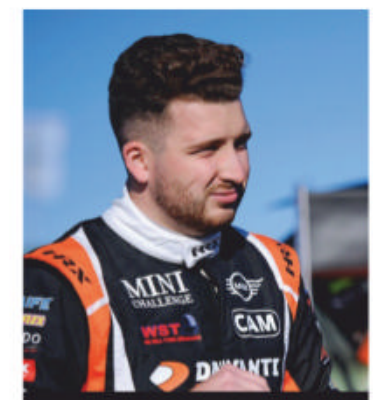
5 Another case of two drivers in the same series that were hard to separate. Voisin took a massive step forward for his second Ginetta Junior season and soon established himself as a leading contender. But his campaign unravelled when sent to the back of the Croft grid after Ginetta found an illegal restrictor plate. Could still have won the title if his final-race pass on Lebbon had worked, but ran out of time to try again. Dropping behind Josh Rattican in the final standings was somewhat harsh.


NATHAN HARRISON


WILL BURNS


GUS BURTON


JOSH RATTICAN


DAN ZELOS

6 Finally, Harrison landed that number one spot having finished as Mini Challenge runner-up three times in the past. Aside from some mechanical woes, his consistency was impressive – only once was he off the podium in a non-reversed-grid race when he finished. Considering the quality in the field, that was a significant achievement. Took the joint-highest number of wins and came incredibly close to adding another in the first race at Brands, which allowed him to take the title with ease.

7 The lowest ranked of the five champions simply because the Ginetta GT4 Supercup had the fewest drivers in its top class, just six at times. But that should take nothing away from Burns, who made up for past disappointment to land the crown. He was on the receiving end of some forceful moves over the initial weekends but really came on strong from Croft onwards and stamped his authority. It may not have been the strongest entry, but 12 top-twos from 19 races is still not to be sniffed at.

8 Burton was one of the surprises of the season. He had shown flashes of speed in Ginetta Junior but rarely converted that into strong results. His pace in the GT4 Supercup right from the start of the season was therefore unexpected, but he instantly felt at home in the more powerful car. Burton was unfortunate to get involved in two first-lap incidents that cost him crucial points – nevertheless, it was still a very impressive first season of senior car racing as he took the most podiums of all the Pros.

9 As Lebbon and Voisin's fortunes began to fluctuate in the middle of the Ginetta Junior season, suddenly it was Rattican who was on a charge. A confidence inspiring maiden win at Knockhill spurred him on to further success and he therefore entered the Brands Hatch season-closer very much in contention. He won the stop/start opener, but could not quite deny Lebbon in race two, still doing enough to finish as runner-up. With a stronger start to the year, he could have been champion, but fell slightly too far behind.

10 It may be a surprising choice to include someone who did not win a race all season in this top 10. But despite not standing on the top step of the podium, Zelos still had an impressive Mini Challenge campaign against a plethora of quick racers. His tally of seven podiums was highest of all – and he would likely have had another one had Isaac Smith not shoved him out of the way at Silverstone. An impressive drive to second in the reversed-grid Brands finale again highlighted his ability.

CHRISTMAS

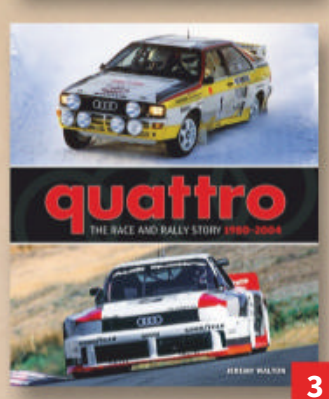
GIFT GUIDE

Autosport's top picks for what motorsport fans will want to find wrapped under the tree on the big day

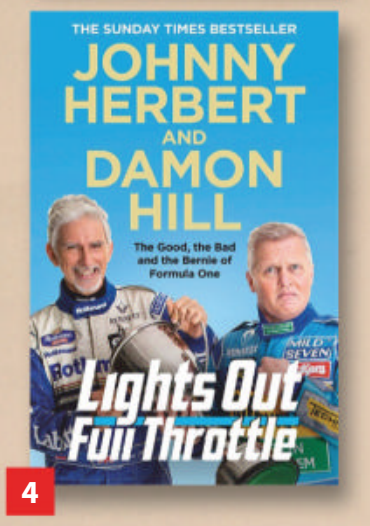
BOOKS



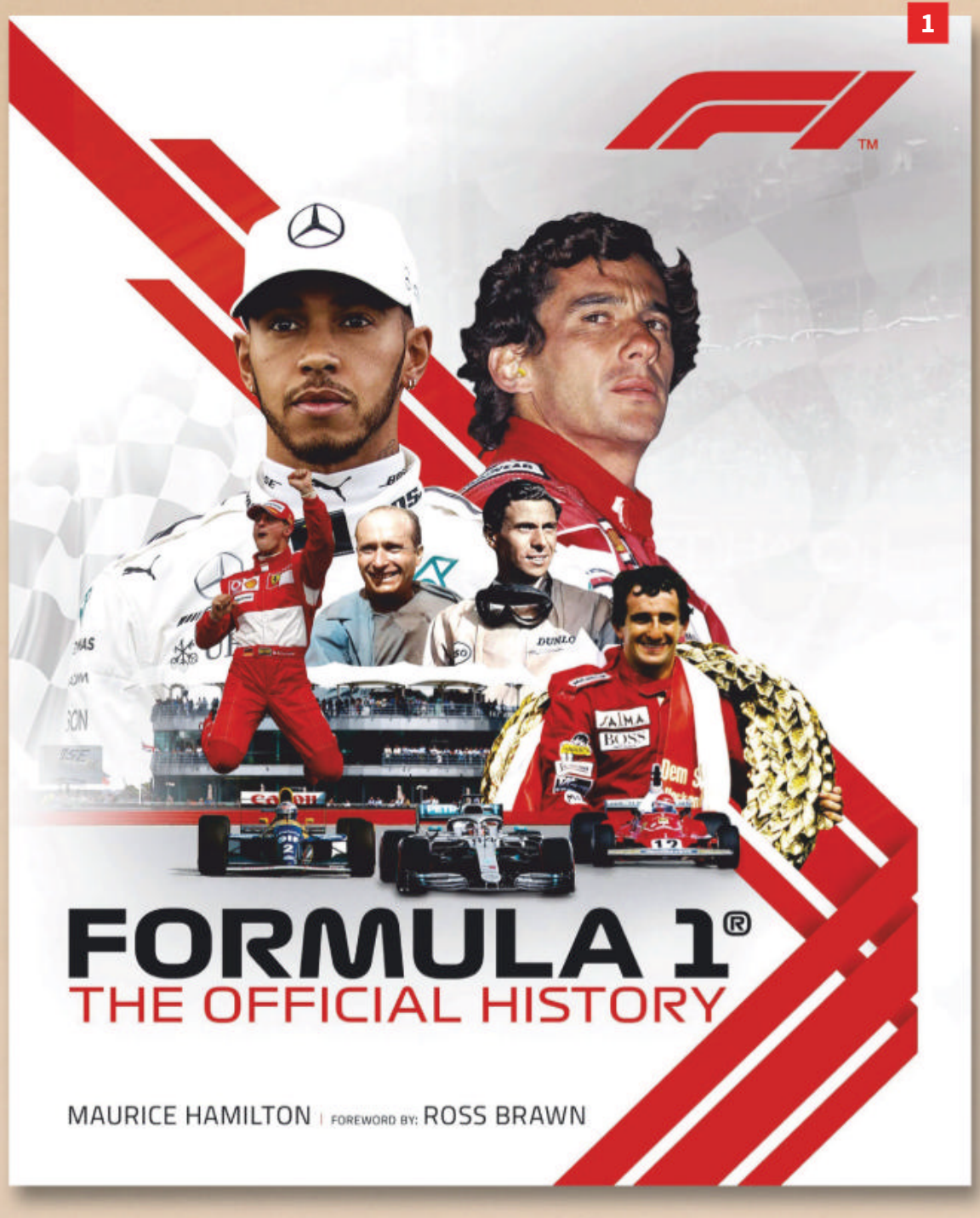
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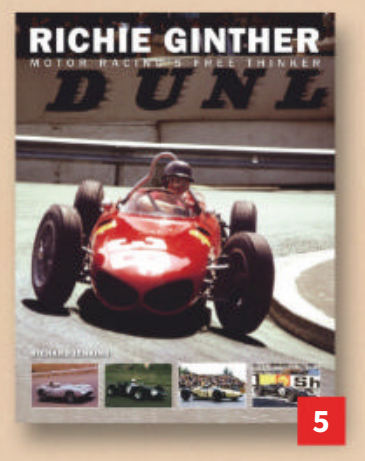
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1 FORMULA 1:THE OFFICIAL HISTORY
RRP £25 | **Website** f1store.formula1.com

2 A RACE WITH LOVE AND DEATH
RRP £20 | **Website** simonandschuster.co.uk

3 QUATTRO: THE RACE AND RALLY STORY
RRP £50 | **Website** evropublishing.com

4 LIGHTS OUT, FULL THROTTLE
RRP £20 | **Website** panmacmillan.com

5 RICHIE GINTHER: MOTOR RACING'S FREE THINKER
RRP £27 | **Website** performancepublishing.co.uk

6 ROFGO COLLECTION
RRP £75 | **Website** porterpress.co.uk

Penned by eminent motorsport writer Maurice Hamilton, ***Formula 1: The Official History*** soundly documents the championship's key moments and is a great entry point for fledging racing fans to get enthused by the grand prix scene.

A Race with Love and Death comes from the mind of the ever-brilliant Richard Williams. With his typically eloquent prose, Williams expertly chronicles the Richard Seaman story. As Seaman was the final GP driver to die before the outbreak of the Second World War, tragedy looms over this fascinating narrative of the era.

Bobble-hatters will be engrossed by their copy of ***Quattro: The Race and Rally Story***, as it marks the life of Audi's great gravel game-changer. Damon Hill and Johnny Herbert have collaborated for a romp through the good, the bad and "the Bernie" of F1, while the ***ROFGO Collection*** by Doug Nye spans the glorious Gulf-liveried car collection.

And at £27, ***Richie Ginther: Motor Racing's Free Thinker*** is an award-winning must-have.



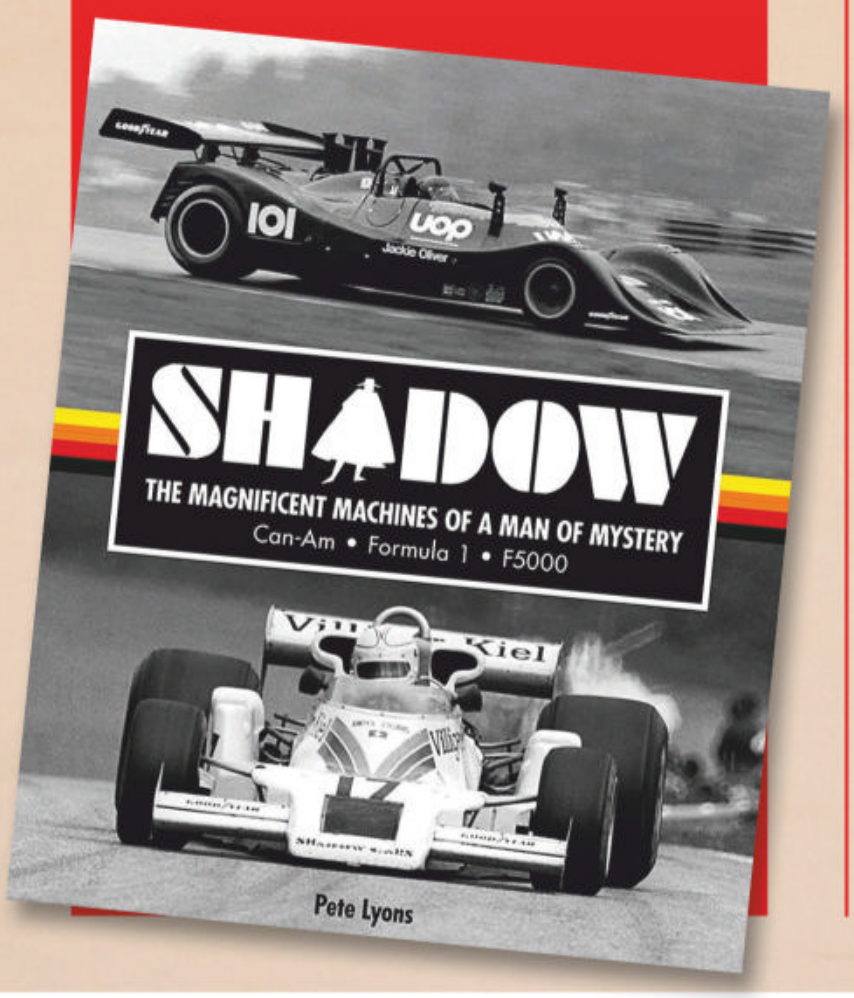
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7 SHADOW: THE MAGNIFICENT MACHINES OF A MAN OF MYSTERY
RRP £75 | **Website** evropublishing.com

Winner of the Royal Automobile Club's 2020 Specialist Book of Year award, ***Shadow: The Magnificent Machines of a Man of Mystery*** is the latest labour of love for Autosport's former Formula 1 correspondent and author Pete Lyons.

It charts the work of D-Day paratrooper Don Nichols as he created Shadow Racing Cars, which would go on to win the 1974 Can-Am championship and 1977 Austrian Grand Prix, the latter with Alan Jones.

Lyons has conducted in-depth interviews with Nichols, ex-Shadow drivers George Follmer and Jackie Oliver plus designer Tony Southgate to reveal the full story of the short-lived American outfit.



GAMES



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Customers have found it pretty tough going to get their hands on the brand-new PlayStation 5, so for this Christmas Autosport has focused on the latest releases for PS4, Xbox One and PC to save any disappointment on 25 December.

Codemasters' officially licenced ***F1 2020*** title has taken a marked step over its predecessors thanks to the inclusion of the new 'My Team' mode. Think ***Football Manager*** for grand prix racing, as players can now create their own outfit, pick a power unit supplier, and look after finances, sponsor deals and driver contracts as they try to take the 11th team on the grid to the top step of the podium.

The ***WRC 9*** and ***MotoGP 20*** videogames offer enhanced iterations of what we've already come to know and enjoy from both series as you attempt to emulate the heroics of Sebastien Ogier and Joan Mir on four wheels and two.

DIRT 5 marks a departure from the hardcore ***Rally 2.0*** sister release, with its more arcade style. But there's still plenty of entertainment to be found sliding a Lancia 037 on a frozen river as you bash door mirrors with a Peugeot 205 T16.

But for a niche simulation experience, why not try ***Assetto Corsa Competizione***? It's been officially licenced by the GT World Challenge and tees up on-track battles between Ferrari and Lamborghini GT3 machinery.

Esports competition has exploded in 2020 and provided action for many in lieu of real-world racing. It's time now for you to hone your own virtual skills.

1 F1 2020
RRP £54.99 | **Website** formula1game.com

2 WRC 9
RRP £39.99 | **Website** wrcthegame.com

3 MOTOGP 20
RRP £49.99
Website motogpvideogame.com

4 DIRT 5
RRP £54.99 | **Website** dirtgame.com

5 ASSETTO CORSA COMPETIZIONE
RRP £34.99
Website assettocorsa.net/competizione

CALENDARS



1 **McKLEIN**
RRP €39.90
Website rallyandracing.com

The McKlein Wider View wall-hanger justifies it price with stunning 95cm panoramic prints from the World Rally Championship season. There's a choice of two images per month, plus brief descriptions, and it'll take the full four weeks to absorb all of that glorious detail.



2 **AUTOCOURSE**
RRP £11.99 | **Website** iconpublishinglimited.com

Never forget the birthday of a current Formula 1 driver thanks to the Autocourse calendar. The esteemed annual maker has celebrated F1's 70th anniversary by reproducing archive images of Stirling Moss, Ayrton Senna and more alongside shots from contemporary grand prix racing.



3 **JAKOB EBREY PHOTOGRAPHY**
RRP £14.50 | **Website** ebay.co.uk

Not content with working around the clock at every British Touring Car Championship round, the Jakob Ebrey Photography team has also taken the time to pick out their favourite pictures from the thousands snapped during the tin-top season for this A3 wall calendar.

LEGACY LEGENDS

A neat stocking filler that's inexpensive and will come in handy when it's time to return to the office after many months working from home. The Legacy Legends vintage mugs are already styled with patina, so no excuses for dried-on coffee stains. On offer is a host of Formula 1, rally, sportscar, NASCAR and touring car designs plus coasters to match. Alternatively, opt for a Castrol GTX scheme to go with your Alan Partridge jacket.
RRP £9.95 | **Website** legacylegends.co.uk





MOTORSPORT TICKETS

After a racing season largely held behind closed doors, let your loved ones return trackside in 2021 with Motorsport Tickets, the dedicated motorsport experience provider.

Lock in credit to put towards attending a Formula 1, MotoGP, World Endurance or historic race meeting of your choice by gifting a voucher, which start from as little as £50. They are valid for 12 months from the date of purchase and are redeemable against any product on the website.

Motorsport Tickets is also running a special competition in support of Jackie Stewart's Race Against Dementia charity. Head to the Motorsport Tickets Instagram page, comment on a racing memory and tag a friend. The winner will receive a signed 1:4-scale helmet of the three-time F1 world champion, while the runner-up wins an autographed poster.

Website motorsporttickets.com



FUEL CANDLE



Are you missing the scent of petrol that hangs in the air after the Goodwood Revival's Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy race? Well, look (or smell) no further than the Fuel Candle from Luckies. With a whiff described as "metallic and smoky with notes of pine and a hint of fuel", this oil drum candle will handily mask any undue odours that occur a couple of hours after Christmas dinner.

RRP £17.95 | **Website** luckies.co.uk





TAMIYA KITS

If you're active on social media, you'll be aware of the ringing endorsements that Tamiya model kits receive from the motorsport world. Take British Touring Car Championship race winner Jake Hill, who posted a picture of the set-up at his new house. He has at least 10 of the plastic kits – models and radio-control cars – on the shelf.

You'll require a steady hand to assemble the pieces and apply the paint, but the Tamiya collection is a perfect way to pass the time – whether that be during a rainy day, another lockdown or the point in the festive season when you've had enough of *Moonraker*.

Tamiya products aren't cheap, but the detail is astonishing. Of the latest models, Autosport would be happy to open the **1976 Martini-liveried Porsche 935** in 1:12 scale or the RC model of the **1991 Audi V8 Quattro**, as driven by Frank Biela to the DTM crown.

Website hobbyco.net

Drugovich on top as Ilott makes ground on Schumacher

FORMULA 2
SAKHIR (BHR)
28-29 NOVEMBER
ROUND 11/12

Callum Ilott had a 22-point deficit to Mick Schumacher at the top of the table going into the penultimate round of the FIA Formula 2 Championship in Bahrain. And, in a characteristically tongue-in-cheek response to a question regarding what would be a good weekend haul of points, he quipped: "About 20 more than Mick." As it transpired, he outscored his fellow Ferrari protege by eight, leaving the title finely balanced going into this weekend's finale at the same location, but he could have got a fair bit closer than the 14 points by which he trails the future Haas Formula 1 driver.

While Ilott sliced four points from the gap on Friday by winging his Virtuosi Racing car to pole, Schumacher — still yet to qualify on the front row in F2 — laboured to 10th on the grid in his Prema Racing machine. But, as ever, Schumacher had a lightning start to the feature race, moving immediately to fifth and then passing Ilott's Virtuosi team-mate Guanyu Zhou for fourth on the opening lap in a move that culminated in the Chinese Renault F1 Junior damaging his front wing.

Ilott and front-row partner Felipe Drugovich, going great guns with MP Motorsport, had started the race on the medium 'option' tyres. The Brazilian took the lead as Ilott braked deep on the inside of Turn 1 and ran wide, and they formed an early four-car lead group with the hard-shod cars of ART Grand Prix-run Ferrari protege Marcus Armstrong and Schumacher.

Schumacher passed Ilott on the ninth lap of 32, then instantly took advantage of a couple of lock-ups from Armstrong to grab second. Three laps later, Ilott pitted to get onto the hard rubber, and there was a delay getting the left-front on. But the time he made up on Drugovich before the erstwhile leader stopped after three more tours meant he was able to pass the MP car when it locked up and ran wide on its out-lap.

Once Drugovich was up to speed, he used his fresher Pirellis to pass Ilott with 13 laps remaining, and beat the Briton home by nearly 15 seconds. "Everything came from taking the lead at the first corner," said Drugovich. "I could manage the tyres. After the stops I had newer tyres than Callum, so I had better pace." Ilott remarked: "I don't think we got the car right on the option tyres, but on the hards it was just amazing."

Schumacher was one of the last to pit, and eventually zeroed in on the Carlin car of Red Bull Junior Jehan Daruvala, who had started on the mediums and pitted from 10th place on the same lap as Ilott. The Indian mounted a stern defence of third, and Schumacher, not wanting to take a risk, settled for fourth.



Deletraz used rare pitting-in-sprint-race strategy to get himself on the podium

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES



Drugovich celebrates his first F2 feature-race victory



Drugovich lock-up allowed Ilott (4) to get briefly in front

COATES

Little did Daruvala know he would play an unwitting role in the title fight the following day. He was minding his own business in fourth place as the race restarted at one-third distance following a safety car when, behind him, Schumacher locked up going into the tight Turn 10 left-hander. Ilott was right behind, and jinked left to avoid the Prema car, but succeeded only in clattering into Daruvala, removing the Indian from the race and damaging his own front wing. Ilott pitted for a replacement and, to add insult to injury, was given a drivethrough penalty.

While Schumacher's Prema and Ferrari stablemate Robert Shwartzman had a relatively serene race from reversed-grid pole to victory, the series leader looked in severe tyre trouble. He faded to seventh, regained sixth on the penultimate lap when Pedro Piquet suffered the heartbreak of a lost maiden F2 podium as his car lost power, then dropped to seventh again when Christian Lundgaard passed him on the final lap.

Shwartzman, Nikita Mazepin and Yuki Tsunoda all retain outside mathematical title shots. Mazepin was fifth on Saturday, struggled at the start on Sunday but charged through to second in his Hitech Grand Prix car, just holding off the fast-closing Louis Deletraz, who gambled on pitting for the option tyres under the safety car. Tsunoda started from the back of the grid after spinning and stalling his Carlin machine in qualifying, stormed up to sixth on Saturday, but sustained a puncture on lap one on Sunday from minor contact while passing Armstrong for second.

POWERED BY motorsport STATS

RESULTS ROUND 11/12, SAKHIR (BHR), 28-29 NOVEMBER RACE 1 (32 LAPS – 107.459 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	**Felipe Drugovich** (BRA)	MP Motorsport	58m24.004s
2	**Callum Ilott** (GBR)	Virtuosi Racing	+14.833s
3	**Jehan Daruvala** (IND)	Carlin	+19.376s
4	**Mick Schumacher** (DEU)	Prema Racing	+20.270s
5	**Nikita Mazepin** (RUS)	Hitech Grand Prix	+28.293s
6	**Yuki Tsunoda** (JPN)	Carlin	+28.590s
7	**Marcus Armstrong** (NZL)	ART Grand Prix	+31.361s
8	**Robert Shwartzman** (RUS)	Prema Racing	+43.868s
9	**Dan Ticktum** (GBR)	DAMS	+46.959s
10	**Jack Aitken** (GBR)	Campos Racing	+47.327s
11	**Pedro Piquet** (BRA)	Charouz Racing	+49.174s
12	**Luca Ghiotto** (ITA)	Hitech Grand Prix	+49.294s
13	**Sean Gelael** (IDN)	DAMS	+50.590s
14	**Guanyu Zhou** (CHN)	Virtuosi Racing	+53.775s
15	**Roy Nissany** (ISR)	Trident	+53.816s
16	**Louis Deletraz** (CHE)	Charouz Racing	+55.957s
17	**Giuliano Alesi** (FRA)	MP Motorsport	+1m01.488s
18	**Theo Pourchaire** (FRA)	HWA Racelab	+1m01.839s
19	**Christian Lundgaard** (DNK)	ART Grand Prix	+1m03.086s
20	**Marino Sato** (JPN)	Trident	+1m05.576s
21	**Guilherme Samaia** (BRA)	Campos Racing	+1m06.756s
22	**Artem Markelov** (RUS)	HWA Racelab	+1m16.019s

Winner's average speed 110.402mph. **Fastest lap** **Ghiotto** 1m46.155s, 114.043mph.


SUTTON

QUALIFYING

1 Ilott 1m41.479s (above);
2 **Drugovich** 1m41.870s;
3 **Ticktum** 1m42.047s;
4 **Armstrong** 1m42.052s;
5 **Zhou** 1m42.065s;
6 **Alesi** 1m42.074s;
7 **Mazepin** 1m42.139s;
8 **Daruvala** 1m42.191s;
9 **Lundgaard** 1m42.259s;
10 **Schumacher** 1m42.283s;
11 **Deletraz** 1m42.316s;
12 **Nissany** 1m42.338s;
13 **Piquet** 1m42.481s;
14 **Shwartzman** 1m42.654s;
15 **Aitken** 1m42.848s;
16 **Pourchaire** 1m42.967s;
17 **Sato** 1m43.170s;
18 **Gelael** 1m43.191s;
19 **Samaia** 1m43.286s;
20 **Markelov** 1m44.019s;
21 **Ghiotto** 1m43.366s*;
22 **Tsunoda** 1m57.048s.
* grid penalty.

RACE 2 (23 LAPS – 77.193 MILES)

GRID FOR RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1, with top eight finishers reversed.

1 Shwartzman 43m15.992s; 2 **Mazepin** +5.283s; 3 **Deletraz** +6.472s; 4 **Armstrong** +10.655s; 5 **Zhou** +15.133s; 6 **Lundgaard** +18.564s; 7 **Schumacher** +20.741s; 8 **Drugovich** +23.510s; 9 **Nissany** +25.352s; 10 **Markelov** +31.150s; 11 **Sato** +31.848s; 12 **Ticktum** +39.824s; 13 **Alesi** +43.904s; 14 **Gelael** +44.427s; 15 **Tsunoda** +49.148s; 16 **Ilott** +1m03.463s; 17 **Aitken** 22 laps-puncture; 18 **Samaia** -1 lap; 19 **Piquet** 21 laps-lost power; R **Ghiotto** 9 laps-lost power; R **Daruvala** 7 laps-accident; R **Pourchaire** 5 laps-fire extinguisher went off.

Winner's average speed 107.047mph. **Fastest lap** **Deletraz** 1m45.114s, 115.173mph.

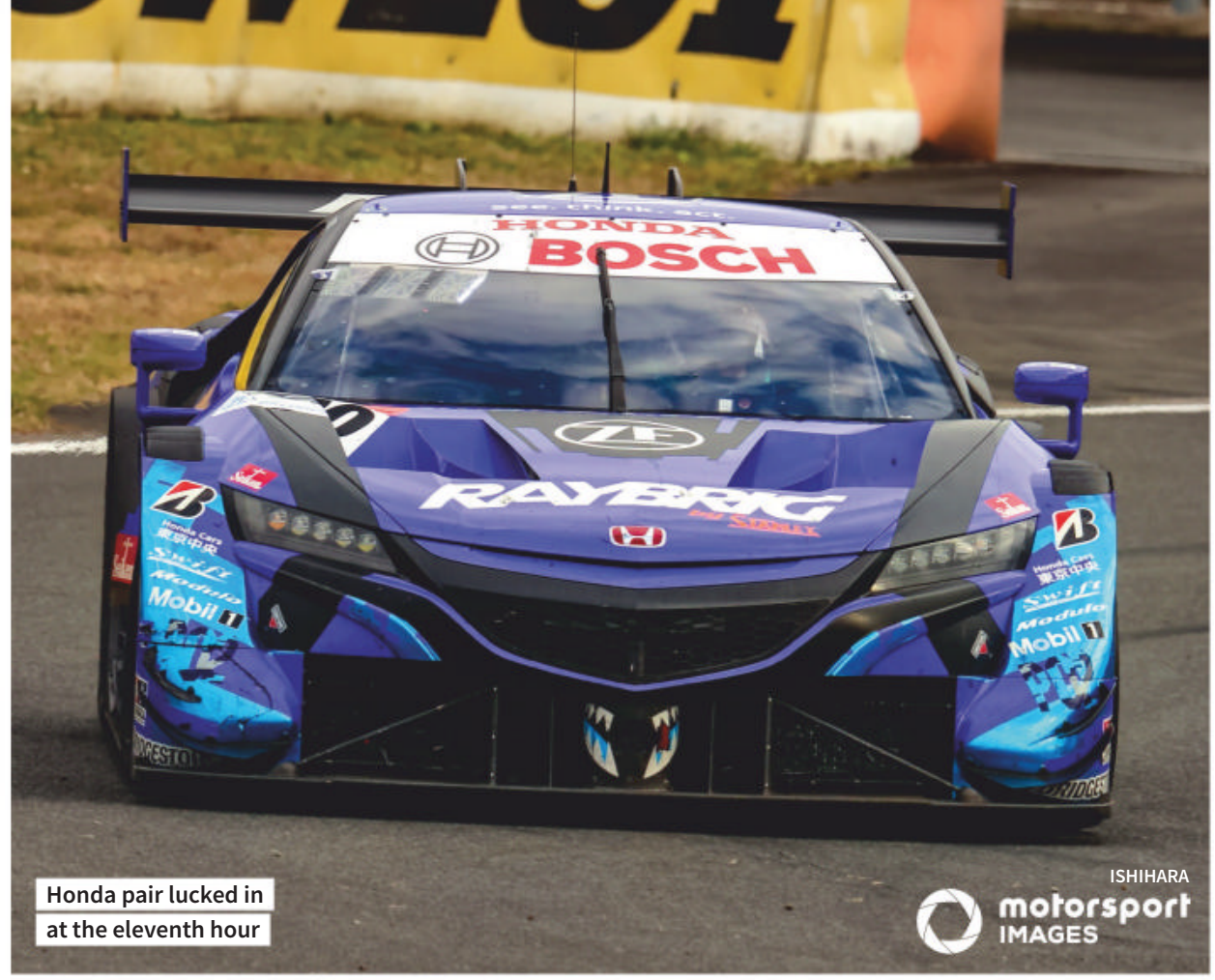
CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Schumacher 205; 2 **Ilott** 191; 3 **Mazepin** 162; 4 **Shwartzman** 159; 5 **Tsunoda** 157; 6 **Lundgaard** 149; 7 **Deletraz** 134; 8 **Zhou** 125.5; 9 **Drugovich** 105; 10 **Ghiotto** 104.


Shwartzman leads sprint race as Mazepin passes Armstrong for second

SUTTON

Yamamoto snatches it as Toyota runs dry

SUPER GT
FUJI (JPN)
29 NOVEMBER
ROUND 8/8



Honda pair lucked in at the eleventh hour
ISHIHARA
motorsport IMAGES

Honda sensationally snatched the Super GT crown away from Toyota in a scintillating season finale at Fuji when Ryo Hirakawa ran out of fuel exiting the final corner.

Hirakawa was in position to take the crown after dominating most of the 65-lap race from pole in the TOM'S GR Supra he shared with Nick Cassidy's stand-in Kenta Yamashita. But, having a built a lead of 15 seconds over the chasing Team Kunimitsu Honda of Naoki Yamamoto, Hirakawa found himself being reeled in by a second per lap in the latter stages, and went into the final three tours with just two seconds in hand.

Hirakawa looked to have done just enough to be crowned the first solo GT500 champion since Ryo Michigami in 2000 when fate intervened — the Toyota ran dry and dramatically slowed exiting the final corner on the last lap.

That allowed Yamamoto through to take the title for himself and team-mate Tadasuke Makino, giving team boss Kunimitsu Takahashi a second Super GT title in three years (after Yamamoto won with Jenson Button in 2018) on the final weekend for long-time team sponsor Raybrig.

Hirakawa coasted across the line in second, while the sister TOM'S Toyota of outside title contenders Yuhi Sekiguchi and Sacha Fenestraz grabbed the final podium spot.

Real Racing Honda pair Koudai Tsukakoshi and Bertrand Baguette had led the standings on countback before Hirakawa scored a point for pole, but the pair qualified a disappointing 12th and could only recover to fourth in the race, ahead of the ARTA Honda of Nirei Fukuzumi and Tomoki Nojiri.

Nissan also arrived with hopes of a first title since 2015 but after a storming start from Ronnie Quintarelli — who passed three Toyotas in one corner to grab an early lead — his works GT-R fell off the pace, and he and Tsugio Matsuda ended up ninth.

Nissan did win the GT300 title, with Brazilian veteran Joao Paulo de Oliveira and Kiyoto Fujinami taking their Kondo Racing GT-R NISMO GT3 to second at Fuji.

JAMIE KLEIN

Canaries halt Spaniards' flight

EUROPEAN RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
CANARY ISLANDS (ESP)
26-28 NOVEMBER
ROUND 5/5

M-Sport WRC2 driver Adrien Fourmaux scored his first ERC win as one of only a handful of drivers not to opt for full slicks during the rain-hit and decisive opening loop on Friday.

After reaching the overnight halt 7.5 seconds behind Ivan Ares, Fourmaux snatched the lead on Saturday's first stage, but dropped behind Nil Solans on the very next run after becoming one of several drivers to run wide on standing water on the final right-hander.



Fourmaux had right tyres for conditions
ERC

Solans's recapture of the top spot — he'd been in command until he spun on SS7 before Ares overtook on SS8 — came at a cost. The Spaniard picked up two slow punctures on his Skoda Fabia and, with only one spare and two stages before service, his challenge was up.

Solans's misfortune, and a puncture and suspension damage for Ares, left Fourmaux in the clear, with Yoann Bonato second ahead of the recovering Ares.

Oliver Solberg beat Gregoire Munster to the ERC1 Junior title — and £90,000 to put towards a full ERC bid in 2021 — in fourth, while seventh was enough for Alexey Lukyanuk to take his second ERC title in three years. Along with several expected frontrunners, including Efren Llarena and Andreas Mikkelsen, Lukyanuk's hopes of a third outright 2020 win faded when he opted for slicks on the first loop of four stages, which were either fully wet or damp.

Mikkelsen recovered to finish sixth as Lukyanuk celebrated a deserved title, shrugging off budgetary woes to land 23 stage wins during the truncated season.

GRAHAM LISTER

WEEKEND WINNERS

SUPER GT
FUJI (JPN)
Naoki Yamamoto/Tadasuke Makino
Team Kunimitsu (Honda NSX-GT)

EUROPEAN RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
CANARY ISLANDS (ESP)
Adrien Fourmaux/Renaud Jamoul
M-Sport Ford WRT (Ford Fiesta Rally2)

SUPER TC2000
BUENOS AIRES (ARG)
Rubens Barrichello (below)
Toyota Gazoo Racing YPF (Toyota Corolla)



SUPER TC2000

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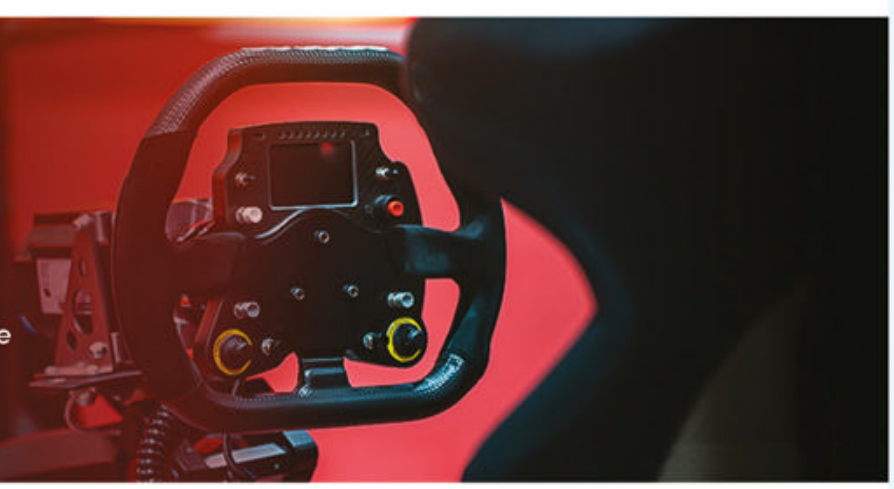


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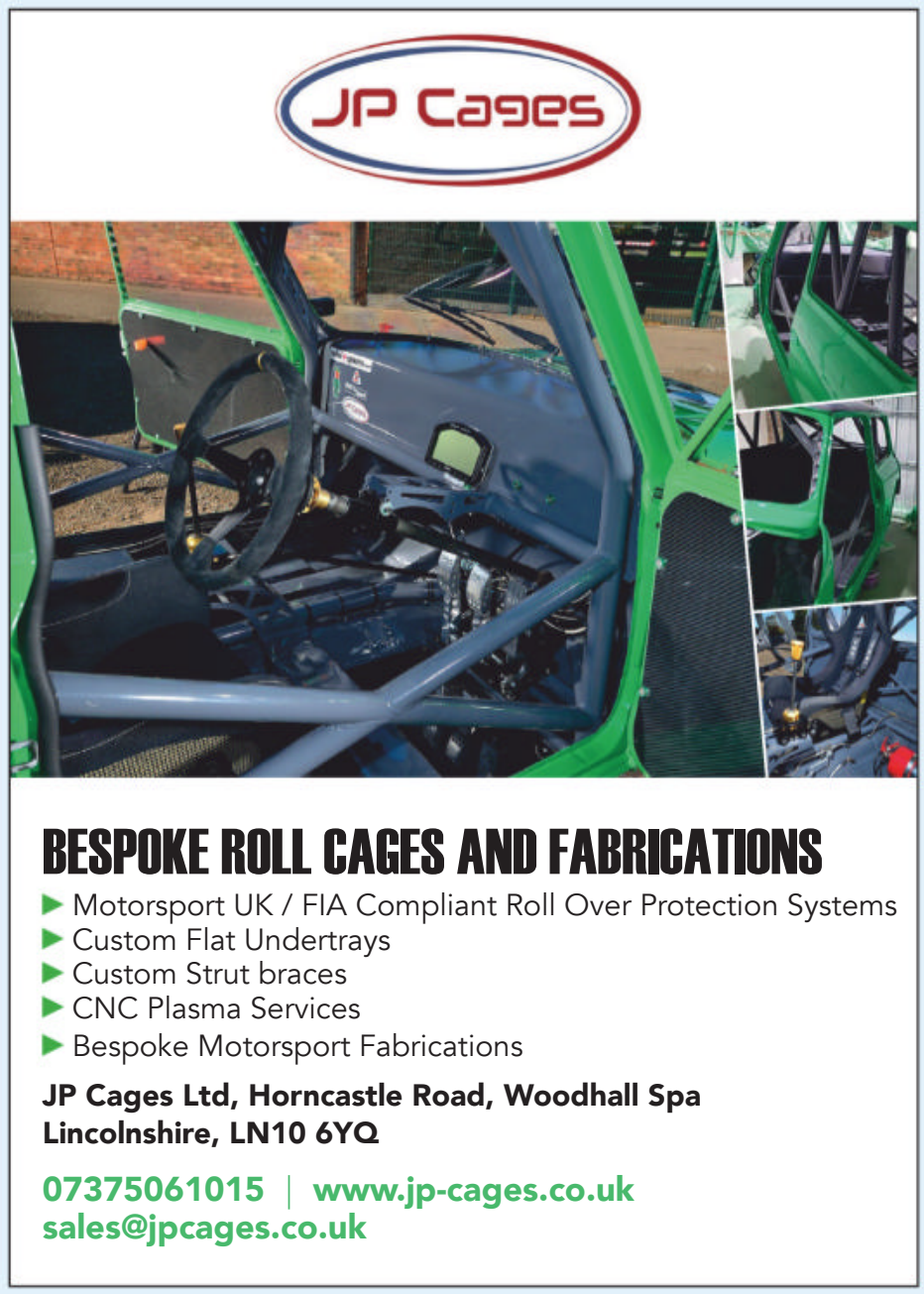


RACE PREPARATION









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Ex-Woodman Escort has been restored by Double R ready for Peter Auto action next year

GIBSON

CONWAY AND BLUNDELL TO SHARE GROUP 2 ESCORT

HISTORICS

Newly crowned World Endurance champion Mike Conway and 1992 Le Mans 24 Hours winner Mark Blundell are to team up to race a famous Group 2 Ford Escort next season.

Conway and his manager Blundell will campaign the car originally built by Broadspeed and raced to the runner-up spot in the 1300cc class of the 1973 British Saloon Car Championship by Vince Woodman. The Escort was acquired some years ago by Conway's father, construction magnate Michael Conway, and it has been restored by leading single-seater team Double R Racing, with which Conway Jr won the 2006 British Formula 3 Championship.

The plan is for the Escort to be raced in the Europe-wide Heritage Touring Cup. "We're looking at doing some Peter Auto races where there's quite a mix of old touring cars, and Dad would also love to see it race at Goodwood," said Conway.

Double R boss Anthony 'Boyo' Hieatt explained that the car has been fitted with the two-litre Cosworth BDG version of what was initially a 1.3-litre BDH powerplant. "To be competitive in Peter Auto, you need a two-litre," he said. "So we built it as that, but everything else that was period has been kept."

The bodywork went to ex-Formula Ford ace and Double R engineer Andy Stapley in Kent, and the modern rollcage built by Rhodri Williams at the Welsh-based Historic RallySport preparation firm of Mark Solloway. The Escort then made a return to the track at Brands Hatch last week, in the hands of Conway and Blundell.

"To do something completely different has been a great challenge and interesting, and to see it running for the first time was quite emotional," said Hieatt. "We had a few issues with brake balance and stuff, but it was a shakedown. After we run it at Pembrey this week, we'll lay it to rest over the winter and see what racing we can do."

Conway added: "Dad loves his Fords and is really into cars of this era, and it looks bloody cool with its big arches and wide wheels. It was great to have a play in it, though we were on slicks on a wet track because we don't have any wets yet. It was a bit of a handful as you might imagine, so there's a bit of work to do on the set-up."

MARCUS SIMMONS AND GARY WATKINS

Goodwood opener to run in May 2021

HISTORICS



The Goodwood Members' Meeting has been pushed back to mid-May for next season as the circuit's operators plan to run all three of its main events in 2021.

Neither the Members' Meeting, the Festival of Speed nor the Revival took place this year in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, but instead a behind-closed-doors Goodwood SpeedWeek meeting was held in October, which combined elements of all three of the traditional fixtures.

Now, all three are due to be back for next season and the circuit plans to allow limited numbers of spectators to attend.

The Members' Meeting, which is set to again feature the SF Edge Trophy for pre-war machines and Gerry Marshall Trophy for Group 1 tin-tops, is due to run on 15-16 May instead of its usual late March or early April slot. This is in a bid to avoid any lingering COVID-19 restrictions that could still be in place in early spring.

The Festival of Speed is then slated for 8-11 July and the planned 2020 theme of motorsport's greatest all-rounders will be rolled over. Mario Andretti is due to be among the legends attending. The Revival is set to be held on 17-19 September.

The Duke of Richmond said: "More than anything else it is the people who make our events special; the drivers, the teams, our staff and above all the fans. We were incredibly disappointed not to be able to welcome them to our much-loved events in 2020. Now we are thrilled to announce all three events are planned to be back."



'Lairy Canary' Escort is among the cars available

Bell's car collection up for auction

HISTORICS

The late Mike Bell's collection of historic racing and performance road cars will be offered without reserve at Classic Car Auctions' next live online sale on Saturday, 12 December.

The former Mitsubishi Ralliart engineer, who died of cancer this year, aged 70, was a noted preparer and competitor in historic racing over the last decade of his life.

Bell's taste in cars was eclectic, as evidenced by those on offer. They range from a 1959 Morgan +4 in SuperSports spec and 1965 Gilbern 1800GT to a 1973 Czech-built MTX sports-prototype powered by a BMW engine.

Star of the set may well prove to be the stunning 1971 Ford Escort RS1600 – affectionately known as 'Lairy Canary' – which Bell built to top spec with a two-litre Wilcox/Cosworth BDG engine.

Bell's 1972 RS1600, 1974 RS2000 and 1994 Porsche 968 Sport are gems too. Buyers' premiums are 11% plus VAT.

● Over 100 items from Team Bentley's 2001-03 sportscar programme are also being auctioned by Historics next week. The lots include a full-scale replica of the 2003 Le Mans-winning Bentley Speed 8, as well as two windtunnel models.

MARCUS PYE

PRIZE MONEY FOR LEADING TIN-TOP DRIVERS IN 2021

CLASSIC TOURING CARS

The Classic Touring Car Racing Club has decided to introduce prize money for its most successful drivers next season.

The club operates a number of different tin-top categories in association with the British Automobile Racing Club and has recently added the Jaguar Saloon and GT championship to its portfolio for 2021.

The top three registered CTCRC members in each of its championships will receive a share of £2000 prize money. The champion is due to receive £1250, the runner-up £500 and the third-placed driver £250.

Club chiefs believe the addition of the cash prizes will not only entice new competitors into the series but also reward loyal drivers.

"For many years, it's been a one-way street financially for club racing; pay this, pay that, renew everything after 10 minutes and start again," said CTCRC chairman Stuart Caie.

"In 2021, the Classic Touring Car Racing Club are going to reverse the flow of money out of drivers' pockets to ensure they benefit directly from the success of their own club. We are a club created by the people for the people run by an extremely dedicated team of volunteers.

"In some cases, club racing has been in a bit of decline for the last 10 years, but our grids are strong as we continue to look at new and diverse ways of attracting members. We feel that prize money is the next step forward in that strategy – you only have to look over the fence to oval racing to see that prize money can help to bring large grids and great racing."





Igoe took maiden win in British GT this year and had four co-drivers

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Keen leaves Barwell and joins WPI for British GT campaign

BRITISH GT

Perennial British GT Championship nearly-man Phil Keen will make the switch from Barwell Motorsport to fellow Lamborghini customer team WPI Motorsport for next year's campaign.

The 37-year-old has been a stalwart of Barwell's British GT programme since 2015, finishing runner-up three times with Jon Minshaw as well as winning 13 races alongside Minshaw and Adam Balon.

Keen, a works-affiliated Lamborghini driver, albeit not with official factory status in 2020, has already completed a two-day test with WPI's Huracan GT3 Evo at Oulton Park alongside new co-driver Michael Igoe, who took his maiden series win at Donington Park earlier this season.

Keen doesn't see his Barwell career as a closed door, but told Autosport he was excited by the prospect of joining WPI.

"I really enjoy working with Michael, Alyn [Roberts, team manager] and the team and they're a great bunch, so I think hopefully we'll have a good 2021," said Keen. "I look at it as just a new challenge, basically. They want to do it well and they're putting the right people in the right place to do the job. This year, they've made steps forward at every race and they haven't put a foot wrong, they've had no reliability issues.

"I'm sure next year will be a learning year for us all to get everything right, but we're still looking to win the championship."

Igoe had four different co-drivers in 2020 due to clashes resulting from the pandemic but, with Keen alongside, is fired up for his third season in British GT next year.

"It's a big testament to us being such a new team," Igoe said. "But I think we've made a good impression in the championship and, considering the inconsistency of having different drivers this year, I think we've still delivered well as a team. It's very exciting times ahead."

Barwell boss Mark Lemmer admitted the news came as a surprise, but said Keen would "always be part of the Barwell furniture". "It was a bit of a shock to us and we're sad to see Keeny go," he said. "But I'm sure he'll be seen back in a Barwell Lambo some time soon."

JAMES NEWBOLD

Teams split over Silver-Silver GT3 class being axed

BRITISH GT

British GT team bosses are split over the decision to scrap the Silver-Silver class in GT3 and replace it with a Silver-Am classification from next season.

This year, all-Silver crews finished first and second in the standings and won five of the nine races, prompting series organiser SRO into a rethink to ensure Pro-Am pairings remain competitive.

Optimum Motorsport boss Shaun Goff said that a pitstop time penalty, as used for Silver-Silver pairings in GT4, would be preferable to the system of weight penalties used in 2020.

"I would have liked to have seen a different balance like there is with GT4, then the Silver drivers can actually compete against the seasoned Pros with equal machinery to benchmark themselves," he said. "There's hope some of these Silvers move across over into the GT World Challenge paddock, but I hope it's not at the expense of having a quality grid in British GT."

Jenson Team Rocket RJN boss Bob Neville added: "I can understand what the thinking is. You can never lose the fact that it's a great Pro-Am championship, but I think that should be balanceable. I'm sorry to see Silver-Silver pairings go."

JAMES NEWBOLD



Silver-Silver pairing won the GT3 title

P71 OPINION

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P72 BF3 FEATURE



Novalak raced in FIA F3 with Carlin this season

SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

FIA F3 prize test for British F3 champion, teams' title launched

BRDC BRITISH F3

The BRDC British F3 Championship will award next year's champion with a two-day test in an FIA Formula 3 car to aid their climb up the motorsport ladder.

The new initiative coincides with the introduction of a teams' championship, with each squad's two best-placed cars in each race scoring points towards that title.

Last year's British F3 champion Clement Novalak remained with Carlin for his step up to FIA F3 this season, taking two podiums on his way to 12th in the standings, while 2019 British F3 runner-up and Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner Johnathan Hoggard has tested with several teams in the F1-support series.

"We're very serious about our championship winner getting into FIA F3 and to help their talent to be recognised within that arena," said Jonathan Palmer, whose MotorSport Vision company operates BRDC British F3. "We're giving the winner a two-day test in FIA F3 at the end of the year – one day will be with Hitech [which joined the British F3 grid in 2020] and one day will be with Carlin.

"Those are the two teams that we have in our championship that are already running FIA F3 cars so that makes total sense. This is serious and I think by having two days they get the full time, as a serious driver would be.

"Carlin and Hitech are clearly top teams and I'm very excited. I think the results will look good. I'll be very surprised if our champion doesn't look anything other than a great talent."

● Roberto Faria has become the first driver to be confirmed for the 2021 British F3 season. The Brazilian will be back with Fortec Motorsport, with which he already competed in the category at selected rounds this year. His best result was a second place in the final race of the year.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Donington double after lockdown

MSVR

Non-elite motorsport will return this weekend following a second national lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, with Donington Park playing host to two meetings.

The venue will hold a MotorSport Vision Racing race meeting on the Saturday, while on Sunday the opening round of the 2020-21 *Motorsport News* Circuit Rally Championship will take place – both without any spectators.

A number of series will be in action during Saturday's race meeting, including Mini Challenge Trophy, Elise Trophy, Focus Cup, Heritage Formula Ford, and Racing Saloons/Production BMWs.

For the event on Sunday, Bentley Academy driver Frank Bird goes into the rally as top seed alongside co-driver Jack Morton in a Ford Focus RS WRC07.

Former UK Asphalt champions Damian Cole/Dale Owen are in a Focus WRC05, while Ollie Mellors/Max Freeman are first of the R5s in a Proton Iriz.

Two-time *MN* Circuit Rally champion Chris West is seeded 12th and will make his debut in Nigel Mummery's GT3-spec Porsche 997.

PETER SCHERER

IN THE HEADLINES

FIRST GT ACADEMY DRIVERS

Five Ginetta racing regulars have become the first drivers to sign up to the new-for-2021 Ginetta GT Academy. Assetto Motorsport drivers Martin Wills, Robin Grimwood and Julian Wantling, and SF Racing's Shawn Fleming and Gary Wager, will all move from the G40 Cup into the GT Academy. The new series features a less powerful, GTA-spec G55 run on road tyres and is designed to be the manufacturer's new entry-level category.

BRITISH F4 FOR TAYLOR

Ginetta Junior racer Zak Taylor will step up to British Formula 4 next year with Arden. He took a best result of third in the Ginetta category this season, driving for the single-car Alastair Rushforth Motorsport squad. "Following a successful test in the car earlier this year, I already feel I am very much part of the team and cannot wait to get preparations under way," said Taylor.

FIA DRAG RACING IN 2021

The FIA European Drag Racing Championship is due to return to action in 2021, after COVID-19 forced this year's campaign to be abandoned. A six-round schedule is planned, featuring two visits to Santa Pod – on 28-31 May and 9-12 September. Other rounds are set to be held in Sweden, Finland and Germany.

SIX-ROUND MGCC CALENDAR

The MG Car Club has revealed a six-event provisional schedule for next season. The club traditionally runs six meetings per year but the coronavirus pandemic led to just three in 2020. The new season is due to begin on 20 March at Silverstone, but it is not yet confirmed if a second visit to the Northamptonshire venue in June will be for the return of the club's popular MG Live event, which hasn't run since 2018.



WALKER

New prototype series joins BRSCC roster for 2021

ZEO PROTO SERIES


Wide variety of machinery is eligible for series

YOUNG

Excool, manufacturer of advanced data centre cooling equipment, has partnered with the British Racing & Sports Car Club to launch a new sports-prototype series for 2021.

The brainchild of Excool's Duncan Williams, an ardent sportscar racer, the Zeo Proto series caters for all open and closed prototypes and sports racers in six classes. The proposed structure is: sports protos over 2001cc and all forced-induction engines; open protos 1401-2000cc and up to 1400cc; Radical SR3s with standard engines; CN and LMP3 cars; plus an invitation division.

A four-event provisional calendar has been released, featuring races at Snetterton (11 April), Silverstone National (20 June), Brands Hatch Indy (8 August) and Donington Park (26 September). Coordinated by Grace Williams, each event will provide a 20-minute qualifying session and 20-minute double-header races.

"The Zeo name is a derivative of 'Geo and Zero', both synonymous with Excool's latest renewable source ground pump home heating systems," said Duncan Williams, who added that the Bromsgrove company aims to introduce an electric Zeo Prototype race car as soon as 2021.

BRSCC chief operating officer Paul McErlean is equally enthusiastic about the series. "Sports-prototype racing has always been popular, particularly in the UK," he said. "Given Duncan's experience and expertise, I'm looking forward to seeing the level of entries and variety of cars I am confident they will be able to attract.

"The introduction of the Zeo Proto Series adds another exciting element to what is shaping up to be a fabulous BRSCC season."

MARCUS PYE

Cadwell Park and Oulton Park on SMRC bill

SMRC

The Scottish Motor Racing Club will run two away rounds for all of its series for the first time in 2021.

Cadwell Park and Oulton Park join next year's provisional seven-event schedule, while the remaining five rounds will take place at the club's traditional Knockhill home.

The club targeted a return to a seven-round season for the first time since 2017, split across four venues. It planned to visit Croft – which was on this year's calendar before COVID-19 intervened – but was unable to secure a date due to "challenges with availability".

The season is due to start on the opening weekend of April at Knockhill before heading south to Cadwell Park a month later. Three more Knockhill rounds follow between June and August, the last being run in the anti-clockwise direction.

Oulton Park hosts the penultimate event in September, with National Formula Ford 1600 joining the itinerary, before the season concludes at Knockhill in October.

Having run its own condensed season in 2020 via the Scottish Renegades Cup, Scottish FF1600 will return to the SMRC bill next year, although it will skip the Knockhill reversed-layout meeting.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON





Bronze is the new Silver

Half of the 2020 British GT3 grid consisted of Silver-Silver pairings. But the decision to outlaw such combinations, and return to its Pro-Am roots, will have a mixed impact

JAMES NEWBOLD

"It's been difficult, maybe a bit too difficult, to manage the balance between the Silver pairings and the Pro-Am, between the very competitive Silver pairings and less competitive Silver pairings. Benjamin [Franassovici, SRO general manager] has had to zig-zag a lot throughout the season trying to do that. It's why we pushed to go back to a much more simple and understandable system next year."

Speaking to Autosport at British GT's Silverstone finale, SRO boss Stephane Ratel was utterly convinced that the championship has done the right thing in removing the Silver GT3 class from 2021 and replacing it with a separate Silver-Am classification, to reinstate Pro-Am as the predominant division.

"[Pro-Am] is the formula that wins in this championship and we should keep this formula," Ratel added. "We will see now that the teams have to be out there on the market really finalising line-ups with Bronze drivers. I'm confident that it will work."

But in culling its numerically stronger class, is SRO making a kneejerk reaction to a 2020 season unlike any other? The impact of COVID-19 on businesses meant that several Pro-Am teams funded by wealthy amateur Bronze-graded drivers withdrew their entries, while aspiring-professional Silver-graded drivers whose planned programmes had fallen apart clubbed together to bolster the grid with last-minute deals (in the case of Jack Mitchell and Jordan Witt, merely days before the season opener).

"I think it'll be difficult if you've not had any GT3 experience to break through the ceiling"

It may be optimistic to assume that the status quo would have returned in 2021 anyway, with cars funded by Ams once again outnumbering Silvers, but the pre-emptive action by SRO has served to allay any doubts that gentleman drivers might have in committing to a Pro-Am entry. While a boon for their victory chances, the move could have unforeseen knock-on effects.

RAM Racing boss Dan Shufflebottom says he already had a Silver car "95% of the way there, deal done for next year" before the new class structure was communicated, and conceded that the change "does narrow who we can have". Silver-graded drivers such as two-time runner-up Sam De Haan – effectively an amateur too young (and quick) to be graded Bronze – looking to improve their craft rather than land a factory deal would effectively be rendered uncompetitive going directly against Pros, and may therefore look elsewhere for their racing. Likewise, inexperienced GT4 Silvers may struggle to step into GT3 when an Am could pay a little bit more to get a plug-and-play Pro co-driver who can bring them along too. This, according to Shufflebottom, is 2020 Pro-Am champion Ian Loggie's preference for next year.

"I think it will be difficult if you've not had any GT3 experience to break through the ceiling," says Lewis Proctor, twice a podium finisher in his maiden season out of GT4 in an Optimum Motorsport-run Silver Cup McLaren. "There's so many Silver-Silvers this year, you're not going to have double that next year because all the Silvers are going to have to find Ams and that's probably not going to happen."

Mitchell, who broke his GT3 winning duck alongside Witt at Snetterton, adds: "Trying to make that next step to GT3, it's obviously quite difficult to find an Am to jump in with someone who is 18 years of age. For me to do Silver-Silver for the last two years has been ideal."

That's not to say it can't work. Before the pandemic, graduating GT4 champion Tom Canning was set to share a TF Sport Aston Martin with reigning GT3 champion Graham Davidson. But will all entries for the new class be of that calibre?

"I suspect what will happen is there are some Bronze drivers out there who perhaps don't want to pay the full budget, so it might introduce a few more Ams to come and do it," says Shufflebottom, who points out that the prospects of Am drivers in a Silver-Am line-up are not dissimilar to what Pro-Am drivers signed up for in 2020. "I don't think it's going to be a huge class. I suspect there will be a few guys in it that have got half the budget or two thirds of the budget and they just want to go racing for fun."

RAM had a foot in both camps this season – its all-Silver line-up of De Haan and Patrick Kujala was a winner, but Pro-Am pair Loggie and Yelmer Buurman weren't. Shufflebottom concedes "the class structure didn't really work this year" and that change was necessary to retain the interest of its core base. "I don't think the championship would survive as a Pro-Am if it was to carry on like that again next year because it's a bit disappointing for the Bronzes to not be able to fight for the overall title," he says.

And, as Mitchell points out, for the aspiring young professional, there are advantages too as they will be unshackled from weight penalties and no longer need to explain to sponsors why their tyres and brakes were degrading quicker. "Now when the Silver guys jump into these GT3s, they'll have a level playing field with the Pros and no extra ballast in the car, so it's a direct comparison of where you are on the grid," he says.

Proctor adds: "It could be a positive thing, I can totally see the logic behind it. It's just a change and nobody likes change..."

A NEW ERA FOR THE UK'S TOP SINGLE-SEATER CATEGORY

The long-standing British Formula 3 Championship ended in 2014, but the current MotorSport Vision-run F3 series has gone some way to filling the void

STEFAN MACKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY **JEP** motorsport IMAGES

"Everybody involved in British motorsport knows how important British F3 has been and we are delighted to get it back." Those words, spoken by MotorSport Vision chief executive Jonathan Palmer, were published in the 31 March 2016 issue of Autosport magazine shortly after the first round of the new BRDC British F3 Championship.

Just days before that opening event, the go-ahead had been given to rename what had been known since 2013 as the BRDC Formula 4 Championship as British F3, although the new two-litre Tatuus-Cosworth single-seater spec car had been given its competition debut in the 2015 Autumn Trophy under the F4 title. It heralded a new dawn, and five seasons later the MSV-operated BRDC British F3 series is well established as the UK's premier single-seater category, silencing a number of critics, and has gone some way to upholding the honour and prestige of the previous British F3 Championship, which ran from 1979-2014.

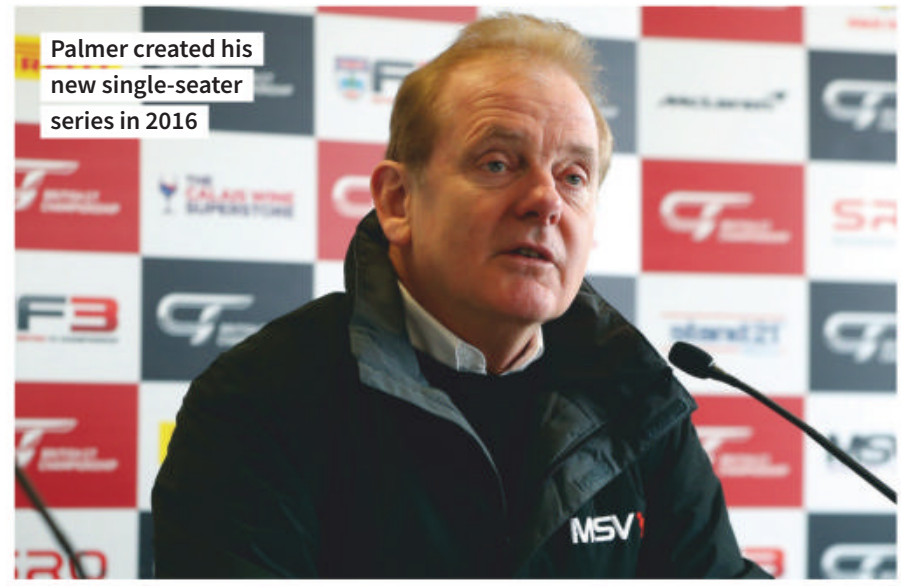
Even in the midst of a pandemic, the current iteration of British F3 has continued to stabilise and even build on its reputation



"WE USED TO DEVELOP THE CAR AS WELL AS THE DRIVER, WHEREAS NOW YOU'RE ONLY DEVELOPING THE DRIVER"



Hitech was new to BRDC British F3 this year and won races



Palmer created his new single-seater series in 2016

in 2020. It has featured 24 races across seven meetings, and attracted a season high of 19 cars for the final round at Silverstone, with nine teams represented on the grid.

"What works for the drivers works for the teams, so I think all of that goes into what has made British F3 as successful as it is now," says Palmer. "Every year, and indeed throughout the year, we liaise carefully with them. This is very much our championship with them being part of it, and if they've got gripes or think there are ways things could be improved we'd be stupid not to listen to them carefully and implement them where we can. And the teams respect that."

As Palmer adds, "you can't tell teams and drivers what to do, they'll go where they want to go", yet the fact that so many operations are represented in the championship is a testament to its current success.

Trevor Carlin's internationally renowned squad was a mainstay until the end in the 'old' British F3 category and has been a permanent fixture since the new series was introduced in 2016, winning three of the five drivers' titles so far, including the past two with Clement Novalak and Kaylen Frederick.

Fortec Motorsport and Double R Racing have also been involved in the series from the beginning, as well as smaller teams such as Hillspeed, Chris Dittmann Racing, Douglas Motorsport and Lanan Racing. This season Hitech GP and JHR Developments joined the roster, while next year Elite Motorsport — best known for dominating Ginetta Junior in recent years — will move into single-seaters for the first time after acquiring cars from Lanan.

But what is it that makes the series so appealing for both teams and drivers? Cost plays an important part. A driver can realistically get on the grid for £180,000 for the season, while those with bigger budgets and wanting a full season of unlimited testing will push it closer to £320,000.

By comparison, a season in British F4 costs around the same, but the Mygale used in that series has less power and downforce. Costs in European series similar to British F3 tend to be higher. With many young drivers looking to make the move up the single-seater ladder quickly, and for as little money as possible, British F3 has found something of a niche market.

A failure to control spiralling costs was the undoing of the original British F3, with teams spending small fortunes on engines from Mercedes and Volkswagen as well as on development of the cars. While future McLaren F1 star Carlos Sainz Jr and IndyCar driver Jack Harvey competed in the series as recently as 2012, two years later (its swansong) British F3 fielded four full-time entries.

This is less of a problem in modern British F3 as all teams are supplied with the spec Tatuus chassis, which for this season underwent minor modifications including an upgraded front and rear wing, new engine cover and bargeboards to aid performance slightly and give it a refreshed look, while Mountune took over the building and maintenance of the two-litre 230bhp engines.

Richard Dutton, owner of Fortec, which has competed in British F3 for more than two decades, agrees that having a one-make series where engines are loaned out to teams and no scope for development has been key.

"I think most probably the biggest thing is the cost because we used to spend a lot of money on development [in old British F3]," he says. "We used to develop the car as well as the driver, whereas now you're only developing the driver. You can't go to the windtunnel; we used to make our own suspension and radiators, have our own floors, a lot of the stuff which takes the costs up. You can't do that now, so the driver benefits, »



A healthy grid of 19 cars took part in the final round this season at Silverstone

and it's better value for money."

For some, this may go against the very ethos of what Formula 3 stood for, but the current climate for motorsport and single-seater racing means that the days of teams developing their own cars, for better or worse, generally belong to the past. Series including FIA F2 and FIA F3, all the way down through the motorsport ladder, have followed this route to keep costs affordable and maintain parity as much as possible. Ensuring that performance is equal across the board, while supplying a reliable car and engine combination, is just as important to Palmer as controlling the costs.

"No driver wants to be losing races or having compromised performance because of reliability issues, and the teams don't want the driver on their back," he says. "We've gone to Mountune this year. It [reliability] wasn't bad before but it could be improved, but this year has been absolutely exemplary. We've had no race failures at all with the engines, which is great. So car reliability has been exceedingly strong, and then we've also got car performance.

"OK, some drivers would like to feel they've got an advantage, but essentially they want to feel that they haven't got a disadvantage, and that's another great strength that we've



Six of the nine teams in British F3 were able to take a victory in the series this year

A 'NEW' HOME FOR INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS

Throughout the 2020 BRDC British F3 season a total of 24 drivers took part in at least one race and, while nearly half were British, the remainder came from across the globe, including the US, Brazil, Malaysia, Argentina, India, Australia, Belgium, Thailand and Jordan.

There were 13 overseas drivers, whose participation has turned the UK-based series into something of a hotspot for international talent, much like the previous iteration of British F3.

"If you go back to the [Ayrton] Senna days, British F3 was always where the foreign drivers used to come, so it's good to see them coming back again," says Fortec boss Richard Dutton.

Throughout its six decades of history, F3 in Britain was a magnet for international drivers who would go on to Formula 1, including Senna, Emerson Fittipaldi, Mika Hakkinen, Rubens Barrichello, Takuma Sato, Daniel Ricciardo and Jean-Eric Vergne.

And with the growing reputation of the BRDC British F3 series, a steady stream of foreign drivers has been attracted to the UK's shores even in the midst of a pandemic. Reigning British F3 champion Kaylen Frederick joined the category in 2019 with Carlin, having previously contested the USF2000 series in his homeland.

"We were looking to move over to Europe to try to get some experience in the series over here as they just seem tougher," he says.

"Drivers seem to mature more quickly. Any driver that comes over to the US from a European championship tends to do quite well, so we figured for driver development it would be the right move to go to any series in Europe.

"But the reasoning behind the British championship was a lot to do with building a relationship with a team like Carlin moving forward, as they've got so many connections with higher teams.

"Also, not only is it a really competitive series but they race on some pretty technical and tough tracks to be quick on."

Having mastered "tough tracks" and come out on top of a closely fought championship battle, Frederick believes that while the current guise of British F3 may still not be what it once was, compared to other F3 categories it ranks right up there.

"Some people made the argument that maybe the series isn't as prestigious as it once was," he says. "There's a lot of other F3 series that are being pushed by the FIA that might look a bit more appealing.

"But I think, especially considering the amount of issues everyone has gone through with COVID, who's to say that this year wouldn't have been even stronger, and it was probably the strongest F3 series besides FIA F3?"

honed in British F3 — equality of performance."

With nine different winners this season — only three of those solely from reversed-grid races — and six different teams reaching the top step of the podium, the championship is delivering in terms of equality and competitiveness.

The success of British F3 is due in part to Palmer's other forays into single-seater racing over the decades, including Formula Palmer Audi (1998-2010) and the FIA Formula 2 Championship (2009-12) — both of which were run in-house by MSV instead of established teams — and the harsh lessons learned.

"One of the big things that we learned is that running it all under one roof doesn't work," says Palmer, who admits

"CUTTING OUT THE TEAMS, CUTTING OUT THE MIDDLE MEN, ULTIMATELY DOES NOT WORK"



McLaren F1 driver Sainz raced in British F3 in 2012

that from a commercial point of view both series were tough, though they did succeed in helping some drivers' careers. "Having one big team and effectively cutting out the teams, cutting out the middle men, ultimately does not work commercially and it's not what the drivers want. It's a way to get the costs down, no question about it, but you do need the teams."

MSV also operates a number of circuits on the British F3 calendar — Oulton Park, Snetterton, Brands Hatch and Donington Park — and there are further trips to Silverstone and Spa as part of its position supporting the British GT Championship.

"You've got great circuits, it backs up British GT, which is very strong — the whole package is good and Palmer has done a very good job with it," says Dutton. "It needs more promotion, but obviously the situation with COVID makes it difficult for them to do it. We've gone through a difficult year, but we've survived it and the championship is looking very strong for next year, which is a credit to them."

While British F3 has strived to establish itself as the leading single-seater category in the UK and grow its reputation in Europe, one of its biggest hurdles remains ensuring that it can keep its name, and all the history and prestige that comes with it.

Palmer has been in a battle with the FIA for several seasons, the world motorsport governing body keen to keep the Formula 3 name solely for its own championships in the wake of creating the Formula Regional European Championship for 2019.

"British F3, it's the right title for it," says an adamant Palmer. "The performance is there, the pedigree is there and I'm sure the FIA will ultimately think it's a valuable part of the heritage of world motorsport that is their responsibility to protect and enhance. Although we've had some pressure, I'm sure that ultimately common sense will prevail and they'll realise that British F3 is an important, valued title and it thoroughly deserves to remain. The most important thing of all for them is that in no way is it any threat to FIA F3. No one is going to confuse the two — they serve different roles."

Palmer, indeed, believes that his series is a direct feeder into FIA F3. Last year's British F3 champion Novalak made that move »



Frederick came across from the US to race in British F3 and won the title this season



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Norris on his way to winning the first BRDC British F3 race

this season with Carlin, finishing 12th in the standings with two podiums to his name; last season's runner-up, Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner Johnathan Hoggard, has been testing with a number of teams in the championship.

Such is the commitment to prove that it is the logical next step that, from next season, the winner of the British F3 title will be given two days of testing in an FIA F3 car (see news).

"We are one of the prime feeders into FIA F3." says Palmer. "There's the FIA F4 championships that exist in the various countries as well, but I think British F3 is probably an even better proving ground for drivers coming into FIA F3 than FIA F4. There is a gulf of performance difference between the two, there's a gulf of technological difference in terms of what you can adjust, and even the downforce level is pretty token in FIA F4. And of course the other big thing is budget.

"For someone to find £200,000-300,000 is one thing, but then to have to go up to around £1million for a proper drive in that — it's a hell of a gap and there will be a lot of drivers who without something like British F3 wouldn't have the confidence or the ability to make that jump into FIA F3."

Palmer believes that while Euroformula Open is "kind of another halfway [point] up the ladder between British F3 and FIA F3", the new-for-2021 Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine — a merger between Formula Regional and Renault Eurocup — is differentiated by British F3's costs.

While there is always room for improvement, Palmer is keen to stress that "the main thing is just not to change anything too much" in British F3. Given that the main effect of the coronavirus pandemic on all of UK motorsport is uncertainty, stability is the number-one priority.

"I'm very excited about the future for British F3 — it's very much on the right track," he says. "It's valued very highly internationally, its reputation is definitely far better than it was for quite a long time in the latter years of [the old] British F3, and it's getting back to the heyday sort of times, I think.

"We're not going to rest on any laurels, we want to keep making it better and to make sure that British F3 has a terrific future for the next five, 10 years. Part of making it successful, maintaining its success and expanding its success is that it's recognised as a valuable step for aspiring Formula 1 drivers to come and prove themselves — that is the real bottom line."

The latest generation of British F1 talent can chart their rise through Palmer's series, with Williams F1 driver George Russell the winner of the BRDC F4 title in 2014 with Lanan, while the first race of new-era British F3 was won by current McLaren star Lando Norris with Carlin.

As Palmer says, "we want to find the new Russells, the Verstappens, the Leclercs, there are people out there who are just [at] another level of superiority". Based on the current trajectory of BRDC British F3, there's every chance that the next generation of F1 drivers could make their mark in the series.

NEXT WEEK

BRITISH F3 SEASON REVIEW
10 DECEMBER ISSUE

Find out how Maryland-born Kaylen Frederick beat season-long rival and rising Indian star Kush Maini to the crown.



The heyday of British F3: Senna and Brundle line up on the front row



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MOTORSPORT'S RENAISSANCE



DOCUMENTARY TV SERIES REVIEW
FERNANDO

Live coverage of sporting events isn't the be-all and end-all anymore. It will bring a certain audience, and a consistent and sizeable one at that. But a behind-the-scenes, fly-on-the-wall documentary that uncovers the 'human story' might just bring a far bigger one, engaging people who aren't necessarily into that particular championship or discipline.

Think Netflix and *Drive to Survive* and *Sunderland 'til I Die*, think Amazon Prime Video and *All or Nothing*. You don't have to live and breathe Formula 1 or football to get an awful lot out of watching those. Now, there's *Fernando*.

The five-part series is available on the Amazon streaming service and follows the two-time Formula 1 world champion in his exploits outside of grand prix racing – taking on the World Endurance Championship with great success, tackling the Dakar Rally with mixed results, and returning to the Indianapolis 500 with a meagre outcome.

Don't underestimate *Fernando*. It received little publicity and fanfare around the time of its release earlier this year. Just 22 reviews on Amazon Prime suggest it's continued to fall under the radar.

Is the reception so muted because the series is simply underwhelming, little more than a vapid vanity project for the Spaniard? After all, its strapline reads: "The team of *Fernando* has the privilege to witness the most extraordinary stage in the career of the driver from Asturias".

To what degree you agree with that declaration concerning the current status of his career is subjective. Fortunately, the four hours of television time – most of which will require English subtitles for the Spanish interviews with Alonso, his partner, friends and family – aren't anything like as self-indulgent as might be implied. In isolation, it's a stellar production, although less polished than some of the similar sports series that admittedly operate with a much bigger production budget.

The five episodes are generally thematic rather than a chronological record of Alonso's life since his F1 exit at the end of 2018 – presumably a second series will have to wait until after his 2021 F1 return with Renault due to FOM filming restrictions.

They track through a lesser-seen personal side to Alonso, and how his sporting success massively disrupted his life when he was thrust into the spotlight after his 2005 and 2006 title triumphs.

Episode two ensures the bad and the ugly are covered off quickly and early before moving onto better things, as the second instalment follows the pitiful 2019 McLaren Racing entry into the Indy 500. This was a team awash with F1 experience that got its imperial and metric measurements mixed up when trying to sort a set-up that was safe at speeds in excess of 220mph.



LePAGE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

MAN IN FOCUS



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Peak Fernando mania: fans flock in Oviedo to celebrate 2006 triumph

Anyhow, Alonso returns to the Motor Speedway only to not qualify for the race after the one-lap heroics on Bump Day from the tiny Juncos Racing team and Kyle Kaiser. That's the lion's share of the bad news over and done with, as the Dakar Rally campaign and sportscar success – two Le Mans 24 Hours and a 2019 Daytona triumph – take centre stage.

It's hard to pinpoint whether it's Alonso's eloquence, the accounts of his nearest and dearest or just the compelling on-track footage that makes *Fernando* very much worth a watch. Any previous fears about this being a pure vanity project (there's still elements to it, this is an eponymous TV series after all!) are long gone.

Yes, Alonso is a national superstar in Spain – check out the footage of a packed Oviedo precinct after his second F1 title win – but there are occasional warts covered off. It's that fallibility that makes it interesting and worthy of your time.

MATT KEW

YouTube youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



The Autosport Formula 1 team analyses the events from the first lap of the 2020 Bahrain Grand Prix surrounding Romain Grosjean's horrific incident. After the Haas driver remarkably walked away after a 137mph impact with the barrier, they assess how a life was preserved in the most extreme test of F1's developments in the field of safety. **Go to bit.ly/GroCrash**

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Sakhir Grand Prix
Formula 1 World Championship
Round 16/17
Sakhir, Bahrain
6 December
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sun 1705
TV **Highlights** Sky Sports F1, Sun 2100, Channel 4, Sun 2200

FIA Formula 2
Round 12/12
Sakhir, Bahrain
5-6 December
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sat 1200, Sun 1250

Monza Rally
World Rally Championship
Round 7/7
Monza, Italy
3-6 December
TV **Live** BT Sport 2, Fri 1130, 1400, BT Sport 1, Sat 0800, BT Sport 2, Sat 1330, Red Bull TV, Sat 1600, BT Sport 2, Sun 0900, 1100
TV **Highlights** Red Bull TV, Fri 2100, BT Sport 2, Fri 2330, Red Bull TV, Sat 2100, BT Sport 2, Sat 2330, Red Bull TV, Sun 2100, BT Sport 2, Sun 2030, Red Bull TV, Sun 1900
Live coverage on wrc.com
All live service via WRC+

Super Formula
Round 5/6
Suzuka, Japan
5-6 December
TV **Live** Red Bull TV, Sat 0600, Sun 0600
Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sat 0430, Sun 0430

Formula Regional European
Round 8/8
Vallelunga, Italy
5-6 December
Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sat 1255, Sun 0855, 1355

Super TC2000
Round 6/6
Buenos Aires, Argentina
6 December

UK MOTORSPORT

Donington Park MSVR*
5 December
Mini Challenge, Focus Cup, Elise Trophy, Heritage FF1600, Toyo Tires Racing Saloons/Production BMWs
***Behind closed doors**



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Jonathan Palmer has a brief moment in his Williams-Ford FW08C during practice for the 1983 European Grand Prix at Brands Hatch – the penultimate race of the season, organised in the wake of three of the year's scheduled events being cancelled. The newly crowned European Formula 2 champion was making his F1 championship debut in a third car entered by Williams in recognition of his work as its test driver. Palmer qualified 25th of 26 starters (full-time Williams driver Jacques Laffite failed to make the cut!) and was 13th of 15 classified finishers.

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Farwell to a British rallying hero

1 December 2005

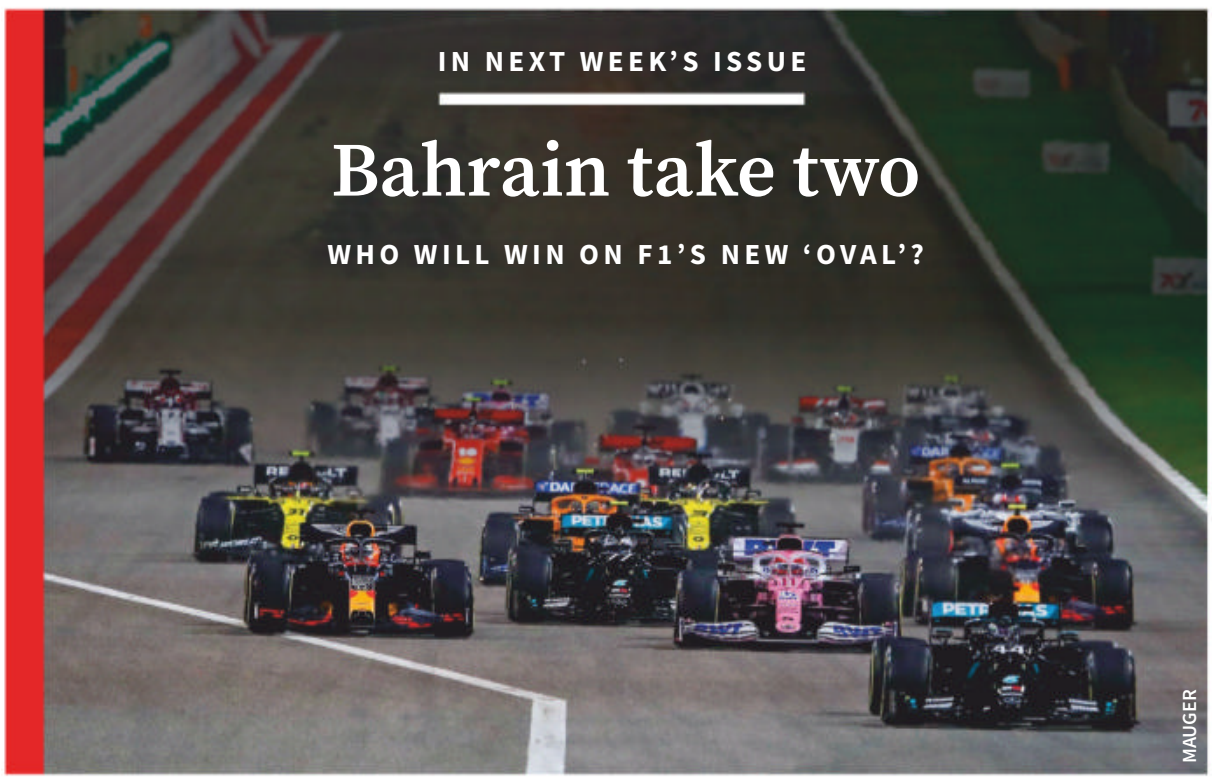
Autosport mourned the loss of World Rally star Richard Burns this week 15 years ago. Burns had been in the fight for the 2003 WRC crown when he blacked out during Rally GB. He was immediately diagnosed with an astrocytoma and never drove again. Despite numerous operations and bravely battling the brain tumour, he lapsed into a coma at the end of November 2005. He died, aged 34, on 25 November, four years to the day after clinching the World Rally crown with third place on Rally GB (above).

"Richard was definitely a special character," said rival and fellow WRC champion Colin McRae. "He was such a genuine man who was very, very good at his chosen profession. What he achieved in motorsport was very impressive, but the grit he has shown in the last couple of years makes that pale into insignificance."

Robert Reid, who was Burns's co-driver for all 10 of his WRC wins, added: "Richard was kind of pioneering in the way he worked hand in glove with his engineer. He was the first driver of a new breed. We'd come through the Colin McRae and Tommi Makinen sideways times. Richard drove the car straighter than anybody, almost like a racing driver. The successful drivers in the championship, like Sebastien Loeb, have continued what Richard started."

Autosport also looked ahead to the crop of young talents who could be Britain's next Formula 1 star. We picked out Gary Paffett, Dan Wheldon, Jamie Green, Anthony Davidson, Adam Carroll, James Rossiter, Richard Lyons... and Lewis Hamilton.

Elsewhere, the DTM hung in the balance as Audi considered its future (sound familiar?) and the FIA GT finale was marred by a fuel row that meant the title was still in doubt as Autosport closed for press.



AUTOSPORT

Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG
Tel +44 (0) 20 3405 8100 **Email** autosport@autosport.com
Individual email firstname.surname@motorsport.com
Website www.autosport.com **Twitter** @autosport

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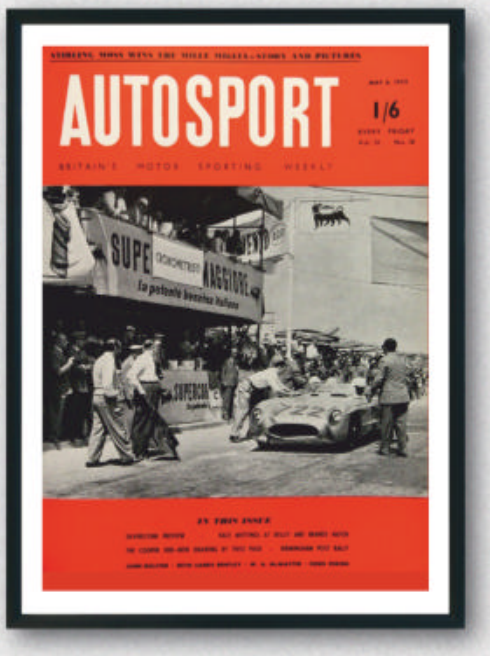
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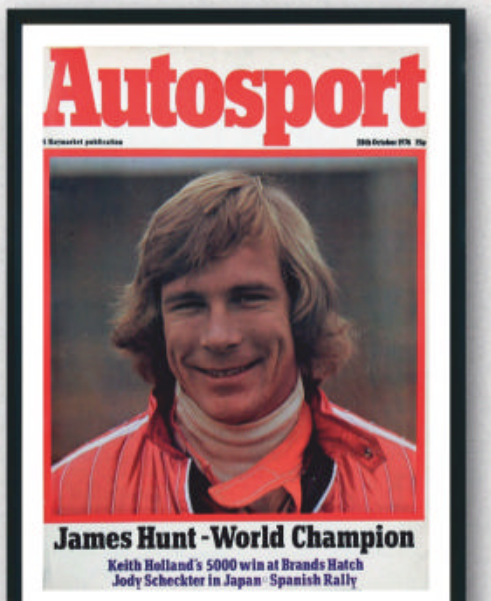
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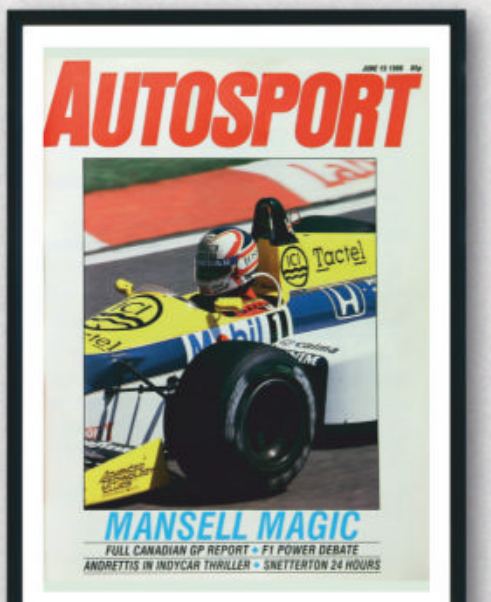
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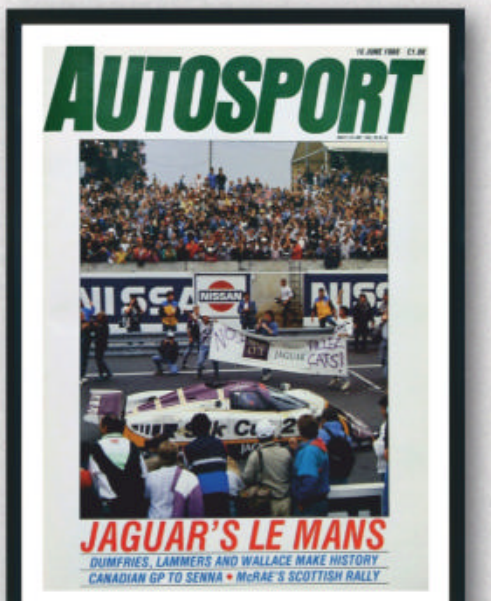
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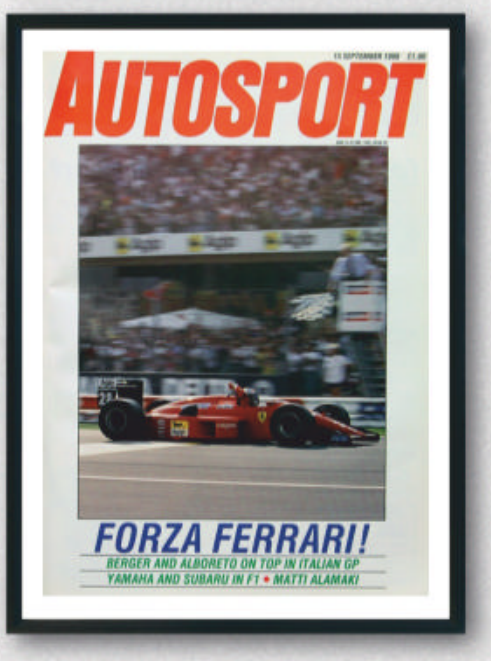
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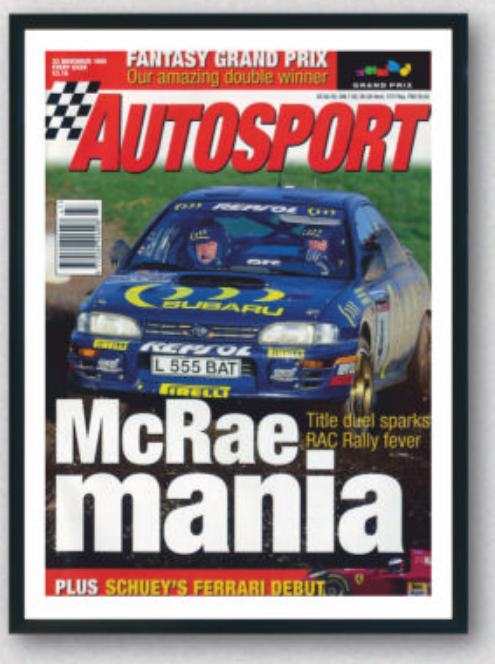














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