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by Andrew Frankel

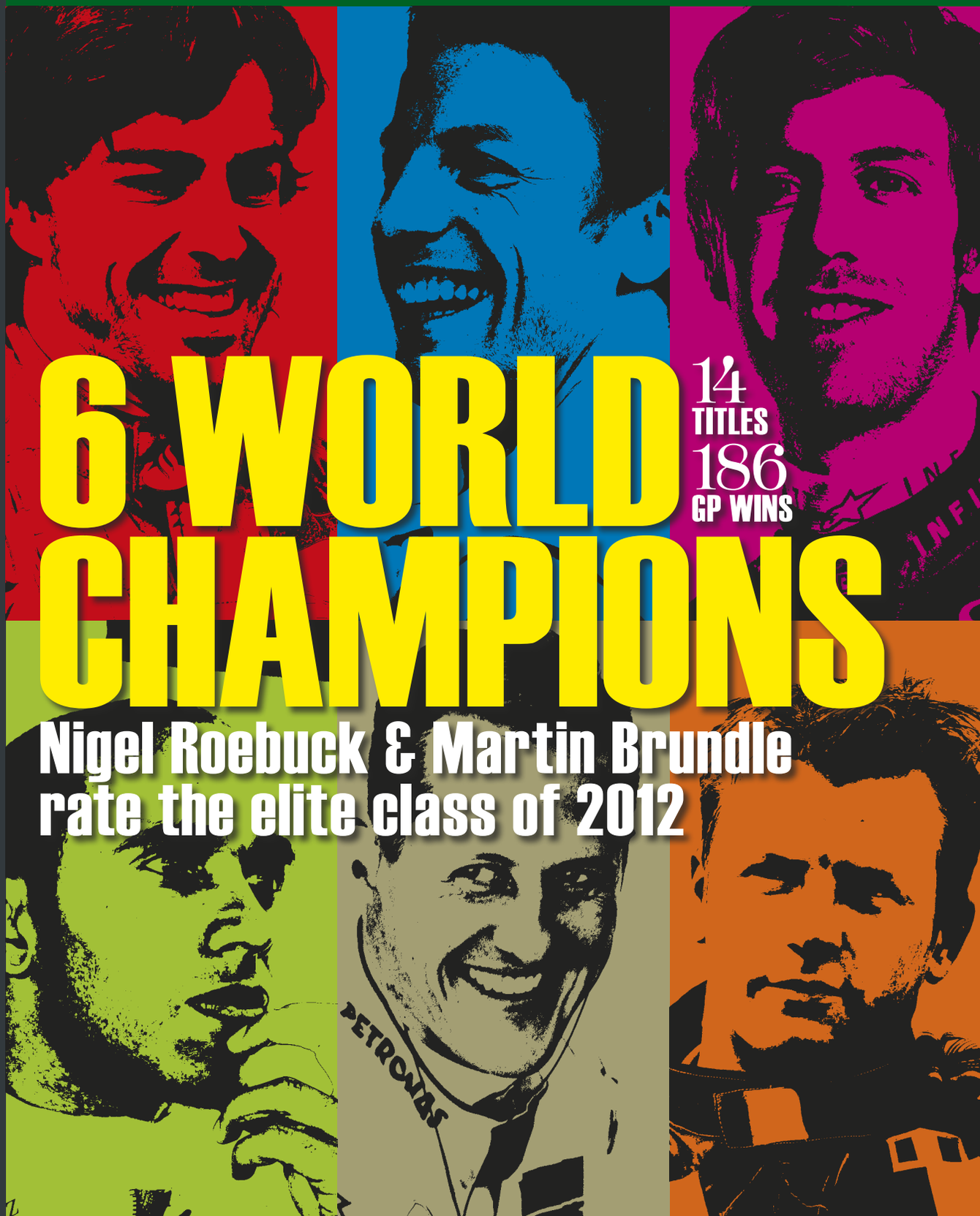
Found! We trace a lost maverick
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Ugh! Why F1 turned ugly
by Adam Cooper

Lunch with Mark Blundell
The racing tough nut who hit the wall – at 198mph…

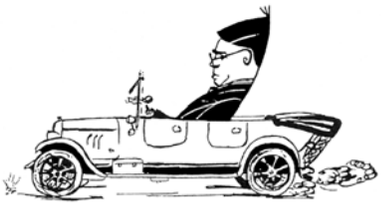
'Sensible' Toyota's supercar surprise
Car giant rediscovers its sense of fun with GT86

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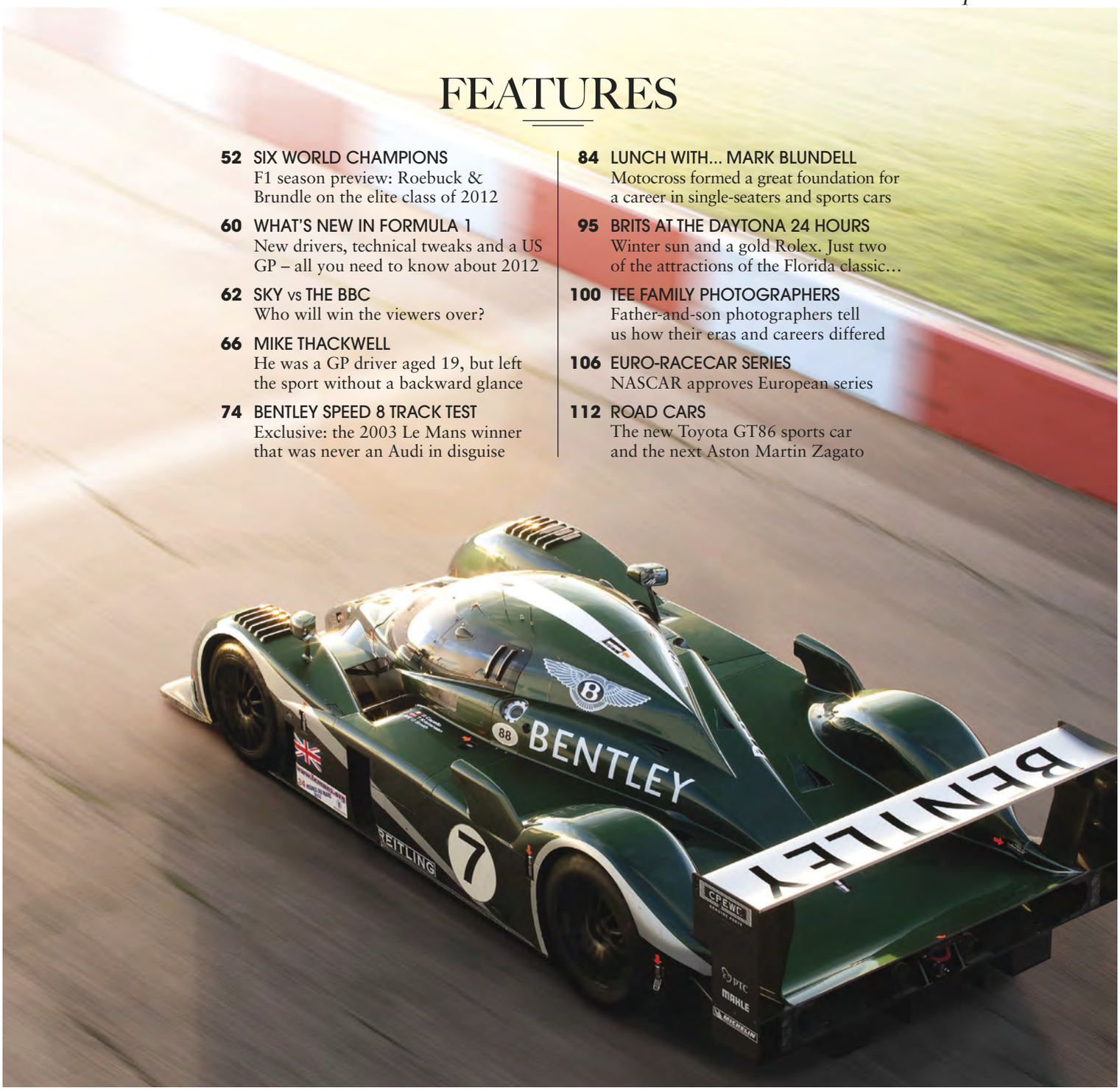
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Matters of Moment

We've been robbed! Peugeot's snap decision to pull out of sports car racing has knocked the stuffing out of both Le Mans and the new FIA World Endurance Championship. There's nothing new here, of course. Manufacturers have always used and abused motor racing, coming and going as they see fit. But this withdrawal is a particularly sharp kick in the guts.

The birth of the new world championship is FIA president Jean Todt's biggest achievement so far, and Peugeot Sport – the team he once ran – played a pivotal role in its conception. To quit less than two months before the first race, as its own staff prepared to test a hybrid 908 at Sebring, must have felt like a betrayal to a man who takes things personally.

Peugeot is likely to return one day, if finances allow. But for now the best thing about a company that produces dull road cars is over. What a shortsighted and plain selfish decision, totally in keeping with a corporate bean-counter boardroom mentality.

So how successful do we judge the team's five-year sports car campaign, and what has the Peugeot board left in its wake?

Peugeot's technicians consistently produced speed that left Audi gasping, beating the German giant more often that not and claiming back-to-back Intercontinental Le Mans Cup titles. The trouble is that those successes, under a series name that meant nothing to the outside world, were offset by regular disappointments in the one race that really counts. A single win in five at the Le Mans 24 Hours is a poor return. Failure is a strong word for a team that has won so many races with such a great car, but as Andrew Frankel writes in our Bentley Speed 8 test, one-off wins at La Sarthe during specific eras are easy to forget. Peugeot won many great battles, but the war – perhaps the most intense we've ever seen at Le Mans – went to Audi.



Damien Smith
Editor

As for what happens next, Todt must be relieved that Toyota has stepped into the breach with its own promising hybrid, the TS030 (see page 18). The Japanese giant should have won Le Mans in the late 1990s with its beautiful GT-One, before its barren and strangely forgettable eight-year campaign in Formula 1. Now Toyota is back where it belongs, although history tells us that victory first time out is a near-impossibility at Le Mans. Audi should win both the race and the world title, and that's its problem: nothing less than victory will be the harsh expectation.

The advent of the hybrid age and the potential of what is to come from Toyota, and in the future from Porsche too, will keep us all hooked. But this year, without the 908s, it's harder to get worked up, isn't it? Cheers, Peugeot.

The French company is far from the only one showing signs of unfathomable madness this month. Take the owner of MINI. You'd think a second place on the Monte Carlo Rally would be a reason to cheer for BMW. Instead, it decides to downgrade Dani Sordo's Prodrive-run entry to privateer status and promote a less experienced, less successful team with two unknown Portuguese drivers. A budget shortfall and BMW's new commitment to the DTM are to blame. But check out our story on p18. Does this decision make sense to you? No, me neither.

Seven Lords and a Green Party MP have now waded into the debate about whether F1 should return to Bahrain in April this year. In a letter to *The Times*, they made their "concern" over the running of the race all too clear.

The letter refers to the independent commission of inquiry which reported in the autumn on the ugly riots that destabilised the Arab state last spring. The Lords and the MP, Caroline Lucas, hoped the commission's findings would "provide a starting point »»»

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for political reform which both government and opposition forces could agree upon", but they write: "Two months on we see an entrenchment of the positions of both sides which risks letting more extreme voices dictate the progress of the conflict… Given the current dire situation, with daily street protests and the deaths of more civilians, we do not believe that the time is right for F1 to return to Bahrain."

They're not alone. Grand Prix racing has often shown itself to be out of touch with the real world, but never more than now. It's just embarrassing that we've got this far and still the race remains on the calendar.

In the May issue last year we reported on the ill-conceived makeover of the Nürburgring. The mammoth shopping mall, the rollercoaster we've never seen working… it all seemed to be missing the point about the draw of the Nordschleife. Meanwhile, as 'Nurodisney' struggled, long-established local businesses complained of a controlling 'monopoly' that was threatening their existence.

Fears over the future of the world's best-loved race circuit are growing. The state of Rhineland-Palatinate, which owns a 90 per cent stake in the Nürburgring, has fallen out with its controversial leaseholder. Now the state has cancelled the deal, citing a lack of lease payments as the reason for the divorce, which looks set to be heading for the courts. A new leaseholder is now being sought, according to minister Roger Lewentz, who also reckons he's talking to Bernie Ecclestone about a new F1 deal.

Since 2009 the Nürburgring and Hockenheim have shared the German GP on alternate years. Hockenheim will welcome F1 this year, but following previous losses on the race the Nürburgring might not necessarily take its turn in 2013. Bernie is said to be keen to resolve the problems and secure the race.

But without a new leaseholder and in view of a potentially lengthy court case that could stop the state from appointing one, how can a deal be done? If legal strife thwarts the 'Ring, the onus will fall on Hockenheim to host the race every year – which it clearly can't afford. Will Germany be forced to share its GP with another country, as Belgium and France might?

Races shared between racing's heartland European countries would have been a laughing matter once upon a time, but not any longer. In fact, it now seems the most likely solution for circuits struggling to turn a profit. If only Ecclestone would lower his race fees… Best not hold our breath on that one, eh?

Back at the Nürburgring, fears go way beyond the hosting of the GP. The leaseholder dispute is threatening jobs and the day-to-day operation of the beloved Nordschleife, too. The grand old circuit remains a popular tourist attraction, despite the disapproval of the 'green' politicians in the state-ruling coalition, and the track's value to car manufacturers remains obvious given the amount of time their models spend pounding round the place. Everyone loves 'Green Hell' (except perhaps the 'greens' themselves – ahem), so it's inconceivable that it should ever close… isn't it?

Hang on, here's an idea. If all these manufacturers hold the place in such high esteem, why don't they club together and take over the lease themselves? What a way for the car giants to put something back into the world of motoring, by securing the greatest drivers' circuit we've ever known.

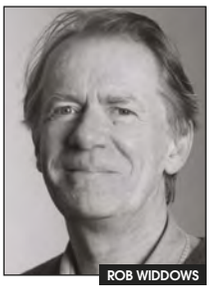


It couldn't happen, of course. Imagine the politics, the egos, the competition between each company. Too much self-interest, not enough 'pay-back'. Some bean-counter in a boardroom would eventually pull the plug. We've seen that before, haven't we?

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NIGEL ROEBUCK


ROB WIDDOWS


GORDON CRUICKSHANK


ANDREW FRANKEL

CONTRIBUTORS

In the racing world there are certain watering holes which have a particular significance: Rosie's Bar at Monaco, the Green Man at Silverstone, The Phoenix at Hartley Wintney for vintagents. For **NIGEL ROEBUCK** it's the North Turn Pub at Daytona Beach, overlooking the sands where stock cars once fought it out in the spray. Though the racing has moved inland to the Speedway, this is still where Nigel and racing pals gather during the 24 Hours race weekend to inhale the fumes of history. Nigel loves this event, and this time had **ROB WIDDOWS** for company on his first trip to the US classic. Rob was gathering stories from the many Brits who race in this American enduro – and coincidentally a beach figured in his other feature this month. After he tracked down missing maverick Mike Thackwell they arranged to meet on a shingly Sussex foreshore, where a contented Thackwell talked without regret about his brief and brilliant racing career.

There's nothing like starting young, says **ANDREW FRANKEL,** who's been teaching his 12-year-old daughter to drive. She would have had an easier time fitting into the Bentley Speed 8 than her dad, who squeezed in to drive Britain's last Le Mans winner for us.

There's another filial connection this month, as **GORDON CRUICKSHANK** talks to the father and son who have from the Fifties until today been behind the cameras for our huge photo archive, LAT. They are both the offspring of long-time *Motor Sport* owner Mr Tee, and while GC has known both for 30 years, this was the first time all three had reflected on just how much the picture business has changed.



LAT

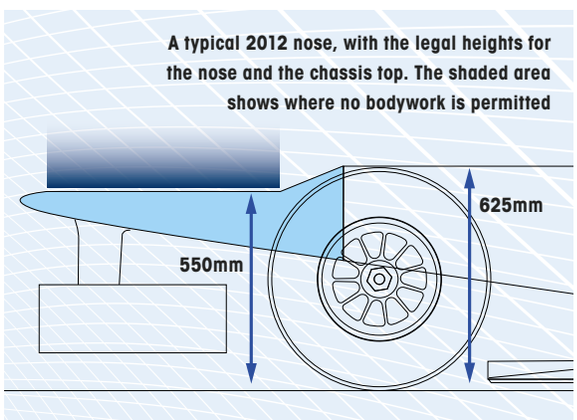
FORMULA 1

How F1's nose job got so out of shape

So how did 2012's new Formula 1 cars end up looking so ugly – and why is the McLaren MP4-27 the odd one out? In fact it's an interesting case study of how the FIA goes about defining the technical regulations, and how the teams will always seek any extra advantage.

The 12 teams have a hand in framing future rules via their involvement with the Technical Working Group, and the FIA is always willing to listen – after all, their collective engineering brains can very quickly pinpoint potential anomalies or discrepancies.

For 2012, race director Charlie Whiting was keen to address the issue of T-bone accidents by lowering noses to a maximum 550mm above the car floor or reference plane. This would literally bring them into line with the reinforced side intrusion panels protecting the cockpit.



A typical 2012 nose, with the legal heights for the nose and the chassis top. The shaded area shows where no bodywork is permitted

The FIA's original intention was that the front of the chassis would taper down to meet the lower nose, but the teams – prompted by Mercedes – pointed out that this would compromise suspension packaging. It would also have an impact on aerodynamics, because most teams have opted for a high chassis – and the airflow under it is fundamental to the efficiency of their cars' overall aerodynamic maps.

"FOR EVERYBODY BAR McLAREN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A BIG PHILOSOPHICAL CHANGE"
ADRIAN NEWEY

The FIA duly agreed that the front of chassis would remain at its former height. When it was realised that, as written, the rules allowed teams to implement a square-edged drop down to the 550mm nose height, the FIA decided to allow the first 150mm of the nose to be used to make a smoother transition – this number represents approximately what is left of an F1 nose after a crash test, and could therefore (in theory) still be attached to a car after a T-bone collision.

Teams soon found that this step or ramp was not going to look good, and it was then suggested that they be allowed to place a bodywork panel over the ugly bump. However, since it was too close to the start of the 2012 season, unanimous approval was required, and that was not forthcoming.

"The height limit was introduced so that the crushable part of the nose was not higher than the side intrusion panels, which is fair enough," Adrian Newey told *Motor Sport*. "And the regulation does that.

"Once it was realised by people that this would lead to ugly solutions it was discussed in the TWG that we would be allowed to use cosmetic panels. They would be non-structural, simply to bridge the gap styling-wise, and make the cars look somewhere more aesthetic. It was raised quite late in the day and unfortunately it was rejected, but it would seem to be the most obvious solution going forward."

So why is McLaren without a step? Quite simply for years it has pursued a lower chassis/nose arrangement than its rivals, and the team could comply with the new 550mm limit without drama. This happy accident helped to encourage other teams to insist on keeping the higher chassis height, so that McLaren did not gain an advantage.

"I think for everybody bar McLaren it would have been a big philosophical change," says Newey. "In fact it would have been quite a big redesign. I'm happy that the Mercedes proposal was the right thing to do."

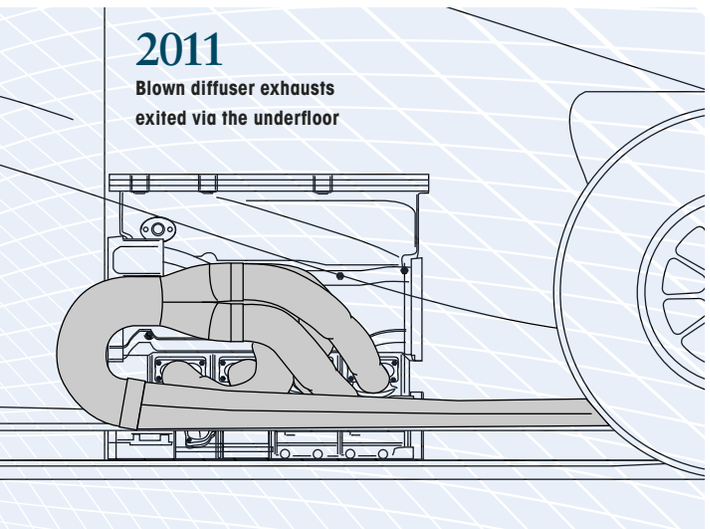
In reality, the nose issue will not prove to be a source of rancour between the participants. Of more interest at the first test in Jerez was exhausts designs. Blowing of diffusers is banned for 2012, and exhausts must now point away from any area where they may be deemed to have a direct impact on aerodynamic performance.

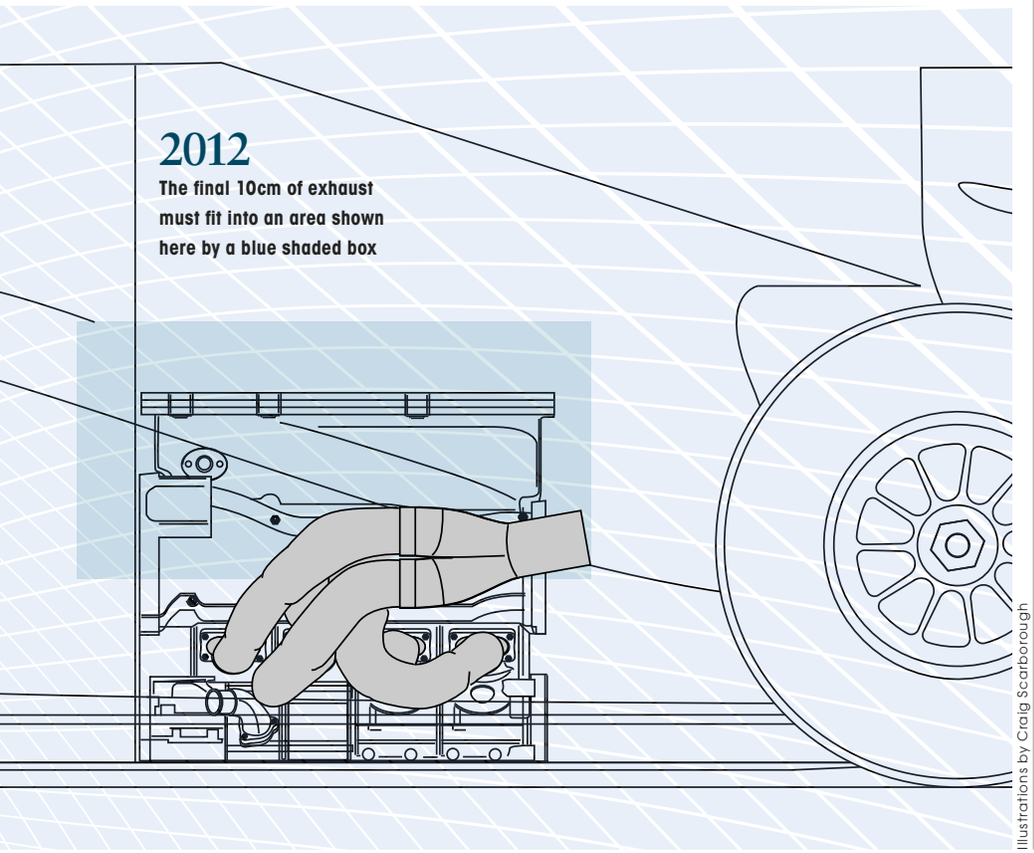
Of course teams are still looking to gain an advantage, and everyone is wary that some interpretations might be borderline in legal terms. Newey insists the potential gains are limited: "There is the possibility to find a small amount of lap time still, but it is very small. And if there's something on the table then obviously people play around and try and find it. It's a bit of a Holy Grail."

Teams were experimenting with exhaust positions in the first test, and will no doubt continue to do so until the first race, and beyond. If someone hits the sweet spot, it won't be that easy to copy them, since exhaust flows are notoriously difficult to model in the tunnel or via CFD – and it takes time.

"It's not structural, so to try a new position is just an exhaust system and a set of bodywork," says Newey. "Having said that, there is significant research and lead time. I doubt whether anybody will copy somebody else's without testing it first, so by the time you've copied it, tested it then pressed the button to go ahead and manufacture it, you're probably looking at something like six weeks.

"Whatever people turn up with in Australia is likely to be already in the system. It's not likely to be a reaction." *Adam Cooper*





Illustrations by Craig Scarborough



Rex Features

■ FORMULA 1

Senna film wins two BAFTAs

Senna won the BAFTA awards for Best Documentary and Best Editing at the Royal Opera House on February 12 – giving Formula 1 a welcome boost in front of a stellar audience that included the likes of Brad Pitt, George Clooney and Meryl Streep.

Senna was also nominated in Outstanding British Film, where it lost out to *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

Producer Eric Fellner said: "This film was made by all of us with love, and all we got back from it was love, and that deeply cynical word commerciality – which I never utter – was never even considered in this situation. We made this because we loved Ayrton, and you showed the love back.

"We need to thank Ayrton Senna for sadly living a too short life, but a life where his fact was even more amazing than fiction."

"We thank the Senna family for trusting us with his legacy," said screenwriter Manish Pandey (above). "When your son dies in circumstances like that, and you get a bunch of guys who turn up and say, 'listen, we want to tell the story, we think we're very sensitive, we think we will absolutely tell it right...' It takes a lot of guts to support people like that, and I'd like to thank them for doing that."

BAFTA host Stephen Fry gave the film his stamp of approval: "Even if you know nothing about F1 racing and are not even vaguely interested in motor sport you will find *Senna* one of the greatest documentaries you've ever watched."

Pandey's next planned project is a drama based on Mike Hawthorn and Peter Collins and their relationship with Enzo Ferrari.

THERE COULD BE LIFE AFTER FORMULA 1 FOR RUBENS Barrichello after all. The veteran Brazilian, left on the sidelines for 2012, tested an IndyCar at Sebring in early February. Barrichello, 39, ran for three days in a KV Racing Dallara-Chevrolet DW12 and said he was tempted by a season in the series. KV has a vacant seat for 2012



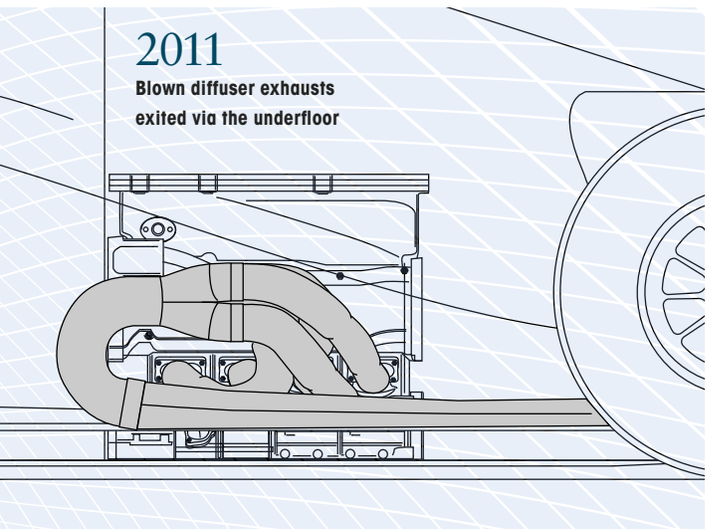
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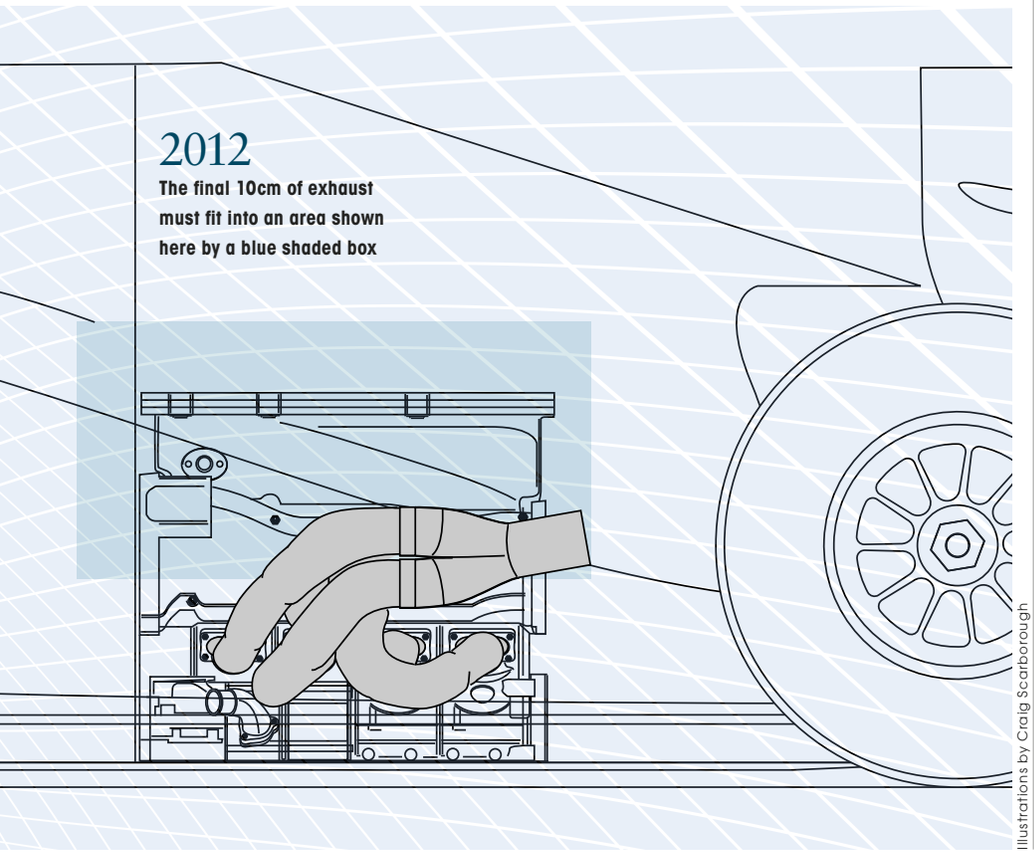
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LAT

FORMULA 1

Teams square up for battle of 2012

Caterham kicked off the 2012 launch season when it issued computer images of its new car on January 25, but the first real example to be shown was the McLaren on February 1. By the start of testing at Jerez on February 7 nine new cars had been unveiled, leaving the latest Mercedes, HRT and Marussia to make their debuts at the subsequent Barcelona tests



1



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RED BULL [1] Adrian Newey insists that there's a direct line between the RB5 of 2009 – the team's first race-winning car – and the new RB8. There is certainly an ongoing family resemblance, but Newey also says that last year's car was designed to fully exploit blown diffuser technology, and with that no longer relevant, this car is different. What caught the eye on its launch was the slot on the nose step (or as Newey calls it, ramp), which he claims is "primarily" for driver cooling. This is the second year with KERS, and one assumes that there won't be a repeat of the problems that plagued RBR in the early races of 2011.

McLAREN [2] The McLaren MP4-27 has already attracted positive reviews owing to the fact that it does not feature a step atop the nose, since the team already had a low chassis and was able to meet the new rule requirements without a step. In its initial configuration the car featured exhausts housed in bulges at the rear of the sidepods, although like others the team is still experimenting. The drivers made it clear in Jerez that they were much happier than this time last year.

FERRARI [3] The Ferrari F2012 is the first car to be produced under the leadership of technical director Pat Fry. The management (and drivers) called for major progress, and Fry and his men duly took a radical approach. Alas, even by the standards of other 2012 machines, the boxy front end looks hideous. Pullrod suspension all round is the major novelty, and it remains to be seen whether the claimed aerodynamic benefits translate into actual results.

MERCEDES Now with AMG acknowledged in its official team name, Mercedes took the decision to run its 2011 car at the Jerez test and delay the debut of the 2012 chassis until Barcelona on February 21, after *Motor Sport* had gone to press. The revamped technical team thus had an extra 14 days to hone its design. Aldo Costa only joined in December, so that allowed the former Ferrari man to have a bigger input, although the fundamentals were already set. The team used its old car to build knowledge of the 2012 tyres, and Michael Schumacher pronounced himself happy with them.

LOTUS [4] The former Renault team is reborn this year after officially securing the right to use the Lotus name – although curiously it no longer has sponsorship from the car company. The return of Kimi Räikkönen has already attracted much coverage, not least after the Finn topped the times on the first day at Jerez. His new team-mate Romain Grosjean was also fast and it seems that the E20 – so named as the 20th car from the Enstone factory – is potentially a competitive package.

FORCE INDIA [5] The team's VJM05 became the first 2012 car to run when it was shaken down at Silverstone on February 3. The team appears to have made progress over the winter, and with Nico Hulkenberg promoted to a race seat alongside Paul Di Resta, it has an enviable line-up. At Jerez a crash for new test driver Jules Bianchi cost a day of running but the car looks promising.



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SAUBER [6] On the eve of the car's launch Sauber made the shock announcement that technical director James Key was leaving the team. He will not be replaced and chief designer Matt Morris, an ex-Cosworth and Williams man, now heads the C31 project. The car has pullrod rear suspension, since it uses a Ferrari gearbox, and thus the team had to make the same call.

SCUDERIA TORO ROSSO [7] The third car produced in the Faenza factory since the FIA forced the team to become independent of Milton Keynes, the STR9 appears to be a very tidy package, and could give new recruits Jean-Eric Vergne and Daniel Ricciardo a chance to shine. Indeed, both men were regularly near the front in Jerez. Extra backing on top of the regular Red Bull support means the team can afford to do more than it used to.

WILLIAMS [8] The team faced a huge challenge over the winter because not only was it the only team to change engines – switching from Cosworth to Renault – but a new technical structure was also being put into place. Led by Mike Coughlan and Mark Gillan, backed by new aero head Jason Somerville, the revamped team has produced a tidy-looking package in the FW34, which like last year's car has a particularly neat rear end. Title sponsor AT&T has gone, and while new recruit Bruno Senna has brought some backing, there still appears to be a lot of empty space on the car.

CATERHAM [9] After two years as Lotus the team has a new name in Caterham, although it retains its green and yellow livery. The addition of Red Bull's KERS – worth 0.3sec a lap – will not be enough on its own to close the gap to those ahead. However, the new CT01 already appears to be a significant step forwards relative to its predecessors. A planned move to Leafield, former home of Arrows and Super Aguri, will help to attract staff who did not fancy life in Norfolk.

HRT The new Spanish owners of HRT have parted company with former team boss Colin Kolles and installed Luis Perez Sala in his place, and it remains to be seen how the team will fare without the Romanian wheeler-dealer. The split also precipitated the loss of many German-based team staff. A temporary base has been established in Valencia, prior to a planned move to a new facility in Madrid in May. Pedro de la Rosa used the 2011 model for the Jerez session, while crash test problems have further delayed the new car. Narain Karthikeyan was a late choice as second driver.

MARUSSIA Following last summer's split with Nick Wirth the technical department of the former Virgin team has been restructured by Pat Symonds, and its base moved to the former Ascari/Wirth facility in Banbury. There was no time to put a wind tunnel programme in place, so the MR01 was designed via CFD, although it will be developed in the tunnel. Running late, the team missed Jerez completely, and then took its 2011 car to the first Barcelona test to gather data. The schedule has made life even harder for French rookie Charles Pic.

OUR NEW WEBSITE

WWW.MOTORSPORTMAGAZINE.COM

NEW WRITERS

A very warm welcome to Oliver Gavin! The four-time Le Mans 24 Hours class winner has started writing for the *Motor Sport* website and will be bringing you all the news from behind the scenes at the races. And, indeed, explaining just what racing drivers do at race meetings when they're not behind the wheel. At the Daytona 24 Hours it turns out that it was listening to Sir Jackie Stewart take the mickey out of fellow Scots Allan McNish and Dario Franchitti. Oliver will be writing for us throughout the season, so do have a look at the 'driver columns' section of the site under 'Race'.

Did we say driver columns with an 's'? Yes, because when you read this Dario Franchitti will also have started writing for the *Motor Sport* website. The four-time IndyCar champion – as you can read on page 32 – is a huge fan of the history of the sport. When we asked if he'd write for the website his reply was simply "hell yes".





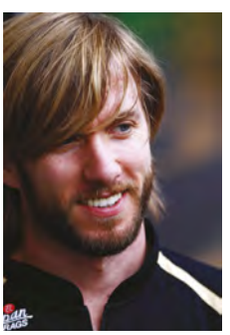
IPAD EDITION

As we're sure you will have noticed in recent issues of the magazine, we have launched an iPad edition.

The feedback has been very good so far, and it seems that more and more people are converting to digital formats for reading magazines and books. Yes, *Motor Sport* will remain a paper magazine, but it's understandable that people don't always want to take the physical copy around everywhere with them (much as we'd like them to!).

If you are a subscriber then you actually get the iPad edition free, so do head to the Apple Newsstand or to iTunes, where you need to type 'Motor Sport magazine' into the search box. You will also find all our podcasts on there as well.

Since the digital edition is enriched by the presence of extra images and videos, it really is worth a couple of clicks of the mouse or taps of your finger on the iPad.



■ SPORTS CARS

Heidfeld secures Le Mans return

Nick Heidfeld will return to the Le Mans 24 Hours after an absence of 12 years following his failure to land a Formula 1 drive.

The German, who was part of Mercedes' ill-fated 1999 Le Mans assault, has signed a three-race FIA World Endurance Championship deal with the Anglo-Swiss Rebellion Racing squad. He will contest Le Mans and the Sebring and Spa WEC rounds in Rebellion's lead Lola-Toyota alongside Neel Jani and Nicolas Prost.

Heidfeld said: "If you look at international series with races across different countries, LMP1 is most probably the most attractive category, especially with the world championship status and the future prospects of more manufacturers joining."

RALLYING

Prodrive loses 'factory' status

MINI's participation in the World Rally Championship took another twist prior to Rally Sweden in early February when parent company BMW announced it was effectively ditching Prodrive from running its factory team in the WRC.

The project, which received start-up money from MINI but was ultimately self-funding, had visibly been in trouble since British driver Kris Meeke was dropped from the 2012 line-up to make way for cash-rich replacements. However, the problems started a long time before then, after Prodrive was not able to find the levels of commercial sponsorship it was hoping for.

With the relationship between the two parties increasingly strained amid Prodrive's efforts to cajole an unwilling BMW board to divert money away from its costly DTM project to bolster the cash-strapped WRC effort, a divorce appeared to be inevitable.

But the settlement is far from straightforward. MINI has homologated the John Cooper Works WRC for use in FIA championships until the end of 2018, in line with its wish to stay in rallying due to the marketing benefits it has identified.

In order to appease the FIA after it deregistered the MINI WRC Team – as the factory squad was known – MINI has arranged for the customer Motorsport Italia outfit to enter a two-car manufacturer team on all remaining rounds of this year's WRC under the banner of 'WRC Team MINI Portugal', but with the significantly weakened driver pairing of Armindo Araujo and Paulo Nobre.

In contrast, Dani Sordo, whose second-place finish on the Monte Carlo Rally in January (below) was the now-defunct MINI WRC Team's third podium in seven starts, could be without a regular programme unless Prodrive can secure funds to carry on as a customer team.

If it does, then it will be doing so in tandem with carrying out the on-going development and build of the MINI as part of its new deal with BMW as "a works-supported private team". *Anthony Peacock*



LAT



SPORTS CARS

Toyota stands in for Peugeot in WEC

Toyota has stepped into the void left by Peugeot's shock withdrawal from the FIA World Endurance Championship.

The Japanese manufacturer had planned to contest just a handful of races around the Le Mans 24 Hours on an invitational basis, but it has now registered as a manufacturer and will contest a minimum of six of the eight WEC races. The decision of Toyota to join Audi in chasing the WEC title means that series promoter, the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, now has the minimum two manufacturers it requires for the world title to be awarded in the LMP1 prototype category.

The ACO moved fast after Peugeot decided to end its 908 turbodiesel programme after five seasons of racing on the day that entries for the WEC were originally due to close. It extended the entry deadline and tried to persuade Toyota to increase its commitment to the series.

This was acknowledged by Toyota on the launch of its new TS030 hybrid LMP1 contender (above) the week after Peugeot's pull-out. But it stressed that a full programme of events with multiple cars in what is billed as a development year was not possible. A compromise was reached that persuaded Toyota to extend its programme. The series rules


Toyota's programme expands to six WEC races after ACO rules were changed



Pescarolo to field a Dome coupé, Audi both diesels (below) and hybrids



are to be changed so there is no mandatory participation in all the rounds, and one rather than two cars from each marque will score manufacturer points.

Yoshiaki Kinoshita, president of the Toyota Motorsport GmbH team which masterminds the TS030 programme, said: "The circumstances for the championship changed suddenly in the last weeks, and Toyota Racing considers it important to work together with the FIA and ACO to establish a successful future for endurance racing. We have done everything we can to show our support and we look forward to an exciting season."

Toyota has filed one entry for the WEC in 2012. It has two TS030s on the Le Mans entry list and is also likely to have a pair of cars at its home race at the Fuji circuit in Japan in October. The car, which was launched at the end of January, will not be present at the WEC event at Sebring which opens the season. It will make its debut at the Spa 6 Hours in May.

Peugeot axed its sports car programme in order to focus its resources on the launch of a series of new road models in the coming year. The decision was made against the backdrop of a poor sales year in 2011 in key European markets for the French manufacturer.

The decision came as a surprise to the Peugeot Sport competitions department which ran the 908 project, despite the likelihood that its Le Mans campaign would be cut from three to two cars. It had already set a date for the launch of its 2012 programme, at which it would have been confirmed that it would run its 908s in hybrid specification, and two uprated 2011 cars were already in the US for a test due to start at Sebring three days after the decision.

Toyota's two cars on the Le Mans entry are joined by four from Audi, its biggest factory assault on the 24 Hours since 1999. It will field two R18 TDI coupés running in hybrid specification and two in conventional form.

Audi Sport Wolfgang Ullrich said: "The first test results [of the hybrid] are very encouraging and we are intrigued to see just how this technology performs on the race track at Le Mans.

"We still, however, see the potential with conventional drive, just as our colleagues do in the production department. This is why we are absolutely delighted that the ACO and FIA selection committee has accepted our entries and that we can join the grid with four cars."

Sports car legend Henri Pescarolo's team is abandoning the design it has run since 2007 in favour of a split attack on the 24 Hours. It has joined forces with Japanese constructor Dome to run an uprated version of the S102 coupé that raced at Le Mans in 2008 and is also building a new car around the monocoque and suspension of the ill-fated Aston Martin AMR-One.

The new car, to be called the Pescarolo 03, will be distinguished by all-new bodywork and will be powered by a 3.4-litre Judd V8. Pescarolo explained that the team had opted to go for the AMR-One monocoque to allow the team to take a significant aerodynamic step.

The new car, which will be entered for the WEC, will not be ready in time for Sebring, but Pescarolo has won permission to run its 2011 car powered by a Judd V10 in the series opener.

The US Dyson team will race at Le Mans for the first time after taking its two guaranteed entries garnered through its successes in the American Le Mans Series. A further five P1 cars are on the entry list for the 24 Hours.
Gary Watkins



■ BTCC

MG returns to British tin-tops

MG is set to return to the British Touring Car Championship with the multi title-winning Triple 8 race squad.

Triple 8 Engineering will field a pair of MG6 GT saloons (above) built to the latest Next Generation Touring Car rules in the 2012 BTCC, under the MG KX Momentum Racing banner. Two-time champion Jason Plato, who raced for the RML Chevrolet team last year, and series regular Andy Neate will race the two MGs.

The deal marks the return of the MG name, which is now in Chinese ownership, to the BTCC. WSR ran factory MG ZSs in 2001-03 and continued to field the same model as an independent in 2004-06.

MG sales and marketing director Guy Jones said: "Motor sport is in the DNA of MG and we are trying to raise awareness of our products. This will be an effective marketing tool."

The deal with Triple 8 Engineering is not an overt factory deal, Jones stressed.

"This bears no relationship to the old business model of a manufacturer competing in the BTCC," he said. "We are not throwing money at a team. This is much more of a commercial relationship.

"There is a budget from MG involved and we are supplying cars and parts, but we are not disclosing the financial breakdown."

MG, which is owned by Shanghai Automotive, started limited production of its MG6 saloons at Longbridge last year. It plans to introduce a hatchback, the MG5, next year.

Plato's switch to Triple 8 brings to an end Chevrolet's factory involvement in the BTCC after two seasons.

■ HISTORICS

New speed event for Cornwall

An all-new Festival of Speed event in Cornwall has been launched and will run in the grounds of Pentillie Castle and Estate on August 25/26 2012.

The mile-long hillclimb course starts on the bank of the River Tamar and climbs past Pentillie Castle, begun in 1698. Recently it featured in the Channel 4 series 'Country House Rescue', which started a turnaround in fortunes for the riverside estate.

Now, two days of motor sport and many other attractions will be the start of what the promoters hope will grow into an event of national importance. Saturday will feature a competitive hillclimb, while Sunday will be given over to demonstration runs.

"This is a really exciting opportunity to create a unique and exhilarating event in the West Country," said Pentillie Castle owner Ted Coryton. "The Castle grounds are the perfect challenge, and provide a stunning backdrop for beautiful cars."

HISTORICS

Monza road trip planned

A convoy of Pre-1963 GT cars could make a road trip from the UK to race at Monza in June if the plans of series organiser Ben Cussons are realised.

Two years ago Cussons drove his AC Ace via Switzerland to race at Monza and is planning to replicate the journey for the Pre-63 GT race at the Coppa Inter Europa meeting on June 2/3. He is now inviting fellow car owners to join him.

"We are trying to arrange for spares, wheels, tools and so on for the racing cars to go in a truck," said Cussons.



Jim Houlgrave

HISTORICS

Estoril back on calendar

After three editions at the spectacular Portimão circuit, the Algarve Historic Festival will switch venues in October to run further north at Estoril after financial issues between the venue and the event promoter went unresolved.

The Portimão track was built at a cost of around £150 million and opened in October 2008. It quickly gained popularity, but the annual historic festival will not run there in 2012.

Event promoter Francisco Santos has confirmed that Estoril, home to the Portuguese Grand Prix from 1984 to 1996, is already booked for the October 18-21 event, which will include races for the Stirling Moss Trophy.



Revival Silver Arrows 'race' paddock to invoke 1939 Bremgarten event

LAT

HISTORICS

Silver Arrows 'race' set for Goodwood

A sensational celebration of the dominance of Grand Prix racing by the Silver Arrows cars in the later 1930s will be the big feature of the Goodwood Revival Meeting in September.

Ten cars from Mercedes-Benz and Auto Union will take part in a staged demonstration race with well-known racing drivers at the wheel. "The biggest thing in historic motor sport for decades," is the claim by the promoters of the meeting.

Cars expected to run at representative speeds include the Mercedes-Benz W25, W125, W154 and W165 as well as examples of the Auto Union Type C and Type D. Alongside the Silver Arrow racers for the demonstration race will be examples of the cars that were outclassed by the dominant Mercedes-Benz and Auto Unions in the late 1930s: ERA, Maserati, Riley, Bugatti and MG will all be represented at Goodwood.

This will be the first time that so many of these leviathans have been driven together at racing speed since the Yugoslav Grand Prix on September 3 1939, the day after the outbreak of the Second World War. It is an event that may never happen again and is being arranged to mark the 75th anniversary of the UK debut of the Silver Arrows at Donington in '37.

During the Goodwood weekend (September 14-16), the Silver Arrow cars will be based in a recreation of the Bremgarten circuit period pit and paddock, with period transporters also present to complete the setting.



Dusk race added to Donington Festival

A feature race into the evening on Saturday will be one of the highlights of the second Donington Historic Festival over the weekend of May 5/6. The hour-long race for Pre-1972 sports-racing cars, which is part of the 1000km series, will start at 6.45pm and finish shortly before sunset.

Other feature races for the second running of the event will be the opening rounds of the season for Group C, the E-type Challenge, Pre-63 GT cars and Historic F2. The Group C cars have an hour-long race on Sunday afternoon. The 'Mad Jack' Trophy race for Pre-War sports cars will also be repeated. The race is in memory of Richard 'Mad Jack' Shuttleworth, winner of the first Donington Grand Prix in 1935.

Away from the racing, attractions include historic karts and car clubs. The organisers have structured the timetable to give a mix of qualifying and races on each day.

Jeff Bloxham

HISTORICS

More time for Oldtimers

A new race on the Nordschleife circuit at the Nürburgring during the Oldtimer Grand Prix will be open only to Pre-1966 touring cars and GT cars of a similar performance.

The race, on August 10, the opening day of the 40th Oldtimer GP weekend, will run in addition to the regular Classic Marathon and should give the smaller-engined cars a chance of glory.

"Initial response has been amazing", said U2TC series coordinator Carol Spagg. It will be the first such race on the daunting Nordschleife.



Gerard Brown

■ HISTORICS

Drivers make it to Cape Town

From the 44 starters that left the Houses of Parliament on January 1, only three failed to reach Cape Town 28 days and 10,000 miles later at the finish of the London to Cape Town World Cup Rally. Victory by just 38 seconds went to the Subaru Impreza of Steve Blunt and Bob Duck.

After coping with ice in the mountains of Greece and mud holes in Africa, the survivors arrived in Cape Town at the end of the first competitive event to travel the length of Africa.

"It has been just a fantastic experience," said Blunt after his £3000 Subaru Impreza struggled to the finish with a series of problems to pip the Toyota Hilux of Andy Actman and Andy Elcomb. The leading classic finisher was the 1973 Porsche 911 of Joost Van Cauwenberge and Jacques Castelein, while Max and James Stephenson made it to Cape Town in their 1923 Vauxhall 23/60, the oldest car on the event.

■ HISTORICS

South Africa's new classic

A new week-long classic special stage rally will run in South Africa in September to celebrate the country's rallying heritage. The event will cover 870 miles of special stages in a total route mileage of around 2500 miles and will be open to pre-1978 cars.

The September 15-22 Classic Rally South Africa is being organised by the team responsible for the Safari Classic, which will next run in November 2013.

"For too long now South Africa has lacked a big competitive classic rally catering for the cars of 30 years ago, and this deficiency is now being addressed in style," said event director Surinder Thatthi.

■ HISTORICS

Formule Libre on the bill for Oulton Park

An old-style Formule Libre race for a wide range of historic and more recent single-seaters will run at the opening Masters event of the season at Oulton Park on Saturday March 17.

The Masters organisation is confident of a healthy entry for the first historic race meeting of the season. It is the first opportunity for many of the cars to be run after the winter.

"Single-seater racing has a huge history at Oulton Park, especially when Formula 1 cars raced for the Gold Cup," said Rachel Bailey from Masters. "What we want to do is encourage cars to come that don't fit into a current category, while at the same time welcoming cars from historic single-seater racing."

Masters will present a bottle of champagne to any entrant who also races at the HSCC's Donington Park event over the same weekend.



Racemaker Archive Torres

■ HISTORICS

Longhorn Williams to return

A rare Longhorn Williams FW07, first built as an Indycar, will race with Grand Prix Masters this season if a current rebuild by Frank Lyons and his team goes to plan.

In 1979 Frank Williams sold rights to the FW07 design to the Longhorn Racing team in Texas and two cars were built for use in Indy racing. One was raced by Al Unser.

One of the chassis, which featured heavier gauge materials, was imported into the UK about 15 years ago, but has never yet raced in Europe.

Now Lyons is having the car rebuilt into F1 trim and hopes to race it later this season.

■ OBITUARIES

Roberto Mieres

Argentinian Grand Prix driver Roberto Mieres, who has died aged 87, was a keen sportsman who represented his country at sailing in the 1960 Olympics.

But his passion was motor racing, and after competing in his own MG and Bugatti, he was one of three drivers funded by his national motor club to travel to Europe in 1950. The others were the daunting pairing of Froilán González and Juan Manuel Fangio, but his fourth place in the Geneva GP showed promise. His Grand Prix debut came in 1953 after being invited back by Amédée Gordini to race the French cars. He then bought a Maserati and after some decent results he was invited to join the Maserati works team for that year alongside Stirling Moss and Luigi Musso. A pair of fourth places kept him in the team for 1955, with Musso and Jean Behra, when his best results were in non-championship races, peaking with a second at Turin. Thereafter he raced intermittently in sports cars while developing his business career and farming in Uruguay.



LAT



LAT

Francois Migault

Francois Migault, who has died aged 67, briefly made it to Formula 1 but he was a fixture on the sports car scene for more than 30 years.

Migault contested 13 Grands Prix for Connew, BRM and Embassy Racing/Hill, but he would make no fewer than 25 starts at the Le Mans 24 Hours. That puts him fifth in the all-time list of starters at the French endurance classic.

Born in Le Mans, Migault made his first start there in 1971 at the wheel of a self-entered Porsche 911 and his final appearance came in the Dome LMP1 prototype in 2002. In between times, he raced a variety of machinery, including works cars for Matra, Mirage and Rondeau, which gave him a trio of podiums in 1974, '79 and '81.

Roger Dowson

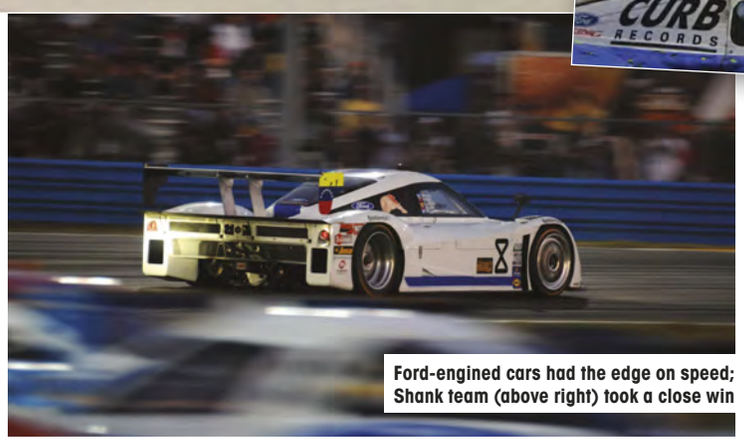
Team owner Roger Dowson, who has died at the age of 67, had a 25-year involvement in the British Touring Car Championship that encompassed factory programmes with Triumph, Austin Rover and Mazda.

Dowson was a partner in Gerry Marshall Racing in the late 1970s before setting up Roger Dowson Engineering in 1982. It built and ran Group A versions of the MG Metro and Metro Turbo.

The team developed the Mazda MX-5 for one-make racing, then returned to the BTCC in 1992.

Daytona 24 Hours





Ford-engined cars had the edge on speed; Shank team (above right) took a close win

Daytona, Florida

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY RUNNING OF the Daytona 24 Hours, or the 'Rolex 24' as it's known in deference to its sponsor, was a thriller. Only in the final hour did a clear winner emerge.

The race that marked the half-century of this great endurance contest was the one they all wanted to win. A full grid of 14 Daytona Prototypes and 45 Grand Touring cars took the rolling start under a perfect Florida blue sky. Scot **Ryan Dalziel** had put his Riley-Ford on pole, confirming the anticipated advantage of the Ford-engined cars over the 3.56 miles of the famous Daytona International Speedway. But it was to be a hard-fought battle with the Corvettes and the BMW-engined Rileys.

A hot, dry race led to a flat-out sprint through day and night. It was clear that, despite Grand-Am's equivalency formula, the Fords had the edge on top speed, a useful advantage on the speedway's long straights.

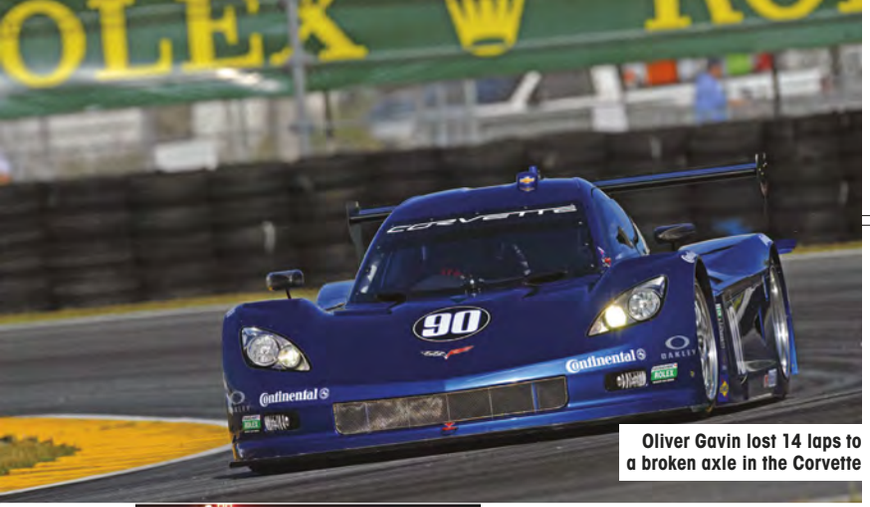
"We can catch them in the corners, but they get away on the straights," said a frustrated **Dario Franchitti** who shared Chip Ganassi's BMW-engined Riley with **Juan Pablo Montoya**, **Scott Dixon** and **Jamie McMurray**. A broken gear lever only added to the woes of this all-star line-up and the battle to win that much-prized gold Rolex came down to a thrilling contest between the Ford-engined Rileys of the Starworks and Michael Shank teams led, respectively, by **Allan McNish** and **AJ Allmendinger.** The turning point came close to the end when the two cars collided, flank to flank, as they sped side by side around the banking.

"I got loose and we touched," said a deadpan Allmendinger, taking a line from the NASCAR drivers' book of excuses. Mr McNish emphatically disagreed and made his feelings known after crossing the line in second place just 5.91 seconds behind Allmendinger who shared with an overjoyed **Justin Wilson**, **Oswaldo Negri** and **John Pew**.

"It was hard racing, cut and thrust, and that's the way racing should be. It wasn't to be our day but we were right in there, every lap, scrapping all the time," said a controlled McNish after the race, choosing not to get into a war of words with Allmendinger, who'd paid him close attention on more than one high-speed occasion.

The Shank team had taken the 'big one' on their ninth attempt after putting Roger Penske's new NASCAR signing Allmendinger in the car for the final three hours. "I knew I'd have to run flat out, and if we could get the lead then we could stay ahead," said Allmendinger. "That was the best three hours of driving I have ever done in my life, the best I could do, every lap."

A highlight of Daytona 2012 came in the midnight hour. At the top of the leader board, in red lights against the night sky, was car number 6, the Riley-Ford of British Formula 3 Champion **Felipe Nasr.** The teenager from Brasilia, racing as a result of winning a Sunoco-sponsored competition to drive at Daytona, had impressed in testing last December and underlined his talent by sparring wheel to wheel through the darkness with none other than Juan Pablo Montoya, not a man



Oliver Gavin lost 14 laps to a broken axle in the Corvette



known to be a pushover in any kind of racing car. Nasr's raw speed and consistent lap times in the Michael Shank-entered Riley, shared with **Michael McDowell**, **Jorge Goncalvez** and **Gustavo Yacamán**, helped push the car to third overall.

"That was a great experience," said a very cool Felipe, "I'd never raced in the dark before, never raced a car with a roof. This was a challenge for me, a great opportunity, and the race was so special. In the traffic, I overtook more cars than ever before in my life – and flat out on the banking, wow, that was so cool."

We are going to hear a great deal more about this young man. The traffic to which Nasr referred is a feature of the 24 Hours, with 45 GT cars squabbling for supremacy while watching in their mirrors for the ever-present threat of the much faster Prototypes. As so often on these occasions, it was the Porsche GT3 Cup cars that had the speed and reliability to beat the Ferraris and Audis into submission. The gold Rolex and winners' champagne went to the Magnus Racing GT3, driven hard by **Andy Lally**, **René Rast**, **John Potter** and **Richard Lietz,** leading home a Porsche 1-2-3 in the Grand Touring class.

No better way to celebrate 50 years of the Daytona 24 than with a thrilling race from lights to the chequer. *Rob Widdows*

Why British drivers love Daytona, p95







GT cars have to mind their mirrors for Prototypes; Potter/Rast/Lally/Lietz (above left) led a Porsche 1-2-3 in the class

Stars celebrate the 'Big 50'

I THOUGHT I'D SEEN IT ALL BEFORE. In hindsight I should have known better. This was something special: my first visit to Daytona, and on the 50th anniversary of international sports car racing around this sensational Speedway.

Just to get the juices flowing, and to remind us of the heritage, a parade of previous winning cars preceded the big race on Saturday morning. Out into the Florida sunshine came a Ford GT40, Porsche 917, Lola T70, Porsche 935 and a BMW CSL among others. Sadly, however, no sign of a Ferrari 330P4, but no matter – Dario Franchitti, fired up in the Gulf-liveried Porsche 917, banished any further disappointment. Indycar legend Bobby Rahal squeezed into Hurley Haywood's overalls to drive the 935, pitting after a lap when the tight fit of the suit prevented safe steering or changing of gears.

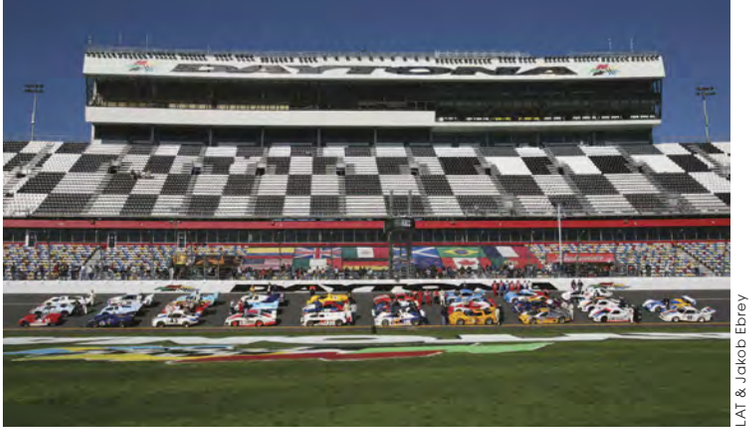
Back in today's world there was much talk of Grand-Am's new equivalency formula, which has been created to produce close racing. Yes, a sports car series designed specifically to promote racing at close quarters, in cars that look and sound the business. On the half-century anniversary, though, it would be Ford engines that beat the 'equivalency', powering the top three finishers into the record books.

"Drivers – start your engines," called Sir Jackie Stewart, who somehow never raced at Daytona, and the 'Big One' was underway. A huge crowd was held entranced throughout, distracted only by a blitz of a fireworks display in the middle of the night. The anniversary victory margin was five seconds after 24 hours; that's how thrilling it was in 2012.

Sadly, the anniversary Grand Marshal AJ Foyt was too unwell to attend but Stewart and Derek Bell stepped in to entertain sponsor Rolex and their VIP guests at dinner on the Friday night. A fitting fall-back since, over the decades, the Brits have conquered the speedway on numerous occasions. And so it was, with perfect timing, that Justin Wilson, Ryan Dalziel, and Allan McNish all made the podium on Sunday afternoon.

The new look of the Daytona Prototypes also provided cause for celebration. Gone are the derided 'garden shed' cockpits, replaced by a far sleeker, and more pleasing, bodywork design. What Grand-Am really wanted was a memorable race on its 50th birthday and without a doubt this one was a thriller.

Perched high above the speedway in their Champions' Tower, those who have carried the torch for Bill France could survey their kingdom and feel satisfied that, after 50 years, all the plates are spinning at once for Daytona and its world-famous motor race.



LAT & Jakob Ebrey

Monte Carlo Rally







Left: Sébastien Loeb underlined his supremacy. Petter Solberg (right) enjoyed his Ford debut, duelling with Dani Sordo (below right) for second place

Monte Carlo, Monaco

CITROEN'S SEBASTIEN LOEB RACKED UP his 68th career victory and his sixth win on the Monte Carlo Rally, underlining his status as the most successful driver in the event's 80-year history.

Having been absent from the WRC calendar for the past three years (after joining the rival Intercontinental Rally Challenge) Monte Carlo made a triumphant return with a marathon five-day long itinerary.

One of the early leaders, in changeable conditions, was Ford's Jari-Matti Latvala but the young Finn was distracted by a patch of ice and crashed into retirement on SS4. From then on it was business as usual, with Loeb taking and then extending an impressive lead. This was despite a complicated tyre choice on the second day, as drivers tried to find consistent grip in conditions that ranged from dry asphalt to sheet ice.

The wrong tyre selection meant that Petter Solberg, on his debut with Ford, dropped nearly a minute to MINI driver Dani Sordo on day two as the duo were fighting for the runner-up slot. In the end Sordo was able to hold off the Norwegian, who was nonetheless able to finish third and secure his best-ever result in Monte Carlo. He described the penultimate day's driving as: "the most fun I've had in a rally car since 2004."

Neither of them, though, had any answers to Loeb, who not only won the rally but also picked up three bonus championship points by going quickest on the Power Stage.

"It's always a great moment to begin the season like this especially in front of so many fans," Loeb said. "Full points in the first race is the perfect start to my title defence. But Monte Carlo is my rally: for the others we have to see."

Loeb has a new team-mate for this year: Mikko Hirvonen, who moved from Ford. The Finn said that he took some time to adapt to the Citroën DS3 WRC in competition, but he grew in confidence as the rally went on, setting three fastest stage times and claiming fourth overall.

Sebastien Ogier, Loeb's team-mate last year, made his competition debut with Volkswagen Motorsport, driving a Skoda Fabia Super 2000 while the German company develops its all-new Polo WRC. Despite the Super 2000 car having much less horsepower and torque than the World Rally Cars, Ogier astonishingly ran in the top six, before pushing a little too hard and having the biggest accident of his career on day two. *Anthony Peacock*

Kadett capers

The Siberian cold snap that swept Europe at the end of January brought heavy snow and sub-zero temperatures to much of the Monte Carlo Historic Rally route, resulting in many damaged cars and almost 100 retirements. After the rally ended in Monaco's parc fermé, the top three finishers were, first overall, the Opel Kadett GTE of José Lareppe and Joseph Lambert, winners in 2010 too, with Jean-Pierre Coppola and Olivier Sussot second in their Alpine-Renault A310, and the Porsche 911 SC of Monty Karlan and Valter Jensen third.





The winning Belgians started from Reims and were in contention for a podium throughout. "We had to push hard on the final stages out of Monte Carlo," said Lambert. True enough, on Col de Turini the orange Opel swished this way and that with demonstrably more gusto than many.

While Porsche, Alfa, Lancia, BMW and Citroën were the most prolific makes, a quartet of Gaz Volga M21s vied with a Trabant and Moskvich as the most unusual Monte model, while the strongest performance came from the tiny Steyr-Puch 650 TR2 that placed fifth. While not epic, owing to fewer stages in the Haute Alpes, this year's Monte Carlo Historic lived up to its reputation as the toughest winter rally. *Johnny Tipler*



Ice made for tough going; Kadett GTE (above), won, plucky Steyr-Puch 650 (above right) was fifth

Nigel Roebuck



REFLECTIONS

– The inexorable growth of aero clutter
– Missing AJ Foyt at the Daytona 24 Hours
– Dario Franchitti's love of motor sport history

When Jenson Button and Lewis Hamilton pulled the wraps off the McLaren MP4-27, it was a relief – and perhaps a bit of a surprise – to note that the car did not have the 'stepped nose' common to all the other new cars revealed to that point.

A rule introduced for the new season requires that the height of the nose be lowered (this an attempt to reduce a car's tendency to 'launch' when running into the back of another), but at the same time the maximum height of the front bulkhead remains unchanged: hence 'the step'. Technical director Paddy Lowe explained that the smooth, unbroken shape of the McLaren's nose was a consequence of a lower chassis than those of rival teams – as the team had already done in 2011.

While I, along with everyone else present, was gratified to see MP4-27's svelte front end, I must admit to being somewhat taken aback by the virulence of the criticism aimed at the 'stepped nose' of the other cars. Even weeks before Ferrari's F2012 was launched, Stefano Domenicali, without going into detail, was warning the world that the car was 'quite ugly', and while it would be difficult to take issue with him, to me the Ferrari is no more unsightly than most of the others.

It's all in the eye of the beholder, of course, and the old clichés have been trotted out by Fernando Alonso and others: 'Any car that wins/doesn't win is beautiful/ugly…' Perhaps the stepped nose offends me less than some because, frankly, it has seemed to me quite a while since the average F1 car could be considered a thing of beauty. Purposeful, yes, always dramatic, of course – but beautiful? If that's what you want, look to a time before wind tunnels alone dictated the shape of a Grand Prix car,

New McLaren eschews the 'stepped nose' trend; the MP4/4 of 1988 (inset) is 'the essence of clean, uncluttered design'

to a 'long nose' Maserati 250F, an Eagle-Weslake, a Ferrari 312B or a Lotus 79.

Since aerodynamics held complete sway in F1, a car's appearance has been of little or no consequence: if the data says it's quicker, that's the end of it. Why else, for example, would the high, pointed nose ever have seen the light of day?

Whenever I visit the McLaren Technology Centre, I can never resist a wander around the lobby area, wherein are housed a great number of cars from the company's past. I rather wish Bruce's original race car, an Austin 7, had not been so 'restored', but it's a remarkable stepping-off point for a collection which takes in not only F1 cars, but also some from McLaren's rich history in Indycars and Can-Am. Glorious.

When cars of a single marque are gathered together in this way, it is



"To me the Ferrari is no more unsightly than most of the others"

fascinatingly instructive to see the way Grand Prix racing has evolved. For all its many triumphs, the M23's looks never much appealed to me, and mercifully there is no example of the 1995 'twin rear wing' MP4/10 on display, but between times – notably in the Senna-Prost era – McLaren produced a succession of cars that were as elegant as they were successful.

I always particularly appreciated the last Honda turbo car, the MP4/4, with which Ayrton and Alain between them won 15 of the 16 Grands Prix run in 1988. The work of quiet and modest Steve Nichols, it remained Prost's favourite car to the end of his career, and when you see it now, in comparison with the devices of today, it strikes you as the essence of clean, uncluttered, design, and could live happily alongside another masterpiece, John Barnard's Ferrari 641, in New York's Museum of Modern Art.

'Clutter', though, was very much on the future agenda. Through the 1990s, and into the 21st century, F1 cars »»

All images LAT

Nigel Roebuck





It's said 'cars that win are beautiful', though MP4-23 (inset) tests that maxim

increasingly gathered aerodynamic accoutrements – barge boards and the like – and if they added to cornering speeds, so they exacted a comparable price in visual appeal. "We've got to stop them sticking all these horrible-looking bits and pieces on…" Bernie Ecclestone said to me once, and he was right. The first car you see, on entering the MTC, is the MP4-23 from 2008, and if it was highly successful it remains, to my eye, shudderingly unattractive, an amalgam of 'horrible-looking bits and pieces'.

On the basis of 'cars that win are beautiful', though, I'll warrant that not too many in Woking would agree with me: Lewis Hamilton became World Champion in that car, after all, and you can't argue with results. The Scarab of 1960 – a sort of F1 Indy roadster, complete with Offenhauser engine – may have been one of the most comely Grand Prix cars ever built, but, tragically, it couldn't get out of its own way.

After 2008 much of the unsightly aerodynamic clutter was banned, mercifully, although too much still remains, and in that context I can't really understand all the fuss about 'stepped noses'. Yes, they're ugly, and I hope they won't be around for long, but in the meantime we'll quite quickly get used to them, just as we did the 'narrow track' look – watch footage from 20 years ago now, and the cars seem ludicrously wide – and the small rear/huge front wing changes that were introduced three years ago.

The cars – with the exception of the McLaren – will look the way they do this season because that is the way the designers have chosen to deal with the regulation requiring a reduction in the height of the nose. As folk have complained about the clumsy appearance of the 'stepped nose', so FIA F1 Race Director Charlie Whiting has quite reasonably pointed out that you can't have a rule outlawing ugliness: it may be unfortunate, and I'm sure it makes a man like Gordon Murray cringe, but that's the way it is.

At the very least, F1 people should rejoice that they don't have to deal with a regime as intransigent as Indycar, which introduces – to what may politely be termed 'muted enthusiasm' – a new car in 2012. It's a 'spec' car, built by Dallara, and clearly it's aimed at a 'spec' driver, as Chip Ganassi made clear to me in Daytona.

"The way the thing's been designed," he said, "a driver *cannot* right-foot brake – can you believe that? There are still drivers who prefer to brake with their right foot – and one of them is Franchitti, who drives for me…"

I'll admit I was aghast. Was this really true? "Absolutely…" Dario shrugged.

"I went back to Indycar," said Ganassi, "and said this had to be changed – but they said no, it couldn't be. I said, 'Well, OK – if you don't mind doing without the guy who's won the goddam championship the last three years!' I mean, are you suddenly going to tell [Phil] Mickelson he's got to play right-handed in the Masters this year?

"I'm about sick and tired," he went on, "of the people running the Indycar show – who don't know what they don't know. What we need is an organisation that will work with people. We thought there would have been big changes since the end of last year – but there haven't been…"

As for the question of right-foot braking – any change there? "Now they say they're thinking about it," said Chip. "They'd better…"

Once in a while F1 folk complain about a decision by Whiting, and that's to be expected. By and large, though, I think they're extremely well served. Stepped noses may be an unfortunate consequence of a new rule, and they may somewhat offend those of us who watch, but – last time I checked – they don't affect a driver's ability to drive as he sees fit.

People never believe me when I tell them that only twice in my life have I attended the Le Mans 24 Hours – and their jaws drop even further when I reveal that the years in question were 1965 and 1967, right after I left school.

It's a fact that back then, in terms of popularity and prestige, World Championship sports car racing was considered at least on par with Formula 1 – indeed time was when Enzo Ferrari's

overwhelming priority was winning Le Mans, and John Surtees has told me of his frustration, when first he joined the team, at the pre-season testing priority being very much the sports, rather than the Grand Prix, cars.

Perhaps Ferrari's desire to win Le Mans was never more intense than when it was a matter of beating the hated Fords. A plan by Henry's company to buy out Enzo's had, apparently at the last minute, come to nought (although many believed that the Old Man was never serious about it, that primarily he was seeking to discover the market value of what he had), and afterwards elements in Ford Motor Company publicly made clear their displeasure at being messed about – and their vehement determination to beat Ferrari on the race track.

In this you would have to say they were – ultimately – pretty successful. Four times the factory teams crossed swords at Le Mans, and if Ferrari won the first two, in 1964 and '65, Ford came out ahead in '66 and '67.

Back in the mid-late-sixties I may have been living habitually beyond my means, but even so the budget for attending race meetings abroad was tight, and looking back it strikes me as not insignificant that I chose to go with Page & Moy to Le Mans, rather than to a 'foreign' Grand Prix. I'll curse myself for ever that I never saw an F1 race at the old Spa Francorchamps, but who knew it wasn't going to last for ever? Me, if I'd thought about it, I suppose, but I didn't.

In today's world 24-hour sports car races, be they at Le Mans or Daytona, tend to be effectively protracted Grands Prix, in the sense that technological progress has allowed cars to be built that can be hammered around the clock. No worrying about reduced rev limits, about keeping to a prescribed lap time in an effort to make the finish – as Allan McNish declared at Daytona, these days, be you in an Audi or a Grand-Am Riley, it's flat out from beginning to end.

Back in the sixties such a thing was believed to be utterly out of the question, but at Le Mans in 1965 Jochen Rindt and Masten Gregory came close to disproving it. In the very early going their North American Racing Team Ferrari 275LM was seriously delayed by condenser and starter motor problems, and the drivers – both renowned chargers, of course – resolved to drive the wheels off the car: that way, either it would break, in which case they could scoot off home early, or it would last, and come Sunday afternoon they would be somewhere in the mix.

From 18th place after four hours, as nearly as possible they drove, as Jochen put it, 'flat out all the way round' to the end, and the LM somehow held together, and they won. At the finish I was in the stand above the pits, and I can still hear the horribly metallic grinding sounds coming from the Ferrari as Gregory, Rindt and the mechanics made their traditional way down the gulley in front of the main grandstand. The gearbox had been shedding teeth, and Gregory – at the wheel for the last stint – said he doubted the car could have done one more lap.

If I only went to Le Mans twice, I was lucky in the races I chose, for while that was a great weekend for my first time there, the next one was better yet – indeed my lamented friend Jabby Crombac, an aficionado of the Sarthe if ever there was one, always maintained that the 1967 race was the greatest ever run.

I have the programme here, so indulge me for a second, and allow me to list the more prominent entries: factory 7-litre Fords for Gurney/Foyt, McLaren/Donohue, Andretti/Bianchi, Hulme/Ruby, Hawkins/Bucknum and Gardner/McCluskey, works Ferrari P4s for Parkes/Scarfiotti, Amon/Vaccarella and Klass/Sutcliffe – deep breath – works Porsches for Siffert/Herrmann, Stommelen/Neerpasch and Rindt/Mitter, Chaparral 2Fs for P. Hill/Spence and Johnson/Jennings, Lolas for Surtees/Hobbs and Irwin/de Klerk, Matras for Beltoise/Servoz-Gavin and Jaussaud/Pescarolo… The list goes on – and then you look at the privately entered Ferraris and Fords, driven by such as Rodriguez/Baghetti, Mairesse/Beurlys, Attwood/Courage, Guichet/Muller, Redman/Salmon, Schlesser/Ligier, Piper/Thomson, Maglioli/Casoni… tot up that little lot, and you can see that virtually anyone with claims to be a serious racing driver was at Le Mans on June 10.

> "I lost interest in a race which could be won by a Rondeau"

I'd been trying for weeks to make up my mind as to whether my foreign jaunt for the summer of '67 should be to Monaco or Le Mans, but as that entry list began to take shape it seemed apparent that there might never be another like it, and there never has been. I was 21 years old, newly arrived in London, and Sgt Pepper – released days before the race – was floating around in my head as we went off to France. Life was indeed good in 1967.

As a spectacle the race proved so enthralling that I didn't sleep even for an hour. As the Fords and Ferraris blasted through the darkness, I watched from the Esses, then from the stand above the pits as the Chaparral mechanics laboured away on the transmission of Hill's 2F for what seemed like hours. Fruitless, as it turned out. As dawn broke, Le Mans had exacted its usual toll, and many front-runners were gone. In the lead was the Gurney/Foyt Ford, its only rival now the P4 of Parkes and an unwell Scarfiotti, and that was how they finished.

Although it had never seemed *quite* a fair fight – seven litres against four – the result delighted me, for I had long been a Gurney fan, and Foyt was almost a mythical figure in my imagination. Almost never did he compete outside the United States, and this was his first – and, as it turned out, only – venture to Le Mans. A few days earlier he had won the Indianapolis 500 for the third time.

It wasn't that I deliberately eschewed going to Le Mans in succeeding years, that anything after '67 was bound to be an anti-climax, more that thereafter my rationed trips were to such as Monaco, Monza, the Nürburgring, Zandvoort. And once I started working in Formula 1, it not only claimed my complete attention, but I'm afraid I gradually lost interest in a race which could be won by a Rondeau.

Increasingly most of the stars stayed away, inevitably bound by F1 contracts which precluded anything else, but in more recent years the Audi-Peugeot rivalry »»

Nigel Roebuck

has reawakened my enthusiasm for sports car racing, and I would have been tempted to return to Le Mans, were it not for the fact that virtually every year the *Vingt-Quatre Heures* clashes with the Canadian Grand Prix. This year, ironically, Montréal is the weekend before Le Mans, but – *helas* – Peugeot have precipitately quit, so that, for the time being, is that.

Although AJ Foyt has all his life freely expressed a deep suspicion of anything 'non-American', there is no doubt that he takes a particular pleasure in that Le Mans victory 45 years ago. He competed in the race once – and he won it, just as Juan Pablo Montoya did in the 2000 Indianapolis 500.

I remember the first time I laid eyes on Foyt. It was August 1964, in the Brands Hatch paddock, and he was in England to race John Mecom's Scarab in the Guards Trophy, in those days a pre-eminent sports car race run on Bank Holiday Monday. The morning was blazing, but he resolutely kept on his leather jacket, and looked like a man who wished he was somewhere else. Hesitantly – *very* hesitantly – I asked him to sign my programme, and to my great surprise he flashed that famous smile.

In his own world AJ was at that time virtually unbeatable: there were 13 races, some on 'pavement' and some on dirt, in the USAC Championship that year, and 10 of them he won. As well as that, he was victorious in sprint car races and occasional forays into NASCAR, and the previous winter had won the prestigious Nassau Trophy in Mecom's Scarab, beating the Ferrari of Pedro Rodriguez, no less. Like Mario Andretti, Foyt was a man who could race – and win – in anything.

In 1978, it may be remembered, two rounds of the USAC Championship were run in England, at one of which Foyt was reacquainted with Brands Hatch. The weather was autumn at its best, but the weekend before, at Silverstone, it was murky and damp, so that the drivers had very little opportunity for practice. When they did manage to get out, we were startled to see Danny Ongais's turbocharged Parnelli-Cosworth *annihilate* the existing F1 lap record, hurtling towards Woodcote at a speed never previously seen, but most of the time everyone just sat about, waiting for the rain to stop. It seemed like an ideal opportunity to interview Foyt, and he was geniality itself as we talked for an hour and more. Next day he duly won the race.

Although Foyt's racing CV is extraordinarily wide-ranging, and although he was nominated to drive a BRM at Watkins Glen in 1964, and an Eagle at Spa in '67, the one discipline in which he never participated was F1, and I wondered if – now 43 – he regretted it.

"You know what," he said, "I've reached a point where I feel I shoulda went Formula 1 racing. I think I'd have enjoyed it, but the problem is that if you're gonna do it properly – and that's the only way to do it – you can't really do anything else. I've got so many businesses and commitments in the States that it's never really been possible for me to think about a full season of F1 – and I wouldn't really want to pick up someone's third car for the odd race…"

Before the demise of CART – of *proper* Indycars, in other words – I went several times to such as Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Phoenix in the late '80s and '90s, and Foyt remained a regular through to his 35th consecutive Indy 500 in 1992; and in



Foyt partnered with Dan Gurney (holding the champagne below) to win Le Mans in 1967





1991, at the age of 56, he qualified second.

One moment, from a practice session at Milwaukee, has always stuck in my memory. They were all out there, flashing round the one-mile oval, and then suddenly the yellow lights were on, and past they came at very reduced pace. In front of me Andretti drew alongside Foyt, and gave him a signal of salute. The two men – for so long the absolute superstars of Indycar racing – did not always have the easiest relationship, and after the session I asked Mario to explain his gesture.

"I was right behind Foyt when he got *completely* crossed up in turn three," he said. "I thought he was gone – and so did the guy operating the yellow light! As it was, AJ somehow caught it – not too much correction, just enough – and I'm telling you that, even now, there aren't six guys in the world who could have got that car back. It was a sublime piece of skill, and I just wanted him to know I appreciated it…"

If I haven't been to Le Mans these many years, I have attended the last four 'Rolex 24' events at Daytona, and the annual trip to Florida in January – it was 86 degrees the day after my arrival this time – has become a highlight of my season. Every year a retired driver is nominated as Honorary Grand Marshal, and this time around, on the occasion of the race's 50th anniversary, it was to be AJ Foyt. Ahead of time I arranged an interview, and was much looking forward to renewing my acquaintanceship with him. You can therefore imagine my sense of disappointment when Dario Franchitti told me on the Friday that Foyt was in hospital, and wouldn't be coming to Daytona after all.

By some quirk of fate, both Gurney and Foyt – the '67 Le Mans winners – had major knee surgery in early January, and I'd heard that AJ, typically, had insisted in checking himself out before his doctors felt he should leave. There were suggestions that, in all probability, he would anyway be in a wheelchair for the Daytona weekend, but a few days before the race an infection set in. Back to hospital he went, and this time the doctors were implacable: he was going nowhere.

On the Friday night before the race, Rolex organises a dinner, and a highly enjoyable event it always is, not least because the evening concludes with the chosen Grand Marshal reminiscing about his career. This year, given that it was to have been Foyt, this was anticipated with particular pleasure, but there was nothing to be done.

"It wasn't until yesterday that AJ decided he couldn't make Daytona," declared host Murray Smith. "He wanted to – but the doctors said no. We decided not to wire him in on a live telephone call here – because there are ladies present…"

Happily, an evening that could have been flat was rescued by three other guests – Jackie Stewart, Derek Bell, David Hobbs – who talked not about themselves, but about the missing guest of honour.

"For me," said Stewart, "AJ was always the pussycat and the bear. There was one side of him that was generous and kind – and there was another side to him that was aggressive and unpredictable and *frightening*! When I was working for ABC's Wide World of Sports they would send one of the junior guys down to ask AJ to an interview, and AJ would be upset by one of the questions – and he'd physically throw the kid out of the door! That happened to a young guy called Sean McManus – who's now president of CBS! – and another one he threw out was Bob Iger, who became president of Disney! So AJ was very selective with his temper… »»

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"I remember a non-championship F1 race at the Ontario Motor Speedway in 1971, which also included Formula 5000 cars. There was a USAC race at Phoenix the same weekend, run on the Saturday, and AJ was taking part, so he couldn't do qualifying at Ontario that day. His car owner decided to get 'one of these long-haired Europeans' to qualify the car, and asked Ken Tyrrell if I could do that.

"It was an F5000 McLaren. I said, 'Well, AJ's a different shape from me – it's going to be a bit awkward, but I'm happy to do it'. Great Englishman that Ken was, he thought it would be good for transatlantic relations if I qualified AJ's car, so I did. It wasn't a particularly good car, but I did a reasonable time with it, and afterwards somebody said, 'What did you think of the car? AJ's been complaining about it…' I said, 'Well, I didn't think it was *that* bad – and if AJ can't do such-and-such a lap time with it, they should pack it in…'

"Can you *imagine*? He got back – and when AJ Foyt got upset… You know, when we all walk, our left arm goes forward at the same time as our right leg, and vice versa, but when AJ's *really* upset, he marches along, and his left arm goes with his left leg! It really is the funniest sight, but it's best not to laugh – on the morning of the race he was doing that when I saw him coming towards my pit…

"He was *really* angry, and when he gets angry he gets quite hot. I'm thinking, 'This is AJ Foyt…' He said, 'I've just been told what you said about me and my car – if you said that, you wait… probably you're going to be the first to lap me, and you're going to be a dead man!' I thought, 'My God, these American drivers…'

"Well, I did come up to lap him, and I started sliding further and further down in the cockpit, thinking, 'Well, he might not see the tartan band on the helmet…' And of course when I did pass him, he was a complete gentleman, and there was no problem at all. That was AJ Foyt: for all his temper he was the fairest man on the race track you could imagine – I never ever saw him do anything remotely questionable, and other drivers have said the same to me.

"I've always liked AJ a lot – he's part bear, part pussycat, as I said, and as a racing driver, he was fantastic. I drove at Indy with him a couple of times, and once or twice got involved with him on the track – and, let me tell you, he was a *driver*. A really great driver, and America should be very proud of him…"



Gregory and Rindt: the first drivers to go flat out all the way at Le Mans?



In 2010, as a sponsor's guest, Dario Franchitti came to Monza for the Italian Grand Prix, and as soon as I knew of his plan I suggested that a visit to Mario Acquati's shop was a must. Situated close to the paddock, it is without equal anywhere, and every year I spend more than I should on books, photographs and memorabilia. Where else on earth would I have found a race entry form, filled in and signed by Achille Varzi?

Before Franchitti's visit I contacted Acquati, and suggested he bring to the shop every Jim Clark photograph he could find. "Believe me, you'll be glad you did," I said, and glad he duly was. At his home in Kentucky Franchitti has a room given over to his collection of Clark memorabilia, and this fellow Scot – who died five years before Dario was born – occupies a special place in his affections.

Among the countless photographs he bought that weekend were many of Jimmy at Indy, and he was enraptured particularly by those of the 1965 race, won by the iconic number 82 Lotus. "But, Dario," said Acquati hesitantly, "you… have won Indy *twice*…"

Quite true, and he probably isn't done with the 500 yet, but as he gazed at a picture of Clark in Victory Lane with Colin Chapman, it was as if Acquati's words took him aback, as if he hadn't really thought of it. »»

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Sitting in Franchitti's motorhome at Daytona, I concluded again that this is a driver unique in my experience. So deeply is he into the sport's history that it's as if he forgets he is a racing driver himself. When I walked in he at once began talking animatedly about a book – *Le Mans '59*, by Stirling Moss – he had recently found: "It's fantastic – I read it from cover to cover last night…" Then he told me about items of memorabilia he had recently bought from the estate of Rodger Ward, like himself a two-time 500 winner, and wanted to know more about the forthcoming feature films on Hawthorn and Collins, on Lauda and Hunt. On the coffee table sat a copy of *The Brothers Rodriguez*, together with long ago issues of *Road and Track* and the like.



Franchitti is a connoisseur of motor racing history

I have written before of my sadness in contemporary racing drivers' lack of interest in the past. The World Champion who asked the daughter of another driver (killed in 1978) what her father was doing these days is an extreme case, but by and large their knowledge of motor racing history dates from the day their own careers began.

Having been obsessed with racing from childhood, time was when I assumed that everyone else in the business – particularly the *drivers* – must be like myself, and it was quite a shock to discover this was not so. Over time I have known a few – Chris Amon and John Watson come immediately to mind – with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the sport, but they, too, fell in love with it from the cradle on.

There are very few like them. At one time I made a point, when interviewing a driver, of asking who his personal hero had been, not least because I felt it would tell me something about his own character. Occasionally there would be an immediate response – I remember the tears welling up in Michele Alboreto's eyes when he spoke of Ronnie Peterson – but more usually it was a matter of, 'Mmm, well, I didn't really have one…'

Michael Schumacher's dispassionate response was at least honest – and perhaps spoke for his generation. "When I was young, I didn't take a lot of interest in F1 – I was in karting, and that was all I thought about…"

Lewis Hamilton, in childhood a fervent fan of Ayrton Senna, is perhaps one exception in the contemporary age, but the F1 figures most caught up in the racing past are undoubtedly India's representatives, Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok.

> "If my wife and I make you a curry, will you tell me all about Jochen Rindt?"

In 2005, Karthikeyan's first year in F1, with Jordan, I was in a group chatting to him in the paddock at Spa when he suddenly asked if we liked curry. Indeed so, we assured him. "Well, if my wife and I make you a curry tonight, will you tell me all about Jochen Rindt?" We were stunned by the question, but a deal was struck, and a most pleasant evening ensued.

The Daytona weekend was disappointing for Franchitti, his car – shared with Juan Pablo Montoya, Scott Dixon and Jamie McMurray – put out of serious contention when four laps were lost to a gear lever problem during the night. Still, though, there had been a moment to savour, for on Saturday morning there was a track parade of victorious cars from the race's 50-year history, and at the last minute Dario was asked if he would care to drive the Porsche 917, such as won in 1970 and '71, driven by Pedro Rodriguez.

Afterwards he was like a kid: "We did a couple of slow laps, and then, for the last one, we were pretty much free to go for it. I was alongside David Donohue, in his father's Lola T70, and we looked across at each other – and then floored it! Wow…"

Would Franchitti have changed if life had taken him in a different direction, and put him into Formula 1, where assuredly he belonged long ago? Possibly, but I doubt it. I think he has been a great loss to F1, but had he spent his career there, would he have enjoyed his life so much? Again possibly, but not necessarily. It's certainly not something on which he dwells.

"In 1995," he said, "I tested a McLaren at Jerez. In '97, when I was starting to do CART with Carl Hogan's team, Norbert Haug and Ron Dennis got together, and told me I was going to be the McLaren test driver. They asked me to go to Woking for a seat fitting. The idea was that I would race the CART car at the weekends, and during the week I would go back to Europe for F1 testing.

"This contract showed up – it was a five- or seven-year deal, 60 or 70 pages, and I've still got it. They were going to pay me quite well, but I was going to be tied up for all that time – and they could get rid of me whenever they liked. They wouldn't let my manager come into the meeting, and in the end I decided… no. Norbert and I fell out for a little while, and Ron and I haven't really spoken since…"

• Don't miss our podcasts with Nigel and the team – plus special guests – on www.motorsportmagazine.com

DISPATCHES



Sutton

MURRAY'S MINT BRABHAMS

THERE WILL BE A LOT OF BRABHAMS AT THE 2012 GOODWOOD Festival of Speed. This is good news. I have always loved and admired Brabhams by Gordon Murray, from the days when Bernie Ecclestone owned the team made famous by Jack himself.

Thinking of Murray's Brabhams got me going through my scrapbooks for the 1978 Grand Prix season. Niki Lauda joined Brabham to work alongside John Watson who, having been a friend since moving to the South coast, contrived to get me inside the team for a couple of races. I hesitate to say 'work alongside' as it often appeared to me that Niki used every opportunity to gain the psychological advantage, a modus operandi that revealed what a clever and ruthless competitor he could be.

At Monaco in May Wattie and I stayed at the Loews Hotel where we would meet for breakfast over a tape recorder. Unusually, my wife had also made the trip that year. She knew Wattie well but was hardly prepared for Herr Lauda who immediately took a liking to her, suggesting that she might enjoy spending some time with him while the journalist went to work. Not overly amused at the time, I later came to appreciate Niki's mischief and sharp humour.

Back at work, Gordon Murray showed me around his Brabham BT46, a thing of functional beauty, resplendent in red with subtle blue stripes. It sounded good too, the powerful Alfa Romeo 3-litre Flat 12 providing as much as 50bhp more than a Cosworth. But, Murray explained, the engine was heavy, used a lot of fuel, and this compromised the perfect design of his aluminium monocoque. His original concept employed the use of flat panel heat exchangers flush with the bodywork instead of normal radiators, thus reducing weight and frontal area. Cooling, however, was not sufficient and BT46 was returned to standard trim by the time it replaced BT45C at Kyalami, where it sat on pole.

At Monaco Watson put his car on the front row alongside Carlos Reutemann's Ferrari with Lauda third. Watson led away and stayed there until he ran wide at Ste Devote, allowing Lauda through. "I'd used the brakes too hard staying ahead," John later told me, "and just ran wide." But the Austrian had a puncture, pitted, and drove back through the field on fresh rubber to take second behind Patrick Depailler, with Wattie third.

Two months later, at Brands Hatch, it appeared that Lauda had the upper hand, at least in the gamesmanship of F1. In qualifying, I remember, sharp words were spoken, voices raised in the motor home, about who would get a perfectly matched set of cross-ply Goodyears. Lauda, using some colourful language, prevailed. On Sunday he would start five places ahead of Watson.

"Niki was very clever, very skilful, he knew how to work the system," John told me. "At Monaco I'd had one set of tyres left for a final run. Niki came in, demanding new tyres, saying he could get pole. Bernie says: 'whose tyres are those?' looking at mine, 'put them on Lauda's car'. I had a rant about that, it was my set, but Bernie thought Niki would get pole. I was smiling later when I was on the front row and Niki was third…"

The Brands Hatch result was a repeat of Monaco. The Lotus boys disappeared, only to retire, as did Jody Scheckter, leaving Lauda in the lead, only to be hunted down by Reutemann in the Ferrari who won by a fraction over a second. Wattie came in third, on the podium for his home race.

In the autumn I did not go to Monza for the Italian Grand Prix, where the cars came first and second. I'm glad I wasn't there that day, the Brabham 1-2 coming in the gloomy aftermath of Ronnie Peterson's dreadful crash and after winner Mario Andretti and runner-up Gilles Villeneuve were penalised for jumping the start.

"The BT46 was a lovely car, like all Gordon's cars," says Watson now, "but it was thirsty and we always started with more fuel than a Lotus or McLaren."

Lovely car indeed, and great memories. Roll on Goodwood.

ON TWO WHEELS



WWW.MOTORSPORTMAGAZINE.COM
Go to the website to read more from Mat Oxley

Gold & Goose

BEYOND YOUR LIVING ROOM

THERE ARE ONLY TWO MOTOGP EVENTS THAT I INSIST YOU visit and a few others that are worth attending. The rest, to be honest, are as well watched from the comfort of your armchair. The season-opening Qatar GP, for example, has as much atmosphere as a dentist's empty waiting room.

I judge each event via a strict formula, drawn up over several decades of diligent research. The criteria are: circuit character, atmosphere, surrounding countryside and quality of local hostelries.

The jewel in MotoGP's crown is Mugello, a venue so perfect that if heaven exists this would be its racetrack. Mugello is an Italian masterpiece that scores a full house of tens. The circuit itself is breathtaking, with a dizzying mix of fast corners that twist and turn along the sides of a verdant valley in the Tuscan foothills.

The main straight used to end with a first-gear right-hander, but not any more. The left kink that precedes turn one was flat out on a 500 without a moment's thought. At over 210mph on a MotoGP bike it is quite a corner, complicated by a brow that kicks the front wheel into the air. Riders hold their breath and sit tight as they wait for the front tyre to regain terra firma before braking for turn one. You can't help but hold your breath when watching here.

The Italians get very excited at Mugello. Not only is this Valentino Rossi's home GP, it is also Ducati's home event, so the crowd throngs the hillsides, making one hell of a racket. Their custom was to bring ageing and unsilenced car engines into the spectator areas and rev them to destruction, day and night. Finally the *polizia* intervened because the paddock wasn't getting any sleep. Now spectators rev their own motorcycles to oblivion – Lord forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Hostelries? You don't need me to tell you that you can wine and dine well at any local trattoria. And with Florence a 40-minute drive and Bologna (along with the Ducati museum) 60 miles away (along the Mille Miglia roads, if you wish), Mugello is unsurpassable.

Jerez in deepest Andalusia is my other MotoGP must-do. The Spanish GP feels more like a bullfight than a motorcycle race, with the local fans working themselves into a patriotic fervour. They certainly have enough riders to support.

The atmosphere is wonderfully chaotic, both at the track and amongst the whitewashed splendour of downtown Jerez, which is packed with great little bars and tapas joints. Before the circuit access roads were sorted out you needed to be inside by dawn to avoid the gridlock. A popular Jerez commentator transformed this arduous early start into an eerie, unmissable event by playing Pink Floyd's *Shine on you Crazy Diamond* as the sun came up over the circuit. Sadly, this custom is now forgotten.

Other rounds worth a visit include the Czech GP, Catalunya, Valencia and the Sachsenring – once a lethal street race, now a well-run and hugely popular meeting on a short but thrilling circuit. For WWII aficionados, Colditz is just 30 miles away. California's Laguna Seca is also good – a dazzling rollercoaster of a circuit and a great event if you can put up with the gun-toting security gorillas who treat you like they're averting the next 9/11.

Phillip Island is probably MotoGP's greatest circuit – a series of swooping, wide-open bends that all but kiss the Tasman Sea on Australia's south-eastern tip. The Aussie GP is very earthy in its charms – no five-star VIP treatment here.

In the past I would also have insisted you visit Assen, a unique serpentine of a racetrack that once kept MotoGP's medics busier than anywhere else. And Spa, the greatest of them all. But bike GPs stopped going to Spa after 1990 and Assen was emasculated a few years ago when half the circuit was sold to settle debts. For good reasons and bad we've lost many classic venues. With MotoGP engines likely to be restricted from 2013 – reducing speeds at Mugello's scary kink – and Jerez teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, experience their magic before it's too late.

THE US SCENE



LAT

PLAYING TO THE CROWD

BACK IN DECEMBER AT THE INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORTS Industry Show in Indianapolis I had the pleasure of moderating a panel discussion about the future of motor racing. Former CART technical director Kirk Russell and retired Chrysler engineer Michael Royce organise a safety and technical conference in conjunction with the IMIS show promoted by reigning NASCAR champion Tony Stewart, among others.

The conference included 40 presentations over two days covering a wide range of matters from Formula 1's 2014 engine rules to electric cars to spec engines for local short track racing. Our panel discussion about racing's future took place at the end of the conference and we covered a lot of ground, so I can only touch on some of the highlights here.

When CART was at its height in the 1990s with multiple chassis and engine manufacturers, Kirk Russell found himself in the middle of numerous rule interpretation disputes. Russell believes the answer is to create an 'open-source' system, in which any innovation developed by a supplier would be made available online for all teams to study and understand .

"One of the big challenges I had as a rule writer for some 25 years was the fact that you would write a rule with everybody thinking more or less in the same box," Russell explained. "Then something would come along that was outside that box. As far as I was concerned I felt that was all well and good. That was something we missed (when writing the rules). But because one guy took a different track then you had a big skirmish on your hands with the other car owners and manufacturers. And I think those skirmishes were very detrimental to the sport.

"But open-source allows people to do the research and development on new things and allows other teams to understand what those developments are without a lot of expense and to decide whether they want to get involved. It's totally transparent."

Former Ferrari, Peugeot and FIA engine man Gilles Simon made some good points about broadening racing's appeal. Simon designed Peugeot's Le Mans-winning engines in 1992 and '93 before spending 16 years with Ferrari, where he led the engine design team that won eight F1 Constructors titles between 1999-2008. Simon was then recruited by the FIA to serve as its powertrain and electronics director to help write the 2014 F1 engine rules, and in August of last year he joined Craig Pollock's new PURE (Propulsion Universelle et Recuperation d'Energie) Corporation as technical director to design a turbo V6 F1 engine for 2014.

"When we think about the future of motorsport I think we need to think about attracting more categories of people – the people who are not interested in motor racing," Simon said. "The auto manufacturers are interested in our industry because we are producing car sales for them. It's about using your engine, your car, your aerodynamics and so on to go faster and be more efficient. Professional motor racing is a forum for people to achieve something new with the car and the technology.

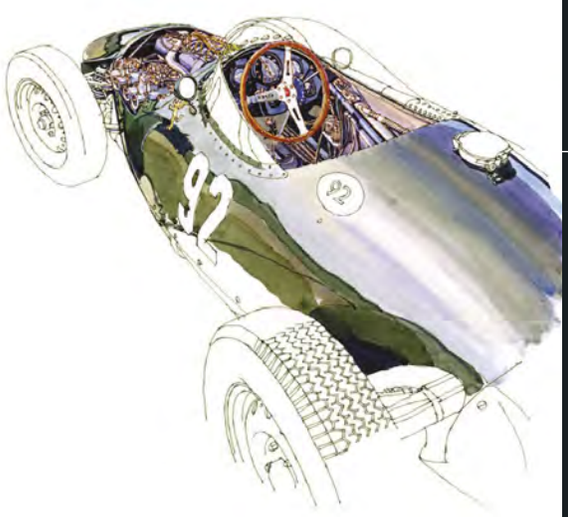
"I think the fans are attracted by diversity and are interested in technology but we need to show them more. There is reasonably good technology in F1 but you don't see it from the outside. We need to show it more, to explain the technology to the public and the fans. It may interest more people in the sport and we need to do that because many people think motor racing is a useless sport.

"If we do that successfully there is a better possibility that more people will believe in the value of racing. We have to be sure to make racing more palatable to more people. Otherwise I believe over the coming years there is more and more chance that some countries could decide to make racing not possible."

All good ideas that I'm sure we'll be pursuing at much greater length at next winter's IMIS safety and technical conference.







The art of motor racing

Clockwise from top left:

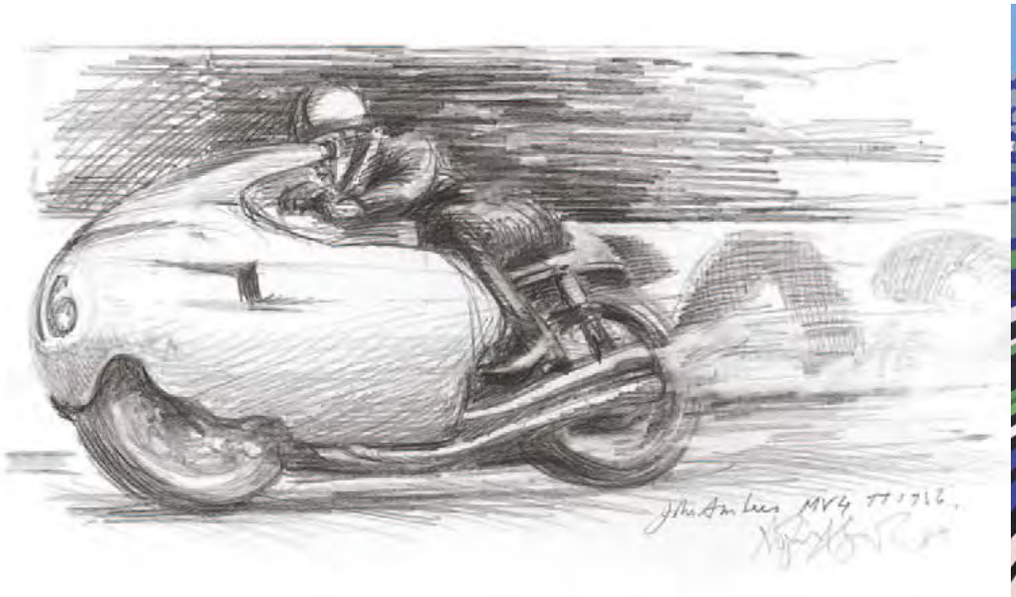
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Tel: 01373 464 528 www.studioprints.co.uk
CRAIG WARWICK 'The Vanwall Boys', oil on canvas, £3850
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Desirables







The art of motor racing

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Tel: 07767 824 633 www.robinbark-motorart.com
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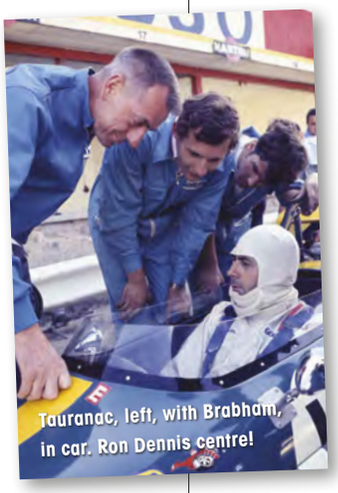
Letters

Jack Brabham, engineer

Sir,

I found February's Lunch with Mike Costin most interesting. Talking of the DFV, Mike mentions that "the pick-up after a gear change wasn't very good. Dare I say it, it was Jack Brabham who solved that".

Brabham was testing at Goodwood and found the engine pick-up was not smooth at small throttle openings. He would then hold the throttle at that position, turn the engine off and coast back to the pit, where the team would mark the fuel cam at that spot. It was then removed and placed on a jig consisting of a wood base with a plastic protractor. Once the fuel cam was mounted, a dial gauge indicator was placed against the cam at the marked spot and a few thou were stoned off. The process was repeated several times until the engine throttle response was good throughout. Cams were then modified to match on the engines we were running.


Tauranac, left, with Brabham, in car. Ron Dennis centre!

When our engines were sent back to Cosworth for service we replaced our modified throttle cam with a standard one, but one time this procedure was missed out, allowing Cosworth to pick it up. We found out about this when further engines were sent for service and we were charged for replacement cams.

On another occasion we were running in Germany at the Nürburgring when Keith Duckworth came into our garage. In chatting to Jack he mentioned they were having trouble with small foreign particles in the fuel system. Jack showed him our filter system which consisted of a piece of piano felt 3in diameter by 1in thick in a split aluminium housing which had solved the problem. Besides being a top driver, Jack was a good mechanical engineer which served the team well.

Ron Tauranac, Bondi junction, NSW, Australia

Targa tales

Sir,

Paul Watson's letter in the March issue mentions Jackie Epstein's and my Targa Florio race. The Cooper Monaco was bought from a garage in Daventry; it had been fitted with a Buick engine, but Jackie and I rebuilt it to standard form for the Targa. The late Mike Eyre, then chairman of the 750MC, did all the administration, and after getting route advice from Jenks we three set off for the 1000-mile journey in a Bedford Dormobile with trailer. We then hired a Fiat 1100 for 10 laps practice just to find our way round the circuit.

In the race I started, and handed over to Jackie after two laps. He did the next two, handing back to me for laps five and six. On Jackie's last stint, just before the finish, the car stopped. He traced the problem, fitted a spare ignition coil carried among the spares, and finished.

The crash Paul Watson mentioned happened in 1964 when we had a Brabham BT8. On Jackie's practice lap the left rear suspension radius arm let go on the straight near the finish. That time he did end up in hospital. Jackie and Paul Hawkins ran a Ferrari 250LM in the 1966 event, finishing 24th.

Bill Wilks, Bourton, North Dorset

Epstein's epics

Sir,

Paul Watson's photo of my friend Jackie Epstein's Cooper Monaco T61 was indeed at the 1963 Targa Florio. I seem to remember it ran short of fuel at some stage, though had suffered electrical problems during much of the race. I think the Monaco had a Buick V8 fitted when Jackie bought it, but he swapped this with the Climax out of his friend Mike Eyre's single-seater Cooper, which received a new lease of life with V8 power!

Encouraged by the Monaco's performance, Jackie returned to Sicily the next year with a Brabham BT8 and it was in this that he hit the scenery, suffering quite severe burns. This put a stop to his plans for racing it at Le Mans fitted with a hard-top. I mention all this in my recently published book [*to be reviewed soon – ed*].

Tony Goodwin, Warlingham, Surrey

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Write to: Motor Sport, 38 Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ

or e-mail: editorial@motorsportmagazine.co.uk

(Please include your full name and postal area)

Remembering Koinigg

Sir,

I was very interested in the article in the March issue, concerning Ian Ashley, although more poignant memories were brought back to me when he mentioned Helmuth Koinigg's tragic death during the 1974 US Grand Prix at Watkins Glen.

There is no doubt that Koinigg was an extremely talented driver, whose single-seater career was blighted by a severe lack of funds. He shone brilliantly in the European SuperVee races, but was also quick in saloons (notably BMWs) and, more famously, in the works Martini Porsche Turbo. Had he survived that accident in America, there is no doubt he would have become a well-known name – perhaps not in Formula 1 but definitely in sports cars. He could well have been racing Porsche 956s and 962s in later years along with the likes of Ickx, Bell and Ludwig.

Koinigg's death was both tragic and totally avoidable. The shambolic maintenance of the steel guard rails at the track was his nemesis in the most brutal and bloody way possible. Almost 40 years on, the passing of Helmuth Koinigg is still remembered with sadness by myself and probably by many others as well. His short career surely deserves an article in your magazine.

Jonathan Blackwell, Dadford, Bucks

Clean up campaign

Sir,

Having just seen the new Ferrari F1 car and read the anti-Tombazis [Ferrari's chief designer] fall-out, I can only imagine that this is the sort of car the FIA wants to see.

If not, why was lowering of the nose section allowed without the additional lowering of the front bulkhead? Surely the FIA realises by now that F1 designers follow the letter and not the spirit of the regulations. It was ever thus, so there can be no carping but do we really want to see a return to ugly cars?

I thought the 2009 'smooth' cars were handsome, even if the rear wing was at first odd and the front too complicated. The following years have seen the dreaded addenda gradually return to the bodywork. Is it time once again to clean up the cars, as in 2009, and put the platypus noses to rest at the same time?

The answer is probably yes – but please don't leave it to the FIA!

M Wilkes, Bonvicino, Italy

Letters

Blue Sky thinking

Sir,

I am sorry to read of Martin Brundle's loss of sleep regarding his 'defection' to Sky. If it's any consolation, I think this is due to young Martin's faulty analogy: "I feel like I moved from McLaren to Ferrari".

Had Martin Whitmarsh told Jenson that economies were being made based on the Robin Reliant design manual and that there were going to be 50 per cent fewer front wheels on his McLaren for 2012, I think the Button entourage would, as we speak, be camped in Modena.

So don't worry about it, lad; catch up on the forty winks and have a great season.

John Miller, Orpington, Kent

Winning versus winners

Sir,

I read with great interest Doug Nye's article 'History – a given, not a gift', and agree with most of it, particularly with regards to comments that would have been made by Jenkinson and Boddy. Why some 'racing motorists' go to all that bother and expense to lower a lap time by such a small amount escapes me. At the sharp end, of course, there is a great deal of wealth and the desire to command the headlines. As Doug rightly points out, historic racing cars have a much longer life now than in period. I think that is why so many people prefer to race historics than current cars which quickly lose their value.

I am fortunate enough to have owned quite a few Lotus cars, both road and racing, and I endeavour to keep them as historically original as is possible. I have a racing Lotus Elan, modified to 26R specification, which is very quick (or would be in the right hands). It is not original in the accepted sense – it has more power and lots of replacement 'go faster' bits. It is extremely competitive, and the value is kept high because of its winning potential.

I also own a genuine ex-Team Lotus, ex-Alan Stacey Lotus XI which is of undoubted and undisputed provenance. I bought it via the person who had purchased it directly from Alan Stacey. The car has been carefully refurbished, using all original parts, including chassis, wheels, bodywork, and even the original 1100cc engine. I can drive it in suitable events, but it is not and will not be competitive against the more advanced, restored and modified Elevens. It is, however, a beautiful car – lovely to look at and a great drive in a completely different way to the Elan. Both cars are straightforward and honestly presented, examples of not having to collude or pretend with others to present a false scenario.

So which car is correct and acceptable according to your article? I notice the quote from Jenks, but may I give you a further quote from my friend, the late John Dawson-Damer, who said "the better guys will always win, but the winners are those who can run their cars well, look good, sound good, enjoy themselves and be an entertainment to those who come to have a look. It is not racing, it is motor sport, and that is the difference".

'Nuff said!

Malcolm Ricketts, by e-mail

Head and heart

Sir,

We'll all miss Patrick Head, one of Grand Prix history's greatest characters in every respect. I sense that his heart isn't really in what he says about today's technical challenges – a case of trying too hard to convince himself, let alone the rest of us. Those challenges haven't proved sufficient to keep him in the paddock, after all.

Of course F1 is more advanced than it was 20 years ago; no-one could doubt that when every bit of a contemporary F1 car looks as intricate as a Swiss watch. But the challenge today is essentially to reach a bar that has been set very high by someone else, rather than to start from scratch and see how far you can jump on a 'sky's the limit' basis. Colin Chapman, I'm sure, would have walked away in sheer boredom years ago. Gordon Murray indeed has, and John Barnard gets more satisfaction today in designing chairs, for heaven's sake. Adrian Newey remains, but for him the stimulus has been in leaving a top team for an erstwhile middling one and then clawing his way back to the top.

There is a lot of emerging chatter about the ugliness of the sunken nosecone/protruding bulkhead layout of the new cars, but my goodness, it's desperate stuff really. We're talking millimetres – the nose as a whole remains fundamentally raised, on which tightly prescribed basis almost all F1 designs have been not only ugly but damned near indistinguishable for the best part of 15 years. Indeed, when the first picture of the Caterham leaked, in profile, I thought 'take off the paint and I wouldn't know whether it's a 2012 Caterham or a 2006 Toyota'.

Adrian Muldrew, via Motor Sport website

KEEP IN TOUCH

The new-look *Motor Sport* website is *the* place to discuss motor racing past, present and future. Don't miss the opportunity to comment on blogs, video and audio podcasts, and read Nigel Roebuck's newsletter and the editor's monthly letter. To get involved in the discussion simply log on to **www.motorsportmagazine.com** and tell our writers exactly what you think!
Also, don't forget that if you have any images which would be suitable for our You Were There feature in the magazine, please send them to the office (address on p44).

Challenging issue

Sir,

Congratulations on a brilliant piece of journalism on the Patrick Head years at Williams. Surely this era was the most interesting in recent times and through Patrick's eyes we got a really fascinating insight into Williams's struggle to the summit and slow slide down the other side. Let's hope for better things this season.

I've never read your mag before, but felt it was £5 well spent. Having seen the Senna movie, I feel F1 is but a shadow of its former self, and to a large extent I blame Ecclestone for being a money-grubbing ruiner of races and circuits. Well done for tackling him over Bahrain. It seems he exercises a Murdoch-like hold on F1, and apart from you only Richard Williams in *The Guardian* ever dares to challenge him.

Hugh Duncan, Lyme Regis, Dorset

Fan data base

Sir,

I am conducting research for a book on Britain's especially enthusiastic and committed sports fans, and would like to meet and interview anyone who is one of these super sports lovers.

For instance, I am interested in fans who watch, follow, collect or in other ways celebrate their passion for a particular sport, team or competitor. If you are one of these passionate fans, please contact me. If you know someone who is a really keen fan please pass on this request to them.

I would like to cover as many sports as possible including so-called minority sports. All contacts will be treated in confidence and not released to anyone else.

I can be contacted by leaving a message on 0777 936 5181 or at fanresearch1@gmail.com.

John Roberts, Dursley, Glos

For the first time in Formula 1 history six World Champions will line up on the grid.

THE OTHER CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Nigel Roebuck compares notes with **Martin Brundle** and assesses the depth of talent on show in the modern era

As the 2007 season got underway, in Melbourne, only one World Champion – Fernando Alonso – was on the grid, but now, five years on, the picture is startlingly different. This season, for the first time in history, no fewer than six World Champions will compete in Australia and beyond. Before it all got underway – indeed before the February tests began – I asked Martin Brundle for his thoughts on their prospects for 2012.

NIGEL ROEBUCK: A quarter of this year's grid will be World Champions. Pretty remarkable, when you think about it…

MARTIN BRUNDLE: Yes – and it tells me two things: one, how safe Formula 1 has become, because they're all alive and kicking, unlike previous decades; two, the cars are too bloody easy to drive – because the whole industry is so data-driven you can leave and then jump back in them without much problem. They're more binary to set up, and to drive, than they used to be. As long as you're fit enough, you can just get back in.

I wouldn't underplay it, because great champions are great champions for a reason, but… I drove the Pirelli car last year for a TV feature on tyres, and… they *stick* like glue, like they're on rails. You can barely lock a wheel, unless you're being an idiot, and you can't miss a gear; there's power steering… they're just dream machines. You spend every day trying to perfect a racing car, and whereas on a scale of 1-10 in the 1980s we might have got to two, now it's 10.

Back then for most of the race your main role was getting it to the end and trying to stop it from crashing, whereas now it's 'brake three metres early, and you've blown the lap'. That brings in a different set of skills altogether – it's the tiny detail that matters. Half a second here or there didn't matter over a Grand Prix distance in the past, did it? Half the cars would drop out, anyway – now it's highly unusual.

NR: People are saying it's all a matter of motivation – if the Lotus is on the pace, so will Kimi be. Certainly there was evidence, first time round, that his motivation was up and down…
MB: Well, that's certainly true. It's difficult to know what to say about him. Petter Solberg told me that the Kimi they saw when he arrived in rallying was completely different from the one they knew two years later – much more approachable, much less smart-ass…

KimiRäikkönen

NR: Wonder if that'll stay the same once he's back in an F1 environment…
MB: Well, it'll be interesting to see, won't it? The great story for me is, 'Will Kimi do a better job than Michael in his comeback?' He should, because he's much younger, he's been away for less time – and he's been competing while he's been away. Will all the frustrations that made him leave in the first place still be there, or not? Let's be honest, he *did* lack motivation, didn't he?
NR: Yes, and you think, 'Well, if he was like that when he was driving for Ferrari…'
MB: I know. There's a hundred kids who'd give their right… to be driving for Ferrari. I suspect that, having dug a few Citroëns out of the snow, and hit a few trees, he'll approach the things that used to piss him off with a slightly different attitude.
NR: At Ferrari they all *liked* him – but he hardly ever went to Maranello, and they felt he never really tried to integrate…
MB: Yes, but we have to take into account the approach of a Scandinavian – that's how they are, isn't it? Should he have put more effort in? Of course he should, but you take the whole package, don't you?

Kimi's comeback depends completely on the car. If you give him a race-winning car, he can win the race – but then I think you can also say that of Michael Schumacher. My concern is whether or not Lotus have the wherewithal to give Kimi a car that will enable him to sniff a victory – to keep his interest, in other words.
NR: I wonder how much PR work Lotus will ask him to do? If they're smart, they'll keep it to a minimum, because he hates all that – it drove him nuts in the McLaren years…
MB: Yes, he never liked PR or media work or even, to some extent, testing. He'll certainly be happier now there's no testing – there are 20 races now, but they're actually doing a lot less *driving* now than they were. They're not pounding round Barcelona, doing three Grand Prix distances in a day…

If Kimi's that lazy again, it won't work. He's got to drive that team forward, and make them believe in themselves. »»





Michael Schumacher

NR: Two seasons since Michael's comeback started – and still no podiums. That said, he had a better season last year…

MB: Yes, Michael had some very good races in 2011, but so far the return's been a failure – I don't think you can see it any other way, can you? As well as that, he's pissed a few people off – running Rubens in the wall in Hungary in 2010, and so on. I thought his driving against Hamilton at Monza was very marginal – leopards don't change their spots. Lewis had the patience of a saint there…

NR: If anything, I thought he was over-cautious that day – he was determined to finish, not to get into *another* coming-together, and he was well aware who he was fighting with! That was the first time they'd had a set-to…

MB: Yes, now you mention it, I suppose it was. Certainly Michael was pushing the boundaries, but that's the way he is. I remember thinking that the only thing that could dent his return was if he compounded his reputation for not being sporting. He had a chance to right the wrongs of the past, by not doing the same things over again – and he hasn't chosen to take it.

The thing is, though, if Michael said today, 'I'm stopping', who's on the market who would be *guaranteed* to be better?

NR: I reckon Adrian Sutil might do a better job overall…

MB: Do you really? As a package, as a tool for Mercedes-Benz? Actually, I agree with you – *if* Michael actually retired. But would you proactively replace him with Sutil? I might have done that with Hulkenberg or di Resta…

NR: Yes, either of them, I agree. Mind you, it wouldn't have been an easy move for Mercedes to make…

MB: No! I can't blame Michael for doing it – they're paying him good money, and he's enjoying it. I'll admit the whole 'age' thing bothers me a bit, because F1 is all about tomorrow, not yesterday – but if he got offered a drive, you can't blame him for taking it…

NR: Nico out-qualified him 16-3 last year…

MB: Yes, it's nearly over, isn't it? Some of that inherent speed has gone, and there were times when Michael looked decidedly clumsy in traffic, didn't he? His racecraft has gone. A lot of fans have said to me, 'Doesn't this prove that before he had a lot of unfair advantages?', and he obviously doesn't have… all the tools available that he had then, let's put it that way. He doesn't have the whole team – including a tyre manufacturer – focused on him, and his driving style.

Overall, though, I'm pleased Michael's staying this year – I think he's still a worthy man to be on the grid in an F1 car, but if it doesn't work out this time, I hope he stops. His stock in trade is obviously way lower than when he left. Would you agree with that?

NR: No question. Frankly, what strikes me is that a young guy like Hulkenberg should have been on the grid last year – and he wasn't…

MB: That's the way it is these days. There are 24 seats available, and a quarter of them need a *big* bag of change – five million quid minimum – even to knock on the door…

MB: Well, first of all, I think his skill and speed are undiminished. Lewis has learned a lot through working with Jenson, and he's probably a more complete racing driver now than he ever has been.

Having said that, I find him unapproachable, confusing – and unreadable, in terms of where he's at. Lewis is *very* extreme – one minute he's over in one corner, and the next he's in the other, over-compensating with the things he says and does, and it feels false…

about? Emotionally Lewis was all over the place, and you could see that on the race track. If he could produce his best – his *best* – performance every day through the season, I don't think Jenson could hang on to him, but so far he can't…

NR: As for Lewis's emotional problems, you could sympathise with him, but I thought some of his behaviour a bit… theatrical – like taking pole position in Korea, getting out of the car, not taking his helmet off, then refusing to smile…

LewisHamilton

NR: What struck me as *very* short-sighted last year was that, at a time he was making a lot of mistakes himself, he chose sometimes to slag off McLaren…

MB: I know. That very unsubtle dropping in on Red Bull in Montréal – what the hell was that

MB: He was sending a message to his girlfriend, wasn't he?

NR: Presumably so, but it was also a message to the world, wasn't it? I'm troubled, I'm not smiling – *why* am I not smiling?

MB: I love the intuition of women – in my experience, they're way smarter than we are, aren't they? I was at a dinner recently, and a woman who will remain nameless said – across the table, not to me specifically – 'Lewis is a child'. I thought, 'Yeah, you're right…'

Still, we don't know the details, and I don't like people making summary judgements on my life when they know nothing about me. All we know is that he's under-delivering on his potential, and I don't know him well enough to understand why.

He has no reference points in his life, has he? I wrote in the BRDC magazine that I was one of 50 people in the paddock who would love to say, 'Can I tell you a few things that might help you a little bit?' That probably sounds arrogant, and I'm sure that's what Lewis – if he reads it – will think, but it's a heartfelt thing, believe me. You think to yourself, 'The kid's got more talent in his little finger than I ever had – I wish I could help him deliver that…'

You learn things the hard way, and he's one of the new generation of drivers who have never known anything else in his life but motor racing. Put him in front of someone like Mario Andretti for an afternoon…

NR: I thought some of the things Lewis did last year were extraordinary – as if he just switched off for a few seconds…

MB: Yes – it doesn't matter whose fault it is, if you lose your front wing, your race is screwed…

On his day, Lewis is unbeatable, and yet I suspect McLaren are wondering whether or not they want to keep him, because he brings so much baggage with him. If Alonso doesn't have in his contract that Hamilton must never come to Ferrari, I'll be disappointed in him! »»



JensonButton

NR: In 2011 I thought Jenson and McLaren looked a perfect fit…

MB: Well, you had to be impressed, didn't you? I mean, he was dead lucky in Montréal – first he survived being clipped by Lewis, then he spun Fernando off, and got away without a penalty – but, having said that, *what* a drive!

Jenson's driving so well – and he's handling it all so well. He's one of those guys who'll see you in the paddock, and he'll change direction to come and chat. Now does that matter? Well, all I can say is that it matters to me – so many of them will pretend they haven't seen you…

NR: Or actually change direction to walk the other way…

MB: Yes! Jenson's so comfortable with what he's doing. Think of the times we've been having lunch at McLaren, and the drivers come in – one friendly and saying, 'Are you going to come and see me on the grid today?', and the other wearing dark glasses, head down, straight into the motorhome. Now that doesn't *matter*, but I'm afraid – as a human being – you can't help but react to that warmth.

More than that, I just enjoy watching Jenson at the wheel – the economy and the precision with which he drives an F1 car is breathtaking.

NR: It reminds you of Prost, doesn't it?

MB: It does – I think that more and more. I watch him, and I think, 'God, I wish I could do that!' It's such a pleasure to watch him caress an F1 car into a corner – he never turns in more than once.

I raced against Alain all those years, and I never saw him on a qualifying lap – I mean, I obviously did, but I never realised it! He was blisteringly quick, but he always looked as though he was on an 'in' lap…

NR: It's just a different sort of art, isn't it? If you had Lewis come past you on a qualifying lap, and then Jenson, it wouldn't be greatly dissimilar from Senna and Prost…

MB: No, it wouldn't. There's no right and wrong – it's just the way different people do it. If Alain had been racing now, he'd have been in his element with the Pirellis, and in the same way there's been a dividend for Jenson. I've got much more respect for him than I had when he won the World Championship – and I had a lot then.





2005 2006

Fernando Alonso

NR: Last season I thought, 'If ever I've seen a driver flatter his car…'

MB: He did, didn't he? He picked up the car, and carried it. I thought Fernando did a *brilliant* job last year. P5 on the grid was basically his slot – his Ferrari was the fifth fastest car in the pack – and 10 times he finished in the top three. He made consistently fantastic starts, and just fundamentally raced the wheels off it, didn't he? He won a race, and threatened to win others. I thought Fernando was absolutely exceptional in 2011.

NR: And he never once criticised Ferrari...

MB: No, that's true – mind you, I'm sure he will if they don't give him a good car again! How much longer can that last – they've *got* to give him a car that's worthy of him.

NR: I've always thought you learn most about a driver when he's up against it, in a second-rate car...

MB: Yes, absolutely. If you're driving a race-winning car, you should win races; and if you can still win races when you haven't got the fastest car, like Senna and Prost and Schumacher and Häkkinen all did, *that* is the true sign of greatness, isn't it? And Alonso's got that, there's no doubt about it. The guy is a *great* racing driver.



SebastianVettel

NR: Adrian Newey being the genius he is, it'll probably never happen, but I look forward one day to seeing Vettel in Alonso's situation, making the most of a middling car. He'd drive the wheels off it – but would he also lose his cool?

MB: A year ago I'd have said yes, but not now. Let's remember that he won at Monza – in the rain – in a Toro Rosso.

All right, that was the year when Toro Rosso had all those hand-me-downs from Red Bull – and with the Ferrari engine, rather than the Renault, they actually had a better car during the second half of the season, but still I thought what Vettel did that day was extraordinary. You have to look at Webber's performances last year to understand just how strong Sebastian has become – I mean, he scored more points than Ferrari!

He's one of the few drivers I've ever seen who can find a third of a second in himself in qualifying. What's a third of a second? A blink of an eye – but it's *so* hard to find, without locking a wheel, running wide, screwing the lap up. That's a gift, and you've got it or you haven't. Vettel has it, which puts him on the front row – then he perfects the start, and he's got the race under control. It's such a key part of the weekend.

NR: Sebastian seemed completely at ease with himself last year, didn't he? Mind you, he was fortunate that at Abu Dhabi in 2010 Ferrari screwed up on strategy with Alonso, and he came away with a World Championship few had expected – there he was, 23 years old, and with the monkey already off his back…

MB: Yes, that's right. He'd made mistakes that year – collected Mark in Istanbul, collected Jenson at Spa, and so on. Finishing the year as champion, though, took all the pressure away, and now he hasn't got any, has he? He moved up a gear psychologically last year – and he still hasn't seen a birthday cake with 25 candles on it!

NR: One's heard stories of how Sebastian can behave when things go wrong…

MB: Yes, I've heard them, too – but it's all behind closed doors, which is as it should be. Think how Senna and Prost and Mansell were when they weren't happy! The thing about Vettel is that he's got the intellect to go with the speed, and somehow – God knows how – he's fit enough. He looks as though he's made of spit and sawdust, doesn't he? There's nothing to him...

NR: Well, yes – but look at Niki. He never looked strong enough to drive an F1 car, but there was never anything wrong with his stamina.

MB: Yes, quite true. I've noticed Sebastian's always one of the first to rest his head – but, again, I think that's just smart. He's thinking, 'Right, I've got to get through this weekend, and prevention's better than cure, so let's rest the head when we can…'

NR: It doesn't hurt, either, that Vettel is a favourite of Bernie's. There haven't been many drivers Bernie has been close to – Stuart Lewis-Evans, Jochen Rindt, Carlos Pace, Riccardo Patrese, and now Sebastian...

MB: Yeah – they have holidays together, do birthday presents, and everything. You see, Sebastian's smart to do that. We're all quite smart, aren't we? But are we close to Bernie?

The kid's got the whole team focused on him – because he delivers – and he's got no weaknesses in his armoury any more.

NR: So how do you think he would be in other than the best car?

MB: Well, we don't know, do we? Would he get impetuous again? Maybe – but I'd never bet against him. If all the bright young things want a target to aim at, it's him.

As well as that, of all the drivers I talk to on the grid, he's the most relaxed. I know the single digit jabbed at the camera gets some fans angry, and I thought the move he put on Jenson at the start in Japan was unacceptable, but generally I think Sebastian is the template for a Grand Prix driver of today…





What's new in F1 2012

New faces, new cars and new tracks will all play their part in the Grand Prix season ahead. As for the car regs, the devil – as usual – will be in the detail

BY ED FOSTER

LAT

"Sebastian has improved and is stronger than ever", Red Bull owner Dietrich Mateschitz recently told Italian newspaper *Gazzetta dello Sport*. "He has prepared during the winter break like he's never done before."

Not great news if you're Mark Webber. Or indeed anyone else on the 2012 Formula 1 grid looking to break Vettel's recent dominance.

This year there is relative stability on the rules front, so it'll be tough for the likes of Mercedes and Lotus to start mixing it with the Red Bulls. But still, there are plenty of reasons to start getting excited about F1 in 2012.

The drivers

There are no driver changes at Ferrari, Mercedes, Red Bull or McLaren this year, but the return of 2007 World Champion Kimi Räikkönen – who will drive for the renamed Lotus team alongside the returning GP2 champion Romain Grosjean – has caused quite a stir (see Nigel Roebuck feature, p52).

It's all change too at Toro Rosso after Sebastien Buemi and Jaime Alguersuari were shown the door in favour of new Red Bull talents Daniel Ricciardo and Jean-Eric Vergne. The Italian team is adamant that it exists to nurture young talent and both Alguersuari and Buemi had had their chance. Watch out for Vergne once he's settled in – the Frenchman has been mighty impressive in every category he's raced in so far.

Former Williams driver Nico Hulkenberg will return to the grid after a year as reserve at Force India, joining Paul di Resta in the team's line-up, while Bruno Senna has gone to Williams to partner Pastor Maldonado. After its disastrous 2011 campaign Williams will be hoping that the new deal with Renault to provide engines will mean a step forward in performance and that Senna can deliver the speed he showed briefly at Lotus-Renault in the latter half of 2011.

Other changes include Pedro de la Rosa and Narain Karthikeyan signing for HRT and Frenchman Charles Pic replacing at Marussia the promising Jerome d'Ambrosio, who is now the Lotus third driver.

The tech rules

There are no drastic changes in the technical regulations this year, but there are two significant modifications, as Marussia consultant – and recent *Motor Sport* podcast guest – Pat Symonds explained to us.

"One is the repositioning of the exhausts," he told *Motor Sport* in January, "and the other is the rule which has effectively doubled the

stiffness of the front wings." The former could mean as much as 0.75 seconds a lap is lost.

"With the exhausts [which helped increase downforce by blowing over the rear diffusers] there was definitely a 'have' and 'have not' on the grid. With my Marussia hat on I'm not sorry to see that go because it was a very complex technology to get to work right and I think [without it] the field will close up a bit. The performance advantage was significant."

There are also tighter regulations on engine mapping now, which – alongside the repositioning of the exhaust exits – will bring an end to off-throttle blown diffusers and mean smaller fuel tanks.

However, Symonds isn't sure that we have seen the last of blown diffusers completely because of the Coandă effect. "The simple way to explain it," said Symonds, "is to run a tap and then put your finger in the water stream from the side. The water will curl round your finger and be diverted – this is the Coandă effect. I think it is possible to do the same with the exhaust. Although bodywork is banned in a cone behind the exhaust it will still be possible to put a piece of bodywork at the edge of the cone-shaped exclusion zone which, by use of the Coandă effect, could divert the exhaust plume away from its obvious path." Time – as always – will tell.

"Last year most people were exploiting the stiffness of the front wing quite effectively," continued Symonds, "and they will continue to do that even though it's now double the stiffness. I don't think it's a game changer so I don't think we'll see the grid shaken up drastically."

The other area teams will have been looking at over the winter is the DRS [drag reduction system] moveable rear wings. Many teams – like Red Bull – didn't see a particularly large difference in straightline speed with it open at the beginning of last season. With a year's experience of using the 'flappy paddle thing' – as Damon Hill puts it – expect plenty of attention to have been paid to rear wings in order to maximise the potential of DRS.

So what of this ugly step in the nose that we have seen on the majority of the new cars, as predicted by Symonds when he came in to see us ahead of the team launches? "The FIA decreed that the nose height needed to be reduced and this is largely from the work that has been going on in the FIA Institute regarding the launching of cars when they run into the back of one another," he explained.

"The nose height is now considerably lower, but in doing that it would have been sensible to have lowered the height of the front bulkhead. The bulkhead is a very regulated thing – it must be a certain height, and it must be a certain height above the ground relative to the cockpit – and some teams didn't want that changed. It does leave more area under the chassis to work with and we've tried very hard to exploit that at Marussia, but couldn't get it working so have gone for something a little more conventional." As he expected, teams have tended to stick with a high front bulkhead, despite the lower nose, to allow for aero developments in this area.



New tyres, returning Räikkönen and new US track will be big draws





It looked like this year's game-changing technical innovation would be a reactive ride height system developed by both Lotus and Ferrari. The technology, which exploited brake torque to maintain a more stable ride height during deceleration, was initially given the go-ahead by the FIA but has now been banned on the grounds that it changed the aerodynamics of the car while it was moving.

"There might be something else out there that I don't know about or haven't thought about," admitted Symonds. "Assuming that isn't the case, or even if it is, the main part of work this year will be about refinement thanks to the reasonably stable set of regulations."

The tyres

The Pirelli tyres transformed the racing in 2011. Yes, the DRS helped drivers to overtake, and then on some occasions to be immediately re-passed, but it was the unpredictable tyres that made the action so exciting.

What can we expect in 2012? Thankfully Pirelli wants to continue as it did in 2011 by making tyres that will create a spectacle. However, it has changed its range of tyres this season in order to bring the compounds closer to each other in terms of performance. The aim of this is to encourage teams to try different strategies rather than to run most of the race on whichever of the two allocated compounds proves to be quickest.

"We have optimised the tyre compounds in order to guarantee even better and more stable performance, combined with the deliberate degradation that characterised the P Zero range from 2011," said Pirelli's research and development director Marco Tronchetti Provera during an Abu Dhabi media event in January. "We're expecting unpredictable races."

The tracks

Bernie Ecclestone is adamant that the Bahrain Grand Prix will go ahead this year, despite the continuing social unrest in the country. If it does, then with the arrival of the first United States Grand Prix since 2007 we're looking at the prospect of a 20-race season. This, though, was also promised last year.

The North American race will be a focus of attention. It seems unbelievable that it has taken this long for the US GP to return. There were fears that the new Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas was backing out of its agreement with Formula One Management. However, with work on the track having started once again you can now register your interest in main grandstand tickets – essentially putting down a deposit on a ticket for a hefty $100. As with Bahrain, we're going to have to wait until nearer the Grand Prix, on November 18, to know if it is definitely going to happen.

Sky will have a dedicated channel to Formula 1 that will air content all week. It's a mammoth undertaking as the content will need to keep flowing to avoid repeats.

If you don't have Sky what will you need to do, or more importantly pay, to get all this content? Because the F1 channel doesn't come with standard Sky you will need to add an extra package. If you don't have a subscription now, the cheapest way to do this is to get the HD package for £10.25 (offer available at the time of writing). With the standard Sky this will mean paying £30.25 per month. The box, dish and installation is all free (at the time of writing!).

There's good news for Virgin Media customers as the Sky F1 channel will also be available on its TV service.

Sky will produce the most comprehensive coverage of F1 ever. Whether it will be the best, remains to be seen.



INSIGHT

SKY vs BBC:
THE BATTLE OF THE BROADCASTERS

British TV viewers will have more F1 coverage than ever before in 2012. But can the BBC do a Grand Prix justice with a highlights programme? And can Sky's coverage be worthy of the extra cost?

BY ED FOSTER

COMMENTATORS



MARTIN BRUNDLE

As you may have read in Roebuck's Reflections in the March issue, it was an easy decision for Brundle to move from the BBC to Sky in the end. With his F1 history and 15 years of experience as a commentator he's a key voice and opinion to secure.



DAVID CROFT

'Crofty' took over from Maurice Hamilton as BBC Radio Five Live commentator at the beginning of 2006. He was well supported by Anthony Davidson on the radio, but it remains to be seen whether he and Martin Brundle will gel in the commentary box.



ANTHONY DAVIDSON

The ex-Peugeot sports car driver will be in the commentary box alongside David Croft during the practice sessions and will also help with expert analysis at other times on the F1 channel.

EXPERT ANALYSIS



DAMON HILL

The 1996 Formula 1 World Champion is a big signing for Sky. Hill will offer a driver's perspective on all the action and will be involved at all the races, as well as at every practice and qualifying session.

PRESENTERS



SIMON LAZENBY

Lazenby has been a Sky Sports presenter for 12 years. He might never have presented a show about motor racing before, but neither had Jake Humphrey when he first covered F1 in 2009. A solid professional to steer the Sky ship.



GEORGIE THOMPSON

The name won't mean much to many F1 aficionados, but Thompson isn't new to racing. The presenter has not only covered A1 GP, but also Grand Prix Masters, Speedway World Cup and the Race of Champions.

The Beeb has chosen 10 races to air live this year, which include the delights of Monaco, Britain, Belgium and Brazil. When coverage isn't live it will be shown in an extended highlights package – of either 90 minutes or two hours depending on race location – later that day.

For the live races, like last year, qualifying will also be shown and the practice sessions will all be on the red button. As will the very popular post-race F1 forum, which will be on for an hour after the action has finished.

In terms of timings for the non-live events, if the race is in a Far East time zone – and on very early in the UK – highlights will be shown at 2pm. For the races that usually run in the early afternoon a 90 minutes highlight show will be aired at 5.30pm.

Got all that? Well, it gets a little more complicated. When the races are live on BBC One there will also be a one-hour highlights show on BBC Three and BBC HD later that evening. If the races start before 10am then they will be repeated in their entirety on terrestrial TV later that day.

Bottom line? The BBC will be doing some brilliant coverage this year and if you want to know when it's on, have a look at *Radio Times* or its equivalent. As long as you know which races are being shown live you're halfway there.

COMMENTATORS



BEN EDWARDS

He's stepping into Brundle's shoes as lead commentator and for some, his return to F1 couldn't have happened soon enough. He commentated for Eurosport's F1 coverage in the '90s and has most recently been commentating on the British Touring Car Championship.



DAVID COULTHARD

After 15 years of racing in F1 Coulthard joined the BBC in 2009 as an F1 pundit. He's been a great success and has added a voice of reason alongside the excitable Eddie Jordan. Hopefully he will be as good in the commentary box with Ben Edwards as he was with Brundle.

EXPERT ANALYSIS



EDDIE JORDAN

Some people don't have much time for Jordan, while others can't wait for him to give his – usually strong – opinion. Either way, he's a key member of the BBC's three musketeers (Humphrey/Coulthard/Jordan) and while he may be more jokey Porthos than insightful Athos, he has a unique perspective having run Jordan GP from 1991 to '05.





GARY ANDERSON

A new recruit, but he will certainly be speaking from experience having been an F1 technical director for 13 years. He's not new to broadcasting either, having previously worked on Ireland's RTE, Setanta and Asia's Star Sports coverage.

PRESENTER



JAKE HUMPHREY

He's the cornerstone of the BBC's coverage and commands the anchor role with consummate ease. As an Olympics presenter for the Beeb, he'll miss the Hungarian GP this year.



STEVE RIDER

We all remember Rider from the days when he hosted the F1 coverage on ITV, and before that on the BBC, too. He's now at Sky and will be presenting the *Grand Prix Legends* show, which will feature in-depth interviews with racing stars from the past and present.

REPORTERS



TED KRAVITZ

Alongside co-presenting the magazine show with Thompson, the ex-BBC F1 pitlane reporter will bring news, interviews and insight from the paddock, as he did for the Beeb and ITV before that.



NATALIE PINKHAM

Pinkham will partner Kravitz in the paddock to help bring news and insight. The ex-BBC Radio F1 pitlane reporter has spent the past seven years presenting and alongside covering the likes of the NFL for Channel Five, she also presented *TT races* for Men & Motors in 2005.

REPORTER



LEE McKENZIE

She always gets the interviews you need, which is partly down to being in the right place at the right time, but perhaps more to do with every F1 driver and team knowing and trusting her. She will step in to the anchor role when Jake Humphrey is on Olympics duty.

BBC FIVE LIVE



JAMES ALLEN

Allen divides opinion, but with 20 years experience as a writer and broadcaster he'll be able to keep things in perspective when taking on the role of lead commentator on BBC Five Live.



JENNIE GOW

Gow will step into Natalie Pinkham's role of pitlane reporter. She was the presenter for the BBC's MotoGP TV coverage in 2010 and will be a safe pair of hands. She has experience in this role as a stand-in for Pinkham last year.

Interview with...
Simon Lazenby

Are you worried going into a new and very specialised sport?
It's going to be a big change and a new challenge. I am not there to tell you about the minutiae of an F1 car; if you're looking for experts, we have seasoned F1 broadcasters and experts in the field.

I've been at Sky Sports presenting for over a decade now, and although F1 is a new area, I hope that the presenting skills, know-how and drive required to do any sport justice haven't changed.

There have been plenty of people saying they won't get Sky – does that worry you at all?
I think the proof will be in the pudding. Sky Sports has been an influence on and investor in sport for over 20 years, and the effect that a broadcast partnership with Sky can have on a sport is well documented.

When people see and hear what the Sky Sports treatment has done for F1, then I hope that anyone who isn't sure about subscribing will find themselves re-considering it.

Can Sky really provide enough content to run an F1 channel without too many repeats?
Definitely. What the ordinary viewer has seen of F1 so far barely scratches the surface of a true Grand Prix experience. Sky will be the first broadcaster to be permitted by FOM to go off-feed and broadcast our own feed from the pit lane, the garages and the team HQs.

How are you finding it so far?
We've been busy! I went to the Brazilian GP and spent the weekend in the Marussia garage, or Virgin as it was. They were a great bunch of lads and I learnt loads. I also got put through the wringer at McLaren where they made me take the driver fitness test. I am pleased to announce that I was 0.9 per cent away from being clinically obese!

We've been trying to get round as many teams as possible and working on all programmes ready for the launch of the channel on March 9.

What can viewers expect when you go live at the first race in Melbourne?
We hope people will be blown away! Our coverage will be unique. The BBC and ITV have both done a great job in the past and of course it's a high standard to follow, but F1 is in very safe hands.

Our interactive (red button) coverage, alongside a companion app, and the fact that you can watch all this live on mobile and tablet devices using Sky Go will, I hope, evolve the way we watch F1.

2012 F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

Mar 18	Australia, *Melbourne*	Jun 24	Europe, *Valencia*	Oct 7	Japan, *Suzuka*
Mar 25	Malaysia, *Kuala Lumpur*	Jul 8	British, *Silverstone*	Oct 14	Korea, *Yeongam*
Apr 15	China, *Shanghai*	Jul 22	Germany, *Hockenheim*	Oct 28	India, *New Delhi*
Apr 22	Bahrain, *Sakhir*	Jul 29	Hungary, *Budapest*	Nov 4	Abu Dhabi, *Yas Marina*
May 13	Spain, *Catalunya*	Sep 2	Belgium, *Spa*	Nov 18	United States, *Austin*
May 27	Monaco, *Monte Carlo*	Sep 9	Italy, *Monza*	Nov 25	Brazil, *São Paulo*
Jun 10	Canada, *Montréal*	Sep 23	Singapore, *Singapore*		

■ GRANDS PRIX LIVE ON SKY ONLY ■ GRANDS PRIX LIVE ON SKY AND BBC

Interview with...
Jake Humphrey

Can you really get everything into a highlights programme?
If you really love the sport then you want to see every single lap, but for most people, to miss out maybe 10 laps from a Grand Prix is not the worst thing in the world.

Most GPs are about an hour and a half long and for our 2pm re-run programmes we have got a two-hour window to put that programme into. There will not be a single iconic moment in 2012 that BBC viewers will miss out on.

How much pressure is there after the award-winning coverage over the past three years?
The awards pale into insignificance if on a Monday morning, when you get the viewing figures through for the weekend, you have only got a few thousand rather than a few million people watching.

I'm hoping that after the first couple of races of the year we are inundated with messages from people saying 'it's not live, but the BBC has done a bloody good job and I'm more than happy with it'.

What sort of fan are you aiming for – the hardcore or the more casual?
We're not shying away from the hardcore fan, but our job is to provide F1 coverage that appeals to the masses, not a niche.

Stirling Moss is really excited by our coverage and if someone like that enjoyed it, and so does my granny, I think we've hit the nail on the head!

Are you exited about the new team at the BBC?
We now have three people who know what it takes to win a Grand Prix. I don't think anybody is going to be able to rival a team designer (Anderson), a team owner (Jordan) and a driver (Coulthard).

I'm equally excited about Ben Edwards because I think he is the strongest motor sport commentator in the country. Of course, I loved working with Martin (Brundle) and Ted (Kravitz) and they are going to be a sad loss.

How much does the rivalry between Sky and the BBC concern you?
We can't afford to miss a beat now because if we come off air and miss the story and Sky has got it, it reflects badly on us.

Is the choice actually a good thing for Formula 1 fans?
It's not necessarily a bad thing. I know for people who can't afford Sky it is. It's also a bad thing that they're losing live races on the BBC, but it's our job to soften the blow by making the highlights programme as good as possible.

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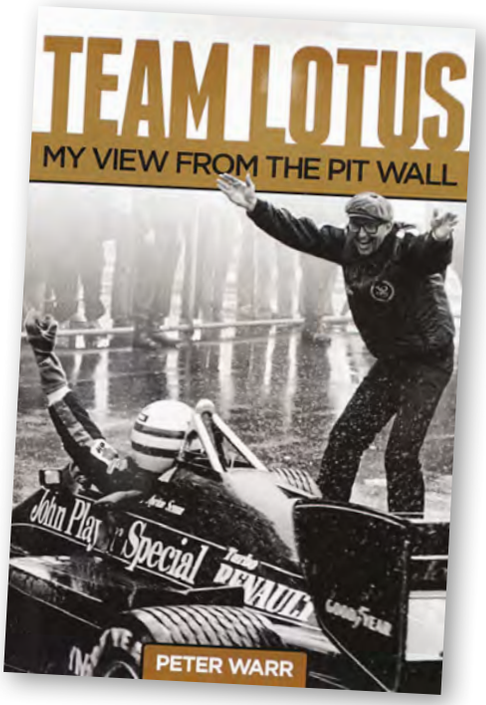
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Stephen Hayward



The maverick who refused to play the game

He was racing's blue-eyed boy: effortless speed, natural confidence, a Grand Prix driver at 19. Mike Thackwell had talent to throw away – and that's what he did, to go surfing instead

BY ROB WIDDOWS



If you knew him then, you would not know him now. He is a different man in a different world. A maverick, intellectually restless, a loner, blessed from birth with a prodigious talent. A man of many and complex parts. The swagger of youth has gone, but the inner confidence remains. Those famous blue eyes are the giveaway, the limp in the left leg, the long blonde hair under a woolly hat. The intelligence and determination, while undiminished, have long ago been applied far away from racing cars.

Mike Thackwell, racing driver, possessed an extraordinary talent, one of the truly gifted. But we never saw what he might eventually have achieved. He arrived out of nowhere, dazzled us, and disappeared.

When I first met him, at Thruxton more than 30 years ago, he could do no wrong. The media called him a 'teenage sensation', and so he was. Remember the dashing power slides, the red helmet with the big white 'T' on the front? If you were there, you do.









An F1 seat aged 19 – but no place on the grid. Left, from top: Alan Jones helped in F3; Tyrrell ride brought frustrations; Zandvoort '80 was a tough F1 baptism

Famously the youngest man ever to start a Grand Prix, until Jaime Alguersuari came along, Thackwell somehow missed out on the top-line Formula 1 seat that surely should have been his. Having gone through Formula Ford, F3 and F2 like a comet across a night sky he was pipped to the 1985 Formula 3000 title, before moving into sports cars with Mercedes and Jaguar, and briefly Indycar with Penske. Then, at the age of 26, he walked away. Just like that, not a glance over his shoulder.

Why, I often wondered, had he done that? And where was he now, this enigmatic New Zealander who turned his back on what was surely destined to be an exceptional career? By some strange quirk of fate, I discover he's living very simply, and very happily, a mere few miles from me down by the sea in the South of England.

"*I b at pub in couple o minutes.....m.*" reads the text on my phone. And sure enough, two minutes later, he parks his bicycle – he no longer has a car – and joins me at the bar. We'd tried to meet before but he was up in London on a protest march against cuts in education. Mike Thackwell 2012 is a special needs supply teacher (he has a severely autistic son) and also a part-time barman. And surfer. A good south-westerly swell has long been more important to him than a perfect lap. This is an all-round interesting bloke who, I learn, no longer has any passion for motor racing and is happiest in the sea, or buried in a book.

"Nope. Can't remember the last time I saw a race of any kind. Just doesn't interest me any more. Seems to me it's all about money – and technology. But I'm happy to chat about the old days because the whole point of it for me was that it was fun, that it was an amusing and enjoyable thing to be doing," he says, taking a sip of his whisky and water.

"At least it was until I saw the inside of Formula 1 – and I didn't like it. I wasn't interested in the money, the politics, the sponsors and the safety campaigns – always thought it was too safe anyway. Perhaps I was too young. Maybe I should have been born earlier, raced in the 1950s, before the war even. People like Rudi Caracciola, Tazio Nuvolari, Stirling Moss and Gilles Villeneuve were my heroes. Now what they did *was* dangerous, quite extraordinary, amazing. *That's* how I thought racing should be."

Maybe we should go back a few steps, I suggest? Born in New Zealand, then a move to Australia, then over to England, a waltz through Formula Ford at just 16 years old, into F3 and on and on. What does he remember of those early days?

"You know, it was so easy for me, right from when I started racing bikes and karts in Australia." He looks at me a little diffidently. "I'm not being arrogant, but the speed came so easily, it was such a great crack, good fun. I had no fear, none of it was difficult for me, and I learnt how to race in karts. There were always cars around; my dad was an amateur racer when he had some money, and we were always making things, mending things, messing around with cars. It was part of my childhood but my dad never pushed me; there was no desperate ambition, we just had a good time – bit of racing, bit of surfing – it was good. Then we went to England to have a crack at Formula Ford. My dad found some sponsorship, and things began to go well."

Have a crack he certainly did, immediately on the pace and on the podium. People sat up, made a note of the name.





Above, return to form after his crash: back with Ralt for '83, Mike leads team-mate Jonathan Palmer but loses out on F2 title. Far right: smiles all round in F3000 year – but maybe there's more to it than a mere joke…





All images LAT

"It was fun, and I knew I could beat the other guys," he smiles almost apologetically. "I'd already said to myself – 'there's 25 guys in the world racing F1 cars and, if I could do that, then I should do that.' We looked after our own cars; I was teamed up with James Weaver, and we taught at the Scorpion Racing School together. He could build engines, fix just about anything, and we were always experimenting with stuff. James was the master of what we called the 'big send', attacking a corner at right angles, big slide on – probably not the most technical way to do it, but he was the master of that. He'd fly past me, throw his car into a huge slide right in front of me, crazy. They were good times."

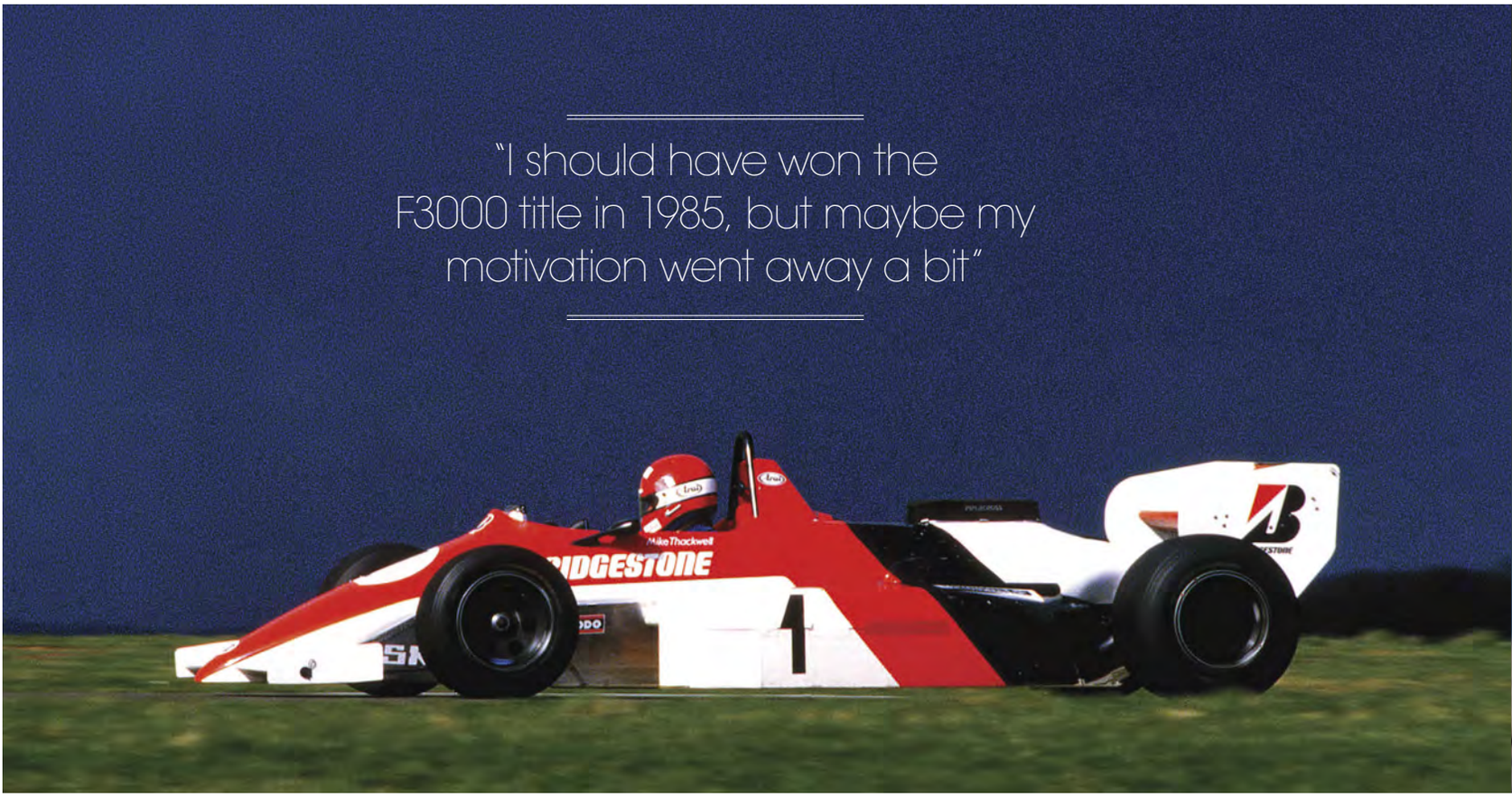
Thackwell's early career was nothing less than meteoric. In 1979, at the age of just 18, he was instantly a front-runner in the Vandervell F3 series, taking five wins in a works March 793, beating the likes of Alain Prost, Nigel Mansell and Kenny Acheson. When times were hard Alan Jones helped him out with some cash and he was the talk of the town. Predictably, March took him into F2 for 1980, in the works BMW-powered 802, where he impressed again but with frustratingly few results and too many retirements. But he'd put in some brilliant drives, attracting F1 offers from Ensign when Clay Regazzoni was injured – which he turned down – and from Arrows which he accepted, standing in for an injured Jochen Mass at Zandvoort.

"That was tough," he laughs. "I'd never sat in the car before practice and the ground effects, with those skirts, made it so heavy to drive. My neck was all over the place and I struggled to hang on to it through the long right-hander on to the straight. But I loved that run down and into Tarzan, a great corner, and we only just failed to make the grid."

By half a second in fact, and 1.32sec behind Riccardo Patrese who'd driven the car all year. This performance came to the notice of Ken Tyrrell who offered Mike a third car for Montréal and Watkins Glen at the end of the year.

"Yeah, it all happened so quickly, and maybe I hadn't grown up enough at that stage – I mean, I was 19 years old, for God's sake – and there I was on the grid for the Canadian Grand Prix. But I deserved to be there, I knew I was quick enough, I had the respect of the other guys and I was confident I could do the job. Anyway, I sat on the back row in the Tyrrell, and there – just two places ahead of me – was Gilles Villeneuve, an absolute hero of mine. He was how a racing driver should be, head and shoulders above the rest of them, I reckoned. In the drivers briefings he didn't pay much attention to all the talk of safety… He kind of sat there looking a bit bored, slightly amused by it all. Anyway, it was the time of a tyre war, and so the grid was all mixed up. The Michelins weren't working well in the cold weather, and Villeneuve should have been way further up the grid. Jody Scheckter didn't even qualify and I thought 'this F1 is crazy' – both Jody and Gilles were way more experienced than me.

"Anyway, at the start, there was this big accident, cars all over the road, so I slowed down, drove around it, and thought I was in with a chance. Then the race was stopped. Ken said he'd have to take the car off me as both [Jean-Pierre] Jarier and [Derek] Daly's cars were too badly damaged to take the re-start. OK, Ken was a good man, very straightforward, and I understood there was pressure from



"I should have won the F3000 title in 1985, but maybe my motivation went away a bit"

sponsors and he needed the points. But it was disappointing and I wondered if I really wanted to get involved in all that kind of stuff, the politics, the money and the blinkered world they lived in. Maybe I was too young, maybe I should have taken advice from someone like Stirling Moss, an older and more experienced person for whom I had enormous respect."

At Watkins Glen he retired early in the race but had made his mark. For 1981 he returned to F2 with Ralt where he began a long and fruitful relationship with Ron Tauranac. The Honda-powered RH6/81 was the class of the field, Thackwell was hot favourite to win the title, and he duly won the opening round at Silverstone from pole. This was followed by a third at Hockenheim. After his flirtation with F1 he was back in his element.

"I enjoyed being at Ralt, working with the mechanics, working with Ron. These were the guys that kept me in the sport for as long as I stayed, people like Alan Howell and Ian Dyer who looked after my car. I can't mention them all but it was such a good racing team and Ron was a real hands-on guy, a great draughtsman. He'd come along with his pencil, make a mark exactly where he wanted a setting on a pushrod, or a track rod, and he always knew exactly what he wanted down to the last millimetre.

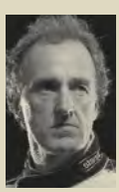
One thing I loved about Ron was that he let me race my off-road bikes – my mechanic Alan and I used to race pretty much every other weekend – and he'd let me drive anything in my spare time. And only Ron would have allowed Alan and I to put a Fablon aeroplane sticker on the car every time I won a race. We had a lot of good times. He paid me £5000 to race for him – that's all I wanted. I wasn't in it for the money, though Ron did say it should have been a bit more. He was a true friend and did a lot for me."

In April 1981 the Formula 2 teams went to Thruxton for the third round of the series. On the fast sweeping turns of the Hampshire circuit a Ralt was the car to have and Mike's confidence was sky-high. But, in practice ahead of the Easter Monday race, it all went wrong.

INSIGHT

ARTIST, GENIUS, FREE SPIRIT

Thackwell's co-instructor and his favourite team manager recall a man of parts



JAMES WEAVER came through Formula Ford with Mike Thackwell, and in 1978 both men were instructors at Mike Eastick's Scorpion Racing School at Thruxton. He realised early on that the New Zealander was something special.

"Boy, could he drive! Mike was a real artist, an absolute genius behind the wheel. He could just look at a corner and know the quickest way round. He won in F3, having only competed in a handful of FF1600 races, and in F2 he was just devastating. Mike was going to be the Ayrton Senna of his day. Before the F2 accident at Thruxton he was head and shoulders above everyone, and after it he was simply just as good as the best. Before the shunt he'd just rock up at a corner and have at it. After the accident, he told me that he'd have to think about the braking point, he needed more reference points, so he drove more like a mere mortal!

"He was just so good – but he hated the corporate side of it. At Sauber, when they had the Kouros aftershave sponsorship, he was offered a king's ransom to race that car, but he said they'd have to paint it silver first – he wasn't going to race a glorified perfume billboard. He loved the history of Mercedes; he was a great traditionalist.

"The accident changed the way he expressed himself. In the early days he was very organised, obsessed with the racing, but he didn't like the atmosphere in F1. He just didn't want to live that kind of life.

"Mike had the most mesmerising blue eyes, and the speed at which he processed information, the massive intelligence, was palpable. He was in a different league; he had



Mike Thackwell, teacher and surfer – and a million miles from the F1 world. Left: Back with Ralt for F3000 in '85

"I knew the track like the back of my hand," Mike tells me, with a big smile. "I'd been an instructor there with the Scorpion school. I was feeling so confident, pretty blasé to be honest, and we'd tested there a lot. I knew I could walk that race, nobody was going to touch me that year, that's how I felt. Going into practice I told Ron I'd try the stiff set-up we'd talked about. He warned me that the hard dampers and springs, on hard Pirellis, might cause the car to bottom out over the bumps. He told me to take it easy. But, hey, I wasn't worried, just wanted to get out there. So Geoff [Lees] and I went out, Geoff was in front of me, and I started chasing him, throwing the car around a bit. There was no way he was going to be quicker than me. Then, all of a sudden, I was going beyond that limit that all drivers sometimes go beyond – you have to – like Villeneuve, or Senna, they were often over that limit, in that special zone. But, at the fast bit out the back I hit a bump, lost it, simple as that, and hit a marshals post very hard. My head hit the steering wheel; it was a heavy blow, my helmet cracked. I don't remember very much after that. It was just bad luck, the post being where it was.

"The car folded up like a banana. I was a bit beaten up, and they took me to hospital. My left leg, heel and ankle were smashed up and I wasn't in great shape for a while. Ron said it was his fault, he shouldn't have let me put the hard set-up on the car, but I told him: 'don't be stupid, I made a mistake, hands up. I just lost it, no excuses'."

Recovery from this lasted for months, any hope of the title gone, and Mike began to think a little differently about his racing. Tauranac wasn't convinced of his fitness at the end of '81 and he was forced to look elsewhere. A major setback for the young man who'd already had a tempting taste of F1.

"Yeah, I did change after that," he says. "Nothing to do with safety, that never bothered me, but I needed to grow up, and other aspects of my life began to be more important. I hadn't really had time to grow up, so while I was out of the car and when I got back I was changing as a person, and I guess that was the ➤➤➤

so much feel for the car and the grip available in the tyres or the track.

"One day at Thruxton we were running the school cars round, I got under the lap record in my Hawke and was feeling on top of the world. Later on that day Mike Eastick asked Thackwell to go out and show everybody how to do it. So he jumped in the car wearing shorts and sandals, came flying down into the Complex, inch-perfect, four-wheel drift, no opposite lock – and I thought: 'Oh, I'm nowhere near that good. How can you do that without even a sighting lap?' It was just amazing how good he was. And hugely respected; he had an inner decency, a strong moral core. I think perhaps the politics and commercial side of the sport didn't sit easily with him. Maybe this diluted the joy of racing for him, enough for him to walk away."



RON TAURANAC, whose Honda-powered Ralts dominated F2, played a vital role in Thackwell's career. From his home in Bondi Junction the Australian engineer gives us a typically even-handed view of his young protégé.

"Mike had a huge natural talent and could have gone a lot further as a driver. He never got into a top F1 team; he needed a good manager who would have found him better placements. But he was a bit different; his heroes were always the great pre-war drivers, and he just enjoyed getting in the car and driving it. So, while he may not have been the most technical of drivers, he had this tremendous natural ability. He really shone at places like Pau, where it's difficult to go fast and not shunt. He always out-raced everyone there.

"I let him go off and race his bikes, he and Alan (Howell). Mike was always a free spirit, loved to race, but just needed a bit more management.

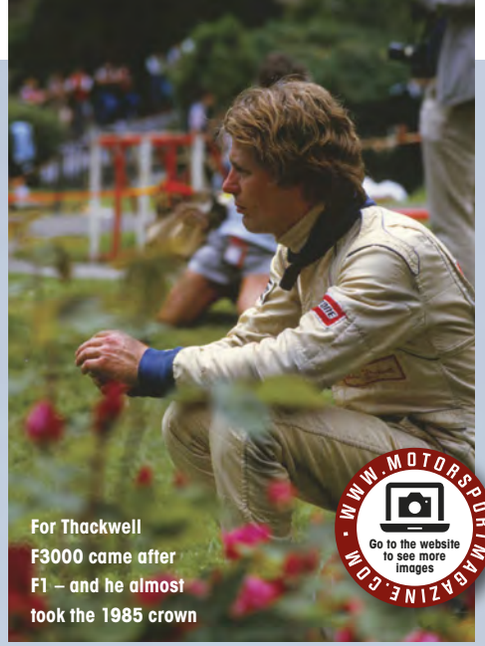
"It's true that he was affected by the accident at Thruxton; it was a year before he fully recovered. He wasn't the same driver for the rest of that season and I don't think anyone realised how much he'd been affected by the head injury. If it wasn't for that accident he could have gone a long way.

"Mike's a very astute person too, and I know he was already doing some charitable works for youngsters when he was racing for us in F2. Whatever Mike did, he did well. He's intelligent – and a nice guy, too."

beginning of me seeing a life away from motor racing. The racing somehow didn't seem so important any more, not as fundamental to my life as it had been through the early years when it was all I wanted, all I thought about. Looking back, I was in a bubble, very self-centred, and the accident somehow changed me."

In fact Mike returned to Ralt in 1983 after a year with the Horag March 822 which produced sporadic results on a very small budget. His return to Ralt saw him forced to play second fiddle to Jonathan Palmer, a deal he'd agreed in advance with Tauranac. He was getting back to his best, chased Palmer hard for the title, and then, in 1984, he simply ran away with the F2 championship. In a league of his own in the Ralt RH6/84, he took six poles, nine fastest laps and won seven of the 11 races while leading 408 of the 580 laps that were run that year.

"That felt good, yeah, and I was enjoying the driving. That car was so good, too quick for the formula really, too easy in some ways," he smiles, ready to surprise me again. "I always raced best when things were tough, when conditions were against me. My best drives came when things were as difficult as they could be. At Spa in 1985 the F3000 race was on the same weekend as the Grand Prix, the track was breaking up, the F1 boys refused to race and went home on the Saturday. What the hell was that about? Just confirmed my view of F1, you know, because I was there to race. That's what we'd gone there to do. Ron wasn't that keen but said it was up to the drivers and most of us were ready to give it a go. In the race I went off a couple of times, most people did, but I won, and that was one of my best-ever races because the track conditions were so difficult. I should have won the title that year, and after that maybe my motivation went away a bit."



For Thackwell F3000 came after F1 – and he almost took the 1985 crown

"I'd had enough; I went to fly helicopters, and helping my dad digging for gold"

More F1 cameos with RAM and Tyrrell had led to nothing, but he made sports car forays too, for Jaguar and then Mercedes with whom he won the 1986 Nürburgring 1000Kms partnering Henri Pescarolo. But by the end of 1987 he'd walked away from racing.

"Hey, those Merc sports cars were *so* quick, loads of grip, great to drive," he says. "But I'd had enough. I quit racing and went to fly helicopters in the North Sea oilfields. That was good. And I spent some time back in Australia helping my dad with his gold exploration. I tell you, digging for gold is hard work."

As we continue chatting in the winter chill, Mike puffs at his pipe, sips a Famous Grouse, flicks through a few photos. Here's a man content to be who he is and where he is. We ramble away from racing cars, to Hippocrates and Socrates, to our mutual fascination with the mysteries of the human condition. A deep thinker, Mike has little time or patience with what might have been.

"Look, you gotta understand," he says, looking me very straight in the eye. "It's been nice getting together again after 30 years, talking about the good times, but F1 just wasn't going to be my life. There seems to be so little integrity, so little appreciation of the privileges – why would an F1 star want to do a TV ad for a big bank rather than campaign for better road safety? They live in a bubble. It's beyond me. You have to be tough to walk away and yes, maybe I do regret letting the fans down. They still send me photos to sign. But the things I saw in F1, and the people… they were not for me."

I try to picture him in Monaco, Boss-suited with Ray-Bans and Rolex in place, and a few smart sentences for the sponsors.

Forget it, let's check out the waves.




BENTLEY
BREITLING
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7



An Audi with a roof? Put a lid on it...

Bentley conquered Le Mans all over again in 2003 with this stunning Speed 8. Just don't suggest it's a German car in disguise...

BY ANDREW FRANKEL

Unalloyed triumphs are rare events. With almost every victory comes a tinge of regret, a sense not just of a job well done, but ways in which it could have been done even better. Bentley's successful three-year campaign to win the Le Mans 24 Hours at the start of this century is the perfect case in point.

The history books show that at its first attempt, Team Bentley placed third in 2001, a podium position behind two realistically unstoppable works Audi R8s. In 2002 with just one car entered, it came fourth and once more first car home behind the factory R8s. In 2003 with only private R8s to contend with, two Bentleys entered, placing first and second. In all three attempts, amounting to well over 100 hours of racing, one car retired due to freak weather conditions, but none was ever pushed back into the pit garage for repairs. Indeed the winning Speed 8 in 2003 spent a grand total of 17 unscheduled seconds in the pits, an unparalleled achievement in the history of the race. Who could want for more?

The source of dissatisfaction is two-fold, neither being the obvious fact that Bentley didn't win every Le Mans it entered. I was in their pits for the duration of all three races and not once was there any sense that the team was punching below its weight. Indeed most of the time they exceeded every expectation. I know, for instance, that the never-communicated internal goal for 2001 was for one car to get home in the top 10. A podium was undreamt of. No, what still rankles in certain Bentley circles to this day is, first, that the team did not defend the victory in 2004 and, second, that the perception still exists that the EXP Speed 8 (or Speed 8 as the 2003 car was known) was actually an Audi R8 with a roof.

On the first point I can remember at the time quizzing Bentley's Franz-Josef Paefgen, then chairman of Bentley and in charge of all VW's motorsports projects, about his decision not to go back to Le Mans in 2004 when it appeared clear the Speed 8s would have to do little more than turn up to be assured of a second triumph.

I remember pontificating about how no one remembers a single Le Mans win – citing BMW's 1999 victory as an example – and how as WO proved in the '20s, if you're to derive real value from a campaign you need to win and win again, leaving an indelible mark on the event as Jaguar, Ford, Ferrari, Porsche and now Audi have done. His view, expressed with impressive candour, was that I was being naïve: the purpose of the project was to help transform the image of the company ahead of the late 2003 launch of the all-new Continental GT road car, the machine that would entirely transform Bentley's business. That job had been done and millions spent not just on racing but also designing the road car and rebuilding the factory: now it was time to sell some cars and gain a return on that investment.

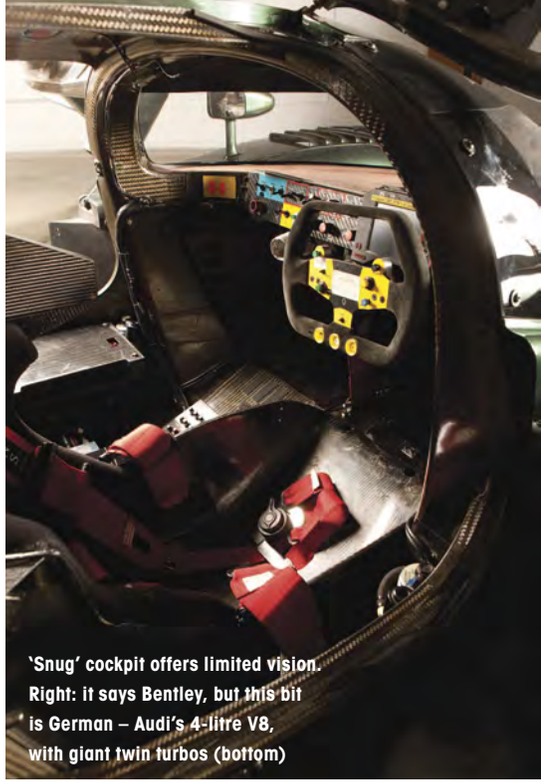
As for suggestions that the Speed 8 was an R8 coupé, genuine bafflement exists even today. "I guess we just didn't do that great a job communicating it at the time," says Bentley's engineering guru Brian Gush who was instrumental in the entire project from its earliest days and, with Paefgen's predecessor Tony Gott, probably campaigned harder and for longer than anyone to get Bentley to La Sarthe. Brian's killer fact, which I don't remember from any press release, is that there was more British content in the Audi than there was German content in the Bentley. "But people saw that we used an Audi engine, knew we both belonged to the same group and came to some inevitable and entirely wrong conclusions."

A man with an even greater right to be cheesed off with this perception is Peter Elleray, the man who designed both the 2001-02 EXP Speed 8 and the all-conquering 2003 Speed 8.

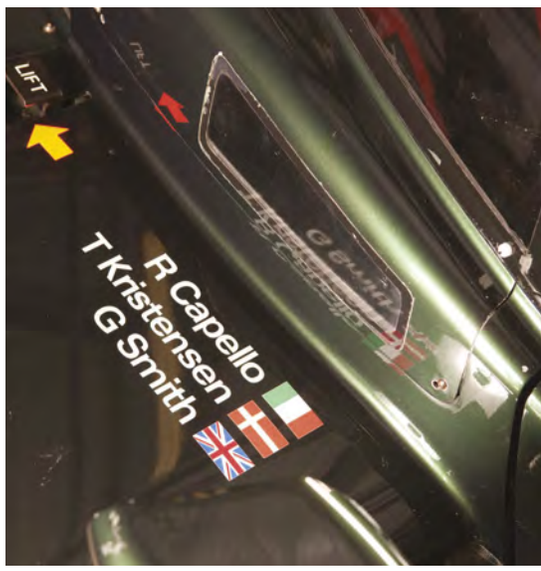
"It's just sheer bloody ignorance," he says, still railing against the notion well over a decade later. "It's true the R8C was designed at RTN," he says, referring to the Audi coupé that proved completely inadequate at Le Mans in 1999 and Racing Technology Norfolk, the factory where the racing Bentleys were created. "So yes, we had that knowledge. But engine aside, there was not a single thing on the Bentley that had anything to do with the R8C or, indeed, any other Audi."

So how did it all start? Though rumours had been flying for a while, the first the public knew that Bentley's lifetime of waiting to return to Le Mans was shortly to end came in a release dated November 4, 2000.

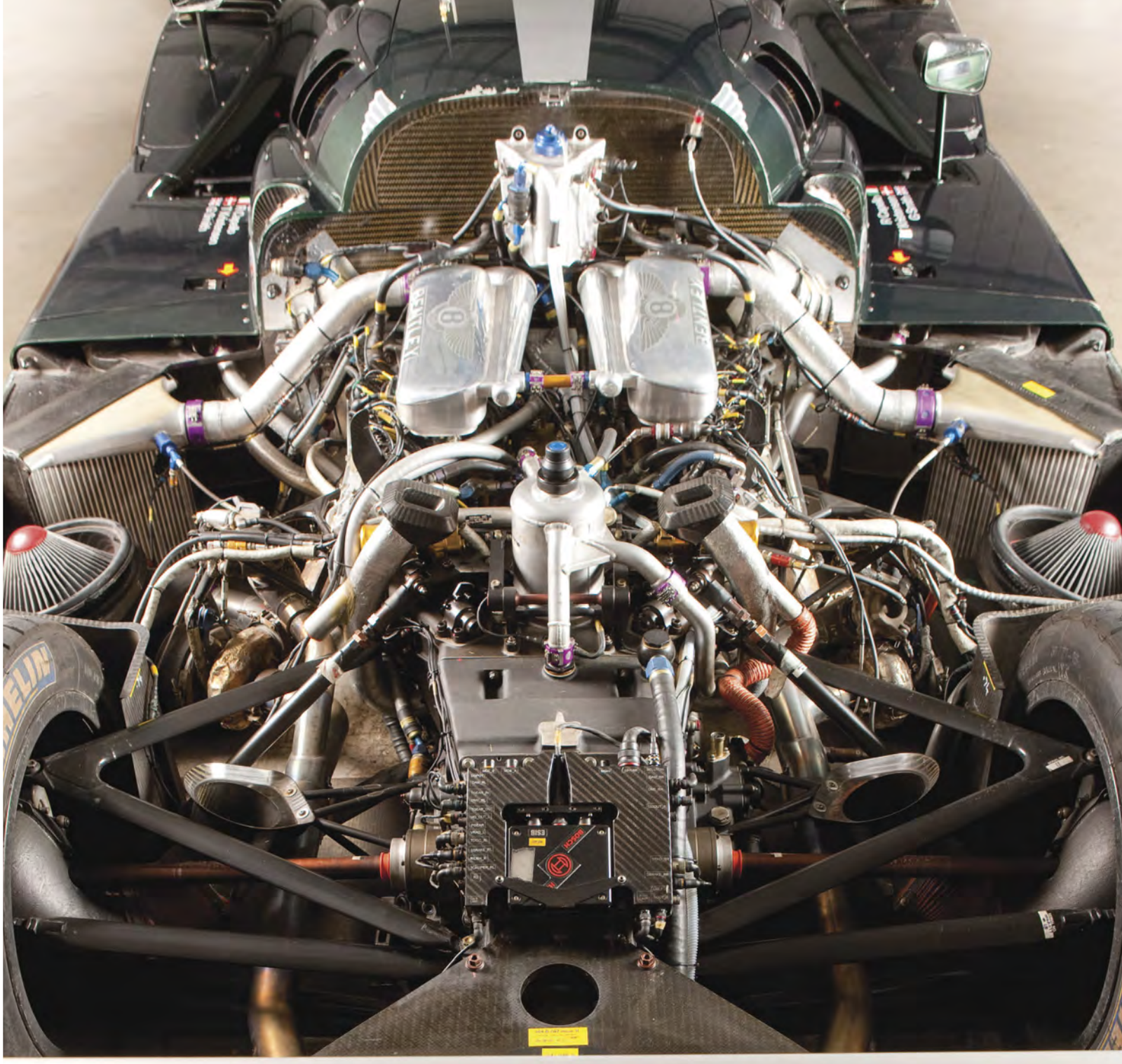
Two cars would contest the race the following summer. Unlike any others in the race, they would be closed prototypes and while they'd be tested and raced by the late Richard Lloyd's Apex Motorsports, the contract to build and develop the cars went to RTN in facilities that house – at least for now – the Caterham



'Snug' cockpit offers limited vision. Right: it says Bentley, but this bit is German – Audi's 4-litre V8, with giant twin turbos (bottom)







Matthew Howell

Formula 1 team. Outwardly Bentley Motors, RTN and Apex would come together to form Team Bentley, but internally the return to Le Mans was always known as 'Project Barnato' after Bentley's former chairman and still the only man to race at Le Mans just three times, and win every one of them. The steering committee was led by Gush.

The decision to make a closed car was the result of a careful balance of attributes. On the downside it would be more complex because of the screen, wiper and door systems, it would carry more of its weight higher up, the rules mandated it had to have narrower tyres and pitstops would take longer. On the other hand, there was a larger restrictor, a smoother route for the air to take to the rear wing, and while the narrower tyres meant less mechanical grip, they impeded air flow under the car less, so this could be balanced by better aerodynamics. It would also look nothing like an Audi R8.

There were problems from the outset. Audi couldn't supply any engines until March, so the car spent most of its development powered by a Ford DFR unit which had similar power but a fraction of the torque of the Audi turbo. James Weaver was enlisted to do all the testing but quit the team long before the race. So one car would be driven by sports car stalwarts Andy Wallace, Butch Leitzinger and Eric van de Poele, the other by none other than Martin Brundle, partnered by Stephane Ortelli and a relatively unknown youngster, Guy Smith.

The official Le Mans test went well; too well according to some. Brundle put in a lap that placed the Bentley far closer to the Audi R8s than anyone had expected, Audi included. Yet come qualifying for the actual race some weeks later, he couldn't get within 2sec of the time. Conspiracy theories abounded about the health of Audi's race engines relative to the test weekend units.

> "Even on the Stowe circuit I could glimpse why the drivers loved this car so much"

Even so, Brundle still managed to startle everyone by leading the race at the end of the first hour: it was raining, the car running on Dunlops which had had almost no wet weather development compared to the Michelins on all the other front-runners; but some canny tyre choice by team manager John Wickham and Brundle's talents allowed Bentley, briefly, to head the field.

But euphoria soon turned to despair as the car retired with Smith at the wheel, stuck in sixth gear at Arnage. Water had got into and scrambled the gearbox actuator; worse, the second car was showing symptoms of the same problem. What happened next has become part of Bentley lore. Leitzinger got stuck in gear too, but mercifully only fourth, which allowed him, just, to get to the pits. There the actuator was changed and the water's ingress stopped by the strategic positioning of the top of a bottle of mineral water. Thereafter the car ran near-flawlessly to the flag, and third position. Richard Lloyd, among many others, shed tears of joy.

The 2002 race was one of consolidation. Bentley knew it needed a new car to keep up with the Audi R8, of which three works units were entered. So just one EXP Speed 8 took the start, crewed by the same team that had come third the year before. And once more they



were best of the rest behind the works R8s, but this time that meant just fourth.

And so to the 2003 season and Peter Elleray's Speed 8. "I'd had the idea for the car a while back," he says, "but I didn't feel well enough established to stand there in the early days and state 'this is what we need'. But after the 2001/2002 cars, things were rather different. I expect we told Dr Paefgen we were going to do a comprehensive update. In fact we started again from scratch."

It was as bold as its predecessor had been conservative and it would be driven by an almost completely new set of drivers. One car would be allocated to Johnny Herbert, Mark Blundell and David Brabham (Allan McNish had been approached but had chosen not to give up his Renault F1 testing contract), the other to Tom Kristensen and Dindo Capello, on loan from the works Audi team currently on sabbatical from sports car racing. They would be joined by the sole survivor from the EXP Speed 8, Guy Smith, who'd sat out 2002 as Bentley test driver and turned down many top drives as a result. The reward for such loyalty would be as great as it was deserved.

The Speed 8s went to Sebring, the first time a works Bentley had raced in America since a car was entered into the 1922 Indy 500 and came last. In qualifying the cars destroyed the field, but still started from the back because of a technical infringement that almost certainly harmed their performance. The R8s had no such problem and fled, leaving the Bentleys too much work to do on the tight, twisting circuit. A dozen hours later they were, yet again, best of the rest in third and fourth behind the Audis. It was becoming a habit.

The story of Le Mans 2003 is swiftly told. Capello qualified the lead Speed 8 almost three seconds faster than the quickest (privateer) R8, Kristensen started the race and took a lead which the car still held 24 hours later when Smith drove it over the line to win. The second car, after a smattering of small but annoying issues, came second, three laps clear of the closest R8.

Interestingly, while there was much satisfaction in the team at the victory, the scenes of wild jubilation that broke out in 2001 were nowhere to be seen: celebrations were almost muted by comparison. And it is easy to see why: that year and for the first time, Bentley had the best car, the best team – with assistance from Audi's respected Joest squad – the best drivers and little comparable competition: anything less than victory would have been defeat. In 2001 in particular, equipped with a good but not great car, the new team punched monstrously above its weight to achieve a result of which few would have dared to dream.

And as for that much discussed return to Le Mans in 2004, while Gush would have loved to go back and at the time put forward a formal proposal to do just that, Elleray puts a different spin on the subject: "Do you know what I'd have hated? Going back in 2004 but without the likes of Tom and Dindo who were still on Audi contracts, without the best pit crew because the Joest boys had gone with them, with customer engines and a non-works tyre contract. Funnily enough I think we might still have won it, because the Speed 8 was so good, straight out of the box. We set it up but did very little development work on it. What ran for the first time in January 2003 is pretty much what won the race in June. But that was the perfect race. We could never have done any better. If you've got to stop somewhere, where better than right at the top?"

So it is to Bentley's eternal credit that it has kept the Speed 8s working and to my eternal good fortune that late last year, Gush rang and said, "remind me how tall you are."

I'd never driven a modern sports prototype before. My first-hand knowledge of Le Mans cars logs off with '80s Group C machinery, veritable dinosaurs compared to the Speed 8 now sitting in the pitlane of the extended and transformed



Top right: proud 2003 'Bentley Boys' Kristensen, Capello and Smith soak up victory after heading privateer Audi R8s. Today, Speed 8 is still striking

Stowe circuit at Silverstone. Gush and Smith are in attendance and much amused by my flailing attempts to thread my way into the Speed 8's dark interior.

"You need to sit on the side, hold on to the roof, swing your legs over, squeeze your feet under the wheel and then shuffle your backside across," is the advice of Ash Mason, the man responsible for running the Speed 8 today. Happily while getting in is murderous, once in place the car fits well. I'm almost comfortable.

Which is not to say it's even close to relaxed in here. Visibility is terrible – if I look straight ahead all I can see is the opaque strip at the top of the screen. Below that is a small letterbox of glass and to either side there are a couple of portholes cut in late in the car's development to allow just a trace of peripheral vision. You can see very little behind you even with the external mirrors but then I guess in a car like this anything that was behind you was likely to be staying there.

Guy leans in, keen to calm my nerves. "You're lucky you're not driving the older car," he says. "That was a pig in the cold. Jumped about all over the track. This one's very easy." To which Gush adds, "but just remember you'll have no brakes, no grip, no traction control or ABS and if the back goes, it stays gone."





LAT

He's right. The track is damp, the air temperature a degree or two above freezing. I'm grateful for a set of new intermediate tyres but in this weather I doubt I'll get meaningful heat into either them or the carbon-ceramic discs with pads so hard they'll do 24 hours without needing to be changed.

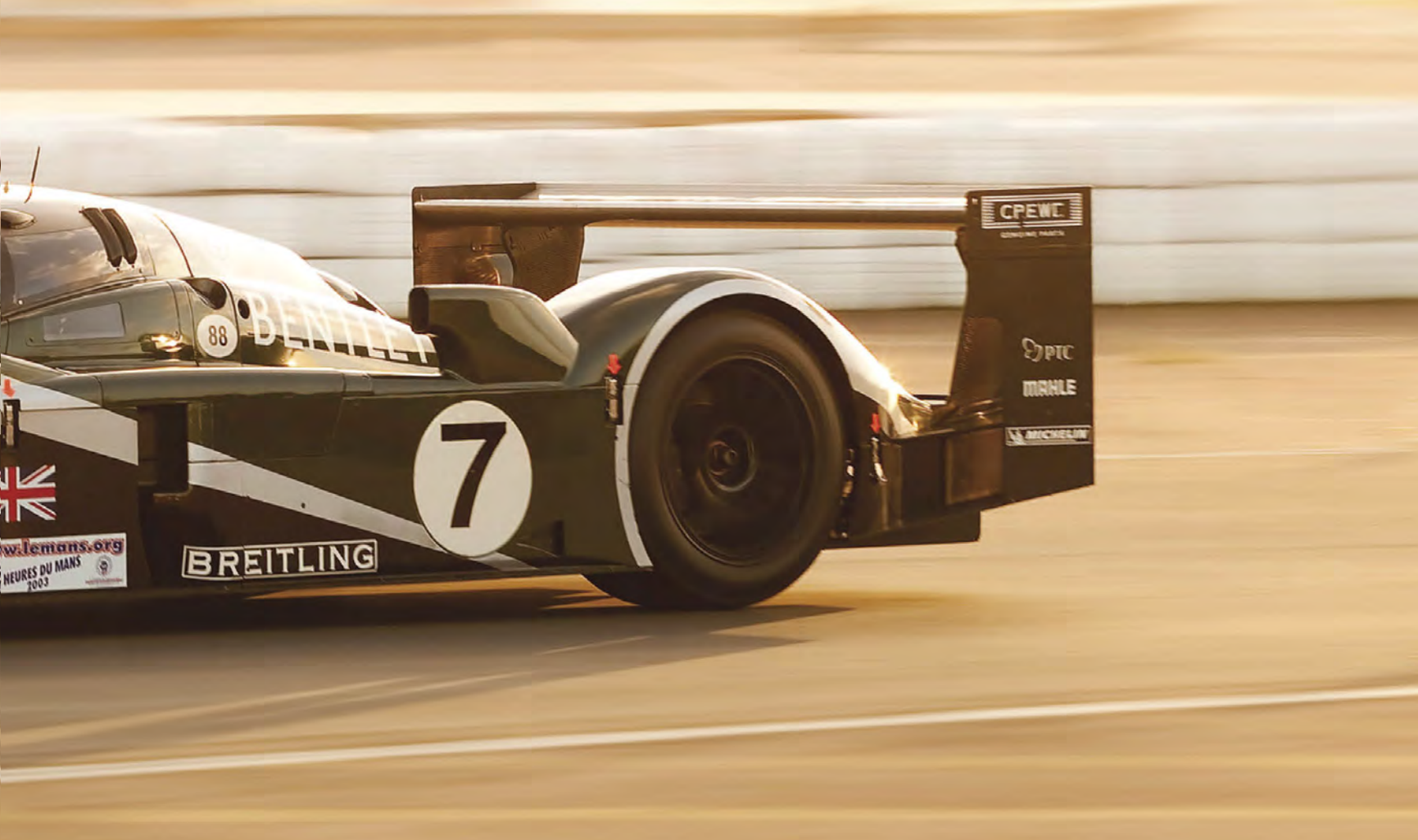
Still, Guy is adamant the car is easier and more pleasant to drive than an R8 and he should know: he drove one to second place the year after he won in the Bentley. The key difference is that while the Audi had a 3.6-litre engine, the Speed 8 unit displaces four litres. A small restrictor means there's no more power, but it is much more driveable. Apparently.

I'm not sure why, but I expected a twin turbo V8 in the back of a Bentley to be a smooth and silken affair. It's not: it fires up and idles angrily with all the charm of a prodded dragon. Compared to, say, a Jaguar XJR-9LM or a late Porsche 962, its 600bhp is comparatively little, but compared to most other 900kg cars, it's palpably absurd. And it has torque you would not believe.

There are LCD readouts all over the place but I'm told to focus on oil and water temperature: the Speed 8's cooling system was designed to work with hurricane force air over its radiators, not for crawling around at 40mph behind a camera car. Even in these temperatures it'll do that for a lap maximum before it threatens to overheat.

And when it does there's only one thing that's going to cool it down and that's being driven fast.

Buried deep inside its cockpit and hardly able to see out, engine shouting and snarling, I find the throttle pedal is as intimidating a thing ➤➤➤



as I've stood on in a while. The performance is instant and brutal. There's no pause, no lag waiting for the boost to arrive as you do in a Group C Porsche – the Bentley just launches itself at the far end of the track. Your very next thought is that those cold inters have started to spin up and the one after that is that this is very senior indeed.

Go up a gear and hope it calms down a bit. Hope in vain. This time the tyres grip properly and you feel like an innocent bystander granted brief access to someone else's vision of pure madness. There's a corner coming and I've already forgotten Brian's warning about the brakes. The pedal is as hard as the bulkhead and about as effective at slowing the car. Right now, you could be comprehensively outbraked by a child's bicycle. But there's nothing else to do except pray and when the brakes do arrive they're so strong you have to bleed off the pedal almost at once to stop the fronts locking. And they raced this for 24 hours?

Happily I've driven enough to know that almost without exception, when confronted with an apparently impossible device like this the trick is not to slow down, but speed up. Moving the car nearer the parameters in which it was designed to work, all the way from



"The nation had waited over a dozen years for a British car to win Le Mans again"

engine revs to tyre temperature, is almost bound to make it easier to drive.

And so it proves. That stupendous slug of torque becomes a friend not an enemy. You don't need to focus on what revs you're pulling or which gear you're in because from 3000rpm onwards, the Bentley just goes. The paddleshift gearbox, given a full throttle upchange suddenly becomes miraculously smooth. Heat in the tyres means they're less inclined to spin and lock and if the back does start to move, as it very easily will with too much power too early, the car will return faithfully to your chosen line, so long as you correct and lift the instant you feel it. The next day, with me stuffed into the 'passenger seat' of a 2001 EXP Speed 8, Guy would prove it could actually be drifted.

Of course the dream would be to let it loose at Le Mans – nailing the throttle at the exit of Mulsanne, hitting some really silly numbers as you rocket down to Indianapolis and feeling the downforce sucking the life out of your neck muscles through the Porsche curves.

But even on the Stowe circuit I thought I could glimpse why the drivers loved this car so much. In its day it was the quickest sports car the world had yet devised. But it was so much more than that: when it really mattered, it was faultlessly reliable, staggeringly strong (Johnny Herbert walked away from a testing accident he described as "the second-biggest of my career") and knee-weakeningly beautiful.

Does it matter that, engine aside, it was also British from end to end? It probably shouldn't but it does. This was a Bentley after all, and though it was designed and built by others (just like Jaguar's Group C cars) the programme was devised and developed by Bentley in Crewe. It brought inspiration to a workforce, and pride to a nation that had waited over a dozen years for a British car to win Le Mans again.

An Audi with a roof? Put a lid on it.







James Mitchell

Lunch with... MARK BLUNDELL

His first home was a caravan, and the school of hard knocks was his only education. It would stand him in good stead on his climb to Formula 1 and beyond

BY SIMON TAYLOR

Nowadays karting is the kindergarten, where aspiring hotshoes learn to feel through the seat of their pants. But it wasn't ever thus. Stirling Moss began, at six years old, to absorb those lessons on horseback. Archie Scott Brown demonstrated his startling sense of balance as a kid in slow bicycle races, able to stay virtually stationary without falling over. Jacky Ickx's huge talent as a wet-weather racer was seeded by teenage success in motorcycle trials.



As a schoolboy, Mark Blundell was a Top 36 ACU motocross rider. It taught him speed and control on loose, slippery surfaces; and it also taught him to be hard, to give and expect no quarter – playground training for the Formula Ford jungle to come: "When you're 14 years old, in a line-up with 39 other kids handlebar to handlebar, you soon learn not to take any crap. You go into the first corner in a huge elbowing group, maybe in the lead, maybe on your face in the dirt with 10 bikes running over your back."

After three decades in motor racing, including Formula 1, CART and Le Mans, Mark has still not retired. But most of his time is taken up by his thriving sports management company and various property interests. We meet at his period offices in Royston, Hertfordshire before he points his wheels that day, his wife's Bentley Continental convertible, towards Cambridge and the Hotel du Vin. There he makes short work of avocado and crayfish, calves' liver medium rare, sticky toffee pudding and a glass of one of the better Chardonnays. It's a long way from his first childhood home, which was a caravan.

"My dad's mother died when he was little, and when he left school at 13 he couldn't read or write. My mum taught him all that later. His disadvantages drove him on to be the man he was. He started as a panel beater and sprayer, but really he was a wheeler-dealer, always working, always dealing.

"He built up his wealth by car trading, then he went into property. As the money came in we moved out of the caravan into a house in Letchworth, and then a better house in Royston. My mum was the backbone of the family, brought up me and my younger brother and sister. Dad would be off each day at dawn and wouldn't be back until I was in bed asleep. So I didn't really get to know him until the motocross started. We'd all go off to that as a clan.





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"When I was a kid nothing ever surprised me. My dad would have a poker night going, lots of his dealer mates round, and they'd be gambling really big. Someone would throw down a bunch of keys, or a Polaroid photograph. The photo would be of a Roller Silver Shadow, the keys would be to a villa in Majorca, and as the night went on they'd change hands around the table. Dad made a lot of money, and by the end he had his own yacht and a private plane. But he got caught in the last recession and the banks pulled the rug on him. He'd supported me in my early years, and by then I was in a position to return the favour. So he got his business back, and he's still working hard. Today he's bashing down a wall in a house he's just bought. He loves to get stuck in.

"My need for speed emerged early on. When I was eight my dad had some of his stock in his yard, with the keys hanging up in the shed. I climbed into a Jensen V8, sat up on a cushion and started it up. My foot slipped off the brake onto the throttle. I wrote the Jensen off, and I managed to catch a Vanden Plas Princess and an Austin 1100 along the way. By the time I was 13, if I saw a nice car on his forecourt I'd sneak the keys from the office, go back at night and take it for a drive – a Ferrari Boxer, a Monica four-door GT, stuff like that. I never banged any of them, and my dad never knew.

"A couple of my mates were farmers' sons who rode old motorbikes across the fields, and that's how the motocross thing started. By the time I was 14 I was doing it seriously. I was never going to be a boy who knuckled down at school. I looked at my dad and his background and I thought, Well, he's done OK. So I wasn't exactly an A-plus student. Friday was bike preparation day, Monday was bike cleaning day, so I'd maybe turn up at school between Tuesday and Thursday. And when I was there I was a nightmare."

Mark became a real force in the hurly-burly of motocross, winning championships and earning a reputation as a merciless competitor. "I had the opportunity to turn professional, but while I was on my two-wheel journey my heart was always hankering after four wheels. But we knew nothing about car racing. We'd heard of F1, but that was all. My dad said, 'If you want to do Formula 1, I suppose you have to start in Formula 2 first?' Then a car trader friend of dad's took me to Snetterton and I saw Formula Fords for the first time. He said, 'You can handle yourself on a bike, you ought to give this a go.' So in February 1984, when I was still 17, I went to the racing school at Cadwell Park. After two days they said, 'We can't teach you any more. You need to go out and race.'

"We went to Lola because they were just up the road at Huntingdon, and bought a T644E. It was on the loose side, taught me car control pretty quickly, then mid-season we switched to a Van Diemen RF84. Coming from motocross, where you'd typically do four races in a day, we didn't understand the mentality of just entering for one event. With all the championships, BP, Star of Tomorrow, P&O Ferries, and local things like Champion of Snetterton, there'd often be three FF races at a meeting. We said, Let's do them all. It's only tyres and fuel. That first season I did 70 races, won 25 of them, and got more poles and fastest laps than anyone else." His efforts won Mark that year's top Grovewood Award, ahead of Andy Wallace and Damon Hill, and the *Autosport* Golden Helmet for scoring more race wins than any other driver. Few novices have had a more successful first season.

[1] Blundell moved up to Formula Ford 2000 in 1986 [2] Lucrative Nissan drive in 1989 led to Le Mans [3] Ligier broke form and hired two British drivers for 1993, pairing Blundell with Brundle [4] Telemetry measured impact speed of 175mph during 1995 Japan shunt [5] Le Mans win for Peugeot in 1992, overseen by Jean Todt [6] Works F3000 campaign in 1988 (Birmingham Superprix pictured) did not prove fruitful [7] McLaren MP4-12C GT3 campaign is the focus for 2012 [8] Works Van Diemen FFord drive in 1985 established Blundell's hard man credentials [9] Second for Bentley at Le Mans in 2003 after losing time to electrical trouble

For his second year Mark had a Van Diemen factory deal, and was rapidly gaining a reputation as a hard man. "I suppose I was a bit rough and ready. If I went into a corner side by side with somebody, rather than be the one to lift off I'd sooner not come out the other side, because I knew that next time it happened the other guy would be the one to lift. That was my psychology, and in Formula Ford it seemed to work.

"My main rival was my, er, friend Bertrand Gachot. Throughout the season we had several incidents. At Castle Combe he moved across on me, put me on wet grass, I was heading for a marshals' post and he didn't pull back. How I missed it I'll never know. Back in the paddock I grabbed Bert and told him to take his helmet off, but he wouldn't. But he made the mistake



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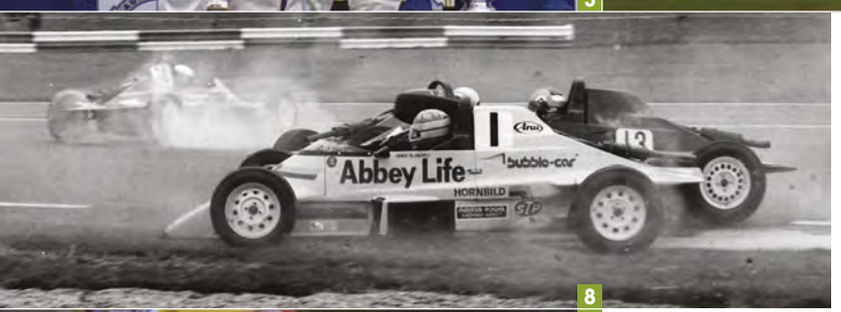


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LAT & Sutton



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of lifting his visor, and I made a tight fist and got him straight in the eyes, through the slot. There were two local bobbies sauntering round the paddock, and they held me for a breach of the peace. But we talked our way out of it.

"With Gachot and me it went on and on. I don't know how many times we were up before the stewards, with Bert saying, 'I don't speak English, I don't understand.' Then we'd get outside and he'd sneer, 'I've done you again.' I won the Esso series, but in the Townsend Thoresen he just beat me, after a startline pileup in the final round at Thruxton.

"For 1986 I moved up to Formula Ford 2000, and I was battling with Bert again. We had some real ding-dongs. I won the European Championship, he just pipped me in the British. There was a good crop of young drivers around then: Damon Hill, Johnny Herbert, Eddie Irvine, we all got to F1. Bert made it to F1 too, but then that thing at Hyde Park Corner ruined his career." Gachot had an argument with a taxi driver after a traffic collision, and sprayed CS gas in the cabbie's face. Convicted of actual bodily harm, he spent two months in a British jail. "It was a shame, because fundamentally Bert was a bloody good driver. I bumped into him at an airport last year and, 25 years on, we had a good chat. He now owns the energy drink Hype, and he's doing pretty well."

In 1987, not yet 21, Mark decided to make a brave move straight into Formula 3000. "A top F3 drive, with all the testing, was going to be £400,000. We said, 'Where's the rule that says you have to go through F3? Let's make the jump.' So we set up our own team, bought a secondhand car from Lola, and made do with a mechanically fuel-injected engine when all the quick boys were on electronic. We nicknamed the car The Garden Shed because it was just held together with tape." Remarkably, he very nearly won his third race, at Spa supporting the Belgian GP. It was Spa weather: in qualifying he was fastest until the track started to dry, leaving him fifth on the grid. More rain on race day, and Mark carved through brilliantly, passing cars right and left in the spray to take the lead.

"I'd learned from motocross to be observant, and read the surface. My lines were sometimes a bit strange, because I'd go two metres wide to find more grip. I arrived at the Bus Stop in second place, lots of spray, no visibility, and in front of me I could hear but couldn't see the leader, Roberto Moreno in the works Ralt. I listened for him to lift off for the corner, counted to five, and came out in the lead. It was that kind of day." A pile-up at Eau Rouge caused the race to be red-flagged and the official results took the positions at the end of the previous lap, so Mark had to be content with second place. But if any F1 people were watching, they'd have been impressed.

For 1988 Mark was in a works F3000 Lola, although he had to find 40 per cent of the budget. "We had a couple of second places and a fastest lap, but we never got the results we felt were there. In 1989 I did F3000 with Middlebridge Racing, run by John Macdonald. That didn't go too well either, apart from third at Silverstone and fifth on the streets in Birmingham. But 1989 was a turning point, because I got a Williams F1 testing deal. John Macdonald said to Frank Williams, 'You've got to take a look at this kid', and I ended up with a three-year contract. I was only paid £10,000 a year, but in the first season alone, developing the semi-automatic gearbox and the active suspension, I did 32 days' testing, a huge amount of miles. It taught me so much, working alongside Riccardo Patrese, Thierry Boutsen and Patrick Head. I really looked up to Patrick, he was very supportive and seemed to trust me. Every so often I'd go into Didcot and report to Frank on how things were going. Always straight-forward, no fuss, you knew where you stood with Frank.

"But I needed to earn some proper money, because I'd done F3000 on a series of loans which had to be paid back. Nissan's World Sportscar programme used a Lola chassis, and my Lola connections got me in there. I signed with them alongside Julian Bailey, and they paid me £150,000 for seven races, which was good money in 1989. We got podiums at Spa and Donington behind the Mercedes, but my first Le Mans was over before it began. Five laps after the start Julian ran into the back of a Jaguar. We spent the rest of the 24 hours at the funfair and in the town centre fountain."

For Le Mans 1990 Nissan made a huge effort, with five works cars, and Mark caused a sensation by qualifying with a blinding balls-out lap in 3min 27.02sec, six seconds faster than anyone else. Despite the new chicanes on the Mulsanne Straight that year, it was an average speed of 147mph. "I was doing the race with Julian and Gianfranco Brancatelli. Julian and I tossed a coin to decide who would qualify and who would start the race. I won the toss, and I knew Nissan had done a monster qualifying engine, so I opted to qualify. Julian was cock-a-hoop because he was starting in front of all the Porsches and Silk Cut Jaguars." Sure enough Bailey, Blundell and Brancatelli led Le Mans for the first four hours, until Brancatelli hit another car and damaged the bodywork. After a long delay they climbed back to sixth place, then during the night the gearbox failed. "But Julian and I got second place in Montréal, and third at Dijon and in Mexico. That was the last round, so we partied afterwards. We went to the Magic Circus, a tented nightclub which held 1000 people. They had big cages suspended


Blundell manages 16 footballers and four racing drivers from his offices in Royston

from the roof for the dancing girls, and Bailey, [Johnny] Dumfries and I decided it would be fun if we took our bottles of champagne into one of the cages. Didn't go down too well with the locals, so we ended up in that cage for a long time.

"For 1991 I'd signed heads of agreement with Tom Walkinshaw to take over Martin Brundle's sports car drive at Jaguar, because he was going back to F1 with Brabham. When the contract came through the £60,000 win bonus we'd agreed had gone missing. I called Tom, and he said he'd never accepted that, although it was in the heads. Then I had a call from Brabham. They'd been taken over by Middlebridge, which was Koji Nakauchi and Dennis Nursey. Lots of people I knew were in it: John Macdonald, Herbie Blash, Dave Price who'd been running the Nissan sports car team. And Yamaha were on board to supply the engines. They'd signed Martin Brundle, and they wanted to sign me. I was 24, and I thought, this is my big break. I've made it. Forget sports cars, I'm going to be a paid F1 driver. It was one of my less well thought-out decisions. I wish I'd had somebody around me strong and experienced enough to tell me to stay put, but I didn't have a manager, I was doing it all myself.

"Martin and I had to go to Japan for the press announcement. Koji Nakauchi was the billionaire team owner, and we expected to be met by his staff at the airport and whisked in to the city to meet him. But when we landed at Tokyo there was just him waiting to meet us. He led us out into the car park, and Martin and I looked at each other when we saw his car, which was an old Rover SD1. That was the first sign that it didn't all quite add up.

"I did have a good race at Spa, qualified well and finished sixth, which earned Yamaha's first championship point. And I put it on the sixth row at Monza. But the Brabham was terrible. They just didn't have the budget to do things right. I was still contracted to test for Williams, and I remember doing the GP at Imola in the Brabham – managed to finish eighth, but I was lapped three times – and then the next day I was testing the Williams FW14 on the same circuit, and I was an easy 2.2sec faster on race tyres than I'd been in the Brabham on qualifiers. That was when I realised I'd made a big mistake. Twice during the year my salary cheque bounced, and I had to go to Chessington and say to Dennis Nursey, I'm not leaving until I get my money. This was glamorous F1.

"The Japanese commentators had a nightmare coping with Brundle and Blundell in the same team, because the Japanese characters for L and R are the same, and we always got mixed up. At the end of the season there was the 11-hour flight from Tokyo to Adelaide, and I had to turn up early because I was in economy. Martin, the superstar, always flew first class. I checked in, and was presented with seat 2A. Nice, I thought, they've given me an upgrade, they must know I'm a real F1 driver. I'd just made myself comfortable when the little Japanese air hostess asked to see my boarding card. 'Prease, you need to move back.' 'No', I said, 'This is my name, this is my seat.' Martin's in the doorway, seething, red in the face and you can see he's been arguing for a long time. Everyone else in first class were F1 people, they thought it was good sport, and were all rooting for me. I refused to budge, so Martin had to sit for 11 hours back in 62J. He still hasn't forgiven me.

"At that Adelaide race at the end of 1991 Ron Dennis sent Jo Ramirez to find me. In the McLaren motorhome Ron said, 'We've seen you testing for Williams, and we've seen you racing for Brabham. You'd be better off working with us than being at the back of the grid with an underfunded team. Come and be our test driver.' That gave me a fantastic year working with Steve Hallam, Neil Oatley and the others, and with Honda. And I got to work with Ayrton [Senna] and Gerhard [Berger].

"Ayrton used to take long winters in Brazil and come back just before the start of the season. I remember him coming to a test, listening to me talking with the engineers, watching how I got on. He wanted to check up on me, then he kind of rubber-stamped me and went away again. As the season went on I got to know him better, talked with him a little bit. Intense, committed, focused, very driven, very selfish. I went to all the races as reserve driver and to do promotional work, and I remember on the plane he had all his press cuttings laid out, marked with highlighter pen wherever he was mentioned. He was going through them all minutely, reading everything that was said about him. I couldn't work out why a guy of his stature would bother with that.

"During one test day at Imola I was in the 'active' car, and I matched Ayrton's time in the 'passive' car. Obviously the active car was very good and fully operational by then, but he couldn't quite get his head round the time I'd done. That was my last day but the others were staying on, and Josef, Ayrton's Austrian fitness guy, had been detailed to run me to the airport at Bologna. We were all in the truck having the debrief, and I said, 'Josef, we need to leave now so I can get my plane.' Senna lifted his head from reading the sheets and said quietly, 'He stays here with me.' I said, 'It's OK, it's been arranged that he can just run me to the airport.' 'No, he stays here with me. You make other arrangements.' Nobody else said anything. It was just Ayrton's way of putting me back in my place. You've done your job today, but don't forget who is boss here.

"Gerhard was a great guy. When I tested his car I couldn't get on with his set-up at all. He had everything on the nose, very loose, whereas I liked the centre of balance much further back in the car. As a bloke he was an oversteerer too, forever pushing, jovial, joking. In the end

he even got Ayrton to crack a smile. He was always sneaking into Ayrton's hotel room, wrapping up something unmentionable and stuffing it down his bed.

"McLaren were in discussion with Peugeot about using their V10 for 1994, so Jean Todt, who was then Peugeot's competitions boss, asked Ron to release me to do Le Mans. It was my one race in 1992. And we won it." Mark, with Derek Warwick and Yannick Dalmas, led from the second hour until the end. "Le Mans is still one of the three biggest races in the world. Everybody wants it on his CV. Winning in France for a French manufacturer is pretty good, but then at the end standing on the gantry as a Brit, with your British team-mate, and looking down on that sea of Union Flags, that's something else again. In a big team there's camaraderie but also pressure, eight months' work focused on a single weekend. Yannick is a lovely guy, and Derek I've always looked up to. We're similar, we think the same way: solid, no bullshit, just do it. I was friendly with Derek's brother Paul [killed in an F3000 crash in 1991]. He had raw ability in shedloads, and with Derek's help he was going to go all the way.

"For '93 I got an F1 race deal again. I was the first British driver to be signed by Ligier – and then, once they'd got me, bizarrely they signed Martin, so the Brundell Brothers were together again. The JS39 had the Renault V10 engine, and it was a good little car. In my first race with it, at Kyalami, I finished on the podium. And again at Hockenheim: when I came out after my tyre stop I was behind Berger's Ferrari, and he was making it very wide. I had to put two wheels on the grass at 200mph to get past. But it wasn't easy being a Brit in a French team, because I didn't speak the language. Martin had the upper hand there, because he'd had some education and spoke a bit of French.

"There was always massive competition between me and Martin. Because we lived quite close we used to share a plane to European races out of Norwich Airport. At Estoril we were running together and had a bit of a thing: basically he pushed me onto the grass at about 180mph. I was pretty sore about that. Martin knew what my temper was like, and off-track he was a bit wary of that. Didn't stop him being a bulldog on the track, he's as hard as anyone. We got on the plane home and we didn't speak for two hours, just sat behind our newspapers. When we landed at Norwich we put our papers down and looked at each other. 'You all right?' 'Yeah, you?' 'Yeah. Speak tomorrow?' 'Speak tomorrow.' And we went home. I was mad because he put me off the track, he knew I was mad, but there was a friendship underneath it. We slept on it, and we talked next day as usual.

"And of course the two of us ended up starting a business. My sports management company, 2MB, was a joint enterprise with Martin, although he's out of it now. And later we did TV together. We've spent a lot of time in each other's pockets. As team-mates at Brabham and again at Ligier we went everywhere together, which is rare in F1 now. We shared the same rental cars, shared the same hotel rooms. Once we shared the same bed, because the room we'd been booked in had a hole in the roof and there was a bird flying around the room crapping everywhere. We had to drive around and all we could find was a single-bedded room. Like I said, glamorous F1.

"For 1994 I got picked up by Tyrrell. I really liked Ken, he called a spade a spade. And I had a good relationship on the technical side with Harvey Postlethwaite, who was a smashing guy. It was back to Yamaha engines again, and I scored their first-ever podium when I was third at Barcelona. It was also, sadly, Tyrrell's final podium. I was in the points at the Hungaroring and Spa, but then McLaren came after me again with a testing deal for 1995.

"McLaren's race drivers for the season were Mika Häkkinen and Nigel Mansell, but unknown to me there were already some issues with Mansell. I signed on as test driver, at test driver money, but there was a clause in my contract that said if they called on me to race I'd get no extra money. And that's what happened." Mansell missed the first race, in Brazil, because he had difficulty fitting in the car – and Blundell finished in the points. Mansell ran at Imola and finished 10th, two laps behind after two collisions, then at Barcelona he slid off the road and pulled out, complaining of handling problems. It was the end of his F1 career.

"I first knew Nigel when I was test driver at Williams. Something needed trying, I forget what, and I heard him say, 'Get the test monkey to do it.' When I took his drive at McLaren I wanted to make some monkey comment in return, but never got the chance. The chemistry between him and McLaren was never going to work, there was such a difference of personalities. So I ended up doing the rest of the season in the MP4/10-Mercedes. But one of my issues with Ron was that, even when Nigel was long gone, he left me on a race-by-race contract. He said it would put me under more pressure to perform, but that was the wrong way to go about it. I wanted to feel part of the team, but I always felt I was on trial."



"Martin knew what my temper was like, and off-track he was a bit wary of it"

That season Mark finished in the points six times for McLaren, qualifying on the third row at Spa, and finishing fourth at Monza and Adelaide. But his bravest race was surely Suzuka. On Saturday morning, at the hugely quick 130R corner, he had an immense accident. As he hit the tyre wall McLaren's telemetry recorded an impact speed of just over 175mph. Stunned, winded and bruised, he was advised to sit out qualifying that afternoon. A spare tub was built up overnight and he started from the back of the grid. "I still had double vision from the crash, but I came through. If the pitstops had been called a bit differently I could have been in the points. As it was I finished seventh.

"For 1996 David [Coulthard] was coming into McLaren, but I'd got an agreement to go to Sauber. Then Dietrich Mateschitz got involved and insisted they had a driver who'd won a GP, so they switched to Johnny [Herbert] instead. At this point I got a bit disheartened and thought, 'screw this, I'm going to Indycar'.

After my time at McLaren, Mercedes said they'd support me, and whichever Indycar team I went to could take their engine. I went to PacWest. The family moved to Miami – Mark Jr was nine then, Callum was a little tot – but eventually we moved to Arizona. Great place: we've still got our house in Scottsdale.

"My second Indycar race, in Rio, I had the biggest accident of my career. I'm lucky to be able to talk about it, because it should have cost me my life. A front hub disc brake bell broke – not a Reynard part, a piece that had been manufactured for PacWest in the US. Head first into the wall at 198mph. The impact was measured at 122G. What stays in my mind is the ferocious noise it made, hitting that concrete. After the restart the same part broke on my team-mate Mauricio Gugelmin's car, but for him it happened on the back straight, so he just ran along the wall and stopped.

"I had two days in hospital in Brazil, broken bones in my feet, various other injuries, knees, ribs, cartilages, but they didn't give me anything like a brain scan. Just a couple of paracetemol. I flew home and by the time the plane landed I had the worst headache I'd ever had in my life, felt like my head was going to explode. My dad took me straight to hospital, they scanned me and found I had a blood clot on the brain. They said if the clot had burst in the air I'd have been dead. But gradually it dissipated on its own, and I was racing seven weeks later.

"I had some of the best racing of my life on the big ovals, lovely 200mph-plus stuff. I won the 500-miler at Fontana in 1997. On that track you're doing 248 on the straights and 227 in the corners, and every 15 seconds you've done another mile. The cars are so evenly matched. Even if you've been an F1 driver, you've never experienced what it's like to run in a big Indycar pack. It's not so much the speed, it's the close proximity, you get buffeted around. The short ovals were something of an art form and I struggled on those, but in 1997 I also won at Portland, a road circuit, beat Gil de Ferran by 27 thousandths of a second. Closest finish in Indycar history. Four weeks later at Toronto, a street circuit, I led all the way with Alex Zanardi on my tail. Won that by 65 hundredths."



"I didn't say I'd retired..." Blundell is looking forward to racing in 2012

In 1999 Mark had another big accident. Testing at St Louis, a gearbox problem put him backwards into the wall, and severely injured his back. He was out of racing for three months. He remained with PacWest until the end of the 2000 season, and in the meantime did some F1 TV commentating with Murray Walker when Martin Brundle was busy at Le Mans. This led to a permanent place on the F1 ITV team, although Mark admits he wasn't always comfortable in the role. "I did enjoy it, and ended up doing it for seven years. But I don't have a good education, and I didn't really have the vocabulary. Some people loved it and some hated it: he can't talk properly, they said, he's got an accent. But it's no good me trying to be something I'm not. I can only explain myself in my own way.

"I did Le Mans for MG in '01 and '02 in the little Lola EX257 with Julian and Kevin McGarrity: in the wet we ran third on the road for a long time. Then in 2003 it was Bentley with David [Brabham] and Johnny [Herbert]. We were third at Sebring and we should have won Le Mans, but we were let down, twice, by £1.50 battery terminals, and in the end we were second to the other Bentley.

"After that I didn't say I'd retired, I just focused on building up my company. I'd always had things going on in the background, because I knew motor racing was fickle. But in 2010 Zak Brown and Richard Dean, who run United Autosports, offered me an Audi R8 for the Spa 24 Hours. We finished fourth in class. Then last year, in the Daytona 24 Hours, I found myself back with Martin in Zak's Riley-Ford. We surprised a lot of people, finished fourth overall. I did some more Grand-Am races, and Spa, and also the Nürburgring 24 Hours on the Nordschleife with Johnny Herbert in a 500bhp turbo five-cylinder VW, a very lively little car. That's the only race I've ever felt that I don't want to go back. Love the track, but 250 starters, and horrendous speed differential – and ability differential – through the field."

This year Mark will be driving one of United's GT3 McLarens in the Blancpain series around Europe. He's relishing the prospect. "I got myself in reasonable shape for Daytona last year, but I need to do more. What I lack in fitness I can carry through with brute strength. But I'll pay the price afterwards.

"Meanwhile the businesses are keeping me up to it. We look after 16 footballers now, and four drivers: DTM racer Gary Paffett, Indycar man Mike Conway, and two youngsters who you'll hear a lot about soon. And I'm doing consultancy work – I've been twice to Saudi Arabia recently, where a developer is talking about the grass-roots potential of a circuit out there. But I'm looking forward to racing seriously, and racing hard, with the McLaren this year. So don't ask me if I've retired...." Ⓜ

Among the British drivers aiming for glory at Daytona were (clockwise from top left): Justin Bell, Rob Bell, Nick Tandy, Oliver Gavin, Dario Franchitti, Robin Liddell, Ryan Dalziel, Steven Kane, Allan McNish, Marino Franchitti, Justin Wilson, Ian James, Sean Edwards, Derek Bell (not racing!) and Brian Wilson; Sir Jackie Stewart acted as Grand Marshal for the 2012 race



There must be easier ways to win a watch...

A gold Rolex: that's the prize these British aces crave when they abandon the winter chill and head to Florida for the Daytona 24 Hours. But what else makes this enduro such an irresistible draw?

BY ROB WIDDOWS

The Brits are back in town. They're over here, overjoyed, and ready to run one of the truly great races. They like the weather here too, down on the beach at Daytona. But it's not the prospect of rays that has drawn them over the pond to the Sunshine State; it's the race, and a gold Rolex for the winners.

The Daytona 24 Hours is one of the toughest challenges, and 2012 was a bit special because it was the 50th anniversary of the 'Rolex 24', so named in deference to its horological sponsor.

Derek Bell is an old hand now but when he first came here he sensed that Daytona International Speedway was a track that could not be underestimated. He's won the 24 Hours three times and yet he admits this is not like any other long-distance race. Having won Le Mans five times, Bell is perfectly placed to assess the specific challenges posed by Daytona.

"The banking does get your full attention," says the former World Sportscar Champion. "It's pretty steep and in traffic the slower GT cars can be three abreast in front of you. But it's not the banking that makes the demands – a good driver will soon have that sorted – it's the constant traffic and tight confines of the infield that make the race such a challenge."

As this always beguiling event reaches its half-century, 'our boys' Dario Franchitti, Allan McNish, Ryan Dalziel, Oliver Gavin, Justin Wilson and Richard Westbrook gave me their impressions of Daytona. »»»

Jakob Ebrey





Allan McNish

RILEY-FORD. FINISHED: 2ND

"Let me tell you, I was pleased Ryan got the pole – it meant our car was good for the race. It was great to be in the same car as Ryan. It's his home turf now (Dalziel won the race in 2010), and he knows the team and the car, so he gave me some pointers about the cars because they are specific little beasts.

"You never get a traffic-free lap here so you have to be tidy, make the best of the yellows, and be there in the last half an hour when the order is usually decided. Up at the front it's pretty close between the Daytona Prototypes so you must not let anyone get too far away from you in the traffic. It can be frustrating, there can be a wee bit of luck involved, but I love this race all the same.

"Physically it's not as tough as Le Mans where we run long stints, and where the cornering speeds are so high, with a lot of g-force. At Daytona there's not much time to relax, no respite from the traffic, so that demands a lot of concentration. You're on it all the time, which is why most of the teams run four drivers. There's no places where you can take a breather.

"In 1982 I came here on holiday with my parents and watched the Daytona 200 bike race from the top of the banking. That looked a bit daunting, and there's no question the place still has a lot of presence that tickles you, especially at night. Maybe the cars have less kudos now compared with the great days when Ferrari and Ford were here with the P4 and the GT40, but the new format is still exciting and it draws a very good line-up of drivers. It's still a big race even though it may no longer be a 'must-do' event for all the big names."



Ryan Dalziel

RILEY-FORD. FINISHED: 2ND

"When I first came to Daytona I was still an open-wheeler racer and I had a tour of the place. Coming in through the tunnel it's an incredible sight, like a bull ring, and quite intimidating at first. Now I'm used to it and you just have to be aware that you're mixing it with drivers who may have come from single-seaters and never raced here before.

"At Daytona you need a car with good balance between aero and mechanical grip and there's a lot of time to be made in the infield, which is very technical and you need a perfect aero trim on the car. This time I was sharing with my countryman Allan McNish, which spurred me on a little bit – he's still at the peak of his game, one of the best guys out there, and I can still learn things from him. But I tell you, having put the car on pole for the race, I was rubbing that in, and he's gonna be hearing about it for a long time…"

Dario Franchitti

RILEY-BMW. FINISHED: 4TH

"For me, the Daytona 24 is a chance to race against people I've admired for years, people I've never raced against before who come from all over the world, and guys I raced against when I was a kid. You can say what you like about the equivalency formula and all that stuff, but at the end of the day we get out there and give it hell for 24 hours. And it's a lot of fun.

"I'm lucky to be driving with what I believe is the best team in the business and it does mean a lot to win this race (Franchitti won at Daytona in 2008). It's been frustrating this year, with Ford engines so strong on the straights, but the race still means a lot to me.

"People talk about the banking. First time out there it can be daunting – but any driver worth their salt shouldn't be fazed by it after five or six laps out there. A lot of the drivers who come for this race have a huge amount of experience in sports cars, but I've been impressed by young Felipe Nasr who has no experience and is obviously very talented. It gets very busy on the track and you're flat out all the time, so in a three-hour stint, for sure you have to stay focused.

"The problem with the equivalency formula we have now is that people tend to sand-bag beforehand, so it's only in the race you find out who's been sand-bagging. Clearly the Fords had something in reserve this year. It's frustrating – but hey, if I had an advantage I'd be quite happy with the formula."

Oliver Gavin

CORVETTE DAYTONA. FINISHED: 8TH

"There is no other track like Daytona. When you first get up on the banking you're struggling to see round the corner, you keep wanting to look up, and look further round the corner. But you can't, so to have that limit on your vision is a bit daunting at first, and it takes a few laps to get your head around that. You need to be prepared for any kind of drama when you're up on the banking.



"It took me about 30 laps of the place to feel really dialled in, to know where the grip is, where the bumps are, where to take a higher or lower line. It's been re-surfaced now so it's a bit easier, and a low line is the fastest, shortest line. The Daytona specialists who've done thousands of laps here, they know every little bump, every patch of grip, but the new surface has taken some of that skill away.

"The place means a lot to me, it's where all the great teams and drivers have come, and won, and you want to be a part of that great history. It's one of the world's toughest races, right up there with Le Mans, and it's at the start of the season so you have to be prepared. For Le Mans there's months of preparation but here, in January, you're not warming up, you're going straight into a 24-hour race, so you have to be ready.

"What wins this race is the ability to stay out of trouble, to deal with the traffic, and not to collide with a slower GT car. If you have a clean race, you're going to be in the top three on Sunday, and that means having a car that you can weave in and out of the traffic, a car with good, solid brakes, because there's guys out there who've never driven in the dark, never seen the track before. You gotta remember that a few of them are so bamboozled by just driving the car they don't always focus on everything else that's going on around them. So to win, you need to be smart and careful in traffic and have a good strategy over the distance." »»



Jakob Ebrey & LAT

Richard Westbrook

CORVETTE DAYTONA. FINISHED: 8TH



"Daytona 2007 was my first ever endurance race. It's a hell of a place, and has a unique atmosphere being in January, right after the off-season, with new cars and drivers. It can be a bit daunting when you first get out there but you learn that the faster you go round the banking, the better it feels.

"Going slowly behind the pace car on the banking there's no g-force pushing you into the seat, and it feels like you're going to fall out. That's when you feel how steep it is. First time here I made the mistake of walking the track and that freaked me out, made me a bit nervous, so you just need to get out there and get up to speed. You need to relax, just let go, and let the angle of the banking do the work.

"Threading your way through the GT cars is like a slalom – it's very busy out there – so if you don't hit one you're going to be right up there. You have to use your head. The darkness is no problem because the track is so well lit, the dark is not that dark.

"I think it's tougher than Le Mans because there are no really long straights, and you have blind spots in your mirrors in some places, so you get no respite. It's one of the classics, up there with the greatest races, and I love it. We should see more Brits, more Europeans here, then it would be even better known back there. This is a big one to win."

Justin Wilson

RILEY-FORD. FINISHED: 1ST

"The Rolex 24 is one of the big prizes in motor racing. The race carries a lot of prestige, and a lot of famous drivers have won at Daytona, which makes it a big one to win. It's certainly one I wanted to win. It means a lot to me to have my name up there, to be part of a pretty elite group of drivers. On top of that there's a nice gold Rolex watch too…



"The race itself is a lot of fun, although it can be tough in the middle of the night. It's a great way to start the season. You can hang out with friends from throughout your career – and there's no other racing at this time of year.

"The track is very, very technical, a bit daunting at first, but the banking is actually the easy part. It's the infield where you make the time. You need to be very precise with the car but at the same time you have to hustle it along. The technique is not as simple as it looks. And the track is constantly changing; the grip levels and the optimal lines shift all the time, depending on where people are running and what stage of the race you've reached.

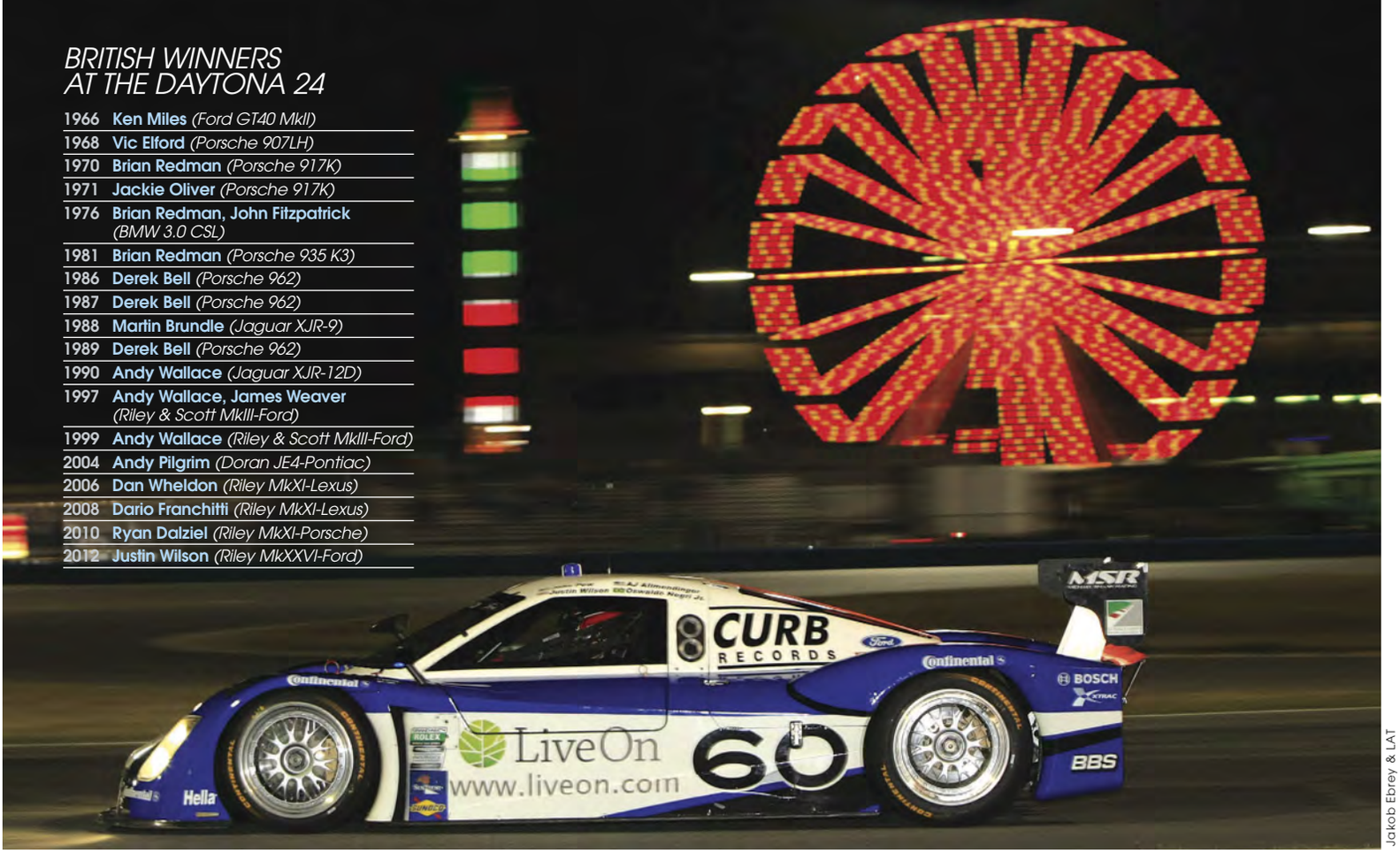
"You never truly feel that you've completely understood where this place is at – and then there's the traffic. We start with as many cars as Le Mans and yet this is only a three and a half mile circuit – early on it's just chaos.

"It's a bit like indoor karting – you're coming up on people who hardly ever race, and in a prototype you're coming up on them so fast. You're in and out of them so quickly. It's a little bit crazy, like driving flat out on a busy motorway; you need to be constantly aware, pick your moments to pass, and not lose too much time in the process. The racing is hard – you run flat out and the cars can take it, which means there's very little left to go any quicker if you need to. You just keep the pace going and hope you're still there at the end to pick up the win.

"The secret of Daytona is all about being as fast as possible without making a single mistake. You push right to the limit, but not once in those 24 hours can you go over that limit. It's easy to make a small error but you simply cannot afford to damage the car. It's pretty tough – the cars are quite heavy and it's easy to make a mistake. You need to be constantly careful while at the same time racing as hard as you can." Ⓜ

BRITISH WINNERS AT THE DAYTONA 24

1966	**Ken Miles** *(Ford GT40 MkII)*
1968	**Vic Elford** *(Porsche 907LH)*
1970	**Brian Redman** *(Porsche 917K)*
1971	**Jackie Oliver** *(Porsche 917K)*
1976	**Brian Redman, John Fitzpatrick** *(BMW 3.0 CSL)*
1981	**Brian Redman** *(Porsche 935 K3)*
1986	**Derek Bell** *(Porsche 962)*
1987	**Derek Bell** *(Porsche 962)*
1988	**Martin Brundle** *(Jaguar XJR-9)*
1989	**Derek Bell** *(Porsche 962)*
1990	**Andy Wallace** *(Jaguar XJR-12D)*
1997	**Andy Wallace, James Weaver** *(Riley & Scott MkIII-Ford)*
1999	**Andy Wallace** *(Riley & Scott MkIII-Ford)*
2004	**Andy Pilgrim** *(Doran JE4-Pontiac)*
2006	**Dan Wheldon** *(Riley MkXI-Lexus)*
2008	**Dario Franchitti** *(Riley MkXI-Lexus)*
2010	**Ryan Dalziel** *(Riley MkXI-Porsche)*
2012	**Justin Wilson** *(Riley MkXXVI-Ford)*



Jakob Ebrey & LAT



Tee for two generations

A 60-year thread links the photos in this magazine, and it involves a father and son. One founded our photo archive, the other runs it today. We asked them how the life of a racing photographer has changed over the decades

BY GORDON CRUICKSHANK

Look at the photo credits through this magazine. Despite our long history, none of them says *Motor Sport*. Many of them say LAT, because that is where our archive now resides. But there's a link that runs through the past 60 years: any LAT shot from the Fifties to the Seventies is likely to be from the lens of Michael Tee, son of Wesley J Tee, for six decades the Proprietor of *Motor Sport*. Anything from the Eighties to today may well be the work of Michael's son Steven, now the MD of LAT. This pair has seen an enormous shift in the way racing is recorded, from roll film and tweed jackets to megapixels and day-glo tabards. We asked them to sit down together and compare their working lives – and there are surprises for both.





Michael Tee's classic shot of Fangio at Rouen in 1957. Below, Taruffi and winner Ascari, 1952 British GP. Right, Mansell's Ferrari makes fireflies at Jerez in 1990


2







Close-up: Michael snaps a 250F at the 'Ring, and below, stays cool under pressure... Right, off-duty with Graham





Although *Motor Sport* commissioned thousands of photos over the years, they are now part of the world's largest motoring photo library, LAT. That company was set up by Michael, who as *Motor Sport*'s main photographer through the 1950s saw the commercial potential of images which otherwise would only be used once, and persuaded his father, the truculent and stubborn WJT, to let him set up a photo agency, the name taken from London Art Technical, a defunct illustration firm, to avoid paying to register a new company.

For over 40 years LAT was the photo wing of *Motor Sport*, becoming a major player among racing sponsors, but when in 1996 the magazine was bought by Haymarket, the photos went too, to join the archives of *Motor, Autocar* and many others in this unrivalled collection. In 2006 Haymarket sold *Motor Sport* but retained LAT – which is why our photos reside in Teddington. That's where we all meet, the first time Michael has been to see the outfit his son runs. And this extensive two-storey library-cum-lab, with 20 employees, is a world away from the cramped couple of rooms at Standard House where LAT began.

Both men were first taken to races by their fathers. For Michael this was the 1948 British GP at Silverstone. "I'd only ever seen black and white pictures, and I was amazed by the colours. I asked my dad why it looked so grey in the magazine and he said 'if you think you can do better, try." So armed with a Contax rangefinder camera and a motorbike Michael began to cover races, rallies, trials and road tests. "The old man wouldn't give me a car so I'd be off to Devon for some trial in the middle of winter on this bike. I nearly died of exposure."

All the equipment he'd have was a camera, couple of lenses, light meter and a few rolls of film. And a notebook – as well as taking and developing the films, he wrote the story.

"For 10 years I was the only one who could take a photo and write a report," Michael says. "I would take pictures of the first two laps, then note down lap times for a while, alternating between the two. Then I'd rush to the pits to find out about the retirements. And I tried to write as much as I could at the track before rushing for the plane home."

In stark contrast, LAT will send eight photographers and a full-time data technician to this year's Australian Grand Prix... "I feel more like a tour guide now," says Steve wryly.



As *Motor Sport* grew and was then joined by *Motoring News*, Michael persuaded his father to recruit another photographer, though with the Old Man constantly grumbling about costs and Denis Jenkinson's view that no-one cared about pictures anyway, it was a struggle. It was Michael's idea to introduce the famous *Motor Sport* centre-spread, where photos had a bit of space – against the will of his father. Bringing in colour was even harder.

"Back then it took a fortnight for Kodak to develop colour film. No-one was using it in magazines, so there was no hurry. I got the turnaround down to 48 hours." That resulted in *Motor Sport* pioneering the exotic idea of colour racing photos.

Through the Sixties LAT took on contracts with teams and advertisers which meant a much better return on the costs of covering so many events, and it's the same today, with many sponsor contracts as well as supplying coverage for a stack of racing titles. One major difference, though, is sheer proximity. Today, photographers (up to 100 of them) are in distant corrals, up towers or hundreds of yards away. "We were on the edge of the track," says Michael, "so you were making eye contact with drivers every lap". Photos show how astonishingly close photographers got to the cars back then.

"Drivers drove 1in outside the white line, and photographers stood 1in inside it," he grins. "You weren't a pro unless the 500cc cars were brushing the leg of your trousers!"

"What lenses were you using?" Steven asks.

"50mm and 135mm."

Steven's eyes widen. "Now a 600mm is the usual choice!"

"At my first event," Michael says, "*Autosport*'s man told me four things: never take your eye off the car, never put your foot over the white line, never stand on the outside, and never run away from a car. You're like a magnet – the car will chase you. Jump sideways instead. Blow me if it didn't happen on the first lap – a car came off heading for the marshal post. The marshal ran and the car chased and hit him. It was a warning."



Crucial shot: Schumacher tries one on Villeneuve – and loses. Below, thoughtful Alonso. Right, Prost expresses disbelief at Senna, Japan 1989





"I think you develop a sixth sense," says Steve, casually adding that at his first ever GP, San Marino in 1984, Eddie Cheever went off and slid between him and two other snappers. Which was lucky compared to what happened when Michael took an 11-year-old Steven to his first race.

"I parked him behind the barriers and told him to stay there. Then an F2 car went off and hit a barrier which clobbered me and another photographer. I remember lying there with my foot pointing the wrong way and wondering what to do about Steven." While Michael was taken to hospital another journalist collected the boy and took him to the press room. "All I can remember is that I had a great time with everyone looking after me," Steven grins.

Michael was lucky not to lose his leg, but was soon back at work. And now Steven had the bug. Even though he was underage, his dad wangled a pass for the 1976 International Trophy, loaned him a Nikon SLR and gave him some vital advice: "just get the sponsor names sharp – don't worry about the car." By now big money was flowing through racing, and many major names were clients of LAT, now very much an independent business with sophisticated printing facilities. Cameras too had marched on: Michael's Leicas and Hasselblads gave way to Nikon SLRs and zoom lenses, which he says altered the photographer's technique. "With a fixed lens you framed your background and waited for the car to hit the sweet spot. A zoom let you track the car itself."

In turn the SLR with its bulky external motor drive grew into electronic autos with continuous zoom and rapid motor drive, ever more vital as photographers were moved further back and lenses grew longer.

> "The Old Man would only let me take three rolls of film to a Grand Prix"

But the arrival of motor drive had a knock-on effect: by the 1990s the number of frames shot had reached a mad peak. "For a GP three or four photographers would shoot 100 36-frame rolls each," says Steven. Michael laughs in amazement: "The Old Man would only let me take three rolls. 'That's 100 shots, boy – we'll only use six' ". In contrast, the digital revolution means today's snapper takes fewer shots. "In the archive you'll see pan shots repeated for safety – every car taken singly at the same corner to allow for focus or exposure or developing problems," explains Steven. "Now we know immediately if we've got the shot, what's worked, what's missing. And no rushing for planes. We make our selections trackside, a technician sends them by satellite, and the sponsors have them in minutes."

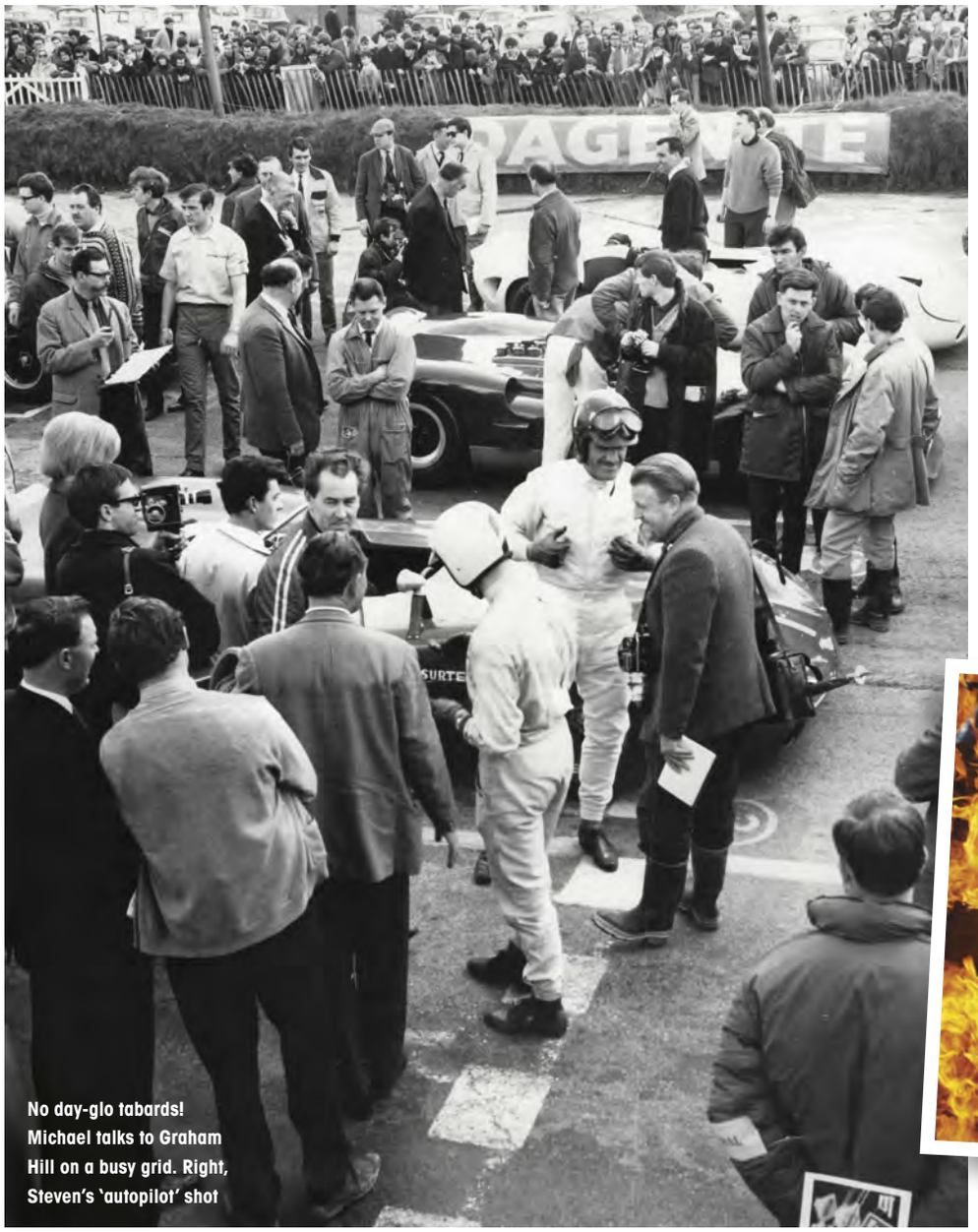
That plane home was the cause of much stress, right up to the Nineties when everything went digital. In his day Michael was rushing for a prop-driven Vickers Viscount and the prospect of many bumpy hours in the air trying to type two race reports, but even jet travel did not alter things much: the films still needed to be carried home.

"At, say, Rio we used to go to the airport on Saturday night and just ask someone in the queue to take the practice films back," says Steven. (If there was a problem with the race shots, this was the back-up.) "They'd be met at Heathrow by someone with a sign saying 'LAT'. After the race we'd rush for the last plane, go straight in to LAT and spend all night developing and selecting shots for the two magazines. I'd be going home with the dawn chorus, having been up since 6am on Sunday."

"South Africa was the worst," Michael chips in. "The race was on Monday, finishing about 5.45pm. The only plane was at 6.15, but the organisers had enough pull to hold the plane. One time they had a helicopter on standby for me and Philip Turner of *Autocar*, but it was only a two-seater, so I sat in the open doorway with my feet outside on the skid. We took off at 6pm and landed right by the VC10. Customs and passport people were waiting there, we were rushed on the plane and it took off straight away. I don't know what the other passengers thought. Then I had to write both reports on the flight, and at LAT start developing the films. It was all on the page by 1pm Tuesday."

In 1968 Michael began to pilot himself to continental races. "It was cost-efficient. Saved on hotels, and we got back promptly. I'd take off from Elstree alongside Graham Hill, and we'd park up beside the planes of Jack Brabham and Colin Chapman."

Of course in Michael's time there were six or seven GPs; now there are 20, some in 'stayaway' pairs. That means Steven could not conceive of doing the sort of 'day job' Michael also



No day-glo tabards! Michael talks to Graham Hill on a busy grid. Right, Steven's 'autopilot' shot

had. As production manager of *Motor Sport*, he frequently went with WB to photograph vintage cars, interview racers or perform road tests, or try out a new road car by visiting Stuttgart or Milan. Plus working some 40 weekends at everything from F1 to VSCC trials.

Today's 500-man race teams have dispelled the 'clubby' world of the past, when Michael would stay in the same hotel as the drivers. "We'd all have breakfast together, go to the same parties. You became friends, went water skiing with them. You wouldn't see today's Hawthorns and Collinses in a bar at 1am on race morning, tight and singing rugby songs."

"In 1969 Bruce McLaren took me round Riverside in practice. I wore his spare overalls and helmet, and while we were out Chris Amon spun. Later I asked Chris what happened. 'Too much partying last night' he said. 'I came up on Bruce and there were two of him in the car!'".

"But we still mix with the drivers, especially if we have the team photo contract, "Steven adds. "I've played five-a-side with Kimi and Ralf, been surfing with Stefan Bellof. I spent the afternoon in Tokyo last year with Jenson. It was for a sponsor shoot, but I've known him for years so it was just like going on the town together."

"Do you remember at one race I kept asking you where the big lens had gone, and you denied moving it?" Michael asks his son. "And all the time Senna was falling about watching me get cross because he'd hidden it."

Being so close to the track meant the drivers knew exactly where their photographer mates would stand. "Moss used to wave at me," recalls Michael. "It took a while to realise that it was part of his performance, to make the crowd say 'look – he can wave to a friend while he's cornering!'". But they could also be useful, as Michael remembers. "Chapman would say 'Jimmy says a wheel's lifting in that corner. Can you get a shot so I can see if it's true?' "

"Senna used to ask, too," says Steven. "He'd want to know how his car compared to Prost's at a certain place."

What's less likely is the sort of banter between Graham Hill and Michael which resulted in LAT's single biggest-selling shot. "At breakfast before a South African GP I was teasing him that drivers didn't go sideways anymore. On the last lap while leading the race he flicked me the Vs, blipped the throttle and went sideways right in frame. That one shot appeared 1000 times around the world."

Today's photographers have to grab different opportunities. Distant cars on open, featureless tracks means searching for movement and detail rather than a nicely framed background. Super-long lenses compress the surroundings, squeezing cars together; catching the whites of a driver's eyes is rare. Today it's a different task, but it's still about long hours, a lot of walking, and constant readiness to seize that electric moment which tells a story – and sells a million. Everyone saw Steve's shot of the Benetton mechanic enveloped in flame at Hockenheim in 1994.



"I can't claim any creative skill for it," he says. "I was in the garage ready for the stop, with a 200mm lens already aimed at the guys. When it all went up I couldn't really see what was happening; I could feel the heat but I went on to autopilot. I didn't know what to expect when it was developed. I got four frames: three were no good, that one was perfect. You just have to be there, pointing in the right direction…"

A simple mantra for a demanding but satisfying profession. In a new digital world of instant upload there's little time for rose-tinted viewfinders, but the core of the job remains the same: you still have to be there, pointing in the right direction…

NASCAR's European union

Now with official backing from NASCAR, the burgeoning Euro-Racecar series offers drivers 'over here' a genuine route into the wide world of stock car racing 'over there'

BY ED FOSTER







"Turn this to steer": our man prepares to make some noise at a freezing Brands

There must be more sensible ways to ease into our first taste of the track in 2012. Brands Hatch is cold, and damp. In fact it's so cold that two of the three cars testing today are in the pits having gravel washed out from their underbellies after hitting ice in the braking zone for Druids. Oh good.

To make matters worse the car *Motor Sport* is about to jump into is a Euro-Racecar – a NASCAR lookalike with a 450bhp V8 under the bonnet. Piece of cake.

The only one not to visit the gravel trap is out on track when we arrive, tiptoeing around the wet patches. As it roars down the relatively dry pit straight, changing up through its four-speed manual 'box, it makes a similar sound to Brian Blessed and Zeus having a shouting match. *Arrrrgh*. Short pause, into fourth. *Arrrrgh*. The cars are restricted to 'noisy days' at the tracks they race on – and we can hear why.

The car looks much like a NASCAR – and technically, as of this year, that's exactly what it is. Euro-Racecar founder Jérôme Galpin has pulled off a significant coup: his series has gone into partnership with the giant of American stock car racing and is 'officially recognised' by NASCAR. Huge kudos for a European series, and importantly it also gives NASCAR a useful foothold on this side of the Atlantic.

Euro-Racecar was started in 2009 by Galpin's company Team FJ and ran as an FFSA series (the French national sporting authority – Federation Français du Sport Automobile). With no way for European drivers to get a taste of NASCAR this side of the water, Galpin was keen to provide a cheap proving ground for European talent.

"I was born into a racing family and I've driven rally cars since I was 18," he says once we've found our way into the relative warmth of the Brands media suite. "I started going to NASCAR events in the USA about 10 years ago and I loved the way they did things, like the entertainment side of it. It just makes it more interesting.

"We started to meet people and actually began doing business over there by importing things like Sunoco fuel into France, along with Mustangs and Chargers. We soon decided that we wanted to start an American series in Europe and set about working on a car.

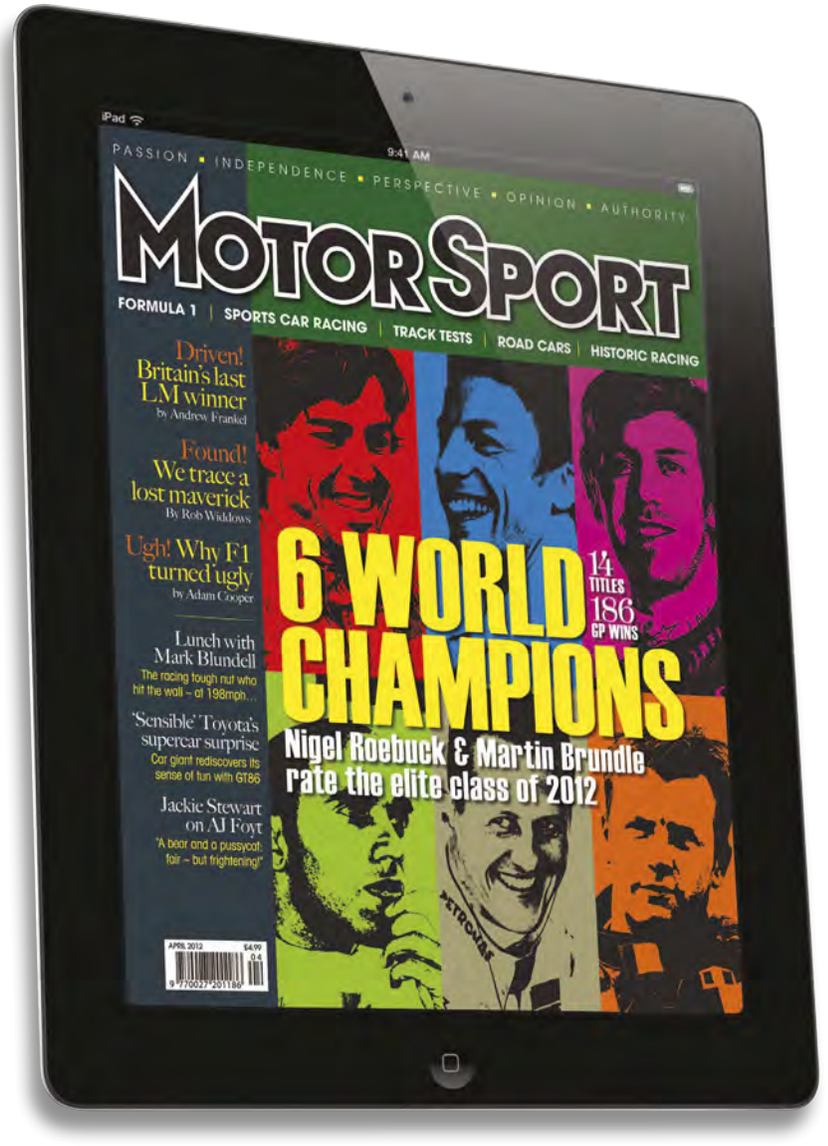
"In my experience there are a lot of announcements [about new series] with no weight behind them so we decided to design the car, and make it, before saying too much. We are a small French company and we don't have a manufacturer behind us so we needed a really good car to attract attention. We also wanted to get the FIA safety structure certification straight away. It would allow us to grow into something bigger if we wanted to whereas if we went for the standard safety certification we would be looking at a re-design sooner rather than later."

The car was launched in June 2008 and come the first race of 2009, at Nogaro in France, there were 16 cars on the grid. All seven rounds in 2009 were in France, but in 2010 there was one further afield – at the Nürburgring. In 2011 the championship became a fully-fledged international series under the FIA and the grids were up to 25 cars. "We evolved step by step," Galpin explains, "and this year we have entered into a partnership with NASCAR."

This is where the story of Euro-Racecar differs substantially from that of Eurocar, ASCAR (which still exists as the European Late Models Series) and Speedcar, the previous attempts at echoing NASCAR 'over here'. With backing from the FIA and NASCAR itself, the American stock car world now has a legitimate foothold in Europe. To complete the link over the Atlantic, if you win the Euro-Racecar Elite Championship – for professional drivers – you win a race in a pukka NASCAR event. "In 2009 and '10 we entered our champion into the Toyota All-Star Showdown, which is a great half-mile race that brings together the East and the West [regional] series in the USA," says Galpin. "There are 42 cars on the track and it's got live coverage on Speed TV. I would like to try and enter our 2011 champion [1993 Le Mans 24 Hours winner Eric Hélary] into a road course event, maybe the K&N Pro Series West round at Infineon [Sears Point], as that's

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where all the young guys are before turning professional. Sadly we don't have the budget for a Sprint Cup race, but I think he'd have a good race at Infineon."

Ah, budget, we had to come to that. Well, there's good news here. The car, which is built by Team FJ, can be bought new and race-ready for €64,000 (£53,500) plus tax. If that's a bit much then you can always buy a reconditioned car for €45,000 (£37,600). "We want to keep the car as it is so that in 2015 someone can win a race with a 2009 car," continues Galpin. "We're not a manufacturer that has road models to promote and just because we have a NASCAR logo on the side of the cars it doesn't mean that the budget is going to double. Yes, I would like to add more rounds, but if you do that the budget does go up and I want to wait until the economic situation is better."

Already there are six rounds in 2012 (in Britain, France, Belgium and Spain) with three races at each – one endurance and two sprints. The series is holding its British round at Brands Hatch for the second successive year on May 18-20 alongside the DTM race. The round in Valencia (September 28-30) also runs with the DTM, which happens to be in the process of talks to expand into America with Grand-Am – the sports car body that is, of course, owned by NASCAR. The DTM link also means that Euro-Racecar is covered on Motors TV, which is a huge attraction to potential sponsors.

Running costs are also reasonably priced at an average of €45,000 (£37,500) per season. The V8 engines may turn out 450bhp, but can easily last two years before a rebuild, which costs only €995 (£830) plus tax. One of the major factors in keeping the costs down is that the cars are all identical. Yes, you can adjust the suspension and ride height, but in terms of actually changing components? Forget it.

"The cars all have the same springs, even the same spark plugs," says Galpin. "It's not a car that you need an engineering degree to work on, either. It's about having good drivers with plenty of skill. The cars were in Daytona in November 2011 [for a non-championship round] and the cars were racing at 175mph. Two weeks later the likes of Jenson Button drove them at 60mph in the Race of Champions. Everyone can enjoy it at any speed, whether you're a total beginner or a professional."

Both professionals and amateurs share the cars in the series with a sprint race each and then a two-driver endurance race. However, unlike most Pro-Am championships the pros can pick up their own points and are not hampered by the amateur they race alongside. In the endurance race the pros are sent out first and a flag is shown halfway through – they pick up their points and the amateurs take over. "We wanted the pros to get their points because in many of the GT championships it's the amateurs who set the results," explains Galpin. "All the pros are within tenths of each other and they make little difference to the overall result."









Euro-Racecars at Brands and the Race of Champions (left) last year. Below: 2011 champion Eric Hélary. Bottom: Jérôme Galpin

Thankfully, by the time that *Motor Sport* climbs into the claustrophobic cockpit, through the window in true NASCAR style, the track has dried a bit. But not by much, and Galpin's suggestion to 'have fun' seems a little inappropriate considering the fact that we wait in the pitlane for 15 minutes so that a stricken Fiesta can be dislodged from the barriers.

> "Everyone can enjoy it, from total beginners to professionals"
>
> JÉRÔME GALPIN

Out on track the Euro-Racecar is unlike anything I've driven. The wet tyres provide just about enough grip to tiptoe around the corners, but even the slightest blip on the exit will send you sideways. Once you're pointing vaguely in the right direction you can nail the throttle and, as you change up through the very physical 'box, you do feel a little like the God of Thunder himself. It's actually hard not to start shouting with excitement every time you have enough space to open it up. But don't tell anyone that.

There's no way I can pretend I mastered the car in the short time I had on the track. But I can safely say that, within two laps, a massive grin predominated over the cold sweats.

This is about as basic as motor sport gets. There is nothing sophisticated about stock cars – and that's why they appeal. Every time you put your foot down, that V8 roars and the back end desperately tries to become the front, you know you've got nothing to go on but your own instincts.

Eat your heart out, Tony Stewart.

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Road cars



by Andrew Frankel

Can an Aston Martin be blamed for producing a car based on its V12 Vantage but offering no more performance, restyling it and charging precisely three times the money for it?

For that is what the new Aston Martin 'Zagato' is. Just 150 will be built, retailing for £405,000 each. And although Andrea Zagato was consulted and lent the family name to the project, the actual design is British.

I admit to being torn by this. On the one hand I find it unedifying to see such brazen profiteering from Aston Martin, but if it can sell the cars and make a stack of money out of them in these difficult times, who's to say it should not? It won't damage the brand any more than the 20 rebodied Murciélagos sold as Reventóns damaged Lamborghini, and they sold for a million each.

The history of Aston Martin and Zagato has always interested me, not least because I don't understand why it has become such an iconic association. The new car celebrates the 50th anniversary of the race debut of the first, the DB4GT Zagato. It was an undeniably pretty thing, but uncompetitive on the track even with Jim Clark at the helm. It had no answer at all to the lighter, nimbler GTOs.

It was succeeded at a distance of a quarter of a century by the V8 Vantage-based Zagato which, unlike the new car, did at least feature a shortened wheelbase and extra power to provide some historically accurate context. Looks only its mother could love did not affect its performance in the market place.

And 10 years ago, to celebrate the 40th anniversary, Aston were at it again, but the rebodied DB7 Zagato was just that: a standard car made to look more different than it was.

On balance I can't see the new car doing much harm. The purists will be outraged by the price, the lack of Zagato involvement or any mechanical enhancements and, instinctively, I'm with them. Pragmatically, however, if these Zagatos provide a few extra million to help finance the range of all-new cars Aston must surely soon produce, then I think it a step worth taking. Still, it's a shame to see the once great name of Zagato reduced to a marketing tool. But at least it's attached to an Aston, not an Allegro – the ignominious fate of Vanden Plas.



My time in Ford's 1-litre Focus (see page 117) suggests very strongly that the balance of motive power for most engines is shortly to tip back in favour of petrol over diesel. For years diesels have been making steady gains, particularly in Europe, thanks to their economy, range, low CO_2 emissions and ability to deliver lowdown torque. Many thought this an inevitable, inexorable process.

But it seems the customer is a bigger fan of diesel than those who make them. In almost every area, diesels cost more to build than petrol engines. Because diesel is so viscous it has to be blasted into combustion chambers at pressures of around 2000bar to make sure it atomises correctly to provide efficient combustion, which means the injection system and engine management costs a fortune compared with a petrol engine requiring less pressure. And, because high-compression diesel combustion puts such a strain on an engine's structure, it needs to be more massively constructed and therefore both heavier and more expensive. Its particulate matter is more difficult to deal with, too.

The fact is that although Ford admits the new 1-litre engine is so crammed full of tech it's 'far more expensive' than the 1.6 it's replacing, costs still come 'nowhere near' those that would be incurred designing a diesel to do a similar job. Of course at the other end of the market, where cars are sold in lower volumes at higher prices, the unique attributes of diesel continue to make a lot of sense, but down in the cheap seats from which most car buyers browse the market, diesel is in danger of reverting to its old role of niche player.

There are other reasons why the good old petrol engine is making a comeback. In the UK you'll pay 10p a litre less for petrol than diesel while over in the US the American flirtation with hybrid appears to be experiencing what General Motors will hope most fervently is just a brief hiatus. Current sales of the Chevrolet Volt are nowhere near their target, and not just because of some scare stories about crash test

mules catching fire weeks after being written off. Bluntly, the price of fuel is just not high enough to scare the Americans out of their gas guzzlers and into hybrids.

Mind you, if Ford's engineers are any guide, a worse fate awaits all electric cars. They have spent years developing an all-electric version of the new Focus but even they reckon its retail appeal will be limited, most being sold into fleets with an extant recharging infrastructure.

Was delighted to see the AA has formally endorsed a call to reduce speed limits to 20mph in certain high-risk urban areas, such as outside schools. The organisation has the kind of clout to make measures like this far more likely to make legislation. I know someone who once knocked over a child outside a school. The boy – who leapt without warning off the pavement – was saved by two factors: one, my friend has a brain and was driving at a saintly speed and secondly, he happened to be in an old 308GTB. So instead of the boy being flattened as would be likely had he been hit by some bluff-fronted saloon or SUV, he just rolled up and down the bonnet before being deposited in an undignified but unharmed heap on the tarmac. The child inflicted far more damage to the car than vice versa.

If the rumour mill is to be believed (and in this industry, unlike most, it usually is) Lamborghini is shortly to announce it is to build an SUV. This is additional to the Maserati SUV we already know about called the Kubang, a much mooted Bentley SUV and Aston Martin's SUV-shaped revival of Lagonda which is still very much on the cards.

Oddly enough, while I don't much like the idea of any of them and lament the fact that in this era when cars are meant to be becoming lighter and less profligate these will surely be the heaviest cars any of their manufacturers (save Bentley) have ever created, I can cope with the idea so long as their core products are not affected.

But I couldn't say the same about Ferrari. While the idea of all these other SUVs just makes me wince a bit, the thought of a Ferrari people carrier makes me almost physically shudder. While Bentley, Maserati and Aston all make four-door saloons and Lamborghini is a former SUV constructor (LM002, anyone?), Ferrari has never made a car with more than two doors (save for some Sultan specials), staying true to its roots in every car it's built in the last 66 years. There will be massive pressure from Russia, China and the Middle East for Maranello to make such a car and, with the all-wheel drive system from the FF, it has the means to do it. I just hope it has also the strength to say no.

MY MOTORING MONTH



TEACHING KIDS TO DRIVE IN A 30-YEAR-OLD LAND ROVER

I HATED TEACHING MY CHILDREN to ride bicycles. It was less an opportunity for bonding, more a chance for me to lose patience and them various sections of skin. If trying to persuade a wailing four-year old to climb back aboard a bicycle is your idea of an afternoon well spent, good luck to you.

However, teaching them to drive is something else. I grew up in the Channel Islands and my father would often make a weekly commute to London. But instead of walking to the airport car park on his Friday evening return he'd go to Avis instead. When asked what car he wanted to hire he'd stipulate only 'cheap and rear-wheel drive.' My brothers and I would then spend all weekend charging round two unused fields at the back of the house.

I can't recall them all, but I do fondly remember a 1.3-litre Escort for its ability to indicate 50mph in second gear, almost all of it wheelspin. But an MG Midget suffered most, not least because we had to test again and again its maker's claim that those rubber bumpers would survive a 5mph impact. Come Monday morning he'd drive the wreckage back to the airport, innocently hand the keys back and continue on his way. He always thought he'd be caught, banned or billed, but he never was.

So now it's my turn. I have the Land Rover in which I passed my test, and a 12-year-old daughter eager to learn.

In many ways it's like teaching them to ride all over again. If you're constantly barking instructions and grabbing the wheel, they'll never learn. You need to watch them like a hawk but, so far as you can, let them get on with it. I thought she'd find steering the old girl most tricky but it was the clutch that provided all the trouble: if she was too sudden the car would naturally stall, but if she was too slow to lift her foot between gears the car would start to free-wheel down the hill.

A 30-year-old Land Rover is not the kindest introduction to motoring but though I tired of my father saying 'if you can pass your test in that you can drive anything' about precisely the same vehicle, I must now acknowledge he had a point. Learning to drive is great fun, but not half so much fun as watching your kid do the same.


Kevin Hughes

THE UNEXPECTED GEM THAT IS THE ANGLESEY CIRCUIT

WENT TO THE ANGLESEY CIRCUIT for the first time this month and now wonder why it took me so long to get to there. I've heard people singing its praises over the years and especially since it was completely rebuilt in 2007, but for some reason never really focused on getting there myself.

I regret that now. Clearly for most of us it's a long way to go, but with the A5 and A55 both converging on Anglesey to provide trucks access to Holyhead, it takes less time than you'd think to get there.

The circuit itself is a rare treat. Longer than Castle Combe or Donington minus the little-used Melbourne loop, its 2.1-mile lap comprises a terrific variety of challenges for the driver. There are a couple of crowd-pleasing hairpins where you can demonstrate your drifting techniques until your rear tyres burst, there's a Thruxton-quick right-hand curve (also called Church) and more than enough blind crests to tax your nerve and your car's suspension.

It's also truly beautiful up there: there's one brow you go flying over and if you look in your mirror at the right time, you'll see it full of the Irish Sea. Of course if you spend too long gazing at it you'll miss your turn-in point for a tricky late-apex left with a challenging camber change.

I'm not sure how the Anglesey Circuit earns its living or who paid for the place to be so comprehensively rebuilt. What I do know is that it's one of the country's best tracks, and, I expect, still waiting to be discovered by most of us.



JAGUAR LAND ROVER'S TECHNICAL MARVELS

HAD A QUICK AND IMPROMPTU tour around the Jaguar Land Rover Engineering Centre in Whitley. The company doesn't make enough noise about this place. There sit 3000 engineers beavering away at developing technologies that won't be seen in cars for years. In another area are the design studios where cars like the Land Rover Evoque and the Jaguar E-type's successor have been brought to life. Their biggest difficulty? Getting enough quality engineers as the company's ambitions spiral outwards. Amid all the economic doom and gloom, it's refreshing to see a company with such a bright outlook.

TOYOTA GT86



After castigating the BMW M5 last month for being too heavy, overpowered and generally overblown, I've found a car that puts the case for an alternative approach, and from a very unlikely source.

To see how left-field the Toyota GT86 is, consider that it comes from the company that in recent years has canned its F1 programme and killed every sporting car on its books from the little MR2 past the mid-sized Celica to the big and brutish Supra. So the decision to reverse all this thinking and build a lightweight, rear-drive coupé was decidedly surprising.

But not perhaps so surprising as its choice of bedfellow for the project. Although nine out 10 of these cars will be sold as Toyota GT86s and while there is some Toyota input into its engineering, the bulk of the job was farmed out to Subaru, a company famed for making sporting cars with four-wheel drive and turbocharged engines. Of which the GT86 (or Subaru BRZ as it is also called) has neither.

More curious still is the fact Toyota engineers actually and actively cite all-wheel drive and turbochargers as two of the three reasons sporting cars have become 'boring'. The third is too much tyre. Which is why the GT86/BRZ uses precisely the same rubber as the Toyota Prius, which would come high on my list of the world's least sporting cars.

Compared with the fat-tyred, front- or four-wheel drive forced induction approach favoured by its major rivals such as the Audi TT, VW Scirocco and Peugeot RCZ, the GT86 is about as different as can be.

But all it's actually doing is reminding us of what such cars used to be like. It is a very simple soul: at one end there's a 2-litre flat-four motor developing a healthy 197bhp, driving through a six-speed 'box to the wheels at the other. A limited-slip differential is optional in Japan but likely to be standard on UK models, and while there is an automatic version, it suits the car's character as well as would a manual Rolls-Royce. The basic six-speed manual is all you should want or need.

As you can see, it's an attractive car, at least until you reach the cabin. There you'll find an interior where form has been made to follow



FACTFILE

ENGINE: 2.0 litres, four cylinders
TOP SPEED: 145mph (approx)
PRICE: £25,000
POWER: 197bhp at 7000rpm
FUEL/CO_2: 42mpg, 160g/km
www.toyota.co.uk

function at a very considerable distance. You sit low in the car, making you realise how much other sports coupés that owe their underpinnings to humble hatchbacks place you much higher, much more on than in the vehicle.

There's no elegant sweep to the dashboard, no lovingly chromed switchgear nor expensive addenda. You get some controls, some clear dials and the bare minimum of anything else. It is all you need.

I should say now I've only driven the GT86 on a track, and a soaking wet one at that so it is possible that what I am about to describe may not relate precisely to how the car handles on a dry British road. But on the basis that I can report only what I find, I find myself struggling to remember when I last drove such an



GTS is the best Panamera, but rival coupés are still more desirable

PORSCHE PANAMERA GTS

PORSCHE HAS A VERY annoying habit of keeping back the best version of any given product until the end of its life cycle, and this shows no sign of abating. It might be thought an inevitable process, that through the life of a model more is learned about both what it lacks and what the customer wants, but I suspect something more cynical. Bluntly Porsche knows exactly what the optimum model is and deliberately withholds it until interest in its less-able stablemates starts to decline.

It did precisely this with the GTS version of the last 911, which was on sale for one year before the all new 911 came along, and it's doing it again with this Panamera.

I have spent the three years that the Panamera has been out in the market place communicating my ambivalence towards the breed. The standard rear-drive V8 model is respectable, but I found the Turbo unlovable, the Turbo S even more so, the bottom of the range V6 gutless and the Hybrid too flawed to consider. Only the diesel really appeals because it excels at what the Panamera does best: covering long distances with the minimum of fuss.

But even I cannot dismiss the GTS, a car that costs barely £6000 more than the four-wheel-drive S model on which it is based yet includes an engine more powerful by 30bhp, ceramic brakes, air suspension, active anti-roll bars, bigger wheels and tyres, a Turbo rear wing and an interior decked out in Alcantara and leather.

It's much more fun to drive than the Turbo because its normally aspirated 4.8-litre V8 has proper throttle response, an addiction to its 7100rpm red line and the best sound of any Porsche made today. Its revised suspension settings are taut but never harsh, meaning comfort has not been compromised in the pursuit of at least some handling prowess. I drove it hard around the Ascari Race Resort and while it inevitably lolled and understeered as any four-wheel drive machine weighing almost two tonnes inevitably will, it was more fun than I had anticipated and more capable too.

Of course the number of Panamera GTS drivers who will take their cars on a race track will be one or none, but even during fast road driving there's enough feel and response to make the driver feel involved in a way I've not experienced in any of its kin.

So, in isolation, it seems as if Porsche has done good with the Panamera GTS. And it will continue to seem so until you consider you can buy a Mercedes-Benz CLS63 for almost £10,000 less which has almost 100 horsepower more. It is also gorgeous, which the Porsche is emphatically not, and it is rear-wheel drive.

The Panamera GTS will be the last model until the range is comprehensively updated next year. It's a Panamera I liked, which is a rarity, but if it's a fast, beautiful four-door coupé you're after, there are others that do it even better than this.

FACTFILE

ENGINE: 4.8 litres, eight cylinders, petrol
TOP SPEED: 179mph
PRICE: £90,409
POWER: 424bhp at 6700rpm
FUEL/CO_2: 25.9mpg, 256g/km
www.porsche.co.uk

entertaining, affordable coupé. The car it evokes most readily is the Porsche 968 ClubSport, but in its day that lived at an altogether more exotic price point.

Why is the GT86 so good? Partly for all those reasons Toyota says: because it's not turbocharged, lacks all-wheel drive and doesn't have needlessly fat tyres. But it's still possible to make a mess of a rear-drive normally aspirated coupé, as many have proven.

The GT86 makes no such mistake. Its most significant weakness is the engine which is sweet but feels a little underpowered, even in the wet. It's no secret that Toyota is already working on a supercharged version that would add the further 60-80bhp needed to give the chassis serious work to do. But the rest of the car is a sheer joy.

And it's that way not just because a fine job has been done tuning the suspension, but because Toyota and Subaru made life easier for themselves from the start, designing light weight in at source – which is why the GT86 weighs around a quarter of a tonne less than a Peugeot RCZ.

The result is a car that's delicate, nimble and has the most sublime balance. Over dinner that night its chief engineer confided to me that they'd actually set aside time in the development programme to make sure it drifted properly. And while I have heard tell of such things in







Minimalist interior lacks elegance, but compensates with a purposeful feel

Aston, Porsche and Jaguar programmes, this came from a man employed by a company better known for making such yawn-inducing machinery as the Auris, Prius and Avensis.

Out on the track the GT86 was in danger of becoming addictive. At the end of the driving programme we were meant to attend a press conference with a live link to the Tokyo show where Toyota was announcing a collaboration with BMW to supply British-built diesel engines. And I'm proud to say that while the entire European press corps dutifully filed into the conference room, the small but plucky UK contingent risked their host's wrath by jumping into the vacated GT86s and heading back to the track for another session of entirely gratuitous, wholly unnecessary oversteer.

At the end of it we all wandered around looking a bit stunned. We knew from its on-paper specification that the GT86 had the raw material to be special, but just how special it was came as a complete surprise. Perhaps it was because we expected so little from a Toyota, or maybe we didn't expect a mass-produced car from any mainstream manufacturer with less than 200bhp to be so enjoyable; I don't know. What I do know is the GT86 was a complete revelation, one of those cars you're lucky to find once a year



in this job that completely overwhelms your expectation of it. It arrives here in June and, knowing what I know now, it is one of the cars I am most looking forward to driving this year.

Of course none of this means the GT86 will sell in huge numbers, and I don't think Audi will lose a moment's sleep over it. Sadly for every person who's dreamt of a sensational driving machine they can both afford and use every day, I fear there are many more who couldn't care less what end is driven but will care very much that they'd have to tell their friends they drive not an Audi or a VW, but a Toyota. And they'll look at that sparse cabin and wonder who on earth could be seduced by that when an entry-level Audi TT has so much more class and quality.

I just hope the GT86 and BRZ garner enough interest around the world for some other car manufacturers to take note. There is, of course, no reason why one of the premium manufacturers could not make a car as classy as a TT but as fun as a GT86. But as things stand the choice remains between a car that projects what its owners believe is a desirable image and another with no image at all, but which offers instead a landmark driving experience for cars of that type. To me there is no contest.



Remarkable three-cylinder engine makes the Focus sweeter and more agile

FORD FOCUS 1.0 ECOBOOST

JUST OCCASIONALLY, A new engine appears that not only throws convention to the winds, it makes convention look pretty silly as it does so. The V12 in the McLaren F1 was one, the V10 in the last-generation M5 another. The 1-litre, three-cylinder motor about to be introduced to the Ford Focus also falls into this category.

I have not taken leave of my senses, any more than Ford has in putting into the Focus an engine displacing half a litre less than convention says is the minimum you can get away with in a family hatch. This is no conventional engine.

The figures are impressive enough: boosted by a tiny turbo spinning at an unimaginable 4000 revs per second, this 999cc engine produces 123bhp, the same as Ford's normal 1.6-litre four. But it uses more than 20 per cent less fuel and has more torque at 1300rpm than the 1.6 can muster in total.

But you'll only appreciate the true scale of Ford's achievement when you drive this Focus. Given the output, I had expected a high-rev screamer; in fact it's so quiet that it's measurably more refined than every other engine in a Focus. And with all that torque, a characterful thrum, a crisp six-speed 'box and 30kg less nose weight, it makes the Focus a sight more engaging to drive too.

Ford has thrown all it has at this engine: it boasts variable valve timing on each camshaft, direct injection, a water-cooled exhaust manifold, a cam belt that'll never need changing and a cast-iron block so stiff there's just 6.1mm of metal separating each cylinder.



More interestingly still, Ford is working on ultra-high output versions. Because the engine is already very 'undersquare' yet on the limit of its bores, it can't change sizes without growing cylinders, so Ford is experimenting with twin sequential turbos, a tiddler for low-speed torque and a monster for top-end power. I was told that an output of 180bhp would be a stretch, but possible.

Ford has such confidence in this completely British-designed engine that it will replace entirely the normally aspirated 1.6-litre motor used in most petrol Focuses sold around the world.

And rightly so: in its own way this is as impressive a new engine as I've seen in the past couple of years. It should also be ringing alarm bells in car manufacturer headquarters right around the world. For on this evidence, the conventional four-cylinder engine of around 1.6 litres, which has been the most popular configuration used by road cars for at least the last three decades, has just become obsolete.

FACTFILE

ENGINE: 1.0 litre, three cylinders, turbocharged, petrol
TOP SPEED: 120mph
PRICE: £17,745
POWER: 123bhp at 6000rpm
FUEL/CO2: 56.5mpg, 114g/km
www.ford.co.uk



Competent and fun Veloster signifies hard times ahead for European manufacturers

HYUNDAI VELOSTER

I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE, but I think it entirely possible that this is the first time a Hyundai road car has been seen within these pages. This new Veloster is here not because it breaks any new conceptual ground (even the single rear door idea has been done by cars as diverse as the AMC Pacer and Mini Clubman), but because it remains fascinating to me to see how swiftly and confidently Hyundai has marched into this corner of the market.

In more conventional classes if you can provide a product that's cheap, well equipped, has a vast warranty and is at least competent, even now it will sell. But here is a Hyundai that must sell on style, image and dynamic ability.

Inconveniently, I only feel qualified to pass judgement in one of these areas and I can tell you the Veloster is quite capable and reasonably engaging to drive. If I damn with faint praise, that is not my intention. The standards set by those few cars that populate this class are not exactly demanding, and I liked the eagerness of its little twin-cam 1.6 motor, the tenacity of its roadholding in poor weather and the swift snap of its six- speed gearbox. It was, after a fashion, fun.

It was also indicative of the problem that Korean car makers are now causing some of their European counterparts. It will be some time yet before Hyundai becomes any kind of threat to BMW, Mercedes, Audi and their ilk, but there are others more directly in the firing line. If yours is a brand without a premium image or a very distinct USP, I think hard times may lie ahead.

Manufacturers who have for too long sold cars they thought merely good enough for an uncritical market will soon be repenting at leisure. In fact it may already be happening: Renault has announced the variety of cars it is to offer to British customers is to be slashed. Expect more drastic measures from more underachieving companies soon.



FACTFILE

ENGINE: 1.6 litres, four cylinders
TOP SPEED: 125mph
PRICE: £17,995
POWER: 138bhp at 6300rpm
FUEL/CO_2: 43.5mpg, 148g/km
www.hyundai-car.co.uk

AND THAT REMINDS ME...

A Mexican jaunt highlights the quiet role of John Fitch in motor racing history

Ten years ago a small number of us got on a plane to Mexico to pay our respects to the Carrera Panamericana and the 50th anniversary of Mercedes winning it using the W194 prototype that would go on to be developed into the immortal 300SL 'Gullwing' road car. Karl Kling took the win with Hans Klenk at his side, deterred not at all by facial injuries resulting from a vulture coming through the windscreen at an estimated 120mph.

The great Hermann Lang came second in a sister car, and the only thing that prevented a complete Mercedes lock-out of the podium was John Fitch being disqualified on a technicality. Half a century later as we drove into Oaxaca, there sat Fitch, who'd set the fastest time of all on the last stage, and a W194.

Fitch is a remarkable man, unfairly most remembered for being Pierre Levegh's team-mate that fateful day at Le Mans in 1955. In fact he was a fine driver and a generous one: for the Mille Miglia that year he was to be teamed with our own DSJ in a showroom-spec 300SL road car. And it was Fitch who had the idea for putting pacenotes on a roll of paper and Fitch who recognised his idea would be put to much better use by Stirling in the works 300SLR, so gave both his idea and his co-driver to Moss, with results that have passed into history.

By the time I met him, Fitch was 84 but in good health and more than game to slither into the W194 and take me for a blast across Mexico. He drove fast and well and then was good enough to swap seats while I drove slowly and poorly.

Fitch left me to find out for myself about his extraordinary contribution to road safety, designing impact absorbent barriers that to this day line US Interstates. He used to test his inventions not under laboratory conditions, but by crashing at high speed; he's 94 now and, so far as I am aware, still going strong.



Sidetracked
WITH ED FOSTER



Lola-Drayson B12/69-EV electric prototype is paving the way for a new FIA-backed championship

GREEN LIGHT FOR NEW ELECTRIC PROTOTYPE

Electric Lola-Drayson LMP machine tests the waters for 2013 FIA championship

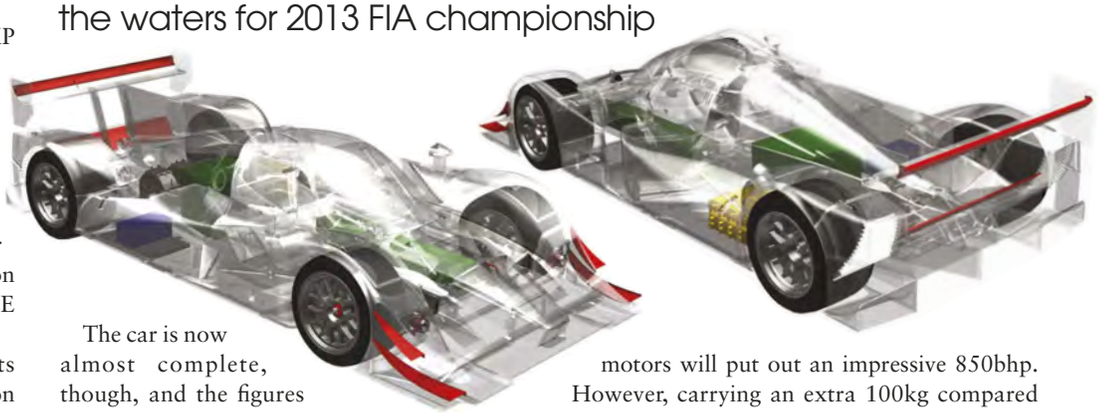
The new Lola-Drayson B12/69-EV all-electric Le Mans Prototype has been hailed as a test car to prove that electric power can be as competitive as petrol or diesel, a possible future contender at Le Mans and a showcase for future technologies.

It is all of the above, but perhaps most importantly, it's a way to test the waters ahead of the new FIA Formula E Championship which will start next year. The governing body has put a tender out to supply cars for the series and the Lola-Drayson tie up aims to be a step ahead of its rivals.

"The regulations the FIA has published are very open so that they encourage innovation," the owner of Drayson Racing Technologies, Lord Paul Drayson, tells me. "The cars will look very radical, and unlike anything else we've seen as a racing car. That's mainly down to the fact that the FIA is promoting low drag rather than high downforce. It doesn't want people spending lots of money on wind tunnels, but it does want people to spend money on innovation in the drivetrain and coming up with ideas to reduce drag. That's why we've got moveable flaps [which act like DRS in Formula 1] on the Lola-Drayson car."

The decision to build it on an existing LMP chassis from Lola was mostly down to Drayson Racing running a petrol-powered Lola-Judd in 2009 and 2010. "We've got a load of data on the Lola chassis from those two years," says Drayson, "and now we've converted it to electric power we will be able to compare, which will give us some clear feedback on the electric drive and the direction we need to go in for the Formula E Championship."

The conversion hasn't been without its problems. "The battery pack and the installation of the motors and gearboxes were the biggest challenge," Julian Sole, the chief designer of the car at Lola, tells me. "It wasn't a case of designing a chassis to wrap around the battery pack and so trying to keep the weight distribution at a sensible point, and installing all the components, was definitely a challenge."



The car is now almost complete, though, and the figures are impressive. It's hoped that the car will be faster than a conventionally-powered LMP1, which Drayson hopes to prove this year with time-attacks on a hill climb, circuit and street track. The electrical components have been developed by YASA Motors and Cosworth, and the four electric motors will put out an impressive 850bhp. However, carrying an extra 100kg compared with its petrol- and diesel-powered cousins means the car will have to make the most of its moveable aero.

Of course, electric racing may seem ridiculous for some since most electric cars can't go very far without a lengthy charge. The Formula E rounds will include four 15-minute races with

30 minutes between each to allow cars to be recharged, but this is no longer the only way forward. Replacing batteries between races becomes prohibitively expensive, and sends out the wrong kind of environmental message, so what if there was a way that the cars could charge while actually moving? It sounds a little futuristic, doesn't it?

You may already use the technology that will make this possible. "It's the same principle as an electric toothbrush," says Drayson. "You stick that on the stand and it charges without any metal contact. The technology was invented in New Zealand and has been acquired by Qualcomm, which is the world's largest manufacturer of wireless devices for smart phones. It transfers energy through wireless magnetic induction from a pad on the ground to a pad on the car."



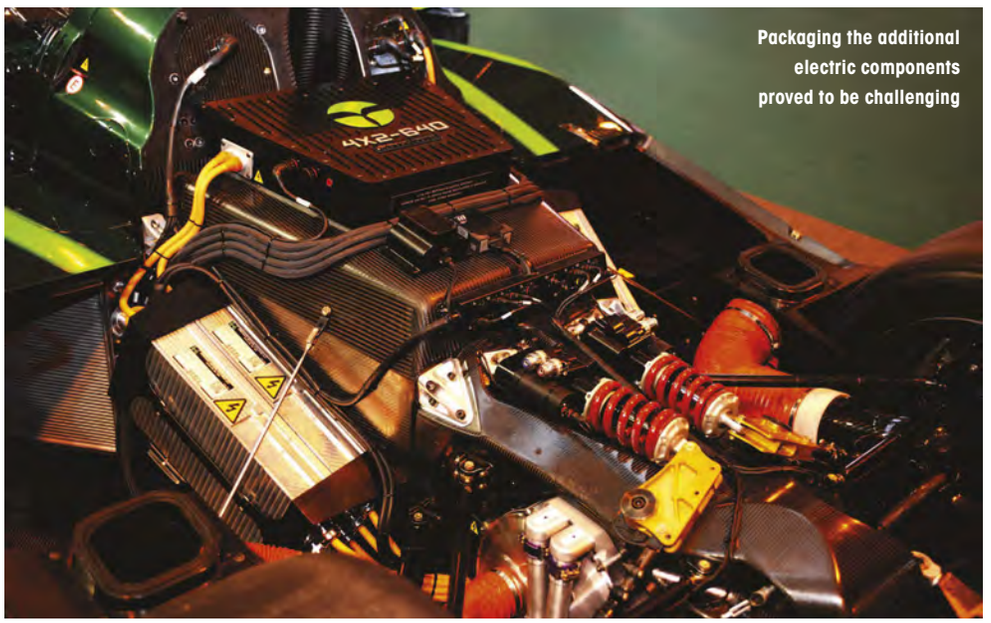
At the moment the car has to be stationary. However, the interesting thing for motor racing is that – in principle – it could work with dynamic charging, when the car is moving. "You would have coils in the road and as the car drives over them it could be charged as it moves," Drayson continues. "At Silverstone you could have the technology on the racing line if you wanted. It's probably three to five years away from being developed sufficiently to be used in a racing environment, but we're really excited about it."

The B12/69-EV, according to Drayson, will manage 20 minutes of running, at full power, before it needs charging so it could already cope with the 15-minute races proposed for next year, but imagine what could be achieved if the pad system could be made to work. Twenty four-hour electric races through the streets of Paris? Don't bet against it because the Formula E Championship is going to be run on street circuits rather than existing tracks.

"It's going to be a new type of racing," admits Drayson. "The races will be on normal streets so that the championship can exploit the fact that the cars aren't as noisy as F1 cars and also have zero emissions. In both cases they are in line with transport policies in cities like Paris and New York."

The electric Lola-Drayson has certainly been an expensive investment for Drayson Racing Technologies, but Lord Drayson is keen to point out that the level of expenditure will change. "The cost isn't in a different league to LMP cars. Electric cars are more expensive and the reason is that they are very early prototypes and the economies of scale haven't kicked in. John Judd [Engine Developments] makes lots of racing engines every year, while there is only one Drayson Racing drivetrain in existence – and that is on the prototype. Ballpark pricing for the Formula E race cars is going to be slightly more expensive, but in the same order of magnitude, as an LMP1 machine."

The FIA will announce which manufacturers will be able to build cars for the Formula E Championship on March 15. Hopefully we will not only see some interesting technology as a result, but also that the FIA makes the most of a completely clean sheet of paper. With races coming to the streets where we live, motor sport can be opened up to a much wider public.



Packaging the additional electric components proved to be challenging



OPEN YOUR OWN McLAREN **GARAGE**

A new agreement means that everyone can experience what it is like to drive the F1 constructor's back catalogue

YOU WOULD BE AMAZED how many announcements about new simulators we get here in the office.

They are no doubt all worthy programs, but it's fair to say that some are more worthy than others. The latest press release to arrive at *Motor Sport* HQ was one from Simraceway. Seeing a headline on the email stating that its creators had reached an agreement with the McLaren Group, we quickly read on.

The deal means that Ignite Game Technologies, which built Simraceway, can now create virtual models of every car the Woking-based company has produced – something that has never been allowed before.

All 36 F1 cars will be available, as well as Can-Am cars and even the road-going machines. They can be accessed through the www.simraceway.com website, and while the McLaren cars will be the main draw for many PC gamers there are also machines from Bugatti, Maserati, Saleen and Jaguar.

It's all very well saying that you can now drive the very rare McLaren M6GT but, as with all simulators, you do wonder how accurate the experience is going to be. To bolster the realism Simraceway has teamed up with Dario Franchitti to ensure that the cars feel like they would in







real life. OK, he hasn't driven every car that the game has to offer, but as many of you will know, he's a huge fan of the history of the sport and has driven an extensive and varied array of cars.

"I have an immense amount of respect for the drivers who came before me in this sport," he said when the announcement was made just before he sealed his fourth IndyCar title last year. "It's almost impossible to describe the feeling you get inside when you're behind the wheel of an old race car, but what I hope to be able to do is use my knowledge and experience to help the team at Simraceway replicate how it feels to drive."

Simraceway is constantly adding cars and tracks to its stock, and despite the fact that I was next to useless – even with the spec steering wheel – it is extremely enjoyable clicking through a garage of McLaren F1 cars, wondering what to drive next, even if it is just a virtual world.





School bus helps aspiring racers keep up their broader education

A SCHOOL AWAY **FROM SCHOOL**

Formula Kart Star bus helps young karters keep up to date with schoolwork at the races

"FORMULA KART STARS (FKS) continues to lead the way in supporting the off-track development of its competitors and recognising their education for its vital importance," wrote Bernie Ecclestone in the foreword to the FKS Official Series Guide last year.

"The days of drivers arriving in Formula 1 on the back of driving talent alone are gone; teams now want racers who are bright, articulate, technically minded and well-rounded, as well as quick."

He went on to say that the current FKS ranks may well have a future Formula 1 world champion in them; and for those that didn't make it to F1, the educational support was even more important.

Formula One Management backed the championship in 2011 alongside Lewis Hamilton and his father Anthony. The British-based series has actually been around for a while and morphed out of the McLaren-Mercedes Champions of the Future which was set up by Ron Dennis, Norbert Haug and the late Martin Hines.



Many racers don't make the most of educational opportunities because they are focused on success in motor sport; Mark Blundell tells Simon Taylor all about his schooling sacrifice on page 84. Ecclestone is right that school shouldn't be thrown aside once the motor sport bug takes its hold. But how do you actually keep up with homework when you've got tyre choice and set-up to worry about?

Well, the first choice for FKS contenders last year was the 'school bus'. "Bernie and Lewis both emphasised the education aspect of racing when they came on board as patrons," the series commentator Henry Beaudette says. "Our recent Clerk of the Course Mark Marsh is a college tutor at Boston College (in Lincolnshire) and we have been given access to the bus through him."

It really is a bus, but it is equipped with audio and visual learning aids, an outdoor presentation area, computers and everything else karters may need to catch up on school work. Marsh is there throughout the race meetings to help pupils.

"Drivers can book one-on-one tutorials or simply drop by to do their own studies," Beaudette says. "If the driver's school wish to they can email the appropriate curriculum to the championship so we can ensure their students carry on with the work they would have done in school had they not been away karting.

"This year Boston College is actually providing FKS with a number of their students who will shadow the FKS officials throughout the year and hopefully they'll learn some new skills in terms of scrutineering, clerking, officiating and media work."

Let's be frank. Only a very small percentage of kart racers will ever make money from motor racing. There were roughly 30,000 licence holders in Britain last year and only a tiny number were actually paid to race. When you think about the sport in that perspective, it seems ridiculous there aren't more initiatives like the FKS school bus.







Chenard 'tank', lovely Talbot and one-off Alfa – just a few of treasures found at Retromobile

I LOVE PARIS IN THE WINTER

It's an exhibition, a shop-front and an automotive party. That's why Retromobile is a February must

In its new hall the annual winter Paris auto-exposition had a higher-quality feel this time, perhaps because the parts and models were in a separate section leaving the displays, dealers and automobilia in the spotlight.

The show seethed with fine machinery, spear-headed by a selection from the amazing Peter Mullin museum of French cars. Alongside the famous Hispano-Suiza Xenia sat a Saoutchik Talbot T26, a selection of seductively-bodied V12 Delahayes, a Bugatti Atlantic coupé and that gloriously absurd Voisin Aerodyne with its wonderful jazz-fabric interior. Delahayes seemed to be everywhere, but I especially liked the short-chassis Guilloré V12 on the Automobiles Historiques stand of Flavien and Vanessa Marçais, who run those two fine race series for GT & Sports Cars and Italian Historics. They also showed me over the only privately-owned Alpine-Renault A442 Le Mans car – which is being restored to race! I can't wait to see that.

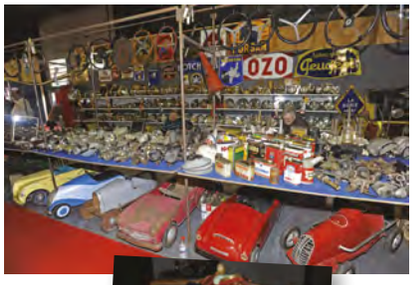
Dealer stands at Retro are much more than sales opportunities, more like mini-museums. On his patch the ever-cheerful Lukas Huni backed up a particularly handsome Motto-bodied Talbot-Lago T26 and enormous Boneschi touring Lancia Asturia with his own V12 Delage 2LCV, Fiskens showed Didier Pironi's Ligier JS11/15, while Hall & Hall paired Villeneuve's Canadian GP-winning Ferrari T3 with one of the Auto Unions recovered from Soviet Russia on the back of a VW pick-up. You couldn't help imagining Gilles in an A-U – blistering. They also had Seaman's Delage 8C – and there was another on an insurance firm's pitch. French manufacturers seem to have rediscovered the show: Renault went big on the sporting angle with Alpine, reminding us that 50 years ago before it went Group 4-wild the Berlinette was a pretty little thing, Peugeot offered a spread of early 200-series cars to mark the new 208, and Citroën took an art route with a groovy-liveried GS, posters and sculptures, a rally SM (was there ever a less likely rally car?) plus maquettes of the 2CV concept by legendary designer Flaminio Bertoni – and the hatchet he used to shape plaster models. Another French make represented was Monica; no, not a rebirth for the elegant 1970s four-door sports saloon, but marque inspirer Jean Tastevin was on hand to sign a new book on the project.

BMW harked back to its humbler origins with a pretty 700RS competition spider and an F2 single-seater of 1949, while Skoda celebrated grander days with one of the Hispanos it built under licence between the wars, featuring a positive sideboard inside with mirrors and cabinets, plus a very attractive Monte Carlo coupé of 1937 with waterfall grille and aero tail.

It's the completely unexpected that make a trip to Retro worth it: you'll come across things like one of the 1925 Chenard et Walcker Le Mans 'tanks', a cute Fiat Topolino hot rod with chopped roof or the beautifully constructed replica of an electric tricycle which ran in England in 1881. Built by Germany's Autovision museum, this was straight out of H G Wells, all wicker, brass and mahogany. Next door, something which stopped me in my tracks: the delicate 1920s duralumin skeleton of the mid-engined Gerin, a grounded aeroplane with all-independent suspension and gearless CVT drive. On show for the first time, it was never completed in period, although its designer drove it for miles *sans* its intended fabric bodywork, and its owners don't plan to finish it now – that would be anticipating history. Elsewhere you could admire a wonderful line-up of amphibious cars, from the practical Trippel which could convey 16 stormtroopers across a river to the bizarre Comète – a two-seater bathtub balancing on two enormous rubber-tyred paddle wheels.

I was impressed by the parade of one-offs built by French hopefuls in the Sixties. Home-built though they were, all were well-finished and

remarkably good-looking, particularly the Elite-like Piollet coupé and the Prab, reminiscent of the 1980s TVR Tuscan. I can't imagine where else you could explore this by-way of motoring history. In fact there were rare vehicles in every direction: the tiny Marquis, designed by Alpine's Jean Redélé, the experimental F1 Ferrari 'Spazzaneve' – seeing its short, squat form I appreciate why it was uncharitably called 'snowplough' – or a tangerine Fifties Alfa 1900SS show car by Ghia-Aigle which I went to look at with American collector Oscar Davies. He was keen to buy until he found he couldn't climb over its doorless flanks.





Auctions are a major Retro feature, and while I didn't make it to Bonhams' sale which was elsewhere, they had brought one of the late George Daniels' cars to preview the Goodwood sale of the horologist's collection, a 1907 Daimler tourer – *two* owners from new. I did inspect Artcurial's offerings, though, finding a tasty Delahaye 135M bodied by Pourtout, one of my favourite houses, and a Lancia Rallye 037 which swept me back to my best-ever day's driving, in one of these GpB wildcards along the banks of Loch Ness. What a car.

Retromobile is famous for its high-quality automobilia, and it's a treat to admire original Bourlier travel posters, huge model biplanes and cases racked with unusual radiator mascots, trophies for forgotten rallies and elaborate sculptures. Retro isn't cheap, but the best never is, and Retro is where the best goes on display. I wanted to pocket a painted Twenties bronze of a hydroplane skating over metallic waves, but the dealer gave me some suspicious looks.

There's new art too: I watched entranced as Hervé Nys's sculpted Bugattis endlessly climbed a spiral ramp, and while I could give his wheeled sheep skull a miss, I liked the contorted con rods writhing together like snakes. Models abound, but my eye was caught by Patrick Badot's amazingly detailed 1/6th-scale Lancia-Ferrari. Patrick, a keen *Motor Sport* reader, tells me it can take from six to 36 months to create a model, which he produces in a small run. No wonder they attract the price of a full-size car. Alongside were the 1/43rd-scale Bugattis of Alain Bouissou, true magnifying-glass jobs with pinhole drillings on a T59 chassis and separate wheel spokes, and the super-detailed Auto Union and Alfa Monza of Pierre Laugier, with paper-thin panels which open up to reveal jewel-like internals.

It's hard getting round Retro, not only because there's so much to see but because at every corner you bump into people you know. The days of finding unused pre-war Alfa switches among the parts stands are mostly over now, but it's still the place to catch up with car types and meet new ones. Mark Lizewskie, curator of the Jack W Rich auto museum in Pennsylvania, told me about restarting the one-time Hershey hill climb, along with a concours where in line with a welcome shift in attitudes there will be a preservation class where faded original paint is applauded, not marked down. Oh, and I met a lady with 100 Cadillacs, but that's another story.

For once I didn't buy anything at Retro – last time I came away with a Panhard garage – but it's always a pleasure to visit. Very different atmosphere to Goodwood or Pebble – it's indoors for a start. Or mostly indoors: thumping away outside sat the awesome 11ft-tall 330-litre (believe it) turbo-charged Duvant engine, built to drive a huge dynamo. A plume of exhaust sailed up into the freezing air, a flag for the weird things you can find in Paris in the winter.

DREAM GARAGE

WHAT WE'D BLOW THE BUDGET ON THIS MONTH



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€660,000
www.artandrevs.com



CLASSIC THROTTLE SHOP

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Older readers may recall 'the Radio London Elva'. Here it is, with a 170bhp BMW four on board and recent race success under its belt. One of the prettiest sports cars around.

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HOME OF HORSEPOWER

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This is the first works car, raced by – everyone! Gurney, Clark, Sears, Taylor, Arundell, Tullius, Hobbs... Driver's seat currently vacant – but probably not for long.

£250,000
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IN THE WORKSHOP

Fiennes Restoration

WHAT'S YOUR HISTORY?

The firm began as a one-man band over 30 years ago, when restoration was a much smaller world. I trained as a physicist, so this was a case of turning a hobby into a business. I'd always had a mechanical aptitude – I date from the time when you had to make your own toys! – and pre-war cars are much more mendable than modern ones. Now we employ 28 people, and we're expanding. A lot of new work is coming from Europe – people have decided that classic cars are a safer investment than shares!

WHAT'S YOUR RANGE OF SKILLS?

We do everything except trim and woodwork; for those we use two trusted companies nearby. Otherwise we manufacture parts, build engines and chassis, and do our own panelling and painting. We've even had to find out how to grind down fishscales in the old way to replicate the original paint finish on an early Phantom. If that's what's needed, that's what we do.

DO YOU HAVE A SPECIALISATION?

We concentrate largely on pre-war machinery, particularly Rolls-Royce of anywhere from 1906 to 1940, and Bentley, although we deal with many other marques too. We also handle post-war coachwork, and we find we're doing more long-distance rally preparation.

WHAT'S IN THE WORKSHOP NOW?

Fourteen pre-war Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, the oldest being a 1923 20hp. There's an unusual Springfield Phantom doctor's coupé with folding roof, a Derby 3½ that belonged to the Kidston family, an Art Deco Bentley with Carlton body, and another 3½ with division – rare for a Bentley – built for the then Prince Michael. Luckily we've just moved to larger premises!

WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOU PROUD OF?

Two awards at the last Pebble Beach concours with a Graber-bodied Rolls 20/25 (above), which was the first time one of the smaller Rolls-Royces has won there. And the Derby Bentley saloon we prepared for a Peking to Paris trip, which got there without problems and was the competitors' choice for the car they'd most like to do the next event in.

GC was talking to Will Fiennes
www.fiennes.co.uk



Can-Am 917/30 tops Gooding's Amelia list, with (below) 924 Carrera GT LM and Daytona-winning 962

Peter Harholdt

Around the houses

NEWS FROM THE MAIN AUCTION HOUSES AROUND THE WORLD

– GOODING AND COMPANY –

When you sell 98 per cent of 118 lots up for auction it's safe to say that it was a successful event. That's exactly what Gooding and Company managed on January 20/21 at its Scottsdale sale, along with breaking 13 world sales records and knocking down two cars for more than $3 million (£1.9m). Sadly one of the lots that didn't even make it to the sale was the star attraction that we mentioned in the February issue – the 1956 Ferrari 500 Testa Rossa Scaglietti spider.

However, almost every other car found a new home and over 10 per cent of the £25.2m total was accounted for by one car: the 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300SL. Gullwings have been escalating, and this one fetched £2.9m.

There were plenty of Ferraris in the sale and top of that list was a stunning 1959 Ferrari 250 GT LWB California Spider that eventually sold for £2.5m. Other Italian exotica included an absolutely immaculate 1971 Lamborghini Miura P400 SV that went for £697,000.

Immediately after the hammer dropped on the final lot in Scottsdale, Gooding and Company was already looking forward to its Amelia Island sale on March 9. The auction house has announced that it will sell the Drendel Family Collection of 18 Porsches that includes some fantastic racers from the German manufacturer. Spearheading these will be one of four examples of the 1973 917/30 Can-Am Spyder (£2-2.5m). Chassis 917-30-004 was sold new to Australian Porsche importer Alan Hamilton before being repurchased by the Porsche factory. The 1000bhp turbocharged flat 12 is on the button and the car has recently been raced at the Monterey Historics.





Patrick McGinnis

The list of other Porsches is as staggering as it is extensive – a 1984 Porsche 962 that won the Daytona 24 Hours twice (£1.1-1.4m), a development 1974 Porsche RSR Turbo Carrera 2.14 (£1.1-1.4m), the first 1976 Porsche 935/76 to be built (£1.1-1.3m), one of four factory 1997 Porsche 911 GT1 Evolutions (£570-760,000), a Le Mans 24 Hours class-winning 1975 Porsche 934 (£500-630,000) and even the only McLaren-Porsche MP4/3 F1 car still in private hands (£280-380,000). It is certainly one of the most impressive collections of racing cars from one manufacturer we have seen for a very long time.

If you're not a Porsche fan then Gooding and Company has also lined up a 1953 Fiat 8V Zagato (£475-570,000), a 1956 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing (£440-570,000) and even a 1947 Ford Sportsman (£140-170,000).

– RM AUCTIONS –

An 89 per cent sell rate and £16m worth of machinery may not stack up quite so well against Gooding and Company's Scottsdale auction, but RM had some wonderful cars for sale in its Arizona auction on January 19/20.

The top sale went to a 1957 Ferrari 410 Superamerica Scaglietti coupé (£1.15m), while other Ferraris also sold well including a 1991 Ferrari F40 (£495,160) and a 1963 Ferrari 250 GT Lusso Berlinetta with Targa Florio history (£620,700).

There were one or two other racers in the sale, with a 1952 Allard K2 'Factory Special' roadster selling for £74,905. Sadly the 1962 Lotus 23B reached £82,315, but didn't sell.

RM Auctions has confirmed it will sell the Saltarelli collection of 100 Ducati motorbikes at its auction on May 11/12 in Monaco. Carlo Saltarelli was a Ducati factory test rider, racer and dealer, and has amassed a mouth-watering selection of bikes. The highlight is certainly



Arizona dreamin': Ferrari 410 Superamerica topped £1m for RM

the 1970 ex-works Ducati 450 Desmo 'Corsa', but there is also a 1990 ex-works Ducati 888 Superbike, two Ducati 750SS from 1973/4 and '75 and a 1956 Ducati 125 Moto Giro F3 up for grabs. All estimates are available on request.

In the less distant future RM is preparing itself for its Amelia Island sale on March 10. 100 cars will be offered, which include a 1934 Packard Twelve Dietrich Convertible Victoria (POA), a 1929 Cord L-29 Hayes Coupé (£790-950,000) and a restored 1959 Jaguar XK120 Alloy roadster (£180-230,000).

– MECUM –

Although Mecum managed to sell £38m worth of cars at its Kissimmee auction on January 24-29, the NASCARs that we flagged up in the February edition – the ex-Bill Elliott 1992 Ford Thunderbird and the ex-Kevin Harvick 2006 Chevrolet Monte Carlo SS – failed to sell.

The 1961 Chevrolet Corvette Gulf car that topped the SCCA B-Production National Championship that year also failed to find a new home, but did reach a high bid of £538,280.

– BONHAMS –

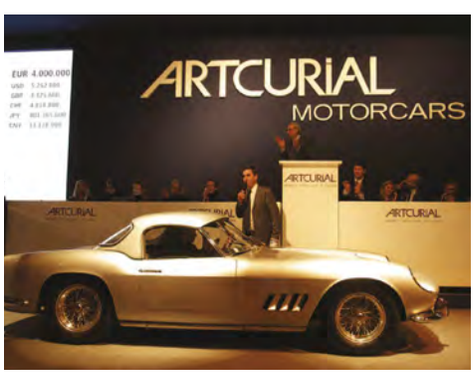
At its Retromobile sale on February 2 Bonhams sold the sole surviving 1925 Delage D8-105S streamlined coupé which we featured in last month's issue for an impressive £267,340. Other lots included a 1961 Aston Martin DB4GT that fetched £839,800 and a 1959 Ferrari 250GT Pininfarina coupé which achieved £200,410. The ex-works/Louis Rosier 1956 Talbot-Lago T14 Spécial coupé also found a new home for £133,600. And in case you're wondering whether *Motor Sport*'s art editor or the associate editor are now proud owners of the 1978 FIAT 900T Ferrari service van featured in last month's issue, that was sadly not to be. However, the wonderful unrestored piece of mobile history did sell for well above its £5-7500 estimate, making £14,790.

Bonhams also had a good first sale in Scottsdale on January 19 after it sold £3.9m worth of lots. The cover star of the sale – the Marlene Dietrich 1929 Rolls-Royce Phantom I Transformable Phaeton – sold for £331,350.

On March 3 Bonhams will hold its Oxford sale and has announced that a 1961 Ferrari 250GTE 2+2 Series 1 coupé, once owned by Italian producer Agostino De Laurentiis, will be 'crossing the block'. The barn find, which carries an estimate of £40-60,000, hasn't been driven since 1976, as its tax disc confirms.

– ARTCURIAL –

Of course, the Bonhams sale wasn't the only auction at Retromobile as on February 3 French company Artcurial also held its annual sale, which this year realised a whopping £12m. Although the ex-Roger Vadim 1959 Ferrari 250GT California Spyder LWB sold for £3.7m and a 1956 Ferrari 250GT Boano went for £396,000, the most unbelievable sale was a 1965 Citroën 2CV that went for £49,430. No, that isn't a misprint; a 2CV sold for nearly £50,000. No surprises that it was a world record sum for the model, but then this version was in the rarest spec of all – the upmarket California version – and had astonishingly clocked up only 116 miles from new.



Ninety per cent of all 102 cars offered for sale found buyers, and among those was the ex-Nigel Mansell Ferrari F40 that sold for £313,210.

– COYS –

The Richmond-based auction house sold several racers at its Autosport International sale on January 15 including an ex-Colin McRae 2002 Ford Focus which he used to win that year's Acropolis Rally (£130,600) and a 1969 Alfa Romeo GTA historic racer (£46,600).

A 1991 Ford RS200 Evo (£126,120), a 1968 Bizzarrini 5300GT (£242,600) and a 1994 Jaguar XJ220 (£130,600) also found their way to new owners.

FORTHCOMING AUCTIONS

FEB 24 WORLDWIDE AUCTIONEERS *The Classics at the Trump,* Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, New Jersey Tel: 001 260 925 6789

FEB 24-25 RM AUCTIONS *The Milhous Collection,* The Milhous Museum, Boca Raton, Florida Tel: 001 519 352 4575

FEB 24-25 MECUM *Muscle Cars & More,* Long Beach Convention Center, Long Beach, California Tel: 001 262 275 5050

FEB 25 SILVERSTONE AUCTIONS *Race Retro Sale,* Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire Tel: 01926 691 141

FEB 28 BARONS CLASSIC, *Collectors and Sports Car Auction,* Sandown Park Exhibition Complex, Esher Hall, Surrey Tel: 023 8066 8413

MAR 3 BONHAMS *Collectors Motor Cars and Automobilia,* Oxford Tel: 020 7447 7447

MAR 5 SHANNONS *Melbourne Autumn Classic Auction,* Cheltenham, Melbourne Tel: 0061 2 8019 4116

MAR 6 COYS *Spring Classics,* Royal Horticultural Halls, London Tel: 020 8614 7888

MAR 7 BRIGHTWELLS *Classic Cars and Motorcycles,* Easters Court, Leominster, Herefordshire Tel: 01568 611 122

MAR 9 GOODING AND COMPANY *Amelia Island,* Racquet Park, Florida Tel: 001 310 899 1960

MAR 10 RM AUCTIONS *Amelia Island,* The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island, Florida Tel: 001 519 352 4575

MAR 16-18 AUCTIONS AMERICA *Fort Lauderdale,* Eisenhower Blvd, Fort Lauderdale, Florida Tel: 001 954 566 2209

MAR 22 DVCA *Classic Collectors Cars and Automobilia,* Templecombe, Somerset Tel: 01963 363 353

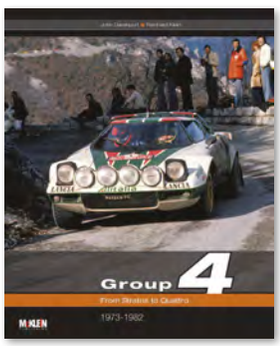
MAR 24 COYS *Techno Classica,* Essen, Germany Tel: 020 8614 7888

MAR 29-31 MECUM *Muscle Cars & More,* Kansas City Convention, Kansas City, Missouri Tel: 001 262 275 5050

FOR FULL AUCTION LISTINGS AND RESULTS VISIT
www.motorsportmagazine.com

Reviews





GROUP 4

FROM STRATOS TO QUATTRO 1973-1982

by John Davenport and Reinhard Klein

When a package from McKlein thumps on your desk you know before opening it that there's a good chance it will be another opus on a certain era of rallying.

Recently there was the extravagant Group B tome and now it's a weighty account of the Group 4 era. This effort may not cost €999 like the former, but it is another book that will be viewed as the definitive work on the subject.

And what a subject – Björn Waldegård, Hannu Mikkola, Markku Alén, Ari Vatanen and Walter Röhrl on opposite lock in Audi Quattros, BMW 2002s, Fiat Abarth 131s, Ford Escort RS1800s and the awesome Lancia Stratos.

McKlein is known by many as a photographic archive thanks to the work of editor, co-author and rally photographer Reinhard Klein. The images are stunning, and run alongside sections on the sport's changes, the drivers, cars, seasons, the main stories from the Group 4 era and the statistics.

When I met Klein last year he told me that the whole sport needed documenting properly. "It just hasn't been done and rallying is sort of pushed aside," he said. "If you ask some of the manufacturers how many cars they had in period and who drove what, they won't have the first idea. Most of them have left the sport and don't give a shit anymore."

It's true that most of the manufacturers from the Group 4 era are no longer in the WRC, but with books such as this the period will be preserved properly. **EF**

Published by McKlein Publishing, ISBN 978 3 927458 54 3, €49.90



RÖHRL'S CAT

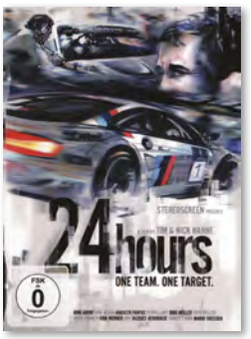
A JOURNEY THROUGH THE RALLY CAREER OF A DOUBLE WORLD CHAMPION

On the back of this DVD it states "no, it is not a film made just for animal lovers, but fans of one of the most successful rally pilots of all time". So why call it Röhrl's *Cat*? There really is no reason, and the footage of his feline friend Lisa eating a mouse at the beginning is, well, just very strange.

Once you're past that though, the story sweeps through the two-time World Rally Champion's story, paying special attention to the Monte Carlo, San Remo and the Safari rallies. There is some absolutely stunning period footage – including that film of his feet working the pedals in 1985 – and Röhrl himself takes us through the highs and lows of his career in German, with English subtitles.

However, certain parts of the story have been reconstructed – like his early work as a chauffeur – and they simply don't work. **EF**

Produced by Helmut Deimel, Highspeed Films, www.deimelfilm.com, €29.90



24 HOURS

ONE TEAM. ONE TARGET

A film by Tim and Nick Hahne

This film about BMW's assault on the 2011 Nürburgring 24 Hours was never going to escape its PR feel. Any DVD on a single manufacturer always runs that risk, but with the backdrop of the famous German race it does make quite good watching, at times...

The film is not just about the race. It covers the car launch four months before, the first test at Imola, the test at the Nürburgring and even Augusto Farfus and Jörg Müller going for a particularly Euro scooter ride around Monaco. In fact, you'll need to fast-forward over an hour into the one-hour 40-minute DVD to get to the actual race. If the film was condensed into an hour it would make a much more palatable viewing experience.

Parts of it are interesting and you get a good idea of how wrong a race can go despite endless preparation. But it's not a patch on Audi's *Truth in 24* Le Mans masterpiece. **EF**

Produced by Stereoscreen, www.rallyandracing.com, €23.90



MOTOR SPORT 1930s-1970s

It's crudely filmed, with a commentary which struggles to identify what's on screen and unpredictable switches from black and white to colour. But it's not hard to excuse technical shortcomings in this DVD of pre- and post-war motor sport, because it is a compilation of amateur film footage which would otherwise never be seen, and it brings us some unexpected gems.

There's film of the second race meeting at Donington in 1934, with sports cars, bikes and spidery sidecar outfits slithering over the narrow track as it spears through the arch of the bridge, sand racing at Southport, Hans Stuck's Auto Union storming Shelsley, Brooklands racing, a duffel-coated Bira signing autographs at Crystal Palace, Brands running in reverse, Eastbourne Rallies, Le Mans colour from 1959, Bluebird at Brooklands, Shuttleworth's P3 taking the 1935 Donington GP, Le Mans starts at Silverstone… A glorious jumble. WB would have loved it. **GC**

Produced by Totally Archive, www.totallyarchive.co.uk, £12.99

YOU WERE THERE

Some attractive colour coverage from Silverstone this month, mostly from those exciting International Trophies when F2 and F1 ran side by side



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8



BRYAN COX

Bryan Cox's first visit to Silverstone was in 1949 – "I stood behind those oil drums with my box camera, not thinking of the risks!" But these shots come mostly from the 1960 International Trophy, by when Bryan had a Paxette Braun. {1} Four-wheel drive? It'll never win… Fans flock round Ferguson {2} BRM P48 by works transporter {3} Graham Hill with Tommy Sopwith and Ronnie Hoare (bending) {4} Jack Brabham watches Cooper crew check settings {5} Filling up with five-star – Cooper-Climax at the pumps {6} Maurice Trintignant settles in Aston DBR4 {7} Centro Sud Cooper-Maserati of Ian Burgess {8} FJunior Lotus and Ace Garage transport {9} Corgi Toys mobile exhibition and Bonnier's Porsche 718{10} Porsche 356 with appropriate tender





9 10



Mike Hawthorn's humble Cooper-Bristol holds off factory Ferrari 500 at Zandvoort in 1952 Dutch GP

LAT

'MICK' HAWTHORN HITS THE HEADLINES

That's what the papers at first called the blond kid from Farnham when he swapped a pre-war Riley for one of Cooper's latest single-seaters and began to make waves

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Graham Hill's Formula 1 World Championship title win in the determinedly all-British BRM. It also sees the 50th anniversary of Jim Clark's first World Championship-qualifying Grand Prix wins in Colin Chapman's determinedly brilliant (and utterly beautiful) Lotus-Climax Type 25. And then there's also the 50th anniversary of Carroll Shelby's determinedly agricultural – but admittedly effective – Cobra…

But let's add another 10 years, and not forget that 2012 also marks the 60th anniversary of Mike Hawthorn's emergence upon the international motor racing stage as a startling new driver talent.

During 1951 the Farnham garage owner's lanky blond son had shown serious promise at club level in pre-war Rileys, including winning the *Motor Sport* Championship at BARC Goodwood meetings. A logical step up seemed to be the single-seater 2-litre Formula 2 class. Father Leslie wangled Mike a winter-time trial drive with Connaught at Goodwood. He promptly tried too hard and spun. John Heath of HWM was another to give him a trial, needing a replacement for Moss who was leaving the team. Heath also tried fellow garage-owner's son Peter Collins, who proved as quick and who also had single-seater experience, which Mike did not. So Collins got the drive instead.

Leslie had talked to his old friend and enthusiastic fellow drinker Bob Chase about finding Mike a Formula 2 drive for '52. Chase, from the south coast, was in his late 50s; a colourful, alcoholic dealer in military surplus and marine diesel engines who ran a powerful ex-Coastal Forces motor launch and who'd reputedly had several close calls with the Revenue men while 'trading' cross-Channel…

Bob Chase had been in bed suffering from 'flu when he read about the Cooper Car Co's latest model – a conventionally front-engined F2 open-wheeler, with 2-litre Bristol six. The price would be around £1800. He'd enjoyed some profitable recent deals and decided on the spur of the moment to ask Leslie Hawthorn if buying one for Mike might be a good idea.

The Hawthorns jumped at the offer, so Chase telephoned John Cooper in the Surbiton factory. John recalled: "I knew about young Mike Hawthorn because in a meeting at Goodwood where I was driving my Cooper-MG this blond-headed bloke in a bloody old pre-war Riley had absolutely murdered me!" John had already done a deal with Jimmy Richmond to supply two Cooper-Bristols to him as semi-works cars, to be driven by Alan Brown and John's old school friend – and effectively co-founder of Cooper Cars – Eric Brandon, with himself as third driver of a works-owned extra car. He called them to suggest they might consider Hawthorn joining Ecurie Richmond in his place. Their reaction was a dismissive "who the hell is Mike Hawthorn?".

John accepted the Chase order largely to the disgust of Richmond, Brandon and Brown. Eric once told me: "The deal we finally did was for our mechanics, Ginger Devlin and Bernie Rodger, to assemble our cars plus Mike's at Cooper's, and we could have ours for £1200 apiece. Our blokes progressed our cars as quick as they could. If some shortage meant a car was going to lag behind, it was obvious which it would be…".

So while the Chase-Hawthorn rolling chassis was delayed, Leslie Hawthorn played his trump card, visiting Bristol at Filton to ensure early delivery of a third F2 engine. He specified a special unit, with high-compression head, tuned to burn nitro-laced fuel.

The two new Ecurie Richmond Cooper-Bristols, plus a third car for John Cooper and this fourth for Chase-Hawthorn were all entered

for the Easter Monday Goodwood meeting – but completion of all four in time seemed doubtful.

Mike and Hawthorn family friend Hughie Sewell – a soft-spoken, gentlemanly bearded boffin who simply loved tinkering with quality engines – descended upon Cooper's Hollyfield Road works to help finalise their car. The engine and gearbox were also late, but with just days to go before Goodwood, Mike and his young friend Neil McNab tore down to Filton to pay the £661 bill and collect the units.

On the Wednesday the rolling chassis with unpainted body was finally rushed to the Hawthorns' TT Garage in East Street, Farnham, where Leslie, Hughie, and mechanics Brit Pearce and Joe Bickell hastily installed the engine and drive-train. Leslie had a wartime acquaintance who was Station Commander at RAF Odiham, and he pulled strings for the new Cooper-Bristols all to test at nearby Lasham aerodrome that Thursday.

But while the Richmond cars ran quite well, the Chase-Hawthorn Cooper-Bristol warped its valve-seats. Brit Pearce: "Leslie had only an old and blunt seat cutter, but he got on with that job. Joe Bickell ground-in the valves and Mike and I had all the wheels off and checked the brakes and shockers. We finally got the engine started again at about half-past-four next morning. Then we took it back to Lasham and it went like a dingbat!"

In fact its pace steadied the Richmond boys who were also there that Good Friday giving their new cars a final shake-down. Alan Brown was impressed, ever-competitive Eric Brandon less so, dismissing the new kid as "a flash in the pan". Leslie had a fine reputation as a carburettor tuning specialist so they attributed Mike's pace to his Dad's touch.

However, Leslie's use of nitro-laced fuel – permissible at that time – had more to do with it. Brit Pearce: "We got the stuff in drums and mixed it up at the garage, and kept it quiet. I don't think even Bob Chase knew we were using it".

Early on Easter Saturday, Goodwood practice day, the TT Garage crew winched their new car, still unpainted – into an ex-War Department six-cylinder Austin transporter that Leslie had borrowed from Connaught. Brit chocked the Cooper's wheels with timber, but just a mile outside Farnham, heading steeply downhill towards 'The Fox' pub, "there was a rumble and bang – the car had run up over the timber. There'd have been hell to pay if Leslie had found out; he had a terrible temper!".

Once at Goodwood, Brit and Joe hastily straightened the new car's bent nose and grille before Leslie arrived. It's all familiar history now how Mike practiced sensationally, setting second-fastest time behind only the 4½-litre ThinWall Special V12 Ferrari. Juan Manuel Fangio was at Goodwood to drive a V16 BRM. He was fascinated to see the new cars, and after some encouragement from BARC organiser John Morgan, John Cooper offered him the prototype Cooper-Bristol to drive on Monday, should the expected BRM default.


In Bob Chase's Cooper-Bristol, Hawthorn took fourth place in the Belgian GP at Spa in 1952

"It's the only time I've seen somebody chat up a bird while driving a single-seater"

The Chase-Hawthorn team carefully re-prepared their new car at Farnham that Sunday, before returning it to Goodwood for the Monday race meeting. Mike later wrote: "I was on the starting line when I realized that I had never practiced a racing start in the car. I had no idea what revs or how much wheel spin to expect. Suddenly there flashed into my mind something I had read in *Motor Sport*. It said somebody at the Brighton Speed Trials took the revs up and then held them instead of blipping the throttle. Down went my foot, the flag dropped, I let in the clutch and away I went. When I got a chance to size up what was going on behind I simply could not believe it. I was well in the lead…".

In those days Goodwood still ran Brooklands-style sprint races, and Mike promptly won the six-lap Lavant Cup to give both the new Cooper-Bristol and himself this sensational debut. In the six-lap Formule Libre Chichester Cup Mike won again after another steady-rev start. The meeting's feature race was the 12-lap Richmond Trophy, including Formula 1 cars, and Mike actually led Froilan Gonzalez in the ThinWall Special before it got into its stride and thundered past. He still finished second to complete this fantastic day. Alan Brown then won a Handicap race in his Richmond Cooper-Bristol, and so this front-engined model from the pioneering rear-engined manufacturer had most sensationally arrived.

In the Chase car, tuned and fed fuel brewed by father Leslie, Mike Hawthorn went on to win his heat and lead the final at May Silverstone, then came fourth against Ferrari and Maserati opposition in the Belgian Grand Prix at Spa, third in the British GP at Silverstone, fourth in the Dutch GP at Zandvoort and showed Gigi Villoresi the way round Boreham in the wet, until a drying track let the Italian's 4½-litre factory Ferrari muscle its way by. By the time of the Italian GP Enzo Ferrari was offering the English boy a driver test, and for 1953 he would join Ascari, Villoresi and Farina as their works team-mate.

But I still suspect that the most fun he had all year in a Cooper-Bristol was not in the Bob Chase car at all, but in the ex-works prototype (as driven by Fangio at Goodwood) which had been bought by Archie Bryde. Partly because they didn't have a spare engine, Leslie arranged for Mike to drive this car on loan while Chase's was being prepared for the major GPs. Mike drove the Bryde car at Dundrod and at Reims where it overheated. The engine was rebuilt at Cattaneo's in Paris, and Mike then drove the car on the public road to the French GP meeting at Rouen, escorted by the owner in his Bentley. Archie Bryde laughed at the memory as he told me how they "…came up to a rather flash white Packard convertible, driven by a young man with a very pretty dolly sitting on his right. Mike first came level on the correct overtaking side, did a double-take, and continued to pass. He then slowed right down, and the Packard went to pass him. Mike allowed him alongside, and at this point the bird was next to Mike. This went on for two or three kilometres; it's the only time I've ever seen somebody trying to chat-up a bird while driving a single-seater…". »»



Trevor Taylor pursues team-mate Jim Clark in the Cape GP at Killarney – until the pressure tells and he takes the win

GP Library

The other Team Lotus twin

While the period of 1962-2012 will be celebrated for its Graham Hill BRM, Jimmy Clark Lotus and Shelby Cobra anniversaries, we should never forget Jimmy's erstwhile team-mate, who in many ways was darned-nearly as good on his day – the late Trevor Taylor.

Back in January 1962 Trev actually scored his first Formula 1 race win, in the Cape Grand Prix at Killarney, South Africa. He and Jimmy were on the Springbok tour there in a pair of Team Lotus Type 21 cars with 1½-litre four-cylinder Climax FPF engines.

That was the South African tour which had persuaded Stirling Moss to name Jim Clark as "the only driver I might fear", as the young Scot had just won the first three races – the Rand, Natal and South African GPs – on the trot.

At the Killarney circuit, the Team Lotus twins faced thin opposition, apart from Jo Bonnier and Edgar Barth in works Porsche flat-fours and Masten Gregory in a UDT Lotus. But a motor race still has to be won. While Clark led initially, Trevor Taylor had first to dispose of Bonnier's hard-driven Porsche before catching Jimmy. The pair of them then swopped



LAT

the lead – OK, perhaps unconvincingly – until lap 50 when Clark spun at Hoal's Hoek. He had been leading at the time but Trev was pressing him hard and had succeeded in forcing the error.

Jimmy fought back as only the truly great can do, retaking second place from Jo Bonnier, but Trev maintained his lead over the last 10 laps to win by four car-lengths after a faultless 90-minute drive whose average speed was faster than Jo Bonnier's lap record of the previous year.

Come December that same year, 1962, Team Lotus would be back in South Africa contesting yet another Springbok tour. And Trev would score further Formula 1 wins for them, this time in both heat two and the final of the Natal Grand Prix, at the Westmead circuit outside Durban.

There the opposition was very much stronger than at Killarney – including the works BRMs of Graham Hill, Richie Ginther and Bruce Johnstone (who finished second to Richie in heat one) – but the event was tragically overshadowed by the death during practice of the Welsh-born Rhodesian motorcycle double World Champion Gary Hocking of MV Agusta fame, driving a Rob Walker Lotus 24. Both sides of the game were so common 50 years ago – joyous triumph coinciding with stark tragedy.

But do remember Trev Taylor's talents. Within Team Lotus he too had some great days… Ⓜ


LUCAS



Parting Shot

Australian Grand Prix, Lakeside, February 2, 1969

Chris Amon in his Ferrari 246T (left) and Jochen Rindt's Lotus 49T head the field at the start of this Tasman series race. Amon would go on to win ahead of team-mate Derek Bell, and to take that year's Tasman title

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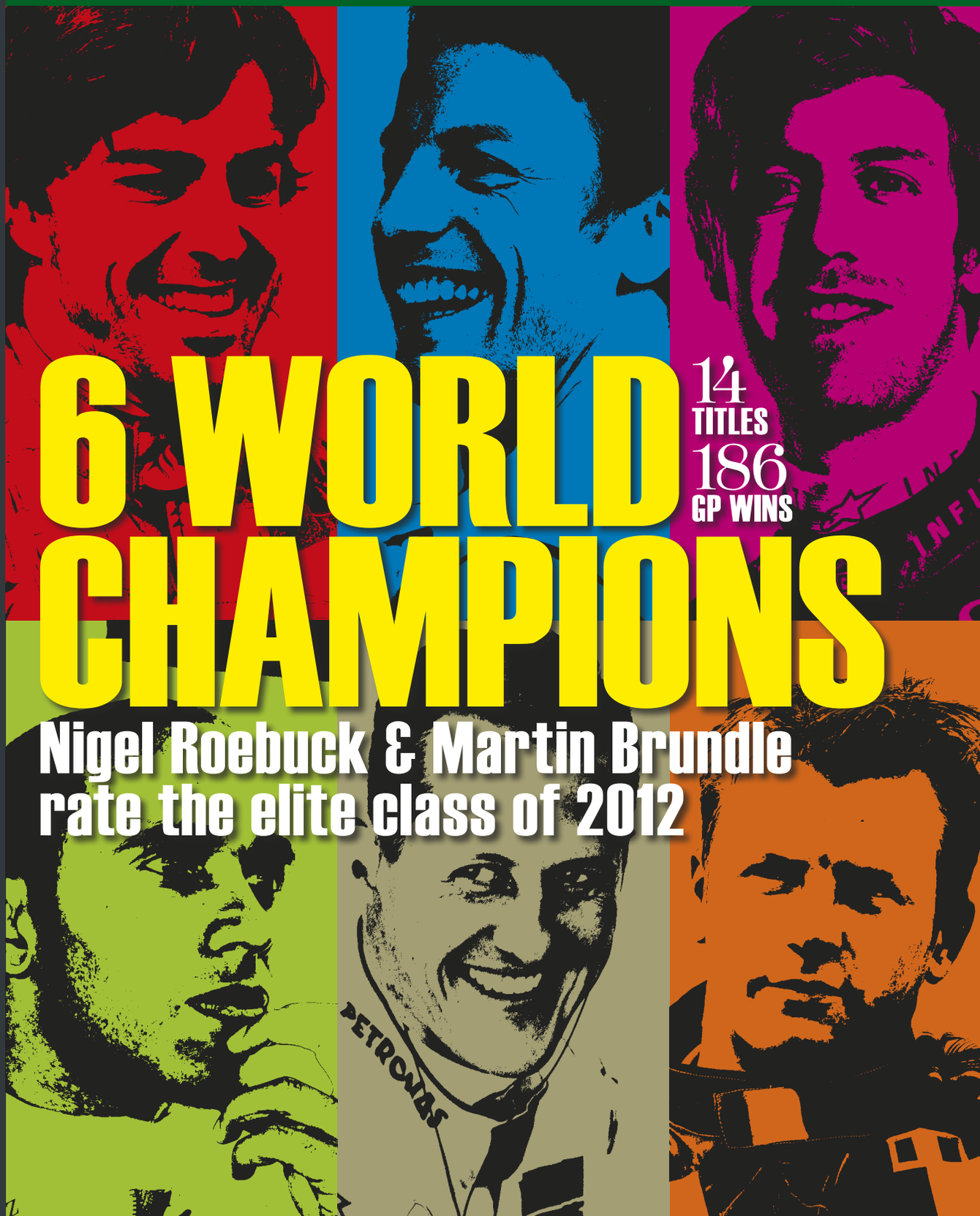
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