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9 APRIL 2020

F1'S FIRST BIG STAR OF 2020

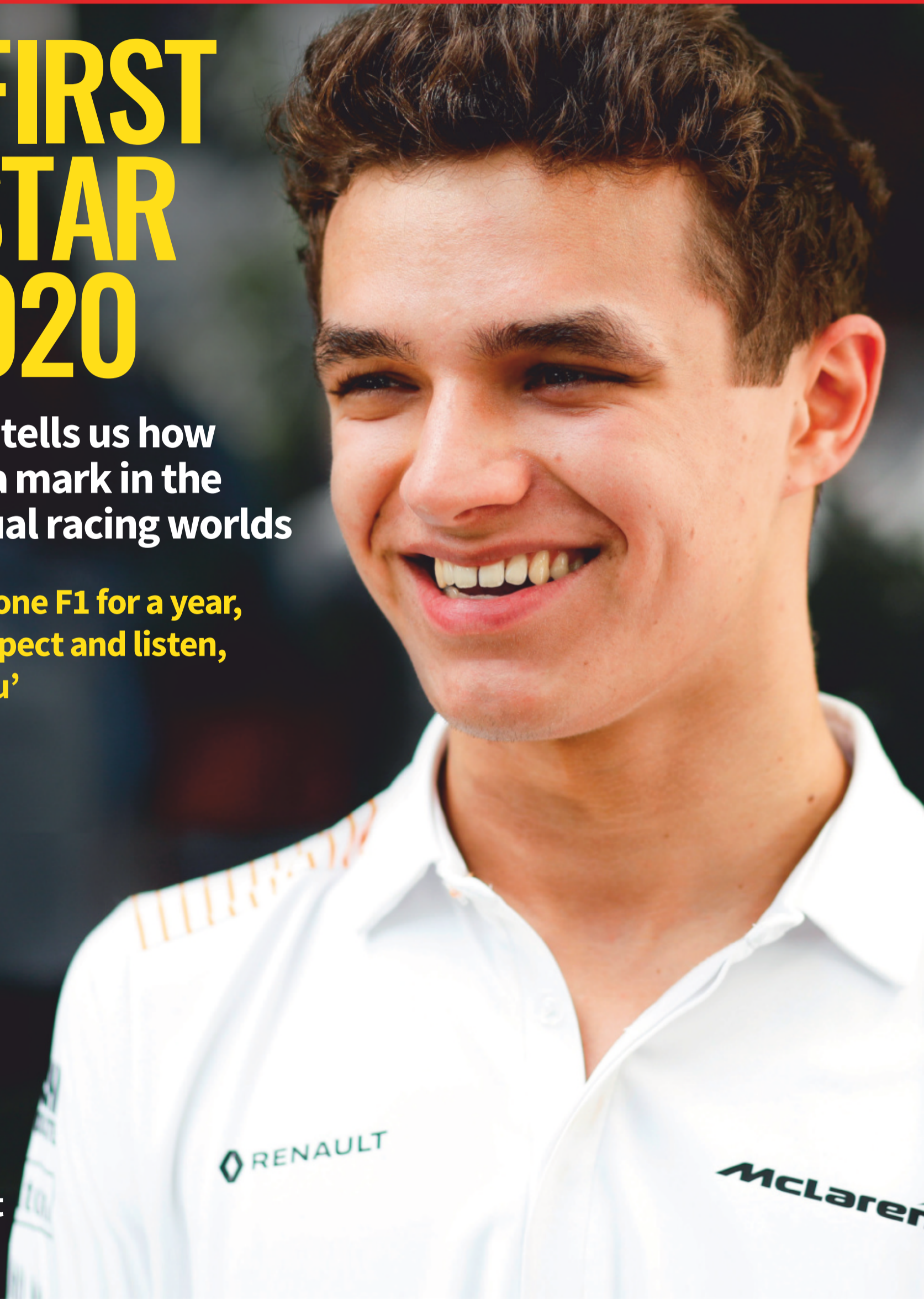
Lando Norris tells us how he's making a mark in the real and virtual racing worlds

'Because I've done F1 for a year, people gain respect and listen, they rely on you'

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The right driver for the new job at hand?

It's been clear for some time that Lando Norris was a potential Formula 1 star. He's been a winner since his karting days, dominated the 2016 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award, won the 2017 European Formula 3 Championship against powerhouse Prema and had an impressive rookie F1 season alongside Carlos Sainz Jr at McLaren.

In the past, a break from racing as long as the one we are currently facing could have really sapped the momentum from a young driver's career but, if anything, Norris is *increasing* his profile at the moment. As Norris says in Alex Kalinauckas's cover piece on page 16, his year in F1 has given the 20-year-old more of a voice – and he is prepared to use it. The data he has available means he can still stay in the F1 mindset too, and help push the team forward for when the time comes.

His confidence has also been apparent in his approach to Esports and social media (p24). Norris was already very much ingrained in the virtual racing world, but his personality has helped to bridge the gap between online fans and real racing. He's helped provide the sort of escapism many of us could do with during this extraordinary time.

Elsewhere in this issue, our new technical consultant Rodi Basso looks back at his remarkable career with Ferrari and Red Bull (p26), we tell the story of the secret Tyrrell (p32), and highlight some of the big stories in British GT (p42) and BRDC Formula 3 (p47).



Kevin Turner
Editor

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NEXT WEEK
16 APRIL

Forgotten Formula 1
We look back at the
non-championship
F1 races



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Motorsport Images

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SILVERSTONE OFFERS ADDITIONAL

FORMULA 1

Silverstone is open to hosting more than one Formula 1 World Championship race this year to help boost the 2020 schedule – but the circuit must decide by the end of April whether it will stick to its current July date for the British Grand Prix.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the opening eight races of the 2020 F1 season to be called off or postponed, as well as triggering a number of international sporting events scheduled for the summer to be cancelled. The Olympic Games in Tokyo and the Euro 2020 football championships have been postponed until 2021, while the Wimbledon tennis championship – scheduled to finish just one week before the British Grand Prix – has been cancelled.

The British GP is scheduled for 19 July, but organisers confirmed last week they had until the end of April to make a decision on whether or not it would go ahead.

“Our colleagues at Formula 1 are working incredibly hard to try and piece together a season that would start much later,” Silverstone managing director Stuart Pringle told Sky Sports News. “There have been a number of cancellations, postponements, so they’re trying to reknit that calendar together and we are one element of that.

“It’s important that Formula 1 try and get a world championship season away, so we can give them the time they need to do that. We’re a fixed venue, we’ve got a fixed set-up and infrastructure. We’ve also got an incredibly experienced team, they know what they are doing, so we can allow ourselves the month of April to make a decision which is sufficient for

Formula 1, I hope, to get their plans together.”

F1 officials are considering a number of contingencies to support the 2020 calendar, such as extending the season into early next year, while running multiple races at circuits has also been suggested. The season requires eight races on three continents to qualify as a world championship.

Pringle said Silverstone would be open to helping F1 by staging more than one grand prix, highlighting the permanent nature of the facility and its proximity to the majority of the teams. “All I’ve done is say to Formula 1 we are willing to work with them in any way, shape or form that they think is in the best interest of the championship,” Pringle said. “The majority of the teams are within a stone’s throw of the circuit, so operationally it would be pretty straightforward [to host multiple races]. We’ve got fixed infrastructure, the staff could go home to their own beds in an evening for the large part. If that’s how we can help then I’m very pleased, I’d be delighted to do that. We’ll do whatever’s asked of us.”

Silverstone last staged multiple events for world championship F1 teams in a single year back in 1975, in the days of the BRDC International Trophy non-championship race. That race ran for top-level cars from 1949-78 before switching to Formula 2, British F1 Championship and Formula 3000 rules.

In response to a tongue-in-cheek suggestion that F1 could run a race on Silverstone on the reverse layout, Pringle said it was “not such a silly thought”.

“We’re not licensed to run the other way, but these are extraordinary times, and I guess that extraordinary decisions are being made,” he said. “Nothing’s off the table, but equally, let’s see what the next four weeks



Lauda leads way to 1975 International Trophy victory. Three months later F1 returned for British GP

GRANDS PRIX

look like. It's difficult for Formula 1 – they're not just looking at what's going on in Great Britain, they're looking at what's going on around the world and how their travel arrangements have to fit in. It's perhaps not such a crazy question."

With motorsport suspended in the UK until the end of June, Silverstone has given its support to the authorities in the bid to combat COVID-19, with the facility currently under evaluation for how it can be used.

"We've got a cracking medical centre," Pringle said. "It's not enormously large, but it's another 20 beds to the cause, and that has been inspected by the NHS personnel and emergency planners. We've had some guys up from the military assessing whether or not we might be a suitable base for logistics. We've got these fantastic pit garages – they're sitting empty. We're very central in Great Britain, so if we can help, we will."

"I've offered we can help our colleagues in the Formula 1 teams making these ventilators. If they can come off the production line at the speed with which they've been said, we've said if any of you need to store stuff at Silverstone, we're willing and available. We'll do whatever we can to put our shoulder to the wheel."

Further support has been offered by Weston Aviation, which is looking to assist the motorsport community's support effort against COVID-19 by making a Cessna Grand Caravan 208B aircraft available for logistics missions.

Any expressions of interest should be directed to Nick Weston at nick.weston@westonaviation.com.

LUKE SMITH

NEXT WEEK NON-CHAMPIONSHIP F1



McLaren boss warns F1 could lose four teams

FORMULA 1

McLaren Formula 1 CEO Zak Brown has cautioned that the series could lose as many as four teams if the coronavirus crisis "isn't handled the right way".

With no races currently taking place until at least June, all teams are facing a financial squeeze. They still have significant overheads such as salaries, while facing the prospect of a loss of income from both the F1 prize fund and their own sponsors.

Brown believes F1 should take steps in response to this, such as a further lowering of the budget cap that comes into force in 2021. He also warned that if teams do hit trouble there are no potential buyers around in a position to save them.

"This is potentially devastating to teams," Brown, whose McLaren team recently furloughed staff, told BBC Sport. "And if [it is devastating] to enough teams, which doesn't have to mean more than two, then it's very threatening to F1 as a whole."

"Could I see – through what is going on right now in the world if we don't tackle this situation head on very aggressively – two teams disappearing? Yeah. In fact, I could see four teams disappearing if this isn't handled the right way. And then, given how long it takes to ramp up an F1 team, and given the economic and health crisis we are in right now, to think there would be people lined up to take over those teams like there has

historically been... I don't think the timing could be worse from that standpoint. So I think F1 is in a very fragile state at the moment."

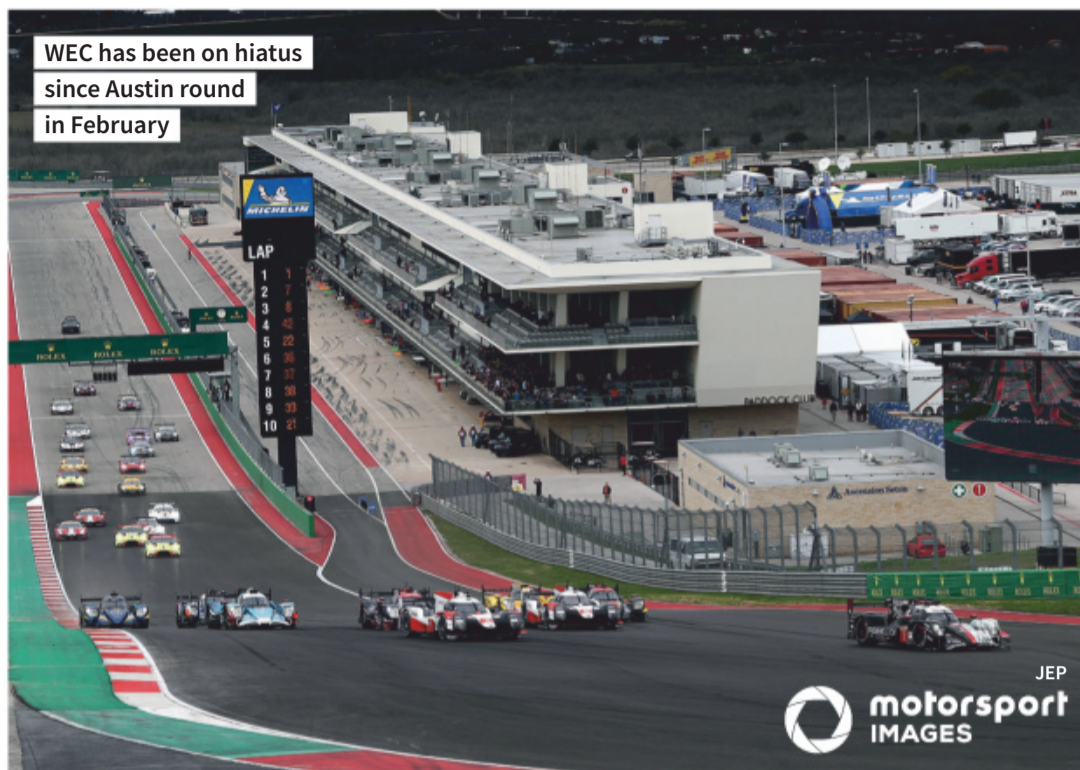
In a separate BBC TV interview, Brown indicated that F1 could survive losing one team, but any more would cause difficulties. "We currently have 10 teams, 20 cars on the grid," he added. "Not too long ago after the financial crisis we had 18 cars. I think that's about the limit, so in reality we could probably afford to lose one. Two becomes the red zone, and I think three we have very, very substantial problems."

Brown says that teams have already agreed in principle to lower the budget cap from \$175million to \$150m, and that one of the three main players most affected by the cap is willing to go even further.

"You have everyone at \$150m, and the strong majority – including one of the big teams – willing to come substantially under \$150m. If we don't make an aggressive enough budget cap and some people feel they have to top up this year and have no chance of getting it back, then they ask themselves: why are they in it? I don't think anyone competes in F1 just to make up the numbers."

McLaren drivers Carlos Sainz Jr and Lando Norris have taken voluntary pay cuts. Williams has also furloughed staff and brought in 20% pay cuts for senior team members, including drivers George Russell and Nicholas Latifi.

ADAM COOPER



Pandemic pushes WEC back into conventional calendar

WEC

A reduced calendar with fewer races could be part of a reset for next season's World Endurance Championship after the series abandoned its winter-series format straddling two calendar years. That's the stark warning from WEC boss Gerard Neveu.

A rejig of the current 2019-20 campaign around the new Le Mans 24 Hours date of 19-20 September has pushed its end back into November, more than two months beyond the intended start of the 2020-21 campaign at Silverstone in early September. That has forced the end of the winter-series concept and means what will now be the 2021 WEC – rather than the 2020-21 edition – is not going to start until March next year at the earliest. That start will almost certainly come with the Sebring 1000 Miles on the same bill as the track's 12-hour IMSA SportsCar Championship fixture on 19 March.

Predicting the look of the calendar for the ninth edition of the reborn WEC, which isn't likely to be revealed until much later in the year, remains impossible at the moment, according to Neveu. There are too many unknowns, he pointed out.

"If I tell you that next year we will have eight races starting in March and finishing in November, I would be crazy and arrogant," he said. "It could be less races: there are many options and everything is possible. We have to make an observation on the economic situation in a few months: what is the position of the teams, manufacturers,

gentlemen drivers and what is the position of the partners, sponsors?"

Neveu hinted that the WEC could be heading for what he described as a reset. "We will have to rethink and rebuild something after the crisis," he explained, adding that the series could undergo "a small evolution" and that "everything has to be on the table".

The only current given is that Le Mans will be on the schedule back in its traditional mid-June slot. Neveu explained that there was a desire to go back to Sebring, which is cancelled for this season, stating "it should be that we will be in SuperSebring".

The WEC has pencilled in a resumption of the 2019-20 campaign for Spa, originally due to host its round this month, on 15 August. The Bahrain round on next season's calendar has effectively been brought forward from 5 December to 21 November to become the finale on this year's schedule.

A revised calendar has also been revealed for the European Le Mans Series. It has been reduced from six to five races with the disappearance of the Silverstone round on the WEC bill, which Neveu said didn't work commercially once the WEC round at the British track disappeared. The 2020 ELMS is now due to kick off at Paul Ricard on 19 July, with the last round taking place at the Algarve Circuit on 1 November.

Neveu stressed that the new schedules for the WEC and the ELMS remain provisional until it becomes clear when racing can resume.

GARY WATKINS



Merc agrees to drop DAS in '21

FORMULA 1

Mercedes has agreed to a plan not to allow dual-axis steering to remain in Formula 1 in 2021, despite emergency measures to roll over the current cars into next year.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced dramatic changes to F1, with teams agreeing last month to delay the introduction of the major rules revamp planned for next season until 2022. That means teams will continue to use their current chassis next year, with some aerodynamic modifications being allowed.

The move to keep the current regulations for 2021 could have left the door open for Mercedes to keep the advantage it has from its DAS system, which allows drivers to adjust the toe angle of its front wheels while the car is in motion, and was set to be banned for the start of the new rules cycle. But in the wake of F1 keeping its current cars for another year, the team agreed with rival squads and the FIA to a change in the regulations that outlaws the system.

The new Article 10.4.2 of the revised 2021 Technical Regulations, which has been approved by the FIA, states: "The re-alignment of the steered wheels must be uniquely defined by a monotonic function of the rotation of a single steering wheel about a single axis."

"Furthermore, the inboard attachment points of the suspension members connected to the steering system must remain a fixed distance from each other and can only translate in the direction normal to the car centre plane."

The decision will ensure that teams are not forced to embark on a spending war to develop their own systems. The fact that it had already been banned for the new era left many of Mercedes' competitors doubtful that it was worth the investment for just one year.

JONATHAN NOBLE



Aprilia angry at drugs verdict

MOTOGP

Aprilia CEO Massimo Rivola has said that Andrea Iannone's 18-month racing ban for a doping infringement is "absurd", and vows to support the MotoGP race winner's appeal.

Iannone was suspended by MotoGP governing body the FIM over the winter after two urine samples taken during the Malaysian Grand Prix weekend in November tested positive for an anabolic steroid. The suspension was upheld after a verdict was not reached in a hearing last month, while Iannone submitted hair samples – supposedly a more accurate way of testing for banned substances – for analysis.

Iannone (pictured) has always maintained his innocence, claiming the banned substance was ingested accidentally through contaminated meat.

After numerous weeks of delay, a verdict was confirmed last Wednesday. The Italian was hit with an 18-month ban, although judges conceded he did not take the substance intentionally. Iannone is set to appeal the decision with the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

In an Aprilia statement, Rivola said the verdict does not follow similar cases where athletes have accidentally ingested a banned substance through contaminated food, and



is confident that such precedents will allow this decision to be overturned.

"The sentence leaves us baffled by the punishment imposed on Andrea, but also very satisfied in his motivations," Rivola said. "The judges recognised Andrea's total good faith and unconsciousness in confirming the thesis of food contamination. For this reason, the penalty imposed does not make any sense.

"In light of the reasons written by the judges, Andrea should have been acquitted, as has always happened to the other

contaminated athletes. But this picture leaves us with much hope for the appeal, which we hope will be very fast. We want Andrea riding his Aprilia RS-GP, we will be at his side until the end of this story and we will support him in his appeal."

Rivola had previously stated that a lengthy ban for Iannone would result in the termination of his relationship with Aprilia. But the delay to the MotoGP season and a prompt and successful CAS appeal could potentially throw Iannone a lifeline.

LEWIS DUNCAN



Team Mugen at centre of virus scare

SUPER FORMULA

Leading Super Formula squad Team Mugen has placed its staff in quarantine following a coronavirus diagnosis after the recent official test at Fuji.

Former single-seater star Marko Asmer, the mentor of Red Bull Junior and SF rookie Juri Vips (left), discovered that he had become infected after the test. After he had notified the team, Mugen advised that those present at the Fuji test

would have their health tested.

Super Formula has now had a third round postponed – the Autopolis event in May. It is now scheduled to kick off at Sugo on 21 June. Meanwhile, Suzuka will host a double-header finale on 14-15 November. The venue is the traditional season opener and closer, but both its 2020 races will be crammed together on the same weekend.

Japan's other leading series, Super GT, has gone further by

scheduling its 2020 season for a finish in 2021. The two 'flyaway' races – at Buriram in Thailand and Sepang in Malaysia – have been given new dates, with one in December and one in January. The first round is now slated for Okayama on 12 July.

Toyota-backed Ryo Hirakawa topped the Fuji SF test for Team Impul with a time set on the first day, with ex-Formula 2 racer Nirei Fukuzumi fastest on day two with Dandelion Racing.

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Detroit GP cancelled; fears grow for Norisring



INDYCAR/IMSA/DTM

The Detroit Grand Prix for the IndyCar Series and the IMSA SportsCar Championship has become a victim of the coronavirus pandemic with its cancellation for 2020, while fears are also growing for the DTM's flagship Norisring street race.

Detroit had become the new scheduled opener for the IndyCar season following the cancellation or postponement of all races up to and including the Indianapolis 500 in late May, but the event on the Belle Isle temporary course has also bitten the dust.

Detroit GP chairman Bud Denker said:

"We looked at every possible scenario to reschedule the race, but all of them would have been too disruptive to the hundreds of fall events that will take place on Belle Isle."

IndyCar has turned its Iowa Speedway fixture in July and September's Laguna Seca round into double-headers, and has added a third date to Indy: a Harvest Grand Prix will take place on 3 October on the road course.

Meanwhile, the delayed start to the DTM season is scheduled for Norisring on 13-14 July, but organisers fear they will not have enough time to prepare the street track.

Wolfgang Schlosser, chairman of the organising Automobil Club Nurnberg, said:

"We need about four or five weeks to set up. But we also need a certain amount of time for ticket sales, because without spectators this event cannot be financed."

"Theoretically there could be a cancellation three days before, if the virus is spreading more strongly or there is a second wave. That would be a total loss, 100%: bankruptcy of the organising club, because of course we can't afford it."

"We're in a different situation than a permanent race track like Hockenheim, where you unlock the big gate, the toilets and the bratwurst stands, and off you go."

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ, SVEN HAIDINGER

Brit F3 king Lundqvist makes switch to the US

REGIONAL F3

Linus Lundqvist, the 2018 BRDC British Formula 3 champion, is moving to the US this season to chase the renamed Formula Americas Regional Championship.

The 21-year-old Swede has joined Global Racing Group, which ran Dakota Dickerson to the 2019 title in what used to be known as the F3 Americas series. The championship, for Honda-

powered Ligiers, is run to the FIA's Regional F3 concept, and is now offering an Indy Lights scholarship for the champion.

It is the first step away from Europe for Lundqvist, who won his British F3 title with Double R Racing and stayed with the squad last season to compete in the Euroformula Open series, in which he finished fifth.

Autosport also understands that Lundqvist

tested with all-conquering Japanese F3 team TOM'S over the winter as he assessed his 2020 options.

The FAmericas Regional series is currently scheduled to get under way in June at Circuit of The Americas, and for the first time contains the historic Trois-Rivieres street race in Quebec. The curtain closer is a date back at CoTA supporting the United States Grand Prix.

MARCUS SIMMONS



FOTOSPEEDY



RENAULT SPORT

FIA makes superlicence U-turn

FORMULA RENAULT

The FIA has U-turned on its decision to downgrade the hotly contested Formula Renault Eurocup on its Formula 1 superlicence points chart.

The series, which for 2019 switched to the FIA-approved Tatuus Regional F3 chassis, was hit last December with a reduction from 18 superlicence points for its champion to 15. This was despite the Renault Eurocup having a far bigger grid in 2019 than its main rival, the FIA-sanctioned Formula Regional European Championship, which retained its status of 25 points for its champion for 2020.

The FIA's downgrading of the Renault Eurocup for 2020 attracted adverse comment in the industry, and Autosport understands that among those lobbying for its reinstatement to 18 points was the governing body's own Drivers' Commission. The decision to move back to 18 points for the champion was taken at the recent FIA World Motor Sport Council after an e-vote.

Renault Sport commercial chief Benoit Nogier told Autosport: "We are very happy and satisfied because since we discovered the change in December we were a bit worried and did not really understand

what happened. We did a very good first year [with the Regional F3 chassis] respecting all the regulations.

"First of all the 18 points are back, but also we have clarified what was the point of view of the FIA about the championship – now we exactly know which parameters they take into account to decide the points."

The Eurocup managed to squeeze in a two-day test at Valencia just before Europe closed down as it reacts to the coronavirus pandemic, with 26 drivers taking part. So far, 17 competitors have been announced by teams for the 2020 season.

"The situation looked very good before what is happening now [with coronavirus]," said Nogier. "At the Valencia test six or seven drivers were discussing the final elements of their contracts. The goal for us is to have 22 drivers at least on the grid, and it seems we are on the right line for that."

The Eurocup is set to follow the GT World Challenge Europe at seven dates, with the current scheduled opener being at Zandvoort at the end of June. Other rounds have been rearranged for Hockenheim supporting the DTM in October, Monza with a Creventic 24H Series event, and the new-for-2019 finale at Yas Marina.

MARCUS SIMMONS

IN THE HEADLINES

F1 ENGINE FREEZE MOOTED

Formula 1 could impose an engine development freeze as an emergency measure if there needs to be a further dramatic reduction in costs to save teams in the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. A freeze, which could last for several years, would dramatically reduce R&D costs and potentially reduce engine bills for customer teams.

RON HELPS NHS STAFF

Ex-McLaren Formula 1 chief Ron Dennis has announced an initiative to help support NHS frontline workers during the current pandemic. Dennis is spearheading the new initiative – [SalutetheNHS.org](https://www.salutetheNHS.org) – that will provide high-quality meals to NHS workers for the next three months. The meals will be made available free of charge to ICU teams, anaesthetic teams and A&E staff during their shifts when they are currently unable to leave their clinical areas under current protocol. The Dennis family has donated £1million to the initiative.

TOYOTA TEAM'S HYBRID TEST

Toyota team Speedworks Motorsport has been chosen as the British Touring Car Championship's testing partner for development of the series' hybrid system. Speedworks, which will run its Corolla for Tom Ingram under Toyota Gazoo Racing UK nomenclature this year, was chosen after a competitive tender process. The hybrid, produced by Cosworth Electronics, will be introduced in 2022 and is scheduled to make its track debut at the Snetterton tyre test in July.

HUNGARY FOR SUCCESS

Hungarians Gergo Baldi and Zoltan Csuti provided a double win for home team M1RA Esports in a World Touring Car Cup pre-season contest on the Hungaroring on Monday evening. Lynk & Co's Yann Ehrlacher took the top result for a 'real' WTCR driver – 17th in the second race.

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Adapt to survive

As the world faces the economic as well as health implications of the coronavirus pandemic, Formula 1 must change if it's to overcome the financial challenges ahead

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Extraordinary times require extraordinary measures – and most of the world certainly knows that to be true in these difficult times of a deadly disease, healthcare crises and social lockdowns.

Formula 1 is already taking its own unprecedented steps in response to the coronavirus pandemic, such as moving to make the 2020 cars usable in 2021 and delaying the rules reset to 2022. But each day of this crisis brings more worry and strain – particularly when it comes to costs.

If F1 is going to return to a recognisable state, then it needs to display a trait that has long been hard to find when it comes to making big decisions: flexibility. For so long the championship has been lumbered by its governance structure. In few other sports do the participants have an active say in the sporting rules and prizes.

It's this bizarre way of doing things that has contributed to F1's performance imbalance over the past decade. The top three teams could move clear using the better constructors' championship bonus payments they negotiated with Bernie Ecclestone for the current Concorde Agreement, and then stay clear by picking up the bigger prize money on offer for the higher standings spots each year.

But when looking back at recent times, to a certain extent the individual teams are not to blame for voting in their own self-interest, simply because the system allowed it. This has led to F1 damaging itself, and in some cases causing outright embarrassment.

“F1 needs a trait that has long been hard to find when it comes to big decisions: flexibility”

Ross Brawn summed things up earlier this year when he specifically discussed how F1 was looking at stopping teams exploiting loopholes in the (now-delayed) new rules package, saying: “We're [trying to move] away from this unanimity which has always blocked anything happening. One team could block anything happening in F1, which has been counterproductive overall. So, we're just moving away from that rigid locked-in situation that we have now, where things can't change even when they're wrong.

“We had the qualifying fiasco a couple of years ago [the elimination qualifying at the start of the 2016 season]. That couldn't change then because not everyone agreed to change it. And it hung on for ages before finally common sense prevailed and it got put back. So, we're trying to avoid those situations.”

As well as the discussions on altering F1's governance structure,

the championship was making progress on the cost cap, which for so long had not been a real possibility. Of course, the \$175million cap still had wiggle room for the big teams to spend more, but it was at least movement. But now F1 must be even more flexible.

This week, McLaren CEO Zak Brown warned that he “could see four teams disappearing” if the coronavirus crisis “isn't handled the right way”. The delayed and shortened 2020 calendar hits F1's prize fund, on which all stakeholders (other than the FIA) depend, and it potentially impacts the teams' sponsorship money.

Now steps that in the past would have been unthinkable are already being taken, such as FIA president Jean Todt being given extraordinary powers to take urgent decisions “in connection with the organisation of international competitions for the 2020 season” – per a World Motor Sport Council statement. Further discussions regarding the championship's overall response to the crisis were taking place as Autosport closed for press.

When it comes to examples from the teams, Mercedes has already demonstrated a degree of flexibility by agreeing to its dual-axis steering being banned for 2021, even though the W11 car it was designed for will still basically be in service. Ferrari agreed to the 2020-21 car continuation despite its apparent performance deficit to Mercedes and Red Bull with the SF1000.

But in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, and the economic shock to come, it is the process of getting a 2020 calendar where F1's stakeholders need to show the most flexibility.

In order to hold the maximum number of races – remembering that sponsors and TV companies have paid for a product, which arguably isn't there if only a handful of races can take place, and more races mean more fees going into F1's prize pot – ideas previously thought unlikely must be embraced.

If global travel restrictions can be eased in the coming months, then F1 must be prepared to condense events to get in and out of countries as quickly and safely as possible. Multiple races at venues should not be ruled out because of self-interest or conflicts. Even the wild thinking of reversing layouts should be on the table if it would help. A superseason into 2021 should definitely be an option.

“Each day we have more news, new concerns,” Alfa Romeo team boss Fred Vasseur said earlier this week. “The most important thing is to be flexible and to work as a group. And that was not always the first asset of Formula 1!”

So, this is an appeal to all F1 stakeholders – the championship, the FIA, teams, promoters, circuits, sponsors, rights holders, anyone. Work together to make the best of what is a truly terrible situation.

The fight to overcome COVID-19 is one tremendous challenge, and motorsport is playing its part, but the battle to beat the economic consequences will be another challenge entirely.

The warnings are there – they must be heeded. ❄



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Sportscar racing's chance to think again

The WEC's winter-series format has been called off before such a season has even been completed. Now it has a great opportunity to reinvent itself and bounce back

GARY WATKINS

The winter-series format introduced for this season's World Endurance Championship has ended up as collateral damage in motorsport's struggles with the world health crisis. The rejig of the current campaign has led to its abandonment for the ninth season of the reborn series. We'll now be talking about the 2021 WEC and not the 2020-21 WEC, and I can't say I'm disappointed. I was never convinced about the idea of running the championship across two calendar years and climaxing with the Le Mans 24 Hours. It was philosophically ill-founded to my mind.

Abandoning the winter-series format is the correct decision on every front. It makes sense as the WEC attempts to complete its present campaign and as the series looks to the future.

Once Le Mans was put back to the third weekend of September, two weeks after the intended start of the new season at Silverstone, the idea of a winter series looked shaky. When the WEC decided that it wanted to maintain the 2019-20 schedule at eight races, it had to go. Scheduling more than the postponed Spa race ahead of Le Mans wasn't realistic given that no one can predict when the resumption of motorsport will come. That meant slotting in a round after Le Mans, and that was the end of the winter series.

“Placing Le Mans at the end of the calendar wasn't the answer to the WEC's hangover problem”

We're now all but certain to begin the 2021 WEC at Sebring next March. That's a good move given that the new Hypercars are due to come on stream at the start of next season. Had we kicked off in September this year it was almost certain that Toyota's LMH contender would have had no opposition save, potentially, for some grandfathered LMP1 cars.

Switching to a conventional calendar will also bring the WEC into line with the IMSA SportsCar Championship. That's important given that the new LMDh category will allow the same cars bidding for victory in North America to compete in the WEC against the LMH contenders.

A kick-off for LMDh in the WEC next September at what would have been the start of the 2021-22 season was too early. Given that we don't have any rules yet, it was wishful to think that multiple

manufacturers would have been ready, even before the world plunged into crisis. A 2022 start for LMDh in both the WEC and IMSA appears more realistic.

The winter series wasn't a new idea when it was announced in September 2017: it was revived as part of the reaction to Porsche's withdrawal from LMP1 that summer. The 2018-19 SuperSeason, incorporating two editions of Le Mans, was part of the rescue package put in place by the WEC and a neat way of segueing into a winter series.

The idea was to rid the WEC of the hangover that it faced each season in the wake of an event that dwarfs all others on the schedule in terms of prestige and media attention. The WEC had a tendency to be anti-climatic after Le Mans, something not helped by the double points on offer for the 24 Hours.

But simply placing Le Mans at the end of the calendar wasn't the answer to the WEC's hangover problem. It was a bit like seeing an ad in a newspaper for a magical cure to the morning-after malaise of excessive alcohol consumption, sending off your money and getting a piece of paper back by return of post with the simple words 'Stop Drinking' written large upon it.

Making the most important event on the schedule the finale surely added to that importance and, by definition, diminished the standing of the other races. I believe the idea may have ended up having the opposite effect to the one intended.

What the WEC has needed since its rebirth back in 2012 is more events, by which I mean big races with their own identities that are more than just rounds of a championship. Achieving that isn't the work of a moment, but my desire has always been for some longer races with more than the regular number of points on offer.

That's why I'm not complaining about the prospect of the 2021 WEC starting at Sebring in March. Sure, the 1000-mile race isn't the headliner – that's the Sebring 12 Hours IMSA round, of course – but the event gets a monster crowd and is a constant on the world sportscar calendar. And there are extra points, too, for a race capped at eight hours.

The Bahrain race last December and the forthcoming one in November are also of eight hours' duration, so the WEC is trying to mix it up a bit. The experiment with four-hour races has been dropped, so how about a pair of three-hour races somewhere?

What I would urge, however, is that the stupid summer break post-Le Mans disappears. The WEC needs to build on the momentum of its biggest race, not let it dribble away over weeks or months of inactivity. Everyone knows that the best cure for a hangover is to get up and get going rather than loitering in bed. ❧



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I regard myself as very, very lucky to have been apprenticed to two exceptional engineers and gentlemen

WYN LEAR

Memories of a brilliant boss

On opening my Autosport last week I was very sorry to see an obituary for my old boss Tommy Clapham, a true gentleman and brilliant engineer (Club Autosport, page 61).

I joined TR Clapham Engineers Ltd Alfa Romeo dealers as an apprentice in the late 1960s and was with him at the inception and build of the Taydec. I last saw Tom at his home late in 2019 and spent a great afternoon reminiscing.

One name missing from this story is George Drake (deceased), another brilliant engineer who along with Tommy designed and built a Group 6 sports-racing car and a Formula Atlantic car in a two-car showroom, which would originally accommodate – with a squeeze and a trolley jack – a 1750 GTV and a Giulia Super.

I regard myself as very, very lucky to have been apprenticed to two exceptional engineers and gentlemen. Thank you Tom and George.

Wyn Lear
Keighley

It was all about the tyres

The all-time classic 1986 Australian Grand Prix was now 34 years ago. Having just read Nigel Roebuck's piece on autosport.com and then rewatched the race, one aspect stands out starkly: it was from the get-go largely about the tyres. Always the tyres. *Plus ca change.*

Graeme Innes-Johnstone
Elland, West Yorks

Tell the history of Formula 1 teams

I've a suggestion for an article that I feel other readers would find interesting, while we're waiting for things to get back to normal. A history of F1 teams and how one morphed into another would I believe make for interesting reading.

I've been following F1 for yonks – and reading Autosport for over 50 years, now online – and, for example, visited the Tyrrell team when Ken was around at his woodyard in Ockham. I think they became BAR, and so on. I was at



Monaco in 1977 when Jody Scheckter won in a Wolf (above) – was there a connection between Wolf and Williams? Jordan/Force India/Racing Point is perhaps better known, but there are some interesting stories out there. You may not wish to go back too far, but the Lancia D50/Lancia-Ferrari D50/Ferrari D50 from the 1950s is also perhaps part of this story.

John Carter
Wimbledon, London

Race-report memory lane

Here's an idea – I bought the book *Formula 1 All The Races The First 1000* after reading a review in your magazine and I'm really enjoying reading it.

As you know, it ranks the races with gold representing the most interesting. You will have contemporary race reports for most, if not all, of these. How about reproducing one of these per week? For those of us who have been buying your magazine for longer than they care to remember it would be a walk down a much-loved memory lane and I'm sure it would be interesting for all. Just an idea for these strange times.

Simon Yates
Byemail


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The driver doing his bit for Formula 1

Lando Norris was already a rising star before the coronavirus struck, but he's now becoming even more of a figurehead

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

Leaders, leading, leadership – all things we're hearing a lot about during the coronavirus pandemic. From inspirational or incompetent political leaders (delete as appropriate) to individuals leading by example or displaying leadership in minor acts. Often, even without meaning to, people can make a big difference.

There's no on-track motorsport action to discuss now, no collisions to micro-analyse, no technical developments to debate. As a result, many people have taken to finding other ways to enjoy and remember the championships they love – whether that's by watching reruns of old races, viewing films or documentaries about famous characters or events, or watching or taking part in motorsport Esports.

That last form of escapism is enjoying a significant boom as it is one of the few online equivalents of sport that is reasonably close to its real-world counterpart. Formula 1 squads have had Esport teams since 2018 (although Ferrari only joined in on the fun a year later), and many drivers have their own at-home simulator rigs and set-ups. »



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Carlos Sainz and Norris scored 145 points in 2019 for McLaren, including Norris's first F1 top-10 finish in Bahrain

“ESPORTS IS THE ONLY THING GOING ON AT THE MOMENT FOR FANS OF MOTORSPORT”

But there's one driver in particular who has been front and centre for the current Esports explosion in motorsport, who is playing a leading part in making the most of a difficult situation,

and is doing so with his usual humour and engaging personality.

At this stage a year ago, McLaren's Lando Norris had just scored his first F1 points in the 2019 Bahrain Grand Prix, his second F1 start. In 2020, with the F1 season joining the rest of world sport on a seemingly indefinite hiatus, the 20-year-old is still managing to grow his profile and persona via his Esports exploits (see page 24) and likeable social media presence. Using Autosport.com's search function, at the time of writing Norris's name features in precisely the same number of articles published in the time since the Australian Grand Prix was due to go ahead as six-time world champion Lewis Hamilton...

Although more drivers are getting involved as the lockdown weeks go by, Norris has largely been the face of the current boom in Esports interest within the motorsport world. He has long been involved in that sphere, and the numbers he attracts on his Twitch channel (where he recently raised over \$12,000 for the World Health Organisation's COVID-19 response fund after pledging to shave his head if his followers donated over \$10,000) demonstrate his star pulling power. His online antics – including calling rivals Max Verstappen (another long-time Esports participant), Alex Albon and George Russell, as well as McLaren team staff during the recent Bahrain Virtual GP – make for popular clips across the various social media platforms.

“It's just a good thing, I guess,” Norris tells Autosport when asked how he feels about being a figurehead for the motorsport Esports movement. “I mean, I'm not trying to do it for any of that, I'm trying to do it because I enjoy doing it.”

“Everyone that's racing online is enjoying doing just that, racing each other and still being able to go and ‘race’ cars, which is what we all love to do. But then, yeah, I guess it's just a bonus – it is the only thing going on at the moment, it's the only really interesting thing for a lot of the motorsport fans and people that want to watch racing and watch us drivers.”

“I mean, it's good for myself as well. But I'm not leading the way, I don't think. But I think I have played a small part in leading, I guess. Seeing so many people on Twitch now and getting into sim racing – I think not all of it and definitely not most of it, but a small part of it is because of me, being one of the first people to do that, really, especially from Formula 1. So yeah, I think it's cool to see more people getting into it.”

It won't feel like it to many, but the Melbourne race that should have opened the 2020 F1 season was to have taken place just under four weeks ago. That event did begin, with the F1 paddock travelling to the far side of the world and then proceedings getting as far as the morning of the opening practice day, just a few hours from when the on-track action was supposed to begin. But, of course, that was as far as it got.

The night before, a member of staff from Norris's McLaren team tested positive for COVID-19 and, while quarantining 14 more employees who had been in close contact with that individual, the squad withdrew from the event. Hours later, the 2020 Australian GP was called off and the paddock departed, with most people arriving home to the lockdown measures that many countries have implemented around the world.

The Melbourne event had, understandably, an unusual feel, with the drivers kept carefully separated from the media during the build-up >>



Norris and team members in Melbourne before GP was cancelled

“THE BEST THING FOR ALL OF US IS TO MAKE SURE WE CAN RESUME OUR JOBS AND LIVES AS NORMALLY AS POSSIBLE”

interviews, and few pre-season publicity events went ahead. Norris, who was “in my hotel room ready to go to sleep” when news of McLaren’s withdrawal broke, “had a bit of a feeling already on Thursday that the race was not going to go ahead”.

“We all knew, within McLaren, what was going on at the time,” he continues. “And yeah, luckily – sadly, at the same time – only one guy had got it. I said to my engineers, kind of as a joke, really, that I just had a feeling that we weren’t going to be doing the race. And I said to my engineers, ‘I’ll see you later in the year.’ And on Thursday evening we got the call that the guy came back positive.

“Then it was the decision for McLaren to pull out of the race, which was the absolute right decision for all of us. I got the call from Andreas [Seidl, McLaren team principal] that that’s what was happening – that was the decision we were making as a team. Which was completely understandable. It wasn’t super-dramatic or anything, but I felt as a team we took all the right measures.

“Ironically, it was one of our team members who got it, but at the same time I think we took a lot of precautions and did the necessary things to try and avoid it as much as possible. Because I think we were doing a good job from that side of things, but at the same time we were the unlucky team which got it first. So, it’s just sad but it happens. The world, it goes around – you pass people, you do things. You just act normally and you can get it. So yeah, it was just a bit unlucky, I guess. But it was the spark of us getting to where we are.”

F1 now finds itself in the middle of a new spring shutdown, with the championship organiser and the FIA agreeing to pull forward the traditional August factory closures, and extending them to 21 days. All races until June’s Canadian GP have been postponed or cancelled and it is still unknown when and even *if* the 2020 season will get under way. Much, it seems, depends on the length of the lockdowns, how long it

takes for them to be safely lifted to allow normal life to resume.

Because no one knows when F1 can return, the championship’s stakeholders have taken several extraordinary steps to try to lessen the impact that the coronavirus shutdown will have on the teams. Even before the full economic consequences of the current situation are understood, the teams know they will keep racing their 2020 cars into next year – with a ‘superseason’ bridging the end of the current year and 2021 also entirely possible – and that the planned rules reset has been pushed back to 2022.

McLaren became the first team to reveal it had taken steps to bring costs under control during the current lockdown in the UK, where the government allows companies to furlough staff – and will pay 80% of their wages to a maximum of £2500 per month if their positions are kept open. The team has temporarily furloughed a number of its staff, while the rest – including CEO Zak Brown, as well as Norris and his team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr – are taking voluntary pay cuts.

“It’s such a big company that you’ve got to think about its future, and what’s the best thing for every single person, man or woman, that works within McLaren,” says Norris. “And of course, that includes myself and Carlos.

“The best thing for all of us is to make sure that when the world is back to normality, and everything’s good again and everything is sorted, that we can all get back to work and all resume our jobs and our lives as normally as possible. And that counts for the 700/800 people within Racing [McLaren’s motorsport division]. But then the thousands of people within McLaren [Group] and McLaren Automotive too. So yeah, I think it’s just the best thing for all of us to be able to enjoy this little bit of time off, let’s say, and make sure we can come back and resume like normal.”

In the meantime, there are ways the teams and drivers can continue working remotely. This includes the usual health and fitness



Norris felt 2020 car was improvement in testing

preparations, as well as studying data and information from previous events and pre-season testing to work on specific performance details or further understand how their new machines function.

In the coming months, Norris will rely on a “hard drive with pretty much every single thing that I need” to keep his knowledge fresh, and his home simulator to keep his driving skills as sharp as they can be via Esports.

“If I ever need to look at anything or want to, or we’re talking over the phone and want to discuss stuff, then we have references regarding the onboard data,” he says. “I can quite easily just look at some data or some video and stuff like that. So it’s just about trying to keep your mind within what Formula 1 is like. When you’re doing sim racing, you still get a good feel for how you control the car and stuff, but then it’s the feedback – how an F1 car is different to cars you drive on the simulator, as you don’t tend to drive the F1 car as much on the simulator.

“It’s just trying to keep or bring yourself back to the reality of what it’s like in F1 compared to just driving on the simulator. So yeah, whether it’s looking at some video or some data or something like that, it’s a good thing.”

For Norris, one of the additional drawbacks of F1’s coronavirus hiatus – and also the social-distancing rules impacting many of us – is that he can’t spend time getting to know his new race engineer face to face. Norris’s equally amusing and touching final radio exchange with his former performance engineer – Andrew Jarvis – at the conclusion of the 2019 Abu Dhabi GP is a shining example of the personality he brings to F1 and its Esports equivalent.

“Jarvis is now officially living in America,” says Norris. “So I got a new engineer who I can’t go and see, I can’t go and work with. So, that’s going to be one of the most difficult things, really – making sure that we get back on terms with how I’m going to be working with him when I get back to racing.”

When that moment does come, McLaren will resume its journey, trying to get back to the front of the F1 grid. With Norris and Sainz joining last year, the team seemed to turn a corner with the MCL34 and finished fourth in the standings on 145 points – its highest total since 2014. Sainz also returned McLaren to the podium for the first time since that year’s Australian GP, when he took third in Brazil.

At the conclusion of winter testing back in February, Autosport reckoned McLaren was in the mix at the front of the midfield scrap, but was behind the usual top three squads and, crucially, Racing Point. >>

NORRIS TO CHANGE HIS COLOURS IN 2020

While the 2020 Formula 1 season – whenever it gets under way – will feature technical rules stability from the previous year, there were a few smaller regulation tweaks, one of which will have appealed to the more colourful drivers on the grid.

For this year, the FIA has removed the rule that governed how many times a driver could change their helmet livery throughout a season. This was introduced back in 2015 – with only one complete design change allowed in the years since then – to try to help fans identify drivers more easily.

This change of tack, surely a welcome move when it comes to freedom of expression, has stirred Lando Norris, who used his single permitted design change in 2019 to pay homage to his hero Valentino Rossi at Monza (we’re still not sure about the fluorescent bucket hat).

“I’ve got a lot planned,” Norris said at the aborted Australian Grand Prix. “It’s like one of the best things about this year. I’m planning to hopefully try and have one new special every race. I have them all on my wall at home – soon they’re not going to be on the wall because I’m not going to have enough space.

“They’re one thing I get to remember every race by, there’s something about them. Now we can mix it up a bit more, and I can have some more exaggerated designs – more custom and colourful – and stuff like that.

“I’ll still be keeping with the same concept of what I have, because that’s still me, but then how everything is done around that, the colours and schemes of everything, are hopefully going to be a bit more dedicated to each race and the country and things like that – bit more character to it, which is a nice thing from what they’ve done. I like that.”

Norris has worked with “one designer mainly, MDM Designs” since 2013 when it comes to helmet liveries and car graphics in the lower formulas.

“He’s done everything for me,” Norris explained. “So we both come up with ideas, he puts it into the proper formats and sends it to the painter and so on. But a lot of them can be his ideas, some of them are my ideas – but then I’m still trying to work with more designers and illustrators, more random people basically.”

“WE CAN MIX IT UP A BIT WITH MORE CUSTOM AND COLOURFUL HELMETS”



HONE

The fight for constructors' championship placings is likely to be even more important whenever the new season does begin, as the larger prize money on offer for the higher places will benefit teams that may be up against it in the expected economic contraction. But until the typical frantic development race can resume alongside normal life, there's not a lot that can be done to improve a team's potential.

"No one is allowed to do anything right now in the factories," says Norris, "so I think the cars are literally going to be as they were once we get back to driving. Of course, we'll have a bit of time to get back to work and get back in the zone before we go to the first race after all the shutdowns, but at the same time I think the pecking order will be the same."

Developing the MCL35 to improve on the areas targeted by McLaren from its 2019 car was a key focus of Norris's off-season. He said at the end of testing that the car felt "less on edge" and was "more stable and consistent".

The natural benefit of completing a successful rookie year – Norris finished 11th in the 2019 standings with 49 points and took 'Class B' wins in Bahrain, Austria and Singapore, with another cruelly taken away when a power problem cost him fifth place in the final laps of the Belgian GP – is a confidence boost. This will help both Norris and McLaren as their journeys continue together, with the team knowing it can trust his feedback now he's proved what he can do with a competitive package.

"I was in a much better place, coming into my year two with knowing things I needed to work on and so on," Norris says of his approach to 2020 testing. "That just allowed me to have a better strategy, a better focus on pre-season testing, knowing those areas that I needed to work on."

It was apparent in testing just how relaxed and at ease Norris is in the F1 paddock. Even before his fame increased in recent weeks he was speaking frankly about a range of topics – from the continuing disruption of dirty air on close racing, to the impact of reduced testing days for Williams rookie Nicholas Latifi.

At the conclusion of the final 2020 pre-season test, Norris casually interrupted an Autosport filming session, while holding what appeared to be an enormous slice of garlic bread, before sauntering on his way. He was an incognito figure as he walked off, and yet one entirely at ease with his own actions, and willing to comment in-depth on his squad's potential, as well as F1's wider issues.

**"I HAD A BETTER STRATEGY,
A BETTER FOCUS ON PRE-
SEASON TESTING, KNOWING
WHAT I NEEDED TO WORK ON"**





Until he sits behind the wheel of his McLaren again, Norris is set to entertain the fans online from his simulator

When asked if the confidence he gained from completing his rookie year has made him feel like more of a voice within F1, Norris says: “Yeah, I guess a little bit, but I’m still much better at driving than anything else.

“But at the same time, just because I’ve done it for a year, people gain a bit of respect and therefore listen to you a bit more. I mean, I didn’t know if I’m classed as a veteran [*not just yet Lando! – ed*], but I feel more confident within myself, and I think at the same time just because you’re in year two, and with McLaren as well, then you are kind of seen as a bit more of a professional, not someone who was just there for one year. You do become in a way that bit more of a spokesperson where people rely on you, they listen to you and they take actions from things you say.

“Say you’re leading the car developments and you’re leading the engineers and aerodynamicists. If they want to develop the car in a certain way, you know your actions and what you say can lead to things going better or maybe worse, basically. So I do need to be a bit more precise with the things I say and not just be kind of a rookie and always saying ‘yes’ and agreeing with everyone.”

At the end of his first season in F1, Norris said that he felt he had been at times “too jokey” and vowed to find a more focused compromise in his second campaign. He knows that once everything does go back to normal he’s “going to have to switch my focus a bit more back to what I need to be doing once we are able to go back to McLaren and start working harder”, but there’s good news for fans of his antics.

“I won’t be home as much, I won’t be able to stream as much and I’ll have to take things a bit more seriously again,” he says. “But I’m not going to change, I’m not going to try and be someone I’m not.

“I just need to make sure I say the right things at the right time and not come across basically as someone who’s just trying to be jokey and not taking things seriously. I just need to be the same me – I can still make jokes and stuff – but I need to make sure I’m seen as the guy who’s focusing and every now and then makes jokes, instead of the guy who is always joking and sometimes looks like he’s focusing. That’s all.”

Successful leaders show who they really are, what they’re made of, and in doing so engage their audience. There can be little doubt that Norris has helped to show much of motorsport – and other sports – the way in adapting to the current difficulties and striking the right tone in a challenging environment.

He is a young driver, probably with a bright and long future ahead in grand prix racing. It’s worth celebrating the way he’s currently lifting spirits for many people trying to find their usual fix of sporting escapism, and at the same time understand how he arrived at his current place of confidence.

Norris truly is one of F1’s great characters, and he’s in the spotlight at exactly the right time. ✨

➔ **P24 NORRIS CONQUERING THE VIRTUAL WORLD**

How Norris established himself as a frontrunner in the virtual world

As coronavirus disrupts motorsport in the real world, Esports has rapidly grown in importance, with Lando Norris becoming one of its leading figures

JOSH SUTTILL AND LUKE SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

MAUGER

Lando Norris is no stranger to sim racing. He entered the competitive virtual world long before he made his real-life car racing debut in Ginetta Junior in 2014, and used his simulator during his rapid rise up the junior single-seater ladder.

He uses a simulator provided by Pro Sim – a company run by GP2 race winner Adrian Quaife-Hobbs – worth in excess of £30,000. Complete with individually adjustable pedals and a high-definition triple-screen set-up, it really is the closest you can come to the real thing in your living room.

It has been vital to Norris's success not only in junior single-seaters but in providing support to McLaren as test driver in 2018, which led to his F1 promotion in 2019. But it's far more than just a training tool for Norris – it's a genuine passion of his. The 2016 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner spends most days sim racing, so it's no surprise that he's become one of the most successful drivers as Esports has taken centre stage in the wake of the postponement of real-life motorsport.

The greatest display of his speed was during the first round of Veloce Esports' Pro Series, in partnership with Motorsport Games. Norris lapped the virtual Silverstone circuit well over half a second quicker than anybody else in qualifying. He annihilated the

competition – which included current Formula E championship leader Antonio Felix da Costa and ex-McLaren F1 driver-turned-Mercedes Formula E star Stoffel Vandoorne – in the 25-minute race, winning on the simulation-focused *iRacing* by over 10 seconds.

But it wasn't just real-life racing drivers with far less sim racing experience than Norris who were upstaged. Last year's World's Fastest Gamer James Baldwin and Toro Rosso F1 Esports driver Cem Bolukbasi had no answer to Norris either.

The second race reversed the top 10 on the grid, and Norris was able to charge through to second and close to within touching distance of the winner, Bathurst 12 Hours class victor Martin Kodric.

By contrast, Norris has endured mixed success in the more entertainment-driven #NotTheGP series on *F1 2019* – the officially licensed F1 game that is more accessible and less sim-focused than *iRacing*. He was disqualified from qualifying for the #NotTheAusGP because he blocked the pitlane, but he still managed to carve through the chaos to finish in sixth place. At the next round in Bahrain, he finished 10th after an opening-lap incident, and then came home sixth in the reversed-grid race before a penalty for speeding in the pitlane demoted him to seventh.

Veloce adopted a 16-driver 1v1 knockout tournament for its Vietnam GP replacement event. Norris came out on top and, although the field was hardly the strongest, it shows his versatility switching between sim-focused *iRacing* and accessible *F1 2019*.

His sim-racing exploits during this postponement period mirror his rookie F1 season to a certain extent. There's plenty of speed but the rough rookie edges are there. The self-induced penalties show Norris isn't immune to the pressure, even in the virtual world, where he believes his nerves are greater.

"I get so nervous in sim racing for some reason – I get more nervous than I do in an actual qualifying session," says Norris. "I don't know if it's because you don't have the adrenalin of driving the actual car, which helps you forget about the nerves. In sim racing, you're sat in the seat, it's a bit more peaceful and quiet, and you're literally just driving. You think about a few more things.





Norris has become an important voice in the world of online motor racing

“I GET MORE NERVOUS IN SIM RACING THAN I DO IN ACTUAL QUALIFYING”

“I need to try and calm myself down as much as possible, I start shaking and getting all nervous, I always ruin my qualifying laps because I get so nervous. My only other thing is to put my Twitch chat into sub-only mode so they can’t talk, otherwise I get too distracted trying to answer their questions.”

It’s no surprise that Norris’s Twitch chat is a distraction to the 20-year-old considering his huge online following and fanbase. His Twitch fans have also watched his friendly rivalry with fellow F1 star Max Verstappen develop. Although the duo rarely crossed paths on track in 2019, they had numerous encounters in the virtual world and those have only increased this year.

Verstappen was crowned champion of sim racing giant Team Redline’s Esports series for professional racing drivers – Real Racers Never Quit. The 12-race compact championship took place over six nights in two weeks and featured guest appearances from 2009 F1 champion Jenson Button as well as two-time Indianapolis 500 winner Juan Pablo Montoya. Norris finished third in the standings with one race win to Verstappen’s six, although that win was a result of a penalty for Porsche Supercup race winner Ayhan Guven for an overoptimistic move on Norris at Interlagos.

Norris was also wiped out by Verstappen in the opening round as



Norris’s Pro Sim set-up has been crucial in his development as a driver

the pair duelled for the lead with ADAC GT Masters champion Kelvin van der Linde in European Formula 3 cars at Spa. That was the result of Verstappen’s audacious move for the lead, but both Norris and Verstappen – who regularly communicate with each other during races – acknowledge that sim racing is a chance to try overtakes that may be deemed too risky in the real-life racing world.

Verstappen knows this better than anybody, having revealed that he practised his famous overtake on Felipe Nasr around the outside of Blanchimont at Spa during his rookie season in 2015 on the simulator prior to the race.

Norris’s and Verstappen’s developing friendly rivalry in the virtual world may prove to be a prelude to real-life battles in the years to come. Whether or not that happens is inconsequential given the great entertainment value the two drivers are providing to fans – which is exactly what everybody needs in these difficult times. ✨

➔ P40 WORLD OF ESPORTS

Prancing Horse, Red Bull, Busy Bee

Engineer Rodi Basso has had a colourful career in motorsport that started under the bridge at Fiorano. Now the ex-Ferrari and Red Bull man is bringing F1 technical analysis to Autosport

STUART CODLING

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

MAIN IMAGE: SUTTON PORTRAIT: TEE

Barrichello in 2002
Italian GP – victory on
Basso's race-weekend
debut with Ferrari



It was a chance encounter with Michael Schumacher that fired Rodi Basso's passion for motor racing and set him on the road to working at the pinnacle of the sport, for Ferrari and then for Red Bull as they reached the height of their powers. Not that he knew it was Schumacher at the time.

An aerospace engineer by training, Basso had been working in Washington as a consultant for NASA, designing data acquisition systems for satellites. Like any Italian, he saw Ferrari as not just a second national religion, but also a crucible of engineering excellence.

"I wasn't such a motorsport fan before I started but it was more for the technical, the engineering side that took me into this environment," he says. "I had four interviews with Ferrari. The first was with a guy from HR, and he talked for quite a long time, explaining what they were looking for. Then he asked me to recap what the job was about. I said, 'Basically, you're looking for a technical interface for the >>



driver? He seemed very happy with this and jumped on the phone to my next interviewer.

“My second interview was at Fiorano, Ferrari’s test track. As I was walking under the bridge one of the Formula 1 cars was going over the top of it. I could hear the V10 screaming and roaring over my head. It was incredible – the thrill coming from the vibration, the sound, all the senses. I said to myself, ‘OK, I need to concentrate and focus because I really want this job’. Afterwards I asked the guy interviewing me who the driver was, and he said it was Michael Schumacher. Well, even if I wasn’t too much into motorsport at this time, I knew who he was – everybody knew Michael...”

This was 2000, just as Schumacher was embarking on his – and Ferrari’s – remarkable run of five consecutive drivers’ championships. The ‘brains trust’ of technical director Ross Brawn and chief designer Rory Byrne, with team principal Jean Todt and president Luca di Montezemolo shielding them from the more grotesque elements of company politics, had thrashed the design, manufacturing and operational sides of Ferrari into shape and turned it into a winning machine. For his fourth and final interview that summer, the 26-year-old Basso was grilled by Todt himself.

“I’m told he was interviewing all the people,” Basso recalls. “He wanted to check, especially the people who would be working at the track, that they had the right attitude for the job. So he was asking the usual stuff about my strengths and weaknesses, and then he said, ‘This world [Formula 1] is an incredible world. You can really grow and develop yourself as a person and as an engineer, but it’s important to be humble. Humility is a key value in this world.’

“I often think back to this because he was right. In the world of

“In motorsport there’s lots of glitter that can make you miss the important stuff”

motorsport there’s a lot of glitter and champagne, very superficial stuff that can distract you and make you miss the important stuff. As an engineer or mechanic you have to keep that in mind because you’ve got the life of the driver in your hands.”

Like all its rivals in this era of unrestricted testing, Ferrari maintained a separate full-time test team that enabled Schumacher, Rubens Barrichello and Luca Badoer to beat around Fiorano – and other European circuits – day in, day out, evaluating the latest innovations and developing a greater understanding of the Bridgestone tyres. The result was a period of absolute supremacy only recently surpassed by Mercedes. It was this organisation Basso joined as a performance engineer in August 2000 after finishing his NASA contract and moving back to Italy.

“It was an incredibly steep learning curve,” he says, “because I’d trained as an aerospace engineer and I had to learn a lot about vehicle dynamics and how to measure and understand the aerodynamics on a race car. Even if you’re a mechanical engineer or whatever, a racing car is something apart. Now there are courses you can take, institutions to attend, that give you some grounding in motorsport engineering, but in those days you could only learn by being in the environment. And nothing compares to being at the track, or being in a design office, and being really hands on.”



Badoer racked up miles with Basso on test team



Inspiring four (left to right): engine chief Paolo Martinelli, Todt, Brawn and Byrne

With a full-time staff in the region of 80 people, Ferrari’s test squad was essentially a parallel operation to the race team. While Badoer shouldered the majority of the mileage, Schumacher was famous for his voracious appetite for testing. Apart from all the travel involved, one of the key reasons for maintaining separate teams was the tremendous difference between the two disciplines, as Basso learned when he received his call-up to the race team in late 2002.

“It’s not the atmosphere, the pressure of being in a race environment, or even the sheer number of people,” says Basso. “In testing – on track or the dyno – you’re working in a very experimental environment. It’s a scientific process built on repeatability, so you need to be very disciplined in planning, and having your rituals and best practices in understanding how to test new items without jeopardising other tests. You’re building an understanding of what makes an impact on performance and reliability.”

“During a race weekend it’s about the psychological, strategic and sporting elements, and having the trust with the driver. You’re looking to extract the maximum potential of the car based on the knowledge you built through testing. Here you don’t want to make too many changes to the car, not just because track time is limited, but because for the driver one of the key aspects is predicting what the car is going to do. It’s a



Schumacher at Fiorano represented Basso's first contact with motorsport



PHOTO 4/MOTOSPORT IMAGES

BACHELOR

completely different mind game – and here the game is where the driver has to be managed. You support your driver to understand where he was stronger and where he was weaker [than his team-mate], and when it was because of his driving and when it was because of the car. That's where you become a competitive engineer.

“You need to think like a sports person.

The tools are different – it's not your body in terms of what's making the majority of the effort, it's about getting into the psychology of the driver and understanding what's best to get him up and running from the moment they arrive. That's what I found fascinating in my work.”

When Barrichello's race performance engineer decided to step back because he wanted to travel less, Basso got the nod to take his place. His first race was the 2002 Italian Grand Prix at Monza in the closing straight of a season in which Ferrari had been utterly unbeatable – Schumacher had long since claimed the drivers' title, in France, race 11 of 17, and Ferrari had secured the constructors' championship two rounds later, in Hungary. While there was theoretically nothing left to play for, Ferrari's competitive drive was relentless – plus, of course, there was the urge to win at home. Its main rival throughout the season had been Williams-BMW – more on account of Munich grunt than Grove grip, it must be said – and to that end Ferrari brought a new qualifying-specific engine to Monza. In this era of excess-all-around, a team could use as many engines as it pleased during a race weekend.

Nevertheless, Juan Pablo Montoya put his Williams on pole, and team-mate Ralf Schumacher would have been alongside him on the front row but for a mistake on his fastest lap. Michael Schumacher therefore split

the Williams drivers, with Barrichello fourth on the grid. On race day Barrichello passed Michael at the Rettifilo on the opening lap as the Williams drivers disputed the lead, then moved to the front when both BMW-engined cars expired in a haze of oil smoke.

“There are so many engineers who never win in F1,” says Basso. “So for me, as an Italian, to be part of the winning team at Monza was the best way to start my race career. There was for sure a special feeling but I was telling myself to keep my feet on the ground. ‘Rodi’, I said to myself, ‘you're f***** lucky.’” >>



SUTTON

Barrichello leads Montoya (Williams) and Schumacher in 2002 Italian Grand Prix

Being part of the race team gave Basso a new and deeper insight into the mindset required to elevate Ferrari to the position it now occupied. This was a team unable to pause and reflect on its success. There was always more performance to find, tantalisingly out of reach: nothing was unimprovable, only unimproved.

“I’d say my biggest piece of luck [in my career] is to start where things were working brilliantly,” Basso says. “The benchmark that I had, in terms of motorsport, but also in general, as a professional and in business, was being really at the peak, dealing with incredible people. In a race team the vertical is there, but it’s very short. So in 2002 I was already in meetings with people like Jean Todt, Ross Brawn, Rory Byrne, Luca di Montezemolo, massive people, and I was only 27-28.

“You had the feeling of having the right and the duty to ask for the best. A faster computer. A better algorithm to manage a particular system on the car. And on the car itself – can we make the hubs lighter? There was this philosophy of pushing all of us try to find one millimetre of advantage because when you put everyone’s contribution together, that’s where you get hundreds of metres.

“In some phases of the championship we had our struggles, sometimes with reliability because we were pushing the limits too much. But even then, in the debrief, Ross Brawn would say, ‘Guys, we know we have a fast car, but maybe it’s not as fast as it could be. Let’s imagine it’s in the middle of this table, and each of us has to think on how to improve by a tenth of a second for each bit we’re managing. If we do this, we get into seconds of advantage.’ For me, this is the highest expression of system engineering and team spirit.

“Before this era, I was told one of the biggest problems at Ferrari was that everyone had his own back yard, this piece of territory he was protecting, even trying to hide what was happening there, and never pushing the limits because they didn’t want to make too much trouble. Whereas when you start breaking up these barriers across the departments and make everyone feel like part of a system, that’s when you get the best out of your team.”

In December 2005 Basso moved to Red Bull, lured by the prospect of reporting to Adrian Newey and experiencing a new working culture. This was a team very much in flux, having experienced a revolving door of senior management and design talent during its days as Jaguar Racing.



Di Montezemolo (right) brought all-star cast for Ferrari domination

COLOMBO

At Ferrari, 2005 had been a fallow year, largely because its long-established design philosophy of optimising the car around multiple pitstops was disadvantageous during a season in which tyre changes were outlawed. But Red Bull’s first season was even worse as the RB1, a boxy carry-over design from the Jaguar era, failed to record a podium even with the experienced David Coulthard at the wheel.

Basso joined as Coulthard’s performance engineer with a remit that included everything from performance analysis to vehicle dynamics simulations, electronic systems development, and liaising between the race engineering group and the design group led by Newey. All of these groups were in transition as the newcomers, led by Red Bull-appointed team principal Christian Horner, sought to flush out the sub-optimal working practices that had made the outfit a serial underachiever throughout the Jaguar Racing era. The 2006 and 2007 seasons became an extended battle as the operational crew got to grips with the Ferrari-engined RB2, the last of the non-Newey designs, and the design and production groups were brought to heel by their new and demanding technical guru. Every aspect of the team’s operations had to change.

“This was a fascinating time because pretty much all the engineers



Ferrari crew celebrate as Barrichello leads Schumacher to 1-2 at Monza



Newey brought new processes to push Red Bull forward...

SUTTON



...although 2006 was a struggle. Highlight was Coulthard in Monaco

CAPILTAN

were changing,” says Basso. “There were people coming from all the teams in the pitlane and I could see the different approaches they brought in terms of how to design the car, build it, set it up, and manage the vehicle dynamics. It was an incredible learning curve.

“On top of this, the first car I worked on [RB2] had a lot of problems. One example is the power steering. At Ferrari you almost forgot we had it, the level of quality was so high – you just put it in the car and it was working. At Red Bull every power steering unit had different characteristics – sometimes more assistance, sometimes less, sometimes more assistance when steering in one direction than the other. Oh my! I had to go into the deepest detail of how the power steering was made to understand the characteristics and when we had a good one or a bad one – and how to make sure we got a predictable behaviour in the car.”

Newey has spoken of the many challenges he encountered when he first moved to Red Bull, chief of which was stamping out not-invented-here syndrome. Having invested time in understanding the RB2, he quickly moved to abandon onward development of it in the summer of 2006 to focus on an all-new design. But initially the flurry of new ideas meant higher stress levels throughout the organisation.

“Adrian Newey is a genius, constantly pushing the limits but also very open”



Basso now brings the mindset of an engineer to motorsport business management

McLAREN APPLIED TECHNOLOGIES

“I remember the leadership of Christian and Adrian with the greatest respect,” says Basso. “All their decision-making was sound. Adrian is a genius, constantly pushing the limits of what’s possible, and sometimes it was overwhelming in terms of the amount of new stuff he wanted to test. To follow him you had to really focus because he was always six months ahead of everyone else. But he was also very open, like Rory and Ross at Ferrari, listening to everyone and encouraging contributions from all the people in the team. And he loved to get involved at the track, checking the performance and talking to the drivers to understand the car.”

Coulthard wrung a single podium finish out of the RB2, at Monaco. The transition process proved to be a protracted one as Red Bull’s build quality continued to fall short: the first chassis to bear Newey’s authorial stamp, the RB3, was intermittently quick but also fragile. So too was the 2008 RB4, though by then Red Bull had established itself as best of the rest behind McLaren and Ferrari.

“These years taught me that you don’t only have to design a good car,” says Basso. “To progress from the midfield to join the top teams you have to be good at designing, simulating and correlating how the car behaves on the track with your models. That’s a big task in itself. Then there’s the production quality, which is not to be taken for granted. You have to be able to get it to a certain level and be repeatable, where your cars have the same level of quality, and then you can take them to the race track and find the limits of their performance.

“I remember there were huge changes and investment, not just in the CFD and modelling capacity to reduce the windtunnel time, but also in the production department itself. Unfortunately the car disassembling itself on the track was part of the pain and the joy. But I remember the taste of that first podium in Monaco. 2006 was generally a year of misery but David was a joy to work with, such a gentleman but also a very focused and determined competitor. He would arrange for me and his race engineer to be worked on by his own chiropractor, at his expense, to make sure we were as fit and sharp as he was! And he was incredibly good at Monaco. Especially coming out from the Rascasse, he had a specific line he was taking that gave him a lot of time over the competition.

“So while it was a tough journey, it was worth it for the lessons and for the joy of that first podium in Monaco – from having joined a team that was at the pinnacle [Ferrari] to another that was starting again from a blank sheet of paper. Yes, it was definitely worth it.”

Moving on from F1, Basso worked as a coordinator for A1GP, overseeing the race engineering of the entire grid, and co-founded (with ex-F1 engineer Anton Stipinovich) Allinsports, a racing simulator company that offers virtual driver training – a growth area now that track testing across most categories is restricted. With a view to expanding his brief to straddle the engineering and business worlds, he’s also worked for the innovation wing of parts company Magneti Marelli and latterly for McLaren Applied Technologies before founding a new start-up.

“I wanted to look at the same world from another angle,” Basso says. “Motorsport business management and development. I keep the same mindset of a performance engineer while working on the business: data-driven, and not to have any bars. Yes, there are boundaries, but you push beyond them. That’s what makes ours such a fascinating business.”

THE SECRET TYRRELL THAT STARTED SOMETHING BIG

Fifty years ago, Formula 1's top team was struggling to find a suitable car, so it got radical...

PAUL FEARNLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY



Ken Tyrrell was on the horns of a dilemma. Long-standing partner Matra – on behalf of new parent company Chrysler – was demanding that he use its sonorous but gutless V12, whereas he wanted to stick with Ford and its gutsy Cosworth DFV.

He had approached Brabham, Lotus and McLaren – and even BRM – about running a semi-works car in 1970 and been politely declined due to clashing oil/tyre deals, among other considerations. Thus the reigning Formula 1 world champions were in danger of going without. External forces were dictating what they could and could not do.

Though it would complicate matters and cost more, Tyrrell realised that his team would have to design and build its own car if it wanted to stay competitive and hang onto its prize asset: Jackie Stewart. Not that JYS knew anything about it – yet. Tyrrell wanted his number one to concentrate on extracting the maximum from the bulky March 701 – this nascent constructor had welcomed Tyrrell's and Ford's opened chequebooks with open arms – that was filling the gap left by the beloved, title-winning Matra MS80.

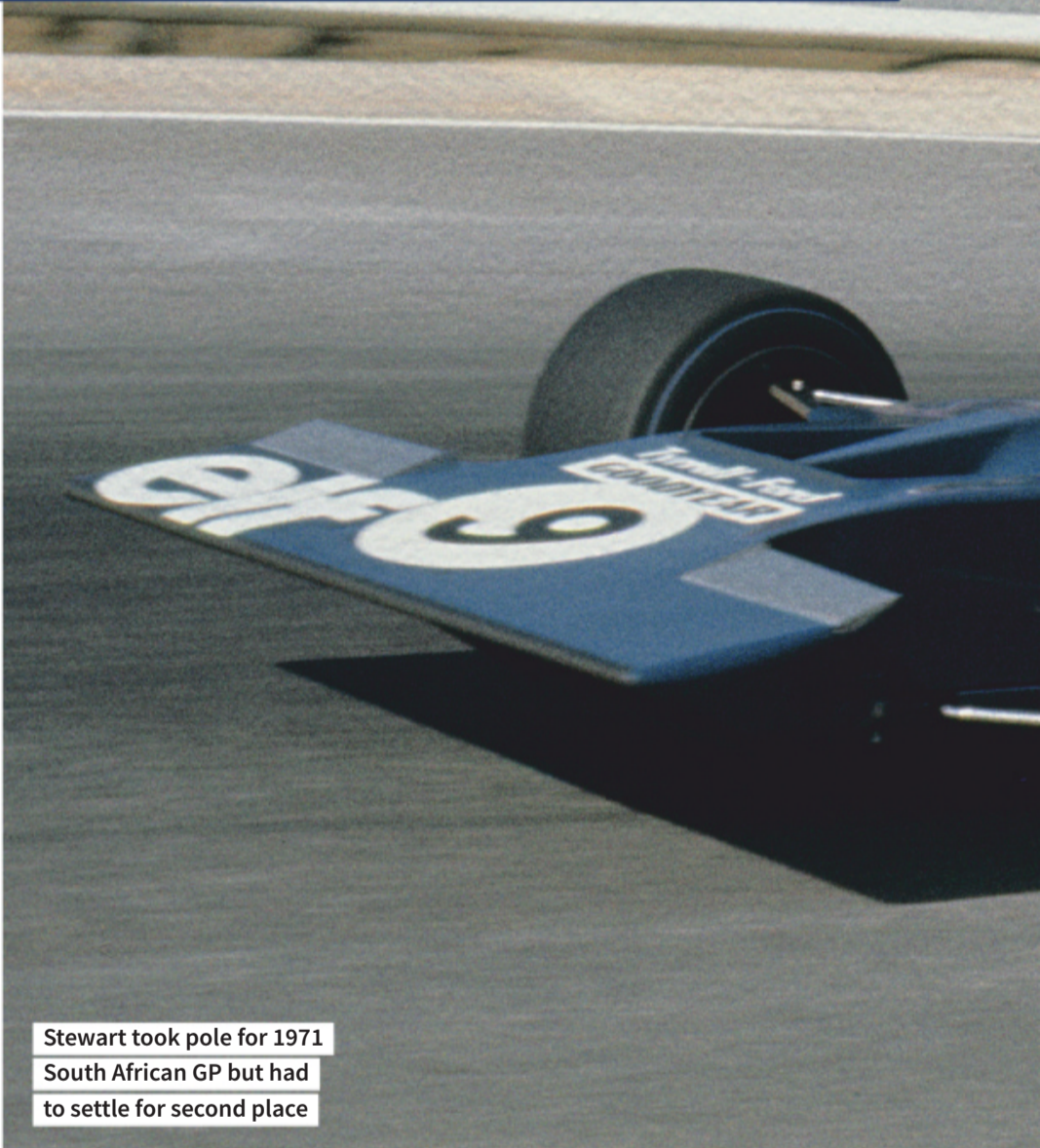
“Ken Tyrrell was very much his own man,” says Stewart. “He could be incredibly private. The first I heard of the project was when he sent me to Coventry. For a seat-fitting.”

Stewart flew from Geneva on 23 March 1970 and a few hours later rolled up a cul-de-sac in Leamington Spa. There, in a wooden garage next to an unassuming house, lay his future – or rather a full-scale plywood mock-up of it. He climbed aboard and immediately felt at home. He was impressed, too, by the thoroughness of the designer who had conceived it.

Tyrrell, averse to freelance loose cannons, had wanted a steady, solid staffer who could keep a secret and keep to a deadline. The unheralded Derek Gardner gave him all of this and more: quiet and unassuming, he considered every word before speaking – slowly – and dressed conservatively. He was, however, the epitome of still waters running deep. Though Gardner had worked with Tyrrell and Stewart during 1969 as the transmissions engineer on Matra's four-wheel drive project, the call had come from out of the blue.

“I can't remember the precise date but it was in 1969,” said Gardner, who died in January 2011, aged 79. “Ken came straight out with it and asked if I could build a Formula 1 car. That was a pretty big undertaking and so I said I'd think about it. I never make snap decisions; those are the ones you regret.

“Could I design a grand prix car? I had never done one before. I'd never even seen anyone do one. But eventually I decided that I could and we arranged a meeting in Henley-on-Thames. I was flattered to a degree by Ken's approach, but such a project needed



Stewart took pole for 1971 South African GP but had to settle for second place



Kyalami confab: Stewart with Gardner (centre) and 'Uncle Ken'

PHIPPS



a big commitment from him and I needed convincing that he was willing to give it." Tyrrell was, and Gardner was convinced.

The deadline for SP (Secret Project) was the non-championship International Gold Cup at Oulton Park on 22 August – the unofficial closing date for sponsorship decisions for 1971. Gardner, therefore, set a deadline of his own: be at the drawing board by February: "We could not afford to miss that race. Not only that but also we had to show immediately that the car was a competitive proposition. Secrecy was another absolute prerequisite. Because I was not part of motor racing's mainstream, that wasn't too difficult to achieve.

"People were aware that I was up to something because I was asking lots of questions about castings and such like. But nobody put two and two together. I hadn't designed a car before and there was no reason for people to think that I was starting now."

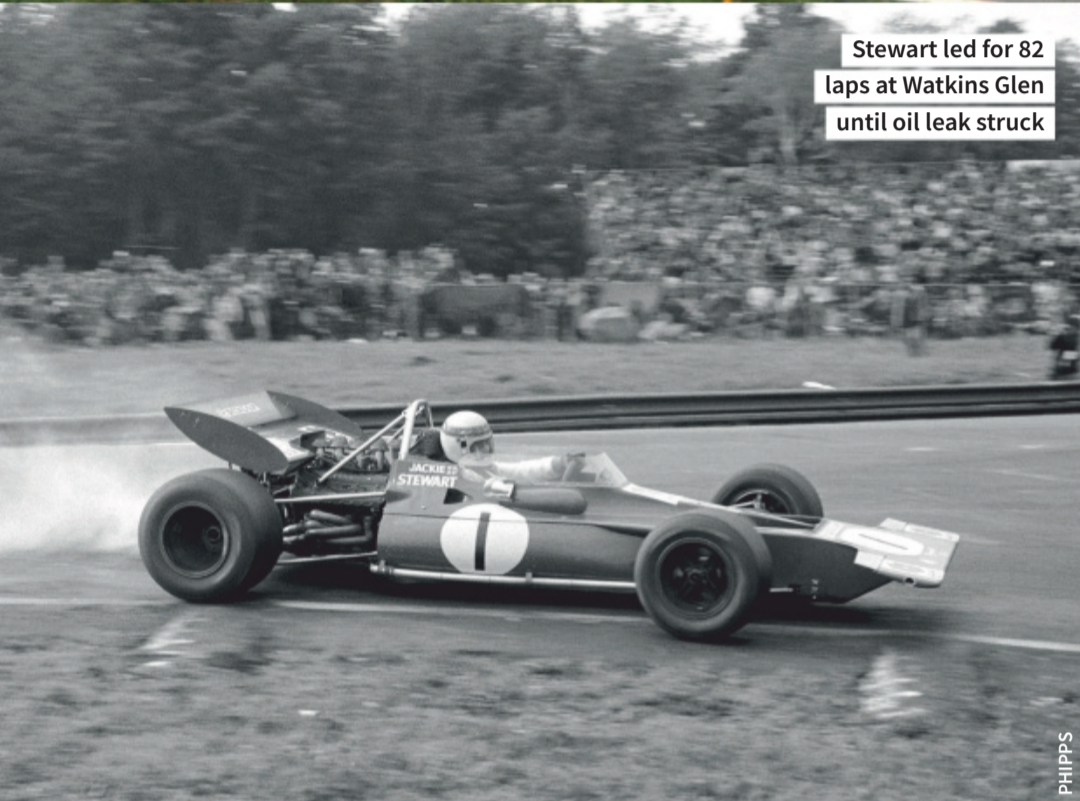
There was pressure, of course, but Gardner now found himself

in a position that most of his peers could only dream of: a trusting, hands-off boss; no prying eyes; no diversions of conflicting demands for a Formula 2 and/or Can-Am car; and no weekends away at the track. On the other hand he was left alone with his thoughts: "I had no background in monocoques, so I designed one from first principles. Ken provided me with some information and told me what the other teams were doing, but otherwise there wasn't much contact between us; I reported to him only when I had something to report.

"I set out to satisfy myself that my design was right and by doing that hopefully satisfy him, too. There was no budget as such: I had a reputation for not being foolish with money and Ken never questioned me on the topic. If there was a bill to pay, he paid it. We kept it simple. Eventually, however, it was vital that Jackie came along for a seat-fitting." >>



Fastest lap set at Oulton Park against Rindt's benchmark Lotus 72



Stewart led for 82 laps at Watkins Glen until oil leak struck

PHIPPS



Things clicked after difficult test at Ste Jovite – and pole position was the result

Stewart: “I found myself outside this house in suburbia. It was all a bit strange. Don’t forget, at the time I could have driven for anyone; there were plenty of offers on the table. But I wanted desperately to stay with Ken. He had made things happen before and I trusted him. I’d had no say in the choice of Derek as the designer of the new car but, if Ken thought he was the right man, I was happy to go along with it.”

Their keynote meeting lasted less than hour – so that tongues could not begin to wag.

Gardner: “We asked each other lots of questions, made some adjustments, talked about this and that. Jackie, however, was slightly non-committal. Perhaps he was happy with what he saw. Back at the airport I heard a bus driver ask, ‘Isn’t that Jackie Stewart?’ To which his mate replied, ‘Here? Nah.’”

Gardner had not set out to design a ‘British Matra’, but a lot of what Stewart saw that day rang a cheering bell: short wheelbase; low, centralised weight; and low polar moment of inertia. He’d already had his fill of that “bucking bronco” March and the mock-up was the (very distant) light at the end of the tunnel. “I left firm in the belief that Derek was a good, cautious engineer,” says Stewart. “That suited me fine: I wanted a strong, safe car underneath me that I could stretch like elastic, if needed.”

This, however, is not to consign Tyrrell 001 to unthinking, unswerving conservatism. Gardner was no slave to convention – he had in 1968 pitched the idea of an Indy four-wheel-drive six-wheeler to STP boss Andy Granatelli. Another of his innovations was the ‘discovery’ of carbonfibre filament: “At that time it was only available in long hanks and you spun it like wool. The only place I could find an expert on how to do this was at Lanchester College in Coventry. I also found a fibreglassing company in Leamington Spa that was able to work with the material. Once again, both of those companies had no connection with motor racing, so our secret was

“IN SOME WAYS THE HARDSHIPS HELPED: THERE WAS A VERY STRONG *ESPRIT DE CORPS* AT TYRRELL”

safe. We used the carbonfibre to brace the nose; two men could stand on either end of the nosecone, quite a big item on this car, and it would take the strain easily.

“I had no benchmark from which to judge my design but I did get some encouragement during the later stages [of this process]. There was going to be a TV programme about this wonderful new March car and I invited Dunlop tyre designer Ian Mills to watch with me – after he had given me a lot of information that I found very useful. I was most impressed with what I saw and thought, ‘How can I compete with that?’ March had masses of people working for it; Tyrrell’s technical department was, well, me. Plus March had done all these tests. It was then that Ian pointed out that I was the only car designer to have asked him for information. That made me feel that perhaps I was finding angles that others had missed.

“I made another discovery that gave me hope. Nearly everybody at that time was using steering dampers and I could not understand why. I worked out all the stresses and forces and decided that they were nowhere near enough to have to bother with one. I made what I considered to be a very robust steering linkage yet they soon became known as ‘Gardner’s knitting needles’. We never had any problems with them, though.”

Designing the car was one thing, building it was another. Gardner had never been to the Tyrrell, ahem, ‘factory’. He got a shock: the main building was a wooden ex-army barracks transported from



Gardner (with clipboard) stands by while Tyrrell and Stewart confer

Aldershot. There were two, in fact, bought for £50 each when Ken was feeling flush after landing the works Mini deal in 1962; joined together, they made for one long, thin and draughty workshop.

“The big shed was unusual,” understated Gardner. “You wondered how on earth the job could be done in a such a building. But that was the way it was. The one thing that gave me cause for hope was an impressive piece of welding kit. Until I discovered that it wasn’t connected. In some ways these hardships helped: there was a very strong *esprit de corps* at Tyrrell.”

Design finalised by June, Ken’s overworked but intensely loyal mechanics began the bit-by-bit build: Maurice Gomm’s place in Old Woking fabricated the main chassis parts, while suspension elements etc were done in-house; machined items followed a similar pattern of subcontracting.

Gardner: “The car turned out quite a lot different from most of the others and people felt that perhaps we had not gone in the right direction, but I had to have the courage of my convictions. Of course, the only true test comes on the track.”

The Oulton Park deadline was kept and Gardner began to fret:

STEWART IN GARDNER TYRRELLS

CAR	STARTS	WINS	POLES
001	4	0	2
003	16	8	6
004	1	0	0
005	6	2	1
006	12	5	3
TOTAL	39	15	12

1971 drivers’ and constructors’ titles
1973 drivers’ title



SCHLEGELMILCH

“It was raining, miserable, and we couldn’t get the car started. I was worrying about everything.” To such an extent that he considered quitting motor racing for good, there and then.

Stewart, in contrast, was encouraged, despite the fuel surge that forced him to start from the back row (he could have started from the second row in the March but chose not to), the stuck throttle that caused him a big moment on the opening lap of the first heat, and the piston failure that kept him out of the second. The bottom line was that the car felt good and had set the meeting’s fastest lap in the presence of Jochen Rindt’s benchmark Lotus 72.

“001 was a very good package: neutral, well balanced and driveable,” says Stewart. “I could ‘create’ with it, whereas with the March I had just been ‘reacting’. It was not yet at the level of the MS80, but it was quick and gentler to drive. Derek and the team had done an incredible job.”

After another technical hiccup at Monza – a front stub axle broke and the team decided to race the March for safety’s sake – 001 was shipped to the Americas for the Canadian, United States and Mexican GPs. Following a difficult test at the rollercoaster Ste Jovite – “I would not have liked to drive the March there” – it clicked in qualifying and Stewart took pole. He would be leading comfortably when another stub axle broke after 31 laps.

He qualified second at Watkins Glen and led for 82 laps, at which point 001 was sidelined by an oil leak. He qualified on the front row at Mexico City, too, only to retire from a chaotic race when he hit a stray dog at 160mph.

Though some frustration remained – 001 never would win a race – he was content now that he and ‘Uncle Ken’ would continue to make history rather than be history: “He and I had recognised that we had a unique relationship and 001 allowed us to stay together and build on what we had already achieved. That makes it a very important car for me.” ❁



Supersonic rally supercar

Rallying's most outrageous period was about to end, but that didn't stop Autosport taking a look at Lancia's latest creation in the 18-25 December 1986 issue

KEITH OSWIN

Photography MCKLEIN



Rallying's equivalent of *Star Wars* was unveiled in Bologna when Lancia's Group S project made an unexpected appearance during the Memorial Bettega event. The totally carbonfibre machine (from wheelrims to roof) has already been tested in secret and the Turin engineers were greatly impressed with their latest creation.

Twin turbochargers provide 600bhp and a completely new engine has been designed to replace the supercharged/turbocharged unit in the now defunct Group B Delta S4. Officially, Group S is no more, dropped after the May tragedies [that took the lives of Henri Toivonen and Sergio Cresto on the Tour of Corsica], but while some parties reflect on what might have been had the existing category been allowed to continue, others give knowing looks as they cover the supercar once more. Maybe there is a future after all...

There can be little doubt that the new Lancia would have been stunning. It is one of those cars that looks like a winner, even if it is standing still. Officially, it is designated as Fiat Experimental Composite Vehicle (ECV), but it is no secret that it is the Group S project from Turin.

Designed, as was the Delta S4 and the new Group A Delta Turbo, by Claudio Lombardi, the car is a radical change from the challengers that it would have replaced. Composite materials (Kevlar and carbonfibre) have been used extensively to strengthen and lighten the car. The wheelrims and driveshafts are now also made of the new materials and the weight saving has been considerable. Only the regulations for rallying would have pegged the weight at 930kg, but the new components represent a saving of up to 40% in some areas.

The car's overall dimensions are largely the same as the Delta S4, but the main difference in performance will be measured in an increase of 150bhp and a further 15mkg of torque for the same revolutions per minute. And these are taken from the official starting figures, already well below the current figures being attained by the rally car...

The body comprises a carbonfibre monocoque with Kevlar formed into a honeycomb structure. This entire tub is similar to that of the Ford RS200 and should be much stronger than that of the Delta S4. The monocoque is now an integral part of the load-bearing structure of the car, designed by the latest CAD/CAM techniques.

Even the wheels are made of the latest materials. Speedline has manufactured the rims in a special project with Abarth, Enichem and IdC, aimed at producing a rim that would withstand the demands of gravel rallying and also be much lighter than the ubiquitous magnesium rims. The finished article is now 40% lighter than those in current use, and apparently more than capable of withstanding the stresses imposed by the power output. The rims are made of carbon fabric impregnated with epoxy resin, with an aluminium honeycomb for the flange. In order to cope with the high temperatures developed by the ventilated Brembo disc brakes, an adhesive film has been used while the edges of the rims have been strengthened with a secret component. The total weight of an 8in x 16in gravel rim is a mere 6kg.

In total, the new car's structure is 20% lighter than the S4's and this saving could be doubled with further development.

To power the car, Fiat has patented a brand new cylinder head. As a twin-turbocharged engine was being used, Fiat had to revise the layout of the cylinder head to improve the suitability for the set-up. Normally, the inlet valves are on one side of the layout, exhaust valves on the other, but this makes a twin-turbo engine difficult to produce. On the new unit, the four valves of each cylinder are laid out in a cross pattern, with the inlet and exhaust valves alternated on each side of the cylinder head. An exhaust manifold can therefore be placed on each side of the engine with the inlet manifolds entering from the centre, either independently or combined into one. The system is known as the double reverse flow and, as the intakes combine into one near the new valve, leaving just three gas flows for each cylinder, the head has been christened the Triflux.

The system produces improved heat distribution in the cylinder >>



head to even out the expansions that take place on a turbo unit, also helping to improve engine cooling. It is now possible to link a single central wastegate valve to the two exhaust manifolds and, if the latest variable geometry turbochargers are utilised, the wastegate can be eliminated altogether. The air that leaves the turbochargers is injected into the radiators or intercoolers before being passed on to the induction manifold and thence back into the cycle, while the compactness of the engine allowed the engineers much more freedom to plan the exhaust system to eliminate resonance problems encountered in more crowded systems.

The twin KKK turbochargers can be linked in a modular turbocharging unit, with a single turbo being used at lower revs to build up power and then, when the revolutions are right, the second turbo comes into play to take the power even higher. With such a unit, high torque is produced at low revs with no loss of maximum power and greatly reduced turbo lag. It is the logical step forward from the present system of twin power provisions employed by the S4 engine, where the supercharger deals with the low revs, the turbo producing the top-end performance.

“I hope that we can maybe use the car one day,” said Lombardi in Bologna. “It is already tested and is *bene, bene*. Perhaps Group S will return in three or four years but, whatever happens, we have improved our knowledge of the technology and that can only be good for the future. It is always possible to learn new things that can help.”

2020 VISION

The extreme Group S, for which Audi was another manufacturer to develop a prototype, never did return and the World Rally Championship switched to the more production-based Group A regulations for 1987. But that did Lancia no harm, the Italian marque dominating the season and Juha Kankkunen taking the drivers' title in his Delta HF 4WD.

It wasn't long before the Group B stage times were surpassed as chassis and handling developments rapidly moved things on. ❧



Kankkunen winning 1987 RAC Rally in Delta HF 4WD. The Finn took the title that year ahead of team-mate Alen



Aken in Delta S4 in 1986 Sanremo Rally. Aken won but the results were annulled after scrutineering irregularities

Lombardi designed Group S car, as well as Group B Delta S4 and Group A Delta Turbo



LANCIA GROUP S TECH SPEC

ENGINE

Centrally mounted, longitudinal with four cylinders, in line, 1795cc. Bore and stroke, 88.5mm x 71.55mm. 'Triflux' double reverse cylinder head with four valves/cylinder and twin overhead camshafts. Compression ratio 7.5:1. 600bhp @8000rpm. 55mkg @5000rpm. Twin KKK (K26 type) superchargers with individual intercoolers. Weber/Magneti Marelli injection/ignition with electronically controlled turbocharging level. Dry sump lubrication with pressure and extraction pumps and air/oil radiators.

TRANSMISSION

Four-wheel drive. Epicyclic train torque converter with viscous coupling and ZF differentials front and rear. Carbonfibre/Kevlar driveshafts. Provision for locking the central torque distribution (30/70, front/rear). Twin-plate clutch with metal-ceramic friction gaskets. Five-speed gearbox longitudinally mounted at rear.

BODYWORK

Load-bearing structure made of carbonfibre honeycomb with steel tube screen front structure. Bodywork mostly made of carbon and Kevlar resins, impregnated with epoxy resins.

SUSPENSION

Independent struts, coil springs and anti-roll bars front and rear. Co-axial Bilstein dampers at front, double acting Bilstein dampers at rear.

BRAKES

Front Ventilated discs with twin calipers and two 300mm diameter Brembo cylinders.
Rear Ventilated discs with single calipers and four 300mm diameter Brembo cylinders. Brakes operated through twin hydraulic pumps in parallel with manual adjustment.

STEERING

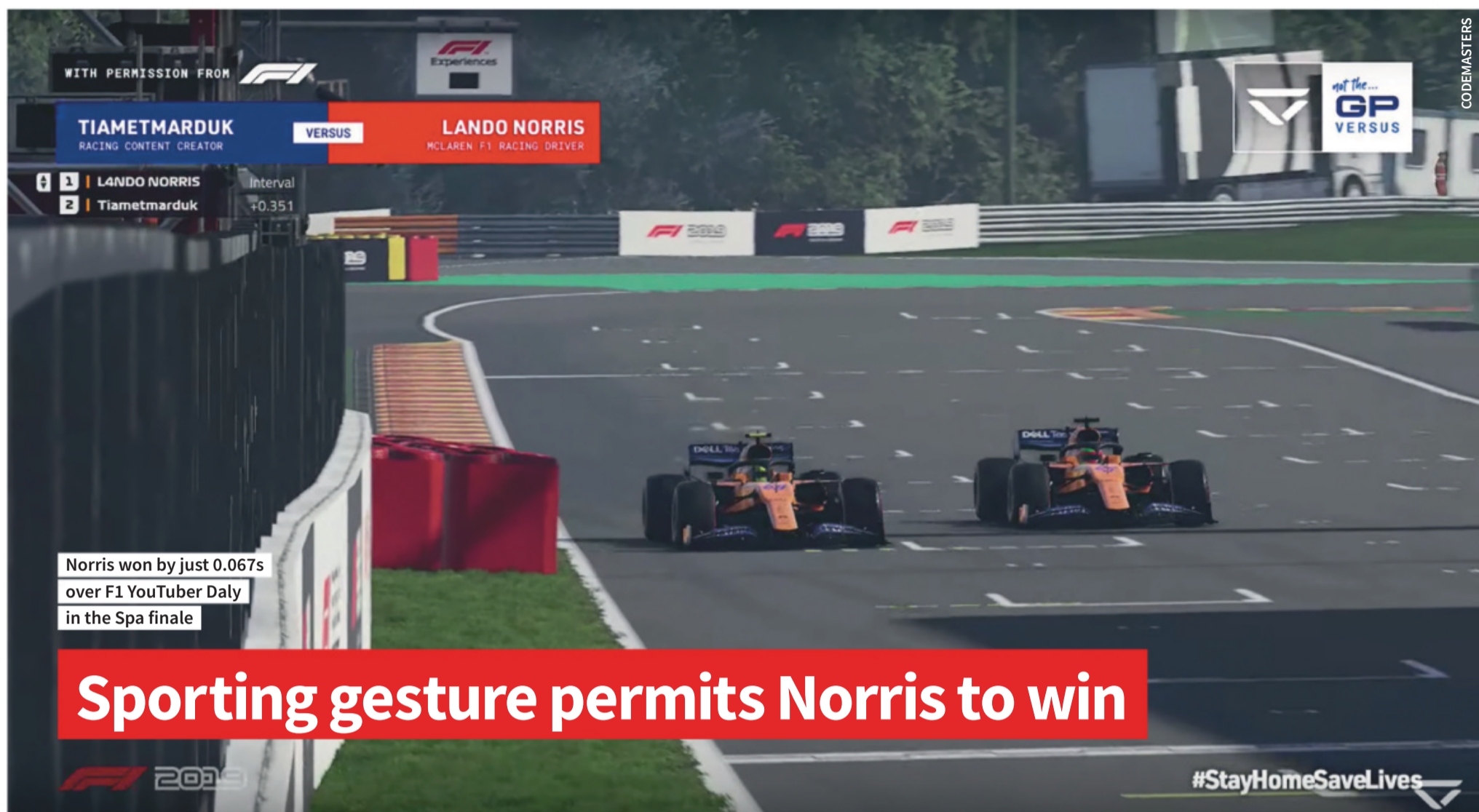
TRW rack and pinion with power assistance.

WHEELS

Composite material, Speedline 9in x 16in rims at front with light alloy 11in x 16in at rear. Pirelli tyres, 230/660-16 (front) and 290/660-16 (rear).

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase 2440mm
Track F/R 1500mm/1520mm
Length 4003mm
Width 1880mm
Height 1500mm
Weight 930kg (Group B)
Fuel capacity 25 litres



VELOCE ESPORTS
VARIOUS VENUES
5 APRIL
ROUND 2

McLaren Formula 1 star Lando Norris was victorious in the latest round of the Veloce Esports #NotTheGP series, organised in partnership with Motorsport Games. The 16 drivers – who ranged from Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois to 2020 F1 pilots Norris and Nicholas Latifi – went head-to-head in a one-lap knockout.

Norris's first scalp was his old flatmate, Super Formula driver Sacha Fenestraz, who he barged down the inside of in the final braking zone at the virtual Interlagos circuit. Fenestraz was sent spinning onto the grass, while Norris advanced to a quarter-final showdown at Monza with Will 'WillNE' Lenney, who boasts well over 3million subscribers on YouTube.

Lenney shocked W Series champion and debutant Jamie Chadwick in the first-round race, leaving Norris to pull a bold move on the YouTuber into Ascari to eliminate him.

This left Norris to face off against ex-F1 driver Esteban Gutierrez. The semi-finals and final were decided over three one-lap races. Their third race ended in a huge collision at Suzuka's final chicane after Gutierrez misjudged a defensive move.

The stewards disqualified the Mexican, and Norris progressed to the final to face YouTuber Benjamin 'Tiametmarduk' Daly – who had eliminated Latifi, racing driver and YouTuber Archie Hamilton and FIA Formula 3 driver David Schumacher, nephew of seven-time F1 champion Michael.

In the first of three final races at Spa, Daly slipstreamed past Norris down the Kemmel Straight to take the early advantage. They battled side-by-side for the majority of the contest before Norris spun out on the exit

of Stavelot, allowing Daly to win.

The duo came to blows in the second bout at the Bus Stop chicane, with Norris spinning again, albeit this time after contact. Daly made the sporting decision to allow Norris to take the chequered flag first, ensuring the event went down to an all-or-nothing final one-lap shootout.

Daly repeated his race one blitz down the Kemmel Straight to pass Norris. But he had the Briton in his virtual mirrors for most of the lap, before Norris was able to pull off a stunning overtake around the outside of Blanchimont.

It was enough for avid sim racer Norris to have the inside line for the Bus Stop and win the race and the tournament. It marked his second victory in successive weekends, after already dominating the first round of the Veloce Pro Series on *iRacing*.

Norris said: "It was a good race, especially race one. We were side-by-side for virtually the whole lap until I was in the wall."

Norris applauded Daly for his sporting conduct in letting him take the race two victory. "If that didn't happen, he would have been a fair winner," he added. "I'm not going to take all the glory, but [I'm] just looking forward to the next one."

Golfer Ian Poulter made his second appearance in the series, losing to another popular F1 YouTuber Aarav 'Aarava' Admin in the first round. Latifi eliminated Admin in their quarter-final after beating Formula 2 veteran Artem Markelov in the last 16.

The second round of the Veloce Pro Series will take place this weekend, with the #NotTheGP series returning the week after.

JOSH SUTTILL



Leclerc crushes opposition on Esports debut

VIRTUAL GRAND PRIX
ALBERT PARK (AUS)
5 APRIL
ROUND 2

Ferrari Formula 1 driver Charles Leclerc needed just eight days' worth of practice to annihilate the Virtual Grand Prix field and score victory on his debut competitive Esports outing.

F1's first Virtual GP a fortnight ago verged on farcical as just two drivers from the current F1 grid took part in a race riddled with crashes. Fortunately, the Virtual Vietnam GP (at Australia's Albert Park) proved to be leagues ahead in quality, with six 2020 F1 drivers participating as well as 2009 champion Jenson Button. The driving standards were far better too, as three-time grand prix winner Johnny Herbert this time chose to brake for Turn 1.

It was Leclerc who led the field away from pole position after Renault junior Christian Lundgaard was demoted five places from first on the grid after a collision in qualifying. Leclerc led every single tour of the 29-lap race and eventually won, 14 seconds clear of Formula 2 driver Lundgaard.

Another sim racing novice, Williams F1 pilot George Russell completed the podium ahead of Charles's younger brother Arthur and Alfa Romeo's Antonio Giovinazzi.

Mercedes Formula E driver Stoffel Vandoorne, who finished second in the



Leclerc inherited pole but dominated the race from lights to flag

MOTORSPORT IMAGES/MAJGER

inaugural Virtual GP, picked up sixth place ahead of Haas F1 reserve Louis Deletraz.

Red Bull's Alexander Albon rose from fifth on the grid to third on the opening lap, but then a spin on the exit of the high-speed Turn 11/12 complex dropped him down to 15th place. Albon recovered well to finish in an eventual eighth ahead of popular streamer Jimmy Broadbent and his former F2 team-mate and Williams F1 recruit Nicholas Latifi.

Button was the first driver to miss out on a place in the top 10, while current McLaren driver Lando Norris and ex-F1 driver Esteban Gutierrez couldn't even take the start due to hardware issues. Cricketer Ben Stokes finished in 18th, on his sim racing debut, behind Herbert.

JOSH SUTTILL



Leclerc led Williams driver Russell into Turn 1 in Melbourne

CODEMASTERS

IN THE HEADLINES

VERSTAPPEN TOPS THE PROS

Max Verstappen won Team Redline's inaugural Real Racers Never Quit series, claiming six of the 12 races. It featured a two-week schedule and over 40 professional drivers, including guest runs from 2009 F1 champion Jenson Button and two-time Indy500 winner Juan Pablo Montoya. Lando Norris finished third behind Audi's Kelvin van der Linde.

McLAUGHLIN WINS INDYCAR

Two-time Australian Supercars champion Scott McLaughlin earned his first IndyCar spoils in the second iRacing Challenge race at Barber Motorsports Park. McLaughlin was due to make his real-life IndyCar debut at May's Indianapolis Grand Prix. He woke up at 0200 in New Zealand and took the win after Watkins Glen victor Sage Karam collided with Felix Rosenqvist.

RED BULL ACES F1 GAMERS

Red Bull's Frederik Rasmussen dominated the first F1 Esports Exhibition Race for the top virtual drivers, ahead of reigning champion, David Tonizza (Ferrari). Floris Wijers picked up Haas's maiden podium in the virtual world in third, ahead of Nicolas Longuet on his debut for Renault. Two-time champion Brendon Leigh retired on the first lap after contact with Enzo Bonitto.

CHOAS REIGNS IN NASCAR

William Byron emerged victorious in a chaotic third NASCAR Pro Invitational Series race at Bristol Motor Speedway. There were five caution periods in the first 50 laps and then the first proper green flag running only lasted 20 laps. There were so many incidents that the stewards were forced to replace the double-file restarts with a single-file formation.

WRX CHAMP TO RETURN

Double World Rallycross champion Johan Kristoffersson's real-life return to the series might have been postponed, but he has now signed up to race in the World RX Esports Invitational, which will run on the *Dirt Rally 2.0* videogame, on 19 April. He will be joined by a host of rallycross stars such as Kevin Hansen and former Hyundai World Rally driver Kevin Abbring.

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Davidson is gunning for a second title, but will have to beat former co-driver Adam to do it



THE KEY QUESTIONS FACING BRITISH GT THIS YEAR

It was due to get under way this weekend, but the COVID-19 pandemic means several questions will remain unanswered for a while longer

JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



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ake no mistake, the 2020 British GT Championship season has all the ingredients for a classic. With 19 confirmed GT3 entries – the highest since 2014 – the competition to score points will be more intense than ever.

That's significant in a championship that is often decided by fine margins – eight points in 2018 and just 2.5 last year. With GT3 grids rarely troubling double figures last year, drivers could usually score even if things went awry. But there will be no such

luxury this time, and several crews will face the prospect of finishing outside the top 10 if they are adversely impacted by success penalties or caught up in incidents.

That, and a slightly different construction from tyre supplier Pirelli, which the teams will all have to learn, points towards the championship battle being wide open, although there are some more immediate issues...

WHEN WILL IT START?

Perhaps the biggest question hanging over British GT remains one that its organiser, the Stephane Ratel Organisation, is unable to answer. Following the decision of Motorsport UK to suspend all sanctioned events until July, the first four rounds at Oulton Park, Snetterton, Silverstone and Donington Park have all fallen by the wayside, with the season now set to commence at Spa on 18-19 July.

As if that wasn't enough, the rescheduled Le Mans 24 Hours now clashes with British GT's season finale at Donington on 19-20 September, which could pose a problem for sourcing marshals and those looking to participate in both. That includes reigning GT3 and GT4 champion squad TF Sport, its lead driver (four-time series champion Jonny Adam), and fellow Aston Martin works pilot Ross Gunn (Beechdean AMR).

SRO has told Autosport that it is still too early to outline its plans for rescheduling events, with several options on the table including combining British GT and its flagship series, the GT World Challenge Europe – as happened in 2005 at Magny-Cours between BGT and FIA GT – to avoid clashes.

Regardless of how many rounds are staged, the disruption means the season will indelibly have an asterisk against it – but that's not to say there won't still be plenty of action once racing resumes. >>



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CAN ADAM DO IT AGAIN?

In an alternative universe where coronavirus hasn't thrown the calendar into disarray, Adam will never have a better chance to win a fifth British GT title as he will in 2020. The equal of anybody in an all-out scrap for victory, he has a knack for coaxing the best out of his co-drivers, and his four crowns have each been taken with a different partner. Those skills have been honed by his years spent driver-coaching in his earlier days during his rise up the TOCA ladder, and have made the Aston factory ace the ultimate weapon for his employers to deploy alongside customers, as the bulging trophy cabinets of Andrew Howard, Derek Johnston, Flick Haigh and Graham Davidson will attest.

Adam's pre-existing relationship with 2020 co-driver Ahmad Al Harthy will come in handy too. While he had to start from square one with Haigh and Davidson in the past two pre-seasons, Adam can hit the ground running with Al Harthy, having first teamed up with the Omani in 2015 and combined with him to win the Blancpain Endurance Pro-Am title in 2017. TF Sport boss Tom Ferrier believes it will count in their favour. "They've known each other for years and they get on very well," says Ferrier. "But Ahmad hasn't got the biggest test programme, so we need to hit the ground running. They don't have time for niceties."

Al Harthy, 38, hasn't contested the British championship since 2015, but he and Michael Caine ran the potent Marco Attard/Alexander Sims combination all the way in 2014 and, after sealing a second Blancpain Pro-Am title last year, he will expect to be up there with the benchmark amateurs – not least reigning champion team-mate Davidson.

On his switch from the single-car Jetstream squad to TF last year, 2017 GT Cup champion Davidson truly came into his own and, after a tricky start learning the characteristics of the new Vantage, showed the field a clean pair of heels at Donington and Brands Hatch. When the pressure was on at the final round, he stepped up to the plate to complete his improbable comeback, having been a whopping 54 points adrift after five of the nine races. Davidson concedes that "any man that bets against Jonny Adam is a fool", but has every chance of doubling up with GT4 champion Tom Canning alongside him, forming a tantalising pairing that Ferrier expects to push Adam and Al Harthy all the way.



Four-time champ Adam renews partnership with Al Harthy in search of title number five

“It’s going to be great for him to measure himself against Jonny, who is obviously hungry to get number five,” says Ferrier. “We’re going to try to make it a non-pressured environment for [Canning], but he’s fully aware he’s with the big boys now.

“Likewise for Ahmad, he’s very motivated to come and tick off the box that he’s not yet completed, but he’s under no illusion that it’s going to be easy. He’s probably slightly more wary about it than Blancpain in some ways.”

WILL A McLAREN BE THE CAR TO HAVE?

Rob Bell and Shaun Balfe were the form pairing at the end of 2019 in the sole McLaren 720S, and ended the season with a victory at Donington that left them just five points short of the title – a remarkable feat given electrical problems with their brand-new car meant they didn’t turn a lap in the two races at the Oulton Park opening round.

Although Balfe Motorsport is no longer the only McLaren GT3 team – it’s joined by two cars from 2 Seas Motorsport and Optimum Motorsport’s Australian pair Nick Foster and Martin Berry – the knowledge it gained last year cannot be unlearned, and factory driver Bell is optimistic that the delay to the start of the new season won’t hamper the squad’s momentum once the new campaign eventually starts.

“We didn’t have a foundation last year, literally everything was new, and at least we’re now going back to tracks where we’ve got a set-up sheet, so we’re in a more knowledgeable place starting off,” he says. “What it does is it just builds a foundation – and that’s knowing that we can do it.

“Last year was exactly what I thought it would be. We started off with a few niggles, but that always happens with a new car. It came together nicely. Towards the end we were strong and on the back of that we’ve got a few more 720s out there. I’m pleased with where we are.”

Balfe Motorsport also claimed the nebulous prize for topping the times at the Snetterton media day last month, although several perennial challengers were absent – chief among them Barwell Motorsport’s Lamborghini Huracans. >>

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Balfe and Bell were the in-form pair in the latter half of 2019 in 720S GT3



Returnee Kibble will lead TF's GT4 assault

CAN ANYBODY ELSE CRASH THE PARTY?

TF and Balfe can expect a strong challenge once again from Barwell's Phil Keen and Adam Balon. They built a commanding early lead last season after sweeping both races in the second round at Snetterton, only for their title hopes to crumble when Balon was penalised for tangling with team-mate Sam de Haan at Silverstone, crashed at Spa and then sustained damage at Donington that broke the suspension. Now in his second season of GT3, if Balon can iron out the mistakes then Keen's long wait for a title could finally come to an end.

There's also a strong second Barwell line-up, with British Touring Car Championship race winner Rob Collard joining series returnee Sandy Mitchell in a Silver-Silver effort (see page 65).

TF's Astons are joined by two Vantages from Beechdean AMR, with team patron and two-time champion Howard making a late U-turn on his decision not to contest the series with Gunn alongside him. The second car, an all-Silver entry, is shared by 2018 GT4 champion Jack Mitchell and Valentin Hasse-Clot.

Meanwhile, Mercedes factory driver and 2018 Blancpain Endurance champion Yelmer Buurman returns to the championship after a year away alongside Ian Loggie in a brand-new RAM Racing Mercedes. Another crew up there will be Michael Igoe and works Lamborghini ace Franck Perera in the WPI Motorsport Huracan.

IS THIS THE YEAR FOR SILVER?

GT3 has traditionally been the domain of Pro-Am pairings and numerically they retain the advantage this term, their number bolstered by graduating GT4 Pro-Am champions Scott Malvern/Nick Jones and Martin Plowman/Kelvin Fletcher in Bentleys entered by Team Parker Racing and JRM respectively. But the number of all-Silver-graded pairings contesting the championship has slowly risen over recent seasons, and last year Optimum's Ollie Wilkinson and Bradley Ellis won at Spa, while Parker's Ryan Ratcliffe and Glynn Geddie could have won at Oulton and Snetterton, without a crash and a slow pitstop respectively. Neither pairing is back this year but, with five Silver cars entered, there will be more teams that can pick up the pieces if any drop the ball.

In addition to the all-Silver Barwell and Beechdean cars, the new 2 Seas squad is entering two McLarens, with quick GT4

graduates Dean Macdonald and Angus Fender sure to be at the sharp end in its lead effort, while Bahraini Isa Al Khalifa will share with an unannounced second driver likely to come from within McLaren's stable.

Another Silver entry not to be discounted comes from RAM, which has paired 2019 runner-up de Haan with Finnish ex-GP3 racer Patrick Kujala in its lurid pink machine. No longer a derogated Bronze, de Haan will have a huge test to show he can cut it against the Pro drivers, but he's optimistic that the Mercedes – famously kind on its tyres – will prove more adept at carrying the weight than the mid-engined Huracan he has raced for the past two seasons. They will be a dark horse.

All-Silver crews will as usual be subject to ballast, unlike the Pro-Am teams, although Autosport understands that the 30kg they carried last year will not uniformly apply to each pairing in 2020 and could be changeable round by round.

WILL THINNER GT4 FIELD LOSE ITS APPEAL?

From regularly grids in the low twenties in 2019, the GT4 class has been thinned out to 16 full-season entries to accommodate the expanded GT3 pack, but it's to SRO's credit that the quality of those teams has been maintained, with BTCC squad Speedworks Motorsport bolstering the field with its new Toyota Supra.

There are new faces aplenty on the driving front, including a wholly new McLaren Driver Development Programme roster – which leaves no space for last year's quick but perennially unlucky pairing of Josh Smith and James Dorlin. Champions Canning and Ash Hand have also moved on, and Multimatic's decision to step back from fielding a works team, with Academy Motorsport taking over the running of its Mustangs, means that last year's runners-up Scott Maxwell and Seb Priaux have both headed to IMSA GT4.

All of that makes it tricky to pick out a favourite, and continued uncertainty over Steller Motorsport's plans with its Audi R8 (which won twice last year in the hands of Sennan Fielding and Richard Williams), as well as unconfirmed line-ups at 2017 champion HHC Motorsport and 2018 title winner Century Motorsport, could present opportunities for new names to stake a claim.

Chief among them is 17-year-old Patrick Kibble, back for a second year in a TF Sport Aston. He made good progress in his first campaign out of Ginetta Junior alongside BTCC refugee Josh Price and was unlucky not to win at Silverstone. With fellow second-year driver Connor O'Brien alongside, Kibble is well-placed to lead TF's title defence, while 2017 British F4 champion Jamie Caroline joins Porsche Carrera Cup racer Dan Vaughan in a strong sister car.

In their second year together in the Balfe Motorsport McLaren 570S, Michael O'Brien and 2016 GT4 champion Graham Johnson will surely be the benchmark Pro-Am pair and will fancy their chances of overall success too. Whatever comes of the 2020 season, it certainly won't be dull. 🏁



De Haan switches to Mercedes after near-miss in 2019 with Lambo

➔ P65 OPINION

UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Minor modifications to the cars could have a major impact on the outcome of the 2020 BRDC British Formula 3 Championship

STEFAN MACKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



motorsport
IMAGES



There is one driver who enters this year's BRDC British Formula 3 Championship as the clear favourite. Kiern Jewiss was fourth in the standings last season and is the highest-placed driver continuing in the category in 2020. The 2018 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist, who will remain with Douglas Motorsport, also 'won' the second half of the 2019 season by accumulating the most points of any driver, including a victory at Brands Hatch.

But, although Jewiss may be favourite on paper, nothing is guaranteed – not even when the season will begin. As with all motorsport, British F3 has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and, instead of the season starting at Oulton Park this weekend, the first four events have now been postponed. As it stands, the campaign

won't get under way until Spa in mid-July.

Regardless of when the season does finally commence, 2018 British F4 champion Jewiss has got something else to think about this year – the 17-year-old has admitted to struggling to get on top of modifications made to the British F3 car for 2020.

Although it's fundamentally the same Tatuus chassis as used in previous seasons, new front and rear wings have been added, which will provide greater set-up variation, while the addition of bargeboards and engine cover – housing a brand new two-litre, 230bhp bespoke Mountune engine – will subtly alter the aerodynamic performance of the cars. All of which has been enough to cause a few headaches for Jewiss (above) in pre-season testing.

"The new aero upgrades have thrown a spanner in the works compared to last year," he says. "I got really settled last year, got the car in a place we liked it, but then we've basically started all over again this year. We've got plenty of work to do to get the most out >>>

of the car at the moment. We'll see what we can do, keep chipping away at it until the first race, but I've got a lot of confidence after a good second half of last year.

"Having a year under my belt in British F3 will help me in some areas, but a lot has changed since last year, a lot of the experience you did learn is under a question mark for this year after the changes to the car, so we'll just have to play it by ear. For newcomers to the championship it's the best year to come and join it, because everyone is starting fresh."

Louis Foster could well be the newcomer to make the most of the changes, as he graduates from British F4 with Double R Racing. The Woking-based squad has a proven track record in British F3, its drivers Matheus Leist and Linus Lundqvist winning the title in 2016 and 2018 respectively.

But in 2019 Double R recorded just a single victory in the category courtesy of Hampus Ericsson, while ex-Red Bull Junior Neil Verhagen finished highest of the team's drivers in the final standings in fifth place. For 2020, however, it won't have to split its attention and think about British F4 – two-time Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion Michael Meadows' sArgenti Motorsport operation has taken over that team, which means more focus will be placed on its British F3 and Euroformula Open programmes.

Foster's maiden British F4 campaign yielded third overall and he is confident that the quicker, more aero-dependent F3 car will suit his driving style, but has downplayed how much the new modifications will aid his cause.

"It's not an advantage for me [the modifications] – I would say it's a disadvantage for the other drivers in their second year," he says. "It's not a huge difference, it's not night and day – yes, there is a disadvantage to them for having to learn a new car, or more aero, but it's not as big as you would think."

"I think the car suits my driving style compared to the F4 car. With that you had to be a bit more aggressive and throw it in a bit more, whereas I'm a bit more careful with my hands, I ease the car [into the corner], which works for a car with more downforce and aero such as the F3 car."



"FOR NEWCOMERS TO THE SERIES IT'S THE BEST YEAR TO COME AND JOIN IT, EVERYONE IS STARTING FRESH"

Johnathan Hoggard, runner-up in last year's British F3 standings, professed the same driving-style differences prior to his campaign – one in which he took seven wins. While there's no guarantee that Foster can replicate that sort of performance, the 16-year-old is setting his goals high. "I think we'll have done a good job to be top three – I'll be disappointed if we are not top three and my aim is to win it," adds Foster. "I think we've got the resources behind it. Double R are really focusing on F3 this year since we dropped F4 so I think we're in with a really good chance of winning it."

Foster will be joined at Double R by fellow British F4 graduate Sebastian Alvarez, who was runner-up in the junior category last year, while Benjamin Pedersen moves across from Douglas after claiming one reversed-grid win last season.

Another team with a proven track record in the series is Carlin,





which secured the 2017 and 2019 titles with Enaam Ahmed and Clement Novalak respectively. That means that Kaylen Frederick is in the right place to mount a title challenge as he remains with the squad for a second season. The 17-year-old American finished 2019 down in ninth spot in the standings, 200 points adrift of his title-winning team-mate. But there were flashes of speed, such as taking pole position on his championship debut at Oulton Park and securing wins at Oulton and Spa.

Unlike Novalak, though, there were also retirements – four in total – and consistency is an area that Frederick hopes to improve upon in 2020. “It was my first year over here last year and I was just playing a bit of catch-up [on other drivers], to be honest, and even though I did get some good results they weren’t always consistently good results,” he says. “So this year

I wanted to come back and solidify a good position in the championship, because even though I got wins and podiums last year I still didn’t finish well in the championship because I just made too many mistakes.

“I know I had the speed last year because I could qualify on pole. Maybe not taking those risks that would put me out of the race to gain a position, and really just finishing consistently in the top 10, just getting as many points as I can [is the goal].”

Frederick admits that there will need to be more maturity from himself in the coming season, which has already begun with him relocating to the UK.

“The biggest thing was last year I was flying back and forth for every race and now I’ve gotten a place over here so I can prep more,” he adds. “I can do my sim when I have to – it won’t be a rush or weeks before, it will be scheduled for when I need it perfectly in time for each event. You treat it more like a job instead of just a thing you fly over for, so now that I’m stationed here by myself it’s more of a job and I’m ready to put more focus towards it.”

Elsewhere on the grid, Lanar Racing is set to field a trio of cars, with Josh Mason contesting a third season in the championship. Joining him will be Australian Bart Horsten, who finished fifth in the British F4 standings last year, as well as Piers Prior.

Prior could be a dark horse as he has shown himself to possess speed in a variety of categories, most recently taking a win in the F1000 Championship last year, but a lack of budget has prevented the Brit from making the step up to British F3 until now. Whatever happens, it’s a big step forward for Lanar, which carried Jake Hughes and George Russell to titles in British F3’s forerunner – the BRDC Formula 4 Championship.

Two other Brits are set to be on the grid in 2020 – Josh Skelton at Chris Dittmann Racing and Oliver Clarke at Hillspeed. Skelton was a race winner in British F4 last season, while Clarke moves across from a part-time campaign in US F4.

Belgian Ulysse de Pauw remains alongside Jewiss at Douglas and is likely to be a threat. They are joined at the team by Jordanian karter Manaf Hijjawi. Argentinian Nicolas Varrone joins CDR from Hillspeed, with which he took one win in British F3 last year.

As ever, there are sure to be plenty of twists and turns in the 2020 BRDC British F3 Championship, regardless of when the season finally gets under way. 🏁



Foster is aiming to be on the pace straight away as he steps up to F3

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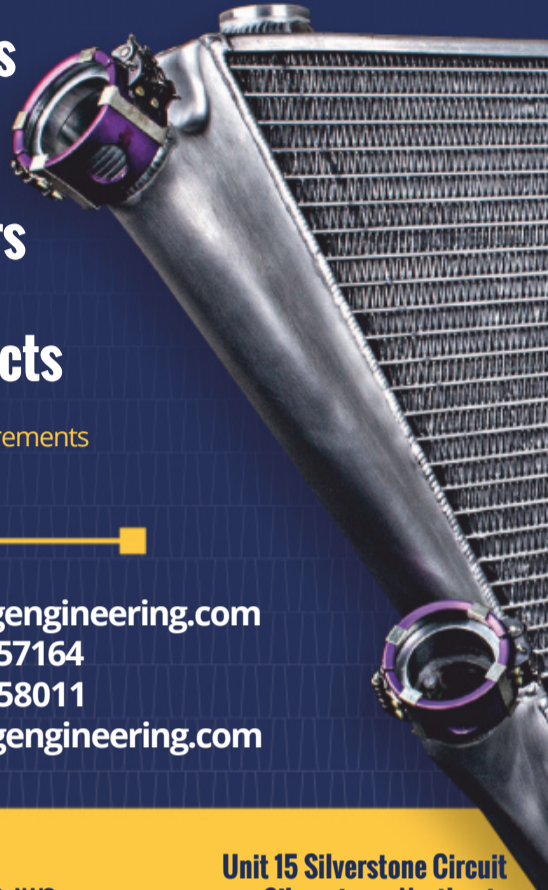
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HSCC has said it could share events with Masters and HVM when racing resumes

HSCC to collaborate with fellow organisers on new 2020 calendar

HISTORICS

Three leading organisers of historic racing in Europe have pledged to work together in rescheduling postponed events over the later part of the 2020 season.

The Historic Sports Car Club, Masters Historic Racing and French-based HVM Racing have announced that they will collaborate to help ensure the best deal for historic racers once the season starts.

Cooperation on rescheduled dates,

shared race meetings and guest races at each other's events are all options that are currently being discussed. The aim will be to create viable race meetings that offer as many racers as possible the chance to compete at leading venues this year.

When approval for racing to resume is given, the later months of 2020 could be very crowded as promoters try to reschedule events postponed from earlier in the year into an already-busy calendar.

Andy Dee-Crowne of the HSCC said:

"This is good for the sport and makes good business sense, and I'd like to thank Ron Maydon at Masters and Laurent Vallery-Masson at HVM for joining us in this process.

"No one can yet be sure when racing will be allowed to restart and we can't yet predict what grid sizes will be like. While there will clearly be pent-up demand to go racing, we also recognise that some competitors will be focused on business recovery after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to make sure that we can all accommodate those who want to go racing again."

It is possible that racing in France could restart earlier than in the UK and HVM's dates at major French tracks, subject to travel restrictions, may be attractive to some UK-organised categories. At present, no Motorsport UK-sanctioned event can take place in this country until the end of June at the earliest.

As an example of what could be done, the HSCC and Masters have each had to postpone two-day meetings at Donington Park scheduled for June. Given the likely calendar pressures of reorganising later dates, a consolidated joint event over a longer weekend may be a viable alternative.

PAUL LAWRENCE



Both Masters (pictured) and HSCC were due to run events at Donington Park in June

CSCC still unlikely to race at Silverstone despite WEC absence

CLASSIC SPORTS CAR CLUB

The Classic Sports Car Club is unlikely to race at Silverstone this season, despite the revised World Endurance Championship calendar no longer featuring a British round in 2020.

Autosport reported last week that

the CSCC's 22-23 August meeting at the circuit had been cancelled by Silverstone in anticipation of the WEC race moving to that date. Circuit bosses were in talks with the WEC to bring forward the event so it could act as a precursor to the rescheduled Le Mans 24 Hours, but a final deal was not reached.

Silverstone has since been omitted entirely from the reissued WEC schedule, but that came too late to save the CSCC's fixture at the venue.

A statement from Silverstone read: "Silverstone was in discussion with the World Endurance Championship for a date change to the September event and, in anticipation of this event being moved to 22-23 August, had agreed with the Classic Sports Car Club that their race meeting would be rescheduled or cancelled.

"Sadly for the British WEC and club meeting fans, WEC decided to cancel the Silverstone round entirely, with the decision taken too late to reinstate the Classic Sports Car Club event."

The CSCC has kept the 22-23 August slot open for an event at "an as yet unknown venue".

In line with Motorsport UK's coronavirus stance, the CSCC has cancelled all UK events up to the end of June.

MATT KEW



OPINION



In these difficult times, a common-sense approach is more important than ever. That's

why it's very reassuring that three major historic racing organisers have decided to work together to ensure a well-thought-out resumption of motorsport activities whenever the coronavirus crisis finally passes.

Historic Sports Car Club chief Andy Dee-Crowne has previously talked of the congested historic calendar and the greater need for organisers to adapt to meet their competitors' requirements. That is exactly what he is doing by working together with Masters Historic Racing and French organiser HVM.

The financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic are clearly going to be significant, and we do not yet know what this will mean in terms of grid numbers in individual series. If there is a noticeable reduction, then the last thing motorsport needs is numerous events for the same cars taking place at the same time and therefore further restricting entries.

That's why this move from these three historic organisers is so important, particularly if events such as the Goodwood Members' Meeting are rearranged to fit into what is already traditionally a very busy period for historic racers in late summer and early autumn.

It's an approach that must be welcomed, and one we need to see across the club motorsport world. Ideas from the historic triumvirate such as shared meetings and guest races at other clubs' events should be easy to replicate elsewhere.

It's time for clubs to put their differences aside and work together to make sure that the sport we all care about can emerge from these dark days in the best possible way.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

NASCAR driver in Team BRIT talks

BRITCAR ENDURANCE

Former NASCAR Canada driver Armani Williams is in talks with Team BRIT about racing the squad's Aston Martin Vantage GT4 in the Britcar Endurance series this year.

Williams, 19, is the first driver formally diagnosed with autism to race in a NASCAR series and is aiming to join fellow autistic racer Bobby Trundle at the wheel of the Aston later this season.

Williams has made sporadic appearances in the regional Pro West and East NASCAR series along with rounds of the Canadian series.

"It all started because Dave Player [Team BRIT founder] reached out to me and told

me about the racing team he runs in the UK," said Williams (left). "They were telling me how they have a whole field of disabled racing drivers and he saw what I was doing here in the US in NASCAR and thought it would be great if I could join his team.

"What attracted me to it is this programme is involved in working to make a positive impact in autism awareness."

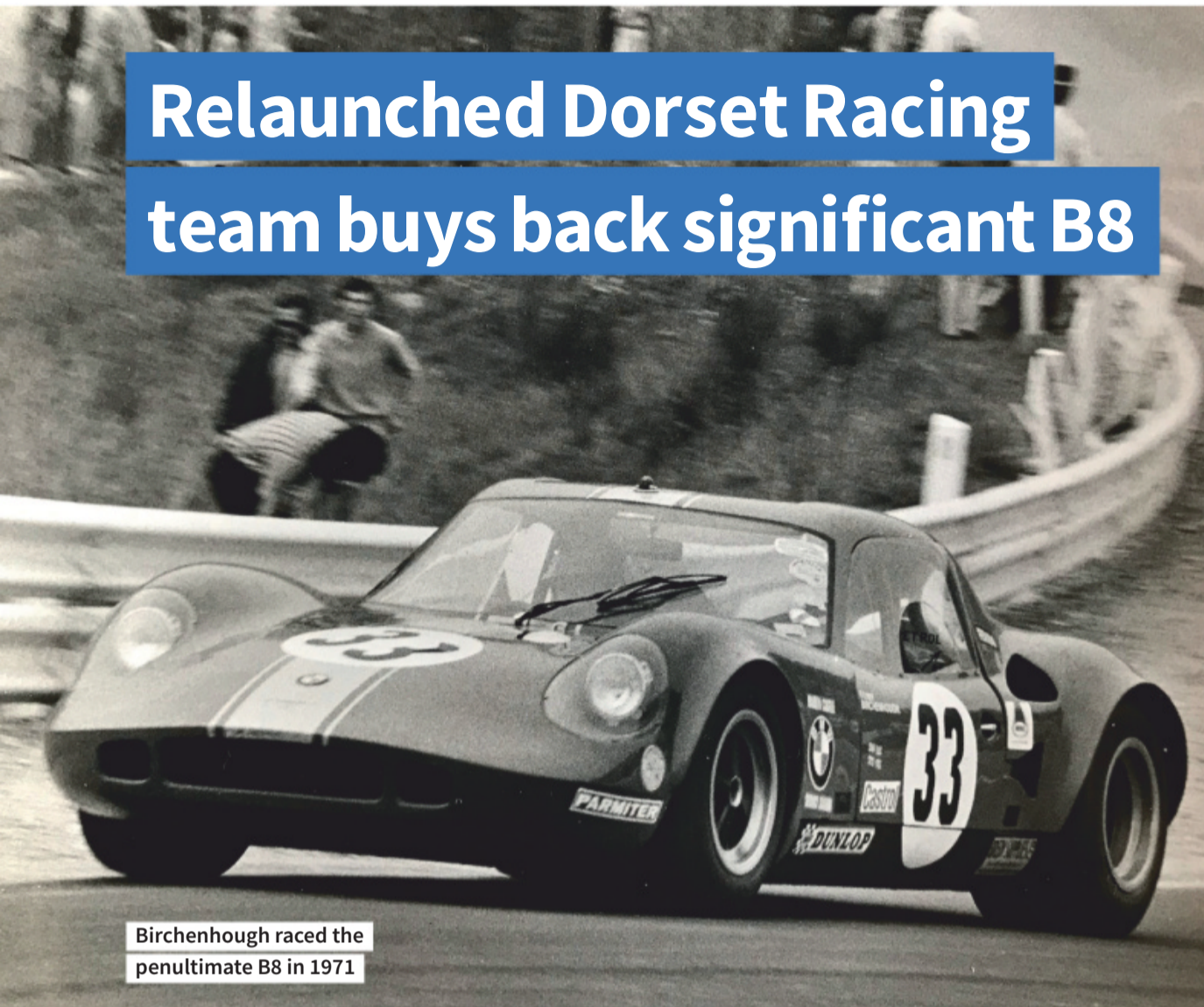
Williams admits he will have a lot to learn switching from a stock car to a sportscar, as well as racing on non-oval circuits.

"I have a sim and I'm taking advantage [of the coronavirus-induced break] to learn what I can about the car before I do in the real world," he added.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Relaunched Dorset Racing team buys back significant B8



Birchenhough raced the penultimate B8 in 1971

HISTORICS

Historic Mini Cooper S racer Ellie Birchenhough, daughter of Le Mans 24 Hours competitor Tony, has bought the Chevron B8 her late father raced in 1971.

The car will showcase the Dorset Racing team, which Birchenhough and her partner Jack Williamson relaunched last year.

Bought by Roger Heavens in 1969 and debuted in that September's Nurburgring 500Km, CH-DBE-87 was the penultimate

of 44 B8s. In 1970 Heavens and Mike Garton landed class wins in the Nurburgring 1000Km and Montlhery's Paris 1000Km.

Second owner Birchenhough added to its CV in 1971. He and Brian Joscelyne scored a class victory in the Spa 1000Km and second in the Nurburgring 1000Km. The ex-Guy Edwards Lola T212's arrival led to the B8 being sold to Scottish expat Billy Blackledge, who mopped up in Jamaican clubbies in 1972.

Although folklore suggested it was destroyed by fire, the car was stripped and sent to John Gunn's Florida raceshop where it languished until Harry Stevenson bought and reassembled it. He sold it to Charlie Hollis, who cherished it for 43 years before selling the car back to its birthplace in 2018.

"I was born in 1975, but I felt an emotional attachment to the B8," said Birchenhough Jr. "Among documents with the car, I found copies of letters from dad to Mr Hollis – one in March 2007, a month before his stroke – expressing interest in buying it back. I knew nothing about this, but having made the commitment it lifted a massive weight from my shoulders.

"It needs a total rebuild, but customer cars take priority. We'd love to see it back on track [in original red-and-yellow livery] in two years, but realistically I'm aiming to compete in the 2026 Le Mans Classic to celebrate 50 years since dad won the index of performance in the Lola T290/294 [HU22, with Joscelyne, Simon Phillips and Ian Bracey]."

MARCUS PYE

British trio to race at Nordschleife in BMW M240i

NURBURGRING ENDURANCE SERIES

A trio of British racers has joined up to compete in the Nurburgring Endurance Series this year with the Purple Dot/Walkenhorst Motorsport squad.

European GT4 class podium finisher Tom Wood, 2017 National Formula Ford 1600 champion Luke Williams and Ginetta GT5 Challenge frontrunner Josh Hislop will race the Purple Dot-backed BMW M240i in the series, which was formerly known as VLN.

Williams is the only one with previous experience of racing at the Nordschleife –

alongside competing in the British GT Championship last year, he made selected appearances in VLN with Purple Dot.

Purple Dot team boss Tim Sugden said the team will also run a second car featuring a predominantly American driver line-up, and believes the British trio can challenge at the front once the season begins.

"We're delighted to have signed three fantastic British drivers, and whenever we are able to be back on track we're confident we'll have a very competitive package," he said. "Tom, Josh and Luke have a huge amount of talent and I'm looking forward

to them mounting a strong challenge when the season eventually gets under way."

Wood, who was a frontrunner in Ginetta Junior prior to graduating to British GT in 2018, added: "I'm super-excited to join such a professional outfit as Purple Dot Walkenhorst, and I'm really looking forward to teaming up with Josh and Luke this year. To compete on the world's most demanding circuit doesn't intimidate me, but it goes without saying it does need to be respected."

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ALAN FOWLER 1940-2020

OBITUARY

East Londoner Alan Fowler, who died at the age of 80 on 24 March following a recurrence of cancer, was a successful builders' merchant who 'wheeled-and-dealed' in racing cars and created a short series of Mercury sports-racers.

With Dennis Pollard he founded D&A Shells in Stratford from premises adjacent to the mainstream business. It became a mecca for enthusiasts seeking cheap racing cars and parts to fuel their dreams.

The first Mercurys appeared around 1967 as GT shells that modernised 1962-63 Lotus 23/23Bs to run against the emerging Chevron GTs, Ginetta G12s and others. The lanky Fowler campaigned his metallic green example with verve.

Later square-tube Mercurys were open

cars. Fowler entered selected European 2-litre championship rounds in 1971-72, competing against rising stars. He won domestic BARC Castrol/*Motoring News* GT rounds at Thruxton and Brands Hatch in 1971 and was a regular podium finisher.

After a long layoff Fowler ambitiously bought the ex-Haas Racing Lola T530 HU1 Can-Am machine from John Foulston and raced it sparingly in Formule Libre through 1984, before selling it to Canada.

For 2007, Fowler's son Justin persuaded his father to re-commission a Mercury Mk3 he'd stored for 30-plus years. They had enormous fun sharing the 1600cc Cosworth FVA-engined car in sprints at Lydden and Cadwell Park. To Justin and Alan's wife Margaret, Autosport offers its sympathies on the loss of a true character.

MARCUS PYE



PAUL SIMMS 1945-2020

OBITUARY

The Historic Formula Ford fraternity was rocked to learn of Paul Simms's passing last Friday, taken too early at 74 by the coronavirus pandemic that has refocused the world.

A toolmaker who founded an injection-moulding business, Simms started racing in the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Pre-'74 FF1600 series around 1989, driving an unusual Jomo JMR7. It was part-exchanged against another rarity, a March 718, which made way for a Dulon MP15. A massive testing shunt in this on the exit of Cadwell Park's Charlie's Bend in 1994 shattered a knee, but not his spirit.

Simms later acquired a pair of matching Merlyn Mk20s, which he and son Benn built up and raced together. "I'll never forget the time at Snetterton when I was in the lead, he was racing too and we shared a pitboard," said Benn. "Dad saw my position and pulled into the pits to wave at me as I crossed the line!"

That was typical of Simms, a kind and generous soul with friendly demeanour and bushy white beard, who built engines for many and equally had words of encouragement for rivals.

On behalf of Paul's friends, Autosport extends condolences to his wife Carol, Benn, daughter Katy and grandchildren.

MARCUS PYE

IN THE HEADLINES

TEAM HARD'S BRITCAR 911

Former Ginetta Junior racer Harry Mailer will join up with Team Hard regular Nick Scott-Dickeson in the Britcar Endurance series this year. Mailer finished 17th in the Ginetta standings in 2014 and finished runner-up in Team Hard's scholarship during the winter. He and Scott-Dickeson will drive the squad's newly acquired Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car.

FENNYMORE BACK AGAIN

Former Caterham European and Classic Formula 3 champion Graham Fennymore will be back on track again this year, once the season starts, racing his Reynard SF81 in the Historic Formula Ford 2000 Championship. "It's yet another swansong," the ex-Formula Vauxhall racer reckoned after testing at Donington Park last month.

CHARITY T-SHIRTS AVAILABLE

Track Attack series coordinator Steve Vince has decided to produce a special T-shirt that he is selling to raise money for charity during the coronavirus outbreak. Carrying the slogan 'Life's a challenge "Attack it"', the money raised from the sale of the T-shirts will go towards a charity of the buyer's choice. Contact Vince on 01646 601908 for more information.

CONSTABLE'S RADICAL BID

Radical Challenge race winner Jac Constable will remain in the series for a second year this season, again driving for the Hart GT squad. The 22-year-old was a podium finisher in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup – and won the Am class in 2017 – before taking five wins in his rookie Radical season last year on his way to third in the standings. "Knowing the car much better now, we should be off to a flying start and be able keep that momentum going all season to be well within reach of the title fight," said Constable (below).



Scottish Sprint champion Munro leads the way as SMRC Esports series begins



Lax led the early part of PC opener before this spin

ESPORTS

The Scottish Motor Racing Club kicked off its 2020 season as scheduled last weekend, albeit through its Esports Spring Championship at a virtual Knockhill.

Such was the popularity of the opening round – a total of 145 real-world, sim and amateur drivers entered – that the club held qualifying heats for PC, Xbox and PlayStation 4 players of the Project Cars 2 game during the week.

Former Scottish Sprint champion John Munro emerged as the top PC player following a pair of tightly

fought ‘Formula Rookie’ races.

Craig Lax started from pole and led the early stages but spun out of contention exiting Clark’s on the third lap of 12, handing the advantage to Lorenzo Turri. Munro eventually found a way into second and launched an attack on Turri in the remaining two laps but fell just short.

Lax made amends in the second race by selling a superb dummy to David Simon under braking for the Hairpin, and was rarely challenged thereafter. Contact between Simon and Munro removed both from victory contention, although Munro recovered to fourth

and takes a one-point lead heading into this weekend’s Oulton Park meeting.

Sam McKenzie profited from leader Aidan Sloss’s late ‘slow-down’ penalty for exceeding track limits to win the first of the PS4 races, but was denied a double when he received a one-second penalty of his own in race two. This handed real-world SMRC Mini Cooper Cup driver Michael Weddell the win, having survived a clash with Sloss with two laps remaining.

The Xbox division was dominated by Ayden Wilson.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

SMRC figures hail Esports competition a success

ESPORTS

Key figures from the Scottish Motor Racing Club’s Esports Spring Championship have hailed the inaugural round a success after it attracted a capacity entry of 145 drivers.

Former Knockhill circuit commentator David Christie, whose Camber Media company organised the event, believes SMRC Esports can thrive during the lockdown.

“It was brilliant entertainment, especially the PC races where you



Munro chases Turri during PC contest

had some of the most experienced drivers,” he said. “Clearly, with the global situation, it is the perfect storm for Esports to flourish.”

John Munro heads the PC standings after the Knockhill opener and was impressed by the quality of the opposition.

“The competition was

really strong,” said Munro, who won the MaX5 title in 2016 and is a Club Enduro regular. “Esports is really hot at the moment, and it’s a great way to teach young or inexperienced drivers basic technique.”

● Motorsport UK is also running its own Karting Esports Championship. ‘Hot laps’ have taken place this week, with the fastest drivers qualifying for the semi-finals and finals next week.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON



Can Collard cut it in British GT?

Rob Collard is following in Sam Tordoff's footsteps in swapping the BTCC for British GT. But will he make it a success, or end up returning with his tail between his legs?

JAMES NEWBOLD

A veteran of 489 race starts in the British Touring Car Championship, Rob Collard scarcely fits the normal definition of 'rookie'. But when the British GT season eventually gets under way, 51-year-old Collard will be on the grid for the first time – following in the footsteps of sons Ricky and Jordan, both of whom have previously raced in the GT4 class.

In signing to race a Lamborghini Huracan GT3 for Barwell Motorsport – which delivered the title for Marco Attard in 2014 and has come close on countless occasions since – Collard has one of the best operations on the grid behind him and, in team boss Mark Lemmer, someone who knows exactly what it's like to make the switch from touring cars to GT racing.

"While we absolutely loved our time in touring cars, it's nice to move into something new, and I think Rob is exactly in that position now," says Lemmer, who sold Collard the ex-Aaron Slight Vauxhall Astra Coupe in which Collard won the BTCC Independents title in 2003, and raced against him as long ago as 2000 in the BTCC Production class. "He's certainly got a real appetite for it."

Collard switched from Formula Ford – where he raced against Jenson Button and Dan Wheldon – to tin-tops in 1999, winning on his debut in the BTCC-supporting Vauxhall Vectra SRi V6 Challenge. He went on to finish third in the points – emulating

“Rob has been around so long and it does get harder when you're fiftysomething”

Lemmer's result of 1997 – prior to beginning his BTCC career. But, after two decades in saloon cars, the move into GTs will be an entirely different proposition for Collard. He only managed three days of testing at Paul Ricard and the Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit before the coronavirus pandemic placed a hold on all motorsport activity, so he's still near the start of his learning curve.

"You can never tell how someone will transition," says Lemmer. "But I've been really impressed with Rob's approach. He's extremely focused but he's also got a very measured approach which leads to much faster development."

"It's a very different car to drive. A mid-engined GT [such as the Huracan] is a very different proposition to a touring car – aerowise, tyre grip and degradation-wise, managing the weight, power, ABS, everything about it – so it takes time. The other thing that's

not always considered is drivers have to get used to sharing their testing time with another driver, when they've been used to having the car to themselves for the whole day."

Lemmer says this was one of the problems facing the previous high-profile driver to make the switch from the BTCC to the GT3 class – Sam Tordoff, who joined Barwell in 2017 after narrowly failing to beat Gordon Shedden to the 2016 BTCC title. Paired with amateur racer Liam Griffin, Tordoff had to play the role of diligent Pro, allowing Griffin time in the car to build his confidence, at the same time as learning the car and trying to close the gap to the team's lead driver, Phil Keen. Tordoff and Griffin finished second four times that season and ended up fifth in the points, but were never in the title hunt, and Tordoff returned to the BTCC for 2018.

But Collard won't have quite the same compromises with Sandy Mitchell as his co-driver. The 20-year-old Scot, who did much of the development work on the McLaren 570S GT4, has become a staple of Barwell's European exploits in the Blancpain GT Endurance Cup over the past two years, including winning the Silver class at the Spa 24 Hours last year in the Huracan, and is tipped for the very top by Lemmer.

With Mitchell expected to stack up well against the Pros, Collard will have a slightly different role than Tordoff had in going up against the amateurs and young Silver-graded drivers. Due to his age, Collard qualifies as an FIA Bronze, but series organiser SRO deemed that his experience in top-flight racing warranted he be upgraded to Silver, with the consequent all-Silver weight penalty.

"Rob has earned his FIA Bronze status by being around so long, and it does get harder – physically and mentally – when you're fiftysomething," Lemmer says. "Rob's job isn't to match Keeny or Sandy; his job is to get to a different level of performance, but Rob is a racer at heart so he is always comparing himself against them. But nevertheless, those guys are running as a Silver pairing and to be fair, those goals should be achievable."

There are some very strong Am drivers Collard will have to face, not least reigning champion Graham Davidson, Blancpain Pro-Am title winner Ahmad Al Harthy and Barwell team-mate Adam Balon, plus fellow Silvers who have more experience in GT racing. But Collard's famous racecraft is something that can't be unlearned and will be a real asset in navigating GT4 traffic.

"Rob is one of the best overtakers in the business – I think that's going to bring some excitement to the championship," offers Lemmer. "He certainly won't have lost that – it's definitely going to be a real positive. It's not easy overtaking in GTs, but people like Keeny and Dennis Lind have proved that you can do it."

Collard is coming into British GT on the back of his first winless season since 2013. But, when the campaign does get under way, don't be surprised if that barren streak comes to an end this year. ✨



A BEAUTY THAT'S IN THE EYE OF



VIDEOGAME REVIEW TT ISLE OF MAN - RIDE ON THE EDGE 2

The cancellation of the 2020 Isle of Man TT was unavoidable, but was still no less devastating to the motorcycling world. The annual event is the jewel in the road-racing calendar, and its absence leaves a

huge void for the fans, as well as having severe financial ramifications for all involved.

A small consolation for all keen followers of the race may prove to be the release of developer Kylotonn's *TT Isle of Man – Ride on The Edge*, a sequel to its 2018 release, which was an unexpected commercial hit and received a reasonable critical response. Racing game sequels can go one of two ways – they either build on the success of the original and establish the foundations for a franchise, or they flop and derail any potential for future instalments. Fortunately, this game swings far more towards the former category.

The core element of the game – the TT Mountain Course – is outstanding once again. It sounds obvious, but when a game focuses on representing one event, it must nail its representation. The decision made by the developers to laser-scan the entire course pays off handsomely, with all the real-life landmarks and scenery immersing the rider in the game. Not that Autosport had much time to take in the scenery – we were busy trying to focus on remaining on our bike through the immensely high-speed corners.

Simple touches, such as the sound of the wind rushing past your rider, do so much to immerse the

gamer in the world of road racing. The realistic landmarks also play an important role in picking your braking spots, meaning that the scenery is not just there to look good but is also crucial in helping you make it around the corners.

Completing even just one section of the course without falling off feels like a win when you first pick up the game. It's the difficulty of the real-life race that draws riders from all across the world to compete, and the game replicates that superbly, just like the original did. It's frustrating but addictive. Once you improve and stop falling off your bike at every other corner, *TT Isle of Man* becomes one of the most rewarding racing games around.

The handling has improved, although it won't be to everybody's liking. It feels slightly off at times in slow-speed corners and you can occasionally find yourself violently thrown off your bike over bumps that feel more like jumps. But it's clearly a marked improvement on the original and signals another successful move by Kylotonn towards simulation after its World Rally Championship franchise benefited greatly when its latest title, *WRC 8*, increased its focus on a model of more-realistic handling.

Bike selection is probably one of the game's biggest issues – in particular, the lack of lower-powered bikes for beginners to try their hand at the TT course on. Classic bikes are included and are fun to ride, but there's a limited choice.

The extra padding around the TT also feels a little half-baked in places, with the additional courses in the UK and Ireland paling in comparison to the TT Mountain Course. But having said that, the provision of extra courses is an admirable attempt to add more depth to a game that could so easily have



THE RIDER



stuck solely to its brilliant replication of the TT course.

The title also has a full career mode, which allows you to work your way up the junior ranks before entering the Isle of Man TT. There are also mass-start races, which provide a thoroughly entertaining break from the time-trial format.

In addition, you can earn virtual money for buying better bikes and equipment, as well as handy perks. It adds a level of progression to your career, so the game is not simply about endless repeats of the Isle of Man TT, although that probably wouldn't be a terrible thing.

Ultimately, Kylotonn's second Isle of Man TT game is a worthy successor – one that builds on the success of the original. Its brilliant adaptation of the TT Mountain Course should be enough for fans to overlook some of the game's shortcomings.

JOSH SUTTILL



autosport.com/podcast



On this edition of the Autosport podcast, host Alex Kalinauckas chats to the presenters and reporters from the Sky Sports F1 line-up. They discuss the various challenges when it comes to broadcasting Formula 1's live TV offering.



YouTube

youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



Revisit and play along with the first ever Autosport Formula 1 Pub Quiz. Hosted by Stuart Codling, there are five rounds of 10 questions each – ranging from simple to super-hard (those should be the new tyre compounds!). **Go to bit.ly/AutosportQuiz1**

AUTOSPORT PLUS

bit.ly/F1reverse

The Formula 1 tracks that would work when reversed

The idea of reversing Silverstone to add events to the delayed and shortened 2020 F1 calendar has gained traction after comments from the circuit's boss. But at what other venues might this be possible?

ALL THE TEAMS

all the drivers, all the controversies

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GUY SMITH

A cut-and-shut car and a dream fallen flat inspire sportscar commitment

MATT KEW

Victory in the 2003 Le Mans 24 Hours with Bentley was followed by a second place for Audi the year after, but otherwise Guy Smith had no full-time drive for 2004. With two Indy Lights seasons under his belt and an itch to scratch in American single-seaters, he leapt at the chance to fill a Champ Car vacancy.

Smith was signed by Rocketspeed team founder Paul Gentilozzi alongside Alex Tagliani to replace Nelson Philippe, who had covered the costs but stepped aside after struggling to find performance.

"No disrespect to Nelson, but he'd not done that much racing," says Smith. "I thought his lack of results was probably down to just his inexperience. But when I arrived it started to dawn on me..."

Smith soon realised the second car ran without a dedicated engineer and was largely built up out of old and often crashed parts. This was most irksome in qualifying, where with fresh tyres Smith suffered with

"I THOUGHT, 'JESUS CHRIST, I MUST BE FLYING'. BUT THE CAR WAS AN OLD DOG"

either "chronic understeer or oversteer". Across seven races, his best starting position was a lowly 14th at Laguna Seca and the Las Vegas oval.

"Whenever we were on old tyres and the grip was low, the car was quite good," he adds. "For example, Laguna Seca, which is a fairly low-grip circuit, I was running about P6 for a good chunk of the race and we ended up ninth. I felt like I was driving pretty well, but in qualifying I just couldn't get the speed out of the car.

"The first time I tested at Road America, I was going down the back straight and I was on the rev limiter only halfway down the straight. I thought, 'Jesus Christ, I must be flying!'. But the team were saying as I'd gone past the pits that the rear-wing endplate had come off the car. That kind of summarised the whole thing. The team had good intentions but the car was an old dog. I probably should have tried Alex's car to see what it was like because he won Road America, which was my first race."

Electrical glitches and mechanical faults, including a blown engine at Vegas, resulted in three DNFs for Smith. The so-called 'American Dream' had fallen flat, paving the way for 2014 Indianapolis 500 winner Ryan Hunter-Reay to fill the vacancy.

"He also had a dreadful year, when he had been tipped to go to Ganassi," says Smith. "Ryan and his dad [a lawyer] tried to sue



GRADY

Gentilozzi at the end of the year because it could have damaged his career. He was on a path to greater things but he had a year where he just looked like an amateur.

"It basically transpired that the car had been crashed and repaired, crashed and repaired. I didn't really feel like I got a fair crack of the whip. But what it did do for me was tick a box and made me realise that Champ Car was not all I thought it was. It made me ready to commit to sportscar racing." ❄️



FROM THE ARCHIVE

David Coulthard (McLaren-Mercedes MP4/17) has an off-track excursion during the 2002 Brazilian Grand Prix weekend at Interlagos. Coulthard

qualified in fourth place, behind the Williams-BMW FW24 of Juan Pablo Montoya, the Ferrari F2002 of Michael Schumacher and Montoya's team-mate, Schumacher's younger brother Ralf.

After Montoya lost his nose at the start and fell down the order, the Schumacher siblings dominated, Ralf chasing Michael to the flag. Coulthard took the final podium position, almost a minute behind.



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FROM THE ARCHIVE

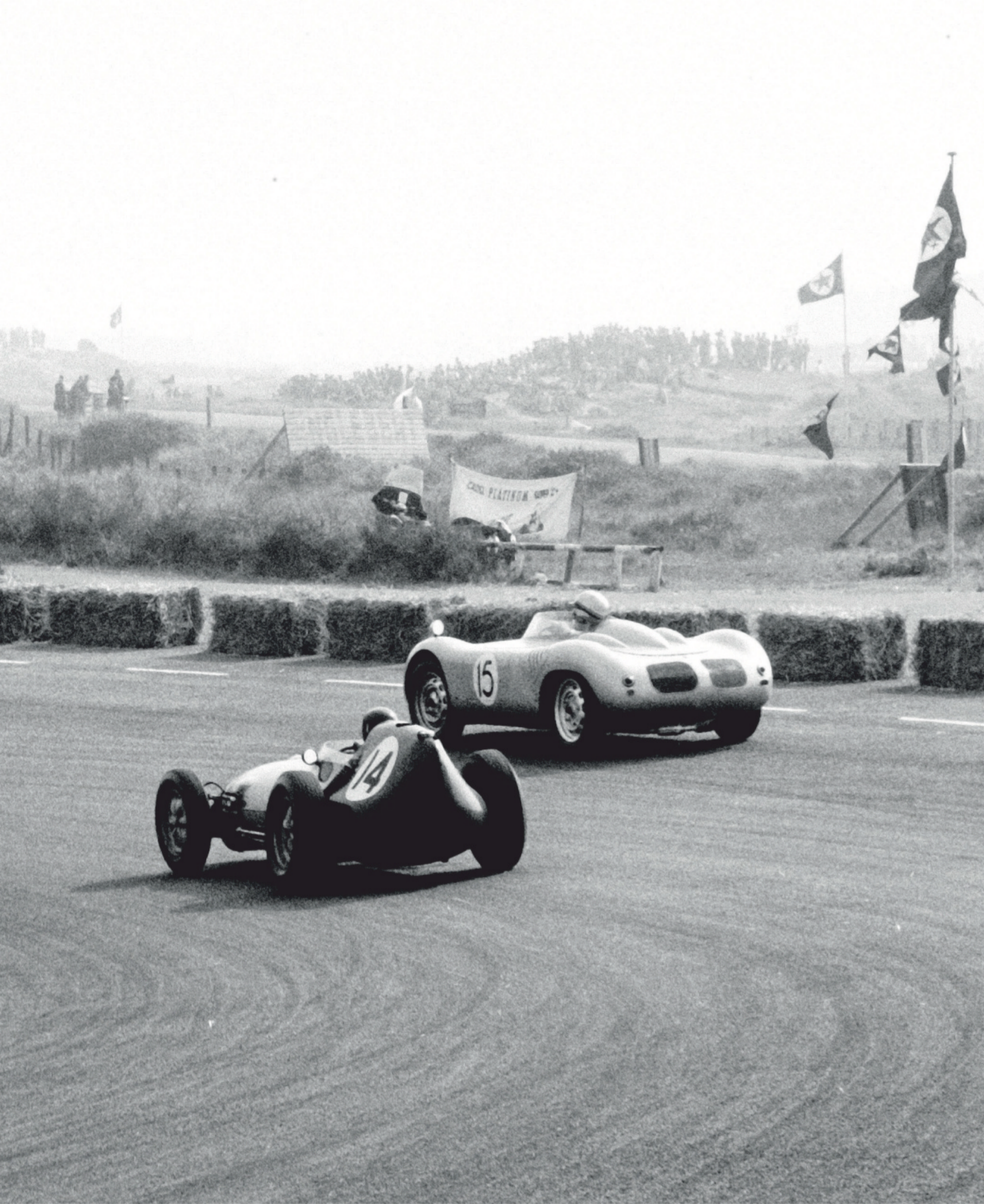
Cliff Allison (#16, Ferrari Dino 246) is about to be lapped at Zandvoort in the 1959 Dutch Grand Prix. Following closely are Jean Behra (#1, Ferrari Dino 246),

Stirling Moss (#11, Cooper-Climax T51), Graham Hill (#14, Lotus-Climax 16) and backmarker Carel Godin de Beaufort's incongruous Porsche RSK sportscar. By halfway, only Moss would still be

in contention, in third behind Jack Brabham (Cooper) and Jo Bonnier (BRM). Moss passed Brabham on lap 48 but his gearbox failed, leaving Bonnier to claim his and BRM's first grand prix win.

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Hakkinen's first chance of taking the F1 crown

9 April 1998

Mika Hakkinen's superb start to the season and Ferrari's struggle to keep pace with McLaren were the key Formula 1 themes in the 9 April 1998 issue of Autosport.

After winning the first two grands prix of the year, Hakkinen talked to Andrew Benson about how he was enjoying racing again now that he had a competitive car in the form of the MP4-13. The Finn also spoke of how much he had bonded with the McLaren team through the difficult times, which included his serious accident during qualifying for the 1995 Australian GP.

"Every day is a new experience, and every day you have to try to be the best, and that's what I'm targeting," said Hakkinen about his championship chances. "You can never be so confident to think, 'I'm always going to be the quickest and I'll win races

all the time'. You have to keep your feet on the ground."

Autosport reckoned that McLaren team-mate David Coulthard was the only real threat, but Hakkinen's caution was proved correct at the very next race. Michael Schumacher won the Argentinian GP for Ferrari, after passing Hakkinen and a clash with Coulthard, to launch himself into a title fight that would last until the final round in Japan.

Elsewhere, we previewed the expected Mercedes-versus-Porsche battle in the FIA GT Championship and looked ahead to the British Touring Car season. Autosport tipped reigning champion Alain Menu to retain his BTCC crown with Renault, while pointing out that "some doubt whether Rickard Rydell has a title-winning temperament"...

CRAIG WOOLLARD



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