F1 2020 ESSENTIAL GUIDE *REBOOT*

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

2 JULY 2020

F1 IS BACK!

All you need to know as the season finally gets under way

- Is Red Bull Hamilton's biggest threat?
- What next for Vettel and Ferrari?
- Tim Wright's team analysis

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The official combined fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the MEGANE RS Trophy-R are: 33.6 (8.41). The official CO_2 emissions is 180g/km. WLTP figures shown are for comparability purposes. Actual real world driving results may vary depending on various factors including any accessories fitted after registration.

*For a front-wheel drive production car on a lap of 20.600m.

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THE RACER
Pit talk from the HRDC
VOL 10 NO. 124
JUN 26

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THERE IS LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL!

THE HRDC RETURNS TO RACING!

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Formula 1 is back – and so are we

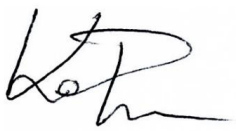
It has been a long wait, but the 2020 Formula 1 season should finally get going at the Red Bull Ring this weekend. It's nearly four months since the Australian Grand Prix was abandoned and a lot has happened in that time, both in motorsport and the wider world.

We still don't know exactly how many F1 races we'll have this season, but the reduced calendar will mean an intense few months for the teams and drivers. Given Lewis Hamilton's particular strength over a long season and the fact that Red Bull has won the past two Austrian GPs, the truncated campaign could provide the Mercedes star with a stern challenge in his quest for a seventh world title.

Hamilton has been in the headlines a great deal of late, rightly standing up for what he believes amid the Black Lives Matter movement, and he's likely to be at the centre of things in Austria this weekend. In our new season preview we talk to Christian Horner (page 16), boss of the team most likely to take the fight to Mercedes, assess Sebastian Vettel's position now that it has been confirmed he will leave Ferrari at the end of this campaign (p24), and take a look at the new direction Williams is taking to prepare for F1's future (p30).

After a coronavirus-enforced pause in May and June, we are pleased that Autosport magazine is also back, starting with this week's issue. The magazine, which first appeared on 25 August 1950 (right), will continue to provide insight and analysis of the wide breadth of motorsport, from F1 to rallying via Formula E, with increased coverage of UK national competition. Turn to p70 for an update on the national scene as club racers prepare to hit the track once again.

We would like to thank all our readers for your patience and kind messages of support during these unprecedented times. The situation remains challenging, but we relaunch with the aim of continuing to provide all the things our loyal readers love about Autosport.



Kevin Turner
Editor
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NEXT WEEK 9 JULY
Austrian Grand Prix
All the action and opinion from the first race of the new F1 season

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Clive Mason/Getty Images/Red Bull Content Pool ; Mercedes-Benz Grand Prix Ltd.

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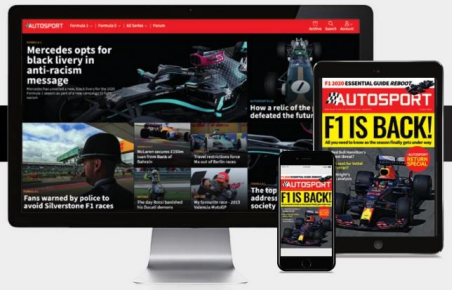

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WHY THE RETURN OF F1 WILL

FORMULA 1

When Formula 1 bursts back into action at the Austrian Grand Prix this weekend following the four-month hiatus imposed during the coronavirus pandemic, the event will be a very different experience for everyone involved. A range of new protocols has been brought in to minimise the chance of a COVID-19 outbreak.

The 'new normal' has become a much-used phrase this year, and this is what F1 can expect...

RACES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

As long as there remains a risk of COVID-19 being transmitted among the general public, no spectators will be allowed in for at least the first phase of the championship. F1 is instead planning fully closed-door events without spectators, guests or sponsors, and dramatic cuts in the number of staff present.

Teams will be operating with reduced personnel (a maximum of 80), while there will be heavy restrictions on media, although Autosport will be present. There will not be any team motorhomes, and the teams will instead construct their own awnings at the back of their garages to give them some more space to work.

TEAMS OPERATING IN BUBBLES

All F1 personnel require a negative COVID-19 test before being able to travel. They will also be tested every five days while on the road. A contact track-and-trace app, specifically designed for the close confines of a racing circuit, will be used to better allow organisers to deal with an outbreak and know who any infected team member has been in close contact with.

Team members will not be allowed to mix with other competitors, and have to stay in strict 'social bubbles' to ensure they are only in contact with those that are essential for their job. Face masks will be mandatory.

LONGER WORKING HOURS

Thanks to social distancing requirements, and the need for team members to wear face masks and other personal protective equipment, some garage jobs are going to take longer than normal. In light of this, teams will be given some extra leeway when it comes to their working hours, with F1's curfew having been relaxed. Team members can now work one hour later on Thursday and Friday evenings, and the curfew now lasts for eight hours, instead of nine.

TYRES: RUN WHAT YOU GET GIVEN

F1 needs to be as flexible as possible in order to get a calendar of races put in place, and teams and suppliers are facing some unique challenges because of it. This means that F1's tyre rules have changed. Previously, teams were allowed to pick how many sets of each type of Pirelli tyre they wanted for a weekend, but now there is a standard allocation – each driver will get two sets of the hard compound, three of the medium, and eight of the soft.

'VIRTUAL' BRIEFINGS VIA ZOOM

Race officials will be operating in rooms where tables and chairs have been moved further apart to ensure social distancing. It has also been agreed that if any drivers are summoned to see the stewards to discuss a matter, PPE is worn at all times. Drivers' and officials' briefings may now take place outside if a suitably large

P14 OPINION

Mercedes unveiled a new, black livery for the 2020 Formula 1 season on Monday, as part of a new campaign to fight racism. The car will also run with 'End Racism' written on the halo. Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas will race in black overalls through 2020, and will adjust their helmet designs accordingly.

BE DIFFERENT

room cannot be found to hold all those required to attend, or they may be conducted via a video teleconference facility such as Zoom.

THERE'LL BE NO DRIVERS' PARADE

With no spectators, and the requirement for drivers to maintain social distancing, the regular Sunday morning drivers' parade will not take place for now. Instead, it is likely that the drivers will be interviewed one by one in front of their garages in that usual Sunday morning slot, so those watching on TV can get some pre-race build-up excitement.

NEW GRID PROCEDURE – OR NO GRID AT ALL

One of the most difficult situations to manage over an F1 weekend is the grid build-up, because it's the time when the teams are in closest proximity to each other.

To try to minimise the chances of contact, grid procedures have been tweaked to allow for social distancing. Teams are only allowed 40 personnel on the grid, and procedures have been compressed so the pit exit closes 20 minutes before the start rather than 30.

If it is felt that at some venues it's still too risky to have personnel so close to each other, one solution is to abandon the grid build-up completely and instead start the formation lap from the garages.

NO 'CHAMPAAAAAAAAAAAAAGNE'

There'll be no podium ceremony because of social distancing requirements. Instead, there is a plan to have some form of post-race trophy-giving on the grid when the cars return following their slowing-down lap.

JONATHAN NOBLE

Dixon dominated in Texas as IndyCar ended hibernation

Indianapolis road course next as series continues

INDYCAR

While Formula 1 has been champing at the bit to get going, IndyCar rolled out at Texas Motor Speedway four weeks ago for its season start. But it's only this weekend at the Indianapolis road course – the first of three planned visits to the venue this year – that the meat of the season begins.

You'd be forgiven for anticipating that Team Penske will dominate the season's first non-oval race. After all, it's unbeaten over the past five races on the Indy road course, with Will Power taking three wins and Simon Pagenaud two.

But with this peculiarly-shaped 2020 season rendering the event as only the second round, and in the absence of any testing, perhaps the squad's undoubted muscle cannot flex with the same effect and the field will have gotten more compact.

"Nice theory, but... no," said a rival engineer last week. "The top teams stay top even in these weird, constricted circumstances. It's not like any of us have been allowed to do anything Penske and Ganassi hasn't done over the past nine months. The only way someone beats them on speed is by making a step that no one else has thought of – which is bloody hard in a spec formula. And anyway, right now you've gotta be pretty brave to do anything radical because outside of the sim, we've had no data to base it on since February in testing.

"Look at it this way: we disappeared for eight months, went to Texas and we were given minimal track time and also minimal time between sessions to fix anything we want to do, and, boom, there's Ganassi and Penske kicking our ass..."

Fair point. At TMS, Penske had the best set-up for ultimate pace, resulting in Josef Newgarden, Pagenaud and Power qualifying 1-3-5. But due to Firestone's shutdown during the pandemic, the teams were running 2019-spec tyres with the new-for-2020 aeroscreens that have altered centre of gravity and weight distribution. Consequently, at a track that can be harsh on tyres, IndyCar played it cautious and imposed a 35-lap stint length for each set – barely more than half of what was achievable in 2019.

Newgarden and eventually Pagenaud picked up tyre vibrations that sapped their confidence and speed. Power, running a tick slower, had no such problems but had one disastrous pitstop.

Chip Ganassi Racing had no such issues. Five-time champion Scott Dixon stalked Newgarden in the early stages of the race, moved past when the reigning champ's tyres went off, and pulled away at will to score the 47th win of his Indycar career. Team-mate Felix Rosenqvist ran second until crashing in the closing laps, allowing Pagenaud and Newgarden into second and third.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

Harvick (4) shared last weekend's Pocono wins with Hamlin

Harvick on top as NASCAR races on through pandemic

NASCAR

After the sporting calendar was decimated in mid-March as the COVID-19 pandemic ripped across the planet, it was the NASCAR Cup that stuck its head up with the announcement that it would be the first motorsport series to return.

The risks and rewards on offer for NASCAR were simple: although the number of people on-site was drastically slashed, a pit garage and paddock is ripe breeding ground for a virus to spread exponentially if proper precautions were not strictly followed. On the other hand, with other major American sports such as the NBA and NFL suspended, and not a lot going on elsewhere, NASCAR had the opportunity to showcase a blueprint on how to safely restart its season.

The first block of four races announced for the comeback were two each at Darlington and Charlotte, in South and North Carolina respectively, chosen for their proximity to the NASCAR hub in Charlotte.

Unlike some other racing championships that stuck rigidly to their weekend formats, NASCAR opted to be dynamic and try something different. Ten of the 11 events since the restart (the 600-mile Charlotte race aside) had no practice or qualifying, and grids have been set by random draws or by reversing the top 20 from the previous race.

The beneficiaries have been those who could best adapt to this new style of racing, with Kevin Harvick (Stewart-Haas Racing Ford), Brad Keselowski (Team Penske Ford) and Denny Hamlin (Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota) the dominant trio.

Between them, they have won eight of the 11 rounds, with average finishing positions of 7.7, 7.9 and 8.2 respectively. Harvick and Hamlin have each won three races since the mid-May return, and Keselowski two.

Nobody else has been able to find much consistency, although Ryan Blaney and Chase Elliott each have six top-five finishes to their names, including a sole victory apiece.

Meanwhile, reigning champion Kyle Busch has still yet to record a Cup win in 2020. The Gibbs driver has finished second twice since the season resumed, but shunted heavily out of the Sunday Pocono race last weekend. Jimmie Johnson's final season has yet to get going – the seven-time champion crashed out of the lead in the first race back at Darlington and was disqualified from second in the 600-miler at Charlotte.

Arguably the biggest star of NASCAR's return has been Darrell 'Bubba' Wallace Jr, not for what he's done on-track, but off it. Wallace, the sole black Cup driver, became the focal point for addressing NASCAR's somewhat sketchy track record on racism after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis at the end of May sparked protests worldwide.

Wallace has been instrumental in leading NASCAR's response, including the banning of the Confederate Flag at circuits and running a special Black Lives Matter livery at Martinsville.

An FBI and NASCAR investigation found that a garage-door pull rope in Wallace's garage at Talladega had been fashioned into a noose in 2019, and it was just by coincidence that he was assigned that garage. Noose or not, the images of an emotional Wallace being pushed in the #43 by fellow drivers up the pitlane for the national anthem will be remembered for a long time.

JAKE NICHOL

Abt out, Rast in, Ma out, Abt in

FORMULA E

When the Formula E season resumes with a six-race schedule – held over nine days from 5-13 August at Tempelhof Airport in Berlin – there will be two high-profile absentees from the grid.

Although Ma Qinghua sits last in the standings, the NIO 333 team remains steadfast in its commitment to always field a Chinese driver. But coronavirus-enforced travel restrictions and a second outbreak in the capital of Beijing mean he and his Shanghai-based race team colleagues will miss the three double-header events.

This has paved the way for recently sacked Audi driver Daniel Abt to maintain his record of starting every one of the 63 races in FE history, as he will deputise for Ma at the track where he claimed his most recent E-Prix victory.

The two-time race winner was effectively sacked by Audi after he had a sim racer take his place in the FE Race at Home Challenge Esports competition, with double DTM champion Rene Rast now promoted to fill the vacancy.

Former Sauber and Manor Formula 1 driver Pascal Wehrlein is also set to miss the final races after he announced his immediate departure from the Mahindra team via a brief social media post.

In due course, Wehrlein is expected to sign for Porsche to replace Neel Jani alongside Andre Lotterer for the 2020-21 season. That's given a surprise berth for former DS Virgin and Jaguar racer Alex Lynn to make his series return.

Aston Martin factory World Endurance racer Lynn said: "I've raced twice in Berlin before and always felt that I went well there, including appearing in superpole last season. The format of Berlin is going to be exciting and challenging at the same time and I'm looking forward to hitting the ground running."

MATT KEW

Lynn has to work out where attack mode is again

Pittard in 'Ring breakthrough

NURBURGRING SERIES

BMW

Briton David Pittard claimed his maiden win in the NLS – the new name for the VLN endurance series – last Saturday in one of the first European events to run since coronavirus restrictions were relaxed.

Pittard and former ex-Formula 3 European Championship frontrunner Mikkel Jensen triumphed in the four-hour race around the Nurburgring Nordschleife, sharing a Walkenhorst Motorsport BMW M6 GT3.

The duo began the contest fifth and Pittard initially lost out at the start but a swift recovery – including a stunning pass around the outside of Mercedes GT3 superstar Raffaele Marciello at the fast Schwedenkreuz corner – meant he was soon running second.

Pittard and Jensen remained in contention for victory for the remainder of the race, and were aided by a late penalty for Mercedes pair Maro Engel and Patrick Assenheimer. The duo, driving for the newly formed Haupt Racing Team that has replaced the Black Falcon squad among Mercedes' factory GT roster, took the chequered flag first, but were handed a 37-second penalty for not spending enough time in the pits, allowing Pittard and Jensen to triumph.

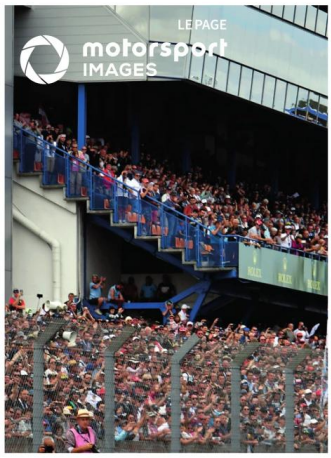
"What a weekend – it was great to be back and see some cars, hear some cars and smell some cars," said Pittard, who has also achieved success in a range of historic machinery and was the 2014 Ginetta GT4 Supercup runner-up. "It was brilliant – I've done a lot of sim racing through lockdown but the best feeling is strapping yourself in and then hearing the tyres going on and the air jacks coming out. It's been a long time coming."

The 28-year-old is targeting a place in the BMW Motorsport factory ranks – which include his Walkenhorst co-driver Jensen – in the future and is aiming for more performances like the season opener.

"My short to medium-term goal is to be a BMW factory driver so this was a perfect opportunity to show I've been chomping at the bit for the last eight months to really get going," said Pittard. "It was one of the first races back after quarantine and so many people were going to be tuning in, so to win this one I had all the eyes on me."

One of the notable changes that allowed the race to take place was pitstops. While refuelling took place in the regular pits, tyre changes were carried out in a new pitlane in the paddock, which meant the 132 cars participating did not need to be serviced in cramped garages – a tweak that Pittard described as a "great solution".

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Le Mans says ticketholders welcome

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Those who have already booked tickets for their annual pilgrimage to the Le Mans 24 Hours will be able to attend the rescheduled event in September.

Race organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest is honouring purchases made before ticket sales were suspended on Monday. Those who have booked grandstand seats, camping, hospitality or parking will also be allowed to buy a corresponding general admission ticket.

Members of the ACO will also be able to buy tickets within the number of available seats. The suspension of ticket sales will be reviewed pending further government directives in France.

The announcement did not include a figure on how many spectators are expected for an event that usually has an annual attendance in excess of 250,000 for its traditional mid-June date. ACO president Pierre Fillon only said that Le Mans on 19-20 September will "not be breaking any attendance records this year".

A condensed timetable was announced last month, with practice and qualifying on the Thursday and Friday, rather than Wednesday and Thursday.

GARY WATKINS

AUTOSPORT PLUS
Smart insight published daily

BMW

Zanardi undergoes more surgery on head injuries

ALEX ZANARDI

Motorsport and Paralympic hero Alex Zanardi underwent a second round of neurological surgery on Monday, 10 days after being admitted to hospital with severe head injuries sustained in a handbike road accident in Italy.

Two-time Indycar champion Zanardi hit a truck while taking part in a handbike event in Siena on 19 June, leaving him with severe head and facial injuries. He underwent surgery upon admission to hospital and has remained in a medically induced coma since.

In a bulletin issued on Monday by Siena University Hospital, it was confirmed that Zanardi had undergone a second surgery after a CT scan presented "an evolution in the patient's state which made it necessary to have a second neurosurgical intervention". The surgery lasted two and a half hours, before Zanardi returned to the intensive care unit where he remained in a coma.

The hospital reported that Zanardi's condition "remained stable from the cardio-respiratory and metabolic point of view, serious from the neurological point of view".

"The intervention carried out represents a step that had been anticipated by the team," according to the university's health director, Roberto Gusinu.

"Our professionals will evaluate day by day the evolution of the situation."

Zanardi has enjoyed a prolific career in handbike racing, winning four gold medals at the Paralympic Games in 2012 and 2016. The 53-year-old ex-Formula 1 driver lost both his legs in an Indycar crash at the Lausitzring in 2001, but returned to racing with BMW, for which he has won races in the World Touring Car Championship. More recently he has competed with BMW in the DTM and GT racing, and was set to contest this year's Italian GT finale.

LUKE SMITH

British F3 king Lundqvist stars on US debut

FORMULA REGIONAL

Less than two years after taking the British Formula 3 crown, Linus Lundqvist made the perfect start to his assault on the US single-seater ladder by dominating the opening Formula Regional Americas double-header at Mid-Ohio.

The Swede had only two short test sessions with his Global Racing Group-run Ligier-Honda in preparation, as he was forced to quarantine in Mexico for two weeks before being allowed to enter the US. Nevertheless, he claimed both pole positions, led every lap of each race and set two fastest laps.

The series, formerly known as F3 Americas, is offering an Indy Lights scholarship for the champion and has attracted some Lights drivers following the cancellation of their series for 2020. One of these, David Malukas, chased Lundqvist home to finish second in each race. South Americans Victor Franzoni and Santiago Urrutia — each a veteran of the US scene — each scored a third position.

"This has been the perfect weekend," said Lundqvist. "I've been in the country for less than two weeks so this kind of result is incredible."

MARCUS SIMMONS

GLOBAL RACING GROUP

JEP

BTCC will lose cars, says Gow

BTCC

A bombshell hit the British Touring Car Championship on Tuesday when official BMW team West Surrey Racing and 2019 series runner-up Andrew Jordan announced that they are parting ways.

In a carefully worded statement, WSR said: "Team BMW and WSR regret to announce that Andrew Jordan has made the difficult decision to withdraw from the 2020 BTCC." Although Jordan was brought into the official BMW fold for 2020 following the withdrawal of his long-time backer Pirtek at the end of 2019, he did still have to bring some backing for the seat.

Jordan then told Autosport: "The deal we had in place before COVID was great. We were all very happy with that. And then I just couldn't make the deal work post-COVID. I took the tough decision to stick to my guns and if we couldn't make the deal work as we wanted then that's how it goes. I'm still on really good terms with BMW. It's just, unfortunately, a sign of the times."

While Jordan added: "I'll probably be doing more historics", it apparently leaves WSR looking for a new driver, and BTCC boss Alan Gow believes this won't be the last driver-team crisis before the series kicks off at Donington Park on 1-2 August.

Speaking to Autosport for the latest in our series of #thinkingforward podcasts, Gow said: "We're fortunate in as much as we've got 29 cars. Some teams have got their budget well covered, other teams are hurting, and I would expect by the time we go racing in August we will see three or four cars drop off out of the field. Considering what they're going through, I think that's a really good result for the BTCC."

But Gow is confident that the BTCC will begin at Donington with spectators in attendance – significantly on the same weekend the British Grand Prix takes place at Silverstone behind closed doors.

"As each day goes past, I'm more and more confident that there'll be an element of spectators allowed into the circuits," he said. "Only this last week we've had the government announce that shops are open, theme parks are open, zoos are open. I struggle to understand how you can allow 30,000 people at Alton Towers and not allow 10,000 people at Donington Park."

MARCUS SIMMONS, MATT KEW AND JAMES ALLEN

Listen to James Allen talk with Alan Gow as part of Autosport's series of **#thinkingforward** podcasts.
autosport.com/podcast

IN THE HEADLINES

VIPS ADDS REGIONAL PLAN

Red Bull Junior Juri Vips has added a Formula Regional European programme to his campaign in Japan's Super Formula series. The Estonian has joined Finnish team KIC Motorsport as a back-up in case travel restrictions make it impossible to take up his seat in Japan with Team Mugen. Remarkably, FRegional offers the same F1 superlicence points as Super Formula. Another recent recruit to FRegional is 2019 W Series champion Jamie Chadwick, who has replaced Roman Stanek at top squad Prema.

BECKMANN IN AT TRIDENT

Multiple GP3 race winner David Beckmann is a late addition to the FIA Formula 3 field for this weekend's opening round at the Red Bull Ring. The German has reunited with Trident, with which he took three victories in 2018. He replaces Devlin DeFrancesco, who earlier this year dropped out of the late rounds of Asian F3 due to coronavirus worries.

TURNER'S HYBRID WORK

Works Aston Martin veteran Darren Turner has been taken on by British Touring Car Championship hybrid developer Cosworth as its test driver. Turner will join next week's BTCC two-day Goodyear tyre test at Snetterton with a Toyota Corolla run by Speedworks Motorsport, which is working with Cosworth on the project.

FITTIPALDI IS SAUBER JUNIOR

Sauber has launched a new junior-driver programme, with reigning German Formula 4 champion Theo Pourchaire, karters Emerson Fittipaldi Jr and Dexter Patterson, and Formula Renault Eurocup racer Petr Ptacek on its books. Pourchaire is racing in FIA F3 this year with ART, the team of Fred Vasseur, the principal of the Sauber-run Alfa F1 team. Scot Patterson will compete in Italian F4. Fittipaldi, 13, is the son of Emerson Sr, and uncle of Haas F1 test driver Pietro and Ferrari junior Enzo!

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F1 AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX PREVIEW

UK START TIMES

Friday 3 July
FP1 1000
FP2 1400

Saturday 4 July
FP3 1100
QUALIFYING 1400

Sunday 5 July
RACE 1410

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SKY SPORTS F1
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SPORTS EXTRA

HIGHLIGHTS CHANNEL 4 1830

TYRE ALLOCATION

CHAMPIONSHIP - FINAL 2019 POSITIONS

Drivers

1	**Hamilton**	413
2	**Bottas**	326
3	**Verstappen**	278
4	**Leclerc**	264
5	**Vettel**	240

Constructors

1	**Mercedes**	739
2	**Ferrari**	504
3	**Red Bull**	417
4	**McLaren**	145
5	**Renault**	91

Albon back on track at Silverstone filming day

RACE STATS

Previous winners

2019	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2018	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2017	**Valtteri Bottas**	Mercedes
2016	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes
2015	**Nico Rosberg**	Mercedes
2014	**Nico Rosberg**	Mercedes
2003	**Michael Schumacher**	Ferrari
2002	**Michael Schumacher**	Ferrari
2001	**David Coulthard**	McLaren
2000	**Mika Hakkinen**	McLaren

Laffite's 1981 win in Ligier-Matra boosts him to second in our table

Red Bull Ring masters

Leading points scorers for grands prix at Red Bull Ring/ A1 Ring/ Osterreichring. All races converted to current points system.

D Coulthard	118
J Laffite	96
A Prost	95
M Schumacher	93
A Jones	92
L Hamilton	85
R Peterson	78
K Raikkonen	77
N Piquet	76
C Reutemann	74

Using F1 for things that matter

Motorsport isn't exactly seen as a force for progressive change, which makes the interventions of Lewis Hamilton and his Mercedes team all the more significant

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

"If someone who has run the sport for decades has such a lack of understanding of the deep-rooted issues we as black people deal with every day, how can we expect all the people who work under him to understand? It starts at the top."

Lewis Hamilton wrote this as part of a message on his Instagram page last Friday in response to the appalling comments made by ex-Formula 1 boss Bernie Ecclestone, which the championship itself moved to condemn.

On Monday, his Mercedes squad revealed that it will run a black livery for the entire 2020 season as "a statement that we stand against racism and discrimination in all forms". It also revealed that just 3% of its workforce comes from minority ethnic backgrounds, and that only 12% are women.

If we take "the top" of F1 in a sporting sense, that unquestionably means Mercedes. The team has clinched double title success in the past six years and therefore sits at the pinnacle of motorsport.

That success has significant value for Mercedes as a business – the two W11 cars it will field for Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas are the prime pieces in what is a valuable and highly rewarding promotional programme for the marque. So, to have those machines displaying a promise to "improve the diversity of our team and our sport" is a tremendous statement,

"Meaningful change can't happen by shouting down those on the opposing side"

and one that supports Hamilton.

By keeping the livery (which it must be said is also utterly gorgeous) for an entire season, Mercedes is echoing Hamilton's commitment to "not stop pushing to create an inclusive future for our sport with equal opportunity for all", as his Instagram message continued.

Throughout recent weeks, as the Black Lives Matter movement has brought fresh attention to the push for racial equality in the wake of George Floyd's killing, phrases such as 'keep sport and politics separate' or 'stick to racing' come up again and again – and they are completely missing the point.

It's frustrating to see any anti-racism message attacked for being 'political' when it's such a clear-cut issue. But it is more frustrating still that certain politicians have used racism to sow division in our societies and use this for their own gain.

F1 is its own society – one that has been willing to walk the 'sport and politics don't mix' line uniquely throughout its history. The colours of the initial grand prix teams were associated with specific nationalities, it went behind the Iron Curtain when the Hungarian Grand Prix joined the calendar in the closing years of the Cold War, and the 1985 South African GP went ahead despite a boycott by French squads Renault and Ligier following the French government's sanctioning of the country over apartheid. In more recent years, races in Bahrain and Russia have been staged despite specific issues regarding human rights, which can be levelled at many other countries that F1 visits during a 'normal,' pandemic-free calendar.

"Racism and discrimination have no place in our society, our sport or our team: this is a core belief at Mercedes," said Toto Wolff regarding his team's adoption of the new livery. "But having the right beliefs and the right mindset isn't enough if we remain silent."

Meaningful change on any subject in any society can't happen simply by shouting down those on the opposing side – as difficult as that can be to accept sometimes. Which is why Hamilton's continued calls to promote education and discussion are so important.

The issue of problematic statues provides an example. Surely more people than ever have learned about the despicable means by which Edward Colston made his fortune since his statue was toppled in Bristol. Criminal damage should never be condoned, but by focusing on statues of people with a racist history, we learn why they are problematic and why it is wrong to venerate them in modern society.

By painting its 2020 cars in a livery designed to support F1's only black driver, Mercedes has helped send a powerful message. It will sit alongside the other sporting statements that have been aimed at making a difference in recent weeks – such as the English Premier League replacing player names with Black Lives Matter on the back of their shirts, and the players themselves taking a knee at the start of each match.

Allied to F1's We Race as One commitment – and not forgetting that Hamilton's intervention has already made a significant impact, with many of his fellow drivers offering their public support for a cause some admitted they had struggled to find the words to address – the livery will serve as a constant reminder to keep the conversations going this year and beyond.

P16 F1 2020 SEASON PREVIEW

YOUR SAY

After the false dawn of Australia, and with the unfortunate and sad weeks we have recently endured, it's great to have some F1 action to look forward to once again

MA SMITH

Can't wait for the season to start

With the beginning of the new-look Formula 1 season now imminent, the excitement is building. After the false dawn of Australia, and with the unfortunate and sad weeks we have recently endured, it's great to have some action to look forward to once again.

So I thought maybe an official minute's silence for the racing fans that have been lost over the past few months, before the start of the first race, would be a respectful opening to a great F1 (half) year and of course with it, a welcome return through my door of the splendid Autosport publication. Here's to a gripping, close season.

MA Smith
By email

Insightful guide to making motorsport work

I have just finished reading Ross Brawn and Adam Parr's book *Total Competition*. I think it should be required reading for anyone involved in F1 and other motorsports.

The points raised and arguments presented are coherent and articulate and offer great insight into how F1 can redeem itself, cut costs, and move forward in unity rather than the current semi-dysfunctional approach as it appears to many of the fans and supporters of F1.

I have written on this subject in the past, but one issue raised was the unbelievable costs of shaving fractions of a second off a lap time. The amounts are obscene in the context of any economic standards and should be proof that changes are absolutely necessary.

Neil Davey
Newport, South Wales

The next big racing merger?

Look ahead five years and consider what happens if the car manufacturers stop writing big cheques for an F1 series that is divergent from their road car direction.

At the same time the IndyCar series prospers in its own back yard under Roger Penske, who is a global player at

heart, but holds the keys to the US mass-appeal market.

What price rule convergence to share costs and marketing? What price a Penske takeover or merger with F1 by, say, 2026? Never say never.

Steve Singleton
Yorkshire

Empty grandstands are nothing new

Some say grands prix without spectators will be strange – won't they simply remind us of the early races in China?

Graeme Innes-Johnstone
Elland, West Yorks

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MARK THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Red Bull v Mercedes

Why the pressure is on Red Bull to end Mercedes' title run

Alex Kalinauckas

As Ferrari seems to have lost its way, it's for Red Bull to take up the cudgels against Mercedes. And it's ready for the fight in a way we haven't seen since its championship-winning heyday

CLIVE MASON/GETTY IMAGES / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

In another age, before the expected 2020 calendar was swept away by the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdowns, six days of pre-season testing at Barcelona provided a theoretical guide to this year's Formula 1 pecking order.

Anybody hoping for clear signs that Mercedes had suddenly produced a dud with the W11 was left disappointed, as the team that has claimed all 12 titles since 2014 topped the times at both three-day tests. But there was delicious drama behind — indeed, in the back of the W11, as Mercedes twice had to swap engines as reliability problems dogged the reigning champion squad, and impacted customer team Williams.

But it was the team that has finished directly behind Mercedes in the past three constructors' championships that sounded particularly downbeat about its chances. Ferrari spent the two Barcelona tests running a programme that was focused on fully understanding the SF1000 and not getting carried away with headline times and race runs, which had led to so much dashed hope at the start of 2019.

The car looked to be giving Charles Leclerc and Sebastian Vettel a hard time through the corners and was down on straightline pace. Ferrari's settlement with the FIA regarding its 2019 power-unit arrangement perhaps explained the latter issue, which was set to be a major point of controversy over the Australian Grand Prix weekend before a rather more serious problem struck that race down. As if to deliberately underline Ferrari's harsh reality, team principal Mattia Binotto insisted it was "not hiding" performance and that "it seems our main competitors are certainly faster".

As a result of Binotto's use of a plural in that final point, it is the team bearing the same name as the track that will now host the 2020 season opener (and the second race, the Styrian GP) that must

"Mercedes had the strongest form in testing. But hopefully we can push them hard at a track that's been good for us"

be expected to be Mercedes' closest challenger. Red Bull is on a hot streak at its home track, where Max Verstappen has been victorious in two entertaining races over the past two years, and where Mercedes has struggled. Although the Silver Arrows squad was struck down by hydraulics and fuel-pressure problems in 2018, and cooling issues significantly hampered its pace last year, two wins in the two most recent races at the Red Bull Ring are a good omen for the Christian Horner-run team.

"It's been a great circuit for us the past couple of years," he says, before naturally refusing to get carried away. "Mercedes have underperformed there the past couple of years, but we don't take anything for granted. So, they still head into the season very much as the favourites. They certainly had the strongest form in pre-season testing. But hopefully we can push them quite hard at the circuit that has been good for us."

Red Bull's form in pre-season testing was harder to read, but the team exuded a quiet confidence as it went about completing its Barcelona programme. Verstappen put the squad second in the overall times, 0.537 seconds adrift of Valtteri Bottas's best, but he set his quickest time on the C4 Pirelli testing rubber — one step harder than the C5s on the Mercedes driver's machine.

The RB16 looked absolutely planted when viewed trackside at Barcelona, and the fact that Red Bull avoided using the softest rubber to set its quickest time (and Alex Albon was 20th in the combined times — see table, right) suggests the team was trying to keep its full performance under wraps. There *were* still issues as

PPE can't hide Horner's excitement at the impending battle

MARK THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

2019 Austrian GP: stunning comeback win for Verstappen

MAUGER motorsport IMAGES

Red Bull's true pace was hard to gauge in testing as it played its cards close to its chest

MAUGER motorsport IMAGES

Red Bull bosses value Albon and Verstappen's positive relationship

S BLOXHAM motorsport IMAGES

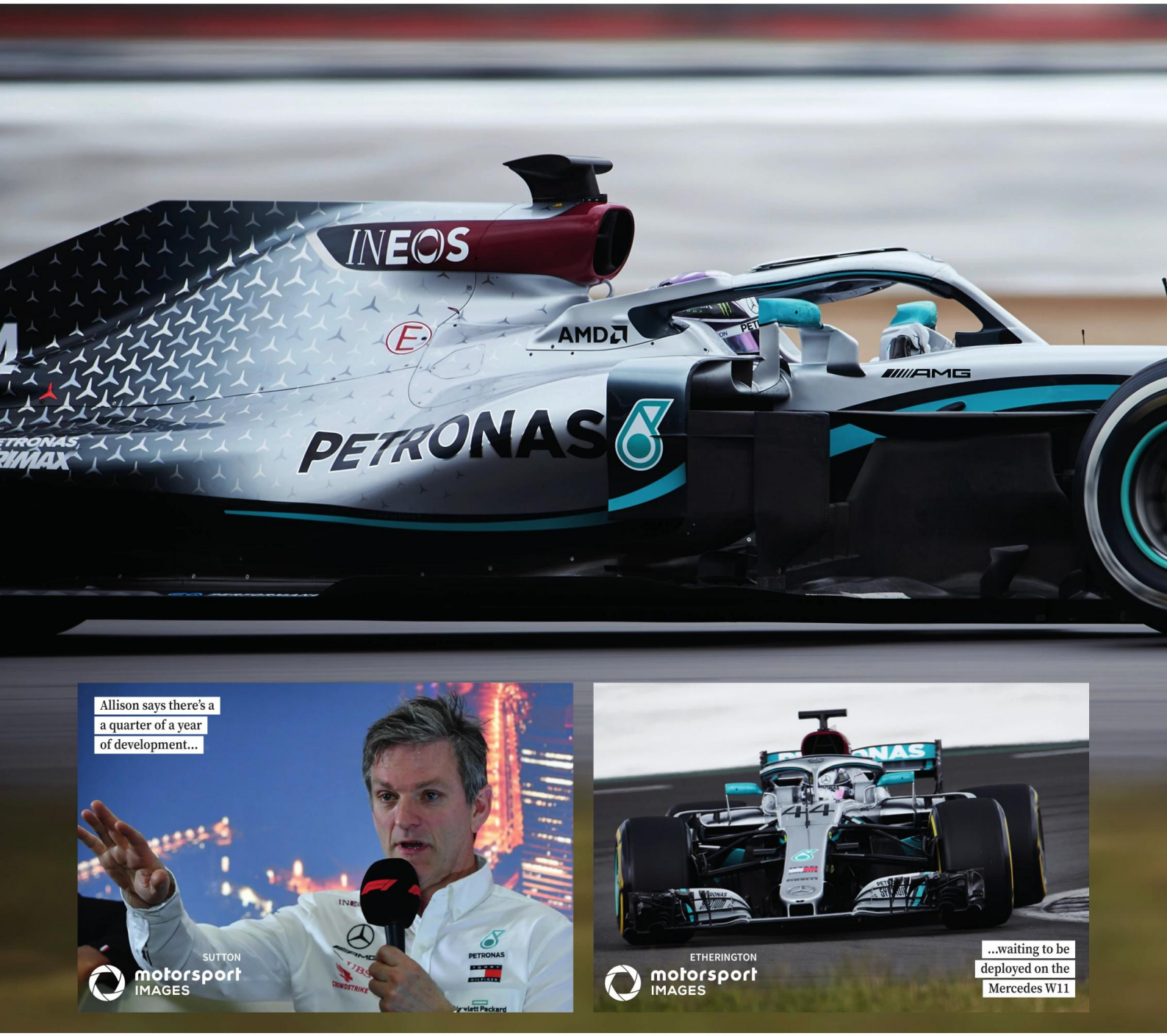
Combined fastest times from both tests

POS	DRIVER	CAR	FASTEST TIME
1	**Valtteri Bottas**	Mercedes W11	1m15.732s
2	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull-Honda RB16	1m16.269s
3	**Daniel Ricciardo**	Renault RS20	1m16.276s
4	**Charles Leclerc**	Ferrari SF1000	1m16.360s
5	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes W11	1m16.410s
6	**Esteban Ocon**	Renault RS20	1m16.433s
7	**Sergio Perez**	Racing Point-Mercedes RP20	1m16.634s
8	**Carlos Sainz Jr**	McLaren-Renault MCL35	1m16.820s
9	**Sebastian Vettel**	Ferrari SF1000	1m16.841s
10	**George Russell**	Williams-Mercedes FW43	1m16.871s
11	**Daniil Kvyat**	AlphaTauri-Honda AT01	1m16.914s
12	**Robert Kubica**	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari C39	1m16.942s
13	**Romain Grosjean**	Haas-Ferrari VF-20	1m17.037s
14	**Pierre Gasly**	AlphaTauri-Honda AT01	1m17.066s
15	**Kimi Raikkonen**	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari C39	1m17.091s
16	**Lance Stroll**	Racing Point-Mercedes RP20	1m17.118s
17	**Nicholas Latifi**	Williams-Mercedes FW43	1m17.313s
18	**Antonio Giovinazzi**	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari C39	1m17.469s
19	**Kevin Magnussen**	Haas-Ferrari VF-20	1m17.495s
20	**Alexander Albon**	Red Bull-Honda RB16	1m17.550s
21	**Lando Norris**	McLaren-Renault MCL35	1m17.573s

both Verstappen and Albon had several spins, although high winds and a damp start, which preceded Verstappen pirouetting off and causing a red flag on the penultimate day of testing, were offered as explanations. Indeed, if Red Bull's 2020 challenger had some sort of innate balance issue, it surely wouldn't have looked so strong in trackside observations (where Mercedes also seemed mighty).

"I think we had a good pre-season," says Horner. "It felt like Mercedes still are a sniff ahead. But it's all going to come down to the rate of development. And obviously Honda's evolution as well. I'm sure the top teams will all be bringing updates that would have normally been [added on] in the early European season, and it's going to be about how much that is worth. Who's going to be putting on the most performance onto their cars?"

This brings us to an interesting point of consideration. The cars that take to the track in practice for the Austrian GP tomorrow (Friday) won't be exactly the same as the ones that left Barcelona in February. The pandemic lockdowns may have brought the >>



Allison says there's a a quarter of a year of development...

SUTTON
motorsport IMAGES

...waiting to be deployed on the Mercedes W11

ETHERINGTON
motorsport IMAGES

summer shutdown forward to the spring, and this was extended from three weeks to nine, but the teams had improvements ready to go following testing, and indeed had the season started as expected they would have added more design tweaks when the action returned to Europe for the now cancelled Dutch Grand Prix.

"The normal process has continued because a lot of the development was in the pipeline following the testing, which would have been introduced at Zandvoort," explains Horner, "or updates that would have also happened in Vietnam [the expected race before the Dutch GP once the Chinese GP was called off]. So, they all get rolled up and packaged into what will appear on the car in Austria."

This situation applies to all teams, so we can look forward to the opening practice sessions being particularly busy as the field assesses whether the upgrades work as expected. And as the bigger teams generally bring constant upgrades to races given their greater levels of resources, putting that all on at the same time raises the prospect of much of the testing picture being refreshed.

Binotto was adamant that his squad was behind Mercedes and Red Bull in February, but at the same time he insisted Ferrari would be back on terms as the season wore on.

When asked how he reacted to Binotto's assertions about Ferrari's pace in winter testing, which effectively heaped the pressure on Red Bull to take the fight to Mercedes, Horner says: "Obviously we have analysis available to us — that we all do — with the GPS overlays. And you could see that they'd taken a significant hit in straightline performance from where they were last year.

"But I'm sure they've worked hard during the interim, and I'm sure they'll be a contender as we head into Austria, but certainly in pre-season, you could see that they were down on performance from 12 months previously."

By anyone's assessment — be they Red Bull, Ferrari, even Autosport — it is Mercedes that heads to the two Austrian races as the benchmark. It has six years of success as proof of its potential, plus its now proven track record of keeping its mantle as F1's best

Hamilton has a point to prove at Red Bull's home race

through regulation resets. So, Mercedes can also be expected to have developed the W11 through the coronavirus delay. Like Red Bull, it had upgrades ready to add in the spring events – and it has something of a score to settle at the Red Bull Ring.

"If you imagine where the launch car was and the car that would have gone to Australia – that was frozen around Christmas," Mercedes technical director James Allison recently explained. "There was the whole of January, whole of February, March, all making the car quicker in the windtunnel and also in the design departments. We got quite a lot of ideas about how to make it quicker, and quite a lot of those ideas were already in process through the design office before we were forced to shut down.

"Our challenge now is to make sure that quarter of a year of development can get off the drawing boards and onto the car as swiftly as possible. We hope to have a chunk of that for the first race in Austria, and the season that follows will take as much of the development as fast as we can get it onto the car in turn." >>

'Class A' musical chairs stops for now

Away from the pandemic and the state of flux it created in Formula 1's 2020 season, the biggest news since the aborted Australian Grand Prix weekend was undoubtedly Sebastian Vettel's announcement of his departure from Ferrari (see page 24).

It was significant for several reasons, one of which was the impact it had on other squads. Ferrari more than likely knew more than it was letting on regarding Vettel's future during winter testing, as new hire Carlos Sainz Jr has since revealed he'd had contact with Maranello over the 2019-20 off-season. Given his positive relationship with soon-to-be former squad McLaren, Sainz let Zak Brown and co know about the talks, and his current team was able to reposition itself and snare Daniel Ricciardo from Renault.

Ferrari sealing its 2021 driver line-up has effectively sewn up the Class A drivers for that campaign, because unless anything dramatic happens regarding Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas (whose name has come up in rumours over Ricciardo's replacement at Renault) Mercedes will keep hold of its current racers.

Red Bull had already tied Max Verstappen to a contract running to the end of 2023, and in winter testing Alex Albon was clear that his employer would give him ample time to prove he can justify holding the seat he was unexpectedly promoted into midway through 2019.

"It's a good, healthy dynamic that we have between the two drivers. Our intention is for that to continue"

When asked about the movements of former Red Bull juniors Vettel and Sainz, and his team's own plans, Christian Horner is clear about the state of play.

"Nothing's changed from when he [Albon] was re-signed for 2020, from the end of last year to now – so we don't have any more information," he says. "My expectation is that he'll just continue to develop, continue to improve.

"And it's a good dynamic that we have between the two drivers. A healthy dynamic. So, our intention will be for that to continue. Of course, we haven't done a single race yet, but if we had to make the decision today it would be the same. We're very happy with our two drivers."

Mercedes looks set to face a consistently robust challenge to its supremacy

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The 2020 F1 season is going to be very different from what we were all expecting. The pandemic is far from over, and the fact that races are set to take place at all is testament to the hard work and protocols the championship's stakeholders have established to make sure F1 can visit various countries safely.

But it certainly will not be the record-breaking 22-race length that had been anticipated, and there are no guarantees the season will reach the "15 to 22" event target set by F1 CEO Chase Carey. Further developments in the pandemic could yet stop the championship traversing the globe, especially when moving on from the European summer events that will be tackled first.

Although they will be two separate competitions, the 2020 and 2021 campaigns are now also intrinsically linked by the pandemic, as the current cars will be kept on for a second season as a cost-saving measure. The teams will be able to make two developments via a token-upgrade system in agreement with the FIA for 2021 (McLaren must spend tokens on adapting its MCL35 to the Mercedes engines it will run from 2021), but essentially what they have now, and how they can adapt it over the coming months, is locked in until the latest rules reset is finally brought in for 2022.

"We've effectively got a year and a half to get out of these cars," says Horner. "So it's going to be a smash°-and-grab kind of season this year, with prolonged development that goes through with this car carried over into next year."

Red Bull has had one advantage ahead of the Austrian GP. It was the only 'Class A' team to conduct a run with its 2020 challenger in preparation for the new season opener, although it was a designated filming day, which means a 100km limit to running conducted on demonstration tyres. Mercedes and Ferrari were limited to tests with their 2018 cars at Silverstone and Mugello respectively.

The purpose of these runs was largely to test the new safety protocols required for what F1 sporting director Ross Brawn called a "biosphere", which means physical distancing for team members wearing personal protective equipment. But that doesn't mean the Red Bull boss missed an opportunity to score a psychological point regarding last week's run. "It was good to get them doing some of the basics again – pitstops and some of the fundamentals just to blow away the cobwebs," explains Horner. "It was a useful exercise. Good to see the cars running again and good to see the team straight back down to sub-two-second pitstops."

"It's going to be a smash-and-grab kind of season this year, with prolonged development carried over into next year"

Horner isn't done laying down markers ahead of the new campaign, referencing Red Bull's most recent title-winning year when asked to offer his expectations for the season ahead.

"It's going to be intense," he says. "Races are going to come thick and fast. And it feels that we're going into the season better prepared – or that it's the best we've been prepared since probably 2013. Certainly in the hybrid era, it's been our best off-season. Our second year in our relationship with Honda feels more integrated, and they're very much part of the team now. And we're excited – we're really excited to go racing."

After so much tragedy and heartbreak, we look again to sport to provide much needed relief. If Red Bull can reach the heights it most recently scaled in 2013 and take the fight to Mercedes, then however long the 2020 season lasts it will be even more noteworthy for motorsport historians. As the cliche goes, come the end of qualifying on Saturday, we'll have the clearest indication yet regarding F1's new reality.

MARKUS BERGER / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Circuit's bucolic setting makes it an ideal testbed for new ways of working

How Red Bull helped get F1 back on track

When the running gets under way at this weekend's Austrian Grand Prix, it's worth considering how important the name above the door at the Red Bull Ring has been to getting the 2020 Formula 1 season going.

By mid-April, the COVID-19 pandemic had forced the cancellation or postponement of 10 races – each loss a blow to anyone missing the joyful break it offers from 'normal' life, which had of course been utterly disrupted for so many. But thanks to the comparatively low number of coronavirus cases in the country (it has had 702 deaths at the time of writing), Austria was able to exit its lockdown much earlier than some other European nations. Eventually, the Austrian GP was the next question mark on the calendar, but it has in fact retained its expected date slot. What has changed is the addition of a second race at the Red Bull Ring that has been assigned the title Styrian Grand Prix. Both events, and the following races in Hungary, Britain, Spain, Belgium and Italy, will take place behind closed doors.

The Red Bull Ring is an ideal setting for F1 to get used to the new ways of working, particularly regarding social and physical distancing. The circuit is located in Austria's picturesque Styrian state, well away from major urban areas – the nearest is Graz, over 40 miles away. There are seven nearby hotels dedicated to the Projekt Spielberg initiative, which means F1's 'biosphere' can be contained in a relatively small area.

"Quite early in the shutdown, as circuits were falling by the wayside, there was a determination within Red Bull to host the race, and then quite rapidly it became the opening race," says Christian Horner. "And as Red Bull owns the facility and has built and developed it, it was really [Red Bull boss] Dietrich Mateschitz's vision and commitment that enabled it to happen. And it's effectively become a blueprint which others could follow. It's exciting for us to be having not just one but two races in Austria and to be kicking off the championship."

"Red Bull worked hard on it, well supported by the government and Liberty and the governing body"

When asked how the discussions with the Austrian government, F1 itself and the FIA had developed regarding the Red Bull Ring races, Horner explains that it's been a joint effort.

"It was a matter of working with the government, with F1 and the governing body and getting the confidence that it could be managed safely and securely," he says. "Red Bull worked very hard on that over the past couple of months , well supported by the government and Liberty and the governing body."

The plans to keep F1's (reduced) paddock personnel safe during the campaign will be regularly reviewed, so expect more tweaks after this weekend. But once the lights go out at the start of Sunday's race, some normality at least will return. A good thing, then, that the Red Bull Ring usually provides plenty of talking points.

"It can produce good races; the weather can be variable as well," says Horner. "The chances of both races being dry is optimistic. It's got the ability to produce a thriller."

MAUGER

Vettel at Ferrari

Starts: 101
Wins: 14
Poles: 12
Fastest laps: 14
Points: 1367

Ferrari

Why Vettel is starting his final Ferrari chapter

Luke Smith

A reassessment of priorities by the four-time world champion, plus the reality check of a young hotshoe team-mate, brought an end to his Ferrari dream

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

When four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel's move to Ferrari was announced back in November 2014, both were in need of a boost. Vettel had suffered a disappointing season alongside Daniel Ricciardo at Red Bull, and the Ferrari-Fernando Alonso relationship had come to an end with no world titles.

For Vettel, the move to Maranello was the fulfilment of a long-held dream to follow in the footsteps of his hero, Michael Schumacher. Like Schumacher, Vettel wanted to build a team around him and restore Ferrari to its former greatness.

But less than six years later, Vettel is gearing up for one final, shortened season with Ferrari before leaving the team, after his exit was confirmed at the beginning of May.

As the world was put on hold amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Vettel was given time to think carefully about his future. With his contract running out at the end of this year and Ferrari clearly rallying around his younger team-mate, Charles Leclerc, Vettel saw that the writing was on the wall. Word soon emerged that both he and Ferrari had decided to call off contract talks by mutual agreement, with formal confirmation coming less than 12 hours later. Vettel's great Ferrari dream was over.

There were a few hints at the reasons behind the decision in Vettel's comments announcing his exit. "In order to get the best possible results in this sport, it's vital for all parties to work in perfect harmony," he said. "The team and I have realised that there is no longer a common desire to stay together beyond the end of this season."

The Ferrari battleplan that was sold to Vettel when he joined for 2015 slowly faded as the years went by. The squad made good on its promise to deliver a car capable of winning the title, in 2017 and 2018, only for mistakes by both Vettel and the team to result in any chance of glory slipping through their fingers.

But the set-up at Ferrari shifted too. Team principal Maurizio Arrivabene and chairman Sergio Marchionne were both instrumental in bringing Vettel to Maranello. Marchionne's death in the summer of 2018 and Arrivabene's exit before the start of last season brought change to the team, with new F1 boss Mattia Binotto favouring a more open, transparent approach.

And that approach meant there was no dragging out of talks with Vettel. Once they realised they had reached stalemate, the white flag was raised. Ferrari had been sounding out other drivers as far back as December, allowing it to announce McLaren's Carlos Sainz Jr for 2021 just 48 hours after Vettel's exit had been confirmed.

Both Vettel and Binotto stressed publicly on multiple occasions through the winter that they expected a new contract to be finalised. But privately at Ferrari there was a level of scepticism about how successful talks would be. That ran deeper than a simple sounding-out of Sainz and Ricciardo – who ultimately missed out on the seat for a second time – with indications being made many months ago that Vettel might not re-sign.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a fresh perspective on what's important in life for everyone. In the case of Vettel, it was particularly timely. After 13 seasons in the sport, the chance to have some time at home with his young family – including a six-month-old baby boy – will have been precious to him. But as it coincided with planning for his future, it accelerated his decision to not settle for a deal with Ferrari that would have left him unhappy.

"There are a lot of sportsmen that thrive for money. The question is whether people have a sense of 'enough'"

Vettel didn't want to play second fiddle to Leclerc, the new darling of Maranello with a five-year contract under his belt after his breakout 2019. He wanted to know he could fight for wins and titles on a level playing field. Anything less would sap his enjoyment, something he was not willing to settle for.

"What's been happening in these past few months has led many of us to reflect on what are our real priorities in life," Vettel said in the announcement. "One needs to use one's imagination and to adopt a new approach to a situation that has changed.

"Financial matters have played no part in this joint decision. That's not the way I think when it comes to making certain choices and it never will be."

Vettel spoke about the need for happiness in an interview with Autosport at the Australian Grand Prix, prior to the race's cancellation. "There are a lot of sportsmen, businessmen that thrive for money," he said. "I think the question really is whether people have a sense of 'enough'.

"That's not just valid for Formula 1. We are putting our life in »

a way also on the line, then you need to show some appreciation for that. Our careers also are shorter than some other careers. I think the really important thing is that you are happy, that's the key."

Vettel's happiness at Ferrari had worn away in recent years, with 2019 and the emergence of Leclerc being the breaking point. Vettel saw his younger colleague getting the kind of attention and adulation he craved but was no longer getting. He was not enjoying the status he felt he deserved as a four-time world champion.

It was something Vettel's former Red Bull team-mate, Mark Webber, had noted. "Knowing how [Vettel] works, which is 110%; he puts a lot of time and effort into it and he expects the same clearly," Webber said on the *F1 Nation* podcast.

"Michael [Schumacher] got in there, you had Rory Byrne, Ross Brawn, Jean Todt, a very good mixture of culture when Michael was dominating. I'm not nailing the Italians, but I'm just saying

"Seb's run out of puff. He's clearly not getting out of bed motivated to drive a red car, and that's an issue"

when they are all one army, they still haven't delivered.

"Seb under that regime... they did what they could, and he's just run out of puff there. He's literally just run out of puff. He's clearly not getting out of bed now motivated to drive a red car, and that's an issue."

Ferrari had, quite simply, moved on. It saw Leclerc as the man leading the team for years to come, evidenced by his long-term contract announced back in December. The friction between the two drivers was something Ferrari could not let persist, risking a similar kind of rot seen at Mercedes between Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg. There was no longer a need for Vettel in the same way as there had been before.

"We closed a cycle with Sebastian," Binotto said. "Sebastian has been working in our team for six years. I admire Sebastian, I admire him as a person and as a professional driver. I hold him in great esteem. We are laying the foundations for our future, and we want to have a specific perspective. We talked with Sebastian, and we found out we didn't share the same short or long-term goals."

Long-term, supporting Leclerc's bids to become world champion was never a goal Vettel was going to share.

The break-up has all seemed fairly civil thus far. Vettel made his first appearance back in Ferrari colours during the filming day at Mugello at the end of June to prepare for this weekend's race in Austria, meeting up with his colleagues — including Leclerc — for the first time since the announcement. Leclerc, meanwhile, had already been at the factory the previous week, completing a brief run in the 2020 SF1000 car around the streets of Maranello.

MAUGER

But both parties still have what looks set to be a painful 2020 season to get through. Ferrari struggled through winter testing, looking like the third-fastest team firmly behind Mercedes and Red Bull. The limits on development through the upcoming season to try to cut costs following the COVID-19 pandemic only add to the bleak picture for the team heading into the new campaign.

Implicit admission that Ferrari is trailing came in Binotto's reluctant acceptance of the delay in the new regulations until 2022, warranting a carryover of the current cars into next season to ease development costs. Ferrari eventually agreed with the other nine teams, with Binotto saying it was "not the time for selfishness", but he conceded the decision was not to the advantage of Ferrari.

DUNBAR

Ferrari is expected to be behind Mercedes and Red Bull this season

SUTTON

Binotto and Vettel gave outward indications of wanting a deal

The 2020 season has been truncated, but it could still drag for Vettel and Ferrari

It could make 2021 just as difficult as 2020.

Vettel has a season to endure with a team that no longer wants him and that he no longer wants to race for, in a car that may not give him the chance to add to his tally of 14 grand prix victories for Ferrari. It all points towards this year being a long, tough slog – even with a truncated season.

It also yields the question of what Vettel does next. At 33 (which he turns tomorrow, Friday), he is hardly at the age to be considering a permanent retirement from F1, and his form through 2019, while patchy in places, proved he is still capable of winning GPs and fighting with the very best drivers.

There has been little indication from Vettel as to what his next move will be, only saying in the announcement that he would "take the time I need to reflect on what really matters when it comes to my future". Tying in with his family focus and change in perspectives following the pandemic, it would perhaps not be so surprising to see him call it quits completely.

The lack of options elsewhere on the grid for 2021 also complicates matters. The idea of forming a 10-time (or will it be 11-time by then?) world champion superteam with Hamilton at Mercedes has been mooted, with team principal Toto Wolff saying Vettel's availability was not something that could be ignored.

But given the success of the team with Hamilton of late and its own ongoing talks to tie the six-time champion down, rocking the boat would seem too risky. Hamilton's incumbent team-mate, Valtteri Bottas, also claims he has been told that Vettel is not an option for 2021.

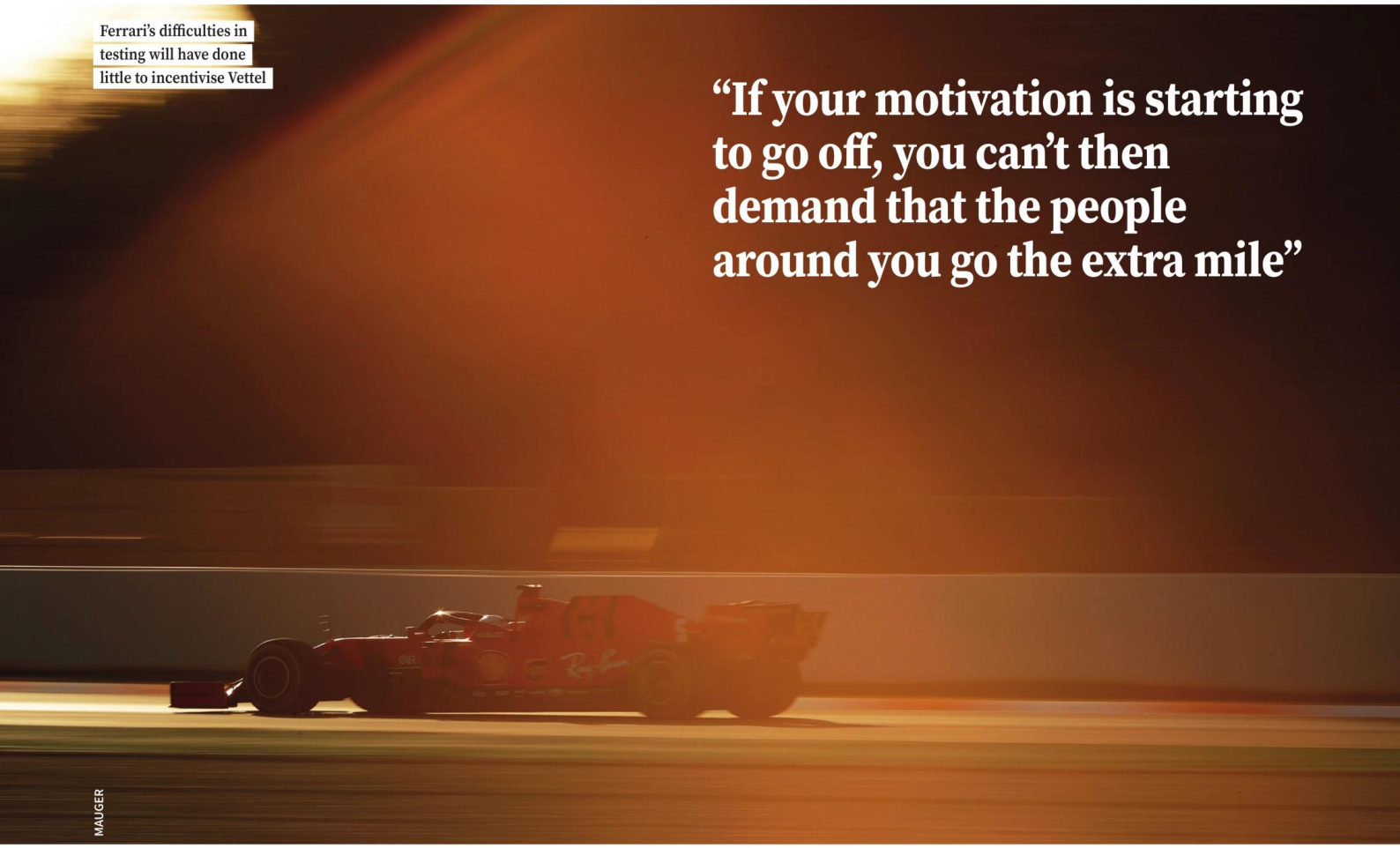
Renault may have a free seat on offer, but the appeal to Vettel of racing back in F1's midfield would be hard to understand. He was not even a consideration for McLaren to move in the »

In happier times with Marchionne and Arrivabene

SUTTON

Ferrari sees Leclerc as the man leading the team for years to come

GALLOWAY



Ferrari's difficulties in testing will have done little to incentivise Vettel

MAUGER

"If your motivation is starting to go off, you can't then demand that the people around you go the extra mile"

opposite direction to Sainz.

Webber said he thought Vettel would take a year off before coming back rejuvenated, but warned it would become more difficult the longer he left it. "Ultimately for me, it just got a bit harder," Webber said. "In your late thirties, that tenth just takes a bit longer to get a bit more confident in certain positions and certain scenarios.

"I wanted to be mindful of if you are starting to look at your clock, the motivation is starting to go off in briefings or whatever, you can't then demand that from the people around you to go the extra mile for you. You can when you're hungry, motivated, disciplined, you're one team and you've got a goal. If you are 9.5 out of 10, you can't have the same mission with your employees."

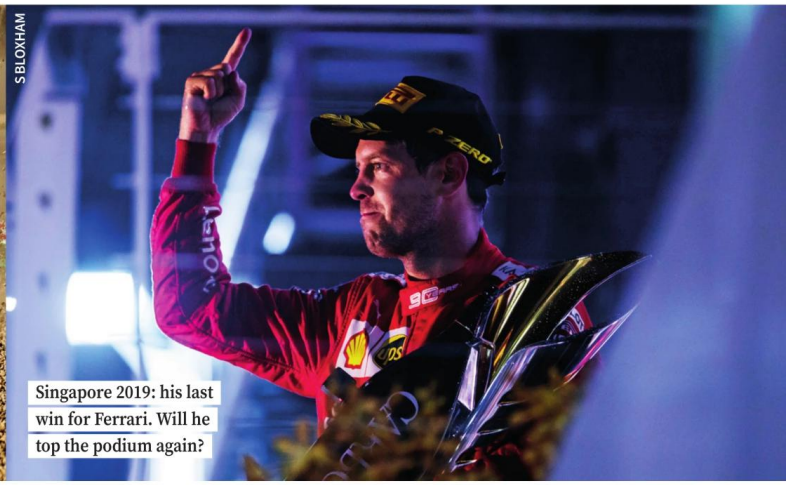
But another comment from Webber resonated upon Vettel's announcement, this one made back in 2014. "I think Seb will do everything early in life," Webber said. "He's got his titles and his results early, he's going to have a kid early and I think he'll retire early. He'll probably take a blast in the red car, then sayonara."

The end of the marriage between Vettel and Ferrari is the latest in a long line of unfulfilled potential for partnerships between great drivers and F1's most famous team. His departure lacks the immediacy or toxicity of that of Alonso or Alain Prost, yet that could only make things more painful for Vettel. He's got another season to get through, when he could be forgiven for having already mentally checked out.

Regardless of his next move and how uncompetitive Ferrari may be this year, it gives Vettel one final chance to make a stand and prove he is still one of the best in the world. The final act of his Maranello tragedy could come to play a big part in defining how kindly history looks upon his Ferrari career.

ANDRE

Off to a bad start: Vettel spins out in testing at Barcelona in February



S BLOXHAM

Singapore 2019: his last win for Ferrari. Will he top the podium again?

Drama in the driver market

Sainz is confirmed replacement for Vettel in 2021

TEE

As rapid as Ferrari may have been in confirming Carlos Sainz Jr as Sebastian Vettel's replacement for 2021, such haste has been rare in the 25-year-old Spaniard's F1 career.

Sainz was initially overlooked for a Toro Rosso F1 seat in 2015, only for Vettel's move to Ferrari – ironically – to open a seat. After being pursued by Renault through 2017, he was then frozen out midway through 2018 by its signing of Daniel Ricciardo. But McLaren's change of line-up for 2019 helped keep Sainz on the grid, and he flourished.

Such stability was something he had never felt under Red Bull's umbrella, and his new-found ease brought out the best of him on-track. Sainz led McLaren to fourth in the constructors' championship, and he finished the year sixth in the standings as F1's midfield king. He capped it with a charge from 20th to third (after Lewis Hamilton's penalty) in the Brazilian Grand Prix, McLaren's first top-three finish for nearly six years.

It was form Ferrari could not ignore. As attractive as race winner Ricciardo may have been, when it came to finding the best fit for the future, Sainz ticked all the boxes for Ferrari. Talks began over the winter

"As attractive as race winner Ricciardo may have been, Sainz ticked all the boxes for Ferrari"

before accelerating as Vettel neared the exit, allowing for such a swift announcement to be made once the deal was completed.

Sainz informed McLaren of the talks with Ferrari at the earliest opportunity, allowing the team to make its own preparations. It was able to announce Ricciardo on a multi-year deal before Ferrari made the Sainz news official, signing the Australian to partner Lando Norris for 2021. The high jinks the pair get up to are surely to become the stuff of internet meme gold.

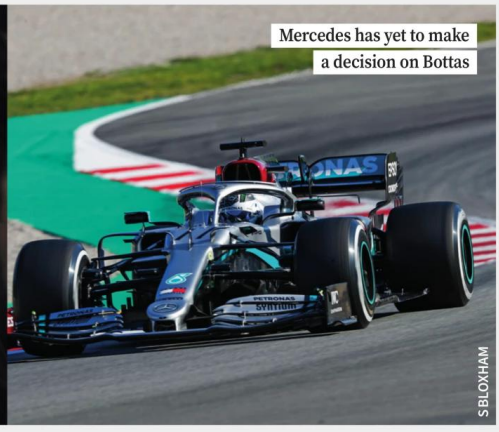
But like Vettel, both Sainz and Ricciardo still have a season to complete with teams they are confirmed to be leaving. While McLaren stresses it remains an "open book" with Sainz, and has expressed its pride in his development that has led to his Ferrari move, Ricciardo is set for a frosty season at Renault. It offered no best wishes on confirming his exit, instead stressing the importance of "unity and commitment" for the future of its F1 project.

The moves proved that even amid the pandemic uncertainty, teams were not willing to 'make do' until some semblance of normality returned. The driver market has been given a shot in the arm, with the repercussions set to unfold in the coming months. Renault now has a works seat available for next year, surely making it the most attractive option for any drivers left floating in the market, while Mercedes also has to make a decision on Valtteri Bottas's future.

May kicked off F1's 'silly-season' fun, and there could be plenty more drama to follow.

SUTTON

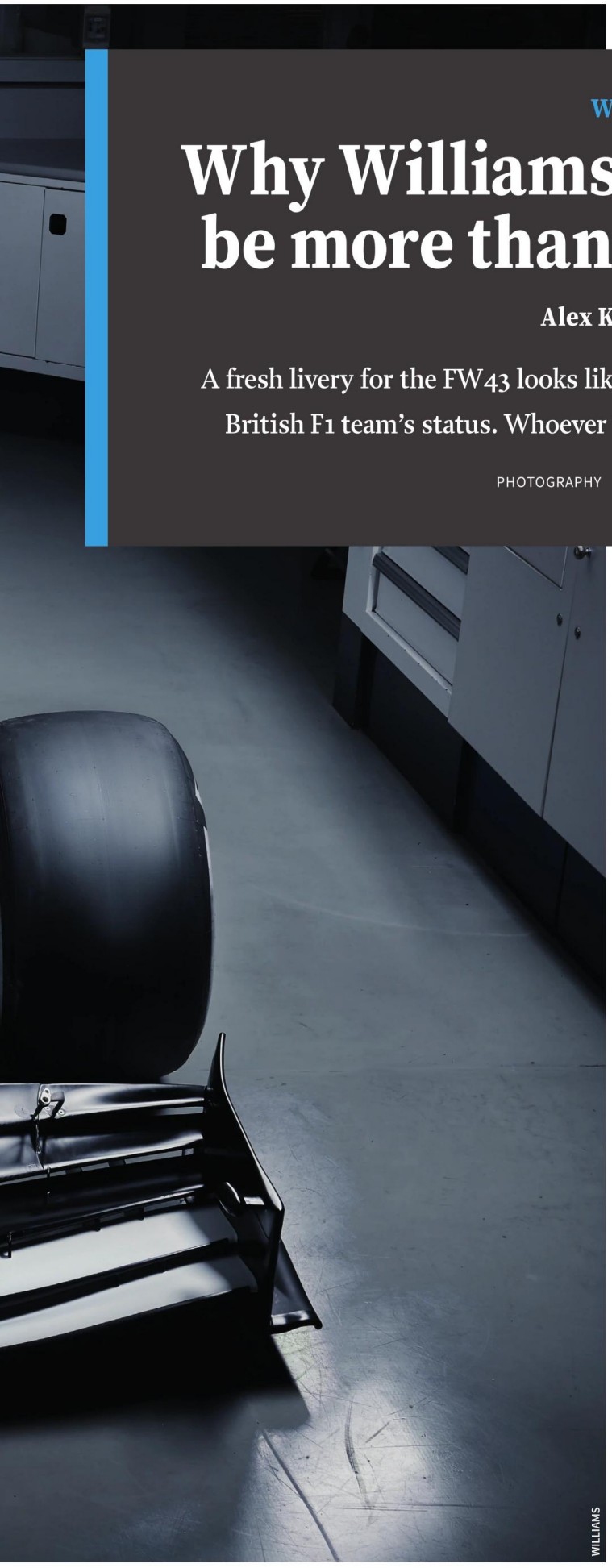
Ricciardo is off to McLaren in 2021



Mercedes has yet to make a decision on Bottas

S BLOXHAM

Parting of the ways with former title sponsor means clean new look



Williams

Why Williams's new look may be more than just a paint job

Alex Kalinauckas

A fresh livery for the FW43 looks likely to herald a seismic shift in this iconic British F1 team's status. Whoever imagined Williams being up for sale...?

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

When George Russell and Nicholas Latifi leave the pits at the Red Bull Ring for free practice this Friday, their cars will look noticeably different from when a Williams FW43 last graced the track in Formula 1 winter testing.

Williams has adopted a new colour scheme after splitting with former title sponsor ROKiT at the end of May (see page 32). Now the team's 2020 challenger is a sleek overall white with blue flashes, where once it was jarringly splashed with red.

The FW43 does now look very clean, but definitely a little bare – with 'Williams' writ large on the rear wing in place of a sponsor's logo a reminder of what the team has recently been through. Off-track developments over the past few months point to deeper change at Williams than merely new colours. Indeed, if certain suggestions play out, they could result in the biggest change in the family-run squad's 42-year history as an F1 constructor.

"This could result in the biggest change in the family-run squad's 42-year history as a Formula 1 constructor"

In December 2019 Williams sold the Advanced Engineering entity – which among many projects runs the Jaguar Formula E team – with WGPH (Williams Grand Prix Holdings) retaining a minority stake. In April WGPH refinanced its corporate borrowings, which resulted in a loan package worth £28million via a mortgage on its land and building assets, with more than 100 of its historic F1 cars included as security. The new agreement meant HSBC, which issued loans to the company in 2015 that have now been replaced, is retained as Williams's long-standing banking partner, and Latifi's father Michael also contributed to that lending.

The refinancing was conducted against the dramatic backdrop of the unfolding coronavirus pandemic, which by that stage had forced the cancellation of eight F1 races, with many more subsequently cancelled or shifted before a start to the season, at this weekend's »

ROKiT fired, but still in orbit

Williams's revelation that it is seeking new investment and is open to fully selling the team to secure its future can euphemistically be described as a 'strategic review' of its operations.

Part of the announcement regarding that move was that Williams had revealed it had "served notice to terminate its relationship" with ROKiT – the mobile phone and wifi services provider that had served as its title sponsor since the start of the 2019 Formula 1 season – and its sister brand ROKiT Drinks, which was also a major Williams sponsor.

It was that decision – which ROKiT was apparently only informed of on the day of Williams's announcement on its financial future – that has led to the FW43s being given a fresh livery ahead of the pandemic-delayed 2020 campaign finally starting.

This was the end of something of a whirlwind relationship, which only lasted a year. It had been expected to run for five seasons until the end of 2023 after a two-year extension was agreed in July 2019. ROKiT had indeed only joined Williams shortly before the 2019 season started after a deal for the team to partner with Rich Energy had fallen through

"It has emerged that ROKiT and the Mercedes F1 squad are apparently closing in on a deal"

when CEO William Storey took his company to Haas and a sponsor saga began…

ROKiT is also the title sponsor of the Venturi Formula E team, and has the same arrangement with the W Series, with ROKiT's branding set to appear on all W Series cars when it relaunches in 2021. In a statement released at the end of May, the company said it would "like to take this opportunity to wish Williams well with their plans for a potential sale of the Formula 1 team. As a group, ROKiT remains fully committed to its other existing motorsport partnerships and the exploration of additional strategic partnerships in the near future."

It has since emerged that the company and the Mercedes F1 squad are apparently closing in on a deal. No agreement had been announced at the time of writing, but it could yet be the case that ROKiT's logos are on the grid at the Austrian Grand Prix after all.

Austrian Grand Prix, could be arranged. The lack of races impacted the distribution of F1's prize money, with Liberty Media even having to move assets between its own divisions to give F1 $1.4billion in extra cash. Some squads were provided with advance team payments to see them through.

Then, at the end of May, Williams made the bombshell announcement, alongside the split with ROKiT, that it's now considering the partial or even full sale of the team to ensure its survival. In short, the operation that Frank Williams established as a constructor in 1978 alongside co-founder Patrick Head could soon be heading out of the family's hands – something to which it had long been opposed.

"The WGPH board is undertaking a review of all the various strategic options available to the company," the team said at the time. "Options being considered include, but are not limited to, raising new capital for the business, a divestment of a minority stake in WGPH, or a divestment of a majority stake in WGPH including a potential sale of the whole company.

"While no decisions have been made regarding the optimal outcome yet, to facilitate discussions with interested parties, the company announces the commencement of a 'formal sale process'."

At that point, Williams revealed that it was not in discussions regarding the full sale of the team – and it noted that any subsequent talks would be covered by non-disclosure agreements – but said it had been approached regarding investment.

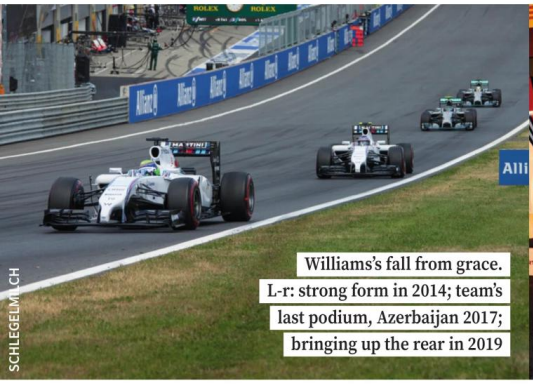
At the same time, the team revealed its financial plight. WGPH Group revenue declined to £160.2m in 2019, which was down from £176.5m in 2018, while F1 revenue had reduced to £95.4m from £130.7m in 2018. This resulted in a loss of £10.1m for 2019 compared to a profit of £16m in 2018.

Ultimately, Williams's financial struggles are the result of its woeful run of F1 results, something that was acknowledged by team CEO Mike O'Driscoll. Considering how dramatic the fall has been, it's worth recalling that Williams finished third in the 2014 and 2015 constructors' championships – the opening two years of the turbo hybrid era when it enjoyed a performance boost from the dominant Mercedes engines. From there it fell to respectable finishes of fifth in 2016 and 2017, before collapsing to 10th and last in the two most recent seasons. In 2019, it scored just a single point.

How the mighty has fallen – from seven drivers' and nine constructors' championships to a potential future ownership that may be markedly different from that which established the squad's storied history. It's interesting to consider at this point that Williams is not the only famous F1 marque enduring financial struggles, as McLaren is considering selling up to 30% of its F1 team, while its parent company also seeks ways to address a cash shortfall. Like Williams, McLaren has endured some terrible recent results, but it has at least made moves back up the grid, finishing as the best 'Class B' team in 2019.

Williams's status as a listed company means its financial dealings must be dealt with transparently, which is why it has been so open about seeking investment and the potential sale of the entire team.

Claire Williams insists any changes should be seen as entirely positive



SCHLEGELMILCH

Williams's fall from grace. L-r: strong form in 2014; team's last podium, Azerbaijan 2017; bringing up the rear in 2019

DUNBAR

SUTTON

WILLIAMS

For sale: famous Formula 1 team, one careful owner

"Williams and the other 'Class B' squads can enjoy a brighter future – *if* they can weather the storm"

There is also something of a time limit to consider, as all F1 squads will need to sign up to a new Concorde Agreement to ensure their participation in 2021 and four more years beyond. As a result of this, deputy team principal Claire Williams said at the end of May that the squad would like the investment process to be completed "within the next three to four months". This would put the conclusion at the end of September.

She also went on to say that the potential investment/sale process "shouldn't be looked on in a negative way, in a disappointing way, or anything other than positive", and that the team is fully funded to compete in the campaign finally about to get under way.

Timing is everything in Williams's situation. Its apparent financial peril stems from its lack of results, and is therefore a legacy of F1's much-maligned financial rules. But these are changing. As well as an expected fairer distribution of income in the new Concorde, the past few months have finally heralded the arrival of the cost-cap rules.

The main intent behind this move — which operates alongside upcoming new sporting and technical rules, such as restricted windtunnel testing for the more successful squads — is to close up the grid. If Williams can secure better results in the coming years, then it will be rewarded in terms of prize money — a virtuous circle that has squads eyeing breaking even (and whispering about making profits) as opposed to the previous system of kicking ever harder those that fall down the constructors' table.

So, Williams is in its current state because of what has gone before, but there is hope that it and the other 'Class B' squads can enjoy a brighter future — *if* they can weather the storm. The cost cap will be $145m in 2021, $140m in 2022 and $135m for 2023-25, but the teams will have to spend all of that money to compete with the pacesetters. Hence Williams's call for fresh financial support.

F1 sporting boss Ross Brawn suggested last month that several "fairly serious" parties were interested in investing at Williams. One obvious party would be Michael Latifi, given his son's position and the fact that he already has financial skin in Williams's game — plus his Sofina Foods company logo now features prominently in the team's updated livery. But his possible investment is somewhat complicated by his 10% ownership share at McLaren.

Putting the potential seismic change of ownership at Williams to one side, the squad is at least heading into the new season on a positive note — despite it being five months since the FW43 produced it. Back in pre-season testing, Williams ended up with the seventh fastest time, but the consensus was that although it remained the slowest car in the field, it had at least begun closing the gap to the midfield. "No doubt we're in a better position," concluded Russell.

The team has brought in new faces to its technical department, which has been shaken up with the departure of several big names, most famously Paddy Lowe. Ex-Red Bull and Renault employees David Worner and Jonathan Carter have been signed as the team's chief designer (Worner) and deputy chief designer plus head of design (Carter), while long-time McLaren operations director and later chief operating officer Simon Roberts has joined as the race team's new managing director. Claire Williams called Roberts's appointment the "final piece" of restructuring.

The world as we know it has changed, in many ways beyond recognition, in the past few months. And it is now entirely possible that the same will happen at one of F1's most famous teams. But the critical aim is to keep it in the championship — and so the results that Williams can now achieve on track, alongside those from its desired financial influx, will be crucial to achieving that goal.

Team by team

Tim Wright

Autosport's technical expert and ex-Formula 1 engineer is your guide to the runners and riders of 2020

ILLUSTRATIONS CAMILLE DE BASTIANI

motorsport NETWORK

It's now four months since my first assessment of Formula 1 pre-season testing at Barcelona for Autosport and, unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown, we have still to see how the teams actually stack up against each other.

I suspect that even with the factory lockdowns, the team personnel won't have been concentrating entirely on making their gardens look pretty. Teams have had a unique opportunity to design and make new parts after seeing their rivals in action at Barcelona, and I think we will see some different parts on some of the cars when they take to the track in Austria.

Of course, one or two teams have been out testing, albeit with two-year-old machinery (unless it's classified as a 'filming session'!). Renault seems to have pulled a fast one, using the excuse of no quarantine rules in Austria, and has racked up huge mileage at the Red Bull Ring prior to the forthcoming opening two races at the same venue. They must have gained some valuable data.

The approach to how teams operate at the races will have changed enormously. As we have seen from footage with Mercedes at Silverstone, everyone is having to wear protective PPE to a certain extent. But will it be the pitstops where the biggest advantages will be gained? Teams are still allowed 60 essential personnel and, because pitstop crews are normally well protected with suits, goggles, helmets etc this should be enough. But this is the one

scenario where three mechanics per wheel cannot possibly social distance. This may well change before the weekend starts.

The FIA, in association with the World Health Organisation, has issued a comprehensive document named *FIA Return to Motor Sport* that stipulates how each event will be run, how many people are allowed, what PPE they have to wear, how many marshals, scrutineers etc, and this will have to be adjusted to each country's government guidelines.

This will have caused a huge logistical nightmare for the teams. Although F1 sporting chief Ross Brawn has outlined his vision of a biosphere in which to keep them apart, it will come down to how switched on they all are as to whether this works in their favour. Will there be a queueing system at Pirelli? Does anyone have priority (surely not)? With no motorhomes, how will everybody be fed?

I suspect that in terms of the racing not much will have changed unless, as I have speculated, some teams will have new parts that may or may not improve their performance. The other consideration for the teams is the weather. Nobody (except for Renault) has run in hot weather this year, and the 800-metres altitude of the Red Bull Ring brings another factor into the equation, plus the threat of rain. Expect tyre wear to be a big conundrum for the teams given the weather and the nature of the circuit.

Another thing to look for will be driver fitness. It will be the neck that suffers the most, especially with the high-g corners at this track. Sitting in front of simulators does not prepare them for the real thing. »

Mercedes

CAR MERCEDES W11 ENGINE MERCEDES M11

STARTS 210 | FIRST GP FRANCE 1954 | WINS 102 | POLES 111 | FASTEST LAPS 75 | 2019 1ST

The Barcelona tests back in February seem a long time ago, but you don't need the memory of an elephant to recall that Mercedes was still the team to beat. During the second test, neither Lewis Hamilton nor Valtteri Bottas was able to beat Bottas's time of 1m15.732s from the last day of the first test, but that time was set when arguably conditions were at their best.

The Silver Arrows were able to run consistently in the 1m19s on the medium C3 tyre, putting the team ahead on the long runs as well as outright pace. Even on two sets of the harder C2, Bottas put in a race distance and then continued running, performing constant-speed tests on the main straight and around Turn 3, gathering important aero information.

The W11 is apparently festooned with all manner of innovations, according to technical director James Allison, the most obvious being the dual-axis steering system. Whether the team goes on to race this idea remains to be seen, as it has raised questions as to its legality. There are certainly advantages on circuits that have long straights, the system also allowing the tyres to be worked harder in twisty infield sections.

It's interesting to see how Mercedes keeps the front of the car flat when cornering by connecting the two rockers with a small link, but they react together in a straight line. That's unlike other teams such as Red Bull, which have an obvious third damper to limit the amount of front-end movement on the straight.

Hamilton alluded in February to the fact that Mercedes still had a few engine problems to sort out, and this was borne out by Williams having two engine changes over the two tests.

Given its record and the resources at hand, I'm sure Mercedes will still be at the head of the field, but will it be the year that Bottas finally shines?

#44 LEWIS HAMILTON

#77 VALTTERI BOTTAS

1ST	2019 POSITION	2ND
35	AGE	30
250	STARTS	139
AUSTRALIA 2007	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2013
84 WINS	BEST FINISH	7 WINS
88 POLES	BEST QUALIFYING	11 POLES
47	FASTEST LAPS	13

LEWIS HAMILTON

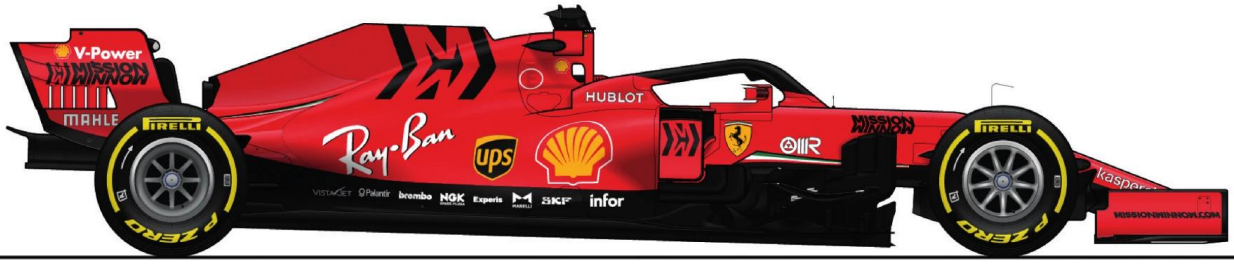
The red hot favourite for the title, and if he does win it he equals Schumacher's record of seven championships. The Mercedes W11 was much better in testing than the W10 was at a similar stage in 2019, but that didn't stop it winning the first eight races. He's also led the agenda off the track, from being the first to speak out about the folly of going to Australia, to leading F1 in supporting anti-racism and helping launch diversity initiatives.

VALTTERI BOTTAS

He's looking much stronger than he was before 2019, when Esteban Ocon was hanging around ready to step in should Bottas repeat his poor end-of-2018 form. Came out of the blocks with a superb Melbourne win, and took three further victories on his way to his maiden runner-up championship finish in F1. Says he feels more complete after the coronavirus hiatus, so should cement status as ideal complement to Hamilton.

Ferrari

CAR FERRARI SF1000 ENGINE FERRARI 065



STARTS 990 | FIRST GP MONACO 1950 | WINS 238 | POLES 228 | FASTEST LAPS 254 | 2019 2ND

Remember the Ferrari controversy from the original pre-season? It was all about the legality of the fuel system used in 2019. The saga was exacerbated by the lack of straightline speed exhibited by the SF1000 in Barcelona testing, some suggesting this was because the team was now having to run a different fuel system. Ferrari blamed it on a draggy car, but that sounds ridiculous given all the data and windtunnel information it has. The car was 11mph slower on the main straight compared to the Alfa Romeo, which uses the same engine.

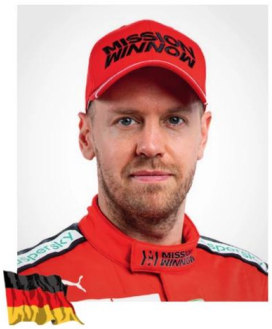
While Sebastian Vettel was able to wring out a sub-1m17s time, albeit on the soft C5 tyres, the team was still shy of Mercedes' pace.

The car looks surprisingly simple compared to the Mercedes, with the exception of the complex array of elements in front of the sidepods. Perhaps this is where the problems lie (like Haas), in that they are creating a low-pressure area and not feeding the 'Coke-bottle' area and diffuser efficiently. The engine cover is tightly pulled in around the engine and cooling parts, so flow to the rear wing should not present a problem.

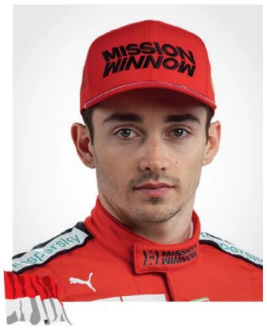
Charles Leclerc finished the last day of testing fourth and a 1m16.360s lap must have been encouraging, but we're used to seeing the red cars always around the top three. Ferrari did manage the highest number of laps during the second test, which shows the reliability is there.

I saw Ferrari trying an alternative front pushrod articulated bracket, either because of a failure or a slightly different geometry. It's been reported that, although slow-speed performance has been improved, there was still an element of understeer and the badly grained tyres were testament to this.

There will have been furious analysis going on at Maranello to figure out how to rescue the situation.



#5 SEBASTIAN VETTEL



#16 CHARLES LECLERC

5TH	2019 POSITION	4TH
32	AGE	22
240	STARTS	42
USA 2007	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2018
53 WINS	BEST FINISH	2 WINS
57 POLES	BEST QUALIFYING	7 POLES
38	FASTEST LAPS	4

SEBASTIAN VETTEL

This is going to be an interesting one. Ferrari has at last ditched its cripplingly conservative driver-choice regime for 2021 and the four-time champion makes way for Carlos Sainz. But Vettel still has it in him, witness the steps forward he made at the end of 2019 – with the exception of his ludicrous move on Leclerc in Brazil. He could be driving for his career; he could be on a morale-boosting farewell tour. And there *will* be drama.

CHARLES LECLERC

The new poster boy for F1 – looks of a Cevert, driving skills of a Prost – should have built on his 2019 momentum to enter this season as a serious threat for the championship. But damn… that Ferrari didn't look very good in testing. Leclerc has only made steps forward in his career, so it will be interesting how he copes if the car isn't up to much. Hopefully with a better result than the ersatz *Rendezvous* remake he got dragged into.

Red Bull

CAR RED BULL RB16 ENGINE HONDA RA620H

STARTS 286 | FIRST GP AUSTRALIA 2005 | WINS 62 | POLES 62 | FASTEST LAPS 65 | 2019 3RD

Red Bull is probably the darkest horse in the field – it didn't show its true pace in testing.

Benefiting from its strong Honda engine package, Red Bull racked up an impressive number of laps over the six days of testing in February and, although at the start the car looked rather skittish in both drivers' hands, by the end Max Verstappen was able to set some impressive long-run times.

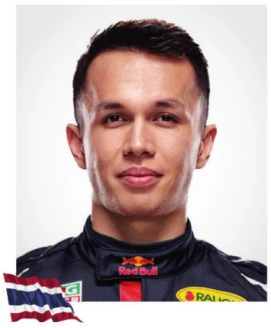
The front suspension has been tweaked to include a one-piece front lower wishbone forward leg (as seen below), maybe due to a unique double front bulkhead design, leading to less space for normal attachments but also, because the rear leg of the said wishbone is separate, allowing two smaller bearings to take the load at the upright.

Team members were seen measuring the overall track width a couple of times during the first test, suggesting that it is on the limit.

The way the steering arm has been positioned, it looks as though Red Bull has taken inspiration from a Citroen 2CV in that on lock it winds on more castor, which in turn with the articulated pushrod lowers that front corner, therefore putting the front wing closer to the ground.

Benefiting from continuity within the team should help Alex Albon back up Verstappen and put the team closer to Mercedes. He looked more at ease with the car at the Barcelona test once his seat had been sorted out – it seemed to not fit him correctly at the start of testing.

The team concentrated more on longer runs in Spain, getting the RB16 to work on the harder C2 and C3 tyres rather than going for glory on the C5. But, using the C4 tyre, Verstappen ended the last day in second place, just 0.073 seconds behind the Mercedes of Valtteri Bottas, who was on the softer C5 Pirelli.



#23 ALEXANDER ALBON

#33 MAX VERSTAPPEN

8TH	2019 POSITION	3RD
24	AGE	22
21	STARTS	102
AUSTRALIA 2019	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2015
4TH	BEST FINISH	8 WINS
5TH	BEST QUALIFYING	2 POLES
0	FASTEST LAPS	7

ALEXANDER ALBON

It's pretty much unheard of for Albon to go into a winter knowing what he's doing the following season – only he can't have expected the 'winter' to last until July. That gives him stability to focus on the most important thing – getting closer to the pace of team-mate Verstappen than he was able to do in a half-season at Red Bull in 2019. Has already been out in the RB16 at Silverstone in a pre-Austria filming-day warm-up. This is his chance.

MAX VERSTAPPEN

The rise of Leclerc has taken a little of the spotlight away from Verstappen, whose arrival in F1 ironically created the superlicence points rules that will keep many similarly talented drivers out of F1. Form from testing suggests that Red Bull's superstar should be the threat that worries Hamilton the most. Red Bull's first year with Honda gave him three wins and third in the points last season, and Verstappen is all set for a big leap forward.

McLaren

CAR McLAREN MCL35 ENGINE RENAULT E-TECH 20

STARTS 863 | FIRST GP MONACO 1966 | WINS 182 | POLES 155 | FASTEST LAPS 154 | 2019 4TH

Both drivers reported back in February that the MCL35 is a lot more forgiving than the 2019 car, and lap times suggest they can be consistent on long runs. Carlos Sainz Jr seems more comfortable with the car than Lando Norris, but maybe it's because he was on home turf (or asphalt) in Spain.

The car looks like an evolution of the MCL34 and, although McLaren finished a good fourth in last year's constructors' championship, I don't think the team has made big enough strides to better that this year.

The front suspension takes its lead from the likes of Mercedes and Racing Point, with the top wishbone pick-up point on the front upright hung out on an extreme proboscis-like bracket. This leaves the top wishbone quite flat and will induce more camber change on bump. McLaren too has adopted the articulated front pushrod designed to lower the front corner on extreme lock.

A new front-wing assembly was tried at Barcelona. There didn't appear to be a huge difference in the make-up of the flaps but, given the secrecy around its arrival, it might have been just stronger bracketry to stop flexing.

Once again, long-run progress was not startling, but maybe different set-ups were being tried, masking the car's true pace.

McLaren's history suggests it should be up at the front fighting for victories, but the reality of the past few seasons means that's still a little way off. The team's improvement under Andreas Seidl in 2019 was impressive and the hope must surely be to nibble away at the gap to the Big Three, while holding off the factory charge of Renault.

Surprisingly, this is a team with financial problems, while the prospect of losing Sainz to Ferrari at the end of the season may have disrupted McLaren's preparation.

#4 LANDO NORRIS

#55 CARLOS SAINZ JR

11TH	2019 POSITION	6TH
20	AGE	25
21	STARTS	102
AUSTRALIA 2019	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2015
6TH	BEST FINISH	3RD
5TH	BEST QUALIFYING	5TH
0	FASTEST LAPS	0

LANDO NORRIS

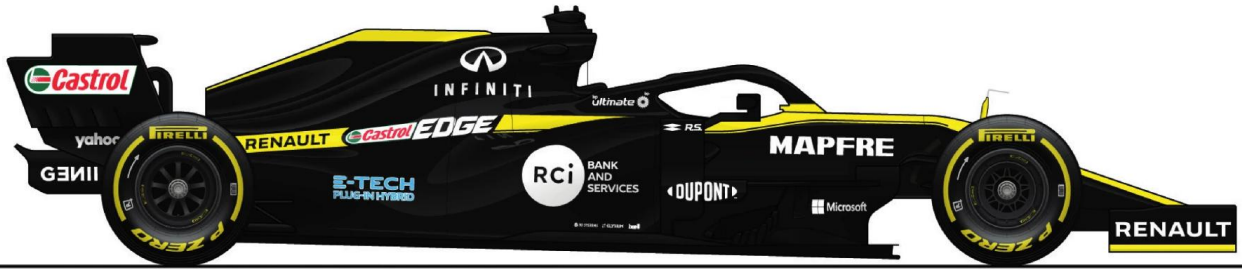
His race performances in 2019 as a rookie weren't quite on a par with those of team-mate Sainz, and this is where Norris needs to kick on. Certainly, the qualifying form of the first Ginetta Junior graduate to make it to F1 is strong – and his one-lap stats have been incredible throughout his career. Has made hiatus headlines, from Esport wars with IndyCar 'virtual' thugs to getting back behind the wheel with F3 cars run by his old mates at Carlin.

CARLOS SAINZ JR

He was a touch overshadowed by Max Verstappen at Toro Rosso and not really any more exciting than piece-of-midfield-furniture Nico Hulkenberg at Renault. But at McLaren he's been a star. The team has improved hugely under Andreas Seidl and Sainz has proved that not all quick Spanish drivers are determined to criticise everything and crush morale. He'll be a big loss to McLaren when he joins Ferrari.

Renault

CAR RENAULT RS20 ENGINE RENAULT E-TECH 20



STARTS 383 | FIRST GP BRITAIN 1977 | WINS 35 | POLES 51 | FASTEST LAPS 31 | 2019 5TH

It looks as though Renault has actually caught up with its customer team – McLaren – and certainly Daniel Ricciardo was looking a lot happier towards the end of Barcelona testing back in February, when he was able to post a time only 0.08 seconds slower than Valtteri Bottas. This was backed up by new team-mate Esteban Ocon, who was another tenth and a half further back.

Of course, Ricciardo's departure at the end of this season for that customer team has thrown something of a spanner into the works.

A lot of Renault's work has gone into the bargeboard area, with some strange looking teeth-shaped elements in an effort to turn the air past the sidepods and into the 'Coke-bottle' area and diffuser. A different, tighter engine cover was tried but required some last-minute fitting repairs.

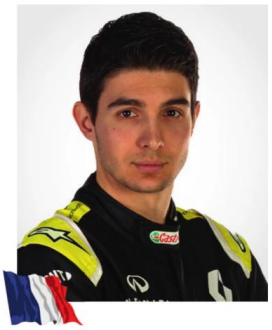
The front wing flaps show a slightly different approach, with fatter outboard shapes on the top element and longer chord on the third as the team searches for more front downforce. The outer part of the top element is also the only front-wing adjustment, which explains its shape.

Unlike other teams, it doesn't look as though Renault is blowing the air through the front wheel, although it did look as though the team was taking pressure readings around the brake drum.

Testing of the RS20 got off to a slow start and the team appeared to be battling with getting the rear rideheight sorted, but by the last two days the car was able to run more consistently.

Last season was something of a disappointment, and Renault will be aiming to get closer to the front and jump back ahead of its customer team, even if Ricciardo wants the customer team to be in the mix too...

#3 DANIEL RICCIARDO



#31 ESTEBAN OCON

9TH	2019 POSITION	MERCEDES PIT
31	AGE	23
171	STARTS	50
BRITAIN 2011	FIRST GP	BELGIUM 2016
7 WINS	BEST FINISH	5TH
3 POLES	BEST QUALIFYING	3RD
13	FASTEST LAPS	0

DANIEL RICCIARDO

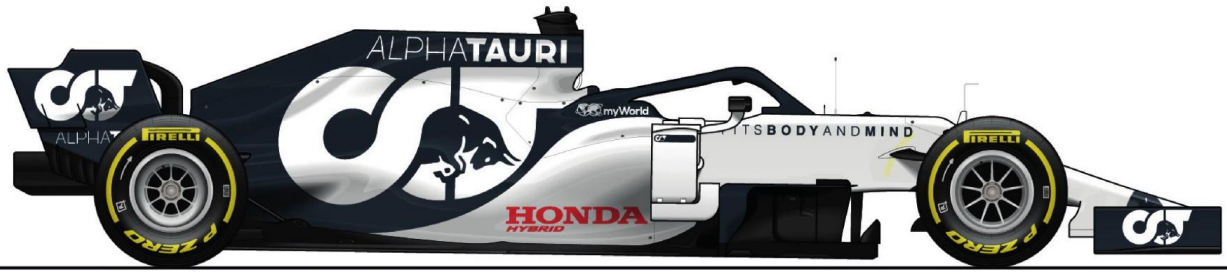
The bank account is looking pretty since his move to Renault, and in one year he pretty much finished off the career of Nico Hulkenberg while carrying the 2019 Renault to three top-six grid positions. But sacrilege! He's enraged the Regie with his move to McLaren for 2021, and has the distraction of an ambitious and feisty Esteban Ocon in the sister car this season. That's going to upset the *panier de pommes*. Expect action here.

ESTEBAN OCON

Oh, this is going to be tasty. Renault decided he wasn't good enough to take a seat for 2019 when it managed to snare Daniel Ricciardo from Red Bull, and now he's alongside the Aussie after a season as the Mercedes reserve – and Ricciardo's off at the end of the year. His speed should be up to beating Ricciardo, but racecraft-wise he is good, if not as razor-sharp as some of the masters – and they include Ricciardo.

AlphaTauri

CAR ALPHATAURI AT01 ENGINE HONDA RA620H



STARTS 268 | FIRST GP BAHRAIN 2006 (AS TORO ROSSO) | WINS 1 | POLES 1 | FASTEST LAPS 1 | 2019 6TH

The latest team with a new name (until Racing Point becomes Aston Martin), the old Toro Rosso squad is perhaps trying to distance itself from big brother Red Bull and looks to be doing a pretty good job. Armed with a repackaged Honda engine, this team could spring a few surprises this year so long as it keeps Daniil Kvyat and Pierre Gasly under control.

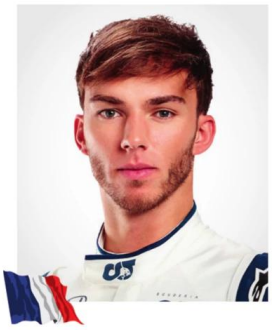
AlphaTauri obviously still has access to certain components from Red Bull and seems to have packaged them well, particularly around the rear suspension and a tightly sculptured engine cover that feeds air nicely to the rear wing.

The front wing and nose certainly look to be one of the most interesting areas, with wide, spread pylons helping to stabilise the front wing assembly. The undercut of the nose helps direct the air onto a flat plane feeding directly onto the T-tray, not using fences as most other teams have done. The flap arrangement does differ from Red Bull's in that the team has opted to keep the inboard section more heavily loaded, thereby channelling more air through to the bargeboard section.

Looking at the front suspension, it is similar to the Red Bull's in that AlphaTauri has kept the top wishbone pick-up on the upright low, which means that the wishbone itself rises towards the chassis, giving less camber change on bump. The third damper is exactly the same and the 'junior' team has also adopted the multi-link top wishbone.

There were interesting battles going on between Gasly and Alex Albon in the Red Bull during the February tests, with long-run pace similar, and honours were pretty much even.

Toro Rosso was a fine sixth in the constructors' championship last year and there are signs that AlphaTauri can fight for a similar spot in 2020.



#10 PIERRE GASLY

#26 DANIIL KVYAT

7TH	2019 POSITION	13TH
24	AGE	26
47	STARTS	93
MALAYSIA 2017	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2014
2ND	BEST FINISH	2ND
4TH	BEST QUALIFYING	4TH
2	FASTEST LAPS	1

PIERRE GASLY

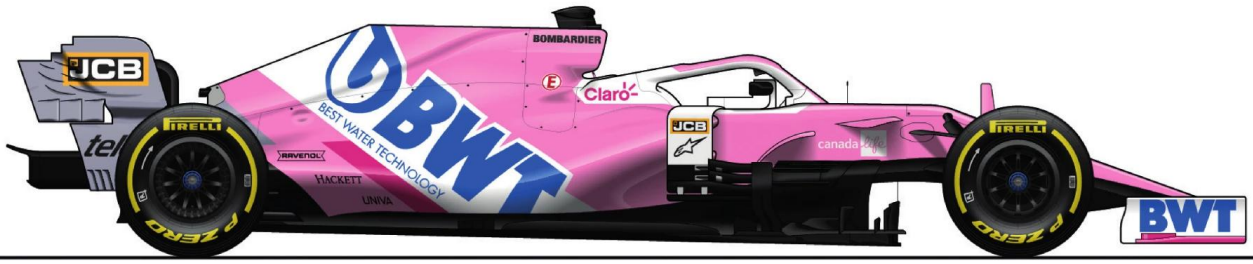
He's a sensitive, very likeable chap and somehow it shouldn't surprise that, while he couldn't cut it at Red Bull, he flourished once back in the less rarefied atmosphere of Toro Rosso. Second place in Brazil was a superb result and, ironically, allowed him to pip Alex Albon in the points. Unfortunately, when you say the team's new name of AlphaTauri it makes you think of Michael Gove in an Alfasud, but hopefully Gasly's form will dispel such horrors.

DANIIL KVYAT

Like Gasly, he's been through the mangle a bit. He was flicked from Red Bull's top team, then demoted from the junior squad at the end of 2017 by… Gasly. After a year on Ferrari's testing books, Kvyat was a driver reborn on his Toro Rosso return in 2019. It's a handy line-up and Kvyat, like his team-mate, is capable of good results. This is an interesting combination and if the car's any good there could be a surprise.

Racing Point

CAR RACING POINT RP20 ENGINE MERCEDES M11



STARTS 30 | FIRST GP BELGIUM 2018 | BEST FINISH 5TH | BEST QUALIFYING 3RD | FASTEST LAPS 0 | 2019 7TH

Racing Point was another team to raise the pulses of journalists and team principals back in February due to the unveiling of what appears to be a very close relation of the Mercedes W10, only in pink. Granted, the team uses the same windtunnel as Mercedes and is maybe privy to some of the data, but there's no doubt that the car is rapid. Sergio Perez says the RP20 is the best racing car he's ever driven, and Lance Stroll impressed at times in the Barcelona tests, putting in some fast tours on the C4 tyre.

There are subtle differences between the 2019 Mercedes and 2020 Racing Point around the front wing flaps and bargeboards, which you would expect. But, as technical director Andy Green has said, why shouldn't they follow Mercedes' lead? He seems somewhat surprised that other teams haven't done the same.

The car looks planted and the change of direction in the final part of the Barcelona lap was impressive.

The front suspension looks strikingly like the Mercedes', with the front top wishbone attachment to the upright and the articulated pushrod, but there the similarities end, according to Green, with all internal workings being in-house designs.

The rear bodywork is squeezed in tightly to the engine and ancillaries in a similar way to the Mercedes' and has the same shape of shark fin. The rear wing main element looks to have quite an aggressive nose-up attitude, suggesting the team is looking for more performance.

I'm not sure Racing Point has made the step to worry the top teams, judging by the long-run times, but the team was focusing on shorter outings in search of the best set-up. The RP19 was only the ninth fastest car on average last year, but the 'pink Mercedes' looks like it'll be further up the order.

#11 SERGIO PEREZ

#18 LANCE STROLL

10TH	2019 POSITION	15TH
30	AGE	21
176	STARTS	62
AUSTRALIA 2011	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2017
2ND	BEST FINISH	3RD
4TH	BEST QUALIFYING	2ND
4	FASTEST LAPS	0

SERGIO PEREZ

The so-called 'pink Mercedes' has been quick in testing, so this midfield lifer – who has an astonishing tally of 74 finishes from seventh to 10th in a grand prix – looks as though he could add nicely to his collection of eight podium finishes. Perez is now established as a rock-solid professional but, with this team building nicely with its injection of Stroll cash, there's nothing to suggest a win is beyond him if he gets the right breaks.

LANCE STROLL

A fair enough F1 driver, Stroll still mustered a points score less than half that of team-mate Perez in 2019, and he should really have been doing more than that in his third season. F1 has been a much tougher deal for a driver who had a better F3 record than contemporaries Leclerc, Russell, Albon, Giovinazzi etc. Will a step forward in competitiveness for Racing Point make him a more regular points scorer?

Alfa Romeo

CAR ALFA ROMEO C39 ENGINE FERRARI 065

STARTS 131 | FIRST GP BRITAIN 1950 | WINS 10 | POLES 12 | FASTEST LAPS 14 | 2019 8TH

This team has produced an efficient package, backed up by the C39's prodigious DRS-assisted straightline speed of 208mph on the second day of the first Barcelona test that also helped Kimi Raikkonen top the timesheets using the relatively soft C4 tyres. Raikkonen managed a couple of spins during his testing stints, but on the whole looked happy with his steed. He did, however, cause a red flag at the end of the day when he stopped just before Turn 9.

Alfa Romeo used its reserve driver, Robert Kubica, at the tests in Spain. He ended up fastest driver on the first day of the second test using the softest C5 tyre, showing again that the car is working well on a one-lap basis.

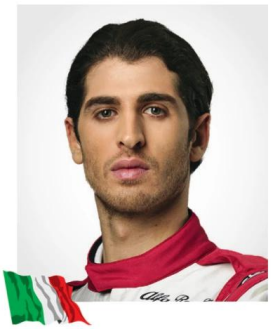
The C39 looks like a good progression from last year, while employing certain elements around the rear – notably the main exhaust and wastegate tailpipes – as used by the other Ferrari-powered teams.

The biggest departure is the treatment of the top engine inlet that has a triangular roll hoop element in front of a large air intake.

The front wing adjustment seems to include moving three of the outer portions of the flap elements together, suggesting they provide a greater range, therefore the adjustment will be quite fine.

But, as with most of the mid-pack teams, Alfa Romeo was unable to get the consistency on long runs, so may be able to qualify well but could slip back during races. Antonio Giovinazzi in particular seemed to be struggling with long-run pace during the Barcelona tests, with a particular drop-off after 15 laps.

Alfa Romeo started 2019 quite strongly, then fell back a little in the final part of the season, so it will be interesting to see how it can develop the C39 during the campaign.



#7 KIMI RAIKKONEN

#99 ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

12TH	2019 POSITION	17TH
40	AGE	26
312	STARTS	23
AUSTRALIA 2001	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2017
21 WINS	BEST FINISH	5TH
18 POLES	BEST QUALIFYING	7TH
46	FASTEST LAPS	0

KIMI RAIKKONEN

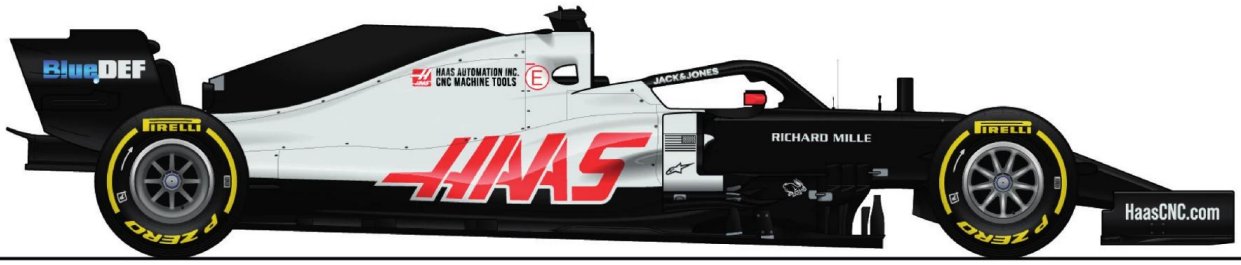
A 40-year-old veteran whose F1 debut, in the 2001 Australian GP, came when Lando Norris was just 15 months old. He wasn't really good enough for the Ferrari seat he hogged for too long, but back with his old Sauber mates under Alfa Romeo nomenclature he proved he's still good enough to score decent points in what should be a solid midfield car. Shows no sign of stopping, and remains a top barometer for the Ferrari protege alongside.

ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

This swashbuckling Italian is surely one of the nicest guys ever to sit in an F1 car. His first full season at the top of the sport last year proved he has Raikkonen-matching speed in qualifying, but he needs to improve on his consistency in the races. He has to at least do as well as Raikkonen on Sundays to hang on to a seat in F1, especially with five more Ferrari proteges – albeit of wildly varying promise – clogging up the F2 field.

Haas

CAR HAAS VF-20 ENGINE FERRARI 065



STARTS 83 | FIRST GP AUSTRALIA 2016 | BEST FINISH 4TH | BEST QUALIFYING 5TH | FASTEST LAPS 2 | 2019 9TH

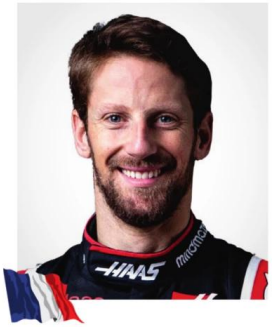
One team trying to change an *annus horribilis* of 2019 into an *annus mirabilis* is Haas. From the first day of testing back in February with Kevin Magnussen at the wheel, the VF-20 looked a better package than its predecessor. But it did seem that Haas has a problem getting the C3 tyre to work over a long run at Barcelona compared to the harder C2. This seems to have been the squad's Achilles' heel last year and I'm not sure it is on top of the problem – it was one of the only teams not to break into the 1m16s during testing.

A couple of unfortunate breakages and a clutch issue hampered running during the second test, contributing to Haas racking up the fewest laps in total, Magnussen in particular having the least amount of running time.

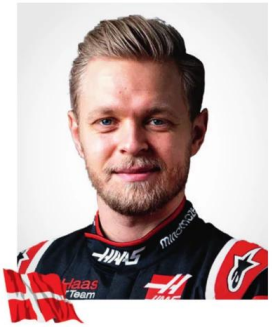
Having said all this, the car didn't look too bad through the final twisty section of the lap (if you ignore the number of times Romain Grosjean locked up at Turn 10), so it leaves me to believe that it's the quick corners where it's suffering. This is down to lack of downforce, which then compounds the theory that Haas can't switch the tyres on sufficiently.

The architecture of the car shows that the team has concentrated a lot in channelling the air through the bargeboard area, but there's such an array of elements that maybe this has not achieved what they were looking for once the air reaches the 'Coke-bottle' area and the diffuser. Also, the changes to the rear wing and the V-shaped cut-outs in particular are contributing to drag rather than speeding the air and producing the downforce needed. Experimenting with different T-wings shows Haas is trying to help the rear-wing elements.

I don't expect to see Haas any further up the grid, which is a pity as it seems the future of the team may lie in its performances this year.



#8 ROMAIN GROSJEAN



#20 KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

18TH	2019 POSITION	16TH
34	AGE	27
164	STARTS	102
EUROPE 2009	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2014
2ND	BEST FINISH	2ND
2ND	BEST QUALIFYING	4TH
1	FASTEST LAPS	2

ROMAIN GROSJEAN

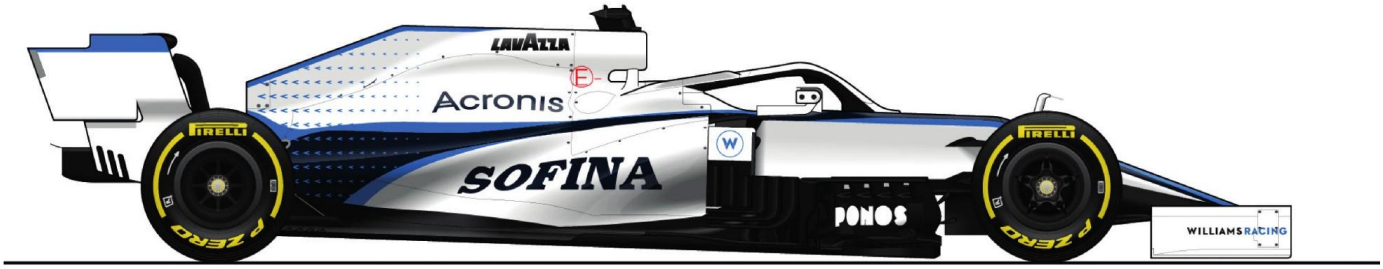
Occasionally brilliant and often maddening in an F1 car, he's been doing his old trick of locking up his brakes during testing. Then came the long hiatus, which will hopefully have given him chance to write another cookery book with his wife Marion – surely the only F1 driver's spouse to have a given name that's an anagram of her husband's. Stay tuned for more peaks and troughs as Haas struggles on in lower midfield.

KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Now entering his fourth season with Haas, it has to be said that his career is stagnating a bit. After finishing second on his debut with McLaren in the 2014 Australian GP, he hasn't stood on the podium in the intervening 101 starts, and that's a number that will surely rise through the rest of 2020. Sadly, he won't even have a chance to take his now customary late-race, new-tyred Singapore fastest lap this year either.

Williams

CAR WILLIAMS FW43 ENGINE MERCEDES M11



STARTS 727 | FIRST GP SPAIN 1977 | WINS 114 | POLES 128 | FASTEST LAPS 133 | 2019 10TH

The legendary team has endured a couple of uncompetitive seasons, not helped by disruptive personnel changes, but there are signs that the tide may be beginning to turn. Just to make a point, Williams put the first car onto the circuit on day one of testing at Barcelona with George Russell driving.

The FW43 is maybe what the team should have produced last year because, compared to its competitors, it looks a little behind on design, in particular the shape of the nose and front-wing layout. Having said this, there was a slightly different front flap array, more like the Mercedes', tried during the second test.

The team's track time was hampered by engine problems, but on the circuit the car didn't look as though it was giving the drivers much confidence in the quick corners. A lot of work was dedicated to set-up changes that helped in the braking area such as at Barcelona's Turn 10, but the changes of direction were not crisp.

Hopefully Williams will have learned a lot about the wake off the front wing and wheels, having run a huge array of sensors during the test. But it's how you control that wake and use it with the bargeboards to then feed the diffuser and rear wing – and at the moment that seems to be Williams's weak point.

The inclusion of Nicholas Latifi is a shrewd move. Although a rookie, he should be able to help with development. Members of the team have reported that the atmosphere within the squad is already lighter with his inclusion.

Williams's long-run pace is still a little behind the others, although it may start to worry Haas and Alfa Romeo during races. I hope the recent struggles with losing a major sponsor and having to look for a buyer to save the team hasn't detracted from its focus.

#6 NICHOLAS LATIFI

#63 GEORGE RUSSELL

2ND IN F2	2019 POSITION	20TH
25	AGE	22
0	STARTS	21
N/A	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2019
N/A	BEST FINISH	11TH
N/A	BEST QUALIFYING	14TH
N/A	FASTEST LAPS	0

NICHOLAS LATIFI

Hasn't topped a single-seater qualifying session since he prevailed over a dismally small British F3 grid in 2013, and he's certainly not going to do that in a Williams. Actually, he likely wouldn't do it even if he had a Mercedes. That said, Canada's 'other' fabulously wealthy F1 driver will certainly not disgrace himself. He has a deft touch that makes him strong in fast corners, and his work rate is regarded highly. Not a star, but he'll be OK.

GEORGE RUSSELL

Has used the unexpected off-time to establish himself as the man in Esports and thereby overshadow previous sim-racing hero Lando Norris – much as he did in 2018 when they raced together in F2. Super-fast, intelligent, articulate, and it's an indictment of modern F1 that such a talent's greatest motivation has been trying to beat his team-mate to 19th on the grid out of the 20-car field. He'll no doubt be doing that again this year.

GIORGIO PIOLA

Technical analysis

The new rules of F1's tech war

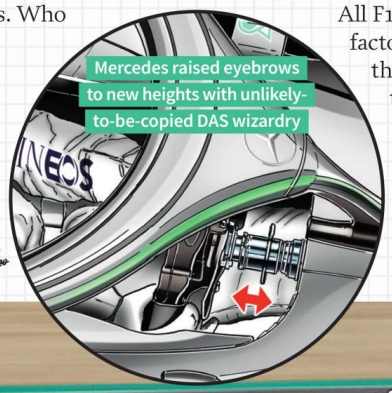
Jake Boxall-Legge

Not much has changed about the cars in recent months, but the new situation means the game will be played a bit differently this year and in 2021

It feels like aeons have passed since we were nestled in the Barcelona media centre, mouths agape with surprise as Lewis Hamilton pulled the steering wheel of his box-fresh Mercedes W11 towards him.

As he did so while exiting the final corner, the front wheels pointed inwards by a few degrees, before returning to their regular position as Hamilton pushed the wheel back in. What was known within Mercedes' own circles as DAS – or dual-axis steering – gave the team a way to run more toe out in the corners to boost cornering grip, while being able to turn the toe angle in to limit drag on the straights. Who says Formula 1 is too restrictive?

As the Nobel Prize-winning economist Bengt Holmstrom once opined: "The thinking is that creativity springs from freedom. That's a fundamental misunderstanding. Creativity is born from challenges, limitations and questions."

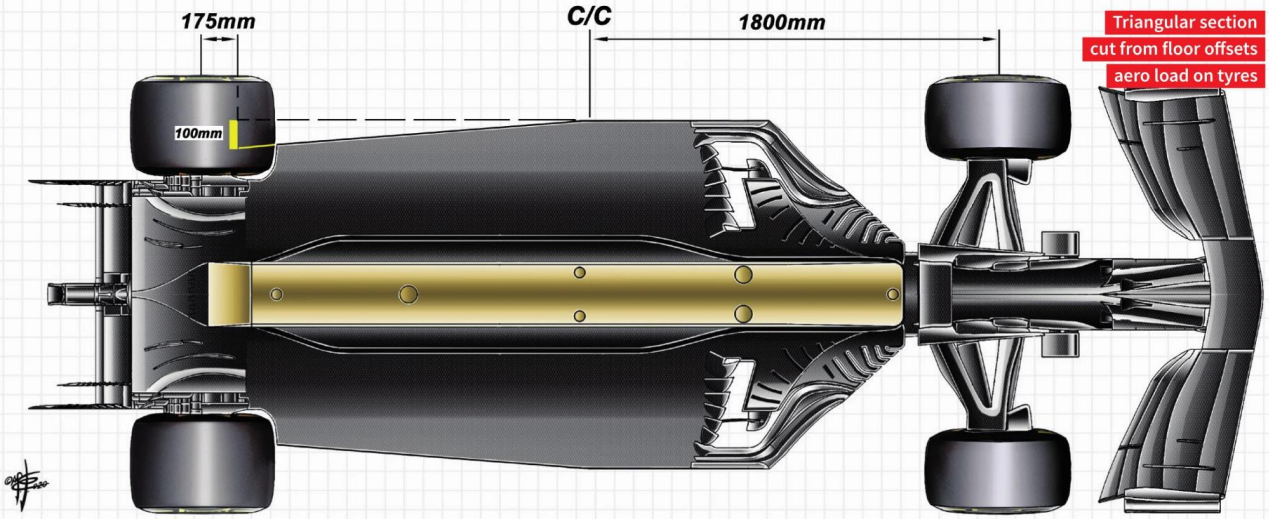


Mercedes raised eyebrows to new heights with unlikely-to-be-copied DAS wizardry

Mercedes, in that instance, saw the limitations posed by the regulations and, challenged by the FIA, managed to question the common convention of a steering wheel and use it to make changes to the car's set-up on the fly. It was definitely creative. But innovative gains can be fleeting, and Mercedes will have one shot at determining the merits of DAS before it becomes outlawed by the FIA.

In F1's coronavirus-enforced hiatus, Mercedes will surely have found some time to fine-tune the system around its more philanthropic endeavours within the 'Project Pitlane' group, in which the seven UK-based F1 teams joined forces to build ventilators for hospitals. Ferrari, too, was involved in producing medical equipment over the pause.

All F1 teams have also had to shut down their factories for 63 consecutive days but, around that, have had extra time to pore through testing data and consider changes to their 2020 cars, which are still yet to be raced in anger. That said, the financial implications and uncertainty of a pandemic mean that some teams will have upgrades in the pipeline but need



to be assured of finances to complete them.

That uncertainty extends to suppliers, and it's not inconceivable that the smaller operators entwined with F1's cast of teams had to press pause on their own operations and push back any production until lockdown measures were wound down. It's been a difficult time for all, but with racing back on the menu there should be some signs of green shoots.

Current cars remain for 2021

Those of you bursting with excitement over F1's hotly anticipated technical overhaul, complete with its return to ground-effects and low noses, will have to wait a little longer. Although the word 'unprecedented' has enjoyed plenty of use in lockdown vernacular, times are as such, and the hit that every team's economic situation will take as a result of the pandemic means that shifting those rules back to 2022 makes sense. To lighten the burden further, the 2020 chassis will remain for next season too.

There will be a considerable change to the floor, however, as the unexpected legacy of keeping the current formula is that the 2019-spec Pirelli tyres will remain in place for a further season. Kept for 2020 after the teams vetoed the squarer construction Pirelli had developed for this year, the 2019 tyres will begin to deal with aero loads that they weren't designed for. Rather than force Pirelli to up the tyre pressures even further, F1 has instead decided to cut a triangular section out of the floor to inhibit all of the cuts and slots that permeate the current floors' edges.

Those slots assist the diffuser by encouraging air to pass around the rear tyre, limiting the amount of turbulence that it 'squirts' into the diffuser and reducing its effectiveness – so removing them will cut about 10% of the cars' downforce.

Although teams will be allowed to make small aero changes throughout 2020 and over the off-season, the gains they make will still fall within the working range of load that the Pirellis can handle – so it's a sensible, if rudimentary, measure.

Other changes can be made depending on the FIA's approval, as McLaren has also been granted permission to make the tweaks needed to accommodate its switch to Mercedes powerplants next season.

The general design freeze will be a pleasing scenario for some, particularly those who impressed in pre-season testing, but it could be a double-edged sword.

With 2020's cars originally designed for just one season »

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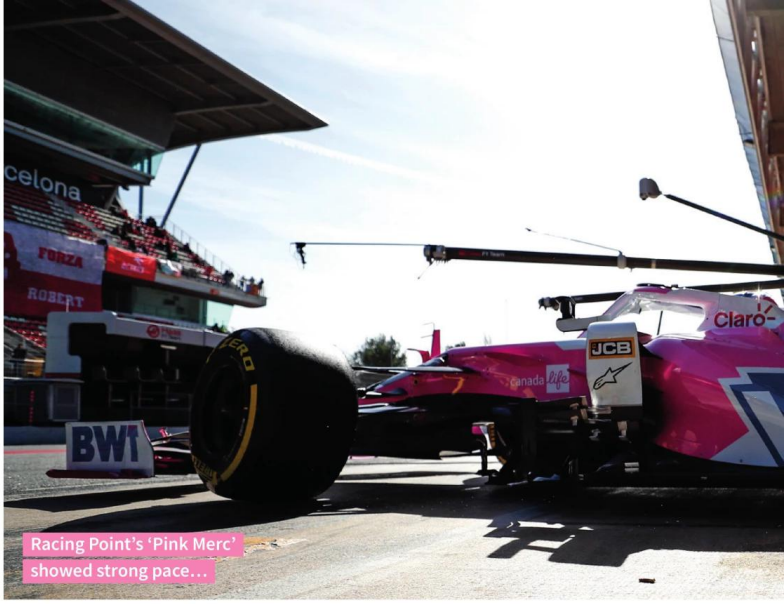


Racing Point's 'Pink Merc' showed strong pace...

before the rules were supposed to change, they now have to stay the course – and so each team's respective engineers will have to hope that their machinery has enough growing room for two years, rather than just one.

This could hinder **Racing Point**, which drew a lot of attention during testing thanks to its distinctly Mercedes-flavoured RP20. Although quick around Barcelona, with both Sergio Perez and Lance Stroll bothering the upper reaches of the timing boards, there are questions about the amount of development that the car can field before the rewards tail off significantly. Technical director Andrew Green, while fielding questions about Racing Point's new car during pre-season testing, had not suggested that too many developments were in the pipeline for 2020, but that was before the team had grasped the potential of its new chariot.

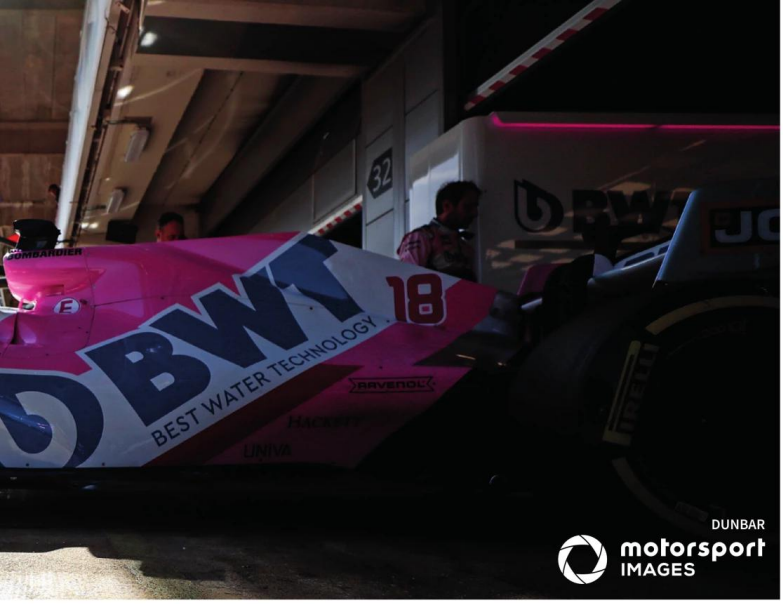
But in April, while speaking to Autosport following F1's decision to stick with the current cars for another year, Green explained that the team hadn't planned concrete developments in case the pejoratively dubbed 'Pink Mercedes' hadn't managed to live up to the team's hopes.

"It's just at the time we were weighing up the risk of what happens if we fail," Green said. "If we fail to do this, if we stop what we're doing, go down a different road and we don't recover the performance and we end up with a car that's actually slower than we had last year. And the thinking at the time was, 'Well, it'll only be for one year, because we're gonna have to scrap it anyway.'

"That scenario, as far as I can see, didn't materialise. So, for us now, we exceeded the performance of last year's car with the new car. So, we're not concerned about running it for effectively 18 months."

Perhaps there are also questions emerging at **Ferrari** too. The SF1000 appeared to be troubled during testing, and it looked as though the engine had been pegged back following the fallout from the FIA's investigation of its power unit. There's always the chance that Ferrari was playing with sandbags but, if the 2020 car does indeed turn out to be something of a lemon, Charles Leclerc will have to spend two years rather than one attempting to corral it into some semblance of dignified results. And a penny for the Maranello-bound Carlos Sainz Jr's thoughts if the Ferrari does indeed emerge to be lacking in the pace department for two straight seasons.

Testing troubles cast doubt over Ferrari's potential



DUNBAR/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

...so tech boss Green is unfazed by design freeze

What developments can we expect in 2020?

OK, let's reframe that question: will anyone else develop their own DAS system in 2020? It seems unlikely at this stage; given the factory shutdowns, economic uncertainties, the fact that Mercedes has had the system in development for perhaps over a year, and the cost of prioritising it over lower-hanging fruit when it'll be banned anyway in 2021, it'll be a small miracle if anyone else does.

Mercedes is expected to have its own upgrades for the Austrian Grand Prix this weekend – referred to by technical chief James Allison as a "chunk" of its work from the first few months of the year – meaning that the class of the field is going to be significantly harder to beat. It's unknown how extensive Mercedes' upgrade package will be, and could be anything from a few tiny details to a 2019-style between-tests overhaul, but it looks as though the reigning champion team has the capital to keep churning out updates, global crisis notwithstanding.

Ferrari will have a new engine in the back of the SF1000 in its bid to overturn its troubles of testing, along with a new gearbox to iron out the unreliability it faced at Barcelona. But the likes of **Haas** will pop a cork in their plans until budgets are guaranteed, and the financial problems faced by **McLaren** and **Williams** suggest that both teams will also save their developments until they can find new investment.

Back in testing, **Red Bull** had experimented with some new bargeboard options and cooling tweaks, with the latter perhaps a consideration when tackling the Austrian Grand Prix – especially following last year's heatwave, which caught Mercedes by surprise.

Racing Point had upgrades queued up for Australia in a bid to leapfrog its midfield rivals, and **Renault** is bringing a triple-upgrade package, but we'll probably not know the full picture until the cars are rolled down the pitlane for scrutineering today (Thursday).

One thing's for sure, with the 2020 cars now settled in for another year, and the cost cap due for next season, we'll potentially have two very closely contested F1 seasons. Sure, the COVID-19 layoff has been an awful situation for all – but in F1 terms, let's hope 2020 was worth the wait.

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The races

Well, the ones we know about anyway...

1 AUSTRIAN GP
Red Bull Ring
5 July
UK start time: 1410

2 STYRIAN GP
Red Bull Ring
12 July
UK start time: 1410

3 HUNGARIAN GP
Hungaroring
19 July
UK start time: 1410

4 BRITISH GP
Silverstone
2 August
UK start time: 1510

5 70TH ANNIVERSARY GP
Silverstone
9 August
UK start time: 1510

6 SPANISH GP
Barcelona
16 August
UK start time: 1410

7 BELGIAN GP
Spa
30 August
UK start time: 1410

8 ITALIAN GP
Monza
6 September
UK start time: 1410

Beyond the eight races confirmed, the intention is to finish the season in the Gulf in December with Bahrain before the traditional finale in Abu Dhabi, with 15-18 races having taken place. This is our best guess of what might follow from September onwards, and we've helpfully given the Mugello race a suitable name!

Vettel tests his Ferrari at Mugello. Will he race there?

Possible extra races

GRAND PRIX	CIRCUIT
TUSCANY GP	Mugello
RUSSIAN GP	Sochi
PORTUGUESE GP	Algarve Circuit
GERMAN GP	Hockenheim
CHINESE GP	Shanghai
CANADIAN GP	Montreal
UNITED STATES GP	Austin
MEXICAN GP	Mexico City
BAHRAIN GP	Sakhir
ABU DHABI GP	Yas Marina

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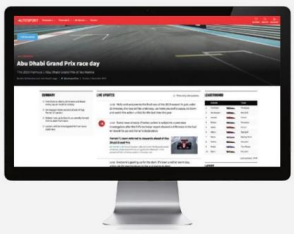

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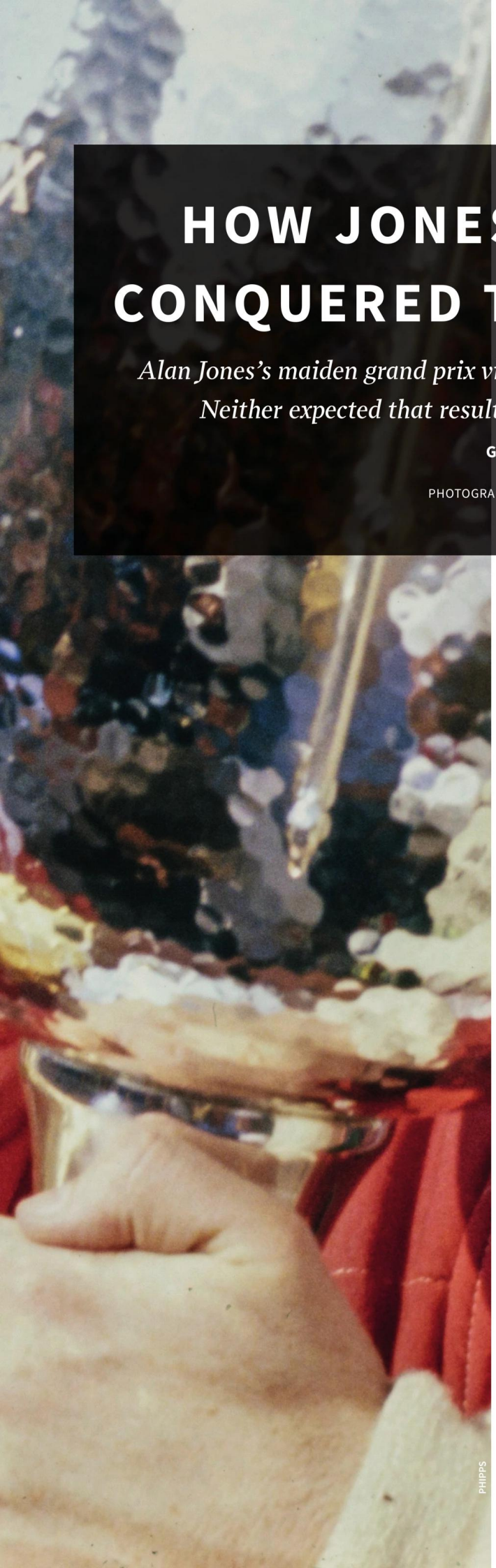
Jones opts not to sing along to *Happy Birthday* on the podium



HOW JONES AND SHADOW CONQUERED THE AUSTRIAN GP

Alan Jones's maiden grand prix victory was also the Shadow squad's sole win. Neither expected that result from a 14th-place starting position...

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

PHIPPS

No one expected Alan Jones to win the 1977 Austrian Grand Prix. Not local hero and pole winner Niki Lauda, sitting pretty at the top of the world championship points, nor anyone else at the sharp end of the grid at the Osterreichring. And probably not Jones and his Shadow team, and certainly not the race organisers.

That explains why it wasn't the still semi-official national anthem, *Advance Australia Fair*, that played as the Shadow driver stood atop what went for the podium in Austria, nor the more formal *God Save the Queen*. Rather, remembers Jones, "some bloke with a trumpet, who was obviously pissed, played *Happy Birthday*".

In lieu of laying their hands on a copy of Australia's national song, or even knowing what it was, the officials' choice of *Happy Birthday* was probably a fair compromise for this celebratory moment in the history of the Shadow team. The British-based operation that raced under the Stars and Stripes had had its chances to win grands prix back in 1975, but it had been on a downward spiral since and was then rocked by the needless death of Tom Pryce, a driver it had taken to its heart, in the South African GP in March 1977.

Victory for Jones would turn out to be the high point of Shadow's eight-season history. The team's slide continued at ever greater pace after Jones departed for Williams and eventual world championship glory at the end of the season.

Jonesy's victory was a freak that owed much to the wet-dry race – including his prowess in such conditions – and the fragility of the latest-spec Ford Cosworth DFV engines in the back of the Lotuses and McLarens. But it wasn't quite as simple as that.

The 14th position in which Jones lined up on the narrow Osterreichring start-finish straight looked pretty much par for the course for a driver who'd yet to qualify better than 10th since replacing Pryce for the US Grand Prix West in Long Beach. The reality was that the lead Shadow-Cosworth DN8 should have been much higher up the grid.

The DN8 now had revised bodywork – "lighter and simpler", recalls Dave Luckett, number one mechanic on Jones's car – that had run in practice the previous time out at Hockenheim. There were also, according to contemporary reports, new radiators aimed at getting some weight out of a car that Jones describes as "a heavy old girl".

He'd shown the potential of the new package in the first of the three qualifying sessions. Jones put his DN8 seventh in the times, less than a second and a half behind pacesetter James Hunt's McLaren M26. But his 1m41.00s set on »

Friday morning would stand as his qualifying mark.

The Cosworth in the back of the Shadow ran its bearings in the second session that afternoon, and then the ignition system nestled in the Cossie's vee, the so-called 'bomb', started to play up in final qualifying on Saturday.

The Shadow came to a halt at the new-for-1977 Hella-Licht 'S' at the top of the hill beyond the pits and Jones couldn't restart. A bizarre and humorous footnote to the tale of Shadow's only GP victory is provided by the car's return to the pits.

Luckett and Dave James, number two on the Jones car, went out to inspect the thing after qualifying and managed to restart it first time. Luckett wanted to turn the car around and drive it back to the pits the wrong way down the circuit. The marshals objected, pointing out that the pitlane was about to open for qualifying for one of the support races.

"I had to drive a lap of the circuit with poor old Dave perched on the rear wing," recalls Luckett. "These little Formula 3 cars, I think they were, were buzzing past us on their out-laps as we made our way back to the pits."

The developments undoubtedly made a difference to the DN8, reckons Jones. "We did a few little bits to the car, slimmed it down and certainly improved it," he recalls. "It didn't become a consistent frontrunner, but it did turn it into a car that was consistently in the top 10."

The upturn in Shadow's fortunes coincided with the return of Tony Southgate, the architect of the DN5 that had claimed pole position in Argentina and Brazil with Jean-Pierre Jarier in 1975. Much was made in the press at the time about the significance of that return. The truth is that he'd had little to do with the updates on the DN8 in Austria. They were the result of the efforts of Dave Wass, who'd stepped into his shoes just over a year earlier and was co-credited with the design of the DN8 that had came on stream at the end of 1976.

"I'd actually only been back for three or four weeks, but it still detracted from what Wassy had done," recalls Southgate, who'd spent 15 months at Lotus. "All I did was twiddle the knobs a bit. They were his bits."

The revised Shadow went to the grid, like everyone else, on wet-weather tyres after a heavy rain shower in the build-up to the race. But when the sun came out there was a mass switch to slicks. Only four cars took the start on grooved rubber.

Opting for slicks was a no-brainer for Jones. "I was always of the opinion that if you're down in 14th place or whatever on the grid, you've got nothing to lose by going to slicks," he recalls. "And anyway, I'd always been fairly good in those wet-dry conditions."

"I'VE ALWAYS DRIVEN 100% TO THE LAST LAP, AND WHAT COMES WILL COME. I WAS ALWAYS HEAD DOWN AND BUM UP"

Jones wasn't dissuaded of his opinion when team-mate Arturo Merzario, in for regular Shadow number two Riccardo Patrese after his sponsorship money didn't arrive, came past him on wets from 21st on the grid as early as lap two. "I was pretty convinced that I'd made the right decision because I could already feel the track drying," he explains. "I thought that if it continued like it was, I'd be seeing him again shortly."

Merzario made it as high as sixth before ducking into the pits for slicks at the end of lap nine. By that time, Jones was up to eighth and every car he'd passed, like his Shadow, was on slicks.

They included Lauda's Ferrari, which would end up second to Jones at the chequered flag. Next up, he passed Patrick Tambay's Ensign and had moved to fourth by lap 12 when first Gunnar Nilsson pitted his Lotus 78 to go from wets to slicks and then the Nicholson-McLaren Cosworth in race leader Mario Andretti's sister car blew up.

Four laps later, Jones was up to second, passing Hans Stuck's Brabham-Alfa Romeo one lap and then the Wolf driven by Jody Scheckter the next. The unfancied Shadow was flying. Jones was taking some unconventional lines on the damp track, most notably at the ultra-fast, banked Bosch Kurve and then the final corner named in honour of Jochen Rindt.

"I did have the tendency to take some unusual lines and I probably did in Austria," he says. "What I was doing was what I call letting the car have its nose. My father [Stan, winner of the 1959 non-championship Australian Grand Prix] taught me that cars go quicker when the wheels are pointing straight. If you can hug the kerb and then straight-line it out, you can normally get the power down a lot earlier."

Second position appeared to be as far as Jones was going to get, though that would still have been Shadow's best grand prix finish. Hunt was 12s up the road when the Shadow made it past Scheckter, the McLaren edging away as the laps ticked by. The gap stood at 23s when the development Cosworth in the back of Hunt's M26 cried enough on lap 44. Jones and Shadow were now leading a grand prix, and by a healthy margin from Lauda.

Jones reckons he never thought about his chances of becoming a grand prix winner at the 31st time of asking when he was trailing Hunt. That was not his style.

"I never sat in a car and thought 'I can win this' or 'I can't win this'," he says. "I've always driven 100% to the last lap, and what comes will come. I was always head down and bum up. Everything came together that day. The car suited the conditions. It was quite a heavy, soft old thing and that's what the conditions required."

Southgate agrees with that assessment. "It definitely suited the conditions and the circuit," he says. "We had a good balance and Jonesy was able to extract the most out of it. He was that kind of driver.

"He was the best driver we ever had at Shadow. He wasn't necessarily the quickest, but he had the best racecraft. He had mechanical sympathy and was the type of driver who could always get the car home."

Luckett has good memories of Jones, too. He credits him with effectively saving Shadow after the shock of losing Pryce. "He made all the difference with the effort and sheer guts he put into it," says Luckett. "He was the one who kept the team going really. I remember Jonesy saying when he arrived, 'I guarantee you I'll get you 20 points this season'. And that's what he did."

The revised DN8 was good enough for Jones to get on the podium at Monza and he followed it up with a pair of fourths in the final two GPs of the season at Mosport and Fuji. His final tally from 14 of the 17 races he contested was 22 points.

An upturn in reliability played its part: Southgate explains that the team started to life consumable parts for the first time after his return. So, too, did the revisions to the DN8, while Jones reckons the Austria win also buoyed his confidence.

"It was probably a subconscious thing, but I think my confidence increased," he says. "You've won a race, so you get into the car with the belief that you can do it again if things go your way."

Victory at the Osterreichring also raised Jones's stock in the paddock. Within weeks, Ferrari had his signature on an option for the following season. It ultimately didn't take it up, preferring instead to bring in Gilles Villeneuve, but Jones was still heading places. Not that he knew it at the time.

"When you become a professional racing driver, your dream is to get to Formula 1," he says. "When you get to F1, your dream is to win a GP. I remember turning around to my wife and saying, 'I don't care what happens now, I've won a GP'."

COLUMBO

Jones leads Peterson, Jarier and Depailler

Local hero Lauda had to settle for second

Hunt set the pace until his engine went pop

COLUMBO

Team-mate Merzario started on wets

Shock victory merits suitable celebration

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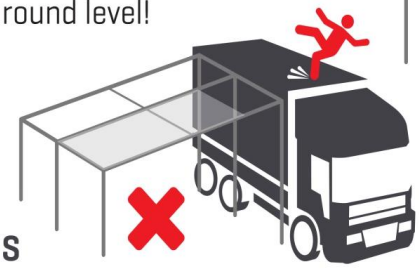

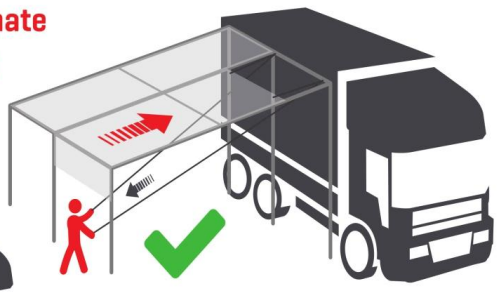

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THREE MORE MEMORABLE AUSTRIAN GPs

1976

COPYCAT VICTORY

Penske introduced its second new car of the season at the Swedish Grand Prix in 1976. The problem was, the PC4 didn't look much better than its predecessor in John Watson's hands. That was before team boss Roger Penske looked at what its rivals were doing and sent designer Geoff Ferris back to the drawing board.

"Roger is the biggest pragmatist I've ever encountered in motorsport," says Watson. "He looked at the McLaren M23 with Geoff and said, 'It's got a conventional nose and a big spacer between the engine and the gearbox. Do it!' So we ended up with a new front and a seven-inch longer wheelbase. It transformed the car."

Penske was competitive for the remainder of what turned out to be its final season in F1. Watson was on the podium at Paul Ricard and then Brands Hatch (admittedly after James Hunt was disqualified), and then won the Austrian GP at the Osterreichring after coming out on top in an initial three-way battle with Ronnie Peterson and Jody Scheckter.

1982

FOAM IS THE KEY FOR LOTUS

Lotus owed its first GP victory in four years in Austria 1982 to the unreliability of the turbo-powered cars and five quid's worth of foam. Elio de Angelis triumphed by a scant 0.050 seconds on a day when he was the best of the Cosworth-powered runners.

The team was convinced its type 91 was something special, according to engineer Tim Densham, even if its results didn't reflect that confidence. "The car had a porpoising problem and we came to the conclusion that air was leaking into the underbody," recalls de Angelis's engineer. "We bought some foam-rubber strips to modify the boards that held the skirts."

"The car behaved itself in qualifying," says Densham, and de Angelis put it seventh. A return of the porpoising in the warm-up was fixed with new skirts and de Angelis was lead Cossie car when the turbos broke and just held off a charging Keke Rosberg in the Williams. Lotus boss Colin Chapman got to throw his famous corduroy hat in the air one last time before his death later that year.

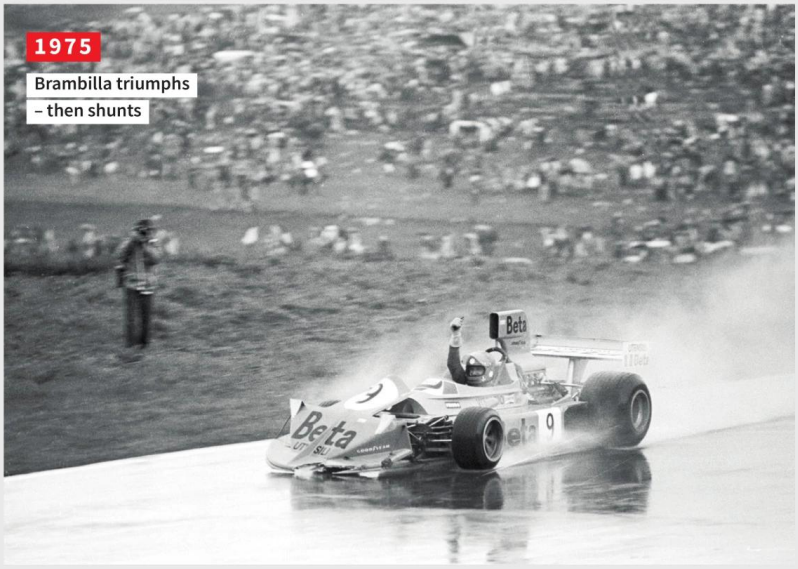
1975

BRAMBILLA'S MARCH JACKPOT

Torrential rain that delayed the start of the 1975 Austrian GP by an hour turned the race into a lottery. The numbers came up for March driver Vittorio Brambilla who was in the lead when the race was stopped early after 29 laps, though only just. He spun on the straight after taking the chequered flag.

The Italian had made quick progress in his Beta Utensili-sponsored March 761 from eighth on the grid. He took fourth from team-mate Hans Stuck on lap four and moved up to second on lap 15 when both he and James Hunt overtook erstwhile race leader Niki Lauda. Hunt was then powerless to hold off the Italian courtesy of an engine in the back of his Hesketh that had lapsed onto seven cylinders.

"The conditions were terrible – there were rivers of water running across the track," recalls Stuck. "But the March by that time was actually a good car, unlike when I first joined the team. It was no worse than anything else in the wet."



1975
Brambilla triumphs – then shunts

1976
Penske pragmatism took Wattie to victory

1982
De Angelis wins by a whisker from Rosberg

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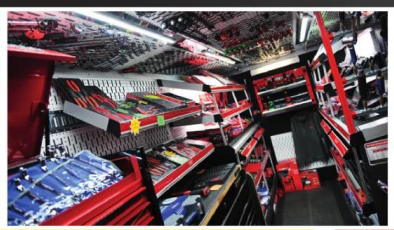

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Pared-back regulations deny McLaughlin a clean sweep

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
SYDNEY (AUS)
27-28 JUNE
ROUND 3/11

Australian Supercars made an action-packed return to real-world competition last weekend with three fascinating sprint races at Sydney Motorsport Park.

Despite the series traditionally not thriving on short races, a number of regulation changes injected unpredictability into the rapid-fire, 80-mile-apiece format.

The most significant alteration, at least in terms of the on-track action, was a limit on tyres. Each driver had just 20 new soft-compound Dunlops at their disposal from the end of practice onwards, which had to be stretched across three qualifying sessions, plus a top 15 shootout, and the trio of races.

It meant everyone had to bear tyre pain at some point, which effectively ruled out any chance of a single driver earning a clean sweep across the weekend.

In Saturday's opener both Scott McLaughlin and Shane van Gisbergen went for broke on rubber, albeit through different strategies. McLaughlin chose to push early and defend late, while van Gisbergen went for a long first stint and used the famously high Sydney degradation to reel the DJR Team Penske Ford in over the closing laps. It led to a thrilling battle, McLaughlin holding on as van Gisbergen struggled with aero wash despite the better rubber fitted to his Triple Eight Holden.

Come the second race, however, the two Kiwis were never in the fight. Needing to conserve tyres, they both plummeted in the first stint, leaving Jamie Whincup and Nick Percat to streak away at the front.

Percat — who hadn't won since Adelaide in 2016 — could smell blood. Having only taken on two tyres during Saturday's race, he called for his Brad Jones Racing team to fit four new boots. When Whincup only took on two tyres, Percat was in the box seat. He ran down the seven-time champion in the second stint before sprinting to a fairytale win in his 199th start.

By the final race there was a wide range of tyre condition throughout the field. McLaughlin, on pole thanks to a record-breaking lap in qualifying, had good enough rubber to get the job done, but it wasn't easy. Tickford's Lee Holdsworth had been ultra conservative to that point, opting for two tyres in both of the races so far. It meant he had rubber to burn in the finale, and he was just 1.5 seconds shy of running a fast-starting McLaughlin down at the finish.

The 20-tyre limit has already been locked in for the Winton, Darwin, Sandown, Tasmania and second Sydney rounds, but with the added element of mixed compounds. Each driver will have three sets of hards and two sets of softs.

Other back-to-basics changes included just two rattle guns during pitstops and a limit on data logging. The latter proved particularly popular with drivers, who didn't have to sit through long evening debriefs.

"I don't think I looked at any squiggly lines," said Percat. "You just come in and tell your engineer what's going on. I enjoyed that side of the format. I enjoyed that you didn't have to sit there and have your eyes go square looking at lines all night..."

McLaughlin added: "I really enjoyed being able to tell the guys which [anti-roll] bar positions I was in, rather than them just telling you where to go. All this data and all this crap doesn't put bums on seats. It's all about the racing."

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

Percat ended a four-year drought to claim his third series victory

ALL PICS: SUPERCARS AUSTRALIA

WEEKEND WINNERS

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
SYDNEY (AUS)
Race 1 Scott McLaughlin
DJR Team Penske (Ford Mustang GT)
Race 2 Nick Percat
Brad Jones Racing
(Holden Commodore ZB)
Race 3 Scott McLaughlin
DJR Team Penske (Ford Mustang GT)

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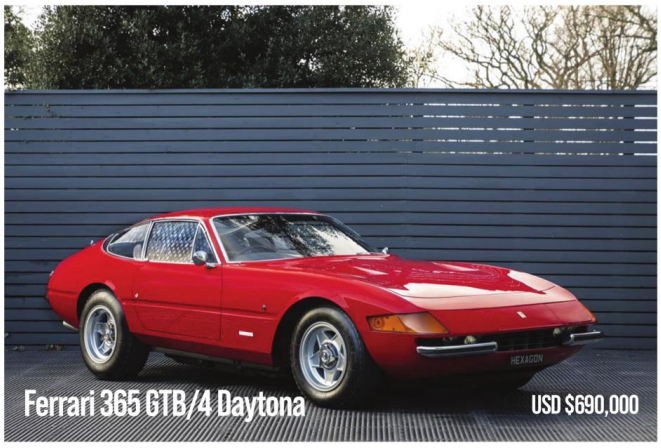

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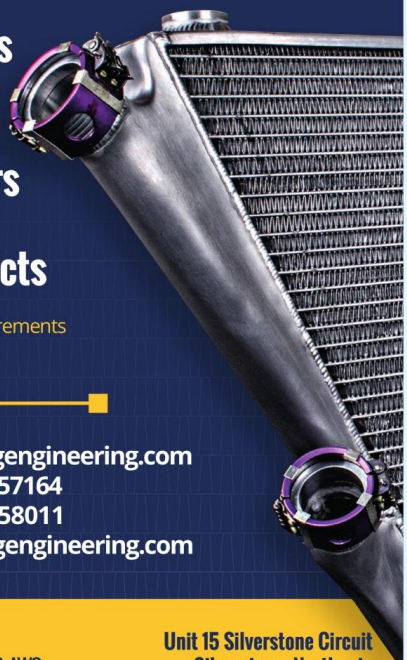

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- Creating session plans for their group and driver(s) including tyre pressures, tyre plan, run length and setup
- Reporting and cataloging any issues that occur and consulting on the solution and possible future application to other cars to improve performance/reliability
- Reporting and cataloging tyre usage, consumables, and mileage

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TF Sport's GT3 Astons will be remaining on their stands this year

TOP TEAM TF EXITS BRITISH GT3 LEAVING ADAM OUT OF A DRIVE

BRITISH GT

Leading British GT Championship team TF Sport has been forced to withdraw both of its GT3 Aston Martin Vantages from the series for 2020 due to fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

TF won the GT3 and GT4 titles last year with Jonny Adam/Graham Davidson and Tom Canning/Ash Hand respectively. Canning was due to step up to GT3 alongside Davidson for 2020, while four-time series champion Adam was set to partner Omani driver Ahmad Al Harthy. But due to a combination of factors resulting from the pandemic, neither Al Harthy nor Davidson was able to proceed with their planned programmes and both entries have been withdrawn.

TF's GT4 Aston Martins, entered for Connor O'Brien/Patrick Kibble and Jamie Caroline/Dan Vaughan, are unaffected.

Multiple business owner Davidson cited "some fairly sizeable delays because of oil industry problems" that had compromised his budget, but told Autosport that he expects to be back next year.

"I don't want to defend a title on a tight, tight budget," he said. "I can't test as much as the team would want me to test, financially but also due to time constraints. I've just got too much going on right now.If I'm doing it then I want to win. I'm very competitive and don't want to do a half-arsed season."

Testing commitments in addition to the congested season schedule also posed problems for Al Harthy, who would also have needed to find a new co-driver for the two Donington Park rounds that clash with the World Endurance Championship's Spa 6 Hours and Le Mans 24 Hours, to which Adam was already committed as part of TF's GTE Am line-up.

Autosport understands that Al Harthy and Canning will compete with TF in an alternative series this year.

TF boss Tom Ferrier said: "It's no mean feat trying to run four cars out there and get four separate deals done, so in that sense it is disappointing, and it's also disappointing because they were both very strong line-ups, so I would have liked to think that we would be fighting again to retain the championship."

Ferrier added that, without TF's clashing commitments, he "would have pushed harder to maybe try and get a GT3 car out" in British GT, but didn't rule out making one-off appearances.

Adam, British GT's most successful driver, will be without a seat for the first time since 2010, but said "as long as there's a [customer Aston] programme,

I still want to be racing" in the championship.

One of the places on the grid left vacant by TF's withdrawal will be taken by returnees Matt Griffin and Duncan Cameron in an AF Corse UK-run Ferrari 488 Evo, the first time the car has appeared in the series.

The 2015 Blancpain Endurance Pro-Am champions, who have raced together in British GT on and off since 2009, were set for parallel campaigns in the European Le Mans Series and International GT Open before swapping the latter for a first British GT bid since 2017.

Cameron, who won't contest all the rounds as he has a Le Mans entry, was due to complete his first test of the updated 488 as Autosport closed for press.

"We're on the back foot because it was a late change of plans, so we've not had the opportunity to build a really big testing programme," said Griffin. "But all things being well we'll definitely be competitive."

JAMES NEWBOLD

P75 OPINION

Hitech adds UK campaign to 2020 season plans

BRDC BRITISH F3

Leading UK single-seater team Hitech GP will contest the 2020 BRDC British Formula 3 Championship when the season gets under way next month.

The Silverstone-based squad, which already competes in FIA and Asian Formula 3 and will also contest Formula 2 this season, will field two cars in the UK category.

The squad, which was second in the FIA F3 teams' championship last year and operates the centrally run W Series, will confirm its drivers in the coming weeks.

Team principal Oliver Oakes said: "We'd looked at British F3 on and off for a couple of years but it just never came together. One year we did Asian F3 and then last year we took the tender for W Series.

"I think with the current COVID-19 situation, doing something in the UK could be good to have. It's a good championship for the young drivers and good for our staff.

"British motorsport doesn't get the credit it deserves for developing drivers. People should be more complimentary and understanding that British motorsport develops talent."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Dempsey sells Formula Ford team after 30 years

FORMULA FORD 1600

Renowned Formula Ford team owner Cliff Dempsey has sold his squad after 30 years.

The team, which has been one of the most successful in FF1600, has now been renamed Low Dempsey Racing after being bought by long-serving mechanic Andy Low.

Announcing the news on social media, Dempsey said: "After 30 years as team owner of Cliff Dempsey Racing, last January Michelle Dempsey and myself sold the race team, but don't despair as it's gone to a very good home in a good friend of mine, Andy Low.

"Both myself and Michelle are still working with the team to help the transition."

- Former Castle Combe FF1600 champion Luke Cooper will enter the opening races of the Combe season this Saturday in his Swift SC18 as well as the first round of the National series at Oulton Park on 18 July before deciding which to contest for the rest of the year.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Motorsport UK chairman thinks now is a time for change

Richards: Now is the time to assess UK motorsport's future

MOTORSPORT UK

Motorsport UK chairman David Richards believes that, in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, now is the right to time to look at the way in which motorsport operates in the UK, including reducing the number of events and making it more accessible.

The governing body suspended all event permits on the eve of the season beginning in March due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

That suspension ends this weekend and a limited number of meetings are now allowed to take place in July, but national championships cannot resume until August.

Richards feels the time is right to reassess UK national motorsport to ensure that it can thrive. "I think we've got to take a fresh look," he told Autosport. "We've got to use this opportunity to look at our calendar, to look at rationalising certain things. We've got to look at our customers more and understand exactly what it is they require.

"There had been a plethora of events around the country – too many events, too confusing – so it might not be a bad thing to restrict some of the calendars and have fewer events for people to go to but make those events more attainable and more affordable. That's got to be one of our goals."

He adds that it has been encouraging to see more clubs working together as events restart after the hiatus, saying it "always disappoints" that "clubs are very territorial at times".

One of Motorsport UK's priorities now is to get rallying restarted. Unlike circuit racing and other disciplines, traditional rallies cannot take place from this weekend as social distancing measures have prevented drivers sharing a car with co-drivers. Instead only rally time trials – where a driver is alone in the car, tackling the same short stage a number of times in a bid to complete it the quickest – are allowed at this point.

"The next thing we've got to do is get rallying back up and running," Richards said. "It's somewhat illogical that if you can get in a taxi with a taxi driver, and I believe driving lessons are coming back, and if that's the case – to my mind – there's no problem with bringing rallying back."

A test event, using new procedures, is set to take place in conjunction with M-Sport next week. It will be filmed and used as a template for how events can be run, Richards adding that he hopes to be able to give a timeframe for rallying's return in the "next couple of weeks".

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Le Mans winner Wallace enjoys Revolution test

REVOLUTION TROPHY

Le Mans 24 Hours winner Andy Wallace has given the Revolution A-One one-make sportscar his seal of approval after a try-out at Brands Hatch last month.

Wallace, who won Le Mans with Jaguar in 1988, was asked to drive the Ford-powered baby LMP car by Revolution boss Phil Abbott. He previously undertook early testing on the Radical RXC and raced both an SR3 and an SR8 for Abbott.

"I know Phil of old and he was interested to see what I thought about the car," said Wallace. "The thing you notice straight away is that it's very easy to drive and user-friendly.

"It's not pitch-sensitive aerodynamically and doesn't want to spit you off the track. It all feels very intuitive.

"It's got a lot of downforce and a lot of power, so it would be nice to drive it somewhere like Silverstone where it can stretch its legs."

Wallace hasn't ruled out racing the car in the Revolution UK Trophy class of the Sports Prototype Cup, which is due to kick off at Brands on 1 August. But he stressed that his commitments with Bugatti, for which he demos cars in his role as 'official driver', are likely to get in the way.

GARY WATKINS

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MIKE GARTON 1936-2020

OBITUARY

Mike Garton, who died last month aged 84, was a poacher-turned-gamekeeper who stopped racing in 1972 and became a respected international scrutineer.

The Peterborough motorcycle salesman switched from scrambling to car racing in 1961 with an Austin-Healey 'Frogeye' Sprite. He exchanged it with Donald Healey's son Geoff for the ex-works 1961 Le Mans Sprite, 1411 WD, in which Garton enjoyed immediate success in 1963 and made the first of 14 endurance starts at the Nurburgring, ending with Roger Heavens's Chevron B21 in 1972.

In 1965, Garton and Paul Hughes finished a remarkable second to John Rhodes/Warwick Banks (MGB) in Brands Hatch's Double 500, defeating Jackie Oliver/Chris Craft (Jaguar E-type) and Paddy Hopkirk/Roger Mac (Austin-Healey 3000). They also contested Snetterton's European Touring Car Championship round in an 850cc Mini.

Garton raced Vegantune's Lotus 23B in 1966, and achieved Sprite 1000km class podiums with David Corderoy at Brands, John Harris at Spa and Alec Poole at the 'Ring. In 1967 he finished 18th in the Nurburgring 1000Km, in a Mini Marcos with Autosport's Paddy McNally, and tackled Mugello in it with Tim Lalonde.

His Sprite swansong came with Clive Baker in the 1968 Sebring 12 Hours, but the works prototype LWD 959E retired. Heavens bought a Chevron B8 in 1969 and class wins in the 1970 'Ring 1000Km and Paris 1000Km at Montlhery followed. Updating to a B16 in 1971, they finished seventh in the Barcelona 1000Km.

With his technical expertise and abiding interest in sports-prototypes, Garton became chief scrutineer for the BRDC and FIA Technical Delegate through the Group C era. He also officiated in the Rover GTi and Metro championships.

MARCUS PYE

British Hillclimb Championship axed

HILLCLIMBS

The British Hillclimb Championship has become one of the latest contests to be severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic after it was announced that it has been cancelled for 2020.

Plans had been created to run a significantly reduced season at five venues across seven weekends but, after Prescott Hill bosses decided they were unable to run a suitable event, the decision was taken to cancel the season.

Championship organisers said in a statement: "Clearly this decision was not taken lightly and we have listened to the opinions of the venues and the competitors, who rightly have concerns about safety, before deciding it was better not to continue to try to run a championship this year.

"We will now start plans for 2021 and it is our intention to revise and invigorate the championship and to implement some changes that will take the championship forward for another 75 years.

"For any competitor who has registered for the championships we offer the option of leaving your entry intact, and this will be carried forward to next season regardless of any pricing alterations that may come into effect during that year."

The British Automobile Racing Club-operated Speed Championship, consisting of hillclimbs and sprint events, has also been axed for 2020.

IN THE HEADLINES

SMRC SEASON SHORTENED

The Scottish Motor Racing Club recently announced plans to hold just three race weekends over September and October as it found competitors were reluctant to make a swift return to action. In order to save on circuit costs and accommodation for marshals and officials, the club will operate three one-day events, with private testing at each round available in the morning. Knockhill's McRae Rally Challenge, due to mark 25 years since Colin McRae's World Rally Championship title, has also been postponed to 2021.

CHAMP DUNN BACK TO F1000

Former F1000 champion Andrew Dunn will make a return to the series this season. He claimed the 2010 title and was runner-up in 2014, but hasn't raced in the category since a one-off outing in 2018. Dunn is one of 20 F1000 entries already received for the season opener at Silverstone on 22-23 August.

SUPERKARTS AT CADWELL

The Superkart season gets under way this weekend at Cadwell Park, after months of uncertainty. As there are no Motorsport UK British Superkart Championships this year, drivers will be competing for points in a club championship. The twin-cylinder Division 1 Superkarts will be the quickest around Cadwell, and heading the entry is Liam Morley, runner-up in last year's FIA-CIK European Superkart Championship. He will face stiff opposition from Lee Harpham, Carl Hulme and Tom Rushforth.

EAVES INTEGRA FOR AUCTION

The 2005 Honda Integra Type R raced by Team Dynamics driver Dan Eaves to five wins in the British Touring Car Championship is set to be auctioned online by The Market. Of the four cars built, chassis #2 (below) is the only one left in the UK, and is eligible for Historic Super Touring and saloon grids. It carries a £50,000-£70,000 estimate and has been restored by Porsche squad In2Racing.

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British GT's bombshell

The withdrawal of TF Sport improves the prospects of its rivals, but highlights the fact that the championship hasn't escaped the COVID-19 crisis unscathed

JAMES NEWBOLD

Imagine if Mercedes took a year out of Formula 1 on the eve of the season and Lewis Hamilton was unable to defend his crown. It seems unthinkable, but on Monday British GT experienced its own version of that scenario with the announcement that leading team TF Sport would be pulling both its Aston Martin GT3 entries for this season, leaving four-time champion Jonny Adam without a seat to defend his title.

Having won each of his championships with a different 'Am' co-driver, the Aston Martin factory ace was targeting number five this year with returning 2014 series runner-up Ahmad Al Harthy. Even amid a stacked 19-car GT3 grid, with the benefit of lessons learned in the new-for-2019 Vantage GT3's first season, Adam reckoned the pairing would have been a strong bet at season's end.

"Getting three on the bounce was what I was really wanting to focus on this year," says Adam. "I really fancied trying to break that little record by doing that with three different Ams. I think we would have been a genuine challenger from the off."

But when the coronavirus pandemic caused all motorsport activity to be paused, date clashes between British GT's two Donington Park meetings and the rescheduled Spa 6 Hours and Le Mans 24 Hours created an unavoidable headache, as Adam was already "fully committed" to completing TF's World Endurance Championship campaign that began at Silverstone last September.

"We can't presume TF will be the last team whose 2020 plans are impacted by the pandemic"

Already without Adam at two rounds, for Omani Al Harthy the travel demands of such a congested calendar – with three events in August – meant his programme was no longer feasible. With the second TF entry set to be driven by 2019 GT3 co-champion Graham Davidson and graduating GT4 victor Tom Canning also falling by the wayside, TF Sport has been forced into a one-year hiatus from GT3. It will continue with its two-car GT4 programme and campaigns with Salih Yoluc in WEC and GT Open, before a planned return next year.

"It's a shame. I know how much effort Ahmad has put into doing British GT this year but a lot of people are in the same boat," says Adam. "You can't fault SRO because they've restructured the calendar to get a season of racing in, but unfortunately those date clashes are unavoidable.

"It will be weird just watching, but hopefully this is just a year out and next year we can try to put something together."

Adam will still have a vital role to play off-track, his expertise in getting the most from both car and customers making him a useful asset for Aston's lone 2020 GT3 customer Beechdean AMR – the squad with which he won his first title alongside Andrew Howard in 2015 – and an invaluable mentor to the four young chargers in TF Sport's GT4 line-up. But his absence from the entry list certainly leaves the door open for new challengers to take up the mantle.

But before we get ahead of ourselves, we can't presume that TF will be the last team whose 2020 plans are impacted by the pandemic. A pessimistic take perhaps but, in a championship that counts wealthy amateur drivers as its lifeblood, it must be a point of consideration for series organiser SRO.

Motorsport remains a luxury activity for those with disposable income and, in times where business owners are tightening their belts, racing an expensive GT3 car at the weekends quickly ceases to be a priority. As Davidson puts it: "I've just got to play the sensible game. You can't have all the toys all the time, can you?"

Of course, none of that is British GT's fault, and removing the annual trip to Spa from the calendar has gone some way towards cutting costs for participants.

Autosport understands another entry is being finalised to replace the second TF car and bring the GT3 ranks back up to capacity, following the Matt Griffin and Duncan Cameron Ferrari announced on Monday (see page 70). What may play to SRO's advantage is a recognition from amateur drivers originally looking to race in Europe – like Cameron, who traded his planned International GT Open assault for British GT – that getting their fix closer to home may be a better bet in this year of uncertainty.

"I do think things will shift, these are strange times," says Griffin, who last raced in British GT in 2017. "There's a big appetite for racing, that's still there, but I think people will shift what they're doing based on their personal preferences. For every race team, professional driver and promoter out there, it's all a little bit up in the air and 2020 is going to be a season you need to get through and reset for in 2021."

Even though they won't be doing all the rounds due to the Le Mans clash, the return of a pairing that first won a British GT round in 2009 – and in a brand-new car to boot – is a welcome boost for the championship and supports Adam's cautious optimism that Pro-Am racing can survive the brunt of the pandemic. "The impact is definitely going to affect motorsport in different ways," he says. "But customer racing hopefully will still continue."

There will be many people at SRO hoping he's right.

HOW CLUBS ARE PREPARING FOR UK RACING'S RESTART

Racing is finally due to begin this weekend, with the first three events set to take place. But these initial meetings will be very different from the club fixtures we've been used to

STEPHEN LICKORISH

July is normally the mid-point of the UK circuit racing season. But 2020 is not a normal year. The coronavirus outbreak has meant that instead of 84 national race events having already taken place in the UK and Ireland this season, there have been none. But that's all due to change this weekend when the club campaign finally gets under way.

Three events are set to take place to get proceedings off to a tentative start: the Castle Combe Racing Club is running a one-day meeting at the Wiltshire circuit, while the British Automobile Racing Club and MotorSport Vision Racing are holding two-day fixtures at Cadwell Park and Snetterton respectively. All eyes will be on these events to see how new procedures and protocols put in place to limit the risk of spreading COVID-19 work in practice.

There is no getting away from the fact that these events will be very different from the typical club meeting held last year. There will be no spectators, team personnel will be restricted, and social distancing is the order of the day. Governing body Motorsport UK has set out a range of guidelines that need to be followed to ensure the meetings can take place safely, and that means a raft of alterations to how race days are normally run.

The CCRC has even put together a two-hour video with input from its competitions director, marshals secretary, chief medical officer and chief scrutineer to give competitors and officials a better understanding of the changes and the rationale for them.

"I think the paperless systems will be the biggest change –

There'll be no spectators for Combe GTs, although the infield crops will be a backdrop

Radical SR1 Cup is due to kick into life at Snetterton this weekend

STYLES

Classic Touring Cars will be in action at Cadwell Park

WALKER

people will have signed on by the time they get to the race meeting," says CCRC chairman Ken Davies. "Cars are being scrutineered by declaration [beforehand] and kit is being authorised by declaration. The scrutineer will do some spot checks on the day and the main difference is there will be no queues at signing on or scrutineering."

BARC general manager Ian Watson agrees that this will be one of the key differences and is crucial to maintaining social distancing at what are traditionally two of the busiest parts of a meeting. "The fact that we've not got any sign-on or [pre-event] scrutineering – the Motorsport UK guidelines allow us to do that electronically in advance – means our biggest pinch points have been alleviated and has made our lives a bit easier," he says.

But signing on and scrutineering are far from the only changes to how events will be managed. The way incidents are dealt with will also be different. In order to aid social distancing, the number of marshals at each post has been reduced to two and drivers that stop on circuit for whatever reason are required to give a thumbs up to marshals if they are OK. If no signal is given, rescue crews with full personal protective equipment will deal with the situation. These restrictions have meant the CCRC has the unusual situation of turning away marshals as too many have offered their services for the 4 July event.

"Fewer marshals on each post means the chances of having a red flag have increased because if we get a blockage by a standard car breakdown, we're not going to have the manpower to recover it,"

READ

"WE'VE GOT NO SCRUTINEERING OR SIGN-ON, SO OUR BIGGEST PINCH POINTS HAVE BEEN ALLEVIATED"

explains Davies. "The chances of a red flag have gone up around 15-20%, but we're telling competitors so they're aware and can be more vigilant at this meeting for those reasons."

Ultimately, it's down to individual competitors to make sure they follow the guidelines. After all, if the virus flares up because someone at a meeting abuses the rules, it risks curtailing the racing season once more. "I think that people need to realise it's down to them to be responsible for their own personal safety – individuals need to be responsible," says Watson.

Another decision the CCRC took for this initial meeting was to limit it to only the club's own categories instead of having any of its usual guest additions. By restricting the timetable to double-headers for the Combe Formula Ford 1600, GT, Saloon and Hot Hatch Challenge classes, there will be sufficient space in the paddock and it also means more room can be created in the timetable to deal with any incidents. The BARC too has been keen to allow for as much spare capacity in the schedule as possible at Cadwell to ensure all the races can still run.

But Watson admits the club was uncertain about whether or not to run the meeting if the government had not relaxed the rules surrounding hotels and overnight stays from 4 July.

"The biggest challenge was knowing what the government »

The return to racing has proved popular with Combe's Formula Ford drivers – 22 have signed up

READ

was going to allow us to do," he admits. "Their relaxation of [the restrictions] allowing hotels and accommodation to open has meant we can take this event forward. If they didn't do that for this first one in July, I thought we might have to cancel."

Fortunately, that was not necessary, but all the measures that the clubs have put in place would have been pointless if no one signed up to race at the meetings. It was the big unknown: whether or not drivers' appetite to get out on track had been dampened by the financial impact of coronavirus. And the answer, so far at least, has been an encouraging no.

At the time of writing, the CCRC has 22 drivers signed up for FF1600 and an incredible 39 for Hot Hatch – both figures far higher than the average 2019 entries. And it's a similarly positive story with the BARC's Cadwell event, with CNC Heads Sports/Saloons and the Junior Saloons leading the way on 24 drivers each.

"Entries are coming in pretty well and it looks like we will have a reasonable entry for the event," says Watson. "All of the grids are doing quite well – we've been pleasantly surprised by how many are coming out to play.

"We've got one or two championships looking a bit thinner than we would like, but it could have been much worse.

Organisers hope the racing will be as hard and fair as normal

WALKER

"AS A RACING CLUB, IF WE'RE NOT GOING TO RUN MEETINGS, WHAT'S THE POINT IN US BEING HERE?"

Competitors and marshals were keen to get back out, so everyone is wanting to give it a try."

MSVR has also been impressed by the level of entries for its first meeting. "We've had very strong interest from competitors and great support from marshals and officials too," says competitions manager Joe East. "We're expecting close to 200 entries for Snetterton, which should include some full grids. The MSV Trackdays series, including EnduroKa, looks particularly strong.

"We're looking forward to restarting and everyone at MSVR is extremely optimistic for the rest of the season. It's been a long time since we've been racing and we're all itching to get going!"

The CCRC has even had a couple of generous competitors step forward – anonymously – to pay for trophies to be handed out at the event. "We have one in Saloons and one in GTs," says Davies. "That's about £500 between them, but it's £500 that would've come out of the club's already depleted coffers. It's a great gesture of support and epitomises everything great about motorsport."

The devastation wrought by COVID-19 had led to many communities coming together to support each other through the tough times – and motorsport has certainly been no exception. Now, as racing finally gets under way, it is more important than ever that everyone plays their part.

As Davies says, these initial meetings will be a "voyage of discovery", but it's vitally important that they are successful and allow more ambitious events with fewer restrictions and more races to take place in the future. The CCRC, for example, was determined to hold the 4 July event and be one of the first to resume activities.

"It's our raison d'etre – as a racing club and racing circuit, if we're not going to run race meetings, what's the point in us being here?" says Davies. "We're hoping the racing, once people get out on track, will be as hard and as fair as normal."

They may be very different from what we have been used to, but, finally, now is the time for organising clubs to focus on running race meetings once more.

Accentuate the positive

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Positive news has been in very short supply in the past few months. The coronavirus pandemic has impacted upon just about every aspect of our lives and motorsport has been no exception, with hundreds of events cancelled or postponed. But finally, after all the doom and gloom, some positive signs are now here. It's not just Formula 1 that's due to make a long-awaited return this weekend, but also club racing. And we've got Autosport magazine back as well!

One of the most significant positives has to be the amount of interest these first few meetings have generated. You can read about the encouraging signs for this weekend's Castle Combe Racing Club, British Automobile Racing Club and MotorSport Vision Racing events on the preceding pages, but other meetings have also attracted competitors in droves. None more so than the Classic Sports Car Club's Thruxton fixture at the end of this month, which had secured more than 350 entries within a few days of them opening.

It has taken a lot of work to get to this point. Governing body Motorsport UK has to be commended for the way it has facilitated discussions between organising clubs, circuit operators and other groups, such as marshals' clubs, to enable sensible plans to be drawn up to allow motorsport to restart in the UK.

Motorsport UK chairman David Richards says one of the biggest challenges in producing these guidelines has been getting clarity from the government about what is possible. "I think there's a lack of clear guidance from government, if you like – it's understandable to a certain extent in that things are changing all the time and I can understand why they don't want to be necessarily tied down by a strict set of rules," he says. "But that has made it quite tricky."

The 'Getting Back on Track' plans cater for radically different race meetings but are widely accepted as being feasible and a good first step in getting motorsport events back up and running. Sadly, not everyone has been so positive about the proposals, and there have been moans about how club events will be unacceptably different. But instead of grumbling about what can't be done over the next few months, we should surely all be celebrating the fact that racing is returning at all – even if it does mean sacrifices have to be made and some of the key ingredients of club meetings of old have to be discarded for now.

And it has to be pointed out that it's a long way from being a universally positive picture. In Scotland, there is seemingly less of an appetite to restart racing, and just a trio of one-day Scottish Motor Racing Club events will take place in September and October. You can read elsewhere in this issue about leading British GT team TF Sport withdrawing from the top class in the wake of the pandemic (page 70) and about the British Hillclimb Championship being axed for 2020 (p73). Rallying has also been hit particularly hard as the social distancing rules have prevented it from returning alongside circuit racing this weekend, and the British Rally Championship has been cancelled for this year.

In these dark and difficult times, it is vital that we look to the positives. And one thing to emerge from the pandemic is a much increased take-up of Esports. From club championships creating their own virtual series to the Virtual Le Mans 24 Hours, there has been no shortage of opportunities for drivers to get involved.

"I would say that's a tremendous positive and we should see it as such," says Richards. "We shouldn't see it as a threat, we should embrace it. We should find ways of communicating with the people that participate in it and really take full advantage of their enthusiasm.

"We've been saying for a long time: how do we get younger people to join motor clubs? How do we get the barriers to entry at a lower level and more acceptable? This lockdown has shown that virtual motorsport has offered that opportunity in abundance. We've got to allow people who enjoyed going virtual racing to have the opportunity to try the real thing, and that's a challenge we will be taking up and looking at more carefully."

Richards has even got meetings planned next week on that very subject and it is clear how seriously the task of converting people from games to real-life on-track action is being taken.

That is just one example of a positive arising from this deeply negative situation. And it's vital that we maintain that attitude as we continue to adjust to motorsport's 'new normal' over the coming months. As CCRC chairman Ken Davies points out, the club's race meeting this weekend takes place almost 70 years to the day since the very first event at the Wiltshire circuit. Back in 1950, there were eight races for the organising club's members only and no spectators. Sound familiar? History has a habit of repeating itself, and over the years motorsport has successfully adapted to numerous changes and challenges. This latest crisis is no exception.

NEXT WEEK

We report from the tracks as club racing resumes.

A diverse range of machinery will be on track during test days

JEP

THE TESTING QUESTION

Circuits have been open for testing and trackdays before racing's restart. But, as simulators become ever more commonplace and at a time of rising costs and diminishing incomes, is testing still a vital part of the sport?

STEFAN MACKLEY

It's the fine margins that ultimately decide who wins and who fails in the fight for the top step of the podium, the work done outside of race weekends and behind the scenes that makes the difference. In particular, those hours spent testing – either by a driver getting up to speed on a specific circuit or pushing a new component on the car to breaking point – can provide the vital gains in performance when it matters most. And national motorsport is no different, whether it be British GT or Formula Ford.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, testing was a growing – and lucrative – sector of UK motorsport, for the circuits that provide the track time and for the teams running tailored programmes for paying drivers. MotorSport Vision, which operates Brands Hatch, Oulton Park, Donington Park, Cadwell Park and Snetterton, held approximately 160 days of testing across those five venues last season, having steadily increased that number over the preceding years.

"When we took over the Brands Hatch group of circuits in 2004 there were far fewer club meetings than we have now, and the same applies to test days," says MSV chief executive Jonathan Palmer. "But club meetings have become busier and more widespread over that time, and so we've had more and more test days that have developed as well.

"We work hard to make sure that our test days are as efficient for the teams and the drivers as possible. Over time we've introduced different formats of test days, like our semi-exclusive events where we limit the number of vehicles on track to offer the best chance of uninterrupted track time. It's clearly more expensive but, for the higher-end championships, people value that time and are prepared to pay for it to make sure that they minimise interruptions from traffic

"TESTING IS THE MOST BENEFICIAL THING YOU CAN HAVE FOR YOUR CAR, FOR THE WHOLE RACE WEEKEND"

and they can get the best value out of their testing.

"We also sell test days to teams and championships on an exclusive basis, so a championship can take a day for its testing; British Formula 4 might [do this], for example, or British Formula 3."

From semi and solely exclusive days to open-pitlane testing, it has all been affected by COVID-19, with on-track activity suspended for most of April and May. Since testing resumed, new protocols have been put in place at MSV venues to help prevent the spread of the virus, including online registration, restricted garage use and a takeaway-only food service.

But will it be enough to encourage people to return to the UK's tracks, especially *just* for testing?

In a bygone era of Formula 1, Michael Schumacher and Ferrari were famous for clocking up hundreds of miles of testing around the Fiorano circuit to extract every last ounce of speed from the car. All well and good for those in the upper echelons of the sport, but is there a limit to how useful testing can be for the club driver, who is spending their hard-earned money on a hobby and often running their own car?

Four-time Toyota MR2 champion Shaun Traynor believes that testing is invaluable for the club driver, despite the added cost to a season's racing.

"I think testing is absolutely the most beneficial thing you can have for your car and the whole race weekend, especially if you're new to a championship," he says. "If I could go back and start again, I would have tested probably twice at every track for the first year.

"Some tracks you can be almost two seconds a lap quicker [after testing], which is the difference between mid-pack and qualifying on the front row. In the MR2s, where you can't modify and you can't tune your engine or anything like that, your set-up might save you three tenths, whereas testing can save you a second, which money just can't buy."

While testing can primarily help you learn a circuit, says Traynor, it's the repetitive running that is essential to building up a level of consistency.

"If I go back through my lap times after a race, they are all pretty much exactly the same," he says. "It might not always be the fastest, but the consistency of fairly quick laps throughout a race is where testing comes into its own. »

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It gives you that consistency of being able to do the same time lap after lap after lap."

While testing for some club drivers might be out of reach financially, especially when it's weighed against being able to complete a full campaign, teams rely on testing as a source of income. Leading UK team Carlin, for example, will conduct just as many if not more test days throughout a season than time spent at circuits for race meetings.

"What we're all about is preparation," says founder and team boss Trevor Carlin. "At a race weekend from a Friday to Sunday, you're going to do three races; you're going to have one qualifying session and one or two practice sessions and you're going to do, in something like British F4, probably 400 miles. On a test day you can do 400 miles, so if you do three test days that's 1200 miles. You can see the amount of mileage you get on a test day compared to a race weekend is far better value."

The past few months have been testing for all the wrong reasons, and it will be many months before the true impact of the COVID-19 pandemic can be quantified – both for national motorsport and further afield.

Testing and trackdays were, as expected, the first on-track activities to return several weeks ago as the majority of clubs prepare to resume racing this month. Palmer reports that there has been no shortage of drivers and teams wanting to get back on track for testing after the lay-off. "Over the past few weeks I am pleased to say we have actually seen very strong demand for testing, with most of our circuits now fully booked with a combination of weekday trackdays and testing," he says.

James Beckett, founder of the popular end-of-season Walter Hayes Trophy and Heritage Formula Ford Championship, believes that the individual competitor will be hardest hit by the current situation, but that it's impossible to know the true impact at this stage.

Circuit operator Palmer says there has been a high demand for post-lockdown testing

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

"Time will tell whether the mindset of testing and how people look at testing changes," he says. "People might be happy to test in their living rooms [on a sim] rather than actually going and spending lots of money testing in the flesh. You're never going to replicate what it's like in real life, but it will be interesting to see how it carries on.

"Circuits are going to want to encourage testing because they are going to need the revenue; teams are going to need the revenue because they've been parked for a long time. As for competitors, it depends who's well financed. Some people will have money in place to go testing. Others – the private entrant – may find that they've been furloughed or their business is struggling. Maybe they won't have the money to go testing. It's difficult to predict.

"There's so many scenarios of how it can go one way or the other. The way things are changing, I'm not really sure we can predict how testing is going to benefit or not benefit."

Carlin says a test day allows his team to complete the same mileage as a three-day race weekend

JEP motorsport IMAGES

OSCAR-INSPIRED SUCCESS THAT

FILM REVIEW
AND WE GO GREEN

Battery cells and comparatively slow and quiet race cars have struggled to win over vast swathes of motorsport fans, so what chance do they have at capturing the attention of a far broader audience?

Academy Award-winning director Fisher Stevens and Malcolm Venville are part of that wider, largely motorsport-apathetic base. That outside perspective allowed them to make a critical decision when it came to producing *And We Go Green*, the feature-length Formula E documentary.

It's not a 98-minute study about technology or cars driving around complicated, inner-city circles. Those elements are present, but only ever peripheral. Instead, the film is motivated by the 2017-18 title fight between main protagonists Jean-Eric Vergne, Lucas di Grassi and Sam Bird. It uses their bravado and arrogance, their rivalries and extensive criticism of one another – and the on-track action – to motivate the story by sticking closely to the more soulful and evocative human stories. This was undoubtedly the right call.

The drivers discuss the mental drain that came with failing to establish themselves in Formula 1. Clips of the crashes that led to the deaths of Jules Bianchi and Ayrton Senna are present, too. These elements contextualise the emotion that has motivated the characters of this film to compete in FE, and it undoubtedly makes for compelling viewing.

But the core issue here is that the film bases itself on events that are rapidly heading towards being three years out of date.

Part of the success of the Netflix *Drive to Survive* serial is that viewers can binge-watch the show and be enthralled. When it then comes to tuning in to the subsequent F1 season they can assume a certain level of knowledge about which teams are competitive and be familiar with almost all of the drivers.

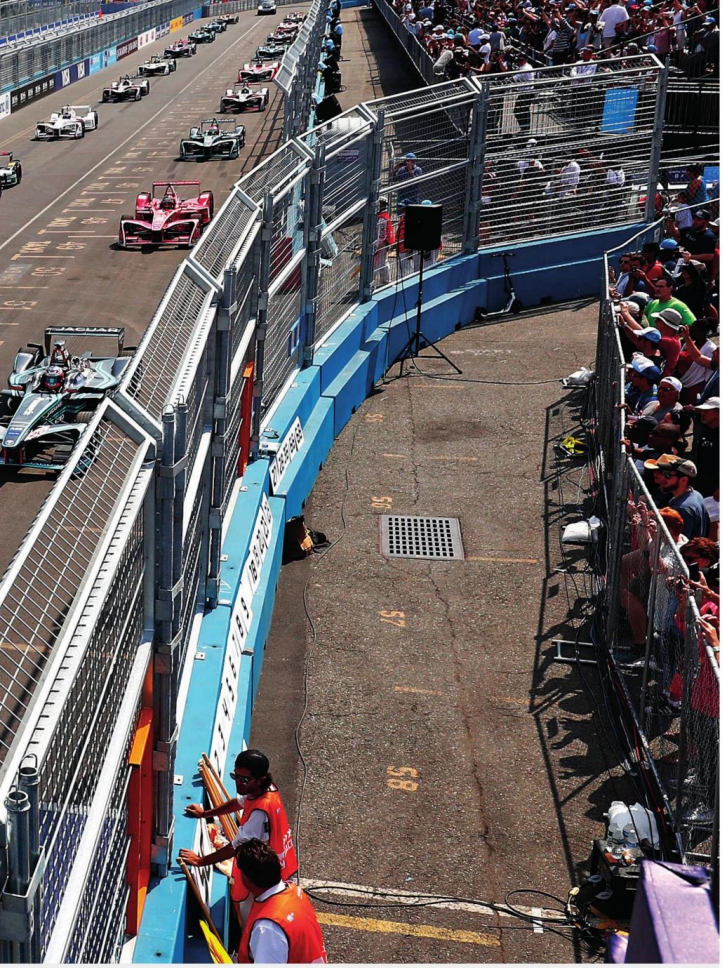
The same cannot be said for viewers of *And We Go Green*. For the duration, the action unfolds in the facelifted Gen1 cars – whereas we are now into the second season of the wildly different-looking Gen2 machine. Similarly, there are new teams and a host of new drivers to get to know.

For instance, inaugural FE champion Nelson Piquet Jr – who features heavily, and is owed a degree of sympathy for the way he portrays his seemingly cold and distant father – has been completely absent from the grid for more than a year.

The jump between the events of the film and contemporary FE is jarring. Maybe this won't matter as much in time – in the same way that the brilliant *The Last Dance* recalls the late 1990s in gripping fashion. But, for now, this is a particular bugbear of *And We Go Green*. It's also staggering that Sebastien Buemi – who holds the records for the most series wins with 13 – is completely absent for the duration.

Aside from a few editing niggles – switching the order of the Berlin and Paris E-Prix, seemingly without reason – the rest of the film strikes a pleasing note. Producer Leonardo DiCaprio's presence in the paddock is an amusing on-screen addition rather than a Hollywood distraction. The talking head interviews don't patronise viewers by over-explaining each incident and lens flares help to glamorise the portrayal.

What's refreshing is it appears as though the directors were given a sizeable deal of creative freedom. This isn't a warts-and-all documentary, but nor is it a straight up PR exercise. One of the opening scenes shows the



CAME TOO LATE

gantry lights failing and delaying the start of the Hong Kong E-Prix, with series co-founder and chairman Alejandro Agag beginning to lose his cool. The drivers are more than willing to take jabs at one another rather than hide behind a veil and toe the party line.

Even if it is outdated, *And We Go Green* is beautifully presented and often emotive – something that bodes well for the possible documentary-style coverage that's expected to be given to the inaugural season of Agag's latest venture, Extreme E.

And as ever with these mainstream motorsport projects, if it captures the drama of the sport and convinces more people to tune in and enjoy racing, then its mere existence has to be celebrated.

MATT KEW

And We Go Green **is available to watch now on All 4 and via the Formula E YouTube channel**

YouTube youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom

Formula 1 is set to return this weekend. But there are now extra safety logistics and procedures that will be implemented, resulting in a grand prix being significantly different compared to when the cars were last out on track. **Go to bit.ly/F1afterCOVID**

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Austrian Grand Prix
Formula 1 World Championship
Round 1/8
Red Bull Ring, Austria
5 July
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sun 1405
TV **Highlights** Channel 4, Sun 1830, Sky Sports F1, Sun 1800

FIA Formula 2
Round 1/8
Red Bull Ring, Austria
4-5 July
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sat 1535, Sun 1000

FIA Formula 3
Round 1/8
Red Bull Ring, Austria
4-5 July
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sat 0920, Sun 0835

Porsche Supercup
Round 1/8
Red Bull Ring, Austria
5 July
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sun 1120

IndyCar Series
Round 2/14
Indianapolis, USA
4 July
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sat 1700

NASCAR Cup
Round 16/36
Indianapolis, USA
5 July
TV **Live** Premier Sports 2, Sun 2100

NASCAR Xfinity Series
Round 13/33
Indianapolis, USA
4 July

IMSA Sportscar
Round 2/11
Daytona, USA
4 July

UK MOTORSPORT *

Castle Combe CCRC
4 July
FF1600, Saloons, GTs, Hot Hatches

Snetterton MSVR
4-5 July
SuperCup, Trackday Championship, Track Attack, Racing Saloons, Production BMW, Z Cars, Radicals, EnduroKa

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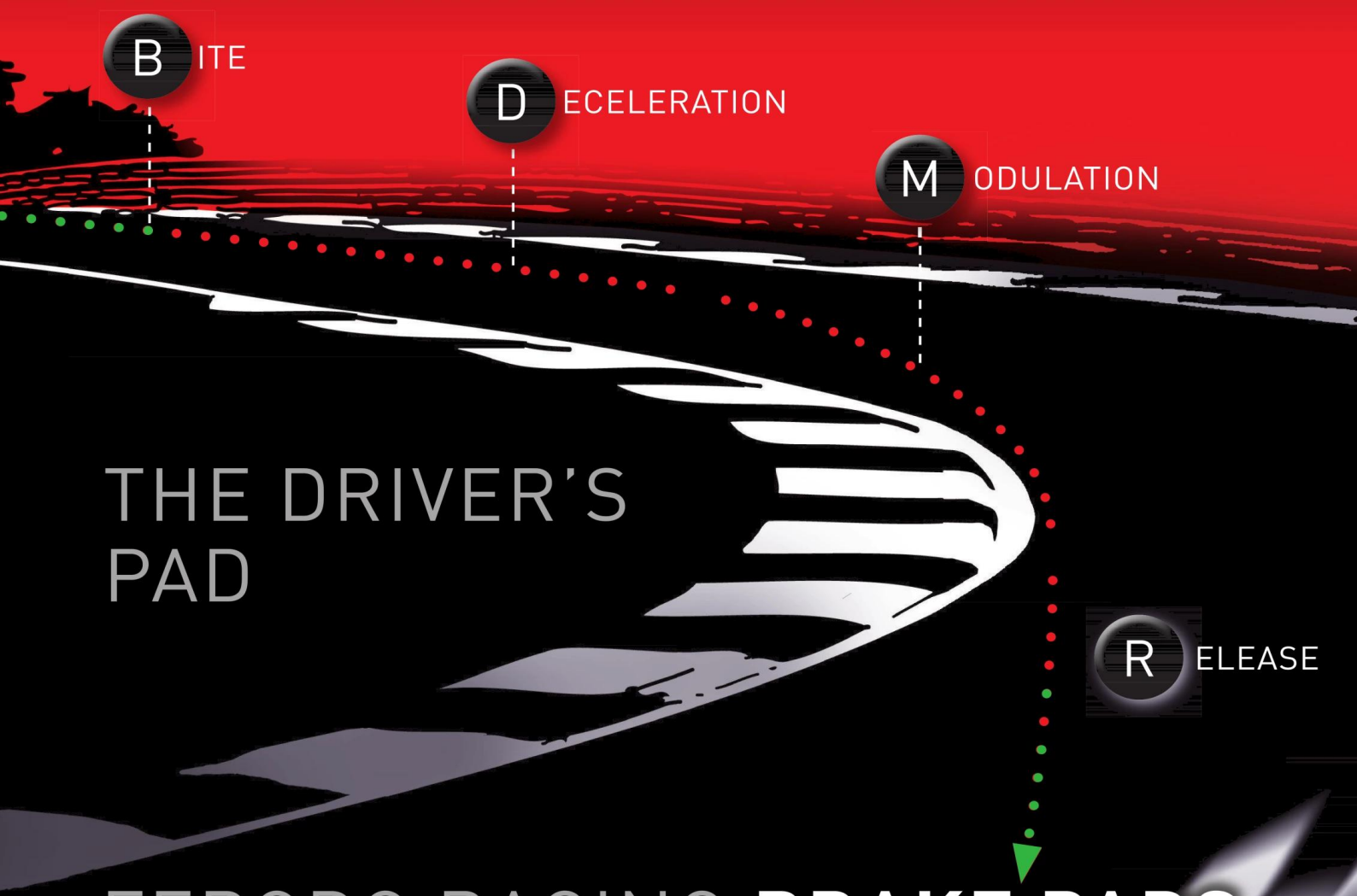

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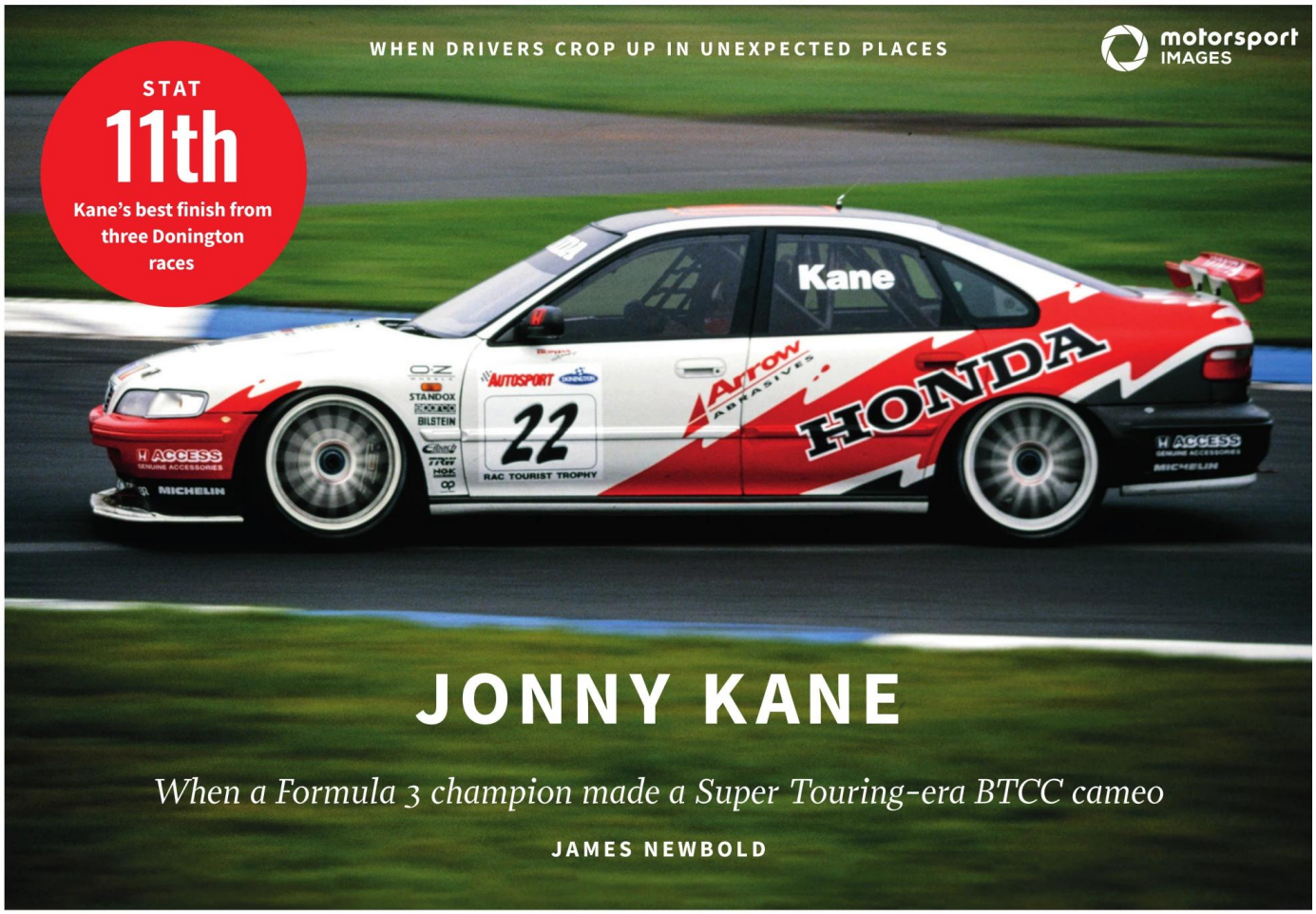

JONNY KANE

When a Formula 3 champion made a Super Touring-era BTCC cameo

JAMES NEWBOLD

At the height of the British Touring Car Championship's Super Touring period in 1997, there were no fewer than eight manufacturers pumping money into full works teams. Drivers earned good money, and it was even a tempting proposition for the top single-seater talents of the day.

That year's British Formula 3 champion Jonny Kane (right) admits as much when looking back at his first experience of tin-top racing in the non-championship Tourist Trophy triple-header at Donington Park in a Prodrive-run Honda Accord.

Kane's Paul Stewart Racing Dallara had been powered by a Mugen engine that "was basically the same engine in the Prodrive Honda, just a lot more restricted rev-wise", and it was another Honda link that meant he'd be team-mates with Superbike whizz Aaron Slight, making his car racing debut, the pair replacing regular drivers Gabriele Tarquini and James Thompson for the event.

But while Kane had their data to work from, the lack of an experienced team-mate to bounce ideas off meant his learning curve was that much steeper.

"I know James a bit and I'm sure having him there would have been beneficial," says the Le Mans LMP2 class winner. "I remember the weekend being quite difficult because there were so many tyre compounds. I needed more track time to get my head around it. I ended up going for a softer tyre than I should have done, which made it tricky towards the end."

But Kane was full of praise for the car, having never driven a front-wheel-drive racer before. "I was really impressed," he says. "I expected it to be an understeery pig, but it was far from it. The car was quite nicely balanced, lots of good engineering had gone into making it that way."

The two heats featured a completely reversed grid, with most teams opting to put one driver at each end, as close as possible to the 110% cut-off. That Kane qualified fifth is therefore not the prescient fact – more impressive was that he was only half a second off poleman Anthony Reid's Nissan.

Slight was taken out by Yvan Muller early on, a hefty rear impact at the Craner Curves ending his weekend, but Kane kept his Accord on-track to place 11th, a result he matched in race two after an attritional contest. A spin in the final meant he ended his tin-top sojourn 14th, but Kane still enjoyed the experience.

"The BTCC was at its peak," he says. "It had great drivers, great teams, really fantastic racing. F3000 was my next goal, but if the opportunity had come up to go into touring cars the following year, I probably could have been tempted."

"I WAS IMPRESSED. I EXPECTED IT TO BE AN UNDERSTEERY PIG, BUT IT WAS FAR FROM IT"

FROM THE ARCHIVE

A prostrate spectator's bravery is rewarded with the spectacle of an almost nonchalant-looking Stirling Moss holding his Aston Martin DBR1 in an inch-perfect drift during the 1958 Le Mans 24 Hours. Moss, who was paired with Jack Brabham, aced the start, then set a mighty pace, extending his lead to more than 90 seconds before a broken conrod just over two hours in ended his charge. None of the works DBR1s made the finish, an accident accounting for Roy Salvadori/Stuart Lewis-Evans and a broken gearbox stymieing Tony Brooks/Maurice Trintignant.

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Boost or bust for F1's smaller teams?

29 June 1995

"The answer to Ligier's prayers?" asked Autosport magazine this week in 1995. Legendary motorsport team boss Tom Walkinshaw had joined as the team's engineering director for the campaign and had high hopes.

The Ligier JS41s of Martin Brundle and Olivier Panis had just had their most competitive showing so far in the Canadian Grand Prix, and Walkinshaw was confident of reorganising the team and lifting them towards the front, as he had helped do at Benetton.

"Ligier is not very different to how Benetton was when we first went in there," said Walkinshaw, who was also – among other things – masterminding the Volvo programme in the British Touring Car Championship at the time. "It's fairly disjointed, with not a lot of processes and controls."

Walkinshaw talked of the new people and systems he was putting in place, and believed the team was capable of battling at the front: "I don't see any reason why Ligier can't be up there fighting for a world championship within three years."

Ligier would finish an encouraging fifth in the 1995 constructors' championship, and an inspired Panis won the 1996 Monaco GP, then the team was bought by Alain Prost ahead of the 1997 season. Prost Grand Prix vanished from F1 after 2001.

The survival of F1's smaller teams was also very much on the news agenda in June 1995, with the confirmation that cars would need to qualify within 107% of the pole position time the following season.

"The new law stands to be another nail in the coffin of the struggling minnows at the back of the F1 grid – more specifically, those without a works engine deal," said Autosport.

A little more than a year later and Simtek, Pacific and Forti would be gone.

AUTOSPORT

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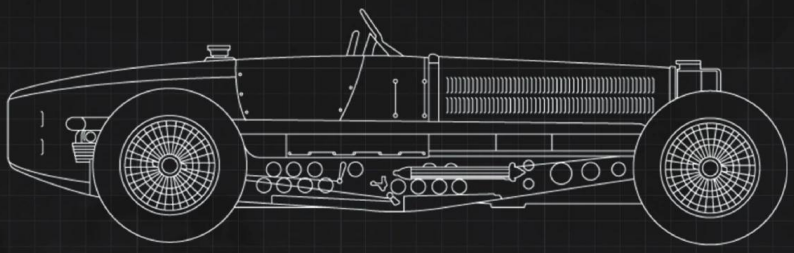

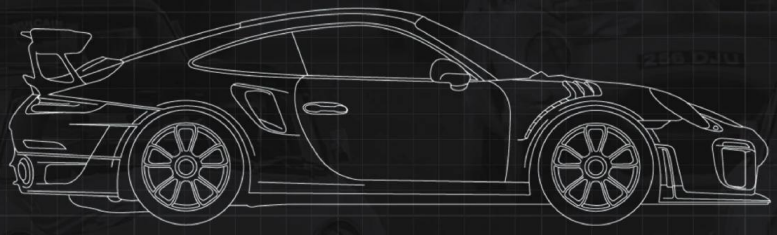

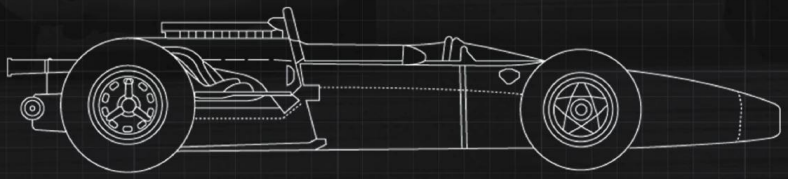

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