

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR F1

 **AUTOSPORT**

**A NEW
ERA
BEGINS**

**LIFE
AFTER
BERNIE**

**NIGEL ROEBUCK ON
ECCLESTONE'S LEGACY**

**PLUS
New owner's
masterplan**

**What we think
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Formula 1's next step cannot be rushed

THE CHANGE FROM BERNIE ECCLESTONE AND CVC to Liberty Media at the top of Formula 1 has created a great deal of excitement and, in the longer term, could be seismic.

A lot of criticism has been directed at F1 in recent years – some of it fair, some of it not – and Ecclestone has seemed increasingly out of step with what the sport needs.

As Nigel Roebuck points out in his extended column this week, there is no doubt that Ecclestone did F1 a great deal of good, particularly in the 1970s and '80s. But Bernie has also probably created more problems than he has solved since the turn of the century. Most would agree that a change is no bad thing.

Nevertheless, those expecting F1 to radically reform overnight may be disappointed. As new Liberty motorsports managing director Ross Brawn has pointed out (see page 10), there are many deals already in place that could slow things down. He prefers longer-term planning anyway, which is a positive.

It is also worth remembering that Liberty will still want to make money out of F1. That's why the talk has been of helping circuits make more of the races they host, rather than reducing the fees.

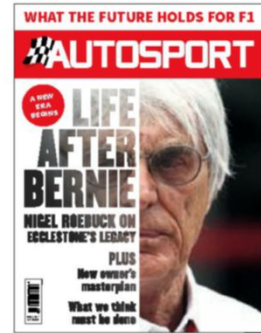
Brawn being brought on board should be seen as a positive sign; he is a racing man with the experience and intelligence to see the bigger picture. But his impact has to be long-term. The sport, partly thanks to Ecclestone, is far too complicated for quick fixes. Life after Bernie is certainly not going to be simple.



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COVER IMAGE
Batchelor/XPB Images

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NIGEL ROEBUCK

The good and the bad of Bernie

IN RECENT DAYS, FOLLOWING THE announcement of Bernie Ecclestone's removal from the helm of Formula 1, it has been irritating to see suggestions that until he came along, it was little more than a rag-bag of bumbling amateurs. Perhaps these people never met Enzo Ferrari or Colin Chapman, nor remembered days when, at a place like Hockenheim, there was not a seat to be had.

Chronologically my own life in F1 has more or less dovetailed with Ecclestone's, for 1971, when I started work as a journalist, was also the year that he moved in from the fringes of 'the sport', and began to transform it into 'the business'. Indisputably, without him F1 would never have grown into an entity of interest to such as CVC Capital Partners or Liberty Media.

Following the death at Monza in 1970 of Jochen Rindt, whom he managed, Bernie took stock of the F1 scene, and resolved to become, let's say, more directly involved. A born dealer and already a wealthy man, in '72 he acquired – on what may be called advantageous terms – the Brabham team, and he was on his way.

That year – over sandwiches and beer in a pub – I interviewed him for the first time, and even by the standards of the day it was apparent that his love of racing was 'old school' in its roots. He was, for example, infuriated that Spa – the old Spa – had been ruled out of the world championship by the drivers: "If you put barbed wire down both sides of the Masta Straight, and told them it was a million to win, they'd all be there like a shot..."

Already you could see how Ecclestone's mind worked, and a homily from that day has stayed with me: "First you get on, then you get rich, then you get honest..."

While you could never describe such as Ferrari and McLaren and Tyrrell and BRM and Matra as a 'rag-bag of amateurs', undeniably their focus was on racing, rather than the commercial aspects of F1. Traditionally team owners had done individual deals with race promoters, and if you had a superstar driver you got more 'starting money' than for a journeyman. Nothing wrong with that as a principle, but no matter who was in the car you were paid a relative pittance, and it was to this problem that Ecclestone swiftly applied himself.

What he proposed was that he do a collective deal with the promoters for everyone, and his fellow team owners, aware of Bernie's reputation as a 'robust businessman', willingly went along. Thus he effectively 'unionised' F1, setting up F1CA (later FOCA), and if circuit owners squealed, inescapably the power lay no longer with them: if they agreed to Bernie's fiscal requirements, all the teams turned up to race; if not, they had an empty paddock. The policy worked most satisfactorily.

'A dog will not howl if you beat him with a bone', goes the old saying, and Ecclestone well knew that if you took care of people's wallets, their hearts and minds would surely follow. Over time the team owners became rich beyond their dreams, and against that backdrop were only too happy to let Bernie do his thing: >>



Ecclestone managed
1970 champion
Jochen Rindt



no surprise that his power base in F1 grew to a point that it became absolute.

Not everyone was happy about this, most notably Jean-Marie Balestre, who in 1978 became president of FISA, then the sporting arm of the FIA. Very much an autocrat himself, the choleric Balestre concluded that Ecclestone's power needed trimming, and increasingly engaged in a battle with him over the finances and control of the world championship, which built up to what became known as the FISA-FOCA War. Through the winter of 1980-81 F1 was split asunder, with the 'manufacturer' teams – Ferrari, Renault, Alfa Romeo – feeling obligated to side with the governing body, all the others remaining true to Ecclestone and FOCA.

In the end it was resolved, as these things always are, and although Balestre proclaimed he had won, it was Ecclestone who emerged with precisely the deal he wanted: if FISA retained the right to make the sporting and technical regulations, that was fine with him; what mattered was that Balestre signed the first Concorde Agreement, under which FOCA was officially granted the commercial rights to F1.

Max Mosley, then in the poacher role of legal adviser to Ecclestone and FOCA, ultimately became gamekeeper, of course, succeeding Balestre as president of the FIA in 1993. Now Bernie truly did have his ducks in a row.

By this time F1 was established as a global sport, and if the focus remained in its cultural heartland, there were also grands prix in North and South America, Japan and Australia, Ecclestone repeatedly saying that 'Europe was finished', that his intention was to concentrate on new markets, particularly in Asia.

More than anything else, F1 had mushroomed because of TV. When Bernie began to take control, relatively few races were televised at all, and fewer than that in their entirety. Gradually, though, he did ever more lucrative deals with



F1 race director Charlie Whiting (left) was chief mechanic at Ecclestone's Brabham

LAT

TV companies in ever more countries, requiring them to broadcast every grand prix, and it was this development that brought riches on a level beyond anything seen before. At the end of each season, the spoils – less Mr E's very considerable percentage – would be divided up between the teams, based on their results.

In 1994, for no reason that was good, F1

came to the notice of the wider world. At Imola Roland Ratzenberger was killed in qualifying, and 24 hours later Ayrton Senna – overwhelmingly the most celebrated racing driver on Earth – suffered the same fate.

It had been 12 years since the last fatality at a grand prix, and in that time the world had immeasurably changed. When Gilles Villeneuve and Riccardo Paletti lost their lives, in 1982, the public reaction was much as it had always been: while sad, it was no more than occasionally inevitable in a sport that could never be safe.

A dozen years on, though, the risk-averse culture was in full flow, and newspapers everywhere took a high moral tone, while taking care to cash in on the tragedies. I remember the front page of Monday's *Daily Star*: 'In the name of sport', the rag trumpeted, sandwiching its headline between photographs of Ratzenberger and Senna, slumped in their cockpits. And, at the bottom of the page, 'These young men died giving us thrills'.

In truth it had ever been thus, and Niki Lauda pointed out that more remarkable was the absence of fatalities for so long. "For 12 years," he said, "God had his hand over Formula 1. This weekend he took it away."

At Monaco, two weeks later, Karl Wendlinger was severely injured in practice, and suddenly it seemed as though it were impossible to come out of an accident unscathed. The following morning FIA president Mosley convened an emergency press conference.

This was not, Max said, a moment for the niceties of unanimous approval, as defined by the Concorde Agreement: "Because of the gravity of the situation, and the force of public opinion, the time has come to push aside such



Future FIA president Max Mosley (left) was Ecclestone's legal adviser

LAT



Events of Imola '94 brought great change

considerations, and simply do what is right, in the general interests of the sport.”

Mosley then announced major rule changes, dealing primarily with three areas: the reduction of downforce and horsepower, as well as safety modifications to the cars.

Many were introduced immediately, and all eventually came to be. If some were rather kneejerk in nature, collectively they changed the map of F1 forever, inevitably at some cost to the purist. As Professor Sid Watkins put it, “Society had changed, and the old panache of F1 was close to being no longer acceptable.”

Human nature being what it is, tragedy had no adverse effect on the popularity of motor racing. Quite the opposite, in fact, as I remember from a conversation with Ecclestone on the subject a year or so later.

“After Senna was killed, everyone said, ‘That’s it, Formula 1’s finished. Brazil,’ they said, ‘don’t even have a race in Brazil...’ And what happened? This year we had the biggest crowd ever in Brazil. The TV ratings have been bigger than ever, and at every circuit the crowd has been up...”

Perhaps, I suggested, what Imola did was remind people that this is a serious business.

“Absolutely,” Bernie said. “You and I have been around long enough to remember that, regrettably, we used to lose drivers. Obviously we weren’t happy when it happened, but it was something that was accepted.”

“I remember, at the end of ’68, we had the choice for Jochen of the Goodyear deal with Brabham, or the Firestone deal with Lotus. And I said to him, ‘If you want to win the world championship, you’ve got more chance with Lotus than with Brabham. If you want to

“Regrettably, we used to lose drivers. Obviously we weren’t happy, but it was something that was accepted”

stay alive, you’ve got more chance with Brabham than with Lotus’.

“It wasn’t a bad thing to say; it was a matter of fact – and I’m not saying it now because he got killed in a Lotus. That was what the pattern was: people did get killed in Lotuses. Maybe Colin [Chapman] took things to the edge a bit – and Jochen was prepared to accept that. That was how racing was, but now suddenly we’ve got a new breed of journalist, spectator, TV watcher, who’ve never seen anyone killed in a Formula 1 car.”

Ecclestone has been truly close to only a handful of drivers, of whom Rindt was indisputably one. Much earlier, though, he was close to Stuart Lewis-Evans, who died from burns after an accident at Casablanca in 1958.

Half a century later, at Valencia, I asked Bernie for his memories of his friend, and saw the other side of the man: I never thought to see a tear in his eyes.

“He was just a super guy. We both lived in Bexleyheath and Stuart and I travelled together. People have *no idea* what it was like in those days. I was with him when they put him in the ambulance, and in the hospital – where they wrapped him in a blanket, and sat him in a chair, waiting for bloody hours for someone to come and take a look at him.

“We needed to get him back to England as soon as possible, and the quickest way was on the Vandervell charter. Stuart was on a stretcher, which was strapped across three seats, and the only medical help he had was one nurse. He was conscious all the way back, and although he was in *terrible* pain he talked about the future, even asked for a cup of tea.

“They took him to the McIndoe Burns Unit at East Grinstead, but it was too late – the initial lack of treatment had been crucial, and he died a few days later. I walked away from racing for a long time after that.”

As many have observed, almost uniquely in F1, Ecclestone, for all he has achieved, is curiously devoid of ego. “When people ask me if I’m proud of what I’ve done, I say, ‘Satisfied perhaps, but proud, no.’ One good thing I did, though, was get Sid [Watkins] involved.”

It was in 1978 that Bernie persuaded “The Prof” to take charge of all medical aspects of F1, and over the next 30 years the lamented Sid, way more than any other individual, transformed attitudes and practices in this sphere of the sport. It is thanks to him that countless drivers are alive today.

Down the years Ecclestone dealt deftly with any attempt to compromise his position as F1’s power broker, putting to good use his >>

time-honoured practice of 'divide and rule', not least in dealing with FOTA (Formula One Teams Association), which was announced in early 2009. For once, the team owners had set aside their differences, and clearly their alliance was not going to sit well with Bernie.

At its launch Martin Whitmarsh spoke of the importance of the championship calendar, from which America was then absent: "We should go

"The rights to F1 were passed around like a tray of cakes"

there strategically, rather than leave it in the hands of the promoter, and consider only who's going to give us the most money to turn up..."

Heresy. And there was more from Luca di Montezemolo: "What's certain is that the time for 'divide and conquer' to rule in F1 is over."

Ecclestone went to work with his chequebook. "At the time FOTA was set up," said Whitmarsh, "Luca di Montezemolo [Ferrari], Dietrich Mateschitz [Red Bull], Mansour Ojje [McLaren] and Dieter Zetsche [Mercedes] had a meeting in Stuttgart, and they all agreed that they would not individually jump."

The togetherness didn't last. From Bernie, Red Bull received a sweetener of \$60 million, after which Ferrari, normally the first to break ranks on these occasions, found an offer – this time \$100m – equally irresistible. All they had to do was leave FOTA.

"Basically," said Whitmarsh, "Red Bull broke FOTA – for money. After they had taken Bernie's offer, FOTA's unanimity was gone, and so was its power."

In recent times F1 – like virtually every other form of motor racing – has taken a downward turn, in terms of both spectator attendance at the races and the number of folk watching them on the box. The worldwide financial meltdown in 2008 played a significant role, of course, and so emphatically have elevated ticket prices and the ever-increasing switch from 'free to air' to pay TV.



It's about more than that, though, and in my mind the rot started to set in back in 2001, when Mr Mosley, in his capacity as FIA president, sold the lease on F1's commercial rights to his good friend Mr Ecclestone – not FOCA – for what seemed like an astonishingly reasonable \$360m. Even more remarkably, the deal was for 100 years. As Jackie Stewart remarked, "When the hell was there ever a deal lasting a century?" Well, this one did.

That summer, shortly before his death, I spoke to Ken Tyrrell, and even in his frail state Ken was incandescent with rage about what had happened. "You wait," he said. "Bernie'll move them on to a bunch of bloody asset-strippers!"

In the fullness of time, this indeed transpired, but before the rights came into the ownership of CVC in 2005, they were passed around like a tray of cakes to all manner of entities – notably TV companies and banks – and the eventual

sale by Bayerische Landesbank to CVC was not without controversy. One of the bank's employees, Gerhard Gribkowsky, was accused of accepting a bribe of \$44m from Ecclestone in return for putting a lower value on the shares when they passed to CVC, the company Bernie favoured, given its undertaking that he would be retained as chief executive.

Ultimately Gribkowsky was convicted, and later came news that Ecclestone would stand trial in Munich on bribery charges. This was eventually conducted in 2014, but in a curiosity of German law the proceedings were abandoned upon receipt of Bernie's cheque for \$100m.

By this time there was widespread public disillusionment with F1, particularly among fans of long standing. During the period of CVC's ownership, Ecclestone continued to do the deals, but the company's interest in F1 went no further north than the bottom line, and as a consequence the shape of the championship began to change, ever more based on a country's ability to pay outrageous sums for a grand prix. Those without government backing found themselves under threat as Bernie, on behalf of Donald Mackenzie (and his ecstatic investors), made it clear that no race was sacrosanct. Farewell France, welcome Azerbaijan.

For all there may be fewer races in Europe, still this is where the bulk of F1 fans reside, and they didn't care for this development. Come to that, nor did they savour the muted sound of the new-generation hybrid engines, the 'drive by numbers' radio instructions constantly issued by engineers to drivers, the 'high degradation' tyres idiotically requested from Pirelli by the powers-that-be, the numbingly complicated sporting regulations, the endless investigations into track incidents by the



Increased global TV coverage brought wealth

French Grand Prix
dropped off the
calendar after 2008



stewards, the penalties so inconsistently applied, the fatuous gimmicks periodically introduced in a misplaced attempt to spice up 'The Show'. It was as if the sport's masters had colluded to drive any drama and passion out of grand prix racing – and, to complete the perfect storm, there was utter domination by one team, Mercedes. Quite a list, is it not?

After, as Force India's Bob Fernley put it, 'raping the sport all these years', CVC concluded that now was the time to cash up, and although unfortunately the company retains a shareholding in the business, it is at least denied voting rights.

The power now resides with Liberty Media, which has very different ideas about the future of F1, one of which was that Ecclestone – with his resolute lack of interest in social media and, come to that, race promotion – was no longer going to run it. Somewhat to my surprise, Bernie has accepted the title of 'Chairman Emeritus', and the new boss man, Chase Carey, says that doubtless his advice will occasionally be sought. No more than that, though.

Just as they say that in the end all political careers end in failure, so sooner or later Ecclestone's iron grip on the reins of F1 was going to be loosened, if only by natural events. For 40 years his 'divide and rule' policy kept at bay any threats to his position, and always he refused to discuss the question of his successor. That has now been settled for him.

"The world changes so bloody fast – anyone who talks about what's going to be happening in four years' time is an idiot," Bernie said to me once. "Longterm planning is a nonsense."

For countless years that philosophy served him well indeed. Perhaps, though, in the end it is also what brought him down. ❁



XPBIMAGES

What Formula 1's new owners will do

Liberty Media has set the bar high: transform F1 from the top down, make it sustainable in the long term and crank up the entertainment on and off the track – all while staying true to core sporting values

By Adam Cooper, Special Contributor

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When it emerged on January 23 that Bernie Ecclestone had been sidelined by Formula 1's new owners, it was obvious to all that the sport was heading into a radically different era. Over the days that followed the key players made it clear that they

have firm ideas about the direction they intend to take.

We've known about Liberty's involvement since September, but until last week we hadn't heard much about its plans. When Chase Carey first appeared at the Singapore Grand Prix he was like a deer in the headlights as he tried to deal with the sort of media attention not usually given to a broadcasting executive. In the few interviews he conducted he spoke in vague terms about the potential to grow the sport, while stressing that he and his Liberty colleagues would take their time as they played their way in and found out what they had actually bought in to.

At that stage we were led to believe that Ecclestone would still be around. Bernie himself said that he'd been asked to stay on for three years, although the potential impact of the new ownership on his power base was yet to be determined. In theory he would still be CEO, although it was apparent that Carey would have a lot more to say than his immediate predecessor Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, who was virtually unknown in the F1 paddock.

The question therefore was how much could Carey and

his colleagues actually achieve with Ecclestone still in the frame? It seemed inevitable that the incumbent boss would put a spanner in the works of any attempt to push through changes that he didn't agree with.

Following several months of internal debate, Liberty came to the conclusion that the way forward was without Ecclestone. With that decision confirmed – along with the appointments of Ross Brawn and former ESPN man Sean Bratches in sporting and commercial roles – the information floodgates opened.

After the announcements the key participants seemed to be everywhere, speaking to the BBC, Sky, CNN, CNBC and other major outlets. In so doing they gave a pretty good idea of where things are heading. So what have we learned so far?

An era of consensus

Carey emphasised that the days of a self-styled dictator running the sport are over, and instead his three-man management team will work with the other stakeholders to move the sport forward. And he wasn't shy about suggesting that, for all his success in building up F1 over the decades, Ecclestone could have done even better in recent times.

"As we looked at the business we felt that particularly over the past four or five years the business had not grown, the sport had not grown, to its full potential," Carey told Sky Sports News in his first interview as boss, "and that we needed to put a new organisation in place to be able to grow the sport in today's world in the way it needs to grow, and work with the partners we have in the business to make sure we can make the sport >>







Making more of the drivers' personalities is part of the plan to sex up F1's 'story', while the likes of Lenny Kravitz (no relation to Ted) and Taylor Swift sprinkle some stardust

everything it can and should be for its fans.

"We think there are things we can do. It's a great sport today. The drivers are iconic stars, it has cars that combine power and technology in a way that truly amazes people, a brand that has fans around the world. It is a great sport with great tools, but we need to continue to improve the sport on the track."

He also sings the praises of his new management colleagues: "I think both Sean and Ross will have critically important roles in developing the sport overall. Ross brings decades-long experience of incredible success in the sport. I think from Ross's perspective what we want to do is make sure we make the sport on the track everything it can and should be, as exciting as possible for its fans, as energising as it can be for its fans."

Bigger and better events

Liberty is keen to turn grands prix into major events that take over the local city. Adding to the track action is not a new concept – Australia, Singapore and Abu Dhabi learned long ago that putting on evening concerts at their venues ramps up interest, while last year's Taylor Swift show at Austin was designed as an intrinsic part of the weekend.

In the past such things have been pursued by individual promoters, with little direct help from Ecclestone's organisation, although he did briefly allow an entity called F1 Rocks to stage concerts away from the circuits. But given that Liberty

owns global event organiser Live Nation, the new bosses are well positioned to be proactive.

"I think the opportunity is making our events bigger, broader, better," says Carey. "I've talked about us having 21 races, 21 Super Bowls. And realistically we have one race in every country, and we should make these races week-long extravaganzas with entertainment and music, events that capture the whole city, not just events at the track."

"The reality is that to be competitive in today's world you need to continue to find ways to connect and excite fans, and we need to use all the digital platforms available, have a marketing capability to tell the stories of the rivalries of the stars."

"They are larger-than-life personalities and you have to take advantage of all the rules to make that story everything it can be, have to make events larger than ever, music and entertainment with sport at the centre of it."

But where are those events going to be? Liberty makes no secret of its ambition to have more grands prix in the USA, and there's a widespread fear that we will lose traditional European races, which have struggled to break even given the ever-escalating sanction fees that they pay. Scaling back those numbers would be a direct hit on F1's revenues, and instead Carey wants to help the promoters generate more income from their races.

"I don't think we will make them more affordable,"

Carey told the BBC. “We will make them more successful. We want to be more of a partner. We think these events should be bigger and more profitable than they are, and we think, properly run, these events should continue to grow and be even more successful.”

Brawn makes it clear that the European races have to be looked after. “I think Silverstone is very important,” he tells the BBC. “The core of F1 is the tradition. A lot of the new circuits are very exciting, and they bring their own element to F1, but they’re in it because they want to be part of that show that includes Monaco, includes Silverstone, includes Monza, includes Hockenheim or the Nurburgring.

“You’ve still got to retain those traditions to have the values of F1. All of the promoters are under pressure, and over the next period we’ve got to review all of it and see what can be done.”

More planning

It would be wrong to characterise Brawn’s role as that of a technical advisor to his newbie American colleagues, as clearly it goes much further than that. As a former team boss, one who was involved in political confrontations with Ecclestone, he provides valuable insight into commercial matters. And by taking an overview of what happens on the track – the show, in other words – he is also by definition deeply involved in the marketing side.

“Ross understands as much as anybody how the sport works, what are the ins and outs,” Carey says. “So for Ross his real focus is how we make the sport on the track everything it can and should be.”

Brawn made it clear in his recent book on management that he always found success by setting out medium and long-term plans, and then following them – and he was keen to point out that the sport as a whole, and Ecclestone in particular, always lacked a strategic approach. Now he intends to rectify that.

“I’m majoring on the sporting side,” he says. “What I want to develop along with all the other stakeholders in F1 – the teams, the FIA and so on – is to get a vision of where we want to be in the next few years.

“I know from experience that F1 tends to be reactive. It’s been crisis management. It has a problem, it reacts and tries to find a solution, but very rarely has the vision of looking forward three to five years, and deciding where it wants to be.

“So I think we know what fans want – they want entertainment, they want close racing, they want to be able

“I think Silverstone is very important. The core of F1 is the tradition. You’ve got to retain these values”

to understand what’s going on. And I think everyone agrees on that. It’s finding the path with all the other teams and all the other people involved to achieve that.”

Improving the show

Watching races from his armchair for the past three years has given Brawn an insight that many veteran F1 insiders don’t have, in that he’s observed it as a fan. The man who was once the king of strategy admits that races are too hard to follow, even for an expert.

“I think simplicity is a key objective for the future,” he says. “I’ve watched F1 for the last few years as a spectator, and there are times where even I haven’t been sure what’s been going on in the race.

“And it’s a great sport, it’s a fabulous combination of the drivers and their personalities, their competition, and the cars, and the whole thing. We just need to look at it and see how we can improve the show.

“I think [the fans] want racing, and we haven’t seen too much of that. We’ve seen a great competition between two drivers in the same team for the last few years, and that’s no fault of Mercedes. They’ve done a fabulous job. The fans want racing, and they want to understand what’s going on in the race.

“There are different types of fans, of course, and that’s where the complication comes. There are fans who come to the races, there are the fans who watch TV, there are the fans who watch through other media. It’s finding a balance between all of those requirements.”

The good news is that Brawn won’t stand for any gimmicks: “We need to make sure there are no artificial solutions. The >>



F1 sponsorship gets the hard sell

OVER THE YEARS Bernie Ecclestone shied away from introducing outside marketing expertise to his business, and relied instead on his own instinctive talent for wheeling and dealing. That approach has been turned on its head by Formula 1's new management.

Chase Carey stressed the intense focus on marketing when he appeared on CNBC's *Squawk Box* morning show – required viewing for Wall Street types. He formed an impromptu double-act with Liberty's top boss Greg Maffei, who took over the host's duties and asked his colleague what the key area of growth would be.

"Probably the one that will grow the fastest is sponsorships," said Carey.

"Realistically today we have a one-man sponsorship operation. There are many categories we are not selling into. We have signage at tracks we're not selling. Putting an organisation in place that enables us to execute on that probably is the most immediate impact."

Maffei compared F1's marketing department on Ecclestone's watch with the resources employed by Major League Baseball.

"I know they [MLB] have something like 75 or 80 people on sponsorship, and that contrasts with what you said, F1 having one?" he asked, somewhat rhetorically.

"We have one," Carey replied. "Our group is one."

While Ross Brawn's name captured the attention of fans and F1 insiders, the appointment of Sean Bratches was of greater interest to the

wider business world, and in particular potential investors. Like Carey, the ESPN veteran made it clear that much potential has gone unrealised.

"I think where the opportunity lies is on the commercial front," Bratches told CNN, "which I am going to be spending most of my time on. I think that generally speaking, [F1] has underpunched its weight class to date."

He was coy when asked to quantify the level of underachievement: "I have a point of view on that, but I am not going to share that with you. There is a huge opportunity with the global brand, and where we are on the commercial side."

For purists it might be grating to hear F1 referred to as a 'brand', but the sport has to fight with other forms of entertainment for attention from sponsors, the media and the public. And that means pushing it harder.



Key target is preventing one team dominating

drag-reduction system; everyone knows it's artificial. We need to find purer solutions. And we need to think through those solutions. I have ideas – I can't share them all with you because I want to share them with the teams first – but I have ideas of things we should start to study, and perhaps use in 2018 or '19."

Closing up the field

As Brawn notes, the fans want to see racing. He believes that too great an advantage can be gained by a team that has the strongest technical package, as enjoyed by Mercedes for the past three seasons.

"The DNA of F1 is always a fair element of technical challenge, and I think that's healthy; there is a need for the cars to be different, and there is a need for the fans to follow the cyclic competitiveness of the different teams," he says. "But it's pretty excessive at the moment. I think we've got to look at that, and see how we pull that back, because the margin between the front and the back is dramatic.

"The level of resource the top teams are using has made an enormous gap. My nirvana would be you get slightly odd circumstances and suddenly a team from the back wins. But at the moment you have two or three teams who can win, and we need to spread that."

A key goal is correcting the current financial imbalance between the haves and the have-nots. In terms of what the teams are paid, the new management is subject to the existing deals that run to 2019. What the new





management can do in the interim is address expenditure – and that could mean some form of budget cap.

“Undoubtedly we are going to have a whole list of objectives, and one of them is to enable small teams to stand on their own two feet,” Brawn explains. “I think that at one end it involves the money paid to the teams, and at the other end the cost of going racing and putting on a decent show. The monies paid to the teams we can’t do very much about for a number of years, until the commercial agreements get reviewed again.

“But on the costs to the teams, I think the commercial-rights holder has a valid input into trying to ensure that those are pegged back. The costs of a well-organised decent small team, the whole thing can add up, the numbers make sense. When we do that then of course those remaining entries in F1 become attractive, because there’s a viable business there. At the moment I’m not sure there is, and that’s what we have to focus on.”

Carey sums it up thus: “We’d like owning a team to be good business, running a track to be good business and F1 is a good business, and together we are all figuring out how to share in making the whole business stronger. But dealing with revenue is complicated.”

Conclusion

Brawn’s presence on the management team is reassuring for anyone with a passion for F1, but it’s apparent that

“One of our objectives is to enable small teams to stand on their own two feet”

newcomers Carey and Bratches have learned a lot in a short time – there are sound reasons why they have both been so successful in business.

Not so long ago it seemed impossible to contemplate life after Ecclestone, but the early indications are that F1 is in good hands, and that things will be very different from now on.

“In many ways, in a simplistic sense, the sport said no too much and we have to start saying yes,” says Carey. “Not gimmick it up, but find ways to do new and exciting things to have the sport continue to grow and interest and excite people.

“One of the benefits we bring is a fresh start. We don’t have an agenda other than to make the sport great for its fans and that gives us an opportunity to look at how we create more of a partnership – everybody has a shared vision of where we want to go, and we can align that vision and have everybody trying to move in the same direction.” ❁



A five-point plan for

As a new broom sweeps through Formula 1's commercial rights ownership, there is talk of big change. But what are the key areas to target?

By Damien Smith, European Editor-in-Chief

[@damien_smith](https://twitter.com/damien_smith)

Seismic is no exaggeration. For years, insiders and fans alike have wondered what Formula 1 without Bernie Ecclestone would be like. Now we are about to find out. The cliché assumption had always been they'd carry him out in a box before the new era would begin. As it turned out, his demotion from dictator to mere employee – a status he engineered all by himself – left him as vulnerable as any other mortal to a boardroom shuffle. Bernie is human after all.

From a certain perspective, it's a fitting compliment to Ecclestone that Liberty Media Group has employed three men

to replace him. In reality, the one-man-show routine has been old hat for years. Free from the unique character who did so much – or perhaps that should be *everything* – to shape it, at last F1 can move into the 21st century.

So what's next? Early signals from the triumvirate – CEO Chase Carey, commercial chief Sean Bratches and sporting boss Ross Brawn – have been positive. That's just as well, given that the following weeks and months will be arguably the most crucial in F1 history since the death of Ayrton Senna. This is grand prix racing's best chance for a truly fresh start, as the trio understands only too well. Here, Autosport presents its own five-point blueprint for a brighter F1 future.



F1's new direction

SBLOXHAM/LAT

1 Strategy

Yes, it's about time grand prix racing had one. Finally. The new owner must create and commission a genuine and truly independent 'strategy group' to plot both the short and long-term vision of what F1 should be. At its head must be a figure of platinum-level motorsport experience – and in Brawn, that is exactly what it has. We can't think of anyone better qualified to drive the technical and sporting route F1 must seek to rediscover its mojo. At Benetton, Ferrari, Honda, Brawn and Mercedes, he walked the line – and on occasion crossed it – in his ambition to inspire title after title during a colossal career. Now he has the chance to 'put something back', to mobilise that cultured (and cunning) intellect for the greater good. Given who we are talking about, the prospect is genuinely exciting.

Should that future revolve around a technical formula built on excitement and spectacle rather than road-car relevance? From what he's said so far, Brawn appears more than open to that suggestion. Gimmicks such as DRS will be for the chop too (hooray!), but all in good time. To revert to the age-old reactionary tradition Brawn has worked and fought within throughout his career would be to waste this opportunity.

This is a man of science – and now that science must be applied in a suitably considered fashion. He needs time to build a team around him and then set them on a research path to



Brawn will need time to shape a long-term strategy

ETHERINGTON/LAT

create first a definitive brief of what must be achieved, and only then a definitive vision that can be enshrined in a rulebook that will deliver great racing on a level playing field. Easy...

Rush it, and we could be back to square one. Again, Brawn should be in control of a realistic timescale.

The same approach should be applied to the commercial and promotional requirements of F1. That's what Carey and Bratches are there for. >>



Manor's failure is an indictment of the sport

2 Power

We're not talking about the merits of 1000bhp or less, but rather control of F1's rulemaking process. Point one (previous page) would be severely undermined if the newly named Formula One Group cannot unstitch the flawed governance model that has handed power to the richest teams in F1. The current, official Strategy Group – comically named – must be pegged back.

History has proven that teams are too selfish to be trusted with such power. But again, instant progress should not be the expectation here. It will take time to unravel the governance, to the benefit no doubt of those who practise the art of law...

The caveat is that stripping the teams of all influence would be a step too far. After all, these are the companies that invest so much in the sport, as they have always argued. A franchise system could be a solution, with a teams' representative body created to report into Brawn and co. The franchise system would be a doorway to revising the unequal financial packages teams receive (see point three), but while they would have a voice the teams would no longer control regulation changes. And anyway, if Brawn's future 'masterplan' is on the money, the big swings in rules witnessed in the past decade alone – in 2009, '14 and '17 – should become a thing of the past.

"And then they asked me if we'd made any decisions!" Teams should not control rule changes

3 Money

As we've touched upon in point two, grand prix racing is screaming out for a truly equitable financial structure for teams. Last week Manor Racing closed its doors – the latest in a long line of sad failures in F1. While fingers can certainly be pointed at the team management in this case (and in truth in most previous examples too), the repetition of such a story is an embarrassment to a sport generating revenues on the scale of F1. Again, not the work of a moment for Messrs Carey and Bratches, but certainly a priority within the masterplan.

The hoary subject of a budget cap could also be back on the agenda, from what Brawn has suggested in the past week. Former FIA president Max Mosley tried and failed to impose the cap and it remains contentious. Why should a governing body impose on the freedom of how much a company wishes to spend in the course of its business? Answer: when that freedom creates a threat to competition. Policing such a cap remains a moot point. It's complex and controversial, but the concept should at least be back on the table.

The financial adjustments reach far beyond equality for the teams. For too long Ecclestone has demanded unsustainable fees from circuits hosting his races. Just a few weeks ago,



"F1's new management trio have stated a desire to ringfence the 'grandee' races"

Silverstone stated it was pinning its hopes on saving the British Grand Prix through renegotiating its deal with Liberty rather than its forlorn search for new investors – so we'd imagine cheers must have been audible from the Northants/Bucks border a week last Monday. Since then, F1's new management trio have stated a desire to ringfence the 'grandee' races in Europe. Good news for Britain, Italy and France, which returns to the fold in 2018 – and also for Germany, which is currently off the calendar. A return to Hockenheim would be a clear statement of intent from Brawn and co for 2018.



Young viewers engage through mobile devices



S. BLOXHAM/LAT

4 Promotion

As those of us who work in media are only too aware, the future is digital – a mantra that 86-year-old Ecclestone was never going to chant. The failure of F1 to fully engage with a 21st-century audience has long been a complaint of F1 marketers. That such a sport built on cutting-edge technology should remain so ‘analogue’ in its promotional model would be unfathomable without an understanding of F1’s newly deposed dictator.

On this point, Liberty won’t want to wait too long for Brawn and co to report back.

Digital avenues should be investigated immediately. We predict a raft of innovations in this area during the course of the 2017 season.

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff has already warned against allowing F1 to become a ‘beta test’ for the digital world. But he has also acknowledged that the tried-and-tested TV model, dating back to the 1980s, must be ripped up. Younger viewers will be drawn to F1 through mobile devices, not through TVs in living rooms. Current broadcasters should be let off the leash this year, while future deals will be shaped in ways Ecclestone would never have accepted.

5 The next generation

Bernie Ecclestone might have played a hand in creating GP2 and GP3, but F1 has forever taken a laissez-faire view of racing’s junior slopes. Talent will rise to the top? Yes, the evidence suggests that’s still true – but it’s never been tougher. It’s time to crack the glass ceiling.

John Surtees has long argued that scholarships and prize drives should be the reward for talent climbing the single-seater ladder. There are pros and cons to such engagement, and a structure would need careful thought before being adopted. But surely it’s high time F1 put something back into the lower branches that feed it. In a similar vein, a more formal structure of engagement with educational establishments around the world would also encourage the development of engineering talent and make the prospect of a career in motorsport a tangible reality for more young people.

This area would really test the new owner’s pledge to invest in F1, to look beyond a healthy financial return and see the bigger picture. It’ll be fascinating to see how far Carey, Bratches and Brawn can push. Right now, optimism abounds. Free from the spectre of Ecclestone, it’s an all-new and exciting adventure. ❄

McLaren and Red Bull support Vandoorne and Gasly, but F1 itself should promote talent

Bratches despatches his own priorities

GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE, it seems. Sean Bratches – who carries the official title of managing director, commercial operations – has already set out his own hotlist of priorities from his new perspective inside the F1 business. Happily, there’s plenty of crossover with our own thoughts on the subject.

“There are four real things I am going to focus on,” he told CNN last week. “One is the brand – the brand is the

entry point for any company, any brand, any sport. And we are going to work to understand the brand.

“We are going to polish it, we are going to elevate it. It is going to be really central to what we do. That will allow us to enter new market places. It will allow us to take out of the market place what we should on the commercial side from sponsors, from rights holders to promoters.”

OK, there’s a great deal of

marketing speak in those sentences. ‘Polishing the brand’? What does that mean? Essentially, we can translate that as suggesting F1 has been neglected in a commercial sense under the restrictions imposed by the old regime. The potential to tap into new sponsors and markets now opens beyond the conversations and dealings of one particularly demanding operator.

Bratches went on to his

three other points of priority.

“The second is digital,” he said. “I think there is a huge opportunity... to reimagine the digital products that F1 has today, and to engage fans in very new ways and also to use sponsors to activate it.

“The third is creating a much more democratic approach in terms of how we approach our partners – from teams, sponsors, promoters and rights holders. There is a lot of opportunity to

leverage the F1 IP to integrate it into their businesses.”

More marketing speak, but we get the well-meaning gist.

“And the last one is the race experience,” he added. “Creating a better race experience that engages fans, spectators [at the track] and on television is a huge opportunity.”

Broad brush strokes, certainly, but a promising undercoat upon which to begin work.



FORMULA 1

Why Manor's latest hu

LAST WEEK THE 212 STAFF AT MANOR received the news that they had been dreading. Administrator FRP Advisory had decided to call time on its efforts to save the Formula 1 team, telling employees that, while there had been interest from several potential buyers, no deal could be done.

As a result, Manor's parent company Just Racing Services Limited (JRSL) would cease trading. Staff were paid until the end of January, with all but a handful made redundant.

A statement issued by FRP Advisory said: "During recent months, the senior management team have worked tirelessly to bring new investment to the team to secure its long-term future, but regrettably were unable to do so within the time available and were left with no alternative but to place JRSL into administration to protect the best interests of the underlying businesses and in order to continue a search for a buyer.

"Since their appointment earlier this month the joint administrators at FRP Advisory have continued to work, with the support of senior

management, to try to secure new investment into the business, resulting in negotiations with a number of interested parties.

"Regrettably since the appointment of administrators no investment has been secured in the limited time available to continue the group in its present form. With no sustainable operational or financial structure in place to maintain the group as a going concern, the joint administrators have now ceased trading JRSL."

All is not yet lost for Manor. While parent company JRSL has ceased trading, the company that holds the right to race in F1, Manor Grand Prix Racing Limited, is not in administration.

A buyer could acquire that company and purchase the assets required to run a team from the administrator. It would then have to recruit staff, though many may already have found jobs elsewhere.

It is believed that the FIA was asked by Manor last month whether it would need to carry out a new frontal-impact test if it chose to use the 2016 car this season, and this request is being considered. While two new MRT07



HONEY/LAT

urdle looks impossible to clear

chassis had been completed, very little other work had been done, so to increase the prospects of the team making the start of the season and remaining attractive to an investor, a back-up plan was formulated that could involve running a modified '16 design.

But, whatever happens, the biggest challenge is time: the first test is just 25 days away, the first race a month later.

How did it get to this? News emerged late last year that a new investor was in advanced talks with the team to acquire a majority stake. Those talks had been going on for several weeks and a deal was close to being completed. But the deal collapsed at the final hurdle.

In early December the team invited new parties to submit their interest. But it is believed that the figures demanded, even at that late stage, were too high.

Since buying the team in 2015,

Stephen Fitzpatrick said he was open for new investors to join, but was keen to stay involved in some capacity and maintain a stake in the operation. This is believed to have been one of the stumbling blocks in not only the initial deal collapsing, but also in talks with other investors progressing.

“The biggest challenge is time. How did it get to this?”

Secondly, Fitzpatrick was only prepared to put in a certain amount of money required to keep the team running and build the budget for the following year. With investment not forthcoming, the funds required grew. And when the team lost a potential \$13.5million in prize money when it was overtaken by Sauber in the constructors' championship, courtesy of Felipe Nasr's ninth place in the Brazilian Grand Prix, life became even harder.

Fitzpatrick then halted production in a bid to stop haemorrhaging money, but that made the outfit an even less attractive prospect.

He continued to hold out for a figure that first allowed him to make profit but, as time ran short, came down to allowing him to break even.

The lack of time to get the team ready to compete in 2017 meant its value had dropped below that figure. Talks continued with several parties, and a further offer was rejected in the middle of last month as Fitzpatrick refused to budge on his valuation. Time eventually ran out and the administrators called it quits.

It is frustrating for those who worked at Manor, especially given the substantial progress made last year. Having been 3.427% off the pace of the next slowest team in 2015, it had improved to just 0.262% last season. But the money was not there to build on that.

The team has been here before, of course. Two years ago Marussia employees were laid off before Fitzpatrick swept in and saved the outfit, renaming it Manor. So hope remains, but time is fast running out.

LAWRENCE BARRETTO



RED BULL SETS RENAULT TARGET TO FIGHT MERC

RED BULL DEPOSED Ferrari as the Mercedes Formula 1 team's closest challenger last year, but it fell short of being a genuine title contender.

Its team boss Christian Horner believes the squad can feature in this year's title fight, providing engine supplier Renault can get within 3% of Mercedes' performance.

Mercedes stole a march on its rivals when the 1.6-litre V6 hybrids were introduced ahead of the 2014 season, but Renault has made gains and is hopeful of further reducing its deficit this term.

Horner said during 2016 that the gap was around 35kW – roughly 45 horsepower – and in percentage terms it was estimated to be just above 5%.

Speaking before the end of the season, Horner said that halving the gap would put Red Bull in a position to battle at the front.

"I think if we got back within 3%, which is where we were with the V8, then you're in the hunt from there," he said. "And hopefully, with stability, we should be able to get there."

But Renault managing director Cyril Abiteboul suggests it is too simplistic to claim that closing the horsepower gap would

have made or will make Red Bull an automatic title contender.

"Clearly last season if they had been within 3% that would have been better, but I am not sure that would have been enough to fight for the championship," said Abiteboul.

"We are committed to having the best engine in the grid, not just within 1%, but to have the best and we think we have a number of ideas and technological concepts that can allow us to be better than Mercedes in the future."

The regulations have been overhauled for this year, with faster, wider cars with wider front and rear wings plus bigger Pirelli tyres.

Despite the sweeping changes to the aerodynamic rules, Horner believes engines will remain a key factor in performance over the course of the season.

"One could argue that the engine becomes more important because the drivers will spend more time at full throttle because the cars have more downforce," said Horner.

"There'll potentially be more drag so engines will play a key role, but as with all these things it's a combination of the two."

LAWRENCE BARRETTO

Toyota signals Le Mans intent

The Japanese manufacturer will enter three cars as it bids to end its jinx at the French enduro

Toyota's decision to run three cars at the Le Mans 24 Hours for the first time since its return to top-flight sportscar racing in 2012 marks a renewed desire to end the years of disappointment and underachievement at the French enduro. The three-car assault on this year's blue-riband event on the World Endurance Championship calendar and the Spa round in May follows Toyota's loss of victory with five minutes to go last year. It seemed inconceivable that the Japanese manufacturer could come much closer to victory without winning than its 1994, '98 and '99

near-misses, but that's what happened in 2016.

The leading Toyota slowed on the penultimate lap when a pipe from the turbocharger to the intercooler fractured. The TS050 HYBRID shared by Sebastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson and Kazuki Nakajima was on course for victory after coming out on top of a battle with the Porsche 919 Hybrid that ultimately inherited the win. Remarkably, it was the second time in three attempts that the marque had been on course for victory at Le Mans. The TS040 had a clear performance advantage in 2014, but Toyota lost its lead car to the failure of a minor electrical component during the night.

Toyota Motorsport GmbH boss Pascal Vasselon had always insisted that there would be no diversion of resources away from car development to fund a third entry at Le Mans. So the final confirmation of the additional car this year means that the team's paymasters in Japan have increased the budget in a renewed bid to win the 24 Hours in what will be the manufacturer's 15th full-factory campaign.

A three-car assault in 2017, the last season of its current commitment to LMP1, means it will reprise its assaults of the 1980s and '90s. It fielded three entries every year from 1989 to '93, and again when it returned to Le Mans with the TMG-developed GT-One in 1998-99.

Toyota has yet to announce a full line-up for its additional 2017-spec TS050. French veteran Stephane Sarrazin moves over to the third car after being displaced in the full-season line-up by three-time World Touring Car Champion Jose Maria Lopez, who has finally been confirmed alongside Kamui Kobayashi and Mike Conway.

A statement from Toyota said that the "team is still assessing its options" for Sarrazin's team-mates and was expecting a decision soon.

GARY WATKINS





MOTOGP Suzuki launched its 2017 MotoGP livery on the eve of pre-season testing at Sepang. The Japanese manufacturer was one of the big improvers last year, taking its first victory since 2007 with Maverick Vinales at Silverstone, in its second season back after three on the sidelines. Its 2017 GSX-RR is an evolution of that package. Vinales has joined Yamaha as Jorge Lorenzo's replacement, so Suzuki has signed Andrea Iannone from Ducati and taken on Moto2 race winner Alex Rins as a rookie in an all-new line-up.

Photograph by Suzuki

MOTOGP

Stoner and Iannone set early test pace

DUCATI'S STAR TEST RIDER CASEY Stoner and Suzuki recruit Andrea Iannone set the pace on the first two days of MotoGP pre-season testing at Sepang. The Malaysian Grand Prix venue this week hosted the first of three scheduled three-day tests, due to finish after Autosport went to press, ahead of the Qatar opener at the end of March.

Two-time MotoGP champion Stoner led the way on Monday, as teams started work with new bikes further developed over the winter break. Stoner set a 1m59.681s to finish 0.117 seconds clear of Ducati race rider Andrea Dovizioso, and for much of the rain-hit second day the Australian's time was not bettered.

But a 1m59.452s effort in the final 15 minutes of Tuesday's running from Iannone became the week's new benchmark. Iannone, who was squeezed out of Ducati to accommodate Jorge Lorenzo in 2017, finished the day 0.406s ahead of Suzuki-turned-Yamaha rider Maverick Vinales.

Both Vinales and new team-mate Valentino Rossi tried a distinctive fairing design as Yamaha looks to replace downforce lost to regulation changes, with winglets concealed within a larger front-bodywork bulge. Rossi was fourth fastest on Tuesday.

It has been a tougher start to the test for Lorenzo, who flew during his maiden Ducati running at Valencia in November, but on Monday could only manage 17th and 1.669s off Stoner's pace, but improved to eighth and a 1.032s deficit on Tuesday. The three-time world champion has highlighted braking as the key area he still needs to adapt.

Honda was quiet early as it develops an all-new engine, with its lead rider – LCR satellite man Cal Crutchlow – in sixth on day one and world champion Marc Marquez 10th on day two. The incoming KTM was an encouraging 16th on Monday with Pol Espargaro, who dropped to 20th on Tuesday.

MITCHELL ADAM



Stoner laid down a marker during testing in Malaysia



GT
BARNICOAT MOVES TO GTs WITH McLAREN

SINGLE-SEATER REFUGEE
Ben Barnicoat has joined McLaren's young-driver GT academy programme for the 2017 season.

The 2014 Formula Renault NEC title winner has been placed at McLaren by backer the Racing Steps Foundation for a programme that will start with next month's Bathurst 12 Hour and encompass the full Blancpain GT Series.

Barnicoat, 20, will drive a McLaren 650S GT3 for the Tekno Autosports team at this weekend's Bathurst 12 Hour. He will share the car with Tekno's Australian Supercars driver Will Davison, winner of the Bathurst 1000 with the team last year, and British sportscar stalwart Jonny Kane.

Barnicoat, a race winner in last year's Formula 3 European Championship, is switching to sportscars full time after making a one-off appearance with the WRT Audi squad in last year's BGTS finale at the Nurburgring.

Kane is making his McLaren debut in what could be a precursor to a factory deal for the year.

The Briton has raced for the past seven seasons with the Strakka prototype team, which will run multiple McLarens on a factory-supported basis in the BGTS this season.

McLaren GT boss Andrew Kirkaldy would only say that McLaren is "talking to Jonny".

The second Tekno car at Bathurst will be driven by Alvaro Parente, Rob Bell and Come Ledogar.

GARY WATKINS



FORMULA 1

What Manor's farewell shot tells us about F1 2017 cars

THE MANOR FORMULA 1 TEAM'S DEMISE CAME JUST when it should have been close to signing off its 2017 car, and images of the MRT07 that emerged last week give a glimpse into what to expect from the new regulations.

Although interpretations of the 2017 rules have been made since they were published, the Manor model is the first actual evidence of the direction teams are taking.

The new front wing clearly features the deltoid shaping required of the regulations, but also shows how the team was trying a more aggressive outwash tunnel and cascade arrangement to displace airflow across and around the front face of the tyre.

The innermost inverted L-shaped cascades work the much-talked-about Y250 vortex, which directs airflow

around the front of the car to prevent interference from the tyres. The nose is broad like it was on the 2016 Manor, but terminates above the front wing's neutral section rather than beyond it, to improve the way the air moves down the car by reducing the blockage caused by the longer nose.

The airflow conditioners that flank the sidepods are retained and may have helped to improve flow around the wider sidepod shoulder. The image also clearly shows the new rear-wing shape, as hinted at previously by Ferrari's modified 2015 car used for Pirelli testing last year.

Manor's planned MRT07 may well have been the car with the fewest details, but it does show how complex aero development is likely to be in 2017.

MATT SOMERFIELD



NASCAR

Drivers back Cup overhaul

LEADING NASCAR DRIVERS have defended the format revamp under which races will be split into three parts.

Major changes to the Cup, Xfinity and Truck series were announced last week, headlined by the division of races into 'stages', with extra points awarded and a new system of 'playoff points' counting for what was formerly known as the Chase.

Joe Gibbs Racing driver Denny

Hamlin believes the mid-race scoring method will bring NASCAR in line with other sports.

"We're the only sport where the scoring isn't done until the very end of the event," he said. "In the PGA [golf tour] you're making birdies, you're making pars; in football, there are touchdowns and fans get excited."

The addition of 'playoff points' – bonus scores for segment and race wins that are applied when the

standings are reset for title-deciding rounds – was also met with approval as a means of increasing the relevance of individual races.

Four-time Cup champion Jeff Gordon believes the new structure will work better on TV, while Penske's Brad Keselowski said the changes had created a perfect format for modern motorsport and declared: "This will be the best racing you've ever seen."

JIM UTTER AND MATT BEER



McKlein/DE

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Is Citroen in trouble?

THERE'S NO DOUBTING THE FEAR THAT Citroen's return had struck into the heart of its rivals. Lead driver Kris Meeke, a winner of just three WRC rallies, was listed alongside Sebastien Ogier, a man who has won four titles and 39 rallies, as joint favourite for this year's crown at 2/1.

And then on the Monte Carlo opener both factory C3 WRCs hit trouble (as well as a bank for Meeke and a ditch for team-mate Stephane Lefebvre) and both were outpaced by a Citroen launched in 2011 from parts bearing a strong resemblance to a motor that made its debut a decade before that.

Craig Breen drove a stellar rally, but the Irishman's classification as Citroen's top points-scorer in a tired-and-tatty DS 3 WRC was not part of the plan. It wasn't what PSA Peugeot Citroen CEO Carlos Tavares and Citroen CEO Linda Jackson jetted in for.

The C3's problems were clear to see from the roadside. At a bumpy, top-gear corner on SS3, Ogier's Ford Fiesta WRC and Thierry Neuville's Hyundai were able to stay flat. Even Neuville's team-mate Dani Sordo, a man with zero confidence in the car beneath him, didn't lift. And neither did Jari-Matti Latvala in the new Toyota.

Then Meeke came into view on song and pulled top. The first bump delivered that horrible tell-tale graunch of steel on asphalt. A shower of sparks confirmed that the car had bottomed out. A lift was understandable and Meeke ended up knocking the car down to fifth for the right-hander at which everyone else was flat in sixth.

It didn't help when Breen came through next, wringing the neck of the old DS 3 and probably wishing for seventh gear rather than thinking about fifth.

Something wasn't right. There was no hiding the low-slung stance of the new Citroen. Check out the shots of the cars in loose snow: inevitably it's the C3 kicking it up over the bonnet. The C3 was a real handful last week, Meeke's brief appearance in second place its only spell near the front.

Any hope of a result had gone south when first Lefebvre, then Meeke went off the road. But even if they'd avoided incident, it's hard to see how either would have challenged.

The Monte is one of the season's most unpredictable rounds. Everything is a gamble and a compromise. A poor performance need not be a sign of a fundamental, year-long car flaw. Citroen tested exclusively in dry conditions and that choice was reflected in its poor performance in the snow and ice.

The C3 WRC flew in Wales late last year during gravel tests, suggesting this was a French Alps-specific issue. That's probably why Meeke remains so upbeat.

"We can test, test and test again, but it's on the rally that you really learn and we've learned a hell of a lot," he said. "I'm still very, very excited about what we've got coming. We did a couple of asphalt tests, both in the dry, for this event, but we've had plenty on gravel and snow.

"For Sweden, we'll be there. This thing's definitely not going to rattle me."

DAVID EVANS

IN THE HEADLINES

NEW ISSUE SPROUTS IN BRUSSELS FOR FE

Formula E is working to keep the Brussels ePrix on its 2016-17 schedule, but a decision rests on a suitable location being found. The electric single-seater series is working with the Brussels regional government to find an alternative venue after logistical problems hindered the second proposed location for the Belgian round on July 1.

FORD BOSS DENIES INDYCAR RUMOURS

Ford Performance director Dave Pericak has denied speculation that the manufacturer is planning a return to IndyCar competition. "Yeah, there's rumours flying again, it's crazy," he said. "There are no plans for us to return to Indy. I can tell you that we're not looking to do that.

SOLBERG STARTS VW TESTING

Two-time World Rallycross champion Petter Solberg has begun testing the Volkswagen Motorsport-built Polo RX Supercar he will race in this year's world championship. Solberg shared driving duties with new team-mate Johan Kristoffersson at the Loheac test in France last week.

BYKOLLES POWERED BY NISSAN

Privateer World Endurance Championship LMP1 team ByKolles Racing has switched to Nissan power for the 2017 season. The Austrian-entered, German-based team will use the 3-litre V6 engine from the NISMO VRX 30A Evo used by the unsuccessful Nissan LMP1 programme two years ago. ByKolles is currently modifying the existing CLM P1/01 car to accommodate the new engine.

TDS TO RUN G-DRIVE LMP2 ENTRY

TDS Racing will field a car under the G-Drive Racing banner in the World Endurance Championship's LMP2 class in 2017. G-Drive regular Roman Rusinov and long-time TDS man Pierre Thiriet have been named as the first two drivers.

ECCESTONE DENIES BREAKAWAY TALK

Bernie Ecclestone has denied suggestions that he wants to set up a new series to rival Formula 1, and he insists he wouldn't do anything to damage the championship. Speculation had arisen that Ecclestone was working on a breakaway since new owner Liberty Media announced an overhaul at the top of F1's organisation, which included Ecclestone being sidelined and Ross Brawn becoming part of a new three-man team in charge of the series.

SAUBER REVEALS C36 DEBUT DATE

Sauber's 2017 Formula 1 challenger, the C36, will hit the track for the first time on February 22 when it completes a filming day at Barcelona. The following car launches have been confirmed: Renault (February 21); Force India (February 22); Sauber (February 22); Mercedes (February 23); Ferrari (February 24); McLaren (February 24).



TEE/LAT

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DTM

MERCEDES DROPS FOUR DTM DRIVERS

MERCEDES HAS dropped Daniel Juncadella, Christian Vietoris, Maximilian Gotz and Felix Rosenqvist from its DTM line-up for 2017.

Already-announced ex-Audi star Edoardo Mortara will be joined by incumbents Gary Paffett, Paul di Resta, Robert Wickens and Lucas Auer.

Maro Engel will return to the DTM to complete the line-up, having previously raced for Mercedes in the series from 2008-11.

Engel has remained in Mercedes' fold since then, primarily in GTs, but he also spent a year in the Australian Supercars series and is now in Formula E with Venturi.

With each DTM manufacturer trimming its line-up from eight to six cars for 2017, the two additions mean that just four drivers are retained in the squad from 2016, when Rosenqvist was a mid-season replacement for the Formula 1-bound Esteban Ocon.

Mercedes decided that Rosenqvist's Formula E commitments with Mahindra should take priority this year even though it wanted him to remain in its DTM line-up.

Vietoris was the longest serving in the DTM of the dropped drivers, having been part of Mercedes' roster since 2011, winning a single race and finishing fourth in the '13 and '14 championships.

Merc has appointed 2016 Euro F3 runner-up Maximilian Gunther as its test and reserve driver, a role filled by Rosenqvist and Ocon in recent years.



FORMULAE

Williams F1 driver Massa to test Jaguar Formula E car

WILLIAMS FORMULA 1 DRIVER FELIPE MASSA WILL test Jaguar's Formula E car next week.

The Brazilian talked openly of his desire to compete in the electric single-seater series before he went back on a decision to retire from F1 in order to replace new Mercedes signing Valtteri Bottas for 2017.

Massa will now get the chance to sample FE machinery for the first time with a test next week at an unknown location in the Jaguar I-type 1. A statement from the team read: "Jaguar Racing received a request from Formula E to give Felipe Massa the chance to experience a Formula E car. We are happy to provide this opportunity."

Massa's on-track preparations for the 2017 F1 season will begin at Barcelona on February 27, ahead of the

opening round in Australia on March 26.

After confirming his Williams return, Massa said he would not be distracted by another programme during 2017.

"Since announcing my retirement last year, I had been assessing my options and there were a number of opportunities presented to me that I could have pursued," he said. "However, I have made my decision and therefore this is now my focus."

If the 2017 F1 season proves to be Massa's last, he could move into FE for the start of the 2017-18 campaign. Autosport revealed earlier this month that the series is looking into starting its next season as late as December, with CEO Alejandro Agag keen to begin after the last F1 round.

SCOTT MITCHELL

TOP 3

Special F1 helmet designs

Lewis Hamilton will run a crash helmet designed by a fan in 2017. Here are three of the best unique lids from Formula 1 history



#1 KIMI RAIKKONEN

Given that he competed in a snowmobile race in late 2006 under the pseudonym 'James Hunt', it was no surprise to see Kimi Raikkonen running the 1976 world champion's lid while a Lotus driver in Monaco in 2012.



#2 GERHARD BERGER

Berger liked the fan-designed, flag-based 'no war in the world' helmet he wore during Friday practice for the 1995 Portuguese Grand Prix so much that the Ferrari driver carried it all weekend, finishing fourth in the race.



#3 DANIEL RICCIARDO

The charismatic Australian used his one permissible design change to spectacular effect at Austin last year, turning up sporting a special-edition helmet in tribute to legendary American stuntman Evel Knievel and finishing on the podium.



Horses for courses

The DPi concept has a very promising future in US sportscar racing.
But that doesn't mean it will suit the WEC or Le Mans

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

[@gazzasportscars](#)

THE NEW LMP₂ MACHINES THAT ARE DRESSED TO impress as Daytona Prototype international contenders certainly look the part. The ability of manufacturers to give their cars a distinctive look is a significant reason why the DPi class seems set for a big future as a key component of the IMSA SportsCar Championship's premier category. But does it have a future elsewhere? Could it even be the future of top-flight prototype racing around the world?

There's a massive rethink going on within the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA, the two organisations that write the LMP rulebook, in the wake of Audi's withdrawal from the LMP1 division. There's a growing realisation that the high-tech category has become too expensive and that costs need to come down if another manufacturer is to join Porsche and Toyota in the World Endurance Championship and at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

The DPi concept offers a cost-effective solution to the prototype conundrum in North America. The final years of the American Le Mans Series proved that LMP1 wasn't sustainable in what we should not forget is a national market, even if it's a very large one. The former Daytona Prototype class, meanwhile, never captured the imagination of the manufacturers.

The idea that a big car-maker can take a state-of-the-art LMP₂ chassis from one of the four licensed constructors, slap on its own body with lots of nice styling cues and stick its own engine in the back at a reasonable price is proving compelling. Cadillac, Mazda and Nissan are the only manufacturers to have signed up so far (and Nissan is in an arm's-length arrangement), but more are on their way.

If it works in North America, is there any reason why it couldn't do likewise on a global scale in the WEC and at Le Mans? I'm not convinced it would.

Manufacturers competing on the world stage need to be able to showcase their technological expertise in this day and age. Look at every factory P1 programme of the past 10 years or so – they've all been about promoting and developing the same technology found in their road-car range.

Primary among the reasons why Porsche finally ended its long absence from top-flight sportscar racing was because it could employ hybrid technology. Toyota's WEC programme is all about research and development, and Audi kept being allowed to go back to Le Mans because it came up with a new technology story to tell every few years.

There is a counter argument, of course. If the resources – financial and technological – required for entry into the P1 arena were lower, we might have had more than the four factories that have participated at Le Mans in LMP1 over the past 10 years. Maybe there could be some kind of halfway house. The concept is already out there in Formula E. There seems to be a constant flow of manufacturers signing up for the FIA's electric-vehicle championship, even though they can't build their own cars. They can, crucially, build their own EV powertrains, and it's their expertise in this field that they wish to promote.

It's not something I'd like to see, I must admit. A Porsche should be a Porsche right down to its carbon monocoque. (It is irrelevant whether it is made by an outside supplier, I might add.)

I'm not a fan of the homogenisation that is increasingly blighting our sport. I used to love Formula 3000 back in the '80s and early '90s, but started to lose interest when it became a one-make formula and now don't care tuppence about GP2.

My love of diversity – which I surely share with most sportscar fans – has influenced my thoughts on DPi, I suspect. I'll support any initiative that puts more types and models of car on the grid; that's things that look – and sound – different.

That's why I have my doubts about the new-for-2017 LMP₂ category. Limiting the number of constructors to four and mandating a spec engine goes against the traditions of sportscar racing in my book. Think of all those Group C2 oddities of the '80s, like the Arundel, the Strandell and various ADAs. These equivalents of the LMP₂ cars of today enriched our branch of the sport. So did cars like the DBA4/Creation – which started out as an LMP675 car – in more recent years.

It's a shocking fact that there will be just seven types of prototype on the grid at Le Mans this year. And none of them will be British. I understand the reasons behind the limitation on the number of constructors and acknowledge that an independent constructor can still build a car for LMP1. I just don't like the idea of a further disappearance of the quirky curiosities that have always been part of motor racing.

DPi adds diversity in a US context, but it would – and I hope this doesn't sound like a contradiction – detract from it on the bigger stage of Le Mans and the WEC. I still believe that a more cost-effective set of LMP1 rules can put three, four or more manufacturers on the grid. Here's hoping. ✨

“I'm not a fan of the homogenisation that is blighting our sport”

FEEDBACK

Goodbye Bernie, welcome Brawn



So Bernie has left the building, at last. Getting Ecclestone out and bringing in Ross Brawn are both masterstrokes by Chase Carey.

Bernie did so much good for Formula 1, making it the global sport it is today, but this is not what fans will remember him for. He became power-crazed and money-orientated, so that he built his own personal wealth to Trumpesque levels and worked with CVC to bleed the sport dry, despite it being awash with dollars.

Ross Brawn is an engineer, tactician and former team owner and is exactly the right person for the job.

Commercially F1 is a mess. Bernie never learned that the best monetary deals for him do not lead to the best outcome. In no other business would a major player, such as a racing circuit, accept a deal that is not a viable business proposition, meaning government coffers must be used to keep it afloat.

Carey suggested that certain races should be protected – this is a must. It can't be right that Silverstone sells out, but cannot make the grand prix viable.

Lastly, Mr Carey, the most important thing: please stop the move to pay-per-view, bring back more viewing-for-all TV, even if it's only extended highlights,

and give us a decent YouTube channel. It's the quickest way to increase viewing figures and sponsorship. If we don't have access to the pictures, we can't be viewers.

**Richard Hargrave
Hitchin**

Don't count Bernie out

While I understand the *schadenfreude* of many over Bernie's sidelining, I would counsel caution. Never underestimate Bernie.

I'm worried. I read rumours of a rival series. Bernie, if you're reading this (and I'd be honoured if you are) please do not set up a rival to F1. Top-level motorsport would likely wither and die. Those precious fans would not know what to watch anymore. Nobody wins. Please do not destroy your remarkable legacy.

Thank you for giving F1 to the world, but please, Bernie, no GP1!

**Peter Goodchild
Byemail**

The best of national motorsport

An excellent article by Stephen Lickorish on the tight competition between Patrick Fletcher and James Bark over the past two seasons in the Clio Championship (Club Autosport, January 26).

Ecclestone's no longer running F1, but has he finished with top-level motorsport?

It's surely a near-perfect description of what racing at club/national level should be. Two determined competitors who give no quarter on the track, but retain mutual respect off-track. Fittingly, all played out under the aegis of the 750 Motor Club – the principal grassroots club for so long in UK motorsport.

**George Copeland
Portsmouth**

Car failures are part of racing

I disagree with Anthony Fenwick-Wilson's suggestion for mechanical faults not to be counted in the drivers' championship (January 26). While I agree that it isn't fair, mechanical failures are part and parcel of the sport. They add unpredictability to proceedings and help make motorsport so captivating.

Countless drivers have lost out on championships through mechanical issues over the years, yet I find it amusing that this is discussed so much only after it cost Hamilton the title.

Perhaps Hamilton fans should be more thankful that Mercedes has been in such a dominant position, meaning it has allowed him to win two championships with such ease.

**James Singleton
Dronfield, Derbyshire**

Keep it simple

Anthony Fenwick-Wilson's suggestion of returning F1 to the days of dropped scores just increases complexity where simplicity is needed. Award a set number of points for a set number of rounds, and whoever ends up with the highest tally is champion. Simple and easy to understand.

**Eliot Wilson
Byemail**

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Cadillac clash decides dramatic Daytona

The new American sportscar era started with Cadillac's Dallara-based cars dominating – and a controversial collision at the climax of the 24 Hours

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

 @gazzasportscars







Cadillac dominated the 2017 Daytona 24 Hours. It dominated out on track, at least when the conditions were dry, and it dominated the headlines from the IMSA SportsCar Championship opener after two of its new DPI-V.Rs put on a thrilling and ultimately controversial show in the closing stages.

If there were any doubts that Cadillac's new Dallara-based Daytona Prototype international was the car to have last weekend, it became clear once the rain clouds that had hung over the track through the night began to disappear on Sunday morning. The two Caddys that went through the race without significant problems drove away from their only rival for victory once the track began to dry.

The 55th running of the early-season Daytona sportscar fixture became a two-horse race between the Wayne Taylor Racing machine and the undelayed entry from the two-car Action Express

Racing roster. The WTR Caddy, in which NASCAR legend Jeff Gordon joined team regulars Ricky and Jordan Taylor and Max Angelelli, had the edge on track, but it was losing out in the pits at every stop. It made for another thrilling climax to the Daytona 24 Hours.

Ricky Taylor was just a second behind Filipe Albuquerque in the Action Express car after the green flags waved to signal the end of the last of 21 safety-car periods with 20 minutes to go. The Portuguese driver went wide into Turn 1 a lap later and then had to close the door pretty aggressively on his adversary through the kink behind the pits to stay ahead.

That was as close as Taylor got to taking the lead for 10 or so minutes. He'd already proved that he could overtake the Action Express car with a late move into the Bus Stop chicane on the back straight an hour or so earlier, but this time around he was struggling to find an opportunity.

Taylor, in his own words, knew he "had to make something happen". And the happening that will be talked about for years came with five laps to go.

Recently retired NASCAR great Jeff Gordon (second from left) joined the regular Wayne Taylor Racing crew for Daytona

The WTR driver made his bid for the lead into Turn 1. He was moving alongside Albuquerque when the leader turned in. The contact that followed sent the leader turning around and decided the outcome of the race. Taylor was nearly five seconds in the clear when he crossed the line almost a lap later.

Albuquerque claimed he'd been hit up the rear. "I turned in, I got hit and I spun," was his explanation of events. "He hit me in the back."

It was definitely an opportunist manoeuvre on Taylor's part, and he was happy to admit it: "I'd obviously been working on it for a while and looking at where we were strong and where we weren't strong, and it's the 24 Hours, so you're going to take a risk. He'd been struggling in Turn 1. Their car didn't look very good there, and we were really strong on the brakes.

"People open up after that little kink in Turn 1 — they open their hands [on the steering] a little bit. It's just so easy to release the brake and pop in there."

Taylor argued that Albuquerque closed the door on him: "If he knew I was



FORD FENDS OFF FERRARI AND PORSCHE

FORD REPRISED ITS 2016 LE MANS 24 HOURS class victory seven months on at Daytona. It was the same trio of Joey Hand, Dirk Muller and Sebastien Bourdais who notched up the victory and the Risi Competizione Ferrari was their biggest threat for much of the race. But that's where the similarities stop.

The GTE Pro battle in France last year was a two-horse race between Ford and Ferrari. GT Le Mans at Daytona was a contest between four of the five manufacturers in class. Ford was admittedly on top for most of the way, but it had to come from behind in the final reckoning.

The winning Ford, entered by the US arm of the Chip Ganassi squad, had to repeatedly fight back to reassert itself at the top of the leadboard during a quickfire sequence of safety cars during the final hours. Muller then had to wage a rearguard action to hold off Patrick Pilet's factory Porsche 911 RSR after the final yellow flag.

Pilet, who was partnered by Dirk Werner and Frederic Makowiecki, propelled his Porsche from sixth place in the GTLM queue at the final restart into second place within a lap. Multiple attempts to pass the Ford ultimately failed and he ended up overstressing his tyres, which allowed James Calado in the Risi Ferrari 488 GTE to put pressure on the Porsche in the closing stages.

Muller, who was nearly three seconds up on Pilet at the chequered flag, said: "I'm lucky that I did the World Touring Car Championship earlier in my career, so I had a big box of tricks to help me keep the Porsche behind."

Calado, who shared the Risi car with Giancarlo Fisichella and Toni Vilander, reckoned that the Ford "was just too fast" to be beaten last weekend. He was right, but only in the context of the winning car, which had an edge over the three other Fords.

Hand and his team-mates had opted for a softer set-up that paid dividends during the wet portion of the race.

"We were chasing grip during practice and ended up running softer than usual," explained Hand. "It wasn't because we thought it was going to be wet in the race, but it worked out for us. We were quick in all conditions. I think we had the stand-out car today."

The second US-run Ford driven by Richard Westbrook, Ryan Briscoe and Scott Dixon was probably a match for its sister car in the dry, but it was already out of the running when the rain disappeared after Briscoe looped it at the Bus Stop when conditions were most treacherous during the night. A long stop for repairs left the car 28 laps down at the finish.

Porsche endured a difficult start to the enduro with a series of right-front punctures on both of its cars. That forced a rethink on tyre pressures, which blunted the mid-engined 911's performance.

Corvette Racing didn't have the pace to repeat its 2016 victory, but Jan Magnussen, Antonio Garcia and Mike Rockenfeller claimed fourth position at the flag. Quick pitwork during the final yellows kept the car in the hunt and gave the best of the Chevrolet Corvette C7.Rs a sniff of a podium.

committing, why would you close the door and make us crash?"

The WTR Caddy was alongside the Action Express car. But was it far enough to claim the corner? Probably not, but the officials deemed it a racing accident and handed out no penalty.

Albuquerque was pretty upset about the lack of action from race control and also lambasted his rival for not waiting for him to resume the race.

This incident apart, WTR was a worthy winner. So said Christian Fittipaldi, who shared the Action Express car with Albuquerque and full-season IMSA team-mate Joao Barbosa.

"They did a great job and pretty much had us covered," he explained. "They were superior in speed, even at the beginning of the race. I saw some things early on that made me think we were in trouble."

The WTR team had a car that was both faster in a straight line and better on the brakes. But then it needed to have an advantage out on the 3.56-mile Daytona International Speedway courtesy of the handful of seconds it was losing in the pits each time. >>

EBREY/LAT





Lead Action
Express car was
delayed late on

EBREY/LAT

GTD MASTERPLAN WINS IT FOR PORSCHE

THE ALEGRA MOTORSPORTS Porsche squad took a GT Daytona class victory that looked unlikely to outsiders for all but the final couple of hours. The team, however, had a plan that ultimately came good for Michael Christensen, Daniel Morad, Jesse Lazare and father and son Carlos and Michael de Quesada.

Alegra cycled its slower drivers through its brand-new Porsche 911 GT3-R early in the race and then put sometime A1GP driver Morad back in with the car lying two laps off the lead with four hours to go. The team judged the yellows to perfection to get Christensen out just on the lead lap with a couple of hours left to run.

More yellows allowed the factory driver to move forward in the pack and then hit the front of the field in the final hour.

“The plan was to make sure that we stayed as close as possible to the lead lap



DOLE/LAT

Porsche wasn't expected to win GTD category

and have a perfect race car for the finish,” said Christensen. “When I got back in the car I was just ahead of the leader [Sam Bird in the Scuderia Corsa Ferrari 488 GT3], so I had to push like hell to make sure I stayed ahead.”

Christensen had to fight a

stern rearguard action to hold off the Land Motorsport Audi R8 LMS, driven by Christopher Mies, in the closing stages.

“He was really good on the brakes, but I had better traction out of the corners,” continued Christensen. “That was the key to staying ahead.”

The Porsche crossed the line just three tenths ahead of the Audi that Mies shared with Connor de Phillippi, Jules Gounon and Jeffrey Schmidt. The 911 GT3-R was the fastest car among the leading pack at the finish, but the quickest GTD last weekend was the Ferrari.

Reigning class champion Scuderia Corsa looked on course for the victory with its 488 shared by Sam Bird, Alessandro Balzan, Matteo Cressoni and Christina Nielsen when it retired in the penultimate hour with engine failure.



The bag tank had partially collapsed, which made getting the last few litres of fuel into the car each time problematic. Time and time again, the WTR drivers had to make up ground after a pitstop to get back on terms with Action Express.

“It could have been a disaster,” said team boss Wayne Taylor, father of Ricky and Jordan. “We just had to sit there in the pits losing seconds while the guys struggled to get the fuel in.”

The Cadillacs, including the second Action Express entry, were in the pound seats from the moment the IMSA circus arrived back at Daytona. The Balance of

Performance change that had robbed the cars of straightline speed at the official ‘Roar’ test early in January had been effectively reversed, and the cars were afforded a two-degree decrease in the angle of the rear-wing assembly.

The Caddys topped every session and Barbosa claimed pole from Action Express team-mate Dane Cameron by exactly seven hundredths. Few if any of their rivals really believed that they were beatable, not least because the Cadillac was the most tested of the new cars running in the Prototype class, both among the DPis and the pure LMP2

Rebellion ORECA was quick until throttle problems intervened

machines on which they are based.

The second entry from Action Express, which Cameron shared with Eric Curran, Mike Conway and Seb Morris, had the speed to challenge for the victory, but ultimately not the reliability. The car remained in the hunt until the end of the seventh hour when it had to go ‘behind the wall’ and into the paddock to have a broken steering arm replaced after a clash with a Prototype Challenge car.

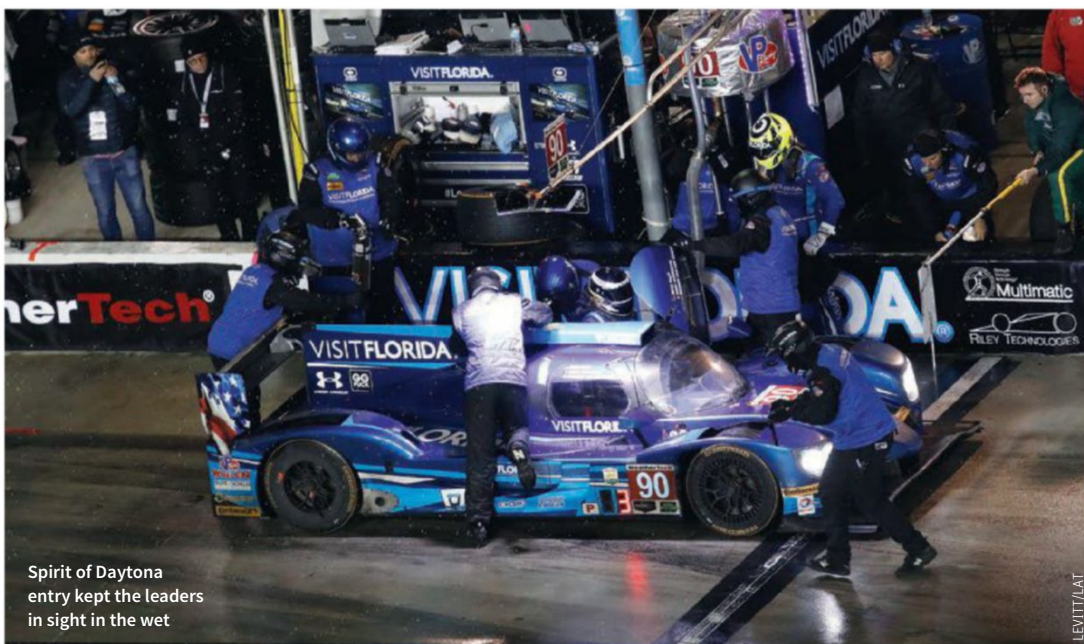
A gearbox problem subsequently cost the car more time. It ended up 20 laps down as the sixth car home in the Prototype class behind the JDC/Miller ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2 car.

The Cadillacs were challenged during the 10 or so hours of wet running at Daytona. The Spirit of Daytona Riley-Gibson Mk30 LMP2 shared by Renger van der Zande, Marc Goossens and Rene Rast was up with the leaders as the track began to dry on Sunday morning, but they had nothing for the WTR and Action Express cars on slick tyres.

“I thought we were racing an LMP1 car sometimes,” said van der Zande in reference to the pace of the Cadillacs. “But we can’t be disappointed with third. Our project is late compared with the others, so we weren’t expecting to go through the race without problems.”

The Riley was a lap down at the end after a strategic gamble that didn’t pay off. It was still well clear of the fourth-place Extreme Speed Motorsports Nissan-Onroak DPi shared by Scott Sharp, Ryan Dalziel and Pipo Derani.

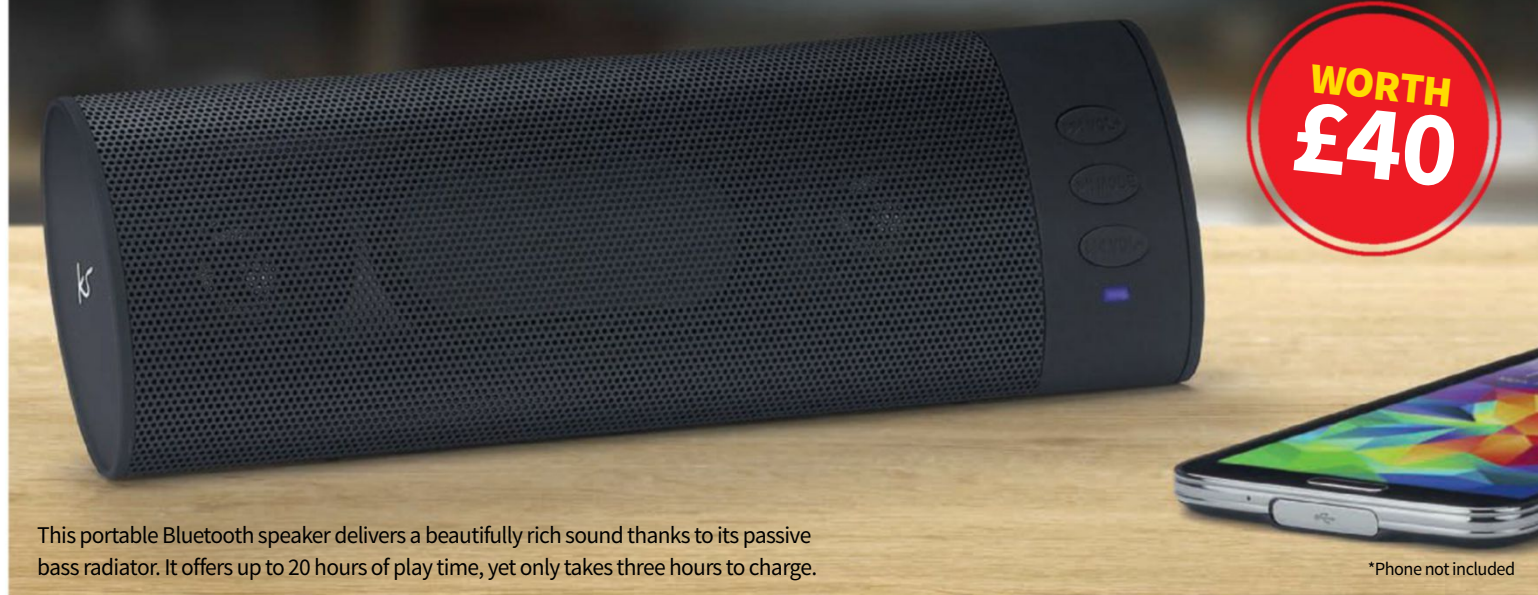
A glitch, caused by communication problems between the Nissan’s >>



Spirit of Daytona entry kept the leaders in sight in the wet

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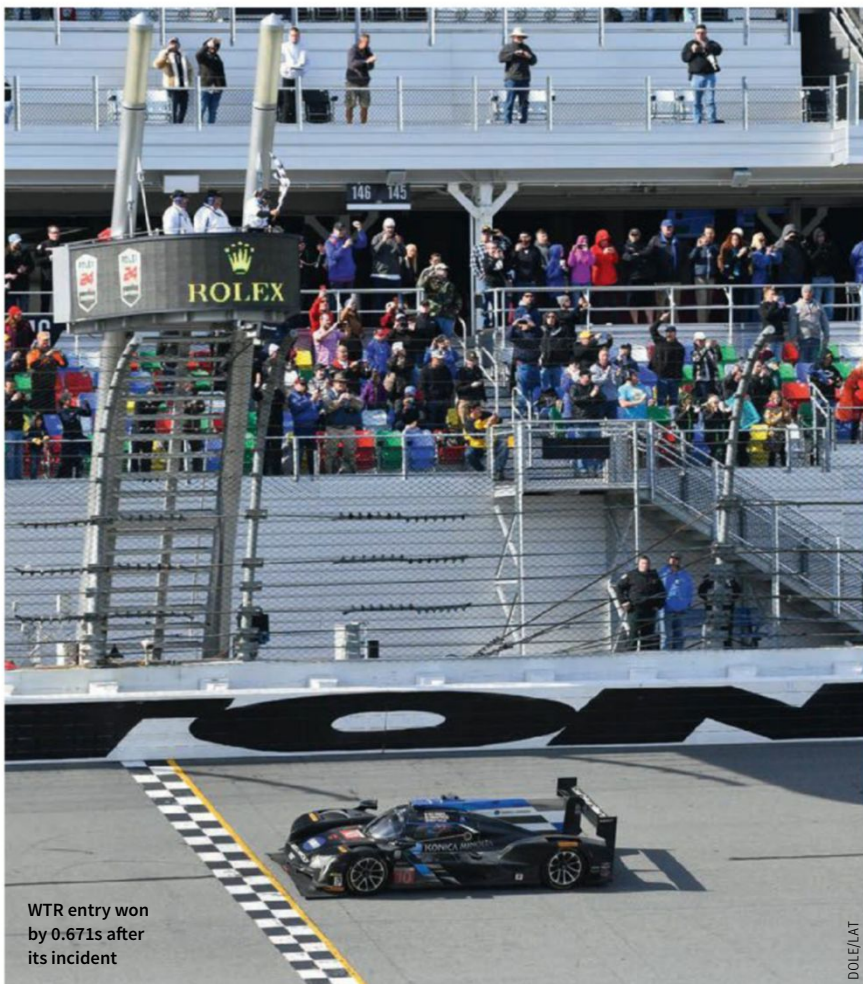
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WTR entry won by 0.671s after its incident

DOLE/LAT

“The Taylors were second in 2014 and ’16, so it was about time they got the job done”

electronic systems, meant ESM couldn't run at full power, but the car was competitive in the wet. Brendon Hartley, who shared the second entry with Bruno Senna, Johannes van Overbeek and Ed Brown, was leading when he pitted in the 10th hour.

Struggling to get heat into his Continental wet-weather tyres, he got on the grass at both hairpins on the infield and then a moment up on the banking resulted in a clash with a GT Daytona class Porsche that put him in the wall. The car was brought back to the paddock on a flatbed and the time lost to repairs left the car 23 laps down at the finish.

Rebellion Racing's ORECA-Gibson led the chase of the Cadillacs in qualifying – Neel Jani put the car third on the grid – and in the early dry running. The Anglo-Swiss squad's challenge went off the rails as early as the second hour when issues with the fly-by-wire throttle – the car's bugbear in pre-season testing – intervened and cost the team 11 laps.

Jani and team-mates Nick Heidfeld, Sebastien Buemi and Stephane Sarrazin had gained back a couple of laps when further problems manifested themselves late in the race. The master switch needed changing, there was a repeat of the throttle problem and then an issue with a suspension component that left the car 50 laps down in 31st position.

It was an emotional victory for WTR after three near-misses over the past four seasons. Gordon added victory in a major enduro to his bulging CV, even if he did only drive for three stints, Angelelli bowed out as a driver on a high, and the team boss witnessed his sons end their wait to join him on the roll of honour for the 24 Hours.

The Taylor brothers were second together at Daytona in 2014 and '16, so it was about time they got the job done, reckoned Ricky.

“We were either going to make a move and do something and win, or sit there in second and wait until next year,” he said. “I didn't want to do that.” ❄

NEWS IN BRIEF



TRIENTITZ/LAT

PERFORMANCE TECH ON TOP

The Performance Tech Motorsports squad dominated the Prototype Challenge class with the kind of race its rivals could only have dreamed of. The winning ORECA-Chevrolet FLM09 (above) shared by James French, Patricio O'Ward, Kyle Masson and Nick Boule finished 23 laps up on its nearest rival after a trouble-free race. The team's only issue over the 24 hours was the failure of the pits-to-car radio.

MAZDAS CAN'T LAST THE DISTANCE

Mazda failed to get either of its new Riley-based DPis to the finish. The pair of SpeedSource-run Mazda RT24-Ps were hit by minor niggles early on, but the #55 entry shared by Jonathan Bomarito, Tristan Nunez and Spencer Pigot was ensconced in the top five and only six laps down on the leaders late in the 20th hour when a broken oil line resulted in a fiery retirement. The sister car needed a gearbox change during the night and then retired with more transmission problems with half an hour to go.

DRAGONSPEED'S DRAMAS

The DragonSpeed squad endured a difficult weekend with its ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2. Loic Duval crashed the team's new car in practice on Friday, which entailed a rebuild around a second monocoque from the car the team ran in the European Le Mans Series last year. The car encountered the same throttle problems as the Rebellion entry and was then retired in the 22nd hour after a rear-wing failure.

ACURA STARS ON DEBUT

The new Acura NSX GT3 claimed fifth in GTD on its race debut with the Michael Shank Racing entry of Oswaldo Negri Jr, Ryan Hunter-Reay, Tom Dyer and Jeff Segal (below). The pair of Shank Acuras starred in the wet conditions of the night, running one-two on more than one occasion. “If it stayed wet, we were the upset,” said Segal.



CANTRELL/LAT

LEVITZ/LAT

IMSA SPORTSCAR/DAYTONA 24 HOURS

RESULTS DAYTONA 24 HOURS, DAYTONA (USA), JANUARY 28-29 (659 LAPS – 2346.04 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	RESULTS	GRID
1	Ricky Taylor/Jordan Taylor/Max Angelelli/Jeff Gordon	Wayne Taylor Racing	Cadillac DPi-V.R	P	24h00m57.343s	4
2	Joao Barbosa/Christian Fittipaldi/Filipe Albuquerque	Action Express Racing	Cadillac DPi-V.R	P	+0.671s	1
3	Marc Goossens/Renger van der Zande/Rene Rast	Spirit of Daytona	Riley-Gibson Mk30	P	-1 lap	11
4	Scott Sharp/Ryan Dalziel/Pipo Derani	Extreme Speed Motorsports	Nissan-Onroak DPi	P	-3 laps	6
5	Joey Hand/Dirk Muller/Sebastien Bourdais	Chip Ganassi Racing	Ford GT	GTLM	-7 laps	18
6	Patrick Pilet/Dirk Werner/Frederic Makowiecki	CORE Autosport	Porsche 911 RSR	GTLM	-7 laps	22
7	Toni Vilander/Giancarlo Fisichella/James Calado	Risi Competizione	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTLM	-7 laps	21
8	Jan Magnussen/Antonio Garcia/Mike Rockenfeller	Pratt & Miller	Chevrolet Corvette C7.R	GTLM	-7 laps	24
9	Andy Priaulx/Harry Tincknell/Tony Kanaan	Chip Ganassi Team UK	Ford GT	GTLM	-7 laps	23
10	Kevin Estre/Laurens Vanthoor/Richard Lietz	CORE Autosport	Porsche 911 RSR	GTLM	-7 laps	25
11	Olivier Pla/Stefan Mucke/Billy Johnson	Chip Ganassi Team UK	Ford GT	GTLM	-7 laps	20
12	Bill Auberlen/Alexander Sims/Augusto Farfus/Bruno Spengler	BMW Team RLL	BMW M6 GTLM	GTLM	-8 laps	27
13	Stephen Simpson/Chris Miller/Mikhail Gokhberg/Mathias Beche	JDC-Miller Motorsports	ORECA-Gibson 07	P	-13 laps	7
14	Dane Cameron/Eric Curran/Mike Conway/Seb Morris	Action Express Racing	Cadillac DPi-V.R	P	-20 laps	2
15	James French/Pato O'Ward/Kyle Masson/Nick Boule	Performance Tech Motorsports	ORECA-Chevrolet FLM09	PC	-21 laps	12
16	Oliver Gavin/Tommy Milner/Marcel Fassler	Pratt & Miller	Chevrolet Corvette C7.R	GTLM	-23 laps	26
17	Brendon Hartley/Ed Brown/Johannes van Overbeek/Bruno Senna	Extreme Speed Motorsports	Nissan-Onroak DPi	P	-23 laps	5
18	Daniel Morad/Carlos de Quesada/Jesse Lazare/Michael de Quesada/Michael Christensen	Alegra Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-25 laps	36
19	Connor de Phillippi/Christopher Mies/Jules Gounon/Jeffrey Schmidt	Land Motorsport	Audi R8 LMS	GTD	-25 laps	34
20	Ben Keating/Jeroen Bleekemolen/Mario Farnbacher/Adam Christodoulou	Riley Motorsports	Mercedes-AMG GT3	GTD	-25 laps	47
21	Andrew Davis/Lawson Aschenbach/Matt Bell/Robin Liddell	Stevenson Motorsports	Audi R8 LMS	GTD	-25 laps	43
22	Jeff Segal/Oswaldo Negri Jr/Tom Dyer/Ryan Hunter-Reay	Michael Shank Racing	Acura NSX GT3	GTD	-25 laps	37
23	Pierre Kaffer/Bill Sweedler/Townsend Bell/Frankie Montecalvo	Alex Job Racing	Audi R8 LMS	GTD	-26 laps	44
24	Bryan Sellers/Madison Snow/Bryce Miller/Andrea Caldarelli/Dion von Moltke	Paul Miller Racing	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	GTD	-30 laps	40
25	Justin Marks/Jens Klingmann/Maxime Martin/Jesse Krohn	Turner Motorsport	BMW M6 GT3	GTD	-31 laps	45
26	Emanuele Busnelli/Fabio Babini/Emmanuel Collard/Francois Perrodo	Ebimotors	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	GTD	-33 laps	51
27	Richard Westbrook/Ryan Briscoe/Scott Dixon	Chip Ganassi Racing	Ford GT	GTLM	-35 laps	19
28	Mike Hedlund/Santiago Creel/Wolf HENZLER/Jan Heylen/Tim Pappas	TRG	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-38 laps	50
29	Andy Lally/Katherine Legge/Mark Wilkins/Graham Rahal	Michael Shank Racing	Acura NSX GT3	GTD	617 laps-accident damage	35
30	Johnny Mowlem/Tom Papadopoulos/Adam Merzon/Trent Hindman/David Cheng	BAR1 Motorsports	ORECA-Chevrolet FLM09	PC	-43 laps	13
31	Neel Jani/Sebastien Buemi/Nick Heidfeld/Stephane Sarrazin	Rebellion Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	P	-50 laps	3
32	Buddy Rice/Don Yount/Mark Kvamme/Chapman Ducote/Gustavo Yacaman	BAR1 Motorsports	ORECA-Chevrolet FLM09	PC	-60 laps	14
33	Marco Sorensen/Paul Dalla Lana/Pedro Lamy/Mathias Lauda	Aston Martin Racing	Aston Martin V12 Vantage	GTD	-66 laps	31
34	Emmanuel Anassis/Brandon Gdovic/Zachary Claman De Melo/Anthony Massari	DAC Motorsports	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	GTD	-69 laps	54
35	Tom Kimber-Smith/Michael Guasch/Jose Gutierrez/RC Enerson	PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	P	-75 laps	8
36	Austin Cindric/Jack Hawksworth/Robert Alon/Dominik Farnbacher	3GT Racing	Lexus RCF GT3	GTD	-78 laps	48
37	Mirko Bortolotti/Christian Engelhart/Rolf Ineichen/Ezequiel Perez Companc	GRT Grasser Racing Team	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	GTD	-79 laps	33
38	Alessandro Balzan/Christina Nielsen/Matteo Cressoni/Sam Bird	Scuderia Corsa	Ferrari 488 GT3	GTD	575 laps-engine	30
39	Nicolas Lapierre/Henrik Hedman/Ben Hanley/Loic Duval	DragonSpeed	ORECA-Gibson 07	P	562 laps-rear wing/accident	17
40	Jonathan Bomarito/Tristan Nunez/Spencer Pigot	SpeedSource	Mazda RT24-P	P	538 laps-engine	9
41	Christian Engelhart/Rolf Ineichen/Roberto Pampanini/Michele Beretta/Milos Pavlovic	GRT Grasser Racing Team	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	GTD	526 laps-technical	39
42	Boris Said/Kenny Habul/Tristan Vautier/Maro Engel/Paul Morris	SunEnergy1 Racing	Mercedes-AMG GT3	GTD	524 laps-vibration	46
43	Lawrence DeGeorge/Cedric Sbirrazzuoli/Paolo Ruberti/Luca Persiani/Raffaele Giammaria	Dream Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	GTD	488 laps-accident damage	55
44	Alex Popow/Scott Mayer/James Dayson/Sean Rayhall/Conor Daly	Starworks Motorsport	ORECA-Chevrolet FLM09	PC	487 laps-gave up	16
45	Chris Cumming/Ben Keating/Robert Wickens/John Falb/Remo Ruscitti	Starworks Motorsport	ORECA-Chevrolet FLM09	PC	464 laps-gave up	15
46	Joel Miller/Tom Long/James Hincliffe	SpeedSource	Mazda RT24-P	P	462 laps-powertrain	10
47	Lance Willsey/Marco Mapelli/Marc Basseng/Luca Stolz/Franz Konrad	Konrad Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	GTD	399 laps-powertrain	49
48	Cooper MacNeil/Gunnar Jeannette/Shane van Gisbergen/Thomas Jager	Riley Motorsports	Mercedes-AMG GT3	GTD	373 laps-accident damage	52
49	Jon Bennett/Colin Braun/Patrick Long/Nic Jonsson	CORE Autosport	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	340 laps-accident	53
50	Alessandro Pier Guidi/Peter Mann/Maurizio Mediani/Davide Rigon/Rino Mastronardi	Spirit of Race (AF)	Ferrari 488 GT3	GTD	105 laps-misfire/sensor	29
51	Patrick Lindsey/Jorg Bergmeister/Matt McMurry/Norbert Siedler	Park Place Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	102 laps-accident	38
52	Jeroen Mul/Corey Lewis/Kaz Grala/Brett Sandberg	Change Racing	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	GTD	79 laps-accident	42
53	Matteo Cairoli/Steve Smith/Reinhold Renger/Hari Proczyk/Sven Muller	Manthey Racing	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	61 laps-engine/oil line	32
54	Scott Pruett/Sage Karam/Ian James/Gustavo Menezes	3GT Racing	Lexus RCF GT3	GTD	52 laps-accident	41
55	John Edwards/Martin Tomczyk/Nicky Catsburg/Kuno Wittmer	BMW Team RLL	BMW M6 GTLM	GTLM	15 laps-driveline	28

Winners' average speed 97.687 mph. **Fastest lap** Albuquerque 1m36.269s, 133.127 mph. **PC** O'Ward 1m42.716s, 124.771 mph. **GTLM** Westbrook 1m43.385s, 123.964 mph. **GTD** Pier Guidi 1m46.972s, 119.807 mph.

In each car, first-named driver set qualifying time and started race.



PROFILE

AGE 20
FROM Cheshire
OCCUPATION Student

FAVOURITE CIRCUIT Spa, every lap is a pleasure to drive, the whole experience of racing there is an adventure every time

RESULTS

- 2017** IMSA SportsCar Challenge
Daytona, 11th
- 2016** Mini Challenge Cooper Class,
CHAMPION
- 2015** Mini Challenge Cooper Class, 6th



Max Bladon

THE 2016 SEASON WAS A BREAKTHROUGH for rising tin-top talent Max Bladon.

His dominance in the Mini Challenge's Cooper Class division showed his coming of age as a racing driver. He's already made his mark on the international stage too, having started just his third season of circuit racing with a debut at Daytona after winning last year's Sunoco Challenge contest. That secured him a funded drive at the wheel of an Aston Martin Vantage GT4 in the four-hour IMSA Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge event that ran in support to the Daytona 24 Hours.

Bladon's success since moving to cars has been swift. He began his racing career in karting at the age of 11. He was inspired to start by his father, Nigel Bladon, who himself sporadically raced a Crossle in Formula Ford 1600 races at Oulton Park in the early 1980s.

Bladon took his first steps in MiniMax at his local track, Hooton Park, initially running his own kart with his father before progressing through the Rotax ranks, first with the Griffin Racing team and latterly with Sam Pollitt Racing.

Bladon achieved multiple successes in Mini, Junior and then Senior Max, where as a 16-year-

old he fought with much older drivers for honours. After finishing second in the Manchester and Buxton Kart Club Championship in 2014, Bladon and his father decided to make the move to cars in the Mini Coopers.

His first season was a learning year, but Bladon showed flashes of his potential, scoring six podium places on his way to second in the championship points. That laid the foundations for his dominant run in 2016 when, running with the Excelr8 Motorsport team, Bladon took a crushing 14 wins from 17 Mini Challenge outings.

That success gave him the initiative in the Sunoco Challenge contest, which scores drivers across 12 different UK club series for race wins, pole positions and fastest laps achieved over their respective seasons. Bladon beat competition from 166 other registered drivers to claim the prize of a dream debut at Daytona, beating British GT frontrunner Rick Parfitt Jr and Radical Challenge champion Steve Burgess in the final points.

Bladon has always mixed his racing with his education and is currently studying for a degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Central Lancashire.

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50 YEARS OF RALLYCROSS AT Lydden Hill



To the north of Kent's North Downs lies Lydden Hill. A race track and an Area of Outstanding National Beauty may seem like strange bedfellows but to rallycross fans the connection is incredibly appropriate. The Hairy Hill fencing lined with fans on a sunny August Bank Holiday Monday? Few sights in motorsport are as appealing.

Lydden's one-mile layout is the shortest car-racing circuit in the United Kingdom, but it packs in a massive amount of character. And

mixed-surface motorsport at the Kentish amphitheatre is celebrating its half-centenary this year.

Lydden's been around since 1955 – it was first a grasstrack venue – but it would be a dozen years before it really made its mark. In 1967, on February 4, Lydden introduced the world to rallycross. The made-for-TV event, won by Porsche 911 driver Vic Elford (of Porsche endurance racing fame) struck a chord.

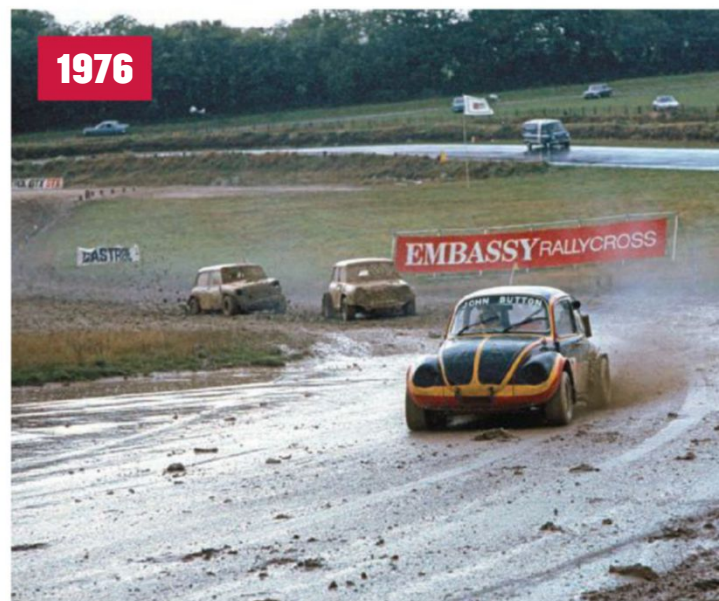
Rallycross didn't take off immediately, though, because an outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease left

the circuit out-of-bounds and torpedoed a planned international rallycross event in November of '67. Still, the world wouldn't have to wait for long. While the inaugural event was put together with the assistance of the ITV, it was the BBC that secured the rights to broadcast 'winter series' racing from Lydden.

As rallycross blossomed, the European Championship came to Lydden for the first time in 1974 – the likes of Franz Wurz (father of Formula 1 driver and Le Mans 24 Hours ace Alexander) and



1967



1976



WRC legends Stig Blomqvist and Bjorn Waldegaard competed. Lydden hosted Britain's round on the calendar until 1996 (when the UK lost its place).

Many other star names have graced Chesson's Drift over the years – John Button (2009 F1 world champion Jensen's dad), Martin Schanche, Matti Alamaki, Will Gollop, Kenneth Hansen, Tanner Foust, Petter Solberg, Sebastien Loeb and more. On a more national level, Lydden and its Bank Holiday meetings have been a staple of the British championship for decades.

This May is Lydden's 'farewell tour' on the world stage – after 2017's World Rallycross round the UK event will move elsewhere. But nowhere will capture the sensation of top-drawer rallycross like Lydden, so savour it while you can.

For details contact **01304 830557**
or visit **lyddenhill.co.uk**

LYDDEN CALENDAR

British Rallycross Championship

Monday, April 17 (Bank Holiday)

BHP Performance Show

Monday, May 1 (Bank Holiday)

World Rallycross Championship

Saturday, May 27 and Sunday, May 28

Borough 19

Saturday, July 15

British Drift Championship

Saturday, July 22 and Sunday, July 23

Trucksport at Lydden

Saturday, August 5 and Sunday, August 6

Classic Festival

Saturday, August 12

Vintage Motor Cycle Club

Saturday, August 19 and Sunday August 20

British Rallycross Championship

Monday, August 28 (Bank Holiday)

Motor Mania

Saturday, November 4





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#weareginetta



Schumacher claimed two wins at former Indian GP venue

MRF

Schumacher wins and bins it

MRF CHALLENGE BUDDH (IND) JANUARY 28-29 ROUND 3/4

MICK SCHUMACHER LOOKED TO HAVE GOT himself right into title contention with two wins, only for a botched pass in the final race to end in a shunt and give the advantage back to Joey Mawson.

Schumacher claimed pole and led all the way in race one, shadowed by Brazilian Felipe Drugovich. Harrison Newey completed the podium ahead of Mawson, who'd recovered from a stall at the start.

Mawson worked his way past early leader Kimi Schramm in the reversed-grid race. Ralf Aron was next to move past Schramm, and the Estonian, despite lacking pace, held off Schumacher.

Schumacher triumphed again in race three, as Mawson held off Newey for second place.

Newey saved a fresh set of MRF rubber for the finale and scampered away. Schumacher tried to prise second from Aron, sliding up the inside at Turn 3. But that ran both of them wide and Drugovich passed both on exit. At Turn 4, Schumacher went down the inside of Aron but inadvertently speared into the innocent Drugovich.

RESULTS

Race 1 Mick Schumacher 12 laps in 22m33.728s; 2 Felipe Drugovich +1.703s; 3 Harrison Newey; 4 Joey Mawson; 5 Rinus van Kalmthout; 6 Kimi Schramm. **Race 2 Mawson** 12 laps in 24m27.191s; 2 Ralf Aron +8.085s; 3 Schumacher; 4 Newey; 5 van Kalmthout; 6 Yoshiaki Katayama. **Race 3 Schumacher** 12 laps in 22m22.305s; 2 Mawson +4.006s; 3 Newey; 4 Drugovich; 5 van Kalmthout; 6 Juri Vips. **Race 4 Newey** 12 laps in 30m30.323s; 2 Aron +0.832s; 3 Mawson; 4 Pedro Cardoso; 5 Schramm; 6 van Kalmthout. **Points 1 Mawson 211**; 2 Newey 184; 3 Schumacher 171; 4 Drugovich 135; 5 Ralf Aron 120; 6 Cardoso 89.

Randle moves up at Downs

TOYOTA RACING SERIES HAMPTON DOWNS (NZ) JANUARY 28-29 ROUND 3/5

TOM RANDLE BECAME THE FIRST Australian since 1975 to win the historic New Zealand Motor Cup, starting from pole and holding on through two safety-car episodes.

Randle flat-spotted his left-front tyre on the first lap under pressure from Jehan Daruvala, and drove the race with a 'square' tyre. But the Victory Motor Racing-run, LMP3-bound racer held on and his win allowed him to slash the gap in the points to series-leading Red Bull Junior Richard Verschoor.

Randle had grabbed both poles, but slid wide at the start of race one, allowing Marcus Armstrong into the lead. The Ferrari protege took his second win of the campaign in his M2 Competition car,

chased by Pedro Piquet, Randle and Verschoor, who had risen from seventh on the grid.

Verschoor claimed more good points in the reversed-grid race. Briton Enaam Ahmed started this from the front row, and took the lead from poleman Ameya Vaidyanathan to win from Verschoor and Piquet. Ahmed also set a new lap record for the Hampton Downs circuit.

But it all went wrong for Verschoor in the headlining race. He started fourth, but hit the right-rear wheel of Armstrong's car, smashing its suspension and putting Armstrong out of the race. The Dutchman pitted for a new front tyre and nosecone under the ensuing caution and rejoined, putting in a spirited drive from last to 12th, but a penalty for hitting Armstrong relegated him to 16th.

Austrian Ferdinand Habsburg had his best drive of the series to second after starting seventh, while Daruvala claimed third after Pedro Piquet went off on the final lap and dropped to fourth.

MARK BAKER

RESULTS

Race 1 Marcus Armstrong 15 laps in 16m34.701s; 2 Pedro Piquet +0.334s; 3 Tom Randle; 4 Richard Verschoor; 5 Enaam Ahmed; 6 Ameya Vaidyanathan. **Race 2 Ahmed** 15 laps in 15m12.040s; 2 Verschoor +2.436s; 3 Piquet; 4 Armstrong; 5 Vaidyanathan; 6 Kami Laliberte. **Race 3 Randle** 20 laps in 24m37.172s; 2 Ferdinand Habsburg +3.362s; 3 Jehan Daruvala; 4 Piquet; 5 Luis Leeds; 6 Taylor Cockerton. **Points 1 Verschoor 539**; 2 Randle 517; 3 Piquet 488; 4 Daruvala 410; 5 Armstrong 402; 6 Cockerton 383.



Ahmed leads Verschoor in reversed-grid race

CAVERON

IN BRIEF



BBADE

ANDROS TROPHY

A dominant performance from Jean-Philippe Dayraut in the single-header finale at Super Besse wasn't enough to prevent Jean-Baptiste Dubourg from taking his second successive ice-racing title. Dayraut got a nice haul of points from topping both qualifying heats in his BMW M2, then narrowly lost out in the super-pole shootout to Olivier Panis (Audi A1 Quattro). But third place in the heats and super pole for Dubourg meant that, barring disaster in the final, the Renault Clio man would be champion. While Dayraut fended off Panis up front in the final (above), Dubourg finished third. Benjamin Riviere (Mini) passed Franck Lagorce (Mazda) for fourth, with the second Audi of Benoit Treluyer rounding out the top six.

IMSA CONTINENTAL TIRE

The traditional four-hour support race on the Friday afternoon at the Daytona 24 Hours ended in a 1-2-3-4 for Porsche Cayman GT4 machinery. Trent Hindman anchored the winning car he shared with Cameron Cassels, defeating Marc Miller and VSCC racer Till Bechtolsheimer, with third going to Irish ace Damien Faulkner along with Russell Ward. The Ford Mustang of Scott Maxwell was the fastest car, but lost time with a powertrain failure.

UAE FORMULA 4

Jonathan Aberdein's clean sweep of the race wins finally came to an end at the Dubai circuit. The Motopark-run South African made it eight on the trot in race one, while series newcomer Sebastian Fernandez took second in his sister car. Venezuelan Fernandez, a race winner in Italian F4, then charged from the back row of the reversed-grid race to pass David Malukas on a safety-car restart and claim victory. Aberdein beat Logan Sargeant in the finale, with Fernandez penalised for a starting infringement.


NACAM FORMULA 4

Guyanese Calvin Ming bolstered his lead in the Mexican-based series with two wins at the Autodromo Emerson Fittipaldi in Yucatan. Ming came out on top of a fight with Manuel Sulaiman in race one after Sulaiman hit gearbox problems. He then won the reversed-grid race from Jose Sierra. Ming's clash on the green-flag lap with RAM Racing team-mate Sulaiman put them both out of the finale, which was won by Sierra from Moises de la Vara.

50 years of grunt and glory

A decade ago rallycross almost fell off the radar, but now, as it approaches its 50th anniversary, the sport is entering a golden era to rival its Group B glory days

By Hal Ridge, Special Contributor

 @HalRidgeRX







To many, the golden era of rallycross was when the explosive Group B machinery of the mid-1980s was exiled from the rally stages and found a new home, with Murray Walker nearing hysteria as they burst off the line at Brands Hatch in the British Rallycross Grand Prix. Talk to a casual fan of motorsport, and they might have said: ‘Ah, I remember, we used to watch that on television. What was the British guy called? Will Gollop. He drove that ridiculous twin-turbo Metro 6R4. It was awesome. What happened to it? Do they still do rallycross...?’

Forward we travel into the modern social-media-driven era, and suddenly rallycross has gone viral thanks to Kevin Eriksson’s audacious, crazy pass at the first corner to take victory at Estering last October in the penultimate round of the World Rallycross Championship.

With its 50th anniversary coming up this Saturday, rallycross has returned to – and even surpassed the heights of – its Group B heyday.

Yes, it’s even better than when grids bulged with 6R4s, Ford RS200s, Audi Quattros and, to a lesser extent, Peugeot 205 T16s. The sport had strength and depth not only on the international scene but domestically too. Despite being made for television, where rallycross remained as popular as it had been a decade earlier (with Walker’s commentary, the BBC having joined ITV as a rallycross broadcaster in 1968 and subsequently taking the reins), events were also well-attended by spectators. The annual season-closing standalone British

Rallycross Grand Prix at Brands Hatch regularly attracted over 30,000 spectators in frosty December.

Finns Seppo Niittymaki and Matti Alamaki won four straight European Rallycross Championship titles in 205s, and Martin Schanche claimed a crown in his RS200 in 1991.

“It was really a special time,” says Alamaki. “The cars were very good; they were more powerful but also very, very light. The suspension and tyres are better today, though, and for sure the cars are much easier to drive. With almost one thousand horsepower and not so good suspension, Group B cars were not so good to drive.

“I waited [for the sport to grow further] and it took a long time to come. But now, there is no big difference to before with [mostly] European rounds, and you also have a couple of races in

Argentina and Canada. And it’s with top drivers and top cars now, like before.”

British driver Gollop secured the European crown with his revered Bi-Turbo 6R4 in 1992, the final year for the machines before they

were banished from rallycross circuits. “We had some good exposure then, especially with the Grand Prix,” he remembers. “That was always the highlight of the year more than the European championship for me, because it got good home television. Getting sponsorship was made slightly easier by that. Rallycross was and still is a good formula. It never gets boring because the races don’t get strung out; maybe Formula 1 could do with having three races in a day with three starts.”

The sport slumped in popularity by the turn of the century, in no small part due to the absence of quality television coverage,

“The season-closer at Brands Hatch regularly attracted over 30,000”



RX is entering a new era of professionalism, a far cry from the early days enjoyed by the likes of John Welch (above right)

poorly promoted events and a lack of continuity through the European championship, each round looking after its own interests rather than the bigger picture.

“The sport was really good, and the racing was really good, but it was difficult to move upwards,” explains Kenneth Hansen, the most successful driver in rallycross history. “There were a lot of people believing in the sport but no-one was really able to put it together. The organisers had an association, the ERA. It was a good idea and I think they tried to put something together, but with 10 organisers you have 10 different strong opinions that each event was the best... so it didn’t work.

“The frustrating thing was that we knew that this sport can be very interesting, it could be something big. We tried many things to help – the worst part was where me and Martin

[Schanche] were collecting prize money from the drivers to give to the TV production guys. It just got too complicated.”

The European championship gained a promoter for 2013 and became a world championship a year later. While many disciplines bear little or no resemblance to previous peaks in popularity, as Alamaki points out, rallycross today isn’t so far removed from the late-1980s: the cars are still relatively extreme and big-name drivers such as World Rally champions Petter Solberg and Sebastien Loeb, along with DTM legend Mattias Ekstrom, are accessible to fans in the paddock too. Action on-track is plentiful and, crucially, it’s back on TV, although in the UK it’s yet to return to the major channels.

The highest level of the sport now has a clear structure thanks to a single promoter, and the short, sharp nature of the action suits a younger thrill-seeking demographic.

For the first time, there are four existing teams receiving works support in World RX for 2017, and the series is becoming increasingly attractive to manufacturers, being broadcast around the world on television and attracting up to 80,000 people at events. “We just got good news from Volkswagen and Audi [entering the championship] and I hope more manufacturers are coming,” says Alamaki. “Rallying is so expensive. Rallycross is much cheaper and it has lots of fans. Hopefully now people have seen Volkswagen coming they will do the same. It’s very good for the sport to make it more professional and less like a hobby.”

Like his Group B peers, Gollop always believed in the sport. “I’ve always thought rallycross should be bigger than it ever was,” he says. “I’m not surprised that it has gone the way it has at all really. I’m not really up with the current regulations, but I think they’ve done well to make a formula that’s about the driver as much as the car, and long may that continue.”

There are areas, however, where the sport is moving away from its roots. The South African round of the series later ➤



this year will be the 10th new venue for World RX in four years, and for 2018 the British round will be held at Silverstone and not the birthplace of the sport, Lydden Hill. Indeed, several of the new tracks have been created at Formula 1 venues (recent events have been held at Barcelona, Hockenheim and Istanbul Park), boasting the facilities that manufacturers enjoy.

Hansen says it's crucial to keep that mix of tracks, but the traditional venues need to keep raising their game. "The promoter has moved the sport on and the teams have increased their level too," says the Swede, who today runs works-backed Team Peugeot-Hansen, and whose son Timmy is one of the leading drivers. "That also needs to be done with the circuits. I like the track and the place at Lydden, but it hasn't developed fast enough. When this happens to an old and strong organiser like Lydden, no-one can be really secure, even [the series' biggest events] Loheac [in France] or Holjes [Sweden]."

"They need to work hard; they have great events but they need to invest to progress. We definitely want to keep them but no-one is safe because a lot of others are interested to make the investment now. Hopefully we can keep some of the proper rallycross tracks – we need them too."

Alamaki agrees: "I don't like the circuits like Barcelona and Hockenheim, but it's very good for the spectators."

In a healthy economic climate, the Group B era was flooded with bought-in cars, some driven by young talents who had climbed through the ranks of the sport. The possibility to do that diminished for many years; during that epoch the majority of top-level competitors were wealthy businessmen (or their sons) rather than career drivers. But now there is arguably

more opportunity than ever to 'make it' in rallycross, with the growth at the top level having a knock-on effect in exposure for the supporting categories and national championships. Entries are increasing and drivers without pots of gold are attracting the funding to progress.

So, what's next for rallycross? With interest expected from more teams and manufacturers, and high-profile drivers such as Jenson Button and Sebastien Loeb (pictured right) seeking opportunities, things look good. In the long term, rallycross looks increasingly likely to include electrically powered cars in some way. Volkswagen, Peugeot and Audi have already made their intentions surrounding the electrification of rallycross very clear, and the high-power, short running times of electric cars fit the bill perfectly, since that is not too dissimilar to what is available on the road right now. An Austrian firm has already released its first prototype, boasting figures that can rival those of a Supercar. But while rallycross is a good match for the technology, the noise will be missed.

"I think all motor racing has a duty to go electric," points out Gollop. "The performance is going to be better in time because of the instant torque and not having to change gear. People say it will spoil the spectacle because there's not as much noise, but it's not outside the realms of possibility to having something linked to the throttle that makes a noise that's acceptable to everybody."

This Saturday, February 4, as the sport celebrates its 50th birthday, the future of rallycross – a discipline that a decade ago had all but completely fallen off the radar – is reminiscent of its glorious past while arguably looking brighter than ever. 🏆





MCKLEIN/DE

How rallycross began

LYDDEN HILL WAS chosen as the venue for the inaugural rallycross event by the 750 Motor Club's Bud Smith, but it was ABC Television director Robert Reed who came up with the idea of a mixed-surface discipline to broadcast on ITV's World of Sport programme.

While covering a rain-hit Harewood hillclimb in November 1966 from his London studio, Reed was struck by how much he enjoyed watching cars make their way from the finish of the course to the paddock on a slippery gravel track.

Coincidentally, Smith enquired a week later as to whether World of Sport would be interested in televising trials. That didn't happen, but the pair began discussing Reed's new idea.

Smith organised the use of Lydden Hill with owner Bill Chesson, and Reed secured an outside broadcast unit. Racer/media man John Sprinzel was tasked with inviting

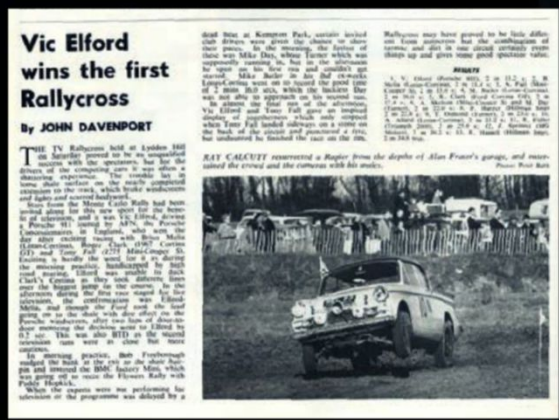
some big names to compete. Sprinzel also formulated the name.

The event took place on Saturday February 4 1967, and the sport of rallycross was born. The versatile Vic Elford claimed victory, driving a Porsche 911 (pictured left).

"In those days the top loop to the hairpin at Lydden was just gravel," explained Smith, who died in 1994. "At least I thought it was just gravel, but underneath it was all railway ballast, bloody great lumps of flint. We started outside the

paddock and went anti-clockwise up the hill and down again, round the Devil's Elbow, along the back straight and dived off onto the grass, literally where Chesson's bend is now. Then we came back again, still keeping on the grass and straight along to where we built a jump. We didn't want it to get spread out, but by keeping the circuit to about a mile it kept it quick, short and sharp."

Such was the success of the format that the next event took place a month later at Lydden Hill.



FIVE OF THE BEST RX STARS



KENNETH HANSEN

The most successful rallycross driver ever. Gave up his employment to try to make a profession of being a European championship rallycross driver in 1990, and moved to the Supercar class with Citroën support in 1993. Claimed a record 14 crowns in his career.



MARTIN SCHANCHE

Arguably as prolific an engineer as he was a driver, Schanche campaigned Fords for most of his career, winning the first of six European titles in 1978. He was also jointly responsible for the revolutionary Xtrac Escort with which he claimed the title in '84.



MATTI ALAMAKI

Two cars that really shout 'iconic rallycross' are the Porsche 911 and Peugeot 205 T16, and Finnish driver Alamaki, who incidentally also began his motor racing career in 1967, won five European titles in those two machines between '81 and '90.



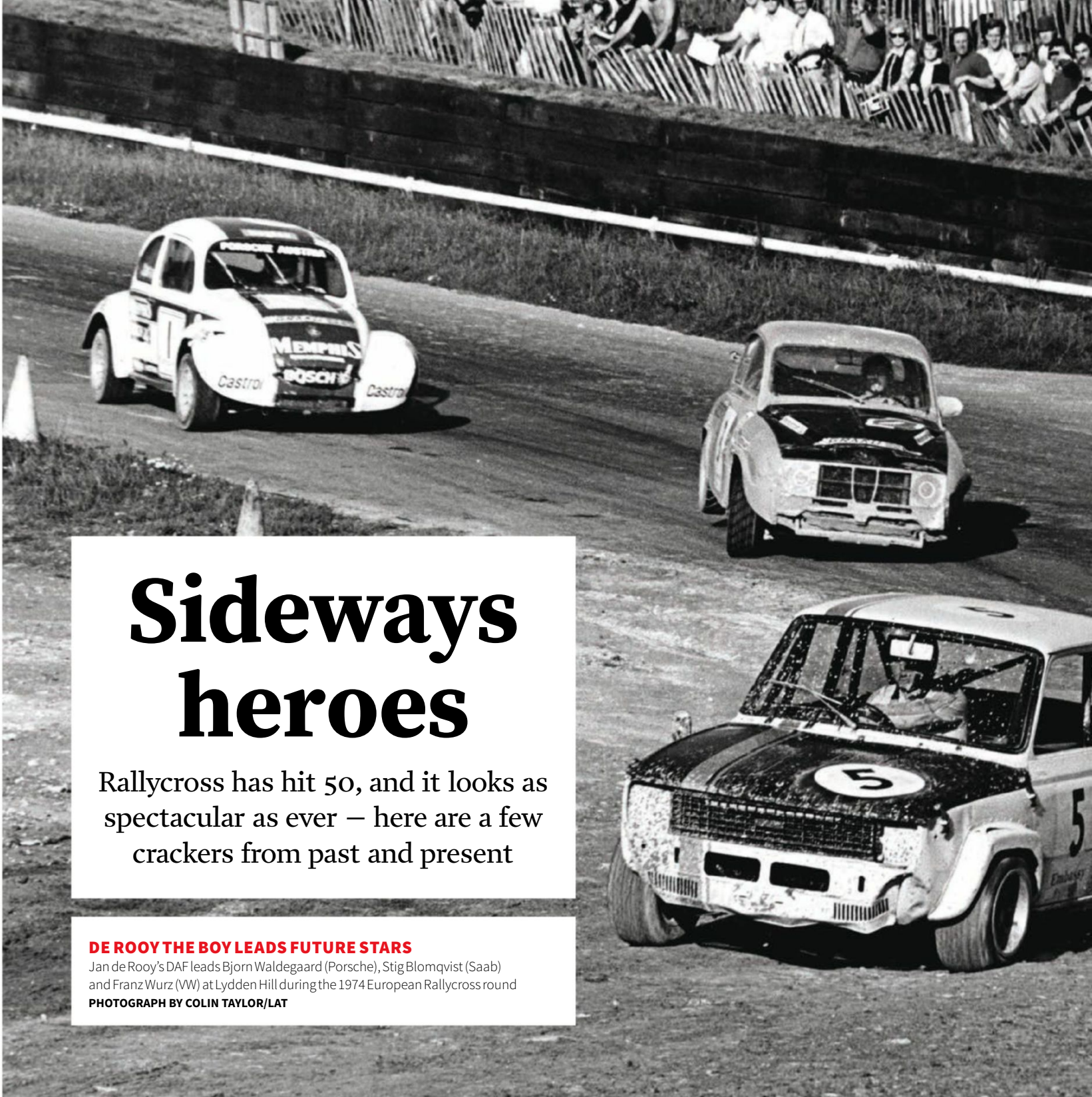
WILL GOLLOP

Gollop climbed through the domestic ranks in the UK and broke into the top class with an MG Metro 6R4 in 1986. Driving a monstrous bi-turbo 6R4 in '92, Gollop claimed the European crown and remains the most recent British driver to do so.



PETTER SOLBERG

Solberg's early career was in rallycross, before he switched to rallying to pursue a world title. He claimed the WRC title in 2003, retired from rallying in '12 and returned to rallycross, where he claimed back-to-back world titles in '14 and '15 with a privately run Citroën.



Sideways heroes

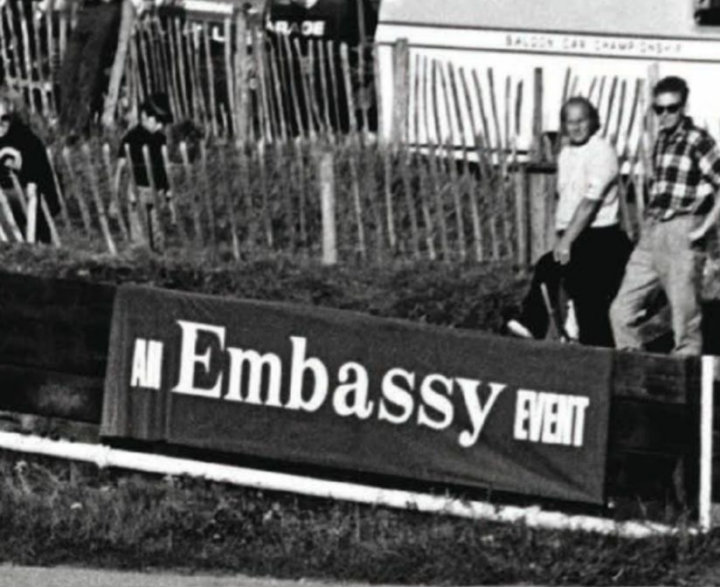
Rallycross has hit 50, and it looks as spectacular as ever – here are a few crackers from past and present

DE ROOY THE BOY LEADS FUTURE STARS

Jan de Rooy's DAF leads Bjorn Waldegaard (Porsche), Stig Blomqvist (Saab) and Franz Wurz (VW) at Lydden Hill during the 1974 European Rallycross round

PHOTOGRAPH BY COLIN TAYLOR/LAT





1 **MATTI THE MASTER**

Much like in rallying, the Peugeot 205 was a formidable machine as Group B took over rallycross. Matti Alamaki tamed it best – this is the Finn celebrating at Lydden during his 1989 title-winning season

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAT



2 **TIMUR THE NEW TITAN**

Supercars helped revitalise rallycross's international appeal and Timur Timerzyanov was the heart of that – the Citroen driver won back-to-back European titles in 2012 and '13

PHOTOGRAPH BY MCKLEIN

3 **BALANCING ON A KNIFE EDGE**

Will Gollop's Metro 6R4 was a popular sight at the height of Group B in rallycross, and the Briton finally secured the European title in 1992. Here, he's pictured winning that year's Rallycross Grand Prix at Brands Hatch

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAT

4 **ERIKSSON GOES ROUND THE OUTSIDE**

Rallycross lends itself to some spectacular overtakes, but perhaps none can match the opportunism show by Kevin Eriksson, who executed this round-the-outside pass to take a decisive lead at Estering last year

PHOTOGRAPH BY MCKLEIN

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2017	Count	Venue / Event	Track Capacity	Content	Content	Format	ACD	ALL	ASC	TG/TC63	JAG	COYS Pre-'66
11-Feb		Eastbourne	180	Dinner/Dance	ALL HRDC	Evening	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
06-Mar	✓	Goodwood	35	Track Day	ACD	Full Day	✓					
30-Mar	✓	Goodwood	35	Track Day	TG	Full Day				✓		
09-Apr	✓	Brands Hatch BRSCC	Indy 34	Race	ACD / ASC	30/15	✓		✓			
09-Apr		Brands Hatch BRSCC	Indy 34	Race	TG/TC63	45/25	✓			✓		
* 23-Apr	✓	Silverstone VSCC	Nat 40	Race	JAG	30/15					✓	
Apr 28-30	✓	Donington Festival	Nat 40	Race	TG/TC63	45/25	✓			✓		
Apr 28-30		Donington Festival	Nat 40	Race	COYS	45/25	✓			✓	✓	✓
28-May	✓	Silverstone BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	ALL/ ACD / ASC	30/15	✓	✓	✓			
28-May		Silverstone BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	TG/TC63	45/15	✓			✓		
11-Jun	✓	Snetterton BRSCC	(300) 45	Race	ALL/ ACD / ASC	30/15	✓	✓	✓			
11-Jun		Snetterton BRSCC	(300) 45	Race	TG/TC63	45/15	✓			✓		
16-Jul	✓	Castle Combe BRSCC	42	Race	ALL/ ACD / ASC	30/15	✓	✓	✓			
16-Jul		Castle Combe BRSCC	42	Race	COYS	45/25	✓			✓	✓	✓
16-Jul		Castle Combe BRSCC	42	Race	JAG	30/15					✓	
* July 28-30	✓	Silverstone Classic	Hist GP 58	Race	ACD	2-part	✓					
24-Sep	✓	Mallory Park BRSCC	30	Race	ACD / ASC	30 /15	✓		✓			
24-Sep		Mallory Park BRSCC	30	Race	COYS	45/25	✓			✓	✓	✓
15-Oct	✓	Donington BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	ALL/ ACD / ASC	30/15	✓	✓	✓			
15-Oct		Donington BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	TG/TC63	45/25	✓			✓		
15-Oct		Donington BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	JAG	30/15					✓	

* Please note these date changes!

KEY:

ACD:  ACADEMY	ALL:  ALLSTARS	ASC:  A-SERIES CHALLENGE	COYS:  COYS TROPHY	TG:  TOURING GREATS	JAG:  COOMBS	TC63:  TC63
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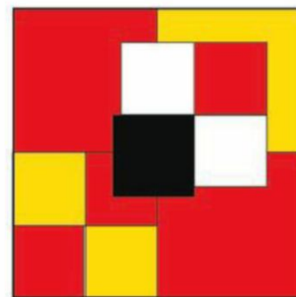
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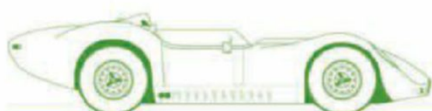
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CLUB AUTOSPORT

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Welsh government says it will not underwrite the project



JACK BENYON
GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

[@jackbenyon](#)

Circuit of Wales asked to prove it can raise required budget

THE CIRCUIT OF WALES HAS BEEN GIVEN A fresh hurry-up from the Welsh government to prove that it can raise the budget necessary to allow the project to go ahead.

The £357 million venue has hit a number of stumbling blocks since it was first mooted in 2011. After the government confirmed that it would not underwrite the project, the Heads of the Valleys Development Company, which is behind the plans, has been searching for private investment. The Aviva insurance group is rumoured to be interested.

Labour member of the Welsh Assembly Vikki Howells asked cabinet secretary for economy and infrastructure Ken Skates for an update on recent developments last week.

Skates responded: "Last July, I made it clear what our position as a Welsh government is. I stated clearly in this chamber that we require a minimum of 50 per

cent of the capital and 50 per cent of the risk of the project to be taken by the private sector. Should that happen, we will consider any new proposal against the appropriate value-for-money and due-diligence tests.

"I'm keen to avoid the opportunity costs associated with a project that does not have a final end date. So, I have therefore written to the Heads of the Valleys Development Company today, asking them to make faster progress on this project and asking for evidence to be provided to me of named investor term sheets within the next two weeks."

A spokesperson for the Circuit of Wales, which has a five-year deal for the rights to hold the British MotoGP round, said: "The Circuit of Wales continues to have regular meetings with Welsh government officials, which are extremely positive, and we welcome the cabinet secretary for economy's desire for a speedy resolution aligned with our own proactive timetable."

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? IT'S the question Vikki Howells was asking and one that people in the Ebbw Vale area of Wales, and much of motorsport, want to know. Of course, Howells was asking about the Circuit of Wales in the Welsh Assembly.

It's a topic shrouded in convoluted politics. The Circuit of Wales's owners don't want to speak out until they have something to say, and are still in talks with the government and investors. It could be two weeks or two months before more information surfaces. The government wants a conclusion, but doesn't intend to burn bridges with the circuit that it wants built.

Not long ago I wrote a column about Donington Park and its route to stability with MSV at the helm. But for the Circuit of Wales, there's no Jonathan Palmer to bail it out.

The money has to come from the private sector and, while those behind the circuit are positive there will be a solution, it's hard to get excited about a breakthrough without knowing more about the investors. Hopefully we'll find out more in the next two weeks. Right now, hope is all there is.

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BRITISH GT

Champion Caine returns to British GT

FORMER BRITISH GT CHAMPION MICHAEL Caine is to return to the series with Team Hard.

Caine, the overall champion in 2012, will share a Ginetta G55 GT4 with Mike Newbould under the Autoaid/RCIB Insurance Racing banner this year. Team Hard-operated RCIB cars won last season's British GT4 teams' title.

Briton Caine was a winner in TVR Tuscan before switching to British GT, and claimed his GT3 title alongside Daniele Perfetti in a Motorbase Porsche 997 GT3-R. He has also been an occasional stand-in for Motorbase in the British Touring Car Championship.

"After the 2016 [BTCC] plans went pear-shaped, I'm really looking forward to a full

championship again," said Caine. "Last year was the first in 26 years of racing that I didn't have a championship to compete in. I think we have a really good chance [of the GT4 title] this year, and GT4 looks like it's the future."

Team Hard boss Tony Gilham said: "It's great to have both Michael and Mike for this year. Michael brings so much to the table, both on and off the track. He's a seasoned pro and will add strength to the team. We're excited to see how both drivers form a partnership and feel there is a genuine possibility of the Pro/Am title."

The team's second British GT4 Ginetta will be driver by Sam Webster and Howard Fuller.

David Pittard will also drive a Ginetta G55 in

the series next year. The GT4 Supercup race winner has been drafted into Lanan Racing's 2017 line-up as a replacement for Joey Foster.

Pittard will share the team's car with Alex Reed, since Foster had to call off his plans to contest the season owing to business commitments.

Pittard joins British GT off the back of several strong seasons in sports cars. He was runner-up in the Supercup in 2014.

"I'm excited to be joining Lanan, with their pedigree in single-seaters and prototypes," said Pittard. "Their impressive debut season in British GT [Reed and Foster finished sixth in the GT4 points with one victory at Spa] underlines their engineering and development skills."

BRITCAR

Britcar reveals WHT night race on calendar



HAWKINS

BRITCAR IS HOPING TO add a second night race to its 2017 calendar on the Walter Hayes Trophy weekend.

Initial discussions have taken place between Britcar and the Historic Sports Car Club, which helps run the WHT Formula Ford event, for the series to join the Silverstone bill. Britcar already organises one night race – at Brands Hatch – which also takes place in November.

Britcar's Claire Hedley said: "After the

success of Brands last year, we felt there's a niche in the market for our guys to do that [another night race]. The opportunity arose to be on the Walter Hayes Trophy weekend with a firework display."

While Britcar has included the event on its provisional calendar, Grahame White of the HSCC said there were still talks to be had. "They've asked us whether it would be possible, but there are lots of things involved in a night race," he said.

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

Dorlin completes step up to Clio Cup

MICHELIN CLIO CUP SERIES CHAMPION James Dorlin has confirmed his graduation to the Renault UK Clio Cup this season with Westbourne Motorsport.

Dorlin, 17, took nine wins on his way to the Clio Cup Series title last year with Westbourne in a Gen-3 car. He had long been expected to step up to the TOCA-support category, having tested the latest Gen-4 Clio Cup machinery with Westbourne before ordering a car.

"It's quite a step up – the move to the latest specification Clio Cup race car and the events are on a totally different scale to what I'm used to," he said. "However, I'm not daunted by it. I've tested the car a few times and seem to have been setting some good times, and Westbourne have won in the UK Clio Cup in the past so I know I've got the right team behind me."

Dorlin will be joined by Myles Collins.



WALKER

FF1600

FF changes defended by organisers

BRITISH RACING AND SPORTS CAR CLUB National Championship organisers have defended changes to the format that have drawn criticism from some competitors.

While a switch from a two- to three-race format and a control pump fuel have drawn praise from most quarters, changes to the championship format have provoked rumblings of discontent. The series' Pre-'90 category has been disbanded and replaced by the Clubman class, which will serve both Pre-'90 cars and Post-'89 machinery.

If a driver has finished in the top three in an FF1600 championship in the previous

three years, they won't be eligible to enter the Clubman class in a Post-'89 car. The category has also reverted to unlimited tyre usage, while drivers in the Post-'89 class – renamed National Pro – can only use one set of tyres per weekend.

BRSCC FF1600 chairman Ian Wolfenden said: "When you actually look at who they are [the people complaining], they haven't raced with us for I don't know how long.

"We're going to get a bit of a backlash whenever we change anything because some people don't like change. We're fairly sure what we're doing is the right thing."



IN BRIEF



CHAMPION COWLEY TO RACE IN USA

Ex-BRSCC Pre-'90 Northern and National Formula Ford champion Matthew Cowley will compete in FF1600 in America next year with Team Pelfrey. The 19-year-old, who won the Northern and National titles in 2015, tested twice before signing with the team.

FOX TO FIELD TWO GINETTA JUNIORS

Fox Motorsport has confirmed a two-car line-up for its maiden season in Ginetta Junior this year. The British GT regulars will field Keaton Samra and Finley Green, who both competed in the Ginetta Junior Winter Series last year, with Samra finishing third in the rookie standings.

HHC GIVEN BRITISH GT GREEN LIGHT

HHC Motorsport has had its British GT4 entry accepted, and is clear to field Ginetta Junior racers Will Tregurtha and Stuart Middleton in this year's championship. The pair will drive the team's new Ginetta G55 GT4.

RATTENBURY MAKES FUN CUP MOVE

Lamborghini Super Trofeo World Final Am champion Jake Rattenbury has joined Team Trooper's Fun Cup line-up. He will be joined by 17-year-old Harry Mailer. Anthony Reid drove for the team last year, and will stay on to coach the pair even though a clashing GT3 programme rules him out of racing in the Fun Cup.

LUNDQVIST FIRST MAN AT DOUBLE R

British F4 squad Double R Racing has signed Swede Linus Lundqvist as its first driver for 2017. The 17-year old won the Formula STCC Nordic Championship last year in Formula Renault 1.6 machinery.

BELL IN PORSCHE 935 DONINGTON RUN

British sportscar driver Matt Bell tested a Porsche 935 at Donington Park with United Autosports last week. The 27-year-old drove the JLP-3 version of the 935, owned by Zak Brown, which won the Daytona 24 Hours and Sebring 12 Hours in 1982. Bell's Donington test is thought to be the first time the car had turned a wheel on a UK racetrack.



WALKER

CLIO CUP JUNIOR

Jamsport adds juniors Burns, Burton

JAMSPORT HAS SIGNED ITS first two drivers for the inaugural season of Renault UK Clio Cup Junior, and could run as many as five cars in the category.

The team – which won the main Clio series with Ant

Whorton-Eales last year – has signed Fiesta Junior runner-up Bradley Burns and karter Gus Burton to its line-up.

"Bradley should be right up there," said team boss Jamie Going. "Straight out of the box he was on the pace.

We did a day at Brands Hatch in terrible conditions and he performed really well.

"Gus hasn't done any car racing before but he's done three or four test days and has fitted in really well in the car – he looks really good."

HISTORICS

Lyons beats Smith in Taupo Historic



FIA MASTERS PRE-'78 FORMULA 1 champion Michael Lyons pipped Ken Smith to win a sensational Race of Champions Revival finale to the inaugural Taupo Historic GP event in New Zealand last Sunday.

After water pump failure sidelined his Hesketh 308E, in which the Briton recorded a searing 1m 23.235s qualifying lap, Lyons switched to father Frank's McLaren M26-1 for the race at Bruce McLaren Motorsport Park.

A problem with third gear added intrigue to the fight in which multiple NZGP winner

and 1976 NZ F5000 champion Smith, 75, got ahead several times – but he had to give best when his tyres wilted.

"That was a fantastic race. Our cars were evenly matched and you can run wheel-to-wheel," said Smith. New Zealand's Clark Proctor (March 73A-1) finished third.

Mark Dwyer (Lola T330/332) beat Proctor and Smith in a close F5000 race, while Ulsterman James Hagan (Hesketh 308-1) landed a first F1 win, over Tommy Dreelan (March 761-04) and Lyons Sr.



GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING The 30th anniversary of the inaugural World Touring Car Championship will be marked with high-speed demonstration runs at the 75th Goodwood Members' Meeting on March 18-19. Over the weekend two batches of period Group A racers will be out on track, with the earlier cars, including BMW 635s, Jaguar XJSs, Rover SD1s and Volvo 240 Turbos, in one group and Ford Sierra RS500s (above), BMW M3s and Alfa Romeo 75s in the other. **Photograph by LAT**

HOTHATCH

RUSHWORTH IN INTEGRA HOT HATCH SWITCH

MG METRO CUP CHAMPION Ben Rushworth will run a Honda Integra Type R in the Hot Hatch series this year after revising his plan to campaign his title-winning Metro.

Rushworth, who claimed the Metro Cup title by 20 points in 2016, had planned to race an upgraded version of his car this year after announcing a switch to the 750 Motor Club-run Hot Hatch championship.

But he has since acquired an Integra DC2 Type R that he is building ahead of the new season.

"I was going to enter the Metro, and put a bigger engine in, but I'd have to do a couple of things like put bigger wheels on and get it up to speed with things like a new gearbox," he said.

"By the time I figured I had done that, it was going to work out really expensive and I thought no-one in their right mind will buy a £12,000 Metro.

"I knew a couple of people, including a guy who had an Integra Type R for sale. It's low, it's got a great shape for drag and has a good wheelbase, but I'm probably doing just as much work as I would have done on the Metro."

BRSCC

Sale boost for Compact Cup

THE COMPANY THAT ORGANISES THE COMPACT Cup has been bought by the BRSCC ahead of the championship's second year with the club.

BMW Race Days boss Paul McErlean decided to sell up in order to pursue other business interests. "The BRSCC is the right club because of its infrastructure and resources," he said. "I wanted to transfer it to someone who can develop it and continue the growth."

Both McErlean and the BRSCC insist that competitors

in the championship – which averaged 40 cars last season, and had previously run with the 750 Motor Club – will not notice any significant differences after the sale.

BRSCC competitions manager Dominic Ostrowski said the decision to take over the series was an easy one. "The championship has proven itself over the years so it definitely works, and as a club we are always looking to add prosperous championships to our portfolio," he said.

MINI CHALLENGE

Best of British prize spurs Grady to defend Mini Challenge crown

REIGNING MINI CHALLENGE champion David Grady will defend his crown this year after landing a £14,000 budget boost as a result of securing the series' Best of British Award.

Grady was picked as the winner by a panel of judges following his title-winning campaign last season, in which he netted five race wins on his way to a maiden Mini title.

He will receive a prize package of entry fees, fuel and tyres to help defend his title.

The 31-year-old from Leicester will again run his F56 JCW machine under his family Unitec Motorsport banner.

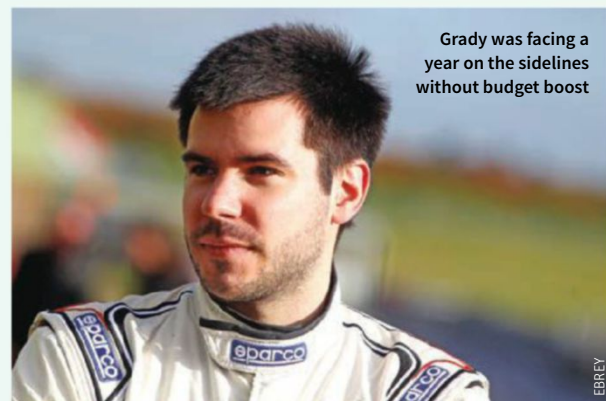
"In truth if it wasn't for the prize I was looking at sitting this year out to save budget, but it's really cemented my plans," said Grady.

"This year is a big one for the Challenge, with it moving onto the British GT support bill, so having a good crack at defending the title with number one on the car

means a lot. It's a great prize for the series to offer and really pays back all of the hard work from last year.

"I'm feeling less pressure this season. Some drivers feel more being the reigning champion, or the target, but I feel it now means I have nothing left to prove.

"I'm going out aiming to be consistent and take calculated risks and hopefully we'll be in the hunt again at the end of this season."



Grady was facing a year on the sidelines without budget boost



Bruce McLaren's great spirit lives on

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@Autosport](#)

OF THE EIGHT NEW ZEALANDERS WHO HAVE competed in the Formula 1 World Championship, Bruce McLaren was the first and longest-serving.

At the time of his death, when his McLaren-Chevrolet M8D Can-Am car crashed at Goodwood in June 1970, McLaren was in his 12th season. Runner-up, at 23, to Cooper team-mate and defending champion Jack Brabham in '60, he finished third in '62 in a 1500cc V8 Cooper-Climax, adding a third race victory to those scored in 2.5-litre four-cylinder T51s.

McLaren's final GP win at Spa in 1968 gave yet greater pride, for it marked the maiden triumph for his eponymous team, with which he placed third in the '69 title race, behind Jackie Stewart (Matra) and Jacky Ickx (Brabham), each with Cosworth Ford DFV power. Having won the '66 Le Mans 24 Hours with fellow Kiwi Chris Amon in a Ford MkII, McLaren and another compatriot Denny Hulme steamrolled North America's Can-Am series for four years from '67, colouring it papaya.

So it is fitting that New Zealand's Taupo race circuit has been renamed Bruce McLaren Motorsport Park in his honour. Perched high above the North Island's picturesque lake-centred holiday resort, overlooked by Mount Tauhara, it is one of the most beautiful places on Earth to go racing.

Technical and challenging, the country's only FIA Grade 2 circuit also promotes close competition, with plenty of overtaking opportunities and great spectating. Amon, who lived locally, was involved in its evolution from club track.

Last weekend BMMP welcomed international competitors to the inaugural Taupo Historic GP, which should put it firmly on the radar. The venue has had its struggles, like others, but Kiwi graft and ingenuity, plus welcome investment, has turned

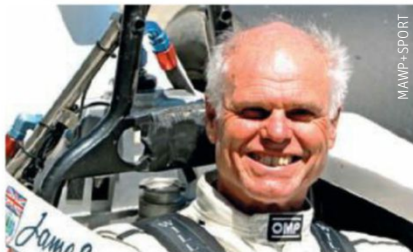
it into a profitable concern. Focused by barrister Chris Abbott – a former NZ Formula Vee champion in his self-built KRD 'Elva' – the small and dedicated management team can be incredibly proud of what it's achieved.

The event brought sensational F5000 cars back after a long hiatus, with NZ's first promoted Race of Champions-style match race against three-litre F1 cars of the similar pre-'78 period. While the latter were thinner on the ground than anticipated after failures at Hampton Downs, the crescendo as three of each genre populated the finale's top six was sensational. That Briton Michael Lyons won it in the ex-Jochen Mass/James Hunt McLaren M26 'poster car' was the icing on the cake for marque fanatics, after a terrific struggle with Ken Smith (Lola T332).

But the relaxed gathering, embracing FJunior, Super Touring cars and FF1600, was so much more than a race meeting. Bruce McLaren's daughter Amanda bravely saddled Warwick Mortimer's M8E/F on Saturday.

Amon's widow Tish with their sons, 1967 world champion Hulme's widow Greta and early McLaren employees Howden Ganley (who learned much from Bruce en route to F1 and becoming a race car designer/constructor with Tiga), Swiss engineer Edi Wyss and others certainly enjoyed it.

Heading to Auckland for my return flight, I dropped in on the imposing Hampton Downs facility, from which the Toyota Racing Series had decamped to Taupo. There I spent a fascinating hour with Ken Smith, whose unbroken 59-season racing career started with the ex-McLaren Austin 7 special, which now sits proudly among F1, Can-Am and modern GT racers at the McLaren Technical Centre in Woking. 🌟



CROCKER'S F1 HESKETH TEST

Irishman James Hagan gave Classic FF1600 pal Alan Crocker a run in his ex-James Hunt Hesketh 308-1 at Taupo's Bruce McLaren Motorsport Park last Friday. "That was awesome," beamed '70s Atlantic racer Crocker, who was born in the UK but raised in New Zealand. Sadly, Crocker's FF1600 Palliser Trident broke in qualifying.

DAVID GOOD 1933-2017

Hillclimb legend David Good died from cancer last Sunday. Born without a right forearm, Good was a tenacious character and high achiever in his professional and sporting endeavours. He acquired the ex-Dick Seaman 1935 ERA R1B from bandleader Bill Cotton in '55, then switched to a Cooper-JAP Mk8, before achieving his goal of winning the RAC British Championship in '61. He also competed in Europe. Good tamed an ex-F1 BRM, then Lotus, Chevron and Martin sportscars before running a ferocious F5000 McLaren M10B. He ultimately commissioned Martin Slater to build a Cosworth DFV-powered Lyncar in the early '70s. Winner of the first Chateau Impney sprint in '57, Good was a great supporter of its revival, and the ERA Club. Our thoughts are with son James and family.



THORNTON'S PERFECT EIGHT

Briton Greg Thornton maintained his perfect Formula Junior record in New Zealand by winning Taupo's four FJHRA Diamond Jubilee World Tour races. Following a prang at Sydney Motorsport Park on the Australian leg, Tom Smith repaired the Lotus 20/22 for Hampton Downs' round, where Thornton also bagged four wins.



What does Autosport want to see in 2017?

As spring beckons, a new season of national racing is in the offing. Club Autosport's special contributors look forward to some highlights

Compiled by Jack Benyon

Entries from Jack Benyon, Jack Cozens, Matt James, Robert Ladbrook, Stephen Lickorish, Marcus Pye, Peter Scherer, Kevin Turner and Eddie Walder



Goodwood Members' Meeting

KEVIN TURNER *Autosport Editor*
@KRT917

The Goodwood Revival has been a highlight of the UK motorsport scene for almost 20 years now. On account of that success, though, it is packed and huge. For a more relaxed, low-key atmosphere, the Members' Meeting in March takes some beating.

There are still many fine drivers in great cars, which provide close racing. And, since there are fewer people

around, you get more chance to roam and see the paddock and circuit from a number of vantage points.

There are several new attractions this year, including the Varzi Trophy for pre-war French and Italian grand prix and Voiturette cars, and the Pierpoint Cup for V8 American tin-tops that raced up to 1966. I'm not normally a fan of demos, but the Group 5 gathering last year was special, and will be followed up nicely by a combination of '70s three-litre sportscars, '80s Group A tin-tops and '90s GT machinery in 2017.

Always one of the best races, though, is the Gerry Marshall Trophy for Group 1 touring cars of the '70s and early '80s. This time the main event is a one-hour, two-driver contest into dusk on Saturday night.

For me, though, the greatest thing about the event is the chance to head to one of the best viewing spots in the country, the right-hand kink before the St Mary's left-hander. It's a great place to watch cars with no downforce in four-wheel drifts, and finding out which drivers are really on top of their steeds.



British Hillclimb at Shelsley Walsh

EDDIE WALDER *National Contributor*
 @Autosport

It may only be 1000 yards long but it climbs at an alarming gradient; and it may have only three proper bends and one slight kink, but there is something that stirs the soul about Shelsley Walsh.

Used since August 1905 and driven by so many of the historic greats such as Sir Stirling Moss, Henry Segrave, Malcolm Campbell and many more, it is still quite clearly recognisable from the sepia-tinted photographs taken over a century ago. Even in the middle of winter you can tell something special happens here.

The place is positively theatrical. The extreme slopes of the spectator areas mean that the crowd hang over the track on one side only. Even if you're not already as excited as I am still after a lifetime of meetings at Shelsley, then I hope that the biggest meeting of the British Championship year will tempt you.

The 70th anniversary of the RAC/MSA British Hillclimb Championship is celebrated there on August 12 and 13. This is one of the oldest

surviving national motorsport championships in the world. Just as Shelsley itself predates Brooklands, Le Mans and every grand prix, this series was extant before the Formula 1 World Championship.

But there is little old fashioned about venue and event. The cars at the top end of the pecking order are special beasts with massive wings and sticky slicks. The acceleration rates from a standing start almost defy belief. It's a very short distance from Shelsley's startline to Kennel Bend, but current hill record holder Martin Groves touched the ton before the turn.

Every registered competitor in the Championship will want an entry because Shelsley is still the one they all want to win, from the standard road-going classes upwards. Every past title winner still with us has been invited along, and this includes Guernseyman Andy Priaux MBE, who was the champion in 1995 at the dawn of his great career. Let's hope he has a free weekend.

Will that astonishing 22.53s record fall at this special meeting? There's only one certain way to find out, so meet me there.

Formula Ford at 50

MATT JAMES *Motorsport News Editor*
 @MattJMNews

It couldn't have been planned better, could it? The Historic Sport Car Club's annual shindig on the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit is at the beginning of July, and the Sunday of that meeting marks exactly 50 years since the birth of Formula Ford at the same venue.

Brands Hatch, with the long-running Formula Ford Festival rounding off each season, is the spiritual home of the class. All the ingredients mix together perfectly.

The HSCC has plenty of events planned to celebrate the category that literally launched

hundreds of stars on the motor racing career ladder. It is appropriate, too, that the Historic Formula Ford championship will be the focus of attention, as it is one of the most competitive and well-subscribed national categories out there.

The reason for the HSCC FF1600's success is the very reason that Formula Ford was a hit in the first place: they are uncomplicated cars that an enthusiastic amateur can pedal well enough to take the fight to the guys with bags more funding. It can be a great leveller – particularly when it comes to the historic version of the category.

The Kent-engined version of the formula was the class that refused to die. As the cast-iron block

became increasingly rare after it was put out of production, first Zetec, then Duratec and now EcoBoost motors have taken the headline series in different directions. But the purity of the Kent block and the racing it provided meant that it was cherished by club competitors. It saw off all the new powerplants and FF1600 remains. Indeed, with the creation of the Walter Hayes Trophy, it has actually flourished.

The boffins at the HSCC reckon that more than 500 drivers have won titles in the Kent-engined cars over the five decades, and they will be invited to join in the celebrations when the cars assemble in Kent. It will be an event not to be missed.



Spa 6 Hours

MARCUS PYE *Special Contributor*

[@Autosport](#)

Many great race tracks stud the globe, but in my experience, Spa-Francorchamps is peerless. Carved into a densely forested valley within Belgium's beautiful Ardennes mountains, the original road course inspirationally plotted by Jules de Thier and Henri Langlois van Ophem hosted its first race 95 years ago in 1922, immortalising the towns of Francorchamps, Malmedy and Stavelot among motorsport's faithful. The town of Spa, mother of natural water springs, is 15km off-piste, if you outbrake yourself at La Source hairpin...

I first worshipped at this temple of vitesse in the mid-1980s, and thus I profoundly regret having missed the ultra-fast and incredibly dangerous 14.1 kilometre (8.76-mile) post-war course. Fangio, Clark, Surtees, Gurney and McLaren won grands prix at Spa before ever-higher downforce redefined Formula 1; sportscar heroes Redman, Siffert, Rodriguez, Ickx, Oliver and Bell claiming 1000km victories in terrifyingly quick and flimsy prototypes; and the annual 24 Hours remains a classic. A thunderous Porsche 917K traversing the downhill Masta Kink flat-out, with a house on one side and no run-off, surely left onlookers shaking.

That fearsome old track that claimed many lives was discontinued after the '78 season, yet the shortened



version that followed from '81, turning right at the summit of the Kemmel Straight then writhing back to rejoin the original before Blanchimont, has retained some of its character. While its initial 'bus stop' chicane was infinitely preferable to the current Z-bend at the end of each 7km (4.35-mile) lap, it remains among the ultimate challenges for F1 to amateur racers.

Established (shakily) by Alain Defalle in 1993, the Spa Six Hours has become the world's greatest endurance race for pre-1966 machinery. The sight of 100 cars plunging into Eau Rouge, with a dozen Ford GT40s leading Jaguar E-types, AC Cobras, Chevrolet Corvettes,

TVR Griffiths and Shelby Mustangs at the start on Saturday afternoon is unforgettable. That they now race into the night, headlights tracing constant traffic between unyielding barriers, engine notes harmonising through the lofty pines and brakes aglow towards the 2200 finish, adds further magic.

This year's edition is the 25th, cause for special celebration. I've made the pilgrimage every year since 1997, when I competed in a Lotus 23B and a 26R-spec Elan. Now I commentate and report on the event, which is fixed in my bloodstream. Don't wait for Spa's centenary to experience it!



Porsche Carrera Cup GB title

STEPHEN LICKORISH *Special Contributor*

[@sdlickorish](#)

Take nothing away from the talent of Dan Cammish, but his domination of the Porsche Carrera Cup GB over the past two seasons has meant a title battle has been pretty much non-existent. While the other TOCA categories have had thrilling finales – with the outcome not known until the final corner – the Porsche title has been sewn up before arriving at Brands Hatch.

This year could be different. Yes, Cammish is back. Yes, he could have another season of racking up the wins. But a close title battle? We could have that too.

Cammish's main campaign this year will be in the Formula 1-supporting Porsche Supercup and the Hungarian round of that clashes with the Carrera Cup's visit to Snetterton. So he will have two fewer races.

And those two races could make a big difference for his rivals. Those rivals include the only drivers to

beat him during his supreme 2016 season: Dino Zamparelli and Charlie Eastwood. This year they stand a very good chance of running Cammish close and even beating him.

Zamparelli will arrive refreshed after a switch of teams to Porsche ace Nick Tandy's JTR squad. He went toe-to-toe with Cammish in the first half of last year and if he can sustain strong performances throughout the season he will be a massive threat.

As will Cammish's Redline team-mate Eastwood. The 2016/17 Scholar will now have shaken off his rookie tag and will be looking to continue the improvement that led to him becoming Cammish's closest challenger by the end of the year.

Add in to the mix a number of promising newcomers, including Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion Tom Wrigley, and it's set to be a fascinating season with an intriguing title battle. And that's certainly something to look forward to.

Rushworth's CAD-designed Hot Hatch Integra

JACK COZENS *Special Contributor*

[@JHCozens](#)

Until the back end of last year, I hadn't heard much about Ben Rushworth, but his rise in recent years is a fascinating story. Having done some karting while growing up, Rushworth only got his licence in 2012 and, after two near-misses in two years, took the Metro Cup title in commanding fashion last season.

What's most remarkable, though, is that Rushworth taught himself CAD to make many components himself. Stories of self-built cars are ones I've always loved, so his achievements stand out that bit more to me.

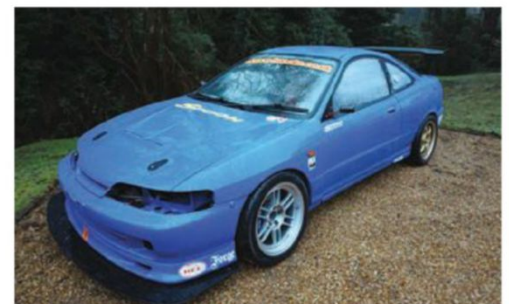
"I can draw something in the evening and then have the opportunity to do it in my free time, and it's a lot

quicker, a lot more accurate and I can come up with a lot more crazy ideas," he says. "Things that you can spend hours making, whether it's brackets or mounts, everything you do in CAD first and then you can actually print off a paper template to see if it fits."

And he's taking that one step further, having opted to take on a new build in the form of an Integra DC2 Type R for an assault on the 750 Motor Club's Hot Hatch series.

"It's low, it's got a great shape for drag and has a good wheelbase," he continues. "Fortunately my wife let me spend our wedding fund on the racing car – she's massively behind everything."

"We've taken it a step further and taken it to 3D laser scanning, so we can scan the whole car and make body panels. I can mock-up the whole suspension system



and check the suspension arcs. The pedals were too heavy so we scanned them to get a mould and then made carbonfibre versions out of them – it just opens up a whole new world of options."

I for one can't wait to see how he gets on this year.



Racing in the Classic Sports Car Club

ROBERT LADBROOK *MN Deputy Editor*
 @LaddersMN

I've been waiting for this. And by waiting, I mean more sitting in the vague hope of eventually something happening that would allow me to have a proper go myself.

That something happened last May when I finally signed my mortgage agreement and bought a house. That ended around five years of strict deposit saving. OK, so much of that is now replaced with a monthly direct debit, but it also removed the mental barrier of 'I can't justify spending cash on anything else until this is done'.

With that obstacle consigned to history, now's the time to go a bit crazy.

This year I'll be doing my first, and likely only, full season of racing – in the Puma Cup with the Classic Sports Car Club.

It all started with a guest drive last year. I was offered a go in the Ford Racing UK Puma, run by series promoter Kevin Shortis, at Donington. The races cater for two drivers, so I dragged my friend (and seasoned Mini Challenge racer) Hamish Brandon along to coach me. Testing was a blast. The race less so, owing to an

accident at the first turn that took us out of the running. So much build-up for just one corner and a dose of pure bad luck.

Regardless, the weekend was still so much fun that we've taken the plunge, bought our own Puma and will run it with another good mate of mine, Rob Sims, under the auspices of his eponymous team.

I'm now experiencing the life of a club racer. Panicking about finding the budget to get through the full year? Check. Planning for every little contingency, such as punctures, extra fuel and rollcage padding? Check. Block-booking hotels early to try and get a few quid off here and there to maybe put towards an extra set of Dunlops? Check. Wondering why the hell I'm doing all this for the umpteenth time? Check.

Proper club motorsport – it's all glamour.

But the overriding feeling is one of pure excitement. Turning up to a circuit on the other side of the fence. Dropping the press pass and grabbing my race kit instead. It's been a long-held dream – to see turn two of a race and (hopefully) far beyond.

If you see us at a round this year, feel free to come and say hello. Just try and hold back from pointing and laughing.

Race of Remembrance

PETER SCHERER *National Contributor*
 @Autosport

It's not every week that something in motorsport surprises you in a positive way, but making my first visit to Anglesey's Race of Remembrance was just such a moment.

It wasn't even a planned visit – a last-minute call the day before sent me heading to North Wales for a November weekend.

The enthusiasm of the teams, the drivers and the organisers was evident from the moment I arrived in the paddock. And with the break for their own very personal remembrance service in the pitlane on Sunday morning, even the most hardened racers seem humbled to share the experience with a number of Mission Motorsport's trained drivers, who proudly sported their military headwear and medals on their racing overalls.

The on-track action is taken seriously with three sessions, including an overnight break, but it's the whole weekend's experience that makes it such a success.

Although the likes of Tom Onslow-Cole, Dan Wells, Sir Chris Hoy and Paralympian Jon-Allan Butterworth competed last year, there were also true amateurs, including many who had never raced before. Butterworth's grandmother even baked cakes for the commentary box – willingly received by Radio Le Mans' Joe Bradley, whose enthusiasm kept the crowd well informed.

There are so many reasons to return to the event this year, but if I had to pick one alone, it would be the determination to succeed demonstrated by everyone from Major James Cameron's leadership down, many of whom have overcome life-changing odds.



Legends and Pickups trump the rest

JACK BENYON *Group National Editor*
 @jackbenyon

For those of you who've read my work in recent years, you'll know I'm a fan of all things stateside. Well, apart from Donald Trump. Can't say I'm much of a fan of his.

But NASCAR and IndyCar are certainly large portions in my motorsport diet. So it'll be no surprise that the things I'm looking forward to this year are American-influenced.

The first is the UK Legends Championship. Based on '30s Chevrolet or Ford Coupes (and you do have to pronounce the 's' in true American style) the likes of which steered Bonny and Clyde away from banks and some of NASCAR's early superstars away from the law with a case full of moonshine in the back. It's a different kind of excitement in the Legends Championship, though.

These cars might be powered by the most unimaginable engine possible to an American (a 1200/1250cc Yamaha motorcycle lump), but the racing they produce is much more in the style of the stripes and stars – except they do turn right. They create brilliant slipstream-fuelled racing, and big grids are likely this year thanks to a new prize.

A test in a Handy Motorsport Toyota Avensis BTCC car is on offer, with tuition from

race winner Rob Austin. Hopefully that, coupled with the absence of the usually dominant Jon Mickel, should close up the pack and bring a return to proper Legend car action, making up for the slight slump in numbers last year.

And, sorry, I'm not done with my American theme. What's the most American thing you can think of when it comes to the automotive sector? It has to be a pickup.

This year, the UK's Pickup Championship turns 20. These, predictably, aren't bike-engined. Instead, 230bhp motors propel the 900kg spaceframed-machines around circuits all over the UK.

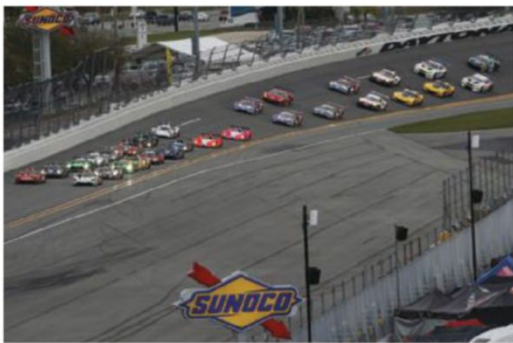
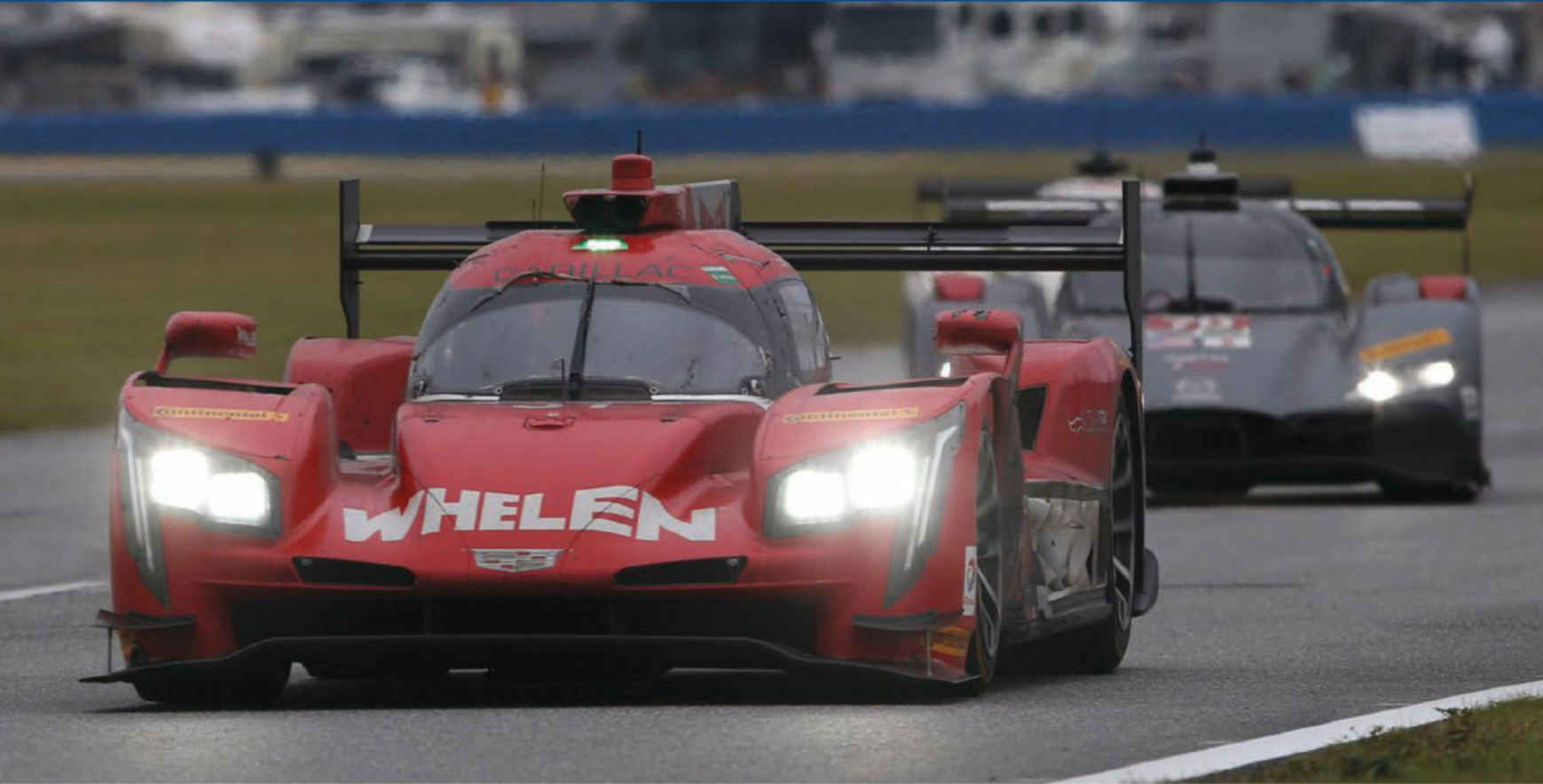
The series has boasted guest appearances by touring car drivers for a number of years, and is extremely underrated as a formula. The racing is close and the paddock boasts some of the most – how to be diplomatic here – interesting characters this country has to offer.

Happy birthday, Pickups, I look forward to more tight knit racing – and one of the only chances to see real oval racing in UK club racing thanks to a heavy presence at Rockingham.

Hopefully none of the competitors in the Legends or Pickups will be refused entry because of their nationality, and we can enjoy what is set to be an excellent pair of championships. Even if the inspiration for them came from Trumpland.



Wow, what Sunoco Challenge



Seb Morris wows huge crowd with stunning drive at Rolex 24

Seb Morris fully justified his status as 2017's Sunoco Whelen Challenge winner thanks to a stunning cameo performance in last weekend's 55th Rolex 24 At Daytona before reliability issues ultimately saw the #31 Whelen-sponsored, Action Express Racing-run Cadillac DPi-V.R finish sixth in class and 14th overall.

The 21-year-old from Wrexham earned his place in the championship-winning line-up – comprising Eric Curran, Dane Cameron and Mike Conway – by seeing off competition from his British GT Championship rivals and other drivers contesting several different European series fuelled by Sunoco.

Seb wowed the crowd by charging from third to first overall on Saturday afternoon, passing NASCAR legend Jeff Gordon along the way, before establishing an impressive 20-second lead by the end of his opening triple stint. Unfortunately, technical gremlins throughout the night saw the team's podium chances slip away before the Welshman got back behind the wheel at 7am on Sunday morning.

A series of blistering lap times – the fastest of anyone on a very wet track at the time – suggested he was enjoying his first ever sunrise racing stint. Indeed, his times didn't go unnoticed by many of the top teams up and down the paddock.

And while sixth was hardly the result Action Express Racing and its drivers had been hoping for, Morris' head-turning performance once again highlighted the Sunoco Whelen Challenge's reputation for unearthing Europe's finest domestic talent.



WHELEN

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winners shine



Sunoco 240 Challenge winner Max Bladon finishes 11th on Daytona debut

Max Bladon has become the sixth different Sunoco 240 Challenge winner to compete at the legendary Daytona International Speedway after finishing 11th in Friday's BMW Endurance Challenge race, the official support event to last weekend's Rolex 24 At Daytona.

The 20-year-old from Cheshire dominated the 'junior' Sunoco Challenge competition throughout 2016 and displayed the same kind of potential around Daytona's famous banking during the opening 90 minutes of the race.

Qualifying the car also meant Bladon had the honour of starting the four-hour endurance race at the wheel of his Racers Edge Motorsports-run Aston Martin V8 Vantage. By the time his double stint was over he'd climbed three spots to 12th overall thanks to a mature, fault-free performance before handing over to team-mates Ramin Abdolvahabi and Chris Beaufait.

Max's speed and race-craft clearly underlined his potential, and that the level of the Sunoco 240 Challenge remains incredibly high.



Photographs by Jakob Ebrey



WHAT'S ON



How Bernie influenced our Sunday

SUNDAY MAY 7 1978. IT'S THE DAY OF the Monaco Grand Prix, and for British television viewers it happened in an unrecognisable broadcasting landscape.

The date is significant because, had you switched on BBC2 at 2250, perhaps after watching the second episode of the historical drama *The Devil's Crown*, you would have been able to watch the first instalment of what became the long-running *Grand Prix* programme.

To today's audience, at least for those with fewer than four decades under their belts, this was an alien world. For while you couldn't watch the full race live earlier in the day, there were a couple of segments of the race shown on the ITV show *World of Sport*. ITV also popped up later in the year showing the Swedish GP from Anderstorp, while most races appeared on the BBC.

So why all this talk of 1978? After all, grands prix had enjoyed television coverage for many years, albeit patchily, since it wasn't until James Hunt's title success in '76 that UK broadcasters started to take it more seriously (although the first proper broadcast was apparently the 1953 British GP). Well the answer is, simply, Bernie Ecclestone.

Highlights of '78 Monaco GP were first to feature as part of Grand Prix programme



In his story, 1978 is a very significant year. And, therefore, it's also a very significant year in the story of the racing fan. That was the year Ecclestone became chief executive of the Formula One Constructors Association, giving him the chance to transform the way grand prix racing was consumed, promoted and turned into a gargantuan revenue stream via the sale of the television rights.

It didn't happen overnight. In the UK, for example, it wasn't until 1980 that every race of the season was shown in some form by the same broadcaster, but F1 quickly became a staple of Sunday afternoon viewing. And that was key to its rise in popularity at a time when sports coverage was irregular.

What Ecclestone did, as with all of F1, was to get the broadcasters to commit to a package. Given the financial

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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube **RAST MONSTERS THE MOUNTAIN**

Search for: Bathurst Onboard Lap GT3 Audi R8 LMS (2:01.840) P2 Quali fastest Audi R8 laptime ever
Audi sportscar ace Rene Rast whets appetites for this weekend's Bathurst 12 Hour with footage of his scintillating qualifying lap on the Mount Panorama circuit last year. Look out for our profile of the German driver in next week's mag.



XPB IMAGES

TV PICK OF THE WEEK

TOYOTA RACING SERIES
MOTORS TV
Thursday 1855
We've heard plenty in the past few months about the highly rated Lando Norris and his exploits on the junior rungs. But there's plenty more young talent out there, and 20 drivers are looking to emulate his success in capturing the Toyota Racing Series crown in New Zealand. Catch the best bits from last month's opening round at Ruapuna to see the high-quality field in action.

CAMERON

TV viewing habits

investment, that also incentivised good-quality coverage and, as a consequence, the desire to show all races live. It took a while, but gradually the tide turned. Whereas in 1978, you couldn't watch the whole Monaco Grand Prix live but you could watch a full Sunday League cricket match, soon F1 was inescapable. And this pattern was replicated in many countries, firmly establishing it as a must-watch.

And there were other innovations. The F1 Digital+ service, a bespoke, multi-channel feed produced by Ecclestone's on-site digital broadcast hub (known as 'Bakersville' after its boss, Eddie Baker) was launched in 1996. That might come as a surprise to readers in the UK, because it wasn't until 2002 that it was available here through the Sky platform.

Ultimately, it didn't get the customers to justify the expense, but plenty of the

innovations did seep into the regular coverage. The multi-channel options you see today have their roots in Bakersville.

Ecclestone has been criticised for F1 gradually falling off terrestrial television both in the UK and further afield. In fairness, this is a general trend in sports broadcasting and F1 is far from the only sporting property battling to retain its discoverability while being on a subscription-only service.

But given where F1 television was when Ecclestone gained responsibility, no matter what has happened in more recent years, it would be churlish to overlook the impact he has had. Who knows, you might not even be reading this now without Ecclestone's role in ensuring that F1 was consistently in your living room back in simpler TV times.

EDD STRAW

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

**BATHURST 12 HOUR
INTERCONTINENTAL
GT CHALLENGE**
Rd 1/4
Mount Panorama,
New South Wales, Australia
February 5

TOYOTA RACING SERIES
Rd 4/5
Taupo, New Zealand
February 4-5





evian

FINALTE

GO YOGI GO

80

90

45

GO

14

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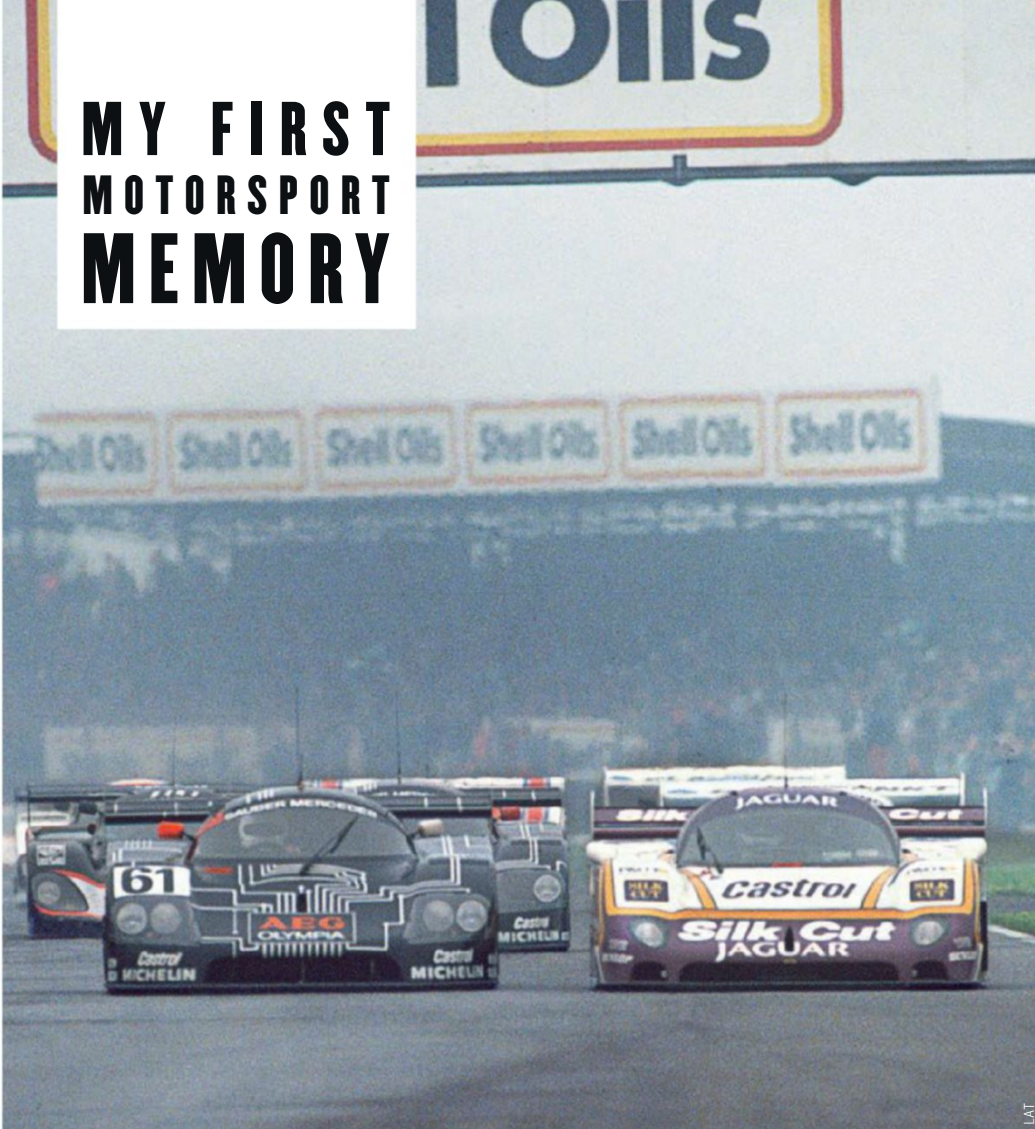


THE ARCHIVE

The Team Brock crew, stationed in the old signalling pits just after Mulsanne Corner, watch the Mirage GR8 of Derek Bell and Vern Schuppan accelerate past as they ready the latest communication for the BMW 3.5 CSL shared by Peter Brock, Brian 'Yogi' Muir and Jean-Claude Aubriet during the 1976 Le Mans 24 hours.

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KEVIN TURNER

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SIX-YEAR-OLD'S SILVERSTONE GROUP C INITIATION

Group C is still regarded by many as a golden era for sportscar racing. I'd be hard pressed to argue, given that it provided me with my first key motorsport memory. I'd been to a few club and historic events before, but the 1988 Autosport 1000Km at Silverstone was the first international meeting my father took me to. This was at the height of the Jaguar-versus Sauber-Mercedes battle and the sports-racers, way quicker than anything I had seen up to that point, left a deep impression.

Like most of the home fans, I was cheering on the Silk Cut-liveried Tom Walkinshaw Racing Jaguar XJR-9s, but the deep bellow of the twin-turbocharged five-litre V8 Saubers added to the feeling that these were proper, cool machines.

Despite the presence of numerous Porsche 962s, the race boiled down to a contest between the Martin Brundle/Eddie Cheever Jaguar and the two AEG-liveried Saubers of Jean-Louis Schlesser/Jochen Mass and Mauro Baldi/James Weaver. It was an engaging and hard-fought fight in the early stages, before Brundle 'ruined' it by showing his class and pulling clear once he'd climbed aboard.

That didn't matter to me, though. A Jaguar won and I'd got to see cars and drivers operating at a level I'd never witnessed previously. Long before I first saw contemporary Formula 1 cars driven in anger, the closed Group C racers were loud, fast and dramatic. Despite being six years old, I don't recall being bored during the five-hour event, though I do remember getting lost at one point...

With the benefit of hindsight, I know there were other things I should have appreciated more, such as one of the last top-level outings for the Lancia LC2 (predictably, it retired early) and an appearance by the GTP class-winning rotary-engined Mazda 757, as the Japanese firm continued along the path that would take it to Le Mans success in 1991. And, surprisingly, Gordon Spice *didn't* win the C2 category.

It didn't matter that I missed these points, though. As is often the case with childhood memories, it's the impression rather than the details that are important. The zoomph-plus monsters gave me a taste for big sports-prototypes that has remained with me. 🏎️



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