

**ALEJANDRO AGAG: THE
MAN BEHIND FORMULA E**

**MEEKE STARS IN
MONTE CARLO WRC**

**LATVALA BAN FOR
SPECTATOR CRASH**

AUTOSPORT

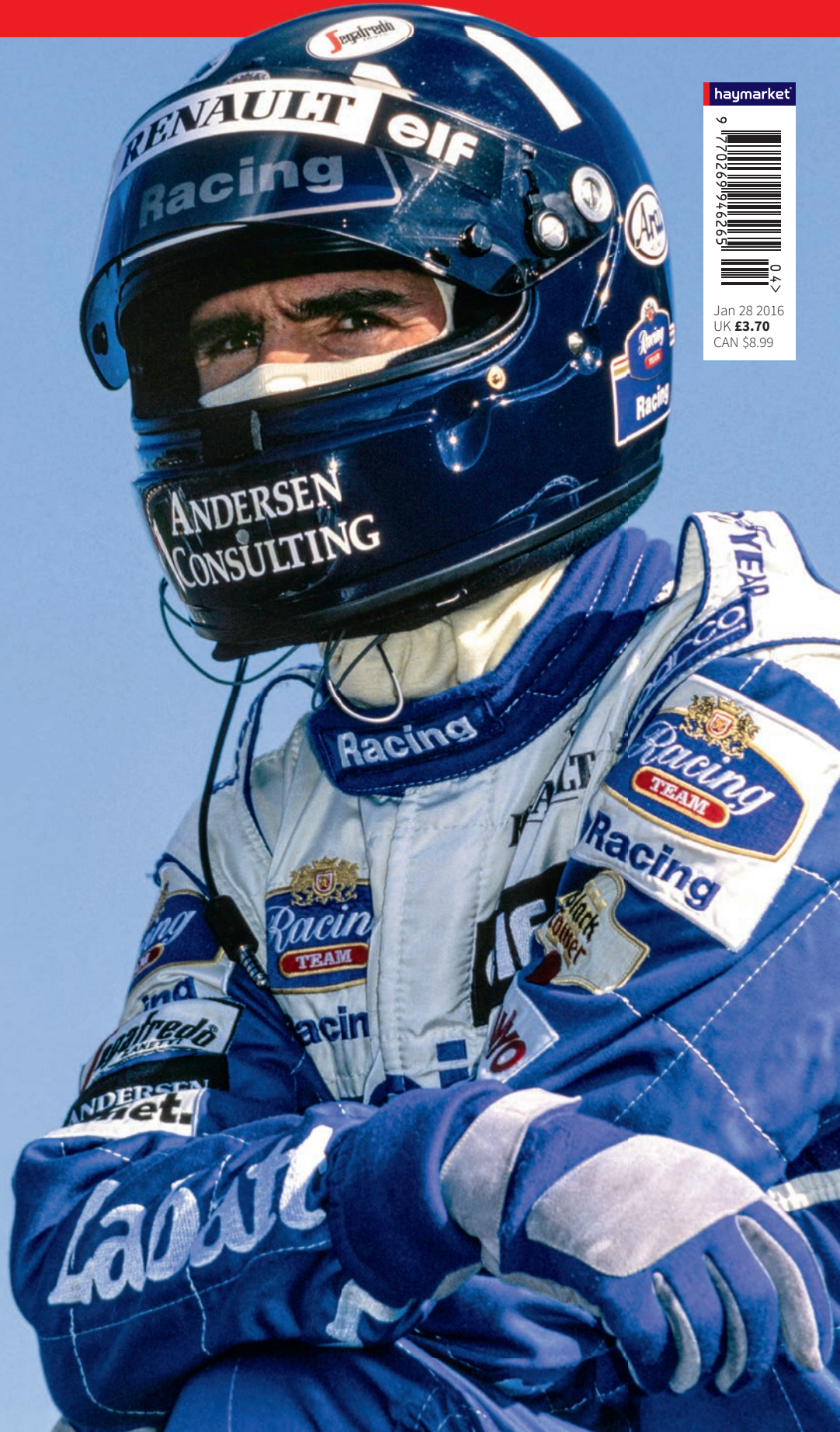
SPECIAL INTERVIEW

WHEN DAMON HILL RULED F1

**“I never saw myself as
a Senna or a Prost, but
I didn’t do too badly”**



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Damon Hill's title win stands the test of time

THIS ISSUE OF AUTOSPORT CELEBRATES TWO DECADES since Damon Hill won the 1996 world championship through Ben Anderson's in-depth interview with the man himself. The story bears retelling because it's remarkable that Hill raced in Formula 1 at all, let alone won a title so many did not believe him capable of.

Many still question Hill's worthiness as a world champion. But as one of only 32 to have achieved that feat since 1950, this shows a lack of respect for the determination and skill needed to do so. Granted, he might have struggled to beat Michael Schumacher had the 1996 Ferrari been the equal of his Williams, but that's not the point. The bottom line is that Hill delivered when he needed to at an age – he was 36 years old at the time – when many drivers are thinking about hanging up their helmets. That achievement deserves recognition.

Winning world titles is difficult. How many drivers touted as potential world champions have squandered the opportunity to do so? Many. Just look at what happened in 1997 when Hill's replacement, Heinz-Harald Frentzen, managed to win just one race. Frentzen was a very fine racing driver, but when the opportunity presented itself he could not piece it all together even in the best car. That's not to be too critical of Frentzen, who drove some superb races in F1, but merely a reflection of the fact that nothing comes easily at the top level of international sport.

Hill is living proof of that.



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DAMON

THE MAKING OF A CHAMPION

WORDS: BEN ANDERSON, GRAND PRIX EDITOR

PHOTOGRAPHY: LAT

“I KNEW '96 WAS PROBABLY THE ONE AND ONLY CHANCE I WAS GOING TO GET A CLEAR RUN AT THE CHAMPIONSHIP. NO DISRESPECT TO JACQUES, BUT I ALWAYS THOUGHT I'D HAVE HIM COVERED, AND MICHAEL HAD HIS HANDS FULL DEVELOPING THE FERRARI. IF I DIDN'T WIN IN '96, I HAD NO EXCUSES WHATSOEVER...”

DAMON HILL IS RELAXING INTO HIS RECOLLECTIONS. Sitting in one corner of a quaint Cobham coffee house in leafy Surrey, the 1996 Formula 1 world champion sips his tea slowly, and casts his mind back, reminiscing on the season that defined his career.

This October it will be 20 years since Hill emulated the achievement of his late father Graham by winning the F1 drivers' title, something that remains a unique intra-family accomplishment to this day.

Hill is in fine form, as he recounts the year that made him what he is – one of only 31 drivers to win single-seater racing's ultimate prize (the 24th to do so at the time) and one of only 10 British drivers to have ever conquered the world.

“You can't quickly adjust from not being a world champion to being a world champion,” he says. “It's something that lasts forever. You're talking to me now because of it!”

“You can't do better than that – that's the summit. You get there, plant your flag, go back down and try again. It was very nice to be able to deliver for people and be one of those who crossed the line.”

As a latecomer to Formula 1, who made his debut in 1992 at the ripe old age of 31, Hill did not possess a great span of years with which to fulfil his dreams. That he ultimately did so is the result of a complicated chemistry – that blend of fortune, skill and hard work that makes all champions what they are.

There's no doubt that things opened up for Hill to win in 1996. The Michael Schumacher/Ross Brawn/Rory Byrne axis that had underpinned Benetton's dominance of the previous season was fragmented by Schumacher's move to a struggling Ferrari outfit.

This meant the reigning double champion would suddenly find himself at a technical disadvantage, driving for only the third best team on the grid. Meanwhile, changes on the driving roster at Williams meant Hill started the season with the advantage of incumbency over reigning Indycar champion Jacques Villeneuve.

Benetton would remain technically strong (for now), but Jean Alesi and Gerhard Berger were occasional race winners at best, so would have to step up to become title contenders.

But that's not to say Hill would automatically have it easy in '96.

After narrowly missing the title by a single point in '94, he had been utterly thrashed by Schumacher and Benetton in '95, which raised serious questions about his own credentials as a potential world-beater.

Hill headed into the winter with a lot of work to do... “In '95, by my own admission, I was demolished by Michael Schumacher,” Hill concedes. “I put myself right in the front line, but there were things I didn't understand in my approach to competition.”

“Ninety-four was unbelievably intense, and in '95 I think I was just unprepared for what you'd call a more normal, straight fight.”

“It was a good car, but Michael had just won his first championship, so he was pretty pumped up, and instead of concentrating on my own thing I saw it as a battle between me and him. I got my bottom kicked, rather hard, and took it rather badly. That demoralised me a little bit, and so my performances dropped.”

“The emotional content of sport is quite high, and the best drivers are the ones who don't let that get the better of them. In '95 I probably let the pressure get to me a bit too much. We hit rock bottom, and I had to go away and reconstruct myself.”

Hill was aided in this process by a dominant win in the final race of '95 in Adelaide, Australia, in which team-mate David Coulthard crashed in the pitlane.

Beating the field by two clear laps put Hill in a much better frame of mind after a poor season.

“Nobody likes going out there and getting beaten,” he adds. “I had some good races in '95, but when I was down I was very down, when it was bad it was really bad – it wasn't like it was just a dropped ball.”

“I went to Adelaide and I'd been surfing, I'd brainwashed myself, and I just felt happy doing what I was doing. I sort of let it go, and you perform better like that.”

“I had a ball, it was fantastic; a great way to end a bad year.”

Hill also received a big boost in the form of the FW18. Although there were doubts over whether Hill could deliver after what had happened in 1995, Williams couldn't afford to stake everything on the Formula 1 rookie Villeneuve, so the '96 car was naturally developed around Hill. >>

Right: Hill's dice with Villeneuve was the story of the 1996 season

Below: the Brit had to rebuild after 1995, in which he was "destroyed"



“MAKING A BIG IMPRESSION IS IMPORTANT BUT WITH JACQUES IT WAS ALWAYS ON THE LIMIT, SO I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO TO GET TO THE END OF THE SEASON AHEAD”

Of taller proportions than your average throttle jockey, Hill had always struggled to fit properly in previous Williams cars, but this one was different.

“The '96 car was built around me,” he explains. “This was the first time in my life I had a car which I fitted in. Ask Gerhard – anyone over five-foot-ten-inches is in difficulty.

“It was so brilliant to actually have room to work. It was so comfortable. Honestly, I swear to God, I could sit in that car and fall asleep! It was like I was floating in space, or in a bath.

“It made such a difference because you need to be connected to the car, and everything I did I could feel it – I'd just get immediate feedback. A gift from God, that car. Or, I should say, from Adrian Newey and Williams!”

With Benetton flopping, and Schumacher and Ferrari preoccupied with working out how to restore regular glory to Maranello, Hill could have been forgiven for thinking he'd have everything his own way in '96. But that didn't count on the extraordinary form of that young French-Canadian upstart from Indycar racing.

Hill ultimately did take the title, thanks to winning eight of that season's 16 races, but 25-year-old Villeneuve was a revelation in his first season, pushing Hill all the way to the final round.

The son of Gilles made an immediate impact, upstaging his experienced team-mate by taking pole for the first race in Australia, and nearly converting that into victory.

But although there seemed an element of fortune in Hill ultimately winning that race, thanks to the oil leak that forced Villeneuve to back off to make the finish, Hill observed clues in the Australian GP – the first to be held at the Albert Park circuit in Melbourne – that suggested he could keep the youngster covered over the balance of the season.

“With Jacques, it was always on the limit, so I knew what I had to do to get to the end of the season ahead,” explains Hill. “Making a big impression first time out is important, but I sat on Jacques's gearbox the whole way through that race in Australia without too much pressure to stay there – and he was all over the place! >>





HILL'S "GIFT FROM GOD"

The Williams FW18, designed by Williams stalwart Patrick Head and aerodynamic wizard Adrian Newey, was fast, reliable and successful, scoring 12 poles, 12 wins, 21 podium finishes and 11 fastest laps from 16 races in 1996. Damon Hill guides us around the vehicle that made him a Formula 1 world champion

SLICKER OPERATIONS

"We were definitely behind the curve in terms of strategy compared to Benetton in '95. We were a hundred years behind them. Ross Brawn just outfoxed us. So we had a lot to learn and catch up. I think by '96 we had done, but we were racing against ourselves. It's more difficult when you've got somebody right behind you..."

AERODYNAMICS

"There was a gain to be had with the airbox – if you had your head slightly to one side it made a difference – so the aerodynamics around your helmet were critical. There was fine-tuning on the aerodynamic side, but it didn't feel much different at the end to how it did in the beginning. It was an easy car to balance."

THE BEAUTY OF SIMPLICITY

"The regulations were fairly simple then, and one of the great things about the car was that it reflected that – it didn't have ride-height control, it didn't have traction control. The '96 car was, and still is, a beautiful car to look at. The proportions are lovely on it – and it looks right."



SWITCHING TO TWO PEDALS

"Paddleshift had been around, but we'd always had three pedals previously in those days. I've got wide feet and the extra pedal for the foot clutch meant I was struggling to get my feet into the narrow cockpit."

GOOD COCKPIT DESIGN

"If you look at all the other cars I had, I always looked like I wasn't actually in the car! In the '96 car I was snug as a bug. Being tall, I had a bit of a disadvantage, but Adrian fitted me in that car and I looked like I fitted it. It was beautiful."

RENAULT MOTIVATION

"The engine was fantastic – loads of torque. I don't think there was much development. There was a time when we were getting 200rpm each time we went out. It was mostly aimed at reliability and making the car run within itself. It's like Mercedes is now; we just had to do a good job and not have any dropouts."

“He was on the ragged edge, and was going to go off at some point, which he did, and I think it might have affected his engine’s sump...”

“The way I saw ’96 was keeping a watching brief on him. As long as I kept one step ahead of him I’d be all right.”

Hill built his title charge on a run of four wins from the first five races. Come the end of July’s German Grand Prix, he had won seven of the 11 races held, and led the standings by a commanding 21 points from Villeneuve.

The FW18 showed almost bulletproof reliability, and Hill suffered only two mechanical retirements all season. He raced with full confidence in the package underneath him, and revelled in what he discovered to be a more relaxed title battle than previously, fought exclusively within the team.

“Frank Williams was very clear: ‘Here’s the car, don’t crash into each other, go racing,’” says Hill. “That was the way Williams went racing. We had a good time. It was a lot of fun. After ’94, everything was fun!”

“I had a healthy rivalry with Jacques. He was cheeky – he tried on a number of occasions to put one over on me. Just stupid little games that we played, but nothing underhand. The famous one, of course, was when he tried to steal my lunch... We knew between us that one of us was going to be world champion, but Jacques was absolutely an impeccable sportsman. He took it like a man, and didn’t sulk about it. He knows he gave it his best shot.

“He was very quirky and had his own sort of grungy style, with baggy overalls and no belt. He was very entertaining. There was a good atmosphere. His dad was an F1 racer and so was mine, so I always felt there was a bit of a bond there, however weird that was.”

“THERE’S STILL A LITTLE BIT OF MYSTERY AROUND EXACTLY WHAT POINT THAT DECISION WAS TAKEN BY WILLIAMS. I FOUND OUT I LOST MY JOB THROUGH AUTOSPORT...”

It was also around this point in the season when Hill discovered his time at Williams would shortly be coming to an end. The team had signed Heinz-Harald Frenzen from Sauber for 1997, and that meant the end of the road at the team for Hill, whether he ultimately became world champion or not.

“There’s still a little bit of mystery around exactly what point that decision was taken,” says Hill. “Whatever, it was broken during the season by Andrew Benson. So I had the ignominy of being told, even though I was leading the championship, that I had already lost my job. I found out through *Autosport* on the Thursday of the German Grand Prix!

“Actually, the truth is I only ever had a year’s contract anyway, so I was always on a one-year ticket. The only time I ever had a two-year ticket was with Jordan. My whole career, every year was a sweaty Christmas...”

Although Williams’s decision gave Hill precious little space to find a suitable alternative drive, he couldn’t bring himself to hold it against the team that had made his entire Formula 1 career possible in the first place.

“I’m a competitive person; I think I did a good job in ’96 – worthy of having another bite of the cherry – so I think it would have been the right thing to give me that opportunity, but then I also know I got so many opportunities that I would never have had in the first place if it hadn’t been for Williams,” Hill reflects.

“They gave me a test contract, they gave me a drive when Nigel Mansell left. I always thought I was a lucky guy to even be there, and I understand that’s how it rolls in the sport.

“You’ve got to be unimpeachable – you have to be, in every sense, 100 per cent rock solid the whole time. And I wasn’t. I was pretty good in ’96, but I wasn’t a Michael Schumacher, who you could just bolt in and know you’re going to get the world’s best >>>



Above: *Autosport*'s Hill exclusive in mid-1996

Left: Hill briefs the media after his Williams exit is confirmed

Below: impending departure from Williams didn't lead to a performance dip, with the world title (and a happier *Autosport* cover story) the reward



Right: waving to the fans at Silverstone during the British Grand Prix weekend

Below: one of Hill's finest memories from 1996, that opening lap in Brazil



“I NEVER SAW MYSELF AS A SENNA OR A PROST; I REALLY, REALLY ADMIRERED THEM. THEY WERE THE LEGENDS – THE BIG NAMES IN THE SPORT. BUT I DIDN'T DO TOO BADLY”

performance every time you drove the car.

“I was definitely still up for another title fight in '97, because I'd learnt so much from the whole process. It would have been nice to have another crack, but c'est la vie.”

Hill felt much better able to deal with any negative media coverage he received, thanks to the chastening experience of 1995. And although he laboured towards wrapping up the title over the final five races of '96, he sealed the deal with victory in the Japanese GP at Suzuka.

Hill's success prompted a famously emotional outpouring from legendary commentator Murray Walker, and much celebration back home in the UK. World champion at 36, Hill became the country's new sporting hero, ensuring his own name, not just his father's, would leave a permanent legacy in motor racing.

Damon Hill will never be considered one of F1's greatest drivers – he never won multiple titles for a start. But he worked hard, and achieved a rare degree of success. To his enormous credit, Hill accepts his place in the world, feeling lucky just to have had the chance to take on the challenge in the first place.

“I never saw myself as a Senna or a Prost; I really, really admired all of them,” he says. “They were the legends – the big names in the sport, and I think it's very destructive to look back on your career and think, ‘I could have had another world championship’. Everyone could have done that.

“I survived a very dangerous sport; I got all the opportunities. People want to measure you all the time, and it's fair enough. Clearly there are people who are better than others, but I didn't do too badly considering not many people even get to Formula 1.

“I don't think I ever believed I was the best. I think I had the potential to be better, and my approach was that it was down to me to realise my full potential. And I think I did.

“I don't think I left anything on the table when I was in F1. In '96 there were dropouts and mistakes, but I was 100 per cent prepared for that season. There were some moments, like the first lap in the wet in Brazil, that were pretty impressive – even if I do say so myself!

“Not bad for an old man...” ❄









Left: Hill gets the champagne treatment after securing the title

This pic: wrestling the, at times, recalcitrant Arrows in 1997

FROM WORLD CHAMPION TO BACKMARKER

LOSING HIS WILLIAMS DRIVE IN THE SUMMER OF 1996 gave Damon Hill little chance of retaining his world championship.

Sir Frank decided not to renew Hill's contract, opting to replace him with Sauber star Heinz-Harald Frenzen. The other top teams were already full up, leaving Hill no option but to scabble around for a seat on the '97 grid — all while needing to maintain focus on his title tilt.

Salvation arrived in the form of a deal with the midfield Arrows team, recently purchased by Tom Walkinshaw, the ambitious former engineering chief of Benetton.

"Tom Walkinshaw was very hungry to get me on board," recalls Hill. "It was a good offer, and possibly something different with the Bridgestone tyres. It was a gamble, but there was definite potential, which I think was brought out by what happened in Hungary [where Hill qualified third and almost won]."

"We thought we'd be ahead of the game if Bridgestone came on. John Barnard [top designer] was coming on board as well... Tom was a very aggressive business person, in terms of getting whatever he needed to win, so it wasn't totally mad to move to Arrows. The 1997 car was actually a really nice car, apart from the [Yamaha] engine."

Things didn't start particularly well for the reigning world champion, who qualified 20th of the 22 cars that made the grid for the first race in Melbourne, scene of a Hill victory 12 months earlier. From champion to backmarker in one fell swoop.

But Hill wouldn't let it get him down. "You've got to do the best you can, and if other people think it's horrible and embarrassing that's their problem," he argues. "You don't want to be there [at the back] obviously, but I wasn't bothered as long as we'd done our best — and there's masses more room for improvement if you're at the back!"

"Tom did make some wild claims, and had some wild expectations, but I liked that. He wasn't realistic; he was very ambitious, and I think you have to be slightly 'pie in the sky'."

"There was that optimism. There was a possibility [of success] with Arrows. It could have happened. Look at the story of Red Bull. It could have been like that."

"From the view of '96 it was all uncertain, but I would rather be involved with a project that has big plans to go places and could possibly work out. I couldn't do the other ones because they were completely hopeless."

It was a tough season, but not without its bright spots. As well as that near-win at the Hungaroring (he finally placed second), Hill also scored a point for sixth position at the British Grand Prix and came within 0.058 seconds of taking pole for the season finale at Jerez.

The reigning champion still harboured hopes of returning to the front of the grid with one of F1's bigger teams, but talks with McLaren failed to come to fruition. "When Adrian left Williams it was obvious McLaren was going to be the place to go, but there was a slight obstacle in my path, with the initials 'RD'," Hill explains. "I am a big admirer of Ron [Dennis]; he's a giant with what he's achieved, but he has a curious way of communicating."

"I'VE ALWAYS SEEN THE SPORT AS A WAY OF EXPRESSING YOURSELF, AND I FELT THAT McLAREN FOUND THAT UNCOMFORTABLE. THE DRIVER WAS JUST A SERVANT OF THE TEAM"

"If I'd been a bit wiser I would probably have said yes, but I felt I'd done my grovelling for most of my career! I thought winning a world championship had established my credentials, but Ron didn't play it quite like that. You are naught in the eyes of McLaren."

"I've always seen the sport as a way of expressing yourself, so to me it's important that free expression is allowed. I felt McLaren was a team that found that uncomfortable, and preferred to have all the success accrued returned to them. The driver was simply a servant of the team."

"I could see their point of view, but that's not how the public see it. I felt those were the conditions under which I'd be living my life, and I got to the point where I felt I didn't think I could swallow that anymore. You make your choices, and I'm not unhappy with the choice I made."

Hill eventually opted to sign a deal with Eddie Jordan's team, scoring the final grand prix victory of his career at the '98 Belgian GP, before retiring at the end of the following season. ❄



WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Suspended ban lets

VOLKSWAGEN STAR JARI-MATTI LATVALA will contest the remainder of this year's World Rally Championship under the cloud of a suspended one-round ban following a Monte Carlo Rally accident in which a spectator rolled across the bonnet of his Polo R WRC.

There are some who feel that Latvala is fortunate to be starting Rally Sweden next month – certainly footage of the incident does the Finn no favours.

Latvala's defence is that he didn't know he'd hit the fan, but this was undermined by a statement from WRC TV reporter Julian Porter and the absence of firm evidence in his favour.

Volkswagen has tried to contact the spectator to enquire about his wellbeing, but to no avail. However, it has been assured by bystanders that the man was on his feet with no injuries.

Latvala slid wide on a square-right corner in the second run at the Lardier et Valenca-Faye stage. His Polo R WRC ran along the ditch before hitting a culvert, which pitched it into a field. In attempting to get back on the road, Latvala hit the fan and knocked him down at low speed.

Porter's testimony read: "Both driver and co-driver of the number 2 Polo were working on

the front-left suspension when Jari-Matti called me over to tell me something. Jari said to me, 'When we went off we hit a spectator, we did not hit him hard, but can you please check he is OK?' And I could get in touch with somebody who could do this."

In the stewards' room on Saturday night, Latvala denied those were his precise words. Instead, Latvala claimed he had asked Porter: "Can you go and confirm with the marshals that I haven't hit anybody?"

Latvala said he had been informed that he had hit somebody, but the stewards' decision reported: "Upon being questioned who informed him and when he was informed that he had hit a spectator, he could not reply precisely."

The stewards found that Latvala contravened Article 40.4 of the FIA WRC Sporting Regulations and Article 12.1.1.c of the 2016 FIA International Sporting Code. He and co-driver Miikka Anttila were fined €5000 and handed a suspended one-event ban to be implemented if they are involved in a similar incident.

While Volkswagen never considered appealing the decision, the incident does raise concerns over the wording of the sporting regulations,



CITROEN

CITROEN FOCUSES ON 2017

Citroen is adamant that it will not be distracted by its rally-leading pace on last week's Monte Carlo Rally – this year's DS 3 WRC will remain untouched, with the focus firmly on next season.

Kris Meeke led the event at the end of the first day and then traded first place with eventual winner Sebastien Ogier through Friday. Meeke retired on Saturday with a damaged gearbox.

Citroen team principal Yves Matton said: "From all the cars on this rally, it was the DS 3 that was fighting with the Volkswagen. This year, we will not make any changes to the car. We are focused on 2017. This event shows if we made a 2016 homologation, we would have been fighting with Volkswagen this year."

Despite his drive in the French Alps, Meeke will not be in a DS 3 WRC on every event that Citroen contests in 2016. Instead, he will share competitive seat time with teammates Craig Breen and Stephane Lefebvre. Matton added: "The idea is to give approximately an equal amount [of competition] to the three drivers. I want to keep full flexibility and I don't want to talk about who will drive on which rallies or which rallies we will compete on – just in case we make a change in our plans. What the drivers do will be linked to our test programme. Kris will not do all of the rallies which we will do as a team."

The Abu Dhabi-backed squad is expected to tackle up to 10 rounds this season.

DAVID EVANS

Latvala off the hook

which state: 'If a crew is involved in an accident in which a member of the public sustains physical injury, the car must stop immediately.'

You could argue that this is too vague. If the bystanders are to be believed – and video evidence shows the man getting up unaided quickly – then Latvala caused no physical injury and, therefore, was not required to stop.

Equally, the Sporting Code states that the breach of rules came because Latvala was guilty of: 'Any fraudulent conduct or any act prejudicial to the interests of any competition or to the interests of motorsport generally.' Guilty or not, the regulations need tightening.

Latvala is adamant that he didn't see the man. "I would first like to stress that I am very sorry about what happened today," he said. "My visibility was hampered briefly by thick steam from the engine and mud that had sprayed up from the ditch. I saw a spectator jump to the side and drove slowly back to the road. The team contacted me after the stage and informed me that I had touched a spectator. As

I said, I am very sorry about the whole incident."

Latvala was even more remorseful in the following day's press release, saying: "The safety of spectators and participants must take top priority at any rally. Miikka and I are in absolutely no doubt about that. We very much regret the incident and will do everything possible to avoid this kind of thing happening again in the future. At the same time, we are pleased that the spectator got off so lightly this time, and that nothing serious happened."

Volkswagen team principal Jost Capito said Latvala was not the kind of driver to leave the scene of an accident involving a spectator.

"I believe him that he hasn't seen him," Capito told Autosport. "There was so much steam and mud in the screen. I think he saw something, but he did not see the guy on the bonnet. Jari-Matti is not the guy who would not stop if he realised he had hit somebody. You know, this guy is crying when a fly hits his windscreen."

DAVID EVANS

"My visibility was hampered by thick steam and mud"

FORMULA 1

TEE/JAT

Pirelli completes wet tyre test at Paul Ricard

PIRELLI CLOCKED UP OVER 1400 MILES DURING its two days of wet-tyre testing at Paul Ricard on Monday and Tuesday ahead of the new season.

Four-time Formula 1 champion Sebastian Vettel, having taken over from Kimi Raikkonen, posted the quickest time of the test for Ferrari on the second day with a lap of 1m06.750s, albeit with times irrelevant given that it was a tyre test.

Vettel edged Red Bull's Daniil Kvyat by less than a tenth of a second, the Russian taking over from Daniel Ricciardo for day two, with McLaren reserve Stoffel Vandoorne a second down at the end of his second day.

The three teams, running in unmodified 2015-spec machinery, completed 374 laps in total, 89 more than on Monday, making a total of 659 laps overall.

Pirelli has tested combinations of different treads and compounds of prototype full-wet tyres, while for the second day the Italian company also ran intermediates to act as a baseline.

Pirelli has been working on improving the longevity and performance of its wet tyre and is set to introduce changes to its rubber this year as a result of the data gained at the test.

JAMES ROBERTS

PAUL RICARD TEST TIMES

1	Vettel	Ferrari SF15-T	1m06.750s
2	Kvyat	Bull-Renault RB11	+0.083s
3	Vandoorne	McLaren-Honda MP4-30	+1.008s
4	Ricciardo	Bull-Renault RB11	+1.963s
5	Raikkonen	Ferrari SF15-T	+2.887s



FORMULA 1

F1 ENGINE COSTS RESOLVED



'COMMON' AND 'SENSE' are two words rarely combined in Formula 1, but it appears a degree of it was finally displayed following weeks of deliberation and two days of talks in Geneva.

Frustrated at being unable to implement meaningful cost-cutting proposals in F1 since being appointed as president of the FIA, Jean Todt turned to an unlikely ally last season in commercial rights holder Bernie Ecclestone.

Together, Todt and Ecclestone threatened the introduction of an independent engine from 2017 for a figure Todt suggested should be around €12 million per annum, which is around €8-12m less than most customer deals presently cost. Mercedes, Ferrari, Renault and Honda were given until January 15 to provide solutions to: the guarantee of supply of power units; the need to lower costs to customers; simplifying the technical specifications; and improving noise.

Following a Strategy Group meeting on January 18 a consensus was reached.

Despite Mercedes motorsport boss Toto Wolff arguing last year that his company already loses money on engine-supply contracts worth around €20m per year, costs will be capped from 2018-20 at the €12m demanded by Todt.

Additionally, all customers will be guaranteed a supply deal covering those three seasons.

IAN PARKES

THE DEBATE

Is Super Formula right for Vandoorne?

McLaren protege and GP2 champion Stoffel Vandoorne has indicated that his Super Formula deal is close to being done for 2016...



Yes

LAWRENCE BARRETTO

Stoffel Vandoorne wants to be racing in F1 this season but that isn't happening. The next best thing is getting a Super Formula deal over the line to go with his McLaren reserve role. Kevin Magnussen failed to do any racing during his time as a reserve last term and he now finds himself without a drive. While Vandoorne may struggle to mount a title challenge in Super Formula, he will at least be racing. He can stay race-sharp, while enduring high cornering speeds will be good preparation for F1.



No

EDD STRAW

Honda engines have won two Super Formula races during the past two seasons, so it's dangerous to assume Vandoorne will be sharpening his skills with a battle for the title in the category. Yes, the cars are quick and he will be up against a very high standard of opposition, so even with a Toyota engine there would be no guarantee he would win races, but it smacks of a 'parking' option for a driver who is ready for F1. He'll enjoy it and get something out of it, but not enough to justify a whole year of his career.



Channel 4 has to meet the high standards set by Sky Sports F1

MOTORSPORT BROADCASTING

Channel 4's challenge

LEAVING NOSTALGIA ASIDE, THE MOVE of Formula 1 free-to-air coverage from the BBC to Channel 4 could and should be seen as an opportunity to improve the show.

The amount of Formula 1 coverage (admittedly a proportion of it coming at an additional cost for many households) has never been better. Fans already have more access to content than ever before.

In terms of the quality, the BBC's work attracted widespread acclaim, so Channel 4 doesn't need to reinvent the proverbial wheel when it takes over the reins in March. It's encouraging, then, that the broadcaster has begun the project by making some smart moves, firstly promising not to show commercial breaks during the race.

It also signed up Mark Wilkin, an F1 editor with proven experience, and the vast majority of the BBC's production team – the people who made the outgoing broadcaster's output such a high-quality proposition.

The decision to appoint David Coulthard as co-commentator was shrewd, too, since he has the knowledge, the contacts and an affinity with the viewers. Importantly, at least one new face is expected to join the presenting team and that will help Channel 4 put its own stamp on the show.

This is a difficult time for broadcasters. The number of people watching television across the globe is dwindling and Formula 1 is not immune. The way people consume news, sport and entertainment has changed. It's no longer just from television and newspapers but now tablets, phones and other online sources. So the channel must find a way to keep the viewers it has got while breaking

down the barriers to F1 and enticing the casual viewer to tune in.

If it achieves its aim of innovating, as it did so impressively with the cricket, horse racing and the Paralympics, there's a very good chance it can succeed.

Formula 1 is a complex sport, so it is in a broadcaster's interest to find creative ways to explain various elements to appeal to a new audience without dumbing it down and alienating the core audience. The channel needs to come up with features that highlight the speed, F1's USP, and use it to excite people to the extent that they feel compelled to talk about it with friends and family.

This sport is about the drivers and their cars, and fans want to see great qualifying sessions and races, so those elements will remain the dominant part of the broadcast. But there's so much more to explore, so much untapped potential, and achieving the balance between covering the racing and delving into the human side will be key.

There are stories to be told about the people involved – not just the drivers, but the people behind the scenes who make F1 happen. It takes hundreds of people to get a couple of cars to the grid and ensure a constant rate of development throughout the season, but fans never get to see that.

Cameras should also aim to give fans a glimpse inside the team's motorhomes, trucks and garages, or an insight into a driver's schedule away from the track.

Achieving this feat will not be easy, given budget and access challenges. But hopefully Channel 4 will have the freedom to do so.

LAWRENCE BARRETT

IN THE HEADLINES

FRY JOINS RENAMED MANOR RACING

Former Ferrari engineering director Pat Fry has joined Manor as engineering consultant ahead of the 2016 Formula 1 season. The team has also officially been renamed Manor Racing after competing as Manor Marussia during the 2015 season.

RIVOLA MOVE CONFIRMED

Ferrari sporting director Massimo Rivola has confirmed he is to take over the running of the Scuderia's Driver Academy, as revealed by *Autosport*. Rivola is to replace Luca Baldisserri, who departed Ferrari last month to become a mentor to former FDA member Lance Stroll after the 17-year-old Canadian was appointed as Williams's new development driver.

NEW FERRARI PASSES CRASH TESTS

Ferrari is on schedule with its new Formula 1 car ahead of the start of pre-season testing in late February. No details have yet been released about the new car, but crash tests (mandatory before a car can test) have been passed.

NO REVIVAL OF MID-RACE REFUELLING

F1 will not pursue the revival of mid-race refuelling further after a meeting of the Strategy Group followed by the F1 Commission. FIA president Jean Todt had said at *Autosport* International that the idea was on the agenda.

HAAS UPBEAT ON UNITED STATES GP

New Formula 1 team owner Gene Haas is certain the Austin circuit can find a way to overcome its financial difficulties and remain as United States Grand Prix host. Its future is in doubt after the State of Texas reduced its annual subsidy from \$25 million to \$19.5m. "There are always these concerns but it's a beautiful track, they have invested a lot of money, so I don't think they are going to scrap it," said Haas.

SILVERSTONE MAKES GP PROFIT

Silverstone is poised to announce a profit on the British Grand Prix for the first time in a number of years, *Autosport* can reveal. The Northamptonshire circuit's end-of-year figures are in the process of being finalised, but managing director Patrick Allen has confirmed that the Formula 1 event made a profit in 2015.

PALMER TOLD TO DROP CAUTION

Jolyon Palmer has been urged to be less circumspect ahead of his debut F1 campaign with Renault this year. "He did well, but now I would like to see him do even more as he was possibly cautious," said the team's Alan Permane of his Friday practice performances in 2015.





CONWAY GOES ELECTRIC Mike Conway will make his Formula E race debut in Buenos Aires next week after joining the Venturi team for the remainder of the season. The British driver has experience of the all-electric cars used in the series, having tested with Dragon Racing in 2014. “The series is innovative,” said Conway. “It’s quickly growing momentum and it’s attractive to a lot of manufacturers to showcase their technologies, so it’s exciting to be a part of the series.” Conway’s main 2016 programme has not yet been confirmed but he claimed a podium finish last year in his first season as a Toyota LMP1 regular in the World Endurance Championship. *Photograph by LAT*

FORMULAE

Villeneuve a big loss for Formula E

A POINT-LESS TALLY SUGGESTS it was a pointless three-event return to single-seaters for Jacques Villeneuve. But for all the jokes, he is a loss to Formula E after splitting with Venturi.

The headline figures suggest that Villeneuve was outperformed by team-mate Stephane Sarrazin, who has 16 points after three races and lies eighth in the standings. Villeneuve’s best finish was 11th.

Dive deeper, though, and you discover a campaign blighted by mechanical trouble. In Beijing he had a battery issue in first practice and in effect missed the second session with a brake-fluid leak. He was then taken out in the race.

In Putrajaya he stopped in practice with a technical issue. He then lost at

least 20 seconds in the race after his second car didn’t fire up, costing a points finish. He didn’t cover himself in glory by crashing in qualifying in Punta del Este and not starting, but his practice pace was decent.

The bottom line is his campaign has not been as ridiculous as some have claimed. Dropping out fits the narrative of a bizarre post-F1-title career, but Villeneuve had been committed to – and excited by – doing a full season.

It is thought that the mutual split was brought on by frustration on Villeneuve’s side at the reliability issues, and not helped by the Uruguay crash.

The real loss is that we’ll never see if Villeneuve could have delivered.

SCOTT MITCHELL



Villeneuve’s stint at Venturi lasted only three races

SBLOWHAW/LAT



OBITUARY

Michael MacDowel 1932-2016

AT 17 LAPS, MICHAEL MACDOWEL'S grand prix driving record was among the shortest in Formula 1 history. Yet the two-part career of this gracious gentleman – who died of cancer on January 18 – spanned club racing and national hillclimb championship titles around a stint as Jaguar competition manager.

Born in Suffolk, MacDowel showed promise in 1954, his debut season, winning twice at Ibsley in a Lotus VI.

Graduating to a Lotus Nine in 1955, he dominated the 750 Motor Club's 1172 Formula championship and partnered Le Mans winner Ivor Bueb to a class-winning 10th in the RAC Tourist Trophy race at Dundrod in a works Cooper T39 'Bobtail' (pictured above).

After a string of sportscar successes in 1956, Charles and John Cooper rewarded Mike with his first start in a Formula 2 car.

His big break came in 1957, when they entered him in an F1-spec 1500cc Cooper T43 for the French Grand Prix at the daunting Rouen circuit. Juan Manuel Fangio, Luigi Musso and Jean Behra headed the pack, with British stars Mike Hawthorn and Peter Collins enhancing their reputations at Ferrari.

When Jack Brabham damaged his two-litre T43, 'MacDowel' (as *Autosport* founder Gregor Grant's report recorded; Harry Schell was 'Shell' throughout!) was signalled to hand his machine over. Brabham finished a distant seventh.

MacDowel mainly raced closed-wheel cars until 1964, including a Jaguar Mk2 and Ferrari 250 GTO for motor trader John Coombs. He was subsequently appointed a director of the Coombs of Guildford dealership.

Having enjoyed some hillclimb success with Cooper, he returned to that arena with a Jaguar E-type. Single-seaters followed, and MacDowel scored his first national victory in a Brabham-Climax BT30X in Jersey in 1969, and pairs over the next two years with the Brabham and a three-litre Palliser-Repco.

Mating a five-litre Repco V8 to an F2-type Brabham BT36 proved the golden ticket. A series of victories in late 1972 augured well and that momentum carried into '73 and '74, when he landed back-to-back RAC British titles with 16 wins.

Thereafter, he hillclimbed the unique three-litre Chevron-BMW B19 and Ralt RT1 powered by an F2 engine built by Brian Hart. In its ultimate Coogar evocation, the Ralt was reworked by Derek Gardner to take a 3.3-litre Cosworth DFV V8, but the sport had moved on.

MacDowel retired at the end of 1979 but stayed involved with the BRDC, particularly with its early Historic Festivals.

He was also active in historic racing, overseeing the preparation of cars in which old pal 'Noddy' Coombs had an interest from a workshop in Guildford.

MARCUS PYE

IN THE HEADLINES

KARAM LANDS INDY 500 SEAT

Former Chip Ganassi Racing IndyCar driver Sage Karam has secured a 2016 Indianapolis 500 drive with Dreyer & Reinbold Racing. Karam was without a seat for the IndyCar season after being dropped by Ganassi.

GASLY MAKES PREMA SWITCH

Red Bull Formula 1 team protege Pierre Gasly will move to series newcomer Prema Powerteam for his second season in GP2. Gasly, who raced for DAMS last year, joins Formula 3 graduate Antonio Giovinazzi in the Prema line-up.

FITTIPALDI MOVES TO FV8 3.5

Pietro Fittipaldi, grandson of Emerson, has stepped up to Formula V8 3.5 this season. The Brazilian-American will remain with Fortec Motorsport, with which he competed in European F3 last season. Dutch racer Beitske Visser remains in the rebranded series for a third season and joins Pons Racing, where she will partner Polish GP3 graduate Alex Bosak. Japan's Yu Kanamaru, who contested some rounds of the series last year, joins category newcomer Teo Martin Motorsport.

AITKEN AND HUGHES FIRM GP3 DEALS

Reigning Formula Renault Eurocup champion Jack Aitken has cemented his place on the GP3 Series grid by joining Arden International. He will be joined by fellow Brit Jake Hughes, who finished runner-up to Aitken in FR ALPS last season and has taken a DAMS seat. DAMS, which competes in GP3 for the first time this year, has also signed another FR ace – Swiss Kevin Jorg – and American F3 racer Santino Ferrucci. Meanwhile, 2015 race winner Alex Palou remains with Campos Racing, where he is joined by Konstantin Tereschenko and Steijn Schothorst.

BERTHON LOSES FORMULA E SEAT

Team Aguri has dropped Nathanael Berthon from its Formula E driver line-up ahead of the Buenos Aires ePrix. His replacement has not been confirmed, but Salvador Duran is in the frame for a return to the team.

SCHUMACHER RACING IN INDIA

Mick Schumacher, the son of seven-time world champion Michael, will contest the final round of the Indian-run MRF Challenge series this weekend at the Chennai circuit. Schumacher was a race winner in last year's German Formula 4 Championship, and is expected to stay on in the series for the 2016 season.

DTM POSTPONES NEW ENGINES TO '19

The DTM's planned move to four-cylinder engines in 2017 has been delayed by two years. Two-litre turbo engines to replace the series' V8 powerplants were to be the centrepiece of the incoming 'Class One' technical regulations. But discussions between Audi, BMW and Mercedes raised concerns about development costs.



FEEDBACK

F1's finest driver? It's got to be Lewis

Best driver in F1 – I see more ‘experts’ postulating about this again. Webber going for Vettel and Capito plumping for Alonso. I may be going out on a limb, but didn’t Lewis beat two-time champion Alonso in his rookie season and arguably should have been champion in 2007?

Apart from his *annus horribilis* in 2011, when has a team-mate ever beaten Lewis over a season?

As for Vettel, the jury’s still out for me. Di Resta beat him in Euro F3 in 2006 as his team-mate and ‘Danny Rick’ beat him comfortably in 2014.

Lewis has developed into the best, currently, by some margin and I’m starting to think he is as good as Ayrton, and for me that’s saying something.

Brian McCausland
Portishead, North Somerset

There’s more to life than F1

I have been an avid reader of *Autosport* for many decades, and I am finally moved to contact you for the first



time by last week’s issue. It says ‘*Autosport*’ on the cover, but I fear that is no longer accurate.

NASCAR has more starters, more finishers, longer races and a bigger crowd than most F1 grands prix, yet gets scant coverage in *Autosport*. The WRC is an amazing series with lots of expensive high-tech cars and highly skilled drivers, but I think you have featured it only once on the front cover, thanks to Kris Meeke’s Argentinian success.

The Dakar Rally is one of motorsport’s great annual events, with more starters, more finishers, more miles covered and watched by more people than any F1 grand prix, yet your coverage of this year’s Dakar is confined to a page and a half deep inside the magazine.

Instead you feature on last week’s cover an article on Schumacher and Ferrari covering events some time ago, which is excellent in itself but hardly as urgent or as gripping as your Dakar

Dakar’s spectacular, so does it deserve a bigger billing in this magazine’s pages?

report should have been! Are you really ‘*Autosport*’ or more ‘F1’?

Mark Slevin
Bath

Not a fan, then

Drab, boring, slow and sounds awful. F1? No, DC. Good luck with that, C4. Thank goodness I have Sky.

Mike Kelly
South-east London

Bit harsh! We reckon David Coulthard’s done a brilliant job for the BBC (see p70, January 21) and has all the potential to grow in stature with Channel 4 – ed

BRDC F4 needs its champion

After reading about Will Palmer’s move into Formula Renault (January 21), I was disappointed that he will not be returning to BRDC F4 this year.

With the new chassis package coming on stream, and BRDC F4 becoming the leading single-seater championship in the UK, I thought having the reigning champion in the new car would be an ideal opportunity to enhance the series’ profile even further.

Hopefully he may guest in a few rounds to show other drivers they can use it as their stepping stone to Euro F3 rather than going abroad, and to establish BRDC F4’s credentials as the leading series in the junior formulas below Euro F3.

Michael Skeet
Southampton

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Growing pains

On the face of it, adding another two races to the schedule in 2016 increases the sport's income, but independent teams will lose out

By Dieter Rencken, Special Contributor

[@RacingLines](#)

FORMULA 1 STANDS ON THE CUSP OF THE MOST crowded season in its history, with a total of 21 races – one up on the record-setting 2012 schedule, and two up on last year's – listed on all permanently inhabited continents save Africa. The current calendar represents a 20 per cent growth over a decade, and a whopping 30 per cent on the norm of 16 rounds prior to Formula One Management's acquisition of F1's commercial rights at the turn of the century.

Before the sport's masters pat themselves on their collective back for a job well done, they would do well to analyse the true cost of this expansion. This means not only the financial impact on teams, many of whom stand to lose in direct terms, but also the enduring effects of overexposure; above all, the cost in human terms. It can be no coincidence that, as F1's schedule grows, so its controllers are increasingly absent.

Mercedes motorsport boss Toto Wolff last week revealed his team was eyeing staggered shifts for crews, adding there were distinct pros and cons to expanding calendars. McLaren, too, has spoken of alternating crews, as has Red Bull.

Tailenders have, with good reason, complained about the overall costs of attending the two extra races.

Wolff suggests F1's expansion has resulted in increased income for teams. While this may be true of FOM revenues, which have increased at the rate of five per cent per annum, mainly by moving F1 off-shore into controversial markets and through an increasing number of subscription TV deals, costs have risen proportionately. Meanwhile, sponsor income has, at best, stagnated due to diminishing number of eyeballs.

Despite the expanded calendar, F1's TV ratings have fallen 30 per cent in five years. Insiders fear 2015's numbers will provide further cause for concern. A TV executive recently confided that his multi-year contract did not provide for commensurate increases ("nor do we enjoy discounts unless the number of races or entries drops markedly," he smiled), so teams are on a hiding to nowhere on that front.

In 2014, the last season for which breakdowns are available, FOM turned over \$1.4 billion from 19 events. This provided an average income of around \$74m per race, roughly split \$27m/\$27m/\$20m from hosting fees/TV rights/signage and hospitality. So each additional race is worth an average of \$45m if the TV is disregarded and based on the assumption that hospitality/signage deals attract incremental dollars.

The teams' share of FOM's income totals about \$850m

(62.5 per cent). But this amount is not distributed equitably. The 'big four' (Ferrari, Red Bull, Mercedes and McLaren) carved up 70 per cent of the team 'pot' – or 40 per cent of FOM income – with the rest sharing the balance.

Their 30 per cent share amounts to just 21 per cent of FOM's income, split among six teams (seven this year with the addition of Haas F1). Of the notional \$90m derived from two additional races in 2016 – assuming the two additions, Baku and Hockenheim, pay close to the average rate – FOM trousers \$34m, the big four teams share \$36m (average \$9m each), and seven independents will split \$20m (\$3m each).

Any preferential deals Mercedes struck over its double constructors' championship bonus – thought to be an extra \$30m per annum – and Renault squeezed from FOM during Lotus takeover talks will further marginalise the independents.

All teams face roughly the same operational costs due to regulatory restrictions on tyres, engines, transmissions and race staff. According to an independent team boss, it costs \$100m per season (\$5m per race) to go racing, the difference

between his budget and that of, say, Ferrari being mainly down to development and marketing costs.

On that basis, the big four just about break even but score through exposure of their products, while independents are down an

average of \$7m each, even if the event is classed as a flyaway, which provides subsidised freight and air travel.

Where Mercedes and Honda stand to move metal, and Red Bull shifts cans, it is difficult to fathom how Airbnb benefits from being seen on Manors careering around Baku's streets, or Banco do Brasil on Saubers at Hockenheim. TV? They get seen 20 times per annum, which borders on overexposure.

While the lion's share of the incremental revenue from two additional races goes to FOM, its 35.5 per cent majority shareholder CVC Capital Partners enriches itself to the tune of \$10m from a race in Azerbaijan, a country the venture fund's owners are unlikely ever to visit. Indeed, a web search provides no evidence of CVC being active in the Caucasian country.

All this vividly illustrates the disconnect between CVC, FOM, the big four and independents when it comes to compiling F1's calendars. The last-named group provides the bulk of the grid, yet each member faces hefty losses with every additional race.

It stands to reason that if independents lose money on 19-race calendars, such losses are compounded by additional events – particularly those in controversial territories. ❄

“Tailenders have complained about the costs of two extra races”



ALL PICS: MCKLEIN/DE

Ogier wins the Monte after Meeke mishap

Kris Meeke had been swapping the lead with Sebastien Ogier until a rock ended his hopes of an historic win, and handed victory to the champion

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

[@davidevansrally](#)



The whole scene looked decidedly odd. Sebastien Ogier was on his hands and knees on the D214 just outside the village of La Batie Neuve last Saturday. The

Monte Carlo Rally leader and world champion had his iPhone out and was shining it up and under the front of Kris Meeke's Citroen DS 3 WRC.

The Northern Irishman looked on disconsolately. The game was up.

Meeke had been called in. Teatime. Left with a ball, but nobody to play with, Ogier looked almost bereft.

For all the animosity and cross words of last season, the pair had found themselves sharing a higher plane in the French Alps. Nobody could touch them. The mutual respect was huge.

Meeke was understandably gutted at his early exit from a fascinating fight. Ogier, genuinely, wasn't far behind him.

Finally unburdened of the need to prove himself at every turn, Meeke appeared mildly amused by the collected media's necessity to pigeonhole his pace. Was this because he *had* a deal?

He neither knew nor cared. What he knew and cared about was that he went to bed on Thursday night as Britain's first end-of-leg Monte Carlo Rally leader since Colin McRae 15 years ago.

Ogier was gracious in his appreciation of his rival's early speed, balancing any compliments with the news that he'd been slightly more cautious than normal through the event's two dark stages.

Having been humbled by Sebastien Loeb on the road from Entrevaux to Rouaine last year, Ogier was happy to top the timesheets this time around. The weakening grip of winter meant the scratch time for the 13-miler was more than three minutes faster than last year. Meeke's start hadn't been perfect – he'd caught a kerb on the inside of a corner early in the stage and that threw his



Citroen into a pirouette. Seven seconds were lost, but the cool remained.

And it was put to good use in SS2, where Meeke went 11 seconds faster than everybody. That'll be the lead by 6.9 then.

What followed was a proper ding-dong day with the pair trading times and the lead – which changed three times on Friday. Meeke remained P1 for the first two stages of the morning loop, but couldn't match his rival on the road from Les Costes to Chaillol. That's the one passing within a couple of miles of the Ogier family back garden, where the champ had grown up and dreamed

Meeke gave it everything, pushing Ogier hard, until a rock punched a hole in his gearbox and win hopes

Ogier and Ingrassia celebrate

of days like today.

Try as he might, Ogier simply couldn't shake Meeke off. Ogier was five seconds clear after SS6, but Meeke hauled him back in and led again one stage later. Back on his home run, Ogier put 9.5s between the pair of them on Friday night.

Ogier smiled thinly back in service. "Every time I am a little bit careful," he said. "He is coming back at me. I have to push – I have to push hard."

He took another 10s out of Meeke on the 30-miler that opened the weekend, and a repeat on the ensuing stage put the gap two tenths over half a minute.

"On a normal rally, you might think that was a lead," said Ogier. "This is not a normal rally; this is the Monte. That's not enough."

After half an hour of driving the longest stage of the event for the second time, Meeke had chipped four seconds out. He wasn't giving up.

"We keep pushing," he said. "We have to keep the pressure on him. The car feels great – everything is working."

Near the end of the next stage, a slow left-hander – rounded with a tug on the handbrake – led the crews straight into an eminently choppable right. Everybody had chopped it first time through, leaving the corner-cut marked well with mud.

Meeke directed the DS 3 into the corner, hard on the power. Nanoseconds after leaving the asphalt and going across the apex, the underside of the Citroen impacted with a rock. The crack went



ALL PICS: MCKLEIN/DE



“On a normal rally, you might think that was a lead... This is not normal; this is the Monte”

Sebastien Ogier

through the car with such force that it ripped the sumpguard from its six eight-mil mountings, slicing a hole in the gearbox as it departed.

Meeke barely had time to recover from the shock before the 1600cc motor went flat. A turbo pipe had been damaged. Then came the sickening smell of gearbox oil. He limped to the finish and parked up down the road.

“There a hole the size of your fist in the gearbox,” he said, grimly. “You can see the cogs...” Amazed and destroyed in equal measure.

Ogier took a look for himself and wasted no time in offering sincere condolences. “I know this place,” he said. “Kris did not deserve this. Everybody takes this cut. This is such bad luck. I am sorry for him. Really sorry.”

Meanwhile, back in 1968...

On the other side of the Atlantic, relief was mixed with regret. US resident Vic Elford’s standing as Britain’s most recent winner of the Monte Carlo Rally remains

intact for a 48th year.

“It’s unbelievable,” said the winner of the 1968 event. “I don’t really understand it. It’s not like Britain’s been short of some great drivers. Obviously we had Richard Burns and Colin McRae and both of them were in great cars, capable of winning the rally. And now we have Kris as well.”

Elford’s own victory came in a Porsche 911 – a car he’d been advised would never be suited to the Monte. Or to him.

“The year I won it was the first year they got rid of those stupid regulations designed to make sure Citroen always won,” he said. “With no handicapping, the fastest car won. I’d really got to like the Porsche – it suited me and I could drive it quickly. In all honesty I could have won the event three years in succession. If a blizzard hadn’t come in and caught me on the wrong tyres in 1967 I would have won that year and then I crashed when, unbeknown to me, I’d moved into the lead near the finish in 1969.

“I’ll be honest – I never really had >>



Getting the ice notes right is a real headache

ON THIN ICE

FRANCOIS DELECOUR KNOWS THESE ROADS and these mountains intimately. What he doesn’t know and what nobody can know is when a patch of damp just north of Authon will freeze.

Conversely, it’s little more than an educated guess as to what point black ice returns to being just black asphalt.

Ice-note crews are responsible for educating the guess. Delecour’s won the Monte as a driver and feared the fallout as an ice-noter.

Once again, those crews were up and out of the hotel before the drivers’ alarms had even come close to going off in the Alps last week. They were on the road to keep the stars of the show on the go.

“My wife Priscille used to do ice notes,” says Delecour, “and she would tell me before the start, ‘Francois, I cannot sleep, I am so worried...’ I didn’t understand at all. Now I have done this job, I understand.”

British co-driver Sebastian Marshall joined former Monte winner Piero Liatti to work on Hayden Paddon’s notes.

“I’ve done this job four times on this event now and it really doesn’t get any easier,” says Marshall. “In all honesty, it’s a thankless task – you can only get it wrong. When I heard Hayden had gone off on Friday morning, the immediate reaction was, ‘Oh no! Is it something I have got wrong?’ I went straight to the notes to check.”

The Liatti-Marshall partnership was in the clear, you’ll be happy to know.

“The trouble is,” says Marshall, “the conditions change so incredibly quickly in the mountains. We were looking at a patch of damp in one stage, wondering what to do. It was damp and no problem, but then the sun started to drop and in 10 minutes it was a solid patch of ice.”

Get it right and you’ve done your job. Get it wrong and you’re unlikely to be asked back. No wonder Mme Delecour couldn’t sleep.



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MARCO ANDRETTI
Photo by: Marco Andretti

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GOPRO APP + GOPRO STUDIO

#BEAHERO



MCKLEIN/DE

any great problem with the event. It was tricky, but two things helped me win. The first of those was the implicit trust David Stone and I developed in each other. We developed pacenotes which were head and shoulders above everybody else's; David knew if I crashed, I was taking him with me!

"The other thing which won me the Monte was an extraordinary ability to go quicker than anybody else downhill. Anybody can go quickly uphill, but it takes real balls to go down the other side. I developed this on the 1967 Tulip Rally, when we did two runs down the Ballon d'Alsace. At that time, this section was an absolute gift for the Minis – I beat Timo Makinen by a second and everybody else by a long way."

With the golden anniversary of British Monte success fast approaching, Elford has grown increasingly relaxed about his record being broken.

"Maybe I'll talk to Volkswagen and see if I can't come and do it myself in a couple of years!" he said. "But anyway, I'm really not too worried. Looking at the route for this year, with no Ardeche stages in there at all and no Turini in the dark, I'm not sure this is a real Monte anyway..."

And now back to 2016...

Elford's thoughts on going downhill quickly were absolutely borne out by the Saint-Leger-les-Melezes to La Batie

Neuve stage on Saturday. Starting from 1276 metres, the stage climbed rapidly up the side of a ski slope to the ski station near Ancelle at 1574 metres. From there it dived down into the woods and steep got steeper, slashing altitude by 700 metres in just a handful of miles.

And, to make matters even more interesting, the top of the drop was littered with ice. Tailor-made for an air-cooled Elford attack.

What was even better was that this stage brought about the only genuine tyre gamble of the whole event.

The stage preceding, the 30-miler from Lardier-et-Valenca to Faye, was almost totally free from snow and ice and absolutely passable without studs. Studs were, however, compulsory when the event arrived on piste an hour later.

Almost universally, the crews departed Gap shod with supersoft rubber and a couple of studded winters in the boot.

Andreas Mikkelsen was going for it. VW's Norwegian had two studs in the boot and had crossed left-front and right-rear studs on the car – supersofts on the other two corners.

As he headed out, there was a surge of excitement – somebody was gambling. Mikkelsen lost 1m13s over the first 30 miles, and a good chunk of the metal, torn out on the dry asphalt.

Had he made a terrible mistake, or played a blinder? He was the only driver

Latvala laboured until controversial contact with a spectator and then suspension damage ended his rally

with perfect rubber at the front of his car; everybody else was compromised on at least half the corners courtesy of studs on only the left or right front wheel.

Mikkelsen threw caution to the wind, rocketed up the hill, took a deep breath across the top, before launching himself down the other side. Like Ogier, he could have been a professional skier, but neither had come down a mountain at anything like this speed.

Reaching the finish, Mikkelsen was wide-eyed. He'd given it everything, risked the lot and won 43.9s, playing himself right back into a fight with team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala.

"It was a risk," said Mikkelsen. "After the long stage, my gravel crew called me to apologise. There was less ice in there than we hoped for, but it was really... interesting coming to the finish of the second stage. OK, we had studs, but still, it was right on the limit."

The next couple of stages would pretty much guarantee Mikkelsen a podium spot. Meeke's dramatic departure came at the end of the second run down the ski slope. Latvala's retirement was one stage earlier but with more fallout.

Stung too many times in the mountains, the Finn had steadfastly refused to be drawn into a fight at the front. More than a minute down after the first full day, he was adamant everything was going to plan. When his Polo >>



THE TWO FACES OF MONTE CARLO

THERE WAS A BRIEF MOMENT OF PANIC FOR the elderly man sitting beneath his blanket at the side of the D10 on Thursday night. A triple World Rally champion, a local lad, had been and gone before him. There had been a raised eyebrow in appreciation, not much more.

Seems this fellow wasn't one for emotion.

Until, that was, he stood up and started to pat his pockets, face full of concern as the vigorous search continued. After a good minute or so, he was victorious. His face split into a broad grin as he triumphantly pulled out a fresh packet of Gauloises.

Life was good again. The WRC could continue.

The Monte Carlo Rally is very much part of the social calendar in Gap and the surrounding Hautes-Alpes. But the contrast between this rally's two faces couldn't be more marked.

Bookended by Monaco's extravagance, the Hotel de Paris and diamond-encrusted dog leads (worn by dogs, you'll be relieved to hear) are of no use in the mountains.

I love both sides of this event. Monaco is a true departure from the real world and a mecca for anybody with even the faintest trace of 95 octane in their veins. Conversely, my friend in Rouaine was a great advert for life's simpler pleasures, those of the beautiful winter sunrise, fogged by the feint, fluttering smoke from a long-burning wood fire. And the smell that accompanies it is quite extraordinary, particularly mingled with freshly ground coffee and baked croissants.

If ever there's a very worthy advert for the tail wagging the dog then this is it. The Monte might be just one of 14 rounds of this year's World Rally Championship, but last week once again demonstrated that, while the worthiness of the crown is slowly on the up, the jewel is as valuable as ever.

DAVID EVANS

Neuville capitalised on others' misfortune with third place



drifted wide on an 11th-stage right-hander, the plan went out of the window.

The car ran along the ditch before being vaulted into an adjacent field by a culvert. Vision doubtless clouded by steam, smoke and mud from the impact, Latvala floored the throttle in an attempt to return the car to the road. Unfortunately, he hit a spectator in the process (see page 14). Latvala retired from suspension damage after the stage, but the debate will rage for some time.

Latvala is one of the most likeable and sincere drivers in the sport and, for many, the concept of him being sufficiently cold-hearted to knock somebody down and carry on without stopping to check their wellbeing is out of the question. Others will point to the locked wheels, clearly shown on YouTube footage of the Polo shortly before it collides with the fan; if you're accelerating hard to get back on the road, you wouldn't be on the brakes. Only Latvala himself truly knows.

It's hard to talk of anybody benefiting from such an incident, but Mikkelsen

and Hyundai's Thierry Neuville did.

Ahead of the event, much was made of Hyundai's New-Generation i20 WRC. This was the car team principal Michel Nandan told us wouldn't be coming until it was quick enough to fight with VW.

The boys in blue and orange didn't come close to the champions in the first half of the Monte. With much of the pre-event testing done on snow, the cars rocked up in Gap running much too soft. Added to that, the drivers were unwilling to stiffen them up and hunker them down into the kind of edgy racers the almost-dry conditions allowed for.

The upshot of this was that Monte rookie Hayden Paddon was quickest of the Alzenau trio... in last year's car. The Kiwi's efforts in the night stages were undone by a disastrous first daylight test in the mountains. He slipped off the road on the same full-ice Friday morning right-hander that caught Robert Kubica.

Paddon returned and completed a weekend's apprenticeship without further blemish to his character.



An icy right-hander caught out Robert Kubica

ALL PICS: MCKLEIN/DE





Miles away on Friday night, the weekend was also a significant improvement for the new, five-door i20s. The biggest change of pace came for Neuville rather than the distant Dani Sordo. The Belgian was winning stages and showing flashes of the form that carried him into his purple patch 12 months ago. The key this time around is to remain in it.

Last week's WRC opener did, of course, mean more than a few new faces. Or at least some different faces in different places, with three new driver and co-driver partnerships in the top five. Mikkelsen and Anders Jaeger fared the best, while M-Sport returnee Mads Ostberg took a little longer to bed into a new language – Ola Floene read their notes in native Norwegian rather than the Swedish Ostberg had been accustomed to from Jonas Andersson. The Ford Fiesta RS WRC crew managed fourth, one place up on Stephane Lefebvre, who had Gabin Moreau alongside for the first time in the second Citroen DS 3 WRC.

While M-Sport new boy Eric Camilli was another to fall off on ice and make an early exit from the rally, there was better news for the man he replaced: Elfyn Evans. The Welshman made a perfect start to the WRC2 season, shrugging off two punctures to beat Esapekka Lappi's Skoda in his M-Sport Fiesta R5.

But the story of the rally was about how close Meeke and co-driver Paul Nagle had come to rewriting a 48-year-old piece of history.

It needs to be sorted next season or Quick Vic'll be back in 2018. ❄️



Ogier had a clear run to victory in the end

RESULTS ROUND 1/14, MONTE CARLO RALLY, MONTE CARLO (MC), JANUARY 21-24

POS	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (F)	Julien Ingrassia (F)	Volkswagen Motorsport Volkswagen Polo RWRC	3h49m53.1s
2	Andreas Mikkelsen (N)	Anders Jaeger Synnevaag (N)	Volkswagen Motorsport II Volkswagen Polo RWRC	+1m54.5s
3	Thierry Neuville (B)	Nicolas Gilsoul (B)	Hyundai Motorsport Hyundai i20 WRC	+3m17.9s
4	Mads Ostberg (N)	Ola Floene (N)	M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+4m47.7s
5	Stephane Lefebvre (F)	Gabin Moreau (F)	Abu Dhabi Total WRT Citroen DS3 WRC	+7m35.6s
6	Dani Sordo (E)	Marc Marti (E)	Hyundai Motorsport Hyundai i20 WRC	+10m35.5s
7	Ott Tanak (EST)	Raigo Molder (EST)	DMACK World Rally Team Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+11m39.9s
8	Elfyn Evans (GB)	Craig Parry (GB)	M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta R5	+18m30.8s
9	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)	Janne Ferm (FIN)	Skoda Fabia R5	+20m41.0s
10	Armin Kremer (D)	Pirmin Winklhofer (D)	BRR Baumschlager Skoda Fabia R5	+20m43.9s
OTHERS				
20	Felice Re (I)	Mara Bariani (I)	Citroen DS3 WRC	+44m14.1s
25	Hayden Paddon (NZ)	John Kennard (NZ)	Hyundai Motorsport Hyundai i20 WRC	+47m05.7s
R	Bryan Bouffier (F)	Victor Bellotto (F)	M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS14-suspension
R	Kris Meeke (GB)	Paul Nagle (IRL)	Abu Dhabi Total WRT Citroen DS3 WRC	SS12-gearbox
R	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Volkswagen Motorsport VW Polo RWRC	SS11-suspension
R	Eric Camilli (F)	Nicolas Klinger (F)	M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS6-accident
R	Lorenzo Bertelli (I)	Simone Scattolin (I)	FWRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS6-accident
R	Robert Kubica (PL)	Maciej Szczepaniak (PL)	BRC Racing Team Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS3-accident

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ogier, 28; **2** Mikkelsen, 19; **3** Neuville, 15; **4** Ostberg, 12; **5** Lefebvre, 10; **6** Sordo, 10; **7** Tanak, 6; **8** Evans, 4; **9** Lappi, 2; **10** Kremer, 1.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Volkswagen Motorsport, 25; **2** Hyundai Motorsport, 25; **3** Volkswagen Motorsport II, 18; **4** M-Sport WRT, 12; **5** DMACK World Rally Team, 8; **6** Hyundai Motorsport N, 6.

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Entreaux-Rouaine 12.57 miles	Ogier 12m21.9s	Ogier	Meeke +4.1s
SS2 Barles-Seyne 13.77 miles	Meeke 13m06.1s	Meeke	Ogier +6.9s
SS3 Corps-La Salle en Beaumont 1 9.03 miles	Ogier 8m07.5s	Meeke	Ogier +6.0s
SS4 Aspresles Corps-Chauffayer 1 15.88 miles	Meeke 13m55.9s	Meeke	Ogier +6.7s
SS5 Les Costes-Chaillo 1 10.98 miles	Ogier 9m23.6s	Ogier	Meeke +1.5s
SS6 Corps-La Salle en Beaumont 2 9.03 miles	Ogier 8m05.4s	Ogier	Meeke +5.0s
SS7 Aspresles Corps-Chauffayer 2 15.88 miles	Meeke 14m16.9s	Meeke	Ogier +0.8s
SS8 Les Costes-Chaillo 2 10.98 miles	Ogier 9m31.3s	Ogier	Meeke +9.5s
SS9 Lardier et Valenca-Faye 1 31.80 miles	Ogier 30m47.8s	Ogier	Meeke +20.1s
SS10 St Leger Les Melezes-La Batie Neuve 1 10.58 miles	Mikkelsen 12m01.3s	Ogier	Meeke +30.2s
SS11 Lardier et Valenca-Faye 2 31.80 miles	Meeke 30m26.6s	Ogier	Meeke +26.8s
SS12 St Leger Les Melezes-La Batie Neuve 2 10.58 miles	Neuville 11m39.6s	Ogier	Meeke +29.1s
SS13 Sisteron-Thoard 22.59 miles	Neuville 22m55.4s	Ogier	Mikkelsen +1m59.7s
SS14 Col del'Orme-St Laurent 1 7.47 miles	Ogier 8m15.0s	Ogier	Mikkelsen +2m02.2s
SS15 La Bollene Vesubie-Peira Cava 13.20 miles	Mikkelsen 14m09.2s	Ogier	Mikkelsen +1m48.6s
SS16 Col del'Orme-St Laurent 2 (Power Stage) 7.47 miles	Ogier 8m09.6s	Ogier	Mikkelsen +1m54.5s



Elektromobilität bewegt weltweit
Internationale Konferenz des Bundes
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Who is Alejandro Agag?

The Formula E CEO is at the heart of a motorsport revolution, but retains a relatively low profile. His career to date provides hints that this will not remain the case for long

By Scott Mitchell, Features Editor

[@ScottAutosport](#)

Alejandro Agag is used to the company of powerful men. Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and George W Bush are all present as *Autosport* meets him in his office at Formula E HQ.

“You see the picture where I’m in the Oval Office?” he asks. “I was really young then. When I was 25 I was appointed private assistant to the Spanish prime minister. For three years I was basically going with him all over the world.”

This business-admin graduate from the Colegio Universitario de Estudios Financieros in Madrid has become the driving force of a motorsport revolution, via one of Spain’s prominent political parties, the GP2 Series and Queens Park Rangers Football Club.

As we talk, the photographs across the room serve as evidence of the type of political career Agag was building for himself. They are a telling glimpse into the making of a man whose standing in motorsport is growing in similar fashion to the championship he runs.

“I’ve always been, in a way, a bit contrarian,” he says. “In politics I was the youngest Spanish MEP. In the parliamentary group, I was 10 years younger than the next guy.”

“I had crazy ideas, out-of-the-box initiatives. I really learned not to be afraid of proposing things that might sound crazy. A lot of the time, if something sounds crazy, it’s a good sign, it means you’re on the right road. I apply that to everything I do.”

That’s good grounding for the CEO of a series that divides opinion and is a tangent to the rest of the motorsport world. But

we’ll get to that. Agag’s talking about his meteoric political rise.

“I was very ideological,” he says of his younger self, who joined the youth organisation of Partido Popular at 18, while at university: “I had very strong ideas and beliefs. It all happened very quickly. Not a lot of people in the party spoke languages and that’s what allowed me to take the international relations side.”

“When I finished university I got a position [deputy secretary general of the European People’s Party] very quickly in Brussels, when I was 23.”

Three years later he became Jose Maria Aznar’s private assistant, at 25. Within three years he was elected to become the youngest Spaniard in history in the European Parliament. At the same age, he became secretary general of the EPP, focusing on economic matters for the following three years.

It’s at this point Formula E fans have a lot to thank Ana Aznar for. “When I got married, I had a conflict of interest because my wife was the daughter of my boss at the time,” Agag explains. “So I retired. If not for my personal circumstances, I would definitely still be in politics today. I really enjoyed it and I was going in a really good direction.”

The incompatibility with his political career of Agag’s marriage, together with a pre-existing social relationship with Flavio Briatore and Bernie Ecclestone, pushed him towards motorsport. By 2003, Agag was brokering Formula 1 sponsorship and television-rights deals in Spain,

“I didn’t have any job, really,” he says. “To be honest, the problem when you have a career in something, and you’re at a certain level, is you have to start from zero again. That’s when we started working around the Spanish angle of Formula 1.”

Briatore’s joint role as a team boss and a manager was >>



High society: with Presidents Clinton (left) and Bush (right)



Agag says Formula E is close to the vision he had for the series



MILLER/LAT



SBLOXHAM/LAT

Beijing 2014, the debut of the series, makes Agag proud

about to bring Fernando Alonso into the limelight. Ecclestone, Agag says, was struggling to sell the TV rights in Spain.

“That’s when Flavio and I went to FOM to buy the rights,” he continues, “and try to sell them on.” They were successful, securing a six-year deal with the Telecino TV channel.

“We were almost betting on a person,” Agag continues. “It was a bet on Fernando Alonso. If he’d done a couple of races, done bad, gone out – like so many do – we would probably have a catastrophic business.”

It’s at this point, Agag admits, that the motorsport fan in him started to take control. “It wasn’t my only activity at the time,” he says of his commercial ventures in F1. “TV rights and sponsorship brokerage became quite a significant part of the motorsport business, but also I was doing my own financial advisory for some very large corporations around the world.

“Then I liked motorsport more than the rest, so it started being more and more motorsport. I thought I had something missing if I didn’t become a competitor or racer.

“I was too old to be a driver, but I wanted to compete and race. The other way is to own a team...”

This is where the autographed crash helmets adorning a cabinet next to his desk, once worn by racers such as Sergio Perez, Vitaly Petrov and Lucas di Grassi, come from. They’re keepsakes from another period Agag remembers fondly and during which another friendship, with countryman Adrian Campos, was key.

A 20 per cent stake in the Campos GP2 team became full ownership for the 2009 season, by which time Campos himself was immersing himself in the (ultimately unsuccessful) HRT

Formula 1 project. Barwa Addax, an amalgamation of the existing team sponsor and Agag’s company Addax Capital LLP, was born.

“It was a personal decision, wanting to race, to really know what it is inside,” recalls Agag. “GP2 taught me a lot of what really having a team is, from a racing point of view – you’re never so upset as when you lose

a race or break a car – and from the financial side of managing the team. Which is really helpful because now, when I have teams in Formula E come to me, I can always immediately catch them out on the bullshit.

“It’s quite different. Business is business, but emotions have a big part in racing. Business is very straightforward – you know where you are. In racing the emotional side and the relationship with the driver is very important. Guys like Checo, Vitaly, Lucas... they became real friends.”

For someone who has rubbed shoulders with powerful world leaders, advised his own country’s prime minister and broken new ground in the European Parliament, motorsport seems a cinch by comparison. But not the way Agag’s been doing it.

“I had to learn everything, know the people, gain credibility,” he says. “I’ve been in motorsport now for 14 years, but it’s been a very slow progression. People take time to respect you because you have to prove yourself. You need time for everything. You cannot come in and the next day be a huge star.

“There’s a certain homework you need to do, so I did sponsorship, I did TV rights, I did racing. People start saying, ‘OK this guy came, took a team that was not in very good shape, they became champions.’ We did what we had to in GP2, we got that experience, and then I wanted to take that next step – Formula E.

“It’s the first thing I’ve done in motorsport, everything else has been preparation for this.”

This brings us onto familiar ground. And it’s remarkable how a running theme has developed as Agag talks. Everything he has done has had the hallmark of a labour of love. So it continues to with Formula E.

“I’ve always been very close to climate issues and it was important to me,” he says. “I had an early discussion with JT [Jean Todt] at a dinner, about electric cars and mobility. The other person was vice-president of the commission of enterprise and industry of the EU. He went on and on and on about electrification. I thought this was a very interesting way to bring motorsport and those issues together.”

The FIA launched a tender to look for promoters for the championship, but Agag says he didn’t know about it until halfway through.

“There were a couple of people bidding for the tender, and I spoke to them and said, ‘I would like to run this thing,’” he explains. “Those guys didn’t continue, so I put together my own group with financing. And we managed to get this contract.”

As we talk, the announcement that Jaguar will be joining the series is still a couple of weeks away. But we both know it’s coming, and talk about it at length – the kudos it will bring, the statement of intent it issues...

Halfway through season two, Formula E still has plenty of doubters, and detractors. But not nearly as many as it did in the beginning, a time in which Agag admits he felt the world was against him. The topic of Beijing 2014, the championship’s debut, brings a huge smile to his face.

“That was the best moment of my professional life,” he beams. “It was a really, really ambitious project. Very challenging. Many people thought we weren’t going to make it. And we made it, against the general opinion of people. It’s very satisfying.”

How many times were you told it would fail?

“All the time. So many people thought it was totally crazy, unachievable, completely impossible. Which kept motivating me, and us as a team. We knew many people were against us – you look at some articles at the beginning and it was very tough. We just went for it.”

The contrarian chuckles but he is growing ever more confident of having the last laugh too. Last March, Liberty Global and Discovery Communication

became minority shareholders in Formula E. In September, the series confirmed a Hong Kong race for season three exactly a year in advance, a major departure from the last-minute planning of the inaugural campaign. Jaguar joined in December, partnering with Williams Advanced Engineering. Nine of the championship’s 10 teams will run their own technology from the 2016-17 season.

Everything’s coming up electric, and it’s music to Agag’s ears.

“People thought we wouldn’t make the first race,” he says. “Then they thought we wouldn’t finish the first season, that we’d run out of money or people would lose attention.

“It’s helped change the perception from a lot of people about the long-term viability of Formula E. And when you have manufacturers, they want to make sure the championship will be around for a long time.

“Before the transaction with Liberty and Discovery, the reply to the question ‘are you going to be around?’ was ‘we hope so’. Now, the answer is ‘for sure’.

“We could have run out of money. We had three candidates to invest in Formula E but you know how these things are: some things go wrong, some things go well. There was a concern, but luckily we avoided that scenario. We were, a few times, like this far [pinches fingers together].

“And not only that time! But that’s normal. This is an entrepreneurial business. When you start something, you just start it. Then you worry about the problems. A few times we were close to the wall but we were never in a situation where we said, ‘That’s it! We always had a Plan A, B and C.’

By now, Agag is speaking very openly. He’s in full flow. >>

“GP2 taught me a lot from a racing point of view. When I have teams come to me, I immediately catch them out on the bullshit”

**“The job in F1 is taken.
But I couldn’t really leave
Formula E for anything
else for quite a long
period of time”**



Ex-QPR boss Agag with
Charlton fan Mitchell



And when the conversation eventually moves away from his career and onto a bit of a quickfire news Q&A, the answers don't dry up. Agag is easy to access and to talk to, and open to discussing something that isn't on his immediate agenda.

It's a refreshing change of pace from a leading series official, one that makes you think where he could end up in the future, what the next entry on his bulging CV will be. He's been linked with Formula 1 before. What does he think of that?

"Of course people have asked me," he says. "In F1, the job is taken, it has for many years and Bernie has done an amazing job there. I am fully committed to Formula E, everybody can be replaced and I can be replaced, but I think I can have an important contribution to Formula E and still the championship is at an early stage.

"I have been the one putting together all the supporters and making them believe in this project. I couldn't really leave Formula E for anything else for quite a long period of time.

Formula E's gaining popularity and credibility in racing



We're in the take-off phase. Maybe when we consolidate the project and it looks very solid, then you see what to do – maybe you stay and enjoy the ride for 20 years, or 30..."

Whatever the next two or three decades bring, the office he holds will naturally sway the attributes that presently make him an attractive interviewee and series boss. But Agag has a knack for nurturing close working relationships and a political background that's proven a handy asset in negotiating the minefield of motorsport. That's a skill set that's fundamentally transferrable. It's what took him to the upper echelons of politics and it's what has enabled him to come into motorsport from the outside and entrench himself in a significant position.

Tracing his career to its origins shows this is a man to whom success is not a stranger, and it is difficult to think of where he would look out of place.

After all, Alejandro Agag is used to the company of powerful men. ❧



Briatore (left) was key to the QPR buyout Agag was involved in

'Would I run another football club? No!'

FROM THE BRINK OF bankruptcy to the promised land of the Premier League... The story of Queens Park Rangers Football Club's rescue from the threat of liquidation in 2007 and promotion to English football's top tier four years later was the subject of a fly-on-the-wall documentary some years ago. And Alejandro Agag was a key secondary character.

"I've seen *The Four Year Plan*," he says when *Autosport* mentions the film released in late 2011. "My kids found the copy yesterday! They played it and came to me and said, 'Dad, you cannot swear so much!' The documentary was a crazy idea – by Amit [Bhatia], I think.

"We had these guys following us for four years. It's nice to have it because you can look back and remember those things that happened – it was definitely a very crazy ride. It's very difficult because they had so much footage and they tried to put this story together.

"I think they did OK, they didn't have a lot of budget and did what they could. It's more like a souvenir of the time, which is good for us. I don't know if people enjoyed watching it."

Autosport did. Agag,

Flavio Briatore and Bernie Ecclestone were part of the billionaire buyout of QPR, which also featured steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal and his son-in-law Bhatia. Ecclestone took a back seat – "he was quite busy with his own things" – but Briatore (chairman), Agag (managing director) and Bhatia (vice chairman) had key day-to-day roles.

Agag, a football fan himself and Real Madrid club member, remembers the experience fondly.

"That was a totally crazy experience," he

"We were really out of our comfort zone. It was totally crazy"

laughs. "It was fantastic, great...! It was all Flavio. He convinced Bernie. The world of football was so different to motorsport – we were really, really out of our comfort zone.

"I did dodge a bullet, I wasn't shown so much because I wasn't important. Flavio and Amit were really the leaders of the project so they were much more involved in the film. Me, I was lucky to speak

and say sensible things!"

But would he run a football club again?

"Football is a distorted business, where the owner has to put so much money in to be hated by the fans," Agag points out. "It's very stupid to be a team owner – you spend all this money from your own pocket and then the fans, who spend £20, come and insult you!"

"It was a very hands-on management style of QPR, which in the end paid off. We sacked seven managers until we found the right one, Neil Warnock, who took us to the Premier League. So we did the right thing. At the end, the only way to judge a project is with the result. And we won. So I guess we did something right with it."

After the promotion the motorsport trio exited QPR, with a soon-to-be-familiar F1 face in Tony Fernandes taking charge. Agag has no regrets.

"It was a fantastic experience but with a lot of bumps in the road," he says. "It's a lot more unpredictable than the world of racing. I'm sure if you asked Flavio or Bernie if they'd buy another football club the answer would be no – definitely if you ask me, the answer would be no. I'd much rather be in motorsport."



Stirling Moss returned to the cockpit of a contemporary F1 car when he tested the Brabham BT52 at Brands Hatch

Moss, Senna and the Brabham BT52

A new book celebrating the Brabham BT52 has just been published by Haynes. Here, author **Andrew van de Burgt** introduces excerpts on the testing exploits of one established legend, and one soon-to-be legend

I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD WHEN THE BT52 MADE A winning debut in the 1983 Brazilian Grand Prix. My mum still has a load of my old school exercise books from that period and, on the inside front covers, margins and elsewhere, there are doodles of arrow-shaped racing cars in blue-and-white livery.

Since the BT52 workshop manual has come out I've been amazed by the number of people who've told me it was their favourite racing car. There's something about it that just taps into people's (especially schoolboys') perception of what a racing car should look like.

Of course, there's far more to the BT52 than its looks. The Brabham team of 1983 was a small one even by the standards of the time, but it employed some of the brightest, most resourceful and ingenious people in the paddock. It was through their pioneering of tyre warmers, mid-race refuelling and quick-change engines and gearboxes that they could slay the giants of Ferrari and Renault.

The manual was a tough assignment, but one that I loved, and I hope this is apparent throughout.

Stirling Moss

A full 21 years after his horrific crash at Goodwood brought a premature end to his Formula 1 career, Stirling Moss was invited to drive a Brabham BT52 at Brands Hatch on the shorter Indy version of the track.

"Stirling worked closely with us on our end-of-season videos," recalls Herbie Blash. "We produced everything at the Brabham factory and then Stirling would come along and add a commentary for us. He's obviously a great friend of Bernie's as they go back to when they first started racing. I can't remember whether it was Bernie or me who asked Stirling if he would like to try the car. It wasn't a big publicity stunt at all. It was lovely to see and it was lovely for Stirling to test what was in those days such an up-to-date, modern race car."

Moss arrived at the track with his blue Dunlop overalls, Herbert Johnson crash hat and goggles.

"The Brabham boys were a bit taken aback," says Moss in his book *Stirling Moss: My Racing Life*, co-written with Simon Taylor, "but I told them that was how I'd always dressed to drive a racing car and I wasn't about to change now. I had special dispensation from the FIA, which meant I could run with my open-face helmet and still wear silk overalls, not the big, clumsy things they were wearing then. Only Sir Jack Brabham and I were allowed to do that."

After a series of tracking laps behind a camera car, Moss was let loose in the flame-spitting racer.

"Until you really tried to approach the limit the car was quite easy to drive with the huge grip from those big slicks. But the power was simply unbelievable: when the turbo came in at around 8000rpm it made the whole car feel like it was going into orbit. I was enjoying myself so much that I stayed out a long time, and after 40 laps I spun at what we used to call Kidney Bend. But I carried on, and in all I did 60 laps, getting down to a best of 46.6 seconds. They told me Nigel

Mansell had done a test there a few weeks before and done a 41.1 seconds, so I reckoned that 5.5 seconds off the pace wasn't too bad in a completely strange type of car against somebody who drove one all the time.

"It was quite an eye-opening experience as it obviously had much more power than anything I was used to. The experience really did impress me immensely."

Three other drivers were present for testing that day and comparison with their times is interesting: Pierluigi Martini set the pace with a lap of 41.75s, while Davy Jones and Ivan Capelli both recorded best times of 43.7s.

Capelli recalls being impressed by the level of commitment Moss showed: "He was really pushing in the car, not just cruising for the footage – he was really testing the car. He was in his fifties at the time but he was at full throttle when he could. I was amazed by the fact that he was really pushing, but, no, he wasn't quicker than me! But you could see that he was taking it seriously and enjoying it."

Ayrton Senna

When Riccardo Patrese decided to go to Alfa Romeo, having apparently asked for more money than Bernie Ecclestone was prepared to offer, the search was on for a new number two for 1984. At Paul Ricard at the end of 1983 there was another batch of young hopefuls who were given their opportunity. Foremost among them was the new British Formula 3 champion, Ayrton Senna, who had made his Formula 1 test debut for Williams a few months earlier, and had recently also tried the Toleman.

On a cold Monday morning, Piquet went out first to set up the car and establish a benchmark time. The new world champion recorded a lap of 1m 05.9s, according to the *Autosport* report of the test. Despite a spin, Senna then recorded a best lap of 1m 07.9s, which was equalled by Pierluigi Martini, who was having his second run in the car, his first having been at Brands Hatch.

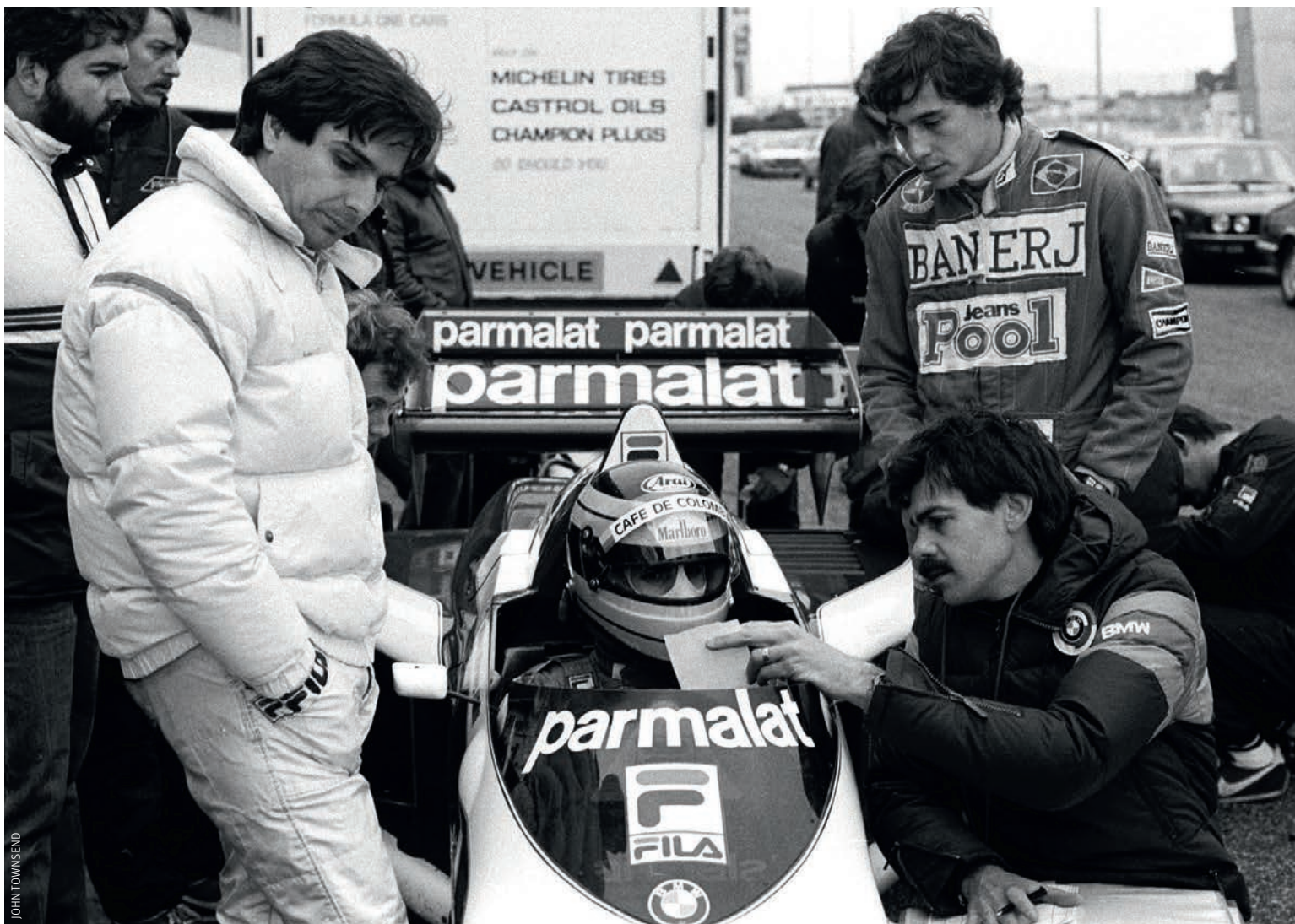
Senna's time in the car impressed everybody at Brabham, but any hopes the team had of acquiring his services were thwarted when Piquet spoke to Calisto Tanzi, CEO of Parmalat, and told him that he would go elsewhere if Senna was taken on.

At the Paul Ricard test Piquet then turned to a modified version of the BT52B in which he set a new 'flat-bottom' lap record in 1m02.6s.

Martini was a little more prepared for it than the other young hopefuls under assessment at Paul Ricard.

"The car was good," remembers Martini. "There was a lot of understeer because the rear downforce was huge with the turbo engine, but in the fast corners it was very well balanced."

"At the time Senna had just won the British Formula 3 Championship and I was winning the European Formula 3 Championship, so we considered ourselves to be rivals – although later on the relationship changed and we became >>



JOHN TOWNSEND

good friends. He was very reserved and focused at that test, and quite distant – this is the only thing I remember really. The following day we headed to Macau for the Formula 3 Grand Prix: he won the race and I retired quite early in a tangle with Martin Brundle.”

Another up-and-coming driver present at Paul Ricard was Colombian driver Roberto Guerrero, who was able to slot in the opportunity ahead of his drive against Senna for Eddie Jordan’s team in the Macau Grand Prix the following weekend. Guerrero was familiar with Cosworth DFV power since he had raced in Formula 1 during 1982 for Ensign and 1983 for Theodore, where he never managed to trouble the score sheets but nevertheless showed up well against team-mate Johnny Cecotto, and he did qualify an impressive 11th at Detroit.

“I had never really driven a turbocharged car before – and talk about a turbo car!” he exclaims. “The turbo lag was so unbelievably bad that I still have no idea how Nelson Piquet was able to drive the car. It was hard enough to drive at a place like Paul Ricard, so I can’t imagine what it must have been like at Monaco or Detroit. I kept on bringing the car in, saying, ‘There’s something wrong! There’s no way that this is normal.’ I remember on the back straightaway how it would kick you up the behind. It was just unbelievable how fast it went. You would put your foot on the gas and count 1–2–3 and then, boom, 800bhp all of a sudden. Wow!”

Guerrero’s best time was 1m08.6s. He then flew with Senna to Macau, where he qualified on the front row next to the

Brazilian and went on to finish behind him in the race.

“The test obviously wasn’t very successful for me,” Guerrero admits. “I didn’t do super well as I clearly thought there was something wrong with that car. The funny thing is that both Senna and myself were leaving that evening for the Formula 3 race in Macau, so it was a bit of a rush to do the test and then

run to the airport and get to Macau for official practice, which started the next day. I was already a Formula 1 driver and I was put together with these little Formula 3 guys. Senna qualified on pole and I was second, and he won the race and I was second – and I remember being kind of mad that a Formula 3 driver beat me. But as it happened I’m not so mad any more as he ended up being one of the most talented drivers ever. It was pretty cool.”

Brabham’s number-two seat for 1984 was eventually awarded to the Fabi brothers, Teo and Corrado.

Teodorico Fabi was a star of European Formula Ford before enjoying success in Formula 3 and Formula 2. This led to a Formula 1 debut with Toleman in 1982, but it was his stunning rookie performances

in CART that brought him to the attention of Brabham.

He spent 1983 racing in the US in Champ Cars, where he had proved to be an impressive rookie for the Forsythe team, finishing second in the championship and taking four wins. As a result, for 1984 he ran a dual campaign in both Formula 1 and Champ Car. When there was a clash between the two, Corrado, who had raced for Osella in Formula 1 during 1983, would step in. ❄

Piquet and Senna look on as Roberto Guerrero gets ready for his test run at Paul Ricard



RACE OF CHAMPIONS

Rebaque: the forgotten BT52 racer

THE LAST-EVER NON-championship Formula 1 race took place at Brands Hatch on April 10 1983. Since the Race of Champions clashed with a major Group C sportscar race at Monza (where Riccardo Patrese was driving for the works Lancia team) and a key Michelin tyre test at Paul Ricard (where Nelson Piquet was a participant), Brabham asked Mexican driver Hector Rebaque to step in.

Rebaque entered 58 grands prix between 1977 and 1981 for Hesketh and Brabham as well as for his eponymous team. He raced for Brabham for part of the 1980 season and the whole of 1981, but then failed to find a Formula 1 drive for 1982 and accepted an offer to race in CART in the US.

Rebaque's BT52 was one of just 13 cars entered for the Race of Champions, but a significant presence was Stefan Johansson's Spirit-Honda, in which the Japanese firm's V6 turbo Formula 1 engine was making its debut.

"It's a long story," Rebaque says of his one-off drive. "I

finished the relationship with Bernie in 1981 when Parmalat wanted an Italian driver. At that moment he called and told me to wait until he could figure out how not to have an Italian driver. But it was too late for me to go to another team, so I decided to retire.

"While I was retired from

"I hadn't driven an F1 car in a year and a half – testing would have helped!"

racing I was invited to race Indycars and I think I did six races, but it wasn't really what I wanted to do. Then Bernie came back to me with the idea of having a third Brabham with a Ford turbo. The intention was to make the car for 1983 but this kept on getting delayed, so by the time the Race of Champions came Bernie said, 'Why don't you come and drive the car otherwise by the time they

finish the engine you'll be completely out of shape."

This offer came on the Friday a week before the race. Rebaque was back in Mexico City at the time. He jumped on a plane and headed to Brands Hatch, but there was no time to test.

He struggled to get to grips with the BT52 and the BMW turbo engine. He qualified tenth, 3.8 seconds off the pole position time set by Keke Rosberg's Williams-Cosworth.

Things did not go much better in the race. Unhappy with the handling of the car, Rebaque made an unscheduled pitstop for a fresh set of tyres, but when this failed to improve the balance he retired, citing tyre and suspension problems.

"I hadn't driven in F1 for a year and a half," says Rebaque. "Some testing would have helped. I found the car very difficult to drive. We made a few changes and I think we got a little bit lost on the set-up. And that was a shame because it was great for me to be there with the Brabham team."

Rebaque did have some prior experience of the BMW turbo, having had a role in the development of the BT50 during the 1981 season. Indeed, he could have played a more significant part in the history of the combination had the decision to enter him in the 1981 Italian Grand Prix in the turbo car not been overturned.

"During 1981 I'd been at all the testing sessions where we'd developed the BMW engine," he says. "There was an idea to race the BMW turbo at Monza in 1981 and the plan was that I would drive the car. But the championship was very tight for Nelson and the team was worried that it would be very difficult for the car to finish the race, so at the end of the day the decision was taken that we would go with two Cosworth cars in order to have more chances of taking points."

After the outing at Brands Hatch, Rebaque returned to Mexico and waited for Bernie to call about the Brabham-Ford plan. But after six weeks or so of waiting, the call that

finally came was to inform him that the project was dead. Rebaque believes that the engine never reached expectations on the dyno.

With this disappointment, Rebaque decided to retire again. Since then he has concentrated on running a successful architecture business in Mexico City.

"I didn't want to drive anything else," he said. "Even though I went to drive Indy and won a race, it wasn't really for me. So I decided that if I wasn't going to have a ride in F1 I'd go and do something else. I was still young. I retired at 26 – I could have raced for another 10 years, but it didn't happen."

Despite the small entry, the Race of Champions was an exciting encounter. Rene Arnoux stormed into an early lead in his Ferrari but wore out his tyres. This allowed Rosberg to take over the lead, but he too was slowed by tyre wear. Danny Sullivan moved his Tyrrell onto the tail of the Williams, but could not find a way by, falling just half a second short.

Rebaque never got to grips with the BT52 and eventually pulled out of the Race of Champions





Nissan's quintessential hero

His profile in Europe is virtually zero, yet with four Super GT titles in five years Ronnie Quintarelli has a claim to being one of the greatest GT drivers in the world

By Marcus Simmons, Deputy Editor

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ISHIHARA/LAT

Robert Kubica or Ronnie Quintarelli? Chances are you know all about one of them, very little about the other. Their destinies intertwined at a point where, in 2002, Kubica was propelled towards Formula 1 and Quintarelli to Japan. Fourteen years later, the enthusiastic and charming Italian is relatively unknown on his home continent, yet a superstar in Japan, where he has carried Nissan to four Super GT titles in the past five years.

In his first season of car racing, Quintarelli had fallen just two points shy of winning the 2000 Italian Formula Renault title (the champion was a certain Felipe Massa). He then competed in the FRenault Eurocup in 2001, before making a sideways step into the short-lived Formula Volkswagen series for '02. Kubica, meanwhile, had raced in FRenault in '01, but looked set to step back to the World Karting Championship with the Birel team – until he won a place on the Renault Driver Development scheme, assuring him of a second season in FRenault.

Quintarelli was therefore offered the Birel seat, combining his karting season with FVW, and bringing him to the attention of

ex-Formula 1 driver Pierre-Henri Raphanel, who had been competing with the Inging team in GT racing in Japan.

“Thanks to the good results in karting, there was an article about me in a French racing magazine,” recalls Quintarelli. “It was lucky – Raphanel read it and was impressed, and he decided to contact me and asked if I was interested to go to Japan and have a Formula 3 test with Inging at the end of the season. The test went quite well, and they offered me a two-year contract.”

After finding his feet in 2003, Quintarelli romped to the '04 F3 title with Inging. He graduated to FNippon in '05 with Kondo Racing as well as contesting a one-off Super GT season with the SARD Toyota squad. When Inging expanded into FNippon in '06, Quintarelli rejoined his old team, and gave Inging its maiden race victory in the category in '07.

“It was a very positive two seasons,” he says. “The level was really high – we had more than 20 cars and a lot of foreign drivers. For a new team it was very good.”

“At the same time I was doing some Super GT races – not full seasons – and the turning point was at the end of 2007. Thanks to the victory I had in FNippon and some good races, Nissan offered me to drive one of their GT500 cars in Super GT. NISMO [Nissan's motorsport arm] in Japan is very popular;



from the outside I liked the atmosphere of Nissan and when I got the offer I was very happy.”

For 2008, Quintarelli joined the Nissan GT squad of Japanese racing hero Masahiro Hasemi, while continuing in FNippon with the Toyota-affiliated Inging. This created difficulties...

“The relationship with Inging was still good, but honestly they didn’t want me to move to Nissan. So I lost the deep relationship I had with them.”

Super GT is where drivers in Japan earn their proper salaries, with many merely covering their expenses in FNippon and its successor, Super Formula. Since the end of 2008, when he left the Inging fold, Quintarelli has not raced in the single-seater class: “Nissan don’t supply an engine... I had chances and offers, but it was Toyota and Honda and they also wanted me to drive with their teams in GT. I didn’t want to leave Nissan. I was a bit

“I had offers for Formula Nippon, but it was Toyota and Honda, and I didn’t want to leave Nissan”

upset because I couldn’t find a seat, but at the same time things were going better and better in Super GT. Now I’m 36, and I’m happy just driving in Super GT.”

From Hasemi, Quintarelli moved to another Nissan team, former racing superstar Kazuyoshi Hoshino’s Impul squad,

for 2010, before making another switch in 2011, to MOLA. This was thanks to Super GT’s tyre war, in which Bridgestone, Yokohama, Dunlop and Michelin fight it out. “MOLA had a long history in the smaller GT300 class,” he says, “and they’d been trying to step up to GT500 [the top class] for

many years. In 2011 they had a sponsor and Nissan wanted to increase by one car, because they needed a car on Michelin tyres, so they gave the opportunity to MOLA.

“Because I had experience on the Michelin tyres from 2009, which was the first season they came back to Japan after their >>



ISHIHARA / LAT

Quintarelli brought the Inging team its maiden Formula Nippon victory in 2007

F1 experience, I knew a lot about the tyres. It was amazing for them to win the title in their first season in GT500.”

Even more amazingly, Quintarelli made it two out of two in 2012, and now Nissan headhunted its Italian star and his co-driver Masataka Yanagida for its factory team: NISMO. “It was the first time in 2011 that Nissan won the title with a private team,” says Quintarelli. “Even when I was driving with Hasemi and Impul, NISMO staff would tell me, ‘If you do a good job, you step up to works team and you can win the title!’ So, winning it with MOLA, Nissan were happy but NISMO were a bit... In Nissan they give the same parts, the same treatment as the factory team to all the satellite teams, but it’s important for the factory team to win. That car is representing Nissan, and the number 23 [in Japanese, the number 2 translates to ‘ni’, and the number 3 to ‘san’].

“When they offered me to step up to the factory team I was really happy, and your value with the fans in Japan takes a step up. Together with me, Yanagida came and even Michelin tyres, so it was a block move to the factory car. In 2013 we had good races, we were fighting for the championship until the final race, but compared with Toyota [Lexus] and Honda we were missing some speed. One of the reasons was that in the middle of the season we already started to develop the new-generation car for

2014, so all the energy in NISMO was focusing on that.”

The switch to new machinery in 2014 made what was already a great driver’s formula even better, with more downforce and a power increase to 600bhp cutting lap times for the now two-litre-turbo carbon-monocoque projectiles by three to four seconds. This was also the year when Nissan moved Tsugio Matsuda across from Impul – where he had partnered Quintarelli in 2010 – to replace Yanagida in the #23 car. By the time 2015 came around, #23 had become #1, and it will be again in ’16...

A record of four titles in five years is impressive in any series, but in Super GT, which operates under a draconian success-ballast system, the odds surely become even longer. How does Quintarelli do it? “It’s not easy, you know,” he says. “At times it’s really tough even to score points. Basically you need the

main driver to lead the team, the car development, and the tyre development. You have to understand with your tyre manufacturer how to develop during the season in many different conditions: hot, cold, wet, monsoon. One of the key points to my titles has been working with Michelin. In 2009 I was working with the same engineers as they had in F1. At that time they had just one car, so I was the development driver and they were ready to work my way.

“Also, living in Japan since 2003, I can speak Japanese and that

“One of the key points to my titles has been Michelin”

When Quintarelli turned down F1

RONNIE QUINTARELLI HAD two flirtations with Formula 1, both of them with back-of-the-grid teams.

In 2004, after winning that season’s Japanese Formula 3 Championship, he was one of many who were reported as being part of a multi-driver ‘super test’ run by Minardi at Misano, but Quintarelli never drove the car. “Thanks to the title of 2004 I went to visit the Minardi factory,” he says.

“I met Giancarlo Minardi and there was some contact, to test or something like that, but it never happened.”

Two years later, with Quintarelli now competing in Formula Nippon, he did drive an F1 car, for the Midland team, during a test at Silverstone.

“That was just because there was a friend of mine who had helped me earlier in my career when I stepped up to

Formula Renault: Manfredi Ravetto [best-known recently as Caterham F1 team boss],” he says. “He was working with Colin Kolles [who ran the Midland squad]. I was in contact with him and it was not a real test – in Italy there was a festival near my home and they wanted to run a car there, with me driving it.

“It [the Silverstone run] was just an installation for the car, to get used to it for the event.”

One year further down the line, in 2007, Quintarelli was offered a race seat with the same team, which was now known as Spyker. “They offered me to drive from the Hungarian GP, because of the contact I had from that test,” he says. “Even the conditions [of the offer] were not that bad, but it was the year they changed drivers many times.

“If I was driving in F1, I would have had to miss some

Formula Nippon races, and I was really focused on that [Quintarelli had just taken his maiden FNippon win, at Okayama]. I had a talk with my team owner in Japan but he said if I left them they would not be happy! If it was a top team in F1, you know... But at that time already the aim was to try and succeed in Japan, to become a top driver there.”

That was a decision that paid off.



ISHIHARA / LAT



ISHIHARA / LAT

helps with the team – it’s easier with a common language.”

Quintarelli has won two titles apiece with Yanagida and Matsuda, and he says they are two very different drivers: “Yanagida-san is very professional and really put me in the leading position inside the team. He was supporting me, saying, ‘What do you need?’ When he was missing something at some stages in the season, we were working together and I would give him advice. He was like a brother to me.

“Matsuda-san is a really talented driver – he won FNippon titles in 2007 and ’08 so he has a lot of speed. But being Nippon champion, he wanted to be the star as well! In 2010 at Impul it didn’t go so well together – he had been with them a long time, he wanted to give the last word to the team all the time. It was not perfect in terms of communication.

“In 2014 when he moved to NISMO we decided, ‘OK, we try to work together better.’ Thanks to his speed, it helped us win the 2014 title. In Super GT you have Q1 and Q2, but both drivers have to drive. When we got the handicap weight he was driving in Q1, and in difficult conditions he was every time going through and giving me the chance to drive in Q2. His speed was one of the key points to win the title, and we really worked well together. In 2015 the relationship was even better, because with success it deepens and improves.”

It was Matsuda who joined the ill-fated Nissan LMP1 project for Le Mans, with Quintarelli kept back in Japan with the prospect of taking a turn in the Fuji 6 Hours – a chance to return to the global radar: “NISMO said, ‘You don’t move from Japan – you need to stay here to lead the team because Matsuda-san is going to Le Mans. If you go as well then we lose our way.’ They said if the development went well I could drive at Fuji, but you know what happened...”

It doesn’t matter. Quintarelli is happy where he is. He doesn’t even have any desire to dip his toe back into Europe with Nissan’s Blancpain Endurance title-winning team: “I’ve tried the GT3 car in Japan and I don’t like it at all; it’s like a touring car!” In a parallel universe, maybe Kubica got that Birel kart seat and moved to Japan, while Quintarelli went to F1...

“You never know what is going to happen in life,” he says. “Small details; your life might change. But I’m happy!” ✨

Quintarelli had successful but very different working relationships with co-drivers Yanagida (left) and Matsuda



EBREY / LAT

Quintarelli tested the Midland at Silverstone in '06



ISHIHARA / LAT

Ford's new era begins

The talismanic manufacturer returns with its new GT programme at this weekend's Daytona 24 Hours. But the American racing effort is only half the story

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

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When Ford took the wraps off its Ford GT supercar at the Detroit motor show in January 2015 there was no mention of racing. Or rather no mention of any competition plans for a car that clearly tipped its hat to the line of machines

that claimed four victories at the Le Mans 24 Hours for the marque in the 1960s. But the talk of that racing pedigree at the launch, and in particular a 1-2-3 in the French enduro in 1966, left no doubts that the machine would take Ford back to the Circuit de la Sarthe.

The Ford GT was all but conceived as a racer that would take on Porsche, Ferrari, Aston Martin and, of course, Chevrolet under GTE rules across Le Mans, the World Endurance Championship and the IMSA SportsCar Championship in North America. The decision to race a car that will make its debut in this weekend's Daytona 24 Hours followed quickly on from the first ideas for the GT. So much so that the carbon-chassis machine was designed with racing in mind, development of road and race car progressing in parallel after the project was signed off in late 2013.

Building the road car was the "first decision", says Dave Pericak, who has led the project in his role as director of the newly created Ford Performance division. "Shortly thereafter, the thought was, hey, let's go racing and let's do it the right way."

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Le Mans victory of Chris Amon and Bruce McLaren with the Ford Mk2 (the successor to the original GT40) using a modern incarnation of those cars came out of a prolonged thought process. That much is keenly illustrated by the back story to the car.

The road to a first full factory Le Mans campaign by Ford since 1982 and the C100 Group C car started when the Canadian Multimatic organisation, which has longstanding links inside and outside motorsport with the car maker, asked a question about potential celebrations for this important birthday.

Any thoughts of joining Porsche, Audi and Toyota in LMP1 were quickly rejected, even though the GT40 originally ran as a prototype and the seven-litre Ford Mk2 and Mk4 that triumphed at Le Mans in 1966 and '67 respectively were Group

"The first decision was the road car, then let's go racing the right way"

Dave Pericak

6 prototypes. Pericak insists GTE is the right place to be.

"We believe this is more relevant," he says. "GTE is more in line with what we are trying to do with the Ford GT. That is, to showcase our engineering prowess and introduce new technologies that will trickle down to the rest of the Ford model line-up."

Multimatic's inquiries about the anniversary initially led to an extensive investigation by the Canadian organisation into the suitability of the sixth-generation Mustang, a car that went on sale last year, for the GTE class.

The conclusion was that the Mustang could not be made competitive, which in turn led to thoughts of some kind of limited-production special carrying the emotive name and galloping-pony emblem. What Multimatic came up with was a design that one insider suggests "looked a bit like a Mustang if you squinted real hard".

That was rejected by Ford, but within weeks it had come back to Multimatic with the idea of a GT40 for the 21st century. The decision to build a GTE version, as Pericak says, followed >>



LEVITT/LAT

quickly thereafter, maybe in as little time as a breath or two.

That early call on the racing plans, explains Pericak, has given Ford “the unique advantage of doing the road car and the race car absolutely in parallel”. Equally important was the way the project has been run, enabling Ford to have a race car running less than 18 months after the decision to produce the GT.

“If you think about the development of a road car in such a short time and a race car in that exact same time, that’s really moving,” he continues. “The programme has run at super-speed. It had to: the party was going to happen with or without us.”

Pericak reports directly to Ford head of product development Raj Nair, who has come to be regarded as the father of the GT. That has allowed for a bit of what Pericak calls “rule-breaking”, but would better be described as “red-tape avoidance”.

There’s been much talk of Ford Performance operating a lean and nimble operation or a kind of skunkworks, but the reality is that Multimatic has been more or less responsible for the entire car. When Ford handed its design brief to Multimatic, former chief designer Brian Willis and aero boss Mark Handford were told they had to use the EcoBoost twin-turbo V6 and that Ford would be responsible for the styling, both exterior and interior.

That has resulted in an extreme carbon-chassis car.

Exactly how extreme isn’t clear yet ahead of its race debut, but those who have seen the racing Ford GT unclothed suggest it looks as though it is waiting for a set of LMP bodywork.

The way was cleared for a composite monocoque at the behest of McLaren when it started work on a GTE version of its MP4-12C in 2012. That project was halted by the ultimately unsuccessful attempt by the FIA and Le Mans organiser the Automobile Club de l’Ouest to bring together the GTE and GT3 rulebooks under the so-called “convergence talks”. Both the old regulations and new rules that come into force for this season stipulate a minimum production run of 300 units for carbon cars: Ford plans to build up to 250 road-going GTs each year over the next five years.

The suspension of the Ford is known to be LMP-style

pushrods and torsion bars. The front dampers are said to be mounted inside the chassis. There’s even talk of a raised nose and what in Formula 1 terminology would be described as a zero keel, which means the lower-wishbone mounting points are almost touching on the underside of an aluminium subframe. (The rules for carbon chassis cars do not allow the suspension pick-up points to be mounted on composite material.)

The Coke-bottle shape at the rear came from Ford’s styling department, as did the flying buttresses between the roof and the rear wheel arches. The Multimatic design team, at the suggestion of company vice-president and motorsport boss Larry Holt, opted to locate the air-to-air intercoolers out in the arches. The buttress acts as a duct to return the cooled air to the engine post-turbocharger, reveals Holt.

“So the air goes into the airbox through the [roof-mounted] duct, through the turbo on each side and gets pumped into the bottom of the charge aircoolers,” he explains. “Then the cold air comes up through the ducts in the buttress and into the throttle.”

The racing version of the 3.5-litre EcoBoost V6, developed by Roush Yates, has two years of development under its belt in the back of Chip Ganassi Racing’s Riley Daytona Prototypes in the Tudor United SportsCar

Championship. That stint included a victory in the Sebring 12 Hours in year one in 2014 and a sixth Daytona 24 Hours triumph for the team in year two in 2015.

Ford forged the relationship with Ganassi as a lead-in to the GT project. There was a need to develop the engine (which was also run by Michael Shank Racing in 2014), but the arrangement was made with an eye on the future and the forthcoming GT programme.

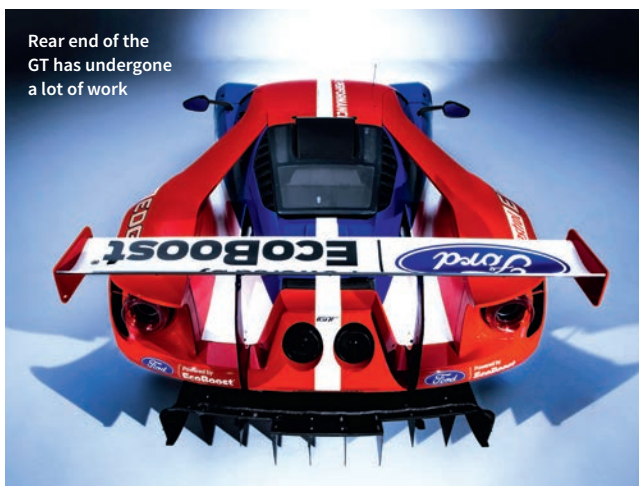
“We decided that we were going to put an EcoBoost engine in the Ford GT, which was a pretty bold statement for us,” explains Pericak. “In order for it to be worthy and a race-proven motor, we decided to put it in a DP.”

“Chip and his team have a hell of a resumé, but you’ve got to make sure that you are compatible with your partners. We

“The programme’s run at super-speed. It had to: the party would happen with or without us” Dave Pericak



Daytona debut will be just the start for the new Ford programme



Rear end of the GT has undergone a lot of work

needed to know that we could work together and we quickly found out that the chemistry was there.”

Ford is competing in both the WEC and the IMSA series under the Ganassi banner. The assault on IMSA’s GT Le Mans class is being made directly from the team’s Indianapolis workshops, while the WEC campaign is run out of premises near Silverstone. This is effectively a Multimatic-run operation – it employs the staff and rents the buildings – under former Aston Martin Racing team principal George Howard-Chappell (who is also programme manager of the race project), but everyone involved in the programme is keen to stress that it is one team. And “one team” is exactly the term they all use, suggesting that those words are written large on some kind of company song sheet.

The idea is that both sides of the operation will be at Le Mans come June. Ford said as early as the launch of the programme in Le Mans week last year that it intended to file entries for the IMSA cars to run alongside the full-season WEC machines at the 24 Hours. It is not allowed to say that it will be there with a quartet of GTs prior to the official release of the entry list on February 5, but a multi-car entry would be another nod to Ford’s history in the great race.

Ford didn’t do things by half at Le Mans in the 1960s – there were eight overt factory cars in the 24 Hours in 1966. ✘



MAUGER/LAT

Ford facilitates Ganassi return

CHIP GANASSI, FOR all his successes as a team owner across multiple disciplines, can’t hide his excitement at taking Ford back to Le Mans. The words “privilege”, “honour” and “passion” pepper his comments about the forthcoming programme, and you get the impression that he means them.

His team’s racing activities may have so far been confined to North America – not forgetting the odd flyaway for Indycar racing – but he has a real enthusiasm for Le Mans. You might have forgotten that he competed in the 24 Hours on one occasion, driving for the Sauber Mercedes Group C

team in 1987 in what turned out to be his final professional race. So he’s got the heritage – and the tie. The ACO sends out neckwear each Christmas, and Ganassi wears his piece of silk circa 1987 with pride and

“I’ve always wanted to go back to Le Mans. It was always in my mind”

was sporting it at the Ford launch at Le Mans last June.

“Really, I do wear it,” he says. “Let’s just say it is in the mix. I’ve always wanted to go back to Le Mans as a team owner, but I’ve been

around racing long enough to know that you don’t want to do it with a humpty-dumpty kind of a deal. I’ve never previously had any concrete plans, but it was something that was always in the back of my mind.”

Ganassi says taking Ford back to Le Mans wasn’t on the table when he signed up with them, which came relatively late in the day ahead of 2014.

“There was nothing official at the time, but we knew something was in the offing,” he explains. “Maybe they wanted to get a look at us up close.

“We knew that if we did a good job there might be something even better in the offing.”



S. BLOXHAM/LAT

Can Ford win Daytona?

The American marque's chances of winning first time out, on home soil, are being talked up. Its fight in the GTLM class could attract greater attention than the one for overall glory

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

🐦 @gazzasportscars



If you've just read the story overleaf about the evolution of the Ford GT, you might be forgiven for thinking that the GT Le Mans battle at this weekend's Daytona 24 Hours is some kind of foregone conclusion.

You'd be forgetting, of course, that the class is a Balance of Performance formula, where the playing field is levelled between the different types of car. And in 2016 that field of play should be rolled yet smoother by a new set of regulations.

The new GTE rulebook created by the FIA and Le Mans organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest allows new freedoms, most pertinently in the area of aerodynamics, that are designed to equate cars as diverse as the mid-engined, carbon-chassis Ford and the rear-engined, steel-unibody Porsche 911 RSR. At the same time, the BoP process has become ever more empirical with the aim not just of matching performance over a lap but also the way the cars achieve their lap times.

How close the cars are for the start of a new era that begins with the opening round of the WeatherTech-sponsored IMSA SportsCar Championship remains

to be seen. The official pre-race test at the Daytona International Speedway earlier this month, the so-called Roar, produced a mixed message. The cars were close on the timesheets, but there was evidence to suggest that not all of the five manufacturers represented in GT Le Mans with a mixture of new and updated cars — Ford, Porsche, Chevrolet, Ferrari and BMW — showed their hands.

“The GTLM BoP appears to have hit Porsche and Ferrari the hardest”

Ford ended up fifth in the timesheets, courtesy of a lap from Joey Hand aboard the #66 Chip Ganassi Racing entry, which was only a tenth and a half off the ultimate pace.

Richard Westbrook, who drives the #67 Ganassi car, insists that sandbagging is a luxury that Ford cannot afford. “We don't have time to play games because we are developing a new car from scratch,” says the Briton. “We are on a steep learning curve and time is not on our side. We went out to continue the development of our car and use every lap we have available to us.”

You will, of course, hear a similar line from the other manufacturers competing.

The confusing — or perhaps that should be suspicious — thing is that the new-style GTE cars were no faster than their predecessors when the rules were created to make the cars quicker, by about two seconds around the long lap at the Le Mans 24 Hours. The fastest time of the Roar went to BMW

with its new turbocharged M6 GTLM, which isn't built to the GTE rules and is in fact a modified GT3 car that the German manufacturer has been given dispensation to run. Lucas Luhr's mark of 1m45.088s compared with last year's pole of

1m43.488s and fastest race lap of 1m43.942s.

Those statistics on their own don't provide conclusive evidence of sandbagging. The revised aero rules, which most notably allow for the ugly, protruding rear diffusers seen on the cars, are likely to come into their own after Daytona.

“Straightline speed is so important at Daytona, so we are all trying to run as little downforce as possible,” says Chevrolet

FORD GT
FORD CHIP GANASSI RACING
#66 Dirk Muller/Joey Hand/Sebastien Bourdais
#67 Richard Westbrook/Ryan Briscoe/Stefan Mucke

GT LE MANS



FERRARI 488 GTE
RISI COMPETIZIONE
#62 Giancarlo Fisichella/Toni Vilander/Davide Rigon/Olivier Beretta
SCUDERIA CORSA
#68 Alessandro Pier Guidi/Alexandre Premat/Daniel Serra/Memo Rojas
SMP RACING
#72 Gianmaria Bruni/James Calado/Andrea Bertolini/Victor Shaytar



BMW M6 GTLM
BMW TEAM RLL
#25 Bill Auberlen/Dirk Werner/Augusto Farfus/Bruno Spengler
#100 Lucas Luhr/John Edwards/Graham Rahal/Kuno Wittmer



PORSCHE 911 RSR
PORSCHE NORTH AMERICA
#911 Nick Tandy/Patrick Pilet/Kevin Estre
#912 Earl Bamber/Frederic Makowiecki/Michael Christensen



CHEVROLET CORVETTE C7.R
CORVETTE RACING
#3 Jan Magnussen/Antonio Garcia/Mike Rockenfeller
#4 Oliver Gavin/Tommy Milner/Marcel Fassler

driver Oliver Gavin, who ended up second in the times at the Roar aboard his updated Corvette C7.R. “You are going to see the real gains in lap time when people start piling on the downforce when we get to the Sebring 12 Hours in March.”

One of the key tenets of the new rules is matching the aero performance of the cars. The BoP set by IMSA mandates minimum wing angles, as well as the gurney height that each make of car must run. This appears to have hit Porsche and Ferrari the hardest.

Porsche, which claimed the GTLM title last year, lagged behind its rivals over the course of the test: the best lap the two CORE Autosport-run cars managed was half a second down on Luhr’s fastest time.

“We were very slow on the straights and traditionally that is where the Porsche has made its time at Daytona,” explains Nick Tandy. “One of the big changes for this year is that IMSA has set minimum wing angles.”

There have been some tweaks to the BoP, published last week, in the wake of the Roar. BMW, which some reckoned was most obviously guilty of sandbagging, has been hardest hit, with a 10mm increase in its rear gurney and a cut in turbo boost through its rev range.

Those changes were made on the basis of the data accrued by IMSA through its mandatory data-logger (a Bosch unit rather than the Magneti Marelli version to be used in the World Endurance Championship). IMSA series manager Geoff Carter reckons that he tries to “stay away from the term sandbagging,” but goes on to explain that, on the basis of the data gathered, the governing body is able “to understand how the cars were underperforming.” He points out that the biggest differential between the fastest lap time of each of the manufacturers and the ideal time based on its best sectors was more than a second and a half. >>

DOLE/LAT

DOLE/LAT

DOLE/LAT

DOLE/LAT

The fight for overall victory

IS THIS THE YEAR THAT an LMP2 car will finally break through and win the Daytona 24 Hours in front of the Daytona Prototypes? It might just be, and for any number of reasons.

Numbers will play a part. There are actually fewer P2s on the entry this year than last – five versus six – but all of them appear to have the potential to make some kind of impact. Twelve months ago, the pole-winning Michael Shank Racing Ligier-Honda JSP2 was the only real contender for victory among the European-style prototypes.

This time around, Shank is joined as a prospect by Extreme Speed Motorsports (now with a Ligier run by the works OAK team and fastest at the

Roar), SMP Racing with its Nissan-powered BR Engineering BR01 (fourth fastest at the test) and two SpeedSource Lolas (now with an AER petrol engine derived from its Indy Lights powerplant).

Ranged against the P2s are seven DPs. Six of those can be regarded as real contenders. Added to their number should be the DeltaWing, which completes the 13-strong entry in the Prototype division.

The on-going Balance of Performance process will also play a role. Successive rules bosses at IMSA have likened the DPs and P2 to “apples and oranges” as they have attempted to equate their performance, but IMSA series manager Geoff



Carter reckons they are now “as close as they have ever been”.

“When the P2s first arrived [in ’14], Daytona was definitely a DP track,” says Wayne Taylor Racing DP driver Ricky Taylor. “We achieved our speed in different ways, but now it is getting closer. Look at the speed-trap times from the Roar, and you’ll see that the Lola-Mazda was fastest.”

The power advantage of the heavier DPs has made them the more ‘raceable’ machine: they have been quicker off the mark at the all-important restarts, better in traffic and in getting their Continental ‘spec’ tyres up to temperature at night.

Shank stalwart Oswaldo Negri Jr believes that a key update for the 2012 winners of the race will

prove crucial. It has gone from the 2.8-litre Honda Performance Development-built twin-turbo V6 to a new 3.5-litre version.

“The 3.5 has a much better low-down torque,” says the Brazilian. “With the 2.8-litre engine we would get bogged down in traffic, but with the new motor we are going to race much better.”

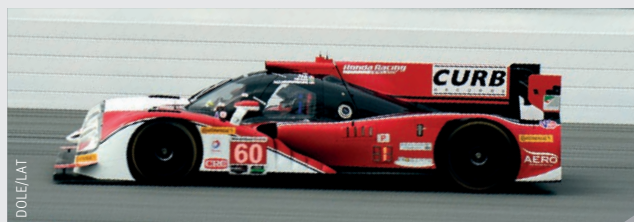
SIX PROTOTYPES TO WATCH OUT FOR



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COYOTE-CHEVROLET CORVETTE DP

#5 Christian Fittipaldi/Joao Barbosa/Filipe Albuquerque/Scott Pruett



MICHAEL SHANK RACING

LIGIER-HONDA JSP2

#60 Oswaldo Negri Jr/John Pew/Olivier Pla/AJ Allmendinger



WAYNE TAYLOR RACING

DALLARA-CHEVROLET CORVETTE DP

#10 Ricky Taylor/Jordan Taylor/Max Angelelli



SMP RACING

BR ENGINEERING-NISSAN BR01

#37 Nicolas Minassian/Mikhail Aleshin/Maurizio Mediani/Kirill Ladygin



CHIP GANASSI RACING

RILEY-FORD ECOBOOST DP

#02 Scott Dixon/Tony Kanaan/Jamie McMurray/Kyle Larson



PANOZ DELTAWING RACING

DELTAWING-ELAN/MAZDA DWC13

#0 Katherine Legge/Sean Rayhall/Andy Meyrick/Andreas Wirth

» Reliability is another unknown. Ford, BMW and Ferrari, with its new twin-turbo 488, have brand new cars. Porsche and Chevrolet have major updates in line with the new rules.

Ford is playing down its chances of winning a 24-hour race on the GT's debut. That's despite it running for the first time in the early summer and the Ganassi team beginning a parallel test programme to that run by Multimatic as early as the autumn.

"It's not like we have a couple of warm-up events before our first 24-hour races," says Westbrook. "That means a win at Daytona isn't on the radar for us. It would be an incredible achievement just to have a clean finish."

BMW believes it has made big strides with the M6 since it ran at the November test at Daytona.

"If someone had said back then that we would have been fastest at the Roar, I would have laughed," reveals Luhr. "We made massive steps with the driveability. Our development time with the M6 GTLM has been short and there are a lot of details that are different from the GT3. At Daytona you never know about reliability, because you have such a high percentage of full-throttle running."

Ferrari has a similar view.

"The car has run 48 hours without problems in testing, but it is still a new car," says new Risi Competizione driver Toni Vilander. "With a new car, you never know: you can always have a problem with a part costing one euro."

That thinking probably makes the updated cars from Porsche and Chevrolet favourites going into the 24 Hours.

"We know the fundamentals of our car," says Tandy. "We're Porsche and we're going into a 24-hour race, so we are obviously going in as one of the favourites."

And the rival Porsche fears the most?

"Chevrolet," reckons Tandy. "The car was quick in the test, they won there last year and they are one of the best teams in the USA. And, like us, they have a proven car." ❦

The other classes



GT DAYTONA

WHAT'S NEW? GTD cars are running in pure GT3 configuration this year. Well, almost. There's still an IMSA-spec rear wing and three sets of gear ratios are allowed. Lamborghini Huracans, like O'Gara's entry, therefore join the field.

WHO WON LAST YEAR? The Riley team's Dodge Viper GTS-R with a line-up including Dominik Farnbacher. It's back with two cars again, with Farnbacher linking up with Jeroen Bleekemolen in the 'lead' car this time.

WHO TO WATCH OUT FOR? The Stevenson Motorsports squad, which has forged an alliance with Audi after years on the General Motors roster. Robin Liddell, Boris Said and Tristan Vautier are among the drivers of its two new R8 LMS GT3s.

PROTOTYPE CHALLENGE

WHAT'S NEW? Not a lot. IMSA's secondary prototype class is again fought out by a flotilla of venerable ORECA-Chevrolet FLM09 one-make racers after testing with an LMP3 car last summer didn't lead anywhere.

WHO WON LAST YEAR? The PR1/Mathiesen team in a thrilling finish. Brit Tom Kimber-Smith again leads its line-up.

WHO TO WATCH OUT FOR? US sportscar stalwart Starworks Motorsport probably has the two best driver line-ups in class: Renger van de Zande and Jack Hawksworth head up one car; and prototype debutants Maro Engel and Felix Rosenqvist the other.

IMSA SportsCar Championship calendar

DAYTONA 24 HOURS JANUARY 30/31

All classes, round 1 North American Endurance Cup

SEBRING 12 HOURS MARCH 19

All classes, round 2 NAEC

LONG BEACH APRIL 16

Prototype, Prototype Challenge & GT Le Mans

LAGUNA SECA MAY 1

All classes

DETROIT JUNE 4

Prototype, Prototype Challenge & GT Daytona only

WATKINS GLEN JULY 3

All classes, Round 3 NAEC

MOSPORT PARK JULY 10

All classes

LIME ROCK JULY 23

Prototype Challenge, GT Le Mans & GT Daytona

ROAD AMERICA AUGUST 7

All classes

VIRGINIA INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY AUGUST 28

GT Le Mans & GT Daytona

AUSTIN SEPTEMBER 17

All classes

PETIT LE MANS (ROAD ATLANTA) OCTOBER 1

All classes, Round 4 NAEC

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Winners both: Norris leads from Daruvala



ELIAN CAMERON

Norris at top down under

**TOYOTA RACING SERIES
TERETONGA (NZ)
JANUARY 23-24
ROUND 2/5**

LANDO NORRIS SURGED INTO the series lead by taking the overall win in the second round.

The 16-year-old from Somerset dominated the feature race after finishing second in the two preliminary heats. Norris had qualified on pole for the Spirit of a Nation Trophy, won the start and soon opened a very safe gap over local hero Brendon Leitch.

After a late safety-car period Norris controlled the restart and won by a second from Leitch, with Russian GP2 driver Artem Markelov

third. "That was my most controlled race of the series so far," Norris said. "I managed to hold onto it at the restart, otherwise I would have been second in all three races and I didn't want that to happen."

"Two seconds and a win isn't bad."

Norris had also qualified on pole for race one and led much of the way, until Force India protege Jehan Daruvala (the Indian who will be Norris's team-mate in Formula Renault this season) jumped him on a restart and carried on to victory. Third went to Polish Euroformula Open driver Antoni Ptak.

"He [Daruvala] basically just timed the restart perfectly," Norris said. "My reactions were OK, but not as good as his."

Pedro Piquet was on pole for the reversed-grid race. Watched by father Nelson, he ably controlled the race despite pressure from Norris, who had started from row two. Markelov took third.

BERNARD CARPINTER

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Jehan Daruvala, 15 laps in 18m23.526s; 2 Lando Norris, +0.305s; 3 Antoni Ptak; 4 Pedro Piquet; 5 Brendon Leitch; 6 Artem Markelov. **Race 2 1 Piquet**, 15 laps in 13m32.886s; 2 Norris, +0.736s; 3 Markelov; 4 Leitch; 5 Daruvala; 6 Guan Yu Zhou.

Race 3 1 Norris, 20 laps in 22m30.090s; 2 Leitch, +0.982s; 3 Markelov; 4 Ferdinand Habsburg; 5 Devlin DeFrancesco; 6 Bruno Baptista. **Points 1 Norris, 380**; 2 Markelov, 346; 3 Habsburg, 303; 4 Leitch, 300; 5 Zhou, 289; 6 Daruvala, 282.

GP2 pairing make it a double

**ASIAN LE MANS SERIES
SEPANG (MAL)
JANUARY 24
ROUND 4/4**

EURASIA MOTORSPORT PAIR Antonio Giovinazzi and Sean Gelael made it two wins out of two ALMS starts in their ORECA-Nissan.

On-form James Winslow took pole in Algarve Pro Racing's Ligier-Nissan, but Giovinazzi soon burst to the front to lead from Oliver Webb in the Race Performance ORECA-Judd. Even a one-minute penalty – a mechanic had his visor open during a pitstop – didn't derail the winning pair, with Gelael able to extend their advantage over Webb's co-driver Niki Leutwiler, who was able to wrap up the 2015-16 title.



Left: victors Gelael and Giovinazzi celebrate

Right: Clearwater McLaren crew won GT title

In GT, Ollie Millroy gave AAI's BMW a big lead. When Christopher Mies took over the Absolute Racing Audi he was the best part of a minute in arrears. But, chased by Rob Bell in the Clearwater Racing McLaren, Mies was able to overhaul Nobuteru Taniguchi (now in the BMW) for the win. Third place in class gave Bell, Keita Sawa and Mok Weng Sun the GT title.



RESULTS

1 Antonio Giovinazzi/Sean Gelael (ORECA-Nissan 03R), 86 laps in 3h01m15.273s; 2 Oliver Webb/Niki Leutwiler (ORECA-Judd 03R), +1m43.503s; 3 James Winslow/Michael Munemann/Dean Koutsoumidis (Ligier-Nissan JSP2); 4 Ho-Pin Tung/David Cheng/Laurent Thomas (Ligier-Nissan JSP3); 5 Christopher Mies/Alessio Picariello/Jeffrey Lee (Audi R8 LMS); 6 Ollie Millroy/Nobuteru Taniguchi/Jun San Chen (BMW Z4 GT3).

IN BRIEF



BERNARD BAKALIAN

ANDROS TROPHY

Franck Lagorce thrust himself into title contention at Lans-en-Vercors by dominating in his Sport Garage-run Dacia Lodgy (above). Lagorce topped qualifying on both evenings and blitzed both finals too. In the first he was chased by Benjamin Riviere (Citroen) and the Audis of Adrien Tambay and Olivier Panis, before Panis nosed into a snowbank after a chain-reaction collision. In the second Lagorce beat Jean-Philippe Dayraut (Mazda), Tambay and Panis. Ballast-laden points leader Jean-Baptiste Dubourg took a fourth and a seventh. Vincent Beltoise and Nathanael Berthon won the Electric races but Matthieu Vaxiviere is still odds-on favourite for the title.



ELIAN CAMERON

NZ TOURING CARS

Andre Heimgartner repeated his previous-weekend performance with victory in round five at Teretonga. Heimgartner (above) again scored two wins and then a second in the reversed-grid finale, won by Angus Fogg. Simon Evans still leads the series after two seconds and a third, all three driving Holdens.



FMASTERS CHINA

There was more joy for Eurasia Motorsport at Sepang in this one-off winter event with a hat-trick of wins for Australian Aidan Read (above). Compatriot Thomas Maxwell took two seconds, with Tomoki Takahashi runner-up in the other race.

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GT Cup, Britcar both unveil LMP3 plans

LMP3 CARS WILL GET THEIR OWN class in the UK as early as this year after the GT Cup and Britcar organising bodies each unveiled plans for new open prototype series.

Bute Motorsport, which organises the successful GT Cup, has begun work to run a mini-series of events for sports-prototypes this season before a full schedule in 2017.

Bute plans for the series to have three classes, with the top tier dedicated to LMP3 machinery, class two for FIA CN-spec sportscars, and the third category operating for marques such as Radical, Aquila, Saker and Riley.

Tyre supplier Pirelli has already backed the plans and Bute is working with MSVR to decide on dates to run pilot races alongside the GT Cup at its GP circuit rounds at Brands Hatch, Silverstone and Donington Park.

Bute Motorsport technical director Phil Boland said: "The new GT3-spec cars are costing up to half a million euros or over, so we see this as an opportunity because there are plenty of people out there in the market for a serious racing car who don't want to be spending that kind of money. LMP3 fits that bill perfectly so why not have them racing in a UK championship?"

"LMP3s are currently limited to just the European Le Mans Series, but they are good to run for thousands of miles so having a series like this allows teams to gain extra competitive mileage and find more value for drivers."

United Autosports will make its ELMS LMP3 debut this year with a pair of Ligier JS P3 chassis. Team head Richard Dean said: "We love the concept of a national prototype series and I'm convinced it is a category that could grow."

"LMP3 cars are probably the best value-for-money racing car out there at the moment and it's a natural progression for GT drivers, so it makes sense to have them racing in Britain. We'd certainly run cars and support it."

Britcar will also run a new four-round Dunlop Prototype Series this year, targeting cars such as the Ginetta G57 and CN-spec cars. One-hour races are planned at Silverstone, Donington Park and Snetterton before it concludes with a two-hour event at Spa-Francorchamps.

Ginetta's LMP3 car raced in the 2015 Britcar 24 Hours at Silverstone, but the race organiser has blocked the car from competing in the event in 2016.

With the race programme for the new G57 still undecided, and protege Charlie Robertson tied to a long-time contract, Ginetta could use the Prototype Series to provide a way back in to Britcar.

Top: the two proposed series would offer teams a chance to race LMP3 cars in the UK. This is the Silverstone ELMS-winning Ginetta

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DUNLOP

LYDDEN

No circuit racing at Lydden

LYDDEN HILL CIRCUIT IS NOT SCHEDULED TO HOLD any club-racing events this season.

A combination of rising costs – owing to an FIA-required multi-million-pound improvement in order for it to retain its World Rallycross Championship round – and a new noise-abatement order have made it difficult for clubs to host events at the Kent track.

Last year just two club meetings were scheduled at the venue, both organised by the BARC's South East Centre, and one of those events was cancelled because of escalating costs. Now the introduction of a 100-decibel noise limit from the local council has prevented the club from returning. Lydden formerly had a cap of 105dB.

"The noise limit makes it difficult," said BARC SE competitions secretary Rod Birley. "The new limit is considerably lower and is a reduction of about 30 per cent.

"Drivers won't pay to modify their cars for just a single round, especially when they have to buy Front Head Restraint [or HANS] devices this season.

"We love Lydden as a club, and in modern motorsport if a venue isn't used it closes and we don't want that. We'd love to return in 2017, but some hurdles have to be removed first."

Lydden's noise restriction does include a three-day exemption, meaning the World Rallycross round is safe, while the British championship is expected to return in 2016. But the track's calendar otherwise is sparse.

Track bosses have submitted a further planning application for additional developments as they hope to diversify activities to generate additional income.

Track head Pat Doran said: "We've been working with the local authority and community to try and get the best for everyone, but the noise-abatement order was a big thing as it has reduced what we can do.

"I think we can find a way forward and the club-race meetings can return. We invited everyone to come and we're certainly not turning people away [from running events at the circuit]."

MINI MIGLIA CHALLENGE

Stock Hatch champ Deegan in Mini Miglia switch



JONES

REIGNING STOCK HATCH champion Shayne Deegan will switch to the Mini Miglia Challenge this season.

Deegan has won the 750 Motor Club category for the past two years in a Citroen Saxo and will now race in Peter Baldwin's multi-championship winning car.

"I raced the Mini last year at Snetterton and got on quite well, beating the driver who won the championship, Kane Astin," said Deegan.

"The plan is to give it a good go and challenge for the title and hopefully that would bring some opportunities for the future."

Deegan hopes to quickly adapt to the challenge of a new category.

"The Stock Hatches run on road tyres while the Minis are on slick racing tyres, so that will be a challenge to get used to," he added. "The Minis are also 300 kilos lighter and more powerful."

SPORTS 2000

\$2000 TO RACE ON LE MANS BUGATTI

COMPETITORS FROM the Sports 2000 Championship will get the chance to race at Le Mans this year after the club announced a new European tie-up.

The Sports Racing Car Club has linked up with French race organiser HVM Racing, which runs the Proto Cup for similar two-litre sportscars.

The deal means that UK Sports 2000 drivers from all three classes – Duratec, Pinto and Historic – will be offered guest grid slots for HVMR's meeting on the Le Mans Bugatti Circuit on September 23-25.

SRCC is also in talks with HVMR to allow its Historic-class cars – produced pre-1985 – to join the Grand Prix de Pau Historique race on the famous French street circuit on May 21/22.

Sports 2000 head Colin Feyerabend said: "Traditionally we've run a European race, but they can prove costly if we don't fill the grid. With this tie-up we can open the door to Europe more easily since we're running with local cars, which makes the dates more financially stable.

"Le Mans is the ultimate place to race a sports-prototype so we're expecting big interest for that date."

Feyerabend said that the SRCC was exploring tie-ups in other areas of Europe, including Germany, where a date at Hockenheim has been tabled for 2017.

The Sports 2000 Championship's UK schedule includes key changes for this year, including a return to the Snetterton 300 in support of the British GT Championship on August 6/7, and a return to Castle Combe for the first time since 2011.

B-TEC DEVELOPMENT SERIES

Plato, Turkington VWs to race in '16

TEAM BKR WILL ENTER SIX CARS IN the new B-TEC Development Series after forming a link up with Team BMR.

Clio Cup team BKR will enter four of Team BMR's Volkswagen CCs, as driven to race wins by Jason Plato and Colin Turkington in 2015, and it will field two Vauxhall Insignias. They will all be fitted with the original GPRM-developed subframes and Swindon Racing Engines two-litre turbocharged motors.

The series will cater for older-spec British Touring Car Championship machines and will feature 12 races taking place at six club

meetings across the year. Team BKR tried to get a licence to enter the BTCC at the end of 2014 but failed.

Team head Nico Ferrari said: "[Team BMR boss] Warren Scott and I were really close to getting a package together last year which would have seen us entering the BTCC and returning an Insignia to the grid. For various reasons this plan didn't work out but now I am more excited by this new opportunity, which gives us the chance to work alongside the biggest team currently in the BTCC."

The team has yet to confirm any drivers.



MSA FORMULA

Fielding sticks with JHR, targets title

MSA FORMULA RACE WINNER Sennan Fielding is plotting a title challenge this year as he returns to the series with JHR Developments.

The 20-year-old finished fourth in the standings in 2015 with three wins, but is aiming for a more consistent year to fight for the title.

Fielding said: "I'm really excited to be staying with JHR, and I genuinely believe we're

going to have a great season together. In 2015 we encountered some bad luck early on, which put us on the back foot and meant we couldn't capitalise on the pace we had.

"It's clearly going to be another tough season with an extremely high-calibre field of drivers and teams, but the title is unquestionably our goal. For that, we'll need to

win races, score regular points and podium finishes – which was one of our trump cards last year – and we'll also need a little bit of luck, which is something we lacked in 2015."

● Sixteen-year-old British karter Max Fewtrell is another to join the MSA Formula grid. Fewtrell will partner James Pull and Devlin Defrancesco at the championship-winning Carlin squad this season.



BRITISH GT

BTCC squad Hard to race Ginettas

TEAM HARD WILL ENTER THE GT4 division of the British GT Championship after buying two Ginetta G55 machines.

The team, which is yet to announce drivers for the new programme, will field the Ginettas alongside its 14-car Volkswagen Racing Cup

mega-team, which runs alongside British GT at most rounds.

Team boss Tony Gilham said: "Team Hard wants to be represented on all rungs of the ladder, and putting a GT programme in place made perfect sense for us."

IN BRIEF



ERS ADDS 2016 NORDSCHLEIFE DATE

The British-based Endurance Racing Series, which held its inaugural season in 2015 over four races, will visit the Nurburgring Nordschleife this year as part of its five-event calendar for its second season. Organisers are planning to run a three-hour event on October 16. "We'll be working with the Rundstrecken Challenge Nurburgring, which is organising a non-championship round, and we'll be joining the grid with them," said series boss David Hornsey.

ROBERTSON GRADUATES TO CLIO CUP

Fiesta Championship runner-up Scott Robertson will graduate to the Renault UK Clio Cup this year with Jam Sport. Robertson raced for Jam Sport in Fiestas and will now partner Ant Whorton-Eales and Tom Grundy in its Clio team.

BURNS JOINS DOUGLAS MOTORSPORT

Ginetta GT4 Supercup regular Will Burns will switch to the Douglas Motorsport team for his third attempt at the championship this year. Burns, 25, finished fifth in the points last season with the HHC Motorsport squad, which has withdrawn from the series.

FIRST KENYAN RACER JOINS BRDC F4

Jeremy Wahorne will become the first Kenyan driver to race in the BRDC Formula 4 Championship after signing with Chris Dittmann Racing. The 17-year old formerly contested the Formula BMW Asia Cup series before testing the older-spec Ralph Firman-built F4 car in late 2014. Wahorne tried the new Tattus-Cosworth machine at Brands Hatch last November.

BMW PRIZE PROMOTES CLEAN RACING

Both the BMW Compact Cup and new 330 Challenge series will benefit from a share of a £12,000 prize fund aimed at promoting good driving standards this season. Organiser BMW Race Days has put up £6000 for each championship to reward drivers who race fairly and cleanly. The fund will be divided up across each series' rounds, and then awarded to drivers up and down the grid by a random draw at the end of each weekend.



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Goodwood's 74th MM widens its horizons

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

GOODWOOD'S SECOND – AND RATHER GRANDER – heyday as a motorsport venue, established when Lord March inaugurated the Festival of Speed at his imposing family seat in 1993, continues to thrill enthusiasts worldwide with ever-more-dazzling content. The inexorable growth of the hillclimb-centred homage to history emboldened the nobleman, enabling the boyhood fanatic to realise his long-held quest to bring head-to-head racing back to the estate's super-fast airfield circuit (last used in July '66) in September 1998, precisely 50 years after his racer grandfather opened it.

Goodwood Road Racing Club's triumvirate of meetings – regarded as the holy grail for competitors who receive monogrammed invitations to play – was completed in 2014 by the relaunch of the Members' Meeting. Immediately hailed by preparation teams who appreciated more space to work, this less-formal two-dayer is a firm favourite on both sides of the sleepers. Unfettered by the Revival's 1966 cut-off point, its broader horizons spread Goodwood's legendary hospitality around, but besides racing also offers accessibility to some of the most spectacular showpieces of the post-Goodwood I era as demonstration sets.

First run in August 1949 as a training ground for BARC subscribers in sportscars (saloons came later and single-seaters were not admitted until 1958), there were 72 Members' Meetings in period, from a total event count of 120-odd. While most drivers competed purely for fun, future household names who sharpened their teeth in them included Formula 1 world champions Mike Hawthorn, Jim Clark, John Surtees and Jackie Stewart, Le Mans winners Richard Attwood and Derek Bell, and British Saloon Car champion Roy Pierpoint.

This year's 74th MM has a wider appeal than its 'modern' predecessors in that ground-effect F1 cars, superlative Group 5

sports-prototypes of the 1960s (sublime Ferrari 512s and Porsche 917s, plus thuggish Chevrolet V8-powered Lola T70 Mk3Bs) and 2-litre Super Tourers are the demo groups woven into the 12-race programme. I remember watching grand prix cars being tested at Goodwood from the late '70s, and recall clocking Nelson Piquet – who knew the 2.4-mile circuit from F3 trials – in the 63-second bracket (a staggering average of 136mph) in one of Gordon Murray's stunning BT49s.

At the opposite end of the aero spectrum, fire-breathing Edwardian racing cars built a century ago are guaranteed to thrill in a race for the SF Edge Trophy. There's also a pot pourri of grand prix cars from the 1950s in the Parnell Cup (to '53) and Brooks Trophy races. Sensational sportscars span the '50s (Collins Trophy) and '60s (Bruce McLaren Trophy, marking the 50th anniversary of the first Can-Am championship). GTs are represented by an all-Ford GT40 dash for the Alan Mann Trophy and a Pre-'66 group named for TT winner Graham Hill.

Two-litre tin-tops of the '60s (Whitmore Cup) and Group 1 tourers up to '82 (Gerry Marshall Trophy) plus 1000cc F3 screamers (the Derek Bell Cup, which provided the closest finish and a dramatic order change on the line last year) complete the four-wheeled action. For the first time the Members' Meeting is also aimed at motorcycle enthusiasts, with a race for zippy 250cc and 350cc two-stroke machines in original liveries from 1970-82 on the Sunday.

Can you think of a finer way to start the 2016 season? Without travelling 12,000 miles I can't, although I am exploring the possibility of returning to Australia for the Victorian Historic Racing Register's magnificent Phillip Island Classic event the previous weekend. It features a reunion of Formula 5000 drivers from the Tasman Cup, last run as a championship in 1975, when I attended the occasional sprint at Goodwood. ✨



WHITAKER AND KIVLOCHAN TO RACE CHEVRON B6s

Two of the seven Chevron B6 production GT cars built by the late Derek Bennett's marque in 1967 have changed hands and will be raced in this season's HSCC 50th Anniversary Guards Trophy championship by club champions Mike Whitaker and Kevin Kivlochan. Whitaker, winner of the 2014 Guards title in his TVR Griffith, acquired the ex-Arthur Moore/Graham Birrell DBE-3 from Peter Aylett. Former Tour Auto victor Kivlochan recently bought the ex-Digby Martland DBE-6.



SPARK AND ASTIN CROWNED

Andrew Spark and Kane Astin were crowned National Mini Se7en and Mini Miglia champions respectively at last weekend's Mini 7 Car Club awards dinner in Stratford-upon-Avon. Guest of honour was Bob Fox (right of pic, presenting Spark), who won the first Formula Mini-7 race at Brands Hatch in April 1966, landed the inaugural title that year and successfully defended it in '67. One leading Mini racer this season will win a BTCC test by courtesy of tyre supplier Dunlop.

WHAT'S ON

A mass audience for WRC – but not the one it wanted



“THIS SPECTATOR JUST GOT shoulder-barged out of the way by a no-f**ks-given rally car!” was a typical internet take on the footage of Jari-Matti Latvala’s Volkswagen clouting a fan on the Monte Carlo Rally. Precisely how many f**ks were given was what the stewards had to determine when debating the incident last Saturday evening. Probably not enough, they concluded, as they slapped a suspended ban on him.

The World Rally Championship is increasingly covering all bases with its broadcast package. UK audiences could pick from daily highlights on both Motors TV and BT Sport, some live stages on the latter, a Monday night wrap on Channel 5, every moment on the brilliant WRC Live radio feed and streamed coverage, plus timing and tracking on the WRC Plus service. But over the coming months the ‘viral’ audience from the Latvala footage’s breakthrough into the web’s top 10 WTF things you’ll never believe happened’ territory will surely top all those.

WRC Promoter tapped into that market very adeptly when Ott Tanak dumped his M-Sport Ford into a lake in Mexico last year. The WRC-branded ‘Titanak’ video rapidly spread far and wide, and long before shareable content was a buzzphrase it made sure Evgeny Novikov’s famous Rally Finland flight was getting an ample YouTube audience.

The official series edit of the Latvala shunt cut off before the spectator went flying (and didn’t include the crucial moments of onboard film cited by the stewards’ case against the Finn), but fans’ footage of the whole aftermath was appearing on social media within minutes of the stage finish.

There can’t have been many Monte Carlo shunts not captured by a fan camera this year. And the days of having to take your camcorder back home and pop the video into the TV are long gone – just pluck your GoPro out of the stage-side ditch you placed it in and upload it direct to the web. From Kris Meeke’s rally-ending, sumpguard-removing



Robert Kubica’s latest rally-ending crash was captured on video and widely shared

impact with a massive rock to Robert Kubica’s and Eric Camilli’s painfully slow-speed exits, every crash could be explained by social media straight after the stage. The video of Elfyn Evans’ oversteering Fiesta biffing Kubica’s stranded car down the embankment with its sliding rear end is another that will do good YouTube business, and sadly it may be an epitaph for Kubica’s once-promising rallying career.

The WRC, its manufacturers and its teams’ sponsors need all the eyeballs

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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube 'OLD' PETTER'S FAR FROM PAST IT

Search for: Nightmare on a parking lot

The 'ace-driver-in-disguise-scares-the-bejesus-out-of-unwitting-passenger' stunt has been done before, but that doesn't make the sight of entertainer-in-chief Petter Solberg dressed up as an elderly gent having a spot of bother with his AMG Mercedes any less hilarious.



Latvala was slapped with a suspended ban after hitting a fan

McKLEIN/DE

ELIAN CAMERON

TV PICK
OF THE
WEEK



TOYOTA RACING SERIES HIGHLIGHTS

MOTORS TV

Saturday 1855-2000

Some single-seater youngsters you'll be hearing lots more about in 2016 and beyond are competing in New Zealand's five-round TRS, and Motors TV has a neat highlights package two weeks after each meeting. There's always plenty of action, particularly when it rains (as it did in round one).

they can get. Toyota and a reinvigorated Citroen are on the horizon, but for 2016 only the vague hope of the new Hyundai blossoming into something extraordinary stands between Sebastien Ogier and a fourth straight predictable rout. For the non-specialist audiences clicking on Latvala's fan-incident video among the 'clickbait' likes of '12 shocking botox leakage incidents' and 'this former child star has unexpected genitals', who won the rally or which car sent the spectator flying won't matter.

Can the WRC reconcile the needs of its disparate audiences, and turn a few of those casual shunt-video retweeters into on-event spectators, or even just Channel 5 highlights show viewers? Rallying is still searching for the ideal way to transmit the drama of its sprawling, multi-day events to a modern audience. As the broadcast technology available to spectators gets ever more advanced, the series has ever less control over how its action reaches the masses.

MATT BEER

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

DAYTONA 24HRS

IMSA SportsCar
Championship

Rd 1/10
Daytona, Florida, USA
January 30-31

One of the prestige events on the motorsport calendar. Expect 24 hours of gruelling racing on the famous speedway's road course. While the battle for overall honours will likely be between the Prototypes, most eyes will be on the all-new Ford GT, making its competition debut.

WATCH ON TV

Streamed live via the website imsa.com

TOYOTA RACING SERIES

Rd 3/5
Hampton Downs,
New Zealand
January 30-31

The intensive five-weekend single-seater series in New Zealand reaches its midpoint, with Britain's Lando Norris sitting atop the table after another win in last weekend's round at Teretonga. Force India protege Jehan Daruvala, like Norris, has a couple of victories under his belt, while Pedro Piquet broke his duck last Sunday in the reversed-grid race.

MRF CHALLENGE

Rd 4/4
Chennai, India
January 30-31

The MRF Challenge series concludes with four final races in its spiritual home of Chennai, India. Pietro Fittipaldi, grandson of F1 champion Emerson, is in the prime seat to claim the title, but don't count out Tatiana Calderon, 18 points back. With four wins in his last six races, Alessio Picareillo must also be a contender for the championship, which attracts a competitive grid of single-seater drivers from around the world.

ANDROS TROPHY

Rd 6/6
Super Besse, France
January 30

1990s Ligier Formula 1 racer Franck Lagorce won twice last time out to cut a ballast-weighted Jean-Baptiste Dubourg's lead down to just 15 points with two rounds of the ice-racing championship left to run. Keep an eye out for other familiar names, with Olivier Panis and Adrien Tambay both also in the frame.

WATCH ON TV

Delayed: Motors TV
Sunday 1400, 2100





THE ARCHIVE

Dallas 1984, when F1 drivers had a smoke or a fizzy drink post-race... Winner Keke Rosberg is flanked by Rene Arnoux and Elio de Angelis

LAT Photographic

HAVE-A-GO HERO

WHEN DRIVERS CROP UP IN UNEXPECTED PLACES



WAYNE GARDNER

THE WOLLONGONG WHIZ HAD A stellar motorcycle career, earning 18 top-tier victories from 100 starts and becoming the first Australian to win the premier class title in 1987. He kicked off his new 'career' in late 1992, dabbling in open-wheel racing before spending almost a decade in tin-tops, peaking with sixth in the All Japan Grand Touring Car Championship.

Linking the two, if only by timing, was a flirtation with Formula 1.

"I've always been fascinated by Formula 1, and I'd actually even had discussions about trying Formula 1 after my bike days, with Bernie Ecclestone," he reveals. "But it just never eventuated, with timing, testing, etc., etc."

The 1992 Australian Grand Prix changed that. Gardner was invited to do some display laps in Adelaide in Mika Hakkinen's Lotus Ford 107B on the Sunday morning.

"I met Peter Collins of Lotus, and they said it would be a very cool thing if I wanted to have a drive around in that car.

"I was totally not prepared, I had an open-face helmet, and went out and did a couple of laps in an F1 car around Adelaide, which was pretty cool. Everyone went, 'Wow, you were quite fast, quite good, you adapted quite well and didn't crash'. It was all good."

In fact, Gardner impressed enough to get another go with the team the following year, and this time it was a bit more serious – at Snetterton.

"They had the rev limiter down just slightly, but I got within half a second of [Johnny] Herbert's time, or something. It was a reasonably good laptime. It was a reasonable test from the day, and I was excited, I loved it."

Lotus, by this point, was on its last legs in Formula 1. Gardner didn't get another chance, but found another team to put on some fun.

"Basically that idea was put to the side," he reflects. "I never really followed it through. I then got to test another Formula 1 car at Motegi with Honda – I drove around the big oval flat-out. I've had a few outings in F1 cars, and I loved them. They were good fun.

"Then I went off to race touring cars and GT cars in Japan, but it wasn't quite the same. It's not my grassroots, it doesn't excite me as much as riding a motorcycle fast." ❦

MITCHELL ADAM AND SCOTT MITCHELL



Adelaide parade laps paved the way for Gardner to flirt with Formula 1



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