

FORMULA 1 VETTEL BEATS HAMILTON AGAIN

 **AUTOSPORT**

ALONSO'S INDY DREAM

And how it became a reality

“This is a step closer to the Triple Crown I want”

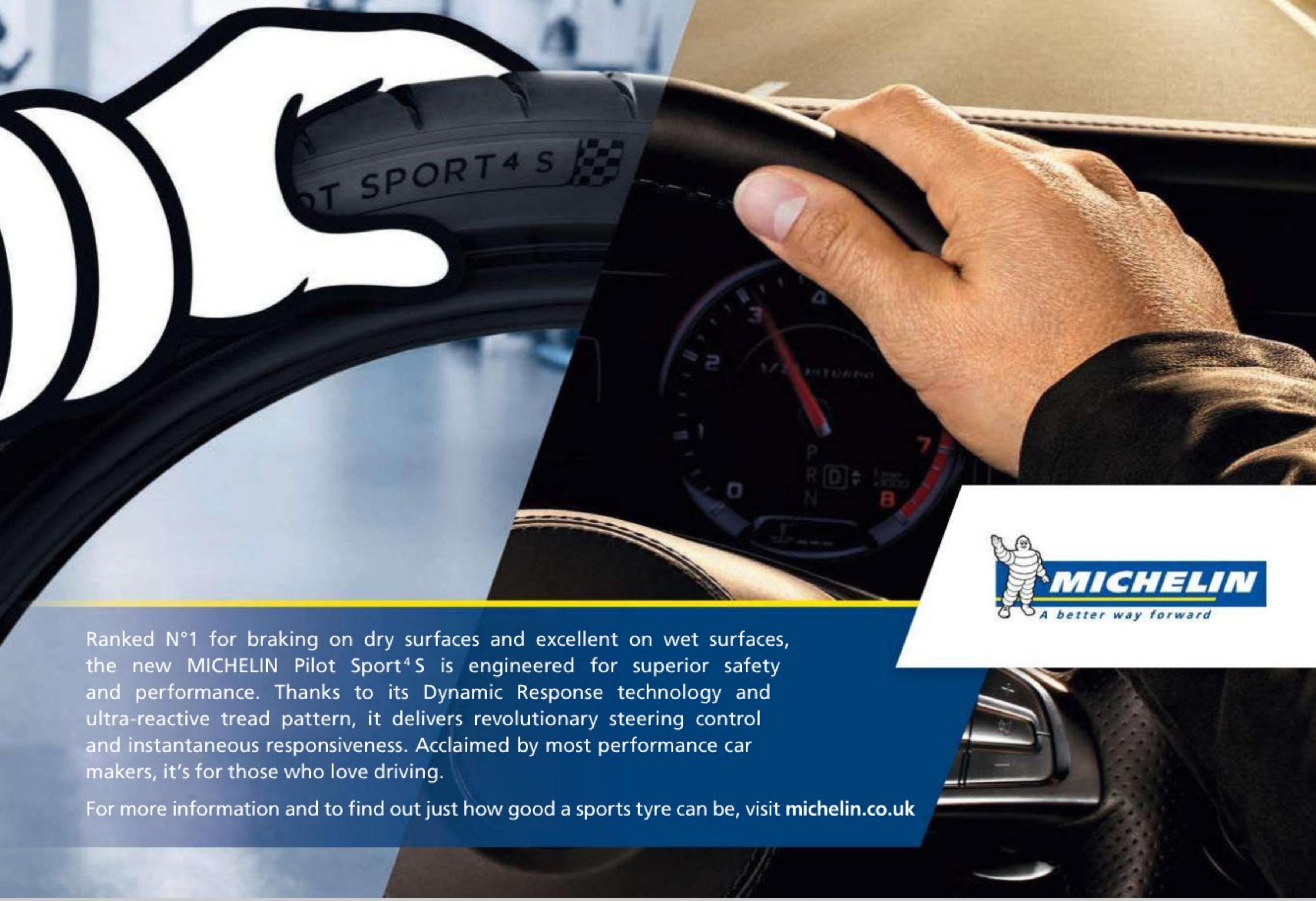


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FERRARI TOPS MERC IN TENSE BAHRAIN GP



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Alonso's challenge in America's greatest race

FERNANDO ALONSO TAKING ON THE LEGENDARY

Indianapolis 500 is going to take some beating as the biggest motorsport story of 2017. One of Formula 1's true stars will miss the championship's blue-riband race to try to achieve the second part of the Triple Crown of winning the Monaco Grand Prix, Indy 500 and Le Mans 24 Hours, so far only completed by Graham Hill.

It's a great story all round. Alonso gets his best chance of winning a race this season – and a shot at achieving a life goal – while McLaren-Honda now has a feelgood factor at a time when the F1 project is in dire straits. IndyCar will get more exposure in Europe and F1 will enter the consciousness of more people in the United States, somewhere it has always struggled to gain traction.

The fact that the deal has come together at all shows how much the different parties want it to happen, with McLaren-Honda doing everything it can to keep Alonso happy while it tries to sort out its F1 problems. Stefan Wilson also deserves a mention for making 'his' drive available for the double world champion.

The move also means we will welcome back Jenson Button at Monaco. The fact that he won't test the car beforehand suggests Button is quite happy with life post-F1, but his class and experience mean he'll take a decent result if the opportunity rises. If it rains, perhaps?

• I am sure anyone who saw the horrific British Formula 4 smash at Donington Park last weekend will wish Billy Monger the best possible recovery. Our thoughts are with him, and his family and friends.



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Tee, Coates/LAT Images

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NIGEL ROEBUCK

Why Indy is the best medicine

“AT THE FIRST [WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP] United States Grand Prix, at Sebring in 1959,” John Cooper said, “I met Rodger Ward, who had won the Indy 500 that year. He didn’t know what road racing was all about, but he was big enough to admit it, and we became great friends. You must, he said, take your car to Indy...”

“I’d never even thought about it. As far as I was concerned, Indy was a different world, and we had our hands full trying to win grands prix. With Brabham we won the world championship in ’59 and ’60, but for ’61 there were new rules in Formula 1, and we hadn’t a hope of being competitive with Ferrari, so Jack and I decided we didn’t have much to lose. Bigger it, we said, let’s do it – let’s go to Indy and have some fun!”

In 1961 the Monaco Grand Prix clashed not with race day at Indianapolis, but with the first qualifying weekend. “On the Thursday,” Cooper said, “Jack ran at Monaco to qualify and then we left immediately for Indy. On the Saturday he qualified for the 500, and then it was police escort to the airport in Indianapolis, flight to Chicago on our sponsor’s plane, then flight to Nice.

“I remember driving along the Corniche late on Sunday morning, with Jack struggling to get into clean overalls! In the race he blew up before half-distance – I don’t think he was too upset...”

In the 500 Brabham, in a car way superior to the Indy roadsters in the turns but woefully

down on power to them, finished ninth, not dissatisfied, but a little disappointed, for the Cooper had run in the top six for much of the day. “We weren’t too unhappy,” John smiled. “We got about \$9000 for finishing ninth – and at that time you got \$3000 for winning a grand prix!”

Then, much more than now, there was a gulf between American and European motor racing. “This man Lee Iacocca became the great guru of the US motor industry,” said Cooper, “but I remember meeting him, in his Ford days, at Watkins Glen. ‘I hear you might be coming into Formula 1,’ I said, and he said, ‘No, we’re not interested in Formula 1 – what we’re gonna do is go the whole hog on grand prix racing’. I didn’t pursue it any further...”

In point of fact, Cooper was not the first F1 team to venture to the Brickyard. In 1952 Alberto Ascari skipped the Swiss Grand Prix to drive a ‘Ferrari Special’ at Indy, which curiously in those days was a round of the world championship, and once Cooper had swung a lamp over the 500, Colin Chapman got into it in a big way, Jimmy Clark winning the race for Lotus in 1965 – and missing the Monaco Grand Prix to do it.

Now the racing world is agog at the news that on May 28 Fernando Alonso, too, will be in Hoosierland rather than the Principality, and the attitude of many in the paddock goes a long way, I think, towards explaining why Formula 1 has for so long struggled to get a toehold in the USA.



Brabham and Cooper ignited F1 interest in Indy

How, they splutter, can Alonso possibly miss the sainted Monaco Grand Prix to venture into this risky, alien world?

No-one cares to be patronised, and their comments suggest that either they have no concept of what the Indianapolis 500 means or that over time they have picked up little

Many in F1 fail to ‘get’ the appeal of Indy and the Borg-Warner trophy





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of what makes Fernando tick. Formula 1 may be his world, his life, but it's many years since first he told me of his wish to do Indy – and, for that matter, Le Mans – and if there's a man on earth who would instantly understand that, it is Mario Andretti, who won races in every type of car known to man.

Let's remember that in 1978, the year he won the Formula 1 world championship, Andretti also competed in every Indycar race that did not clash. With Mario it was always a matter of priorities: given that Formula 1 was his main focus at the time, he passed up the 500 in '79 because... you guessed, it clashed with Monaco.

For a long time now the two Blue Riband events have unfailingly – unfathomably – been run the same weekend, and, having concluded after the 2013 race that 47 Monaco Grands Prix were probably enough for anyone, I will again be at the Speedway this year, fascinated to see how the world's most complete racing driver copes with a wholly new environment. Alonso is right when he says that Ron Dennis would never have countenanced his missing Monaco – let

“In Zak Brown McLaren has a man with the vision to think beyond the suffocating confines of the F1 box”

alone doing Indy – and I find it wonderfully refreshing that in Zak Brown McLaren now has a man, like Cooper and Chapman, with the vision to think beyond the suffocating confines of the Formula 1 box.

It's a fact that Monaco, where Alonso has always excelled, presents probably McLaren's best opportunity of the year to pick up good points, and this will not have escaped Brown. But it's undeniable, too, that putting this deal together, allowing Fernando to realise one of his ambitions, can only give him a lift at a difficult time – a time when Zak and his colleagues are desperate not to lose him at the end of the year.

Were Honda's power unit even close to the pace, Alonso would never have contemplated

missing a grand prix, but this year the circumstances – as with Cooper and Brabham 56 years ago – lend themselves to lateral thinking, and at Indy Fernando will at least have a competitive Honda engine at his back.

This should – if perhaps only temporarily – do wonders for his morale. While the Bahrain Grand Prix, a superbly tense affair, came down to yet another two-hander between Vettel and Hamilton, Alonso spent his afternoon scrapping, as fiercely as ever, with Jolyon Palmer's Renault and Marcus Ericsson's Sauber.

“I never raced with less power in my life!” he exclaimed on the radio. For one afternoon at least, at Indianapolis, he won't have that problem. ❄



FORMULA 1

McLaren names Button

WHEN JENSON BUTTON CLIMBED OUT OF his McLaren-Honda after 12 laps of last year's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, most thought that would be the last we saw of him in Formula 1 as a driver. But thanks to Fernando Alonso's assault on the Indianapolis 500, Button's F1 career won't end with a whimper and a suspension failure in the Middle East. The stage might now be the Monaco Grand Prix, which clashes with Indy, at the end of May.

Since Button is McLaren's designated reserve driver, you might think there's no surprise in this. But the 37-year-old hasn't been on active F1 service this year, has yet to be seen in a GP paddock, and doesn't even attend races on standby. So it was no foregone conclusion that he would return when given the chance, and suggestions are that he took some convincing — despite racing director Eric Boullier's insistence that Button was excited about the opportunity and that bringing him back was “very easy”.

In Button, McLaren has the ideal stand in, one who knows the team, has vast experience, is a Monaco GP winner and can be relied upon to do a good job. Perhaps he could even bring points in a race that should offer McLaren its best shot at scoring in the first third of the season.

The one surprise is that Button has turned down the opportunity to try the car in the

post-Bahrain F1 test. The first time he will drive the 2017 McLaren will be when practice starts on Thursday in Monaco. Even with 305 starts and 15 victories, he hasn't driven an F1 car since last November and has never driven the new-generation of grand prix machinery.

“I'll drive the MCL32 around Monaco in the McLaren sim beforehand, and I reckon I'll be ready for the race after doing that,” said Button. “I'm supremely fit, having done a lot of triathlon training recently, so I have no worries on that score. And it'll be nice to say ‘hi’ to all my old Formula 1 mates too, and hopefully to give the fans something to cheer about.”

Time in the simulator is one thing, but it's a surprise Button is not trying the car first.

Given McLaren also had the possibility of putting Button into the car for a Friday practice session either in Russia or Spain, the two races before May's Monaco GP, there was no lack of opportunity to get him in the car. Along with the question marks surrounding Button's desire to make a return, it suggests he might not be willing to push to get the maximum out of the weekend. But Boullier insists any running would have been of limited use anyway.

“Jenson spent 17 years racing in F1, he drove the kind of level of downforce that we have today and we agree the track layout here [Bahrain],

ROSENQVIST GETS LE MANS DEAL

Formula E and Super Formula driver Felix Rosenqvist will make his Le Mans 24 Hours debut in June with the DragonSpeed LMP2 squad. The Swedish driver will race the DragonSpeed ORECA-Gibson 07 alongside Ben Hanley and Henrik Hedman in the centrepiece round of the World Endurance Championship on June 17-18.

GINETTA TIES UP WITH WILLIAMS

The Williams Formula 1 team's sister company, Williams Advanced Engineering, will work with British constructor Ginetta on its privateer LMP1 project. The new prototype will be tested in the Williams windtunnel as part of the company's alliance with Williams Advanced Engineering and will be entered in the 2018 WEC.

MANOR AUCTION IN MAY

The auction of more than 4000 items belonging to the now defunct Manor Formula 1 team will take place across four days in May. Manor's parent company Just Racing Services ceased trading earlier this year. The auction of the team's assets is to raise funds to pay creditors.

VERSTAPPEN SAYS SORRY

Red Bull's Max Verstappen has apologised for any offence he may have caused by making a joke about Brazilians following qualifying at the Bahrain Grand Prix, where he felt he had been impeded by Williams driver Felipe Massa. "Well he's Brazilian – so there's not much to discuss," Verstappen had said when asked if he would speak to Massa about the incident.

PENALTY THREAT OVER GRID SPOTS

Formula 1 drivers have been told that anyone copying Sebastian Vettel's strategy of starting to the left of his grid box in the Chinese Grand Prix is likely to get a penalty. The FIA reviewed the situation with its stewards, and announced its decision, before the Bahrain race.

ECCLESTONE: I CHARGED TOO MUCH

Bernie Ecclestone now believes he charged grand prix venues too much money for the quality of show Formula 1 was providing in recent years. The ex-F1 commercial chief was speaking at last weekend's Bahrain GP, his first appearance since being made 'chairman emeritus' by Liberty.

VETTEL JR JOINS DTM SUPPORT

Fabian Vettel, the younger brother of four-time Formula 1 world champion Sebastian, will race in Audi's TT Cup on the DTM support bill in 2017. Vettel Jr has competed in German karting championships such as ROK Cup with Ralf Schumacher's KSM team.



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as Monaco stand-in

or even running practice one in Barcelona, will not be very useful.

"He is fit, he is ready and having [test driver] Oliver Turvey next week in the car is part of our fine-tuning the correlation with our simulator. The simulator is very accurate now and we both believe that it is better for him to spend a couple of days in the simulator driving this car model around the streets of Monaco."

It is true that Monaco is a circuit that doesn't put such a great lateral g-force load on the driver, and that Button should have no physical problems.

Autosport understands Button has yet to drive the car in the simulator, despite this being part of the duties of the ambassadorial and reserve role he has with McLaren this year.

Fellow British world champion Nigel Mansell, speaking to BBC Radio 5 Live, has backed Button to deliver at Monaco. "He loves Monaco, he's a tremendous driver and he'll do exceedingly well," said Mansell. "They are in safe hands with Jenson. He knows the team and they know him very well. The last thing they need is a rookie doing one race, causing problems and crashing."

"Time off may have reinvigorated his interest"

Whether or not this one-off return will be the precursor to a full-time comeback is unclear. But it seems unlikely. At the end of last season, Button was obviously comfortable with his decision to stop racing in F1 and, while a return in '18 was always talked about as a possibility, the indications are he had little interest in it.

Time off in recent months may have reinvigorated his interest in F1, and the outing at Monaco could also have that effect and encourage him to chase a seat for 2018. But for all the rationalisation of Boullier, who insists that after 10 laps in the car at Monaco Button will be on the pace, the decision not to test suggests this is not a driver desperate to leave no stone unturned in the pursuit of fulfilling further F1 ambitions.

It's not impossible it could lead to something more in the future, but for now F1 fans should treat this as a chance to see one of the pre-eminent drivers of the 21st century have one last race. After all, even without the perfect preparation and in an uncompetitive car, you wouldn't bet against the 2009 Monaco Grand Prix winner picking up a point or two on May 28.

EDD STRAW





WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mikkelsen set for Portugal WRC return

ANDREAS MIKKELSEN'S RETURN TO frontline World Rally Championship competition looks assured from the next European round of the series in Portugal next month.

The Norwegian, who was the only Volkswagen driver not to secure a 2017 contract following the German car giant's shock WRC withdrawal at the end of last season, will test a Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC for the first time tomorrow (Friday) with an eye to a competitive debut in a new-generation World Rally Car at Rally Portugal (May 18-21).

Autosport understands Mikkelsen's management team was close to a deal with Toyota for a programme for the rest of this season and into 2018 – but insiders have indicated Hyundai and Citroen could be in the frame for last year's Rally Australia winner.

Nobody from the team, Mikkelsen's management nor Hyundai would talk about him joining the Frankfurt-based squad's pre-Portugal test this week.

Autosport understands Toyota and Hyundai remain Mikkelsen's strongest options, but Citroen is still talking about the possibility of putting him in a C3 WRC for selected events this year and a full-time deal next season.

The Citroen deal looks to be fading, however, since the team is reportedly unable to commit to anything until the second half of this season.

Mikkelsen told Autosport: "I hope something will be organised very soon. We are talking to everybody, but it's not just this year or next year – it's the future. It's looking positive. We have developed our conversations a lot, it's going in the right direction."

Asked if he would like to see Mikkelsen testing a Yaris, Toyota team principal Tommi Makinen told Autosport: "Yes, why not? We need to look, but I am very interested to see that. We have been discussing different ideas and different possibilities. After [the next round in] Argentina we might start thinking about the future a bit more."

DAVID EVANS

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Sprint races an option for GTE

One-hour qualifying races are among the ideas on the table to increase interest in well-supported class next year

A

SHORT QUALIFYING race is one of the proposals under investigation to raise the profile of the GTE Pro class in the World Endurance Championship from next season.

Discussions about increasing the visibility of the class began following the granting of full FIA world championship status for the overall GT classifications for this season in the wake of Ford's entry last year and the announcement that BMW will join in 2018. The manufacturers and drivers previously competed for 'Endurance Cups' in the first five years of the reborn WEC.

Series boss Gerard Neveu revealed that the idea of a sprint race, most likely of a 60-minute duration the day before the main event at the six-hour fixtures, was one of the ideas on the table.

"We are thinking about the idea for a sprint race for GTE on Saturday and thinking it could be quite interesting," he said, "but it is just an idea at the moment and we have to follow FIA processes.

"There are many questions, like how many drivers would take part and how we would award points. There are no clear answers and we will talk about it over this season as we go through the proper processes."

The manufacturers competing in GTE Pro – Ferrari, Porsche, Ford and Aston Martin – appear open to the idea.

Frank-Steffen Walliser, the Porsche Motorsport vice-president in charge of GT racing, said: "Anything that makes the weekend more fun and more interesting for the fans is welcome. We are open to the idea, but it is something

that needs to be discussed."

Ford also stated that it is in favour of the idea being pursued.

Walliser insisted that the idea of sprint races needed to be part of a wider discussion about the championship. "We have to remember that the WEC is not just about one 24-hour race at Le Mans," he said. "We've got to make it attractive. There are many things to discuss, like double points at Le Mans, yes or no?"

WEC promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest has also revealed its intention to outline the new LMP1 regulations for 2020 during Le Mans week this June.

Discussions about more cost-effective regulations designed to encourage manufacturers to take part were triggered by a freeze on the current rule book last November in the wake of Audi's withdrawal from LMP1. ACO president Pierre Fillon said that the new regs would "keep a certain level of technology" for the factory hybrids.

Peugeot motorsport boss Bruno Famin, who was present at a rules meeting at Silverstone last Saturday, denied that the French manufacturer is pushing for rules that would mandate the use of only one hybrid system.

"We are only saying that we need decisions about cost reduction from the FIA and the ACO," he said. "We are not saying that if the rules are not like this we are not coming, but the reality is that we can only do a programme if the costs are more accessible."

The FIA's contract with the ACO to promote the WEC has been extended to the end of 2020. FIA President Jean Todt said: "When things go well it is only rational to move forward and continue to make things better."

GARY WATKINS



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SILVERSTONE The next generation unites: Bruno Senna, Mathias Lauda, Nicolas Prost, Nelson Piquet Jr, Pietro Fittipaldi, Pedro Piquet, Harrison Newey and Mick Schumacher, were joined by three-time Formula 1 world champion Piquet Sr in the paddock at last weekend's World Endurance Championship, Formula V8 3.5 and European Formula 3 events for a recreation of the famous pitwall picture of rival F1 drivers Ayrton Senna, Alain Prost, Nigel Mansell and Piquet at the 1986 Portuguese Grand Prix at Estoril.

Photograph by Ebrey/LAT

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

M-Sport confident Fiesta issues fixed

M-SPORT TEAM PRINCIPAL Malcolm Wilson is confident there will be no recurrence of the issues that hindered the three Ford Fiesta WRCs on the Tour de Corse earlier this month.

The hydraulic issue that cost Sebastien Ogier has been fixed, as has the injector issue that slowed Ott Tanak. The investigation into Ogier's final-day electrical issue is still being investigated.

"We had a busy week after Corsica, but we're very confident we're on top of things," said Wilson. "The hydraulic issues for Seb and Elfyn [Evans] were the same, but we've got that sorted. It won't happen again and it's the same with Ott's injector problem, which left his car over-fuelling. I'm very confident we'll have the electrical issue sorted before Rally Argentina and the good thing is that we've sorted these issues without using any homologation jokers."

Ogier and M-Sport are still at the top of the drivers' and manufacturers' standings, and Wilson admitted the timing of the problems was fortuitous.

"It could have been worse," he said. "I must admit, I was a bit apprehensive going into the debrief, but we want the same thing and Seb can see the commitment coming from this team."

Part of that commitment was last week's gravel test in Portugal, which was aimed at finding improvements to the car in the second half of the season.

DAVID EVANS



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WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Kubica steps down from sportscar drive

FORMER GRAND PRIX WINNER ROBERT KUBICA HAS OPTED out of racing in this year's World Endurance Championship.

The Polish driver was to have contested the WEC with the privateer LMP1 ByKolles team, but made a decision a week before last weekend's Silverstone opener to stand down. It followed his failure to get any time in the team's ENSO CLM-NISMO P1/01 ahead of the start of the season after a disastrous official Monza WEC test at the start of the month.

"It has been a hard decision to step down and so lose the opportunity to join such a challenging and competitive championship," explained Kubica. "But I hope this will not be a definitive goodbye."

James Rossiter was recalled to the team after Kubica's withdrawal to share the CLM with fellow Brit Oliver Webb and Austrian Dominik Kraihamer. He will compete in the first three rounds of the series up to and including Le Mans in June.

GARY WATKINS

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The challenge of Indy

Will Fernando Alonso underestimate the difficulties of racing in the epic Indianapolis 500 next month?

By Gary Anderson, Technical Correspondent

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FERNANDO ALONSO TAKING ON THE INDIANAPOLIS 500 was the last thing I was expecting. But it could be an even harder challenge than he is anticipating.

It's very easy to underestimate the Indy 500. After all, the track is just a long straight connected by four corners, right?

No, because even as an engineer, it can so easily knock your confidence. And when you lose your confidence to alter the car set-up to suit the conditions, you lose the ability to be more competitive. Having worked as the engineer on one of these cars at Indy, I can tell you it's a lot harder than it looks.

Most people assume you just drive down the front straight at 235mph, turn left and the car goes round a turn four times a lap. But every one of those corners is different on every lap to the extent that the 800 corners in the race are each a white-knuckle ride of their own. If you underestimate what Indy requires, you can very quickly end up in hospital.

When a rookie arrives at Indianapolis, the first thing he or she wants to do is set fast lap times. The clever drivers and teams know that building up to speed slowly and carefully is the most important thing.

Once you get through rookie orientation and then go out and do a few 200mph-plus laps just to know what it's like, you have to concentrate on the nasty bit. This is running in traffic.

As qualifying approaches, you can start to turn up the wick. If the car has a good balance, then you can reduce downforce, which in turn reduces drag to give you that very important extra speed.

If the car can be trimmed out and the balance retained, then the only difference the driver will feel is the extra corner-entry speed and the loss of grip mid-corner. If the confidence is there, they will keep the throttle pegged. If not, and they get a bit of a wobble on, then qualifying can turn into a nightmare.

The one thing any experienced oval driver will tell you is not to correct if the car oversteers too much, as when the front-end bites it will usually take you head-on into the wall at an enormous speed. Let it spin and you will usually brush the wall with no great damage other than to the car.

The conditions change around the circuit dramatically throughout a race that lasts three hours or more. Although you get lots of running – a total of nine days of practice, if you include qualifying – it is at different times of day and

the danger is that it can just confuse you. The grip level can be transformed by one degree of track-temperature change, or a change in wind speed of 1mph.

Running on your own in qualifying, as you do, is fine. Only the track temperature and wind direction will alter the car balance. If the balance is not correct, the lap time just won't be there. If you try to force it to overcome the problem, you risk the car heading back on a wrecker truck, and you might well be heading off in an ambulance to the Methodist Hospital in downtown Indianapolis.

In the race, it's a very different deal. At the start, if you qualify in the midfield, you are in a queue of cars all ducking and diving for position. So managing the traffic is what it's all about, and managing others' enthusiasm to win the race well before the last lap is vital.

When you get in that queue of cars, initially you get a massive tow and lose front-end grip. After that, the air actually starts to swirl around the track and the top speeds of the cars increase to a level that makes entering the corners a new experience.

Because of the drag reduction, you also have an overall downforce reduction that means that cars have less overall grip.

You need to be disciplined enough to make sure your practice

running is at a representative time of day for both qualifying and the race and that you experience all of these scenarios prior to the race start. That allows you to give the team immediate feedback.

Winning Indy is all about one thing: being in contention when the final round of pitstops starts to unfold. This is going to be in the last 35 laps of the race. Before that, it's about survival, getting confidence in the car to use the full track width, adapting to the conditions and being able to read the race to alter the balance to suit the situation.

That's when it's time to light the blue touch paper, half-closing your eyes and keeping that throttle pegged when all around you are feathering it that little bit.

Whoever has the fuel, tyres and balance to run flat-out from the last pitstop to the flag usually ends up drinking the milk. However, sometimes it can come down to a fuel economy run.

I'm not saying Alonso can't be in the mix at the front, but Indianapolis is a race that looks so simple when, in reality, it couldn't be more complicated. That's why it's so easy to underestimate, even for a man as sharp as Alonso. ✂

“If you underestimate what Indy requires, you can end up in hospital”

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FEEDBACK

Alonso deserves his crack at the Indy 500



Alonso's very happy with his Indy deal, but reader reaction is split

Fernando Alonso has been consistently the best driver in Formula 1 over the last decade, despite having a less than competitive car for much of it. That he maintains his form was amply displayed again after a superbly combative but ultimately fruitless effort in Bahrain.

It is therefore good to see him given the opportunity to take in the Indy 500, which has long been on his 'to-do' list. It also enables us the chance to see fan-favourite Jenson Button back at Monaco, where hopefully the deficiencies in the McLaren-Honda will not be so apparent.

However, I cannot be alone in expressing disappointment that these two great drivers have spent most of the end of their F1 careers in uncompetitive cars.

Given Alonso's desire to do Le Mans, would it not be splendid to see the pair of them teamed up there, where their fast and consistent driving could pay dividends.

John Turner
By email

McLaren's Indy wrong-turn

The whole circus of Fernando Alonso skipping the Monaco Grand Prix in

favour of the Indianapolis 500 is a sad indictment of the state of affairs that the former great names of McLaren and Honda now find themselves in; neither is it good for the sport.

The whole McLaren-Honda F1 project was probably always doomed to failure, inasmuch as the decision to enter part-way through the hybrid era has left them playing constant catch-up.

The decision to go to America does them little credit either. Surely it takes something away from the spectacle of F1, the pinnacle of motorsport, to not have one of its star drivers competing at its blue-riband event.

While there might be a like-for-like replacement in place, I'm not sure that as paying fans we should be happy to have drivers picking and choosing what races they wish to take part in or not, especially should I have particularly wanted to watch them.

Who exactly is calling the shots here? I know who it should be and it is the team, not the driver.

Michael Brierley
Stalybridge, Cheshire

To be fair, it was actually McLaren boss Zak Brown's idea (see p30) – ed

Crazy to miss Monaco

OK, Alonso has lost it! Who in their right mind would pass up Monaco, ever!?! For anything!?! Let alone some stupid American race to go around in circles???

Ronald McIsaac
Saint John, New Brunswick

Too high-tech for its own good

I gather that Valtteri Bottas started the Bahrain Grand Prix with the pressure in his tyres set too high, when the Mercedes 'generator' failed on the grid and the team was unable to bleed off the excess air in the tyres.

Did nobody within the phalanx of mechanics on the grid have a £10 tyre-pressure gauge from Halfords in his pocket to cover just such an eventuality? It sounds like Formula 1 is getting too high-tech for its own good and needs to get back to basics.

Douglas Thomson
By email

Hamilton-Vettel superteam?

Lewis Hamilton is showing his maturity with his appreciative and complimentary comments about the performance of Ferrari and his main rival and new BFF, Sebastian Vettel.

However, it is said that every driver wants to drive for Ferrari during his career. What chance a Scuderia superteam in 2018, with eight drivers' championships on their roster?

But that would leave a champion-sized hole at Mercedes. And Alonso is available. If they are going to do this, they are talking about it already.

Bruce Merchant
Big Sur, California

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Vettel takes advantage of Merc fumbles

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor [@BenAndersonAuto](#)





IF YOU QUALIFY ONE-TWO FOR A FORMULA 1 RACE, LOGIC DICTATES YOU SHOULD head home with a victory trophy in your hands. Mercedes locked out the front row for the first time this season, with the biggest pace advantage we've seen so far in 2017, yet somehow it was Sebastian Vettel and Ferrari that left Bahrain grasping the spoils of glory.

That Mercedes departed the Bahrain Grand Prix without one of its drivers having stood atop the podium is a situation that owes itself to what team boss Toto Wolff called "a perfect storm" of "many marginal losses" through the early phase of the race.

In fact, a confluence of eight particular circumstances came together to undo Mercedes in Bahrain, allowing Vettel to retake the lead of the world championship and Ferrari to ascend to the top of the constructors' table.

The trouble began, as it sometimes does, before the race had even started. Valtteri Bottas claimed pole position with a brilliantly accomplished performance in qualifying on Saturday, but team-mate Lewis Hamilton felt top spot should have been his own again, but for a DRS malfunction on his final Q3 lap and a small mistake at the final corner. Given that he would turn out to be comfortably Mercedes' fastest driver in this race, Hamilton's failure to start on pole ultimately proved very costly.

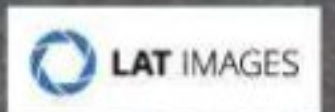
Nevertheless, Bottas should still have been plenty quick enough to get the job done, but a problem setting the Pirelli tyre pressures while his Mercedes sat on the grid put him into immediate trouble once the race got under way.

"Our generator broke on the grid and we couldn't bleed Valtteri's tyres, so we were starting with the completely wrong tyre pressures on his car," Wolff explained. "We knew he would be struggling."

The next part of that 'perfect storm' was Hamilton slipping from second to third on the run to the first corner, with Vettel gaining superior momentum off the grid and swooping around the outside of the Mercedes under braking.

"Initially, [it was] a very good start," said Hamilton. "I hit my target, then just had a bit of wheelspin in the second phase."

That allowed Vettel to immediately apply pressure to Bottas, who not only lost the protection of a Hamilton-shaped buffer to Ferrari but was naturally struggling to build any sort of meaningful



advantage while sliding around on overinflated Pirellis.

“I don’t know the exact amount but it was more than one psi,” Bottas explained. “The effect was basically big overheating – it felt like [driving] on marbles, the rear tyres just not working like they are supposed to.

“They are overheating from the surface, from a smaller part of the tyre. Your balance is limited and the traction is poor.”

Vettel was quite surprised to have qualified almost half a second shy of pole position, given how good his Ferrari felt around the Sakhir circuit, but Bottas’s early tyre struggles, combined with jumping Hamilton at the start, was crucial in putting Vettel in position to upset Mercedes.

Bottas could not pull away from Vettel through the opening sequence of the race, which in turn backed Hamilton – who also struggled for speed initially – into the fast-starting Red Bulls of Max Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo.

Barely more than three seconds covered the top five cars when Ferrari pulled the strategic trigger and brought Vettel into the pits for fresh super-softs at the end of lap 10 of 56. He rejoined the track in a neat gap in traffic between Sergio Perez’s Force India and Jolyon Palmer’s Renault.

Verstappen followed suit next time around, but his rear brakes failed on the out-lap, which sent his Red Bull off the circuit and

into the barrier on the outside of Turn 4. Shortly afterwards, Carlos Sainz Jr’s Toro Rosso came out of the pits and speared into Lance Stroll’s Williams under braking for Turn 1. The contact left Stroll’s car stranded on the inside of the circuit at the corner’s exit, so officials called the safety car into action.

Rather than undoing Ferrari’s strategic masterstroke, as it had done in China a week earlier, this scenario further complicated matters for Mercedes. Bottas dived for the pits at the end of lap 13, but lost around three seconds to a slow tyre change.

Meanwhile, Hamilton was trying desperately to give Mercedes enough margin to do a double stop, but ended up copping a five-second penalty for delaying Ricciardo’s entry to the pitlane with what officials deemed unnecessarily slow and erratic driving.

“I’ve only been in this scenario twice – once with Nico [Rosberg] in Monaco I think, and in Monaco I didn’t have a big enough gap, so I knew I needed a five-second gap between myself and Valtteri,” Hamilton explained. “So I slowed down to try to increase that gap.”

Hamilton also lost time at the pitstop itself, thanks to the same wheelgun problem that affected Bottas’s stop. “It looks like we had a power loss on the guns,” explained Wolff. “And we couldn’t operate the guns as they would normally function.”

The ‘domino effect’ of qualifying second, getting overtaken by Vettel at the start, getting bottled up with the Red Bulls in the >>

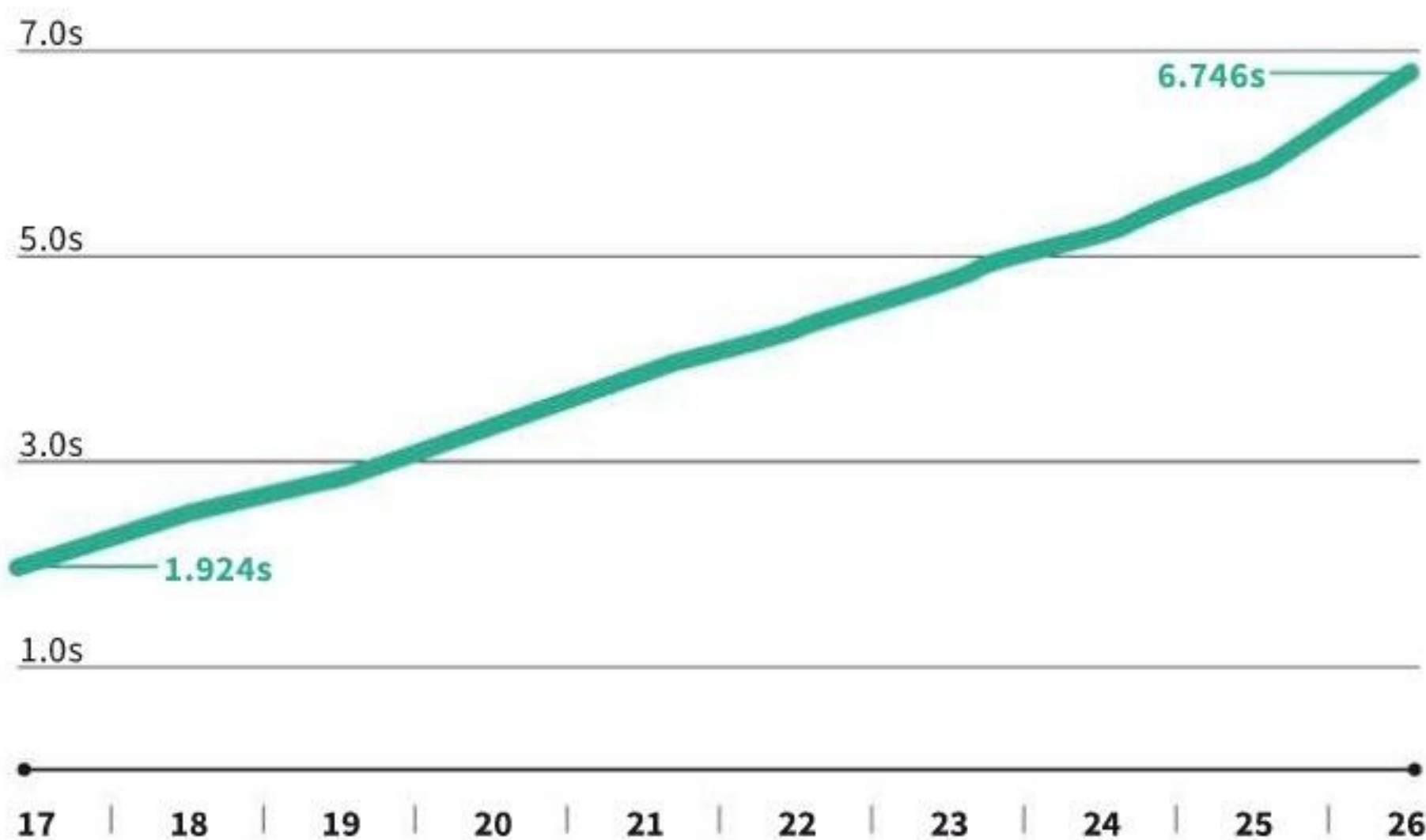


Sebastian Vettel jumped Hamilton at the start and hounded Bottas thereafter

first stint, getting penalised for driving too slowly in the pitlane, then suffering further delay at the stop itself, put Hamilton seriously on the back foot.

He lay fourth as the race restarted on lap 17, but immediately dispatched Ricciardo, who was struggling to maintain temperature in his Red Bull's soft Pirellis, to run third behind Vettel and Bottas. Unfortunately, Hamilton then spent 10 laps stuck behind his Mercedes team-mate, who briefly but unsuccessfully threatened Vettel's supremacy on the outside of Turn 4 after the restart.

Hamilton time loss to Vettel during second stint



Hamilton lost 4.842s to Vettel while Mercedes debated whether to move Bottas aside for his faster team-mate. Eventually, Mercedes made the call, which allowed Hamilton to claim second place with an uncontested move into Turn 1 at the start of lap 27.

"You're always more intelligent afterwards," said Wolff, when asked whether Mercedes waited too long to switch its drivers around. "It's a call you don't like to make. I think both have to have a chance of winning, and it's only when the moment comes you realise if you're not changing anything you're going to lose the race."

Hamilton closed to within four seconds of the leading Ferrari over the next seven laps, before Vettel dived into the pits to make his second and final stop on lap 33. Vettel emerged behind Ferrari team-mate Kimi Raikkonen (having another difficult race outside of the lead fight), but was quickly past and back into second.

Mercedes kept Hamilton out until the end of lap 41, at which point he had to serve his five-second penalty. He emerged from the pits trailing Vettel by just a shade under 20s, with 16 laps left in which to work miracles.

Hamilton was 0.829s per lap faster than Vettel on average during that final charge on soft Pirellis, which included diving back past Bottas on the brakes into Turn 13 on lap 47, and spending time under yellow flags when Marcus Ericsson parked his broken Sauber on the outside of the approach to Turn 4. It was a heroic effort, but ultimately Hamilton finished 6.660s behind.

"I gave everything I have to close that gap," Hamilton said. "When I came out of the last corner he was going into Turn 1, so it was a massive, massive gap, which almost seemed impossible.

"But I kept believing, kept pushing and doing some great laps, but it wasn't enough in the end."

Hamilton found himself in the reverse position to the one he occupied last time out at Shanghai – fighting a losing battle to



LAT IMAGES



Wheelgun problem cost both Mercedes time in the pits

chase down Vettel for victory, rather than controlling the race from the front while Vettel attempted to recover from early setbacks. But Vettel's China misfortunes were not of his own making; on this occasion Hamilton felt he only had himself to blame.

"I feel pain in my heart," he added. "I lost two tenths from Turn 10 to 11 – the DRS didn't engage – in qualifying, I lost half a tenth out of the last corner, should have easily been on pole. Today, I lost position at the start, solely my fault. Then you've got the time lost in the pitlane. You practice and practice, and when you mess up, man, it's painful – there's no other way of saying it. I try to handle it the best way I can, but it eats you up a little bit inside and you've just got to try to cope and move forward.

"In Australia [where Vettel last beat Hamilton], I don't remember it being particularly any, necessarily, massive fault of >>

QUALIFYING



VALTTERI BOTTAS HAS BEEN CHIPPING AWAY AT LEWIS HAMILTON during their first three races as Mercedes team-mates, and in Bahrain Nico Rosberg's successor did what Rosberg couldn't quite manage around the Sakhir circuit last season, lapping quicker than Hamilton in qualifying to claim his first pole position in Formula 1.

That result ended a pole streak for Hamilton that stretched back six races, to last October's United States Grand Prix. Hamilton spoke in China about extending that streak long enough to break his hero Ayrton Senna's F1 record of eight consecutive pole positions, but he now must start again from scratch.

The Sakhir circuit has not traditionally been one of Hamilton's favourites, and he often spoke of Rosberg's advantage around this place, and how hard he had to work to negate it.

This of course meant potential opportunity for Bottas, who in Melbourne was 0.356% off Hamilton's pace in qualifying and behind Sebastian Vettel's Ferrari, and in Shanghai was 0.204% off Hamilton and within 0.001s of beating Vettel. In Bahrain, he beat them both.

"Valtteri is keeping me on my toes. He deserved that"

Lewis Hamilton

Everything looked to be in Hamilton's hands until the very end of Q3. He was the fastest Mercedes driver in final practice and led the way through Q1, Q2 and the initial runs in Q3.

But Bottas had been steadily homing in on his target – 0.227s down on soft tyres in Q1, only 0.020s away in Q2; and although Hamilton extended that advantage back out to 0.052s after the initial runs in Q3, Bottas hit top spot on his final run with a lap of 1m28.769s.

"It took a few races but we got it and hopefully it's the first of many," said Bottas. "I definitely now feel much more comfortable with the car than qualifying in Melbourne. The more time you spend driving it, you get more at one with the car. It's good to keep making progress and getting better all the time."

Hamilton dropped a chunk of time to a DRS glitch in the second sector of his final lap, and lost more to an oversteer moment at the final corner, so failed to improve. He ended up second fastest by just 0.023 seconds.

"Valtteri is keeping me on my toes – he really deserved that lap," said Hamilton. "A first pole position is just amazing. You dream that as a kid. He did a great job."

Vettel was almost half a second further back in third, and a bit perplexed having qualified on the front row for the first two races.

"When I got the time I was a bit down," said Vettel. "Four tenths was a lot more than expected, given how good I felt."

Daniel Ricciardo was mystified by Red Bull's competitive improvement here, qualifying within eight tenths of pole having been more than 1.3s off in China.

He split the two Ferraris on his final run, just 0.022s clear of Kimi Raikkonen, who was happier with his car but didn't get the most out of it. A stark contrast in fortunes for F1's Finnish drivers.



“A BIG AND SUDDEN RUSH OF POWER”



Bottas steers the Mercedes with delicacy

LEWIS HAMILTON SAYS THEY are a waste of time, but F1’s daytime practice sessions in Bahrain’s searing desert heat still offer up clues as to who’s hot and who’s not in the competitive sense.

Over at Turn 14/15, the final part of the circuit, for first practice the conditions are sweltering. This corner is deceptive, a tight entry that requires heavy braking, but also for the drivers to carry speed because it opens up onto the long straight.

It was noticeable how well the Red Bulls were coming off

this corner, Daniel Ricciardo’s in particular. He is very adept at throttle control and was typically super smooth – no wheelspin. Traction is very important at this track and the Red Bull seems to have plenty of it.

Turn 14 is also the sort of corner where Valtteri Bottas shines – hands delicate on the steering wheel, relying mostly on braking technique to get the car turned, rather than waiting on eventual reaction to preemptive steering input. This is a very effective style for such short-radius turns, but

leads to some occasional over-eagerness getting back on the throttle.

Over to Turns 9 and 10 for the final practice session, a good place to observe braking performance through the tricky downhill approach, as well as low-speed handling and traction off the hairpin.

Both McLaren-Hondas really struggled off Turn 10, the rear wheels spinning even

when straight with DRS open. It sounded similar to the driveability problem Renault suffered in 2015 – a big and sudden rush of power that is hard to control in such a narrow band of delivery within the rev range.

The Ferraris both looked very composed, Sebastian Vettel with more understeer dialled into his, which made the corner tougher but

improved traction; Kimi Raikkonen the opposite.

Max Verstappen used more kerb at Turn 10 than anyone else, making a tighter and shorter corner but opening up the angle of attack for the straight. He was maximising the strengths of the Red Bull and minimising its weaknesses. Fastest time of the session was his reward.

BEN ANDERSON



GULF AIR BAHRAIN GRAN

SAKHIR

ula



Vettel added bunny-eared insult to injury

my own – in the sense that I'd run out of tyres and had to pit; it was just the circumstances I was faced with.

"But today there were certain things, if perfect, I would've been in a much better position to fight for the win. And I didn't put myself in that position."

Even allowing for Hamilton's catalogue of woes, Mercedes could still have potentially salvaged victory with Bottas had the Finn not suffered a perplexing lack of pace after ditching that initial set of over-pressured super-soft Pirellis.

Apart from briefly challenging Vettel at the restart, Bottas struggled on his replacement set of super-softs, and again – in a way Hamilton did not – on the soft compound later on. Bottas eventually finished more than 20s behind Vettel in third.

Wolff said there were "not big differences in the set-up" between his two cars, but Bottas was convinced something was specifically wrong with his Mercedes, feeling the large pace deficit to Hamilton could not be blamed on inferior driving alone.

"Stint two and three, there is no explanation why the rear end wasn't working," Bottas said. "I was running out of all the tools, with the diff and with the brake bias, trying to cure the oversteer, but there was no way.

"When the tyres were new, they were OK, but very quickly when you rise up with the surface temperatures it gets more and more tricky. A strange race for me missing so much pace. It's not so easy for me to explain. I don't know why the pace was so poor. I know that gap doesn't just come from driving. I'm sure we'll find out something why I struggled more than Lewis."

Hamilton struggled much less, clearly, and also benefited from what turned out to be the superior strategy of not running the super-soft tyre again after his first stint, but admitted his own first stint on super-softs was also "not spectacular".

It seems the Mercedes isn't working the softest compounds particularly well at present, within what most paddock insiders

feel is a narrower operating window of temperatures for the new control Pirellis than was the case last season.

This also played a part in Mercedes' defeat in Bahrain, allowing Vettel a free pass to attack Bottas during the first stint while Hamilton battled to fend off the Red Bulls.

"The car is obviously good, it's just how we use our tyres on race day, particularly when it gets a bit warmer," Hamilton explained. "But even today it wasn't really that. It was quite cool, so that is definitely a big question mark for us."

Mercedes clearly enjoys an advantage in single-lap pace. That has been evident through each of the first three grands prix of 2017, and was even more apparent in Bahrain than elsewhere. But although the W08 seems to lack the Ferrari's present finesse with the tyres in race trim, Mercedes should still have got at least one of its cars to the flag first.

But ultimately, it was undone: the quicker Mercedes driver qualified second unexpectedly; the polesitting Mercedes driver suffered a tyre pressure malfunction that spoiled his chances and backed his team-mate into the pack; the quicker Mercedes driver lost crucial track position at the start; he made a costly mistake at his first pitstop for which he was penalised; both initial pitstops were spoiled by taking place back-to-back under safety car conditions; the pitstops themselves were compromised by faulty equipment; the slower Mercedes driver then held up the quicker one for too long in the second stint (struggling with undiagnosed handling problems while management agonised over team orders); and all of this took place in a context where the Mercedes again displayed some vulnerability relative to Ferrari in race conditions on the softest available tyre compound.

These are all small details, but this fresh battle between two Formula 1 titans is close enough that such details now matter an awful lot. And ultimately, eight of those crucial details conspired to help hand Ferrari a valuable victory at Mercedes' expense. ❄



BRAKE FAILURE HALTS VERSTAPPEN CHARGE

MAX VERSTAPPEN'S promising form in the Bahrain Grand Prix ended when he went off at Turn 4 and hit the barrier lightly after suffering a rear brake failure.

The Dutchman started sixth but passed Kimi Raikkonen's Ferrari on the run to the first corner, and then team-mate Daniel Ricciardo, to be fourth on the first lap.

He held fourth throughout the first stint behind Lewis Hamilton and pitted at the end of the 11th lap, one tour after Sebastian Vettel, but then ploughed off the track on his out-lap.

"It was a rear brake failure," said Verstappen. "As soon as I hit the pedal, it went really long and I basically only had the front brakes to brake. Luckily I still had the front brakes [or the impact could have been heavier]."

Verstappen believed he was in a strong position before the failure, as he could have jumped to second under the safety car.

"We made the right call – if we didn't have the failure we would have ended up behind Sebastian. We would have undercut the Mercedes cars, so that would have been really good for us. But it wasn't to be."

McLaren-Honda's woe deepens

BY ANY OBJECTIVE MEASURE McLaren-Honda has endured a woeful start to the 2017 season, but the Bahrain Grand Prix was easily the worst of its first three races so far.

The first two events of the year in Australia and China were arguably better than expected for the team, with Fernando Alonso making Q2 twice and coming close to scoring points before retiring late-on with chassis-related reliability problems. But Bahrain's Sakhir circuit brutally exposed the Honda engine's lack of performance, and the underlying fragility of its mechanical reliability.

Stoffel Vandoorne suffered two failures related to the MGU-H during Friday practice, before a third failure – caused by a water leak but also suspected of being related to the MGU-H – prevented the Belgian from even starting the race.

Alonso scraped into Q2 again, but wrecked his Honda engine in the process thanks also to a failure of the MGU-H. Autosport understands that the MGU-H failure sent debris into the internal combustion engine,

also damaging that beyond repair.

Honda motorsport chief Yusuke Hasegawa explained that the Japanese manufacturer has yet to fully understand the reasons, or why these failures occurred suddenly in Bahrain. "We are not sure the exact cause, but definitely a mechanical failure of the MGU-H," explained Hasegawa after qualifying. "It is something around the bearings, it was sticking."

"They are all dead so we have to replace them. We're not sure why it happened just here, but we are suspecting something happened in this environment. Possibly because the temperatures are very high."

Alonso battled in the lower midfield for most of the race, but outside the points, complaining vociferously over team radio that he had "never raced with less power in my life". He ultimately retired the car three laps from the end with an undiagnosed engine problem.

Alonso, who plans to "refresh the mind" by focusing on his Indy 500 preparations before the next grand prix, called McLaren-Honda's unreliability "an unacceptable situation".



First lap masked Raikkonen gains

THE BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX WAS ultimately another disappointing race for Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen, who again failed to make the podium.

But the Finn reckoned an "awful" opening lap defined the outcome and disguised a race that was "a lot better" than he has experienced so far in 2017.

Raikkonen qualified more than three tenths down on Vettel, and slipped from fifth on the grid to seventh early on. Raikkonen eventually recovered to fourth, and the Finn says he was happy with his pace in the race, despite the "disappointing" outcome.

"The car was working pretty nicely – not much complaint on that side," he said. "[I had a] shit start and then an awful first few corners because of that. Obviously, after that, played catch-up."

Raikkonen also believes he was "a bit unlucky" with the timing of the safety car, which meant he had to re-pass Felipe Massa's Williams for a second time. He felt the Williams's straightline speed made this particularly difficult, but Raikkonen showed strong pace once into clear air for the final stint.

Having now gone through another underwhelming grand prix weekend

since his form was publicly questioned by Ferrari president Sergio Marchionne in Shanghai, Raikkonen insists he has made progress – even if the results haven't reflected it.

"It's just small things now; in the big picture we are pretty much where we want to be – it's just that we need to fine-tune a few things," Raikkonen added. "[It's] taking too long, but nobody to complain [to], it's my job."

"Overall we are much happier, but I cannot be very happy with the result, even this weekend. It's all big-picture – when you look, it's been disappointing."





LAT IMAGES

Ricciardo believed that Red Bull would win

RED BULL WAS NOWHERE NEAR THE pace of Mercedes and Ferrari during the first two races of the season, but enjoyed a much more competitive showing in Bahrain, where Daniel Ricciardo outqualified Kimi Raikkonen's Ferrari, and both Red Bulls raced with the leading pack in the first stint.

Max Verstappen vaulted from sixth on the grid to fourth on the first lap, and pressured Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes until making a pitstop and then crashing out with brake failure on lap 12 of 57.

Ricciardo jumped Hamilton for third place in the pits during the safety car period called for the collision between Lance Stroll's Williams and Carlos Sainz Jr's Toro Rosso, but then struggled to generate tyre temperature in the soft compound Pirellis and fell back to sixth on the lap-17 restart.

He eventually repassed Felipe Massa's Williams for fifth with a late lunge on the brakes into Turn 1 on lap 29, but made no further progress.

"It was a race of two halves really," said Ricciardo. "At the beginning I genuinely

thought we had a chance to win. The safety car worked for me, but it wasn't so good for our tyres.

"Once the chaos settled we fell back and I was struggling with grip at the front and rear. We never really got that [soft] tyre working for us."



SUTTON IMAGES



WEHRLEIN DEFIES CRITICS ON HIS RACING RETURN

PASCAL WEHRLEIN FINISHED 11TH ON HIS F1 comeback after missing the Australian and Chinese Grands Prix owing to a lack of race fitness.

The 22-year-old Sauber driver broke three vertebrae in a Race Of Champions accident in January. Losing five weeks of training meant he did not feel fit enough to race, and he stepped down after driving in the second pre-season test and during Friday practice in Australia.

Returning in Bahrain he qualified 13th, lapping 0.548s faster than team-mate Marcus Ericsson in Q1, then held off Daniil Kvyat in the race.

Q&A



You weren't sure how you would feel in a full race distance, so how was your fitness?

"I'm surprised how good it is. But that's what we could have

expected, because the strength went away but it's coming back quite quickly. You can see what a big change these two weeks of training have been to me and I'm just really happy overall. This race was great in terms of performance and I'm really happy to come back like this, it's like I've never been away."

How do you rate your performance given the circumstances?

"Mentally, it was a great weekend. I know what I can do and I know I can be quick but the last three weeks were really difficult for me. I heard some crazy comments from other people, what I should do or what they would do even though they don't know what my situation was. The best answer is to show the performance on track and to come back like this."

Are you at 100% in terms of performance?

"No, I will improve every weekend I get in the car because I lost one winter test and two races, so I'm starting now to learn and understand the car. I've started with a new team as well, so there's a lot of performance to come."

Do you have any worries about other impacts?

"No, because on the medical side everything is OK. If it didn't heal, or the bones weren't as strong as they were before, I wouldn't be allowed to drive. So I'm not worried to crash. Otherwise, you would see it in my performance."

LAT IMAGES

Sainz handed grid penalty for Stroll collision

CARLOS SAINZ JR WILL take a three-place grid penalty at next weekend's Russian Grand Prix for causing an accident with Lance Stroll in Bahrain.

The Spaniard and the Canadian made contact at Turn 1 on lap 13, as Sainz emerged from

the pits, forcing both cars to retire and triggering a safety car period.

Sainz lunged his Toro Rosso down the inside on the brakes coming out of the pitlane, and T-boned the Williams as Stroll made for the apex.

Both drivers blamed

each other for the crash and were summoned to see the stewards after the race.

Stroll said Sainz "dive-bombed" him and called the move "ridiculous", but Sainz argued the Williams driver should have left space on the inside.

"You are allowed to turn in, but when you have someone inside, you have to leave at least one car's margin in case there's someone there," Sainz said. "He chose to take the risk and assume no-one was there."

The stewards found

Sainz was at fault for what they labelled a "very optimistic attempt" at passing Stroll.

As well as the grid penalty, Sainz received two penalty points, taking the total accrued on his licence to seven over the past 12 months.



LAT IMAGES

Force India targets correlation fix

FORCE INDIA HOPES to solve the aerodynamic stalling problems that have compromised its start to the season with an upgrade planned for next month's Spanish Grand Prix.

This package includes a new floor, which it is hoped will cure the weakness caused by the windtunnel-to-track correlation.

"We know exactly what it is. Andy [Green, technical director] and the team have determined that there's a

correlation issue – we knew that in Barcelona testing," said Force India deputy team principal Bob Fernley.

"The effects were identified, [and solutions] put in place. It's just a production process and it will hopefully bolt on at Barcelona and we can go toe-to-toe again as opposed to having to defend.

"It's related to our aero platform. The problem is that you pick one bit up

and it affects different areas and you've got to go back through it, correct it and then produce the new part for it."

Both drivers have complained of inconsistency in slow and medium-speed corners, which Fernley confirmed was due to aero stalling and the resulting loss of downforce.

This could potentially be caused by the car going in and out of ground-effect with changeable rideheight.



Perez wins tight battle for seventh

SERGIO PEREZ WON A CLOSE FIGHT FOR SEVENTH place in the Bahrain Grand Prix, despite starting 17th after having to slow for yellow flags on his final Q1 run.

Perez climbed to 13th on the first lap, before passing Jolyon Palmer for 12th. He then moved up further when Max Verstappen retired.

When the safety car was deployed on lap 13 because of the Lance Stroll/Carlos Sainz collision, Perez jumped Romain Grosjean and team-mate Esteban Ocon. He then overtook Nico Hulkenberg after the restart to run seventh and held the position to the end.

Grosjean was ninth during the race's first two stints. The Haas driver opted for super-softs in the middle stint, so stopped five laps earlier than soft-shod Hulkenberg and undercut his way past the Renault for eighth. Ocon held on to 10th despite the timing of the safety car working against him.



DRAWING BOARD

By Giorgio Piola and Jake Boxall-Legge



HAAS

TEAMS EXPLOIT FLOOR-SLOT LOOPHOLE

When the FIA ushered in the new set of technical regulations for the 2017 Formula 1 season, the maximum allowable width of the car's floor was increased by 200mm.

This has opened up a loophole for teams to exploit, allowing them to experiment with slots and cuts in the floor's geometry in that extra space.

A number of teams have already started to use slots to manage the flow of air around the edge of the floor, ensuring that the engineers

are able to have greater control over their desired flow patterns. This approach also helps to increase the downforce created by the front-leading-edge corner of the floor, which is important as this helps the front wing to create the downforce necessary to achieve the required balance.

The solutions that each team has come up with vary, offering different ideas on how best to control airflow.

The overall idea is to introduce a vortex along the floor's edge to help seal the

diffuser, reducing the chance of turbulent flow bleeding into it. This improves the overall pressure distribution of the diffuser itself, providing a stronger and more consistent downforce output.

In tandem with the existing bargeboard pieces, the airflow can be directed through these slots with minimal additions to the current aerodynamic packages.

In McLaren's case, the direction of the slot's trailing edge appears to carry further vortices outboard, reducing its interface with the wheel and minimising the effect of tyre squirt on the rear end.

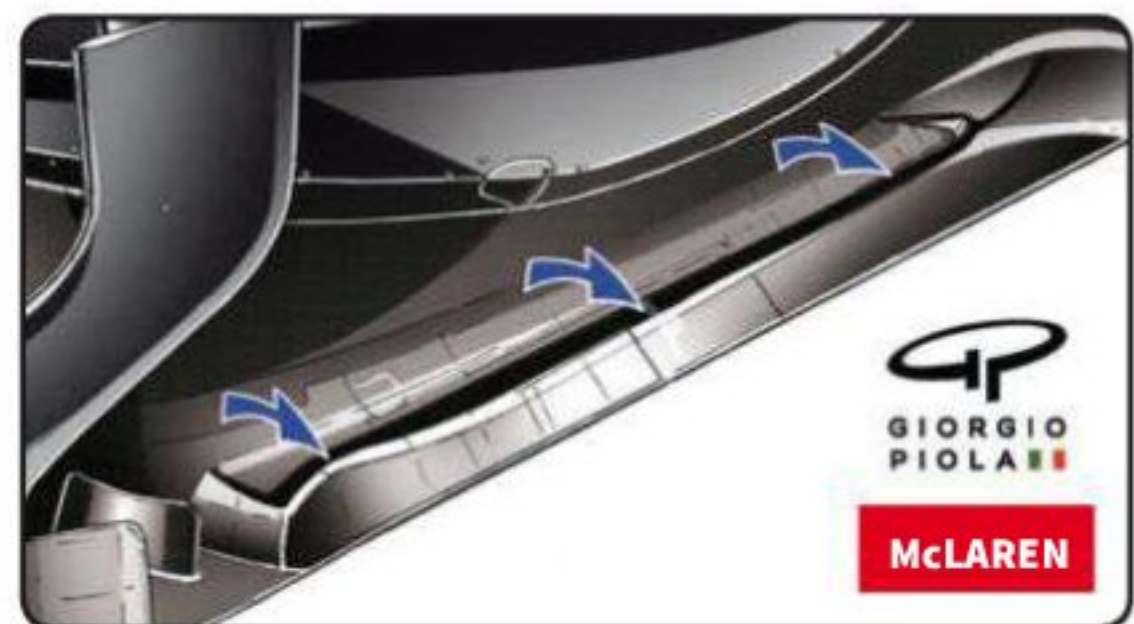
Again, tyre squirt has a detrimental effect on diffuser performance, and is created by the rotation of the wheel creating an unpredictable flow pattern.

Haas and Toro Rosso appear to have taken a similar route to McLaren, although their slots are of shorter variations and are both paired with the scalloped edge of the floor.

In Haas's case, two small raised sections help to guide the airflow around the sidepod and through the slot, carrying it outboard. Toro Rosso's slot is further forward,



TORO ROSSO



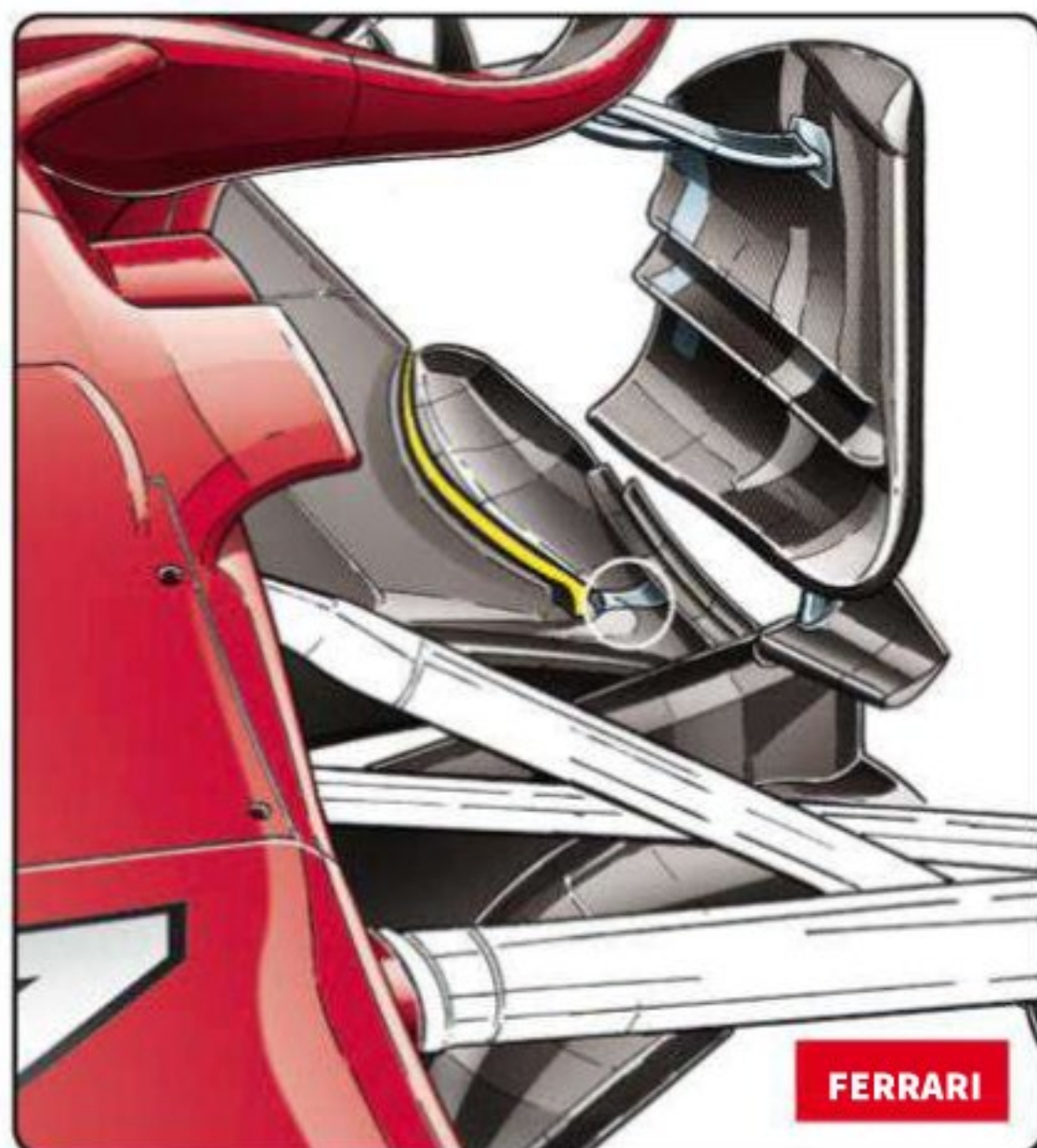
McLAREN

perhaps seeking to work the air being directed around the sidepod as quickly as possible.

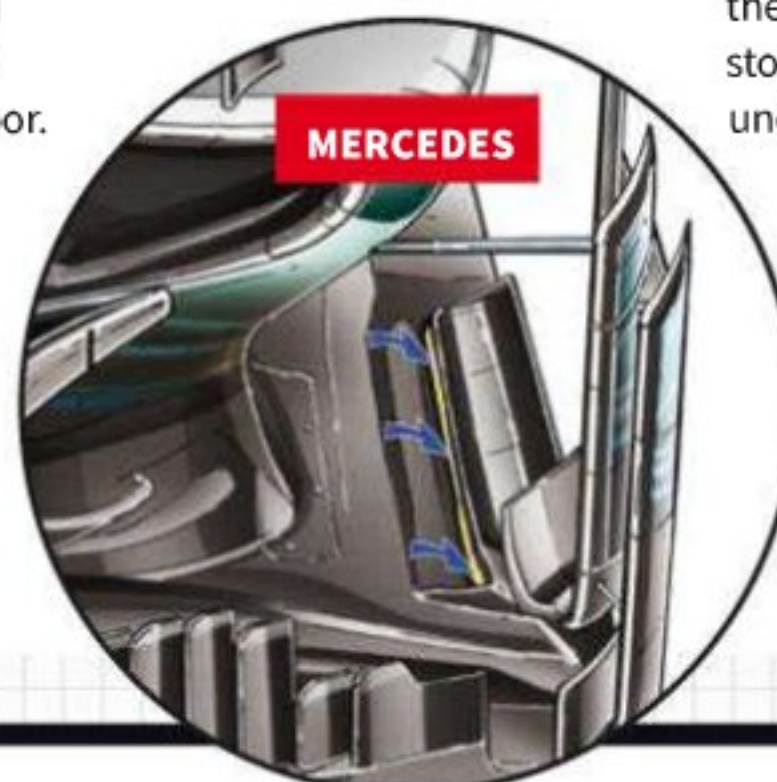
Mercedes and Ferrari have considered different

solutions to the floor slots, and have a trailing edge that is cut away from the floor. At this sharp trailing edge the teams are able to create a small vortex to carry along the edge of the floor and stop 'dirty' air from drifting underneath the floor.

This regulatory loophole should serve to produce further developments, and it may not be until the Spanish GP next month that teams bring more radical floor-slot solutions.



FERRARI



MERCEDES

F1/BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX RESULTS

STARTING GRID



Race results / 57 laps - 191.539 miles

Fastest laps

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	TIME IN PITS	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	1h33m53.374s	36	●●●	49.016s	1	Hamilton	1m32.798s	-	46
2	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+6.660s	8	●●●	1m01.369s	2	Ricciardo	1m33.495s	+0.697s	42
3	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	+20.397s	13	●●●	52.908s	3	Raikkonen	1m33.720s	+0.922s	55
4	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	+22.475s		●●●	52.286s	4	Vettel	1m33.826s	+1.028s	36
5	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-Renault	+39.346s		●●●	50.512s	5	Bottas	1m34.087s	+1.289s	33
6	Felipe Massa	Williams-Mercedes	+54.326s		●●●	49.944s	6	Massa	1m34.256s	+1.458s	39
7	Sergio Perez	Force India-Mercedes	+1m02.606s		●●●	48.962s	7	Perez	1m34.609s	+1.811s	39
8	Romain Grosjean	Haas-Ferrari	+1m14.865s		●●●	50.040s	8	Grosjean	1m34.948s	+2.150s	33
9	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	+1m20.188s		●●●	51.769s	9	Kvyat	1m34.985s	+2.187s	45
10	Esteban Ocon	Force India-Mercedes	+1m35.711s		●●●	49.169s	10	Ericsson	1m35.086s	+2.288s	35
11	Pascal Wehrlein	Sauber-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●●	26.542s	11	Ocon	1m35.179s	+2.381s	39
12	Daniil Kvyat	Toro Rosso-Renault	-1 lap		●●●	50.450s	12	Hulkenberg	1m35.372s	+2.574s	40
13	Jolyon Palmer	Renault	-1 lap		●●●	53.886s	13	Palmer	1m35.552s	+2.754s	43
14	Fernando Alonso	McLaren-Honda	-3 laps		●●●	49.645s	14	Alonso	1m35.595s	+2.797s	47
R	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber-Ferrari	50 laps-gearbox		●●●	25.576s	15	Stroll	1m36.303s	+3.505s	10
R	Carlos Sainz	Toro Rosso-Renault	12 laps-collision		●●●	25.001s	16	Verstappen	1m36.681s	+3.883s	4
R	Lance Stroll	Williams-Mercedes	12 laps-collision		●●●	24.915s	17	Wehrlein	1m36.786s	+3.988s	43
R	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-Renault	11 laps-brakes		●●●	25.174s	18	Sainz	1m38.026s	+5.228s	8
R	Kevin Magnussen	Haas-Ferrari	8 laps-electrics		●●●	-	19	Magnussen	1m38.718s	+5.920s	6
NS	Stoffel Vandoorne	McLaren-Honda	0 laps-engine		●●●	-	20	Vandoorne	-	-	-

WEATHER Dry, dusk; track 30C, air 24C WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 122.397mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 130.458mph ● New ○ Used | ● Ultra-soft ● Super-soft ● Soft ● Medium ● Hard ● Wet ● Intermediate

0

Lance Stroll has yet to finish a race in his grand prix career, this time being wiped out by Carlos Sainz

1

Jolyon Palmer qualified in the top 10 for the first time, 28 years since father Jonathan last did so at the '89 French GP

4

This is only the fourth time out of 44 wins that Sebastian Vettel has won after starting off the front row

10

Esteban Ocon has finished 10th in all three races so far in the 2017 F1 season

164

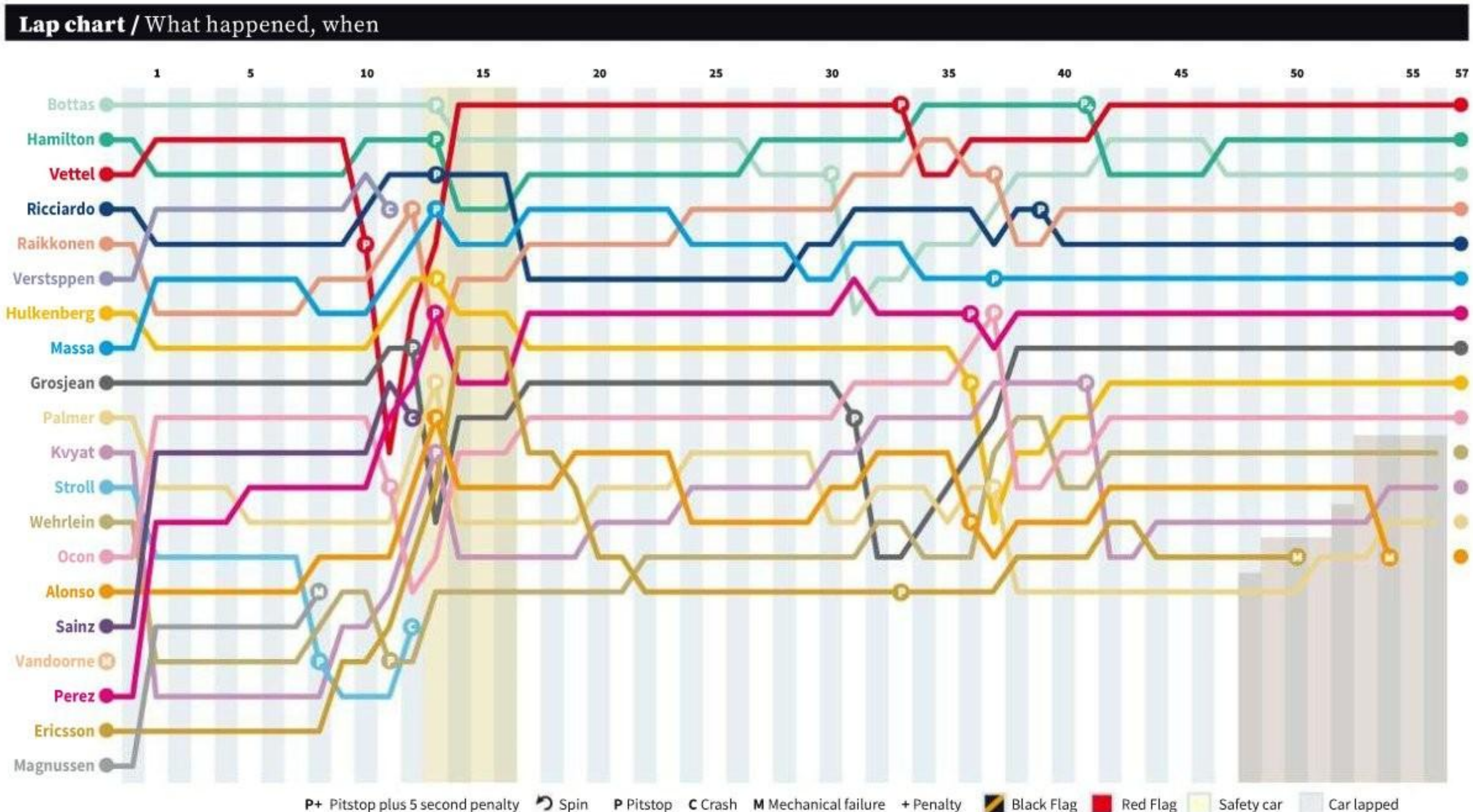
Before this weekend, it's been 164 races without a Finn on pole position since Heikki Kovalainen at Silverstone in 2008

2308

Lewis Hamilton's second place made him the first driver to score more than 2300 points in Formula 1

14,002

Felipe Massa is only the fifth driver to complete 14,000 racing laps in world championship races





Qualifying 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m30.814s
2	Verstappen	1m30.904s
3	Raikkonen	1m30.988s
4	Vettel	1m31.037s
5	Bottas	1m31.041s
6	Hulkenberg	1m31.057s
7	Massa	1m31.373s
8	Palmer	1m31.458s
9	Kvyat	1m31.531s
10	Ricciardo	1m31.667s
11	Grosjean	1m31.691s
12	Stroll	1m31.748s
13	Ocon	1m31.774s
14	Wehrlein	1m31.995s
15	Alonso	1m32.054s
16	Sainz	1m32.118s
17	Vandoorne	1m32.313s
18	Perez	1m32.318s
19	Ericsson	1m32.543s
20	Magnussen	1m32.900s

Qualifying 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m29.535s
2	Bottas	1m29.555s
3	Vettel	1m29.596s
4	Raikkonen	1m29.843s
5	Hulkenberg	1m30.169s
6	Verstappen	1m30.307s
7	Ricciardo	1m30.497s
8	Massa	1m30.677s
9	Grosjean	1m30.857s
10	Palmer	1m30.899s
11	Kvyat	1m30.923s
12	Stroll	1m31.168s
13	Wehrlein	1m31.414s
14	Ocon	1m31.684s
15	Alonso	no time

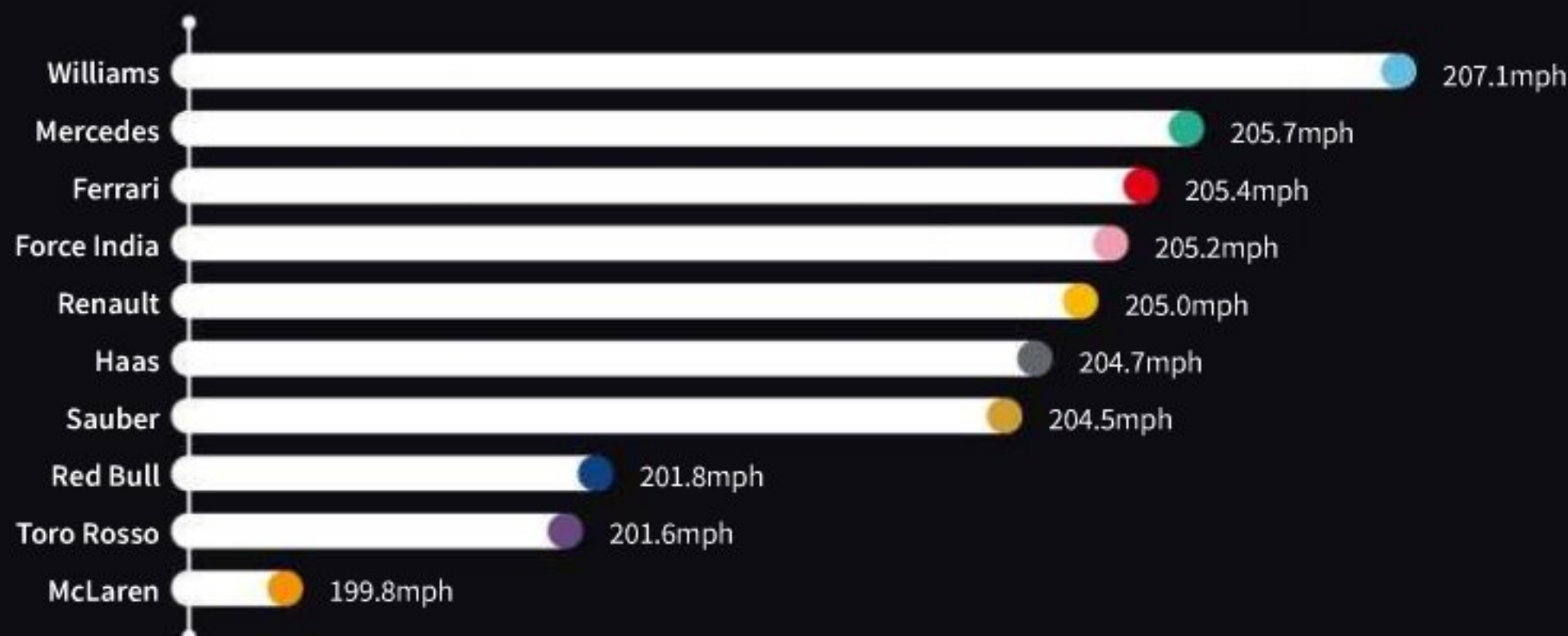
Qualifying 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m28.769s
2	Hamilton	1m28.792s
3	Vettel	1m29.247s
4	Ricciardo	1m29.545s
5	Raikkonen	1m29.567s
6	Verstappen	1m29.687s
7	Hulkenberg	1m29.842s
8	Massa	1m30.074s
9	Grosjean	1m30.763s
10	Palmer	1m31.074s

WEATHER Dry, dusk; track 31C, air 30C

SPEED TRAP

Fastest for each constructor in qualifying



Free practice 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m32.697s
2	Ricciardo	1m33.097s
3	Verstappen	1m33.566s
4	Perez	1m34.095s
5	Massa	1m34.246s
6	Stroll	1m34.322s
7	Ocon	1m34.332s
8	Alonso	1m34.372s
9	Grosjean	1m34.564s
10	Hamilton	1m34.636s
11	Kvyat	1m34.838s
12	Hulkenberg	1m34.927s
13	Vandoorne	1m34.997s
14	Bottas	1m35.002s
15	Palmer	1m35.068s
16	Magnussen	1m35.579s
17	Ericsson	1m35.888s
18	Wehrlein	1m35.959s
19	Sainz	1m36.079s
20	Raikkonen	1m42.333s

Free practice 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m31.310s
2	Bottas	1m31.351s
3	Ricciardo	1m31.376s
4	Raikkonen	1m31.478s
5	Hamilton	1m31.594s
6	Hulkenberg	1m31.883s
7	Massa	1m32.079s
8	Verstappen	1m32.245s
9	Grosjean	1m32.505s
10	Kvyat	1m32.707s
11	Magnussen	1m32.854s
12	Ocon	1m32.875s
13	Palmer	1m32.876s
14	Alonso	1m32.897s
15	Perez	1m33.319s
16	Stroll	1m33.361s
17	Ericsson	1m33.944s
18	Sainz	1m34.072s
19	Wehrlein	1m34.117s
20	Vandoorne	1m34.230s

Free practice 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m32.194s
2	Hamilton	1m32.304s
3	Vettel	1m32.750s
4	Bottas	1m32.754s
5	Raikkonen	1m32.785s
6	Massa	1m32.801s
7	Ricciardo	1m32.809s
8	Hulkenberg	1m32.933s
9	Sainz	1m33.604s
10	Kvyat	1m33.744s
11	Perez	1m33.916s
12	Alonso	1m33.922s
13	Wehrlein	1m33.947s
14	Stroll	1m33.965s
15	Vandoorne	1m34.027s
16	Ocon	1m34.064s
17	Magnussen	1m34.198s
18	Grosjean	1m34.205s
19	Ericsson	1m34.268s
20	Palmer	1m34.417s

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 47C, air 37C

WEATHER Dry, dusk; track 34C, air 33C

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 38C, air 34C

SEASON STATS

Drivers' championship

1	Vettel	68
2	Hamilton	61
3	Bottas	38
4	Raikkonen	34
5	Verstappen	25
6	Ricciardo	22
7	Massa	16
8	Perez	14
9	Sainz	10
10	Grosjean	4
11	Magnussen	4
12	Ocon	3
13	Hulkenberg	2
14	Kvyat	2
15	Wehrlein	0
16	Giovinazzi	0
17	Palmer	0
18	Vandoorne	0
19	Alonso	0
20	Ericsson	0
21	Stroll	0

Constructors' championship

1	Ferrari	102
2	Mercedes	99
3	Red Bull	47
4	Force India	17
5	Williams	16
6	Toro Rosso	12
7	Haas	8
8	Renault	2
9	Sauber	0
10	McLaren	0

Wins

Vettel	2
Hamilton	1

Fastest laps

Hamilton	2
Raikkonen	1

Pole positions

Hamilton	2
Bottas	1

Qualifying battle

HAM	2	1	BOT
RIC	2	1	VER
VET	3	0	RAI
PER	2	1	OCO
STR	0	3	MAS
VAN	0	3	ALO
KVY	2	1	SAI
GRO	2	1	MAG
HUL	3	0	PAL
ERI	0	1	WEH
ERI	2	0	GIO

NEXT RACE



Russian Grand Prix
April 28-30, Sochi

Nobody's perfect

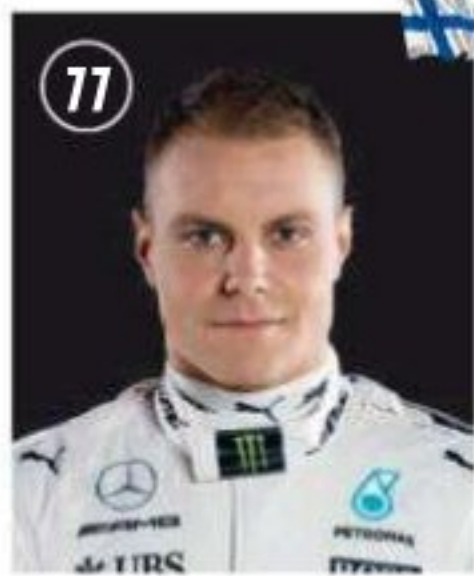
We rate each driver's Bahrain grand prix weekend performance out of 10
 By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

[@BenAndersonAuto](#)

MERCEDES



8 LEWIS HAMILTON
 Looked on for his seventh pole in succession, but was outdone at the crucial moment in Q3, feeling a DRS glitch and mistake at the final corner cost him. Took blame for the shaky start and pit-entry blunder that helped hand victory to Vettel. Failing to win a race you comfortably had the pace to will always hurt.



7 VALTTERI BOTTAS
 Deserves credit for beating Hamilton to claim his maiden pole position in F1, but ultimately endured a hugely disappointing race. Could do nothing about the over-inflated tyres that ruined his first stint, but that doesn't explain his lack of pace thereafter. Couldn't tame the oversteer and had to let Hamilton past.

RED BULL



8 DANIEL RICCIARDO
 Couldn't explain Red Bull's upturn in form here, but made the most of the situation to split the Ferraris in qualifying. Red Bull showed such pace in the first stint Ricciardo thought he was going to win, but fell away after the restart on cold tyres he couldn't get warm. Recovered to the highest finish the car merited.



9 MAX VERSTAPPEN
 Got beaten by Ricciardo in qualifying, but was quicker in Q2 and initially in Q3, so it would have been interesting to see the result had Massa not "ruined" his final run. Made another great start to the race, jumping both Ricciardo and Raikkonen. Was simply a passenger when the rear brakes failed.

FERRARI

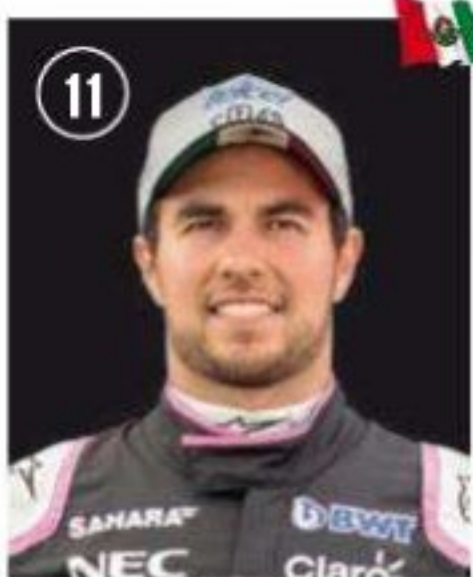


9 SEBASTIAN VETTEL
 Probably fancied his chances for pole after matching the Mercedes drivers to the tenth in Q2, but it's doubtful he could have threatened them in Q3. First-corner pass on Hamilton was brave and well-judged; Bottas was easy meat thanks to Mercedes' problems. Once in front, Vettel is so hard to stop.

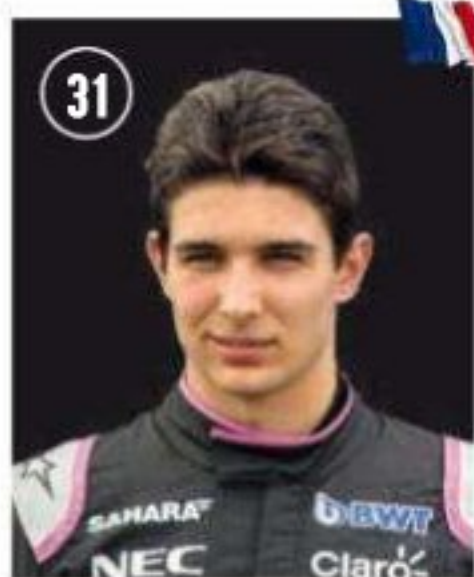


6 KIMI RAIKKONEN
 Reckoned his Ferrari behaved better than ever here, but struggled with "a few small things" again as the track cooled in qualifying. Was well off Vettel's pace. Paid dearly for a "shit start" to the race, and took ages to repass Massa's Williams (twice). Showed decent pace in the final stint at least.

FORCE INDIA



8 SERGIO PEREZ
 The Force India wasn't working well here, but Perez recovered nicely after yellow flags spoiled his qualifying. Passed Wehrlein, Alonso and Stroll on the first lap, picked off Palmer, jumped Ocon and Grosjean in the pits thanks to the safety car, and nailed Hulkenberg after the restart.



7 ESTEBAN OCON
 Went reasonably well on the first circuit on the calendar he's been to before and was likely going to edge Perez in Q1 before his team-mate's misfortune, but shouldn't have let Wehrlein beat him in Q2. A great first lap put Ocon into the points but, although the safety car hurt his race, he also lacked Perez's pace.

WILLIAMS



5 LANCE STROLL
 Felt his feet were getting too hot in Friday practice, but in qualifying it was a lack of heat in the tyres that undid Stroll, who was quite a way off Massa's pace again. Lost ground on the first lap and had to pit early again after flatspotting his tyres. Was minding his own business when Sainz harpooned him.



9 FELIPE MASSA
 Upset Max Verstappen with his driving in the closing moments of Q3 but ultimately did nothing wrong. Drove very well in the race, dispatching Hulkenberg immediately and mixing it with Raikkonen's Ferrari and Ricciardo's Red Bull for a time. Couldn't have done much better really.

McLAREN



6 STOFFEL VANDOORNE
 Close to Alonso initially in Q1, but lacked confidence on the brakes and was a chunk off his team-mate's ultimate pace. McLaren-Honda's poor reliability is also hampering his progress. Suffered two MGU-H failures on Friday and a suspected third (related to a water leak) put him out before the race even started.

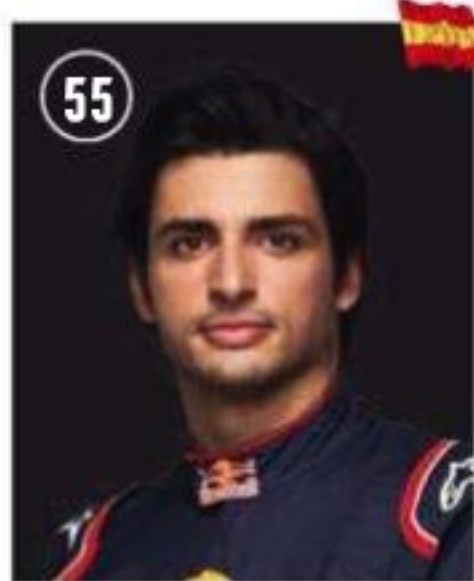


9 FERNANDO ALONSO
 Another feisty performance in the face of adversity from Alonso, who hauled his car into Q2 (with help from yellow flags) before suffering engine failure. Hung in a race with Kvyat's Toro Rosso and Palmer's Renault for as long as he could, before retiring with a suspected engine problem three laps from home.



Alonso was left battling Renaults and Saubers

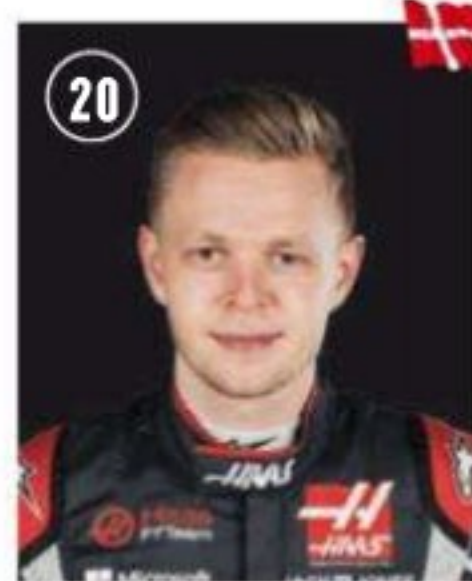
TORO ROSSO



5 **DANIIL KVIAT**
Was going to be behind Sainz in Q1, before Sainz's engine let go, and missed Q3 thanks to an error. Went off on lap one after a "misunderstanding" with Grosjean, which dropped him well back. Recovery fight with Palmer and Alonso was fun, but ultimately Kvyat finished behind a Sauber in a car capable of points.

7 **CARLOS SAINZ JR**
Lost Friday's vital second practice session to a broken exhaust, so did well to put together a qualifying lap that was set to be good enough for Q2 until the engine failed. Rose to 11th with a good opening lap, but undid all that good work with a wildly optimistic lunge inside Stroll's Williams after exiting the pits.

HAAS



8 **ROMAIN GROSJEAN**
A decent weekend's work for Grosjean, who pranged his car in final practice but recovered well to make Q3 again, though he didn't hook up a great lap in the top-10 shootout. Lost out to Perez by pitting before the safety car, but managed to jump Hulkenberg later and score solid points.

5 **KEVIN MAGNUSSEN**
A disappointing grand prix after the high of scoring his first points for Haas in China. Felt the yellow flags ruined his chances in qualifying, but in reality he wasn't lapping quickly enough to make Q2. Made up three places on the first lap, but only lasted seven more before an electrical problem forced him out.

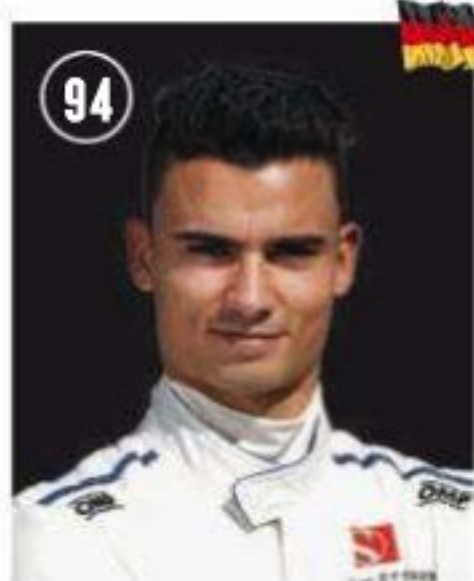
RENAULT



8 **NICO HULKENBERG**
Reckoned the qualifying lap that put him seventh was "silky smooth" and as good as his Brazil 2010 pole effort. It was certainly right up there. Lost a place to Massa at the start, but was steady thereafter. The Renault seems unkind on its tyres in race trim, and Hulkenberg lost out at the pitstops.

5 **JOLYON PALMER**
After struggling in practice, Palmer produced a strong effort in Q2 to qualify inside the top 10 for the first time. Unfortunately, he switched his engine into the wrong mode and overdrove trying to compensate in Q3. Got shuffled back early in the race, and picked up front wing damage while fighting Kvyat.

SAUBER



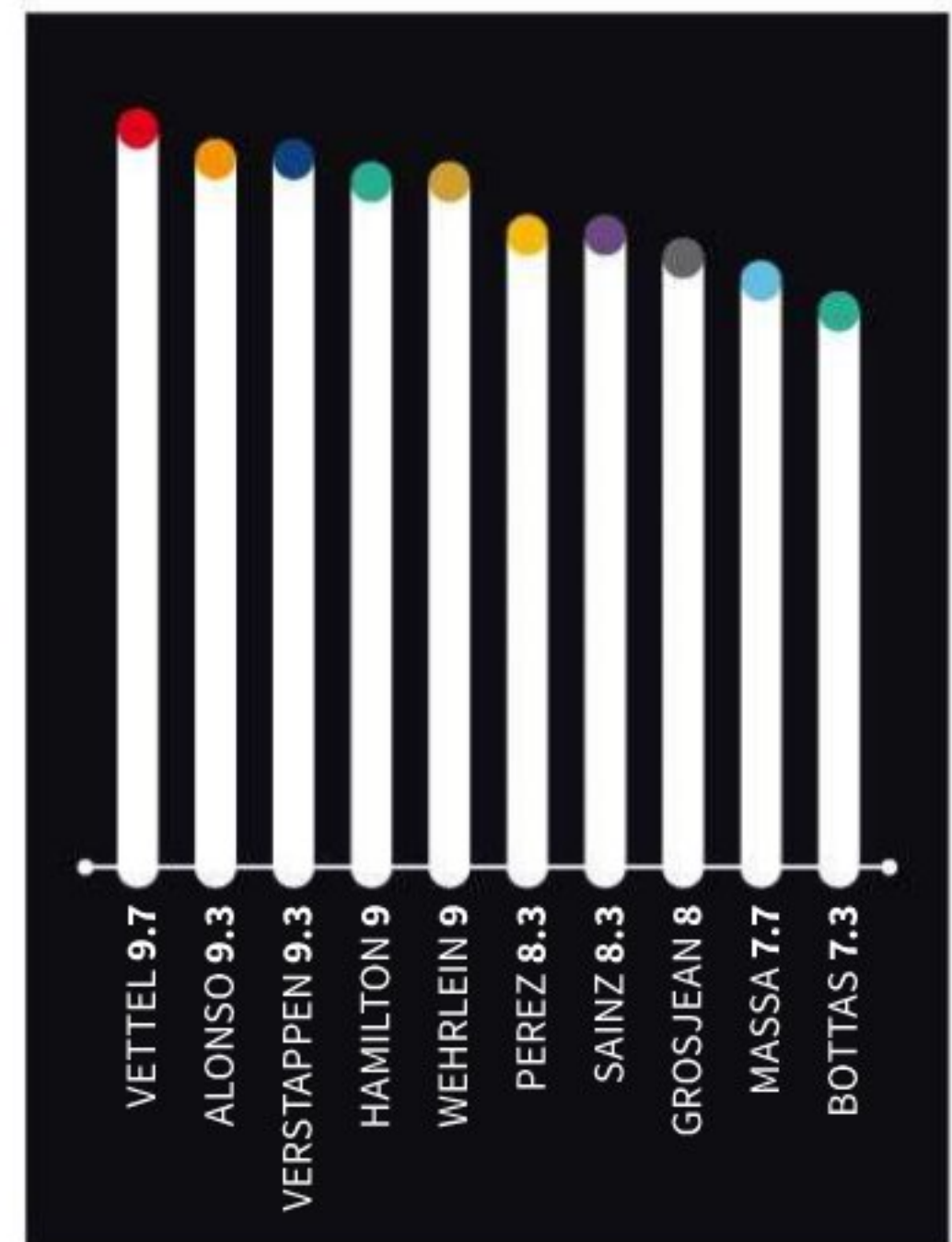
5 **MARCUS ERICSSON**
Was faster than his returning team-mate on Friday, but failed to get within half a second of Wehrlein in qualifying. Was the only driver to start the race on the soft tyre, so the safety car timing was unfortunate for his strategy, but Ericsson was clinging on against Palmer when the Sauber's gearbox failed.

9 **PASCAL WEHRLEIN**
A great effort from Wehrlein, who copped a lot of criticism for skipping two races to regain fitness following his Race Of Champions shunt. He starred in Bahrain last year and was superb again to put Sauber in Q2. The first lap wasn't stellar, but he executed a one-stop strategy expertly to beat two faster cars.



Brake failure halted an impressive Verstappen run

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATING





How Alonso's Indy deal became reality

Fernando Alonso's ambitions outside of Formula 1 were already known before last week's big announcement, but his Indianapolis 500 drive came together very fast

By Edd Straw, Editor-in-Chief

[@eddstrawF1](#)





It started as a joke, a throwaway comment from McLaren team boss Zak Brown to Fernando Alonso about racing in the Indianapolis 500. Then something amazing happened. It evolved from a joke, into a mad idea, into a long shot, into a possibility, into a likelihood, into a signed and sealed deal for Alonso to become the first active Formula 1 megastar to commit to racing at the Brickyard since Nigel Mansell.

When the news broke on Wednesday of last week, many couldn't believe it. Would McLaren and Honda *really* let its star 'defect' to Indy and miss F1's blue-riband race, the Monaco Grand Prix, to do it? That's exactly what has happened.

Alonso describes it as a "win-win" situation, but there are more than two wins in play here. For Alonso, it's a chance to pursue a long-held desire to take on the Indy 500, and perhaps even become only the second driver after Graham Hill to win the so-called 'Triple Crown' by winning the Monaco Grand Prix, the Indy 500 and Le Mans. Having won Monaco twice, he's still a long way off as he's not so much as started either of the other two races, but it's clear that, with a third world championship looking as far off as ever, Alonso is thinking about his legacy.

"If I want to be the best driver in the world there are two options," says Alonso. "I win eight Formula 1 World Championships, one more than Michael [Schumacher], which is very unlikely. The second one is to win different series in different moments of my career and be a driver that can race and win in any car, in any series."

Alonso will have as good a chance as he could hope for to win Indy on his one-off appearance (he has stressed he's not planning outings in any other IndyCar races other than the big one), improbable as that sounds. While he will be entered under the McLaren banner with an appropriately orange livery, the car will be run by Andretti Autosport. This is a team that, in various guises, has won Indy five times, including last year's race with Alexander Rossi. Only Roger Penske's squad has more victories.

Team boss Michael Andretti will call Alonso's strategy, although you could argue that given the famous family curse at Indy, that might not be such a good thing! But as well as having that vast strategic nous to call on, he will have an Indy 500-winning race engineer in Eric Bretzman. With Andretti a long-time Honda spearhead, albeit now having to share that status with Chip Ganassi Racing, and McLaren offering all the

support it can, including personnel, this is a proper assault.

And it has to be. After all, McLaren would not let its prize asset skip F1's own blue-riband race for a half-baked bid. This is serious, and to see just how serious you need to look at how difficult it was to put together this deal in such a short time. First mentioned during the Australian Grand Prix weekend, it came up again in China before being announced three days after that race.

"In Australia we talked about this possibility, we had a general talk about the future, the future of McLaren as a team and as a group, me as a racer, [my] ambitions, the Triple Crown and McLaren's ambitions for the future," says Alonso. "Eric [Boullier, racing director] is French so is very keen for the Le Mans 24 Hours in the future. Zak is American so was keen for the Indy 500."

"After the Australian Grand Prix I received a call from Zak about different things. In one moment of the conversation the Indy 500 possibility came out again and at that point I was happy McLaren was considering this. I was happy when Zak joined the team last year, but I was even happier when he was telling me these plans for the future. But I was thinking for 2018."

"In China we had dinner together and we talked a bit more seriously about this. We decided if this is going to happen, the decision had to be made by tomorrow. On Saturday, I arrived at the circuit and said this is a good decision for everyone, a win-win; a win for F1, for myself, for the fans. On Monday everything became real; I was not completely sure on Saturday in China if it was possible to do it so quickly. We had huge

Alonso and Brown announced the deal last week

Alexander Rossi won as an Indy rookie for Andretti last year





Alonso scored his first Monaco GP win for Renault in 2006

help from Indy, from the speedway, from the promoter and together with Zak's contacts and Andretti Autosport it helped everything become real in two days."

An unlikely figure also played a part in the story: 2007 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Stefan Wilson. The 27-year-old – younger brother of the late Justin Wilson – was closing on a deal to drive the sixth Andretti Autosport car at Indy, but decided to park his bid to facilitate Alonso contesting the race. IndyCar CEO Mark Miles picks up the story.

"At one point we were kind of long-faced because it looked like there was no ride available," says Miles. "The equipment was all spoken for, there were no other engines or cars out there that we thought we could make available. That was a dark day.

"Not long after that we started a conversation with Stefan Wilson, who had lined up a Honda ride with Andretti that was well sponsored. We had a long dialogue over the course of a couple of hours and agreed that if we could take care of his sponsors – in other words get them the benefits that they had bargained for were he to stay in the car in 2017 – and if he could have future IndyCar opportunities, then he would be happy to cooperate with us to achieve this possibility for McLaren and Alonso."

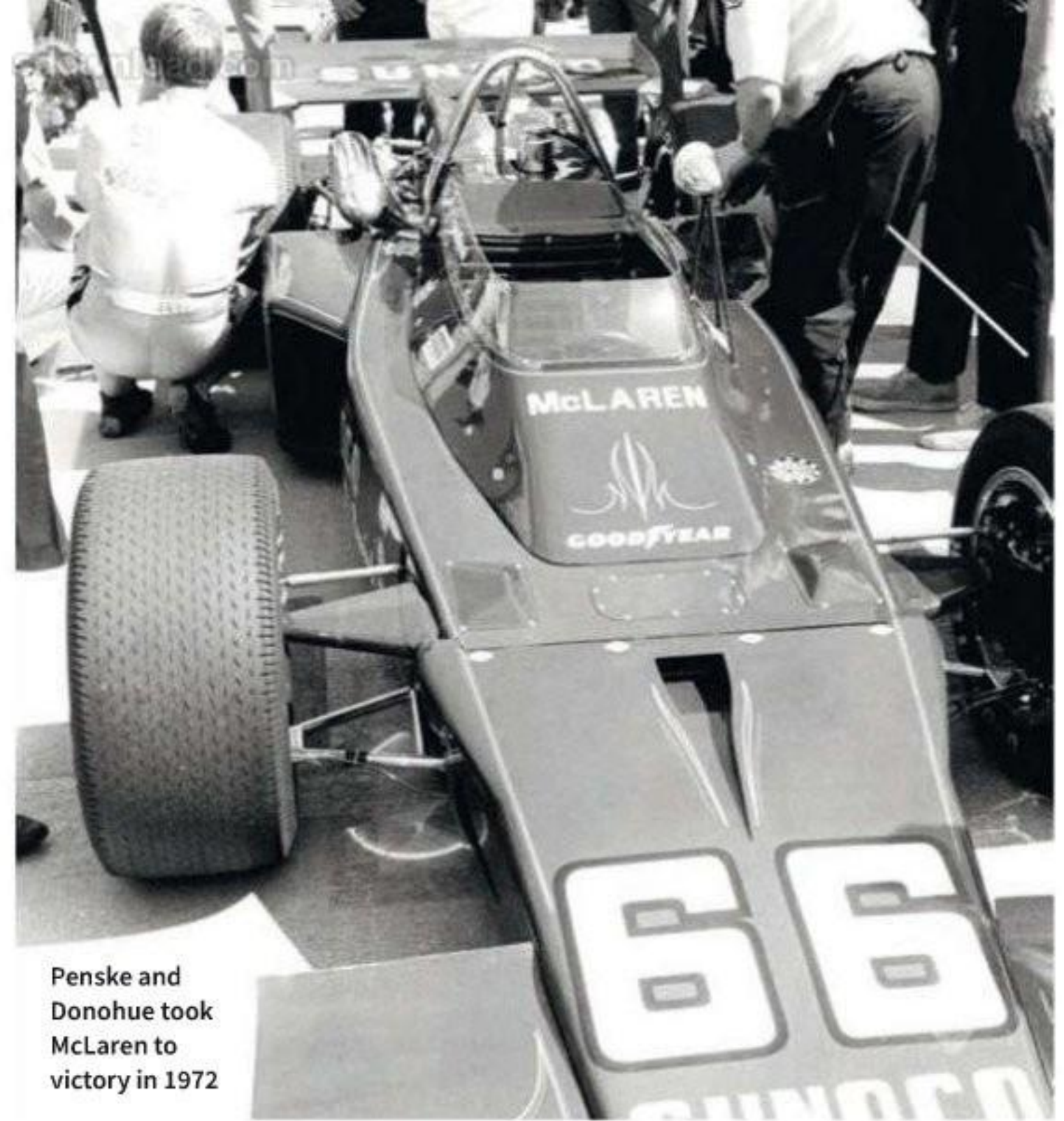
But this deal isn't just about Alonso, it's also about McLaren. When asked during the Bahrain GP weekend about whether or not this would have been possible in Ron Dennis-era McLaren, Alonso suggests it would have been desperately unlikely.

"I guess not," reckons Alonso. "Zak is a man who has a bigger vision than other team principals or bosses that I had. He sees motorsport differently, he sees McLaren bigger, not only concentrating on F1."

It's certainly hard to conceive of a deal like this happening without someone of Brown's outlook. His enthusiasm for the Indy project is clear, and has driven it from his initial throwaway joke to what is, so far, the biggest motorsport story of 2017.

"McLaren has a great history at the Indy 500, having won it three times [see sidebar, right]," says Brown. "We, as McLaren, have a desire to get back to Indianapolis as part of our racing portfolio. I am one of the newest members of the team, so while I had aspirations for us to get back to Indianapolis in the future, the thought of doing it with Fernando Alonso and Honda was a stunning idea. It felt a bit like a dream and it was probably a bit early to start pursuing it. And I did drop it. But it was one of those things where one of your jokes has some truth to it.

"So I said to Fernando pre-Australia, 'Hey, one of these days' »



Penske and Donohue took McLaren to victory in 1972

McLAREN'S INDYCAR PAST

BY THE TIME THE McLAREN marque joined the Indycar field in 1970, it was already well known in America, having just dominated the 1969 Can-Am series. A quiet start in US open-wheel racing with the M15 would lead to the M16, a Gordon Coppuck design that in '71 appeared ready to dominate the Indy 500, with Peter Revson and Denny Hulme in works cars qualifying first and fourth, and Mark Donohue's Penske-entered McLaren starting second. Yet the latter dropped out with gearbox failure while leading, and Revson couldn't catch Al Unser's Johnny Lightning-sponsored Colt, and finished as runner-up.

Little more than a month later Donohue scored McLaren's first win, at Pocono, and followed it up with a dominant Michigan victory. The following year, Penske team-mate Gary Bettenhausen won Trenton and seemed destined for Indy 500 glory, but even when his engine let go, Donohue was there to grab the win and the milk.

In 1973 Johnny Rutherford would finally land two wins for the works McLaren team, but

while Bettenhausen also scored one for Penske, it was Roger McCluskey in another independent-entered McLaren, that of Lindsey Hopkins, who scooped the USAC championship.

Rutherford's works M16 earned the 1974 and '76 Indy 500s, while Tom Sneva won the USAC championship in Penske's McLaren M24 in '77. However, when Roger Penske elected to enter his company's own Indycars for '78, McLaren's prospects took a hard hit. Rutherford scored four more wins over the next two seasons, bringing the brand's victory total to a very respectable 28 by the end of '79. But in light of the team's disastrous form in Formula 1, and under increasing pressure from principal sponsor Marlboro, the decision was taken to focus on grand prix racing.

That worked out fine for Rutherford. Scarcely believing his luck, 'Lone Star Jr' saw Al Unser fall out with Chaparral's Jim Hall, and was offered the keys to the stunning John Barnard-designed Chaparral 2K for 1980. He grabbed five victories, including his third Indy 500 triumph.

DAVID MALSHER



Rutherford took McLaren team's second Indy 500 win in 1976

we should do Indy together', and threw it out there to see what type of reaction I'd get. He joked back and I thought I had thrown the bait in the water and would leave it at that. When Fernando was with Eric and Honda in Australia, it came up in conversation..."

From there on, Brown's account matches Alonso's. But while he's adamant that any benefits other than getting Alonso and McLaren into the Indy 500 are bonuses, it's clearly a move that has huge advantages for McLaren and Honda. In a moment, the narrative was transformed from an uphill competitive struggle, three years of failure and questions of when Alonso would walk away, to a completely different, more positive story. Not even repeated Honda engine problems during the Bahrain GP weekend could spoil the effect of that.

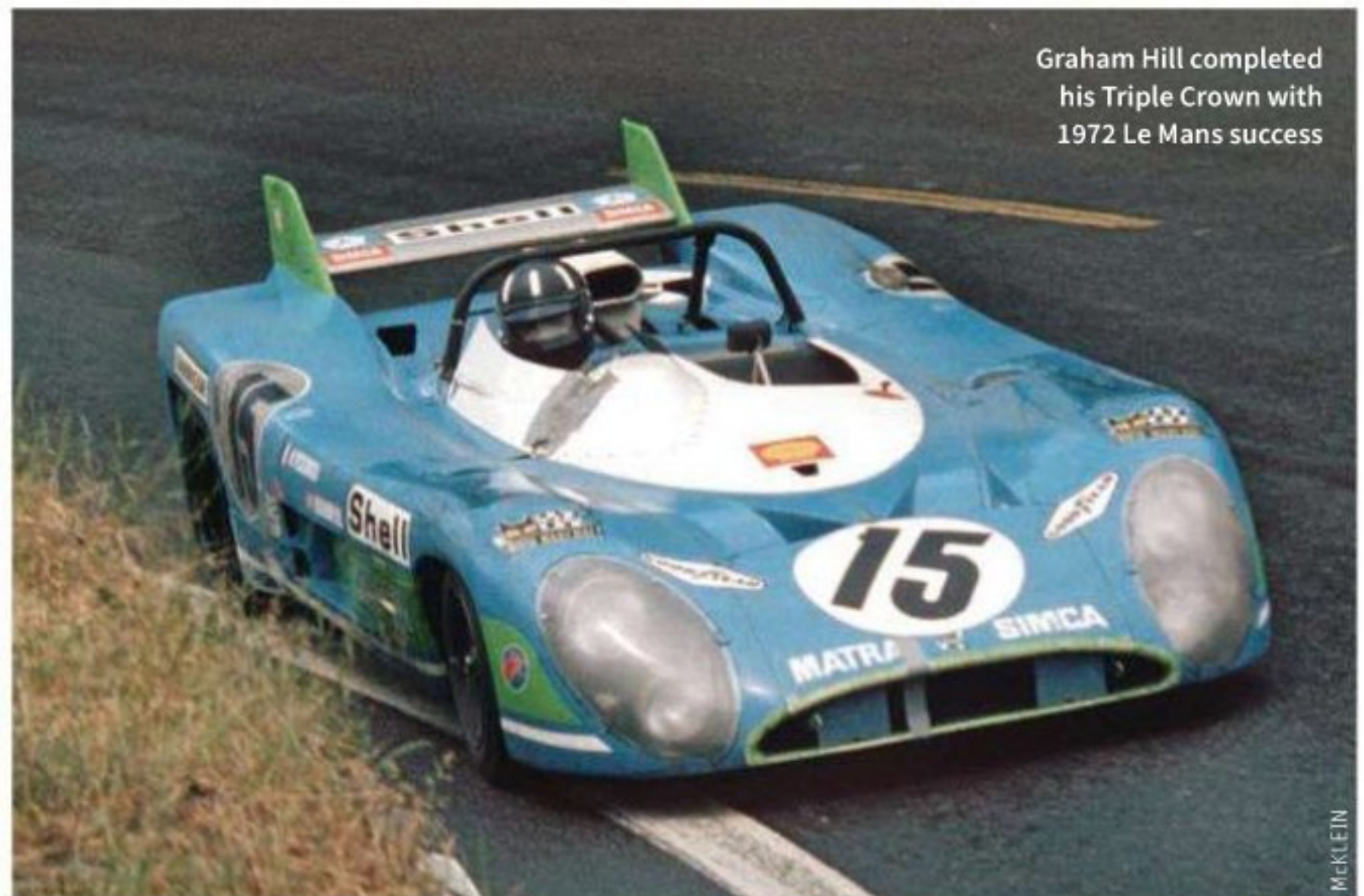
It also gives Alonso what he wants: the chance to race a competitive car. As he points out, if it's a choice between an outside chance of winning Indy as a rookie, and an outside chance of finishing sixth or seventh in the Monaco GP, it's not a difficult choice. With Alonso a free agent for 2018, it also presumably buys some time to prove that the McLaren-Honda alliance could yet salvage something from F1 and get on an upward trajectory that could deliver that third world championship.

And, what's more, it got people talking about F1 in the United States, which remains a significant target for growth. Those who say it's bad for F1 to have a star driver dropping Monaco for Indy, that it reflects poorly on grand prix racing, are missing the point. This is a great story for F1 as well as McLaren and Alonso. Doubly so given Alonso's replacement is a former world champion and a Monaco GP winner: Jenson Button.

While Brown was the driving force, he did have the support of those that matter at McLaren. Not only has the project enthused the workforce (apparently, there were plenty of requests from the F1 race team to go to Indy, which inevitably had to be knocked back given there will be work to do at Monaco), but the McLaren executive committee, which includes Sheikh Mohammed bin Essa Al Khalifa, thanks to Bahraini sovereign wealth fund Mumtalakat's major stake in the group.

"I couldn't have done it without the guidance, support, approval and enthusiasm of our team leaders and them saying go and do it," says Brown of the deal, which gives McLaren its best shot of winning a single-seater race in 2017.

"We just wanted to try to win races with Honda this year, and this probably gives us as good a chance as any. We're not going in making any claims that we're going to win, but we'll have a car and driver capable of winning. We want to show the world that McLaren, Honda and Fernando are united, because we were getting lots of questions about that relationship. While we're all frustrated, we're one team and we're in this together. And it was a good way to show everyone that we are brave as a group.



Graham Hill completed his Triple Crown with 1972 Le Mans success

MCKEIN

“I consider myself a racer, a complete driver, adapting to any conditions”

"It's good for our partners. They will all come along for the ride, so while we're not getting great F1 results, and we're not delivering for them on track as we're used to, they'll get a benefit there. Then of course there's the narrative with all the media and the fans – we hoped everyone would then think it was really cool. So it's not a media-driven decision, but we're not surprised at the reaction of the world."

So, realistically, what are Alonso's chances? He will have a run in the car before the start of practice at Indy the Monday after next month's Spanish Grand Prix, but his first experience will be on a road course rather than an oval. His team, engine, race engineer and strategies are certainly up to it, but the key is how well he adapts to the challenge of racing on ovals. Needless to say, Alonso has never competed in anything like this.

The last time a driver won Indy as not part of a full-time programme was Juan Pablo Montoya in 2000, although he was racing in the Champ Car series at a time when the Indy 500 was in the rival IRL IndyCar camp – so this is heavily caveated. Alonso has no oval-racing experience to fall back on, no experience of the team, no experience of running in close quarters in a group of cars and is up against drivers who have all of that in spades.

But if anyone can, it's Alonso. Even through a desultory period in his career results-wise, without a win since May 2013 and without a top-four finish since September the year after, he is driving as well as ever – if not better. Alonso is an extraordinary driver, and while he will not be able to bring European racing technology to America to help him in the way drivers like Jim Clark, Jack Brabham, Graham Hill and Jackie Stewart did in the 1960s, you wouldn't put it past him being in contention. If anybody in the world could do it in the 21st century, it's the extraordinary Alonso. He's certainly going in with the aim of drinking the milk on May 28.

"I consider myself a racer, a complete driver, adapting myself to any car and any conditions," says Alonso. "The best way to show this is to compete in different categories.

"I am not going there to see the cars going around, I will go with my best effort and full commitment to try to win the race."

What a story that would be. ❄️

Alonso and McLaren haven't had much to smile about this year



LAT IMAGES

ANDRETTI'S VIEW

MARIO ANDRETTI IS ONE OF ONLY FIVE drivers to conquer the Indianapolis 500 and the Formula 1 world championship, along with Jim Clark, Graham Hill, Emerson Fittipaldi and Jacques Villeneuve. Andretti will be available as a consultant to Alonso, as he is for all of son Michael's team's drivers, and is backing the Spaniard to make a big impression.

"Let's face it, it's adapting to ovals, not the cars themselves, that you need to think about here," he says. "A driver in a race car is looking for a feel, and the best drivers – and Fernando is one of the very, very best – will always find it. It may not be his regular environment, but a top driver will find a way to relate to any true race car."

Michael Andretti has always said that, although Indianapolis Motor Speedway is very fast and daunting, the Indy 500 is actually the best race for a driver to make his oval debut, due to the practice time available. His father agrees.

"Absolutely, absolutely, it's the only race on the planet that will give you that much time to prepare," says Mario. "Each day Fernando will get six hours of practice, weather allowing."

"They'll first send him out there loaded up with downforce, and he may think, 'Oh, it's a piece of cake.' Then as he starts getting confidence they'll gradually take downforce off; he'll get used to the car moving around a bit more, then a little bit more, and on and on. As he gets more confident still, they'll have him practice slipstreaming."

"That there is *another* benefit of having Alonso teamed with five other drivers, four of them solid Speedway veterans. [The fifth will be another rookie, Jack Harvey, driving a Michael Shank-run entry on behalf of Andretti Autosport.] Between them they can create their own mock 'race' during practice sessions, to throw a bunch of dirty air in the rookie's direction and get him used to the loss of downforce."

Andretti believes it will be key that Alonso is prepared to gradually work his way up to being confident on the 2.5-mile superspeedway.

"We don't want him to get too brave and spook himself," adds Andretti. "When you do that, it can be very tricky getting that confidence back, so the team will not allow that to happen."

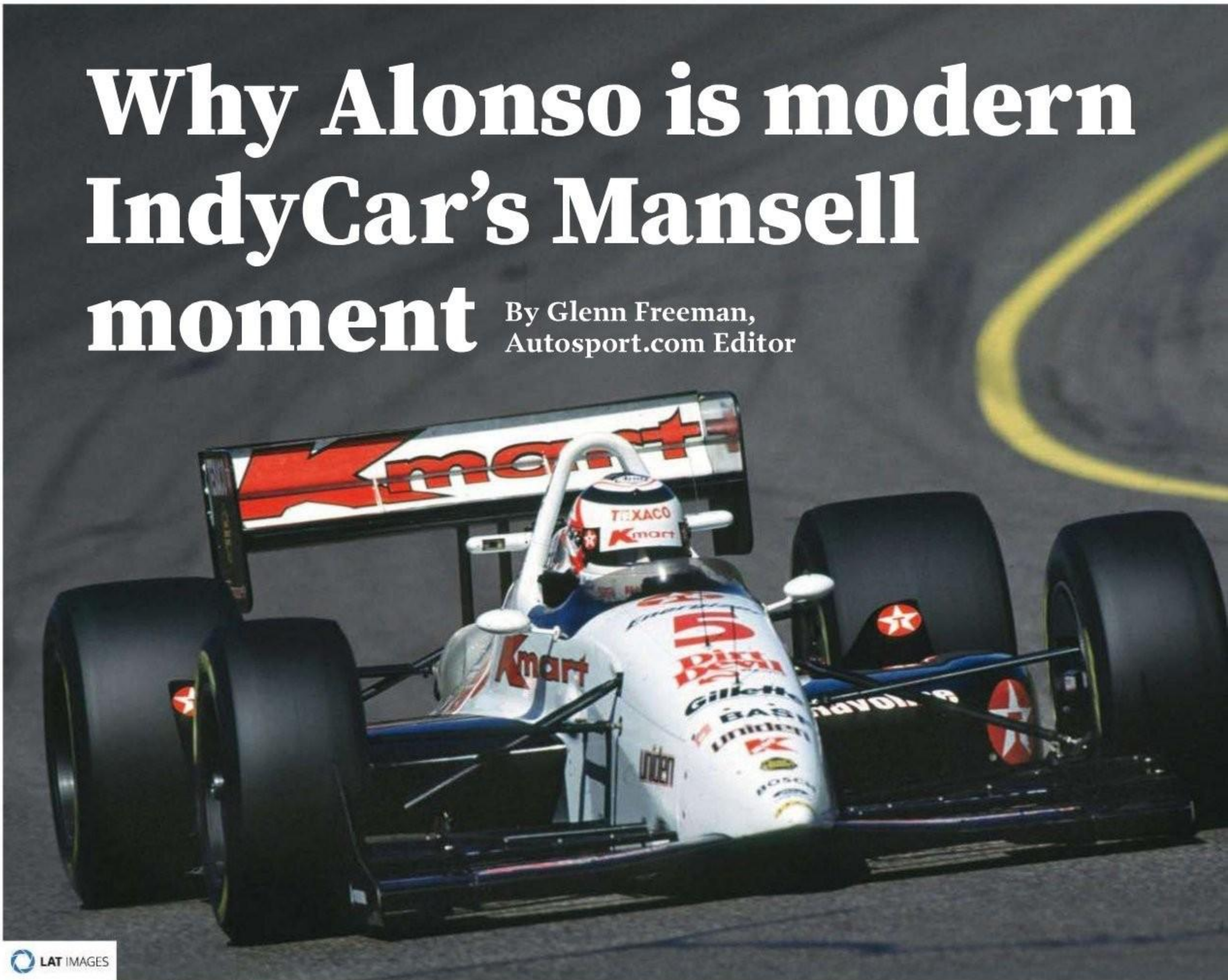
DAVID MALSHER



Andretti won
Indy 500 in 1969

Why Alonso is modern IndyCar's Mansell moment

By Glenn Freeman,
Autosport.com Editor



LAT IMAGES

Fernando Alonso missing the Monaco Grand Prix to make his debut in the Indianapolis 500 is the biggest thing to happen to single-seater racing in America since Nigel Mansell switched to what was then called the CART Indycar World Series as the reigning Formula 1 world champion in 1993.

There are parts of the Alonso story even more remarkable than Mansell's. Mansell opted for the US as a full-time way out of F1 when his relationship broke down with Williams, while Alonso is an active grand prix driver taking the staggering step of missing F1's most high-profile race.

Mansell's move to Newman/Haas catapulted an already-thriving CART series into the mainstream. Modern IndyCar's international profile does not compare to the status it was enjoying before Mansell arrived, but the recovery mission since Champ Car and the Indy Racing League merged in 2008 has been building momentum.

While series bosses make no secret of having international ambitions, the focus has correctly been on getting things back on track on home soil first. TV ratings have been on the rise in the United States, after a long and painful decline, and, through

all the problems faced by North American single-seater racing, the Indy 500 has stayed strong. Last year the race sold out for the first time in more than two decades.

IndyCar still needs a spark to have a chance of catching fire again, however. Alonso presents the best chance in almost 25 years of making that happen.

When Mansell arrived for 1993, moves were already afoot that would lead to 'the split' for '96, and Tony George officially announced the formation of the Indy Racing League in '94. Among the reasons for the creation of the IRL, beyond ugly politics behind the scenes that had plagued Indycar racing throughout its existence, was a concern that homegrown American drivers were missing out on opportunities.

The foreign invasion had already started before Mansell crossed the Atlantic Ocean, but it rocketed after his spell in America. His move transformed the landscape of Indycar racing, helping it become viewed as a credible career option away from F1 for aspiring drivers racing in Europe and South America.

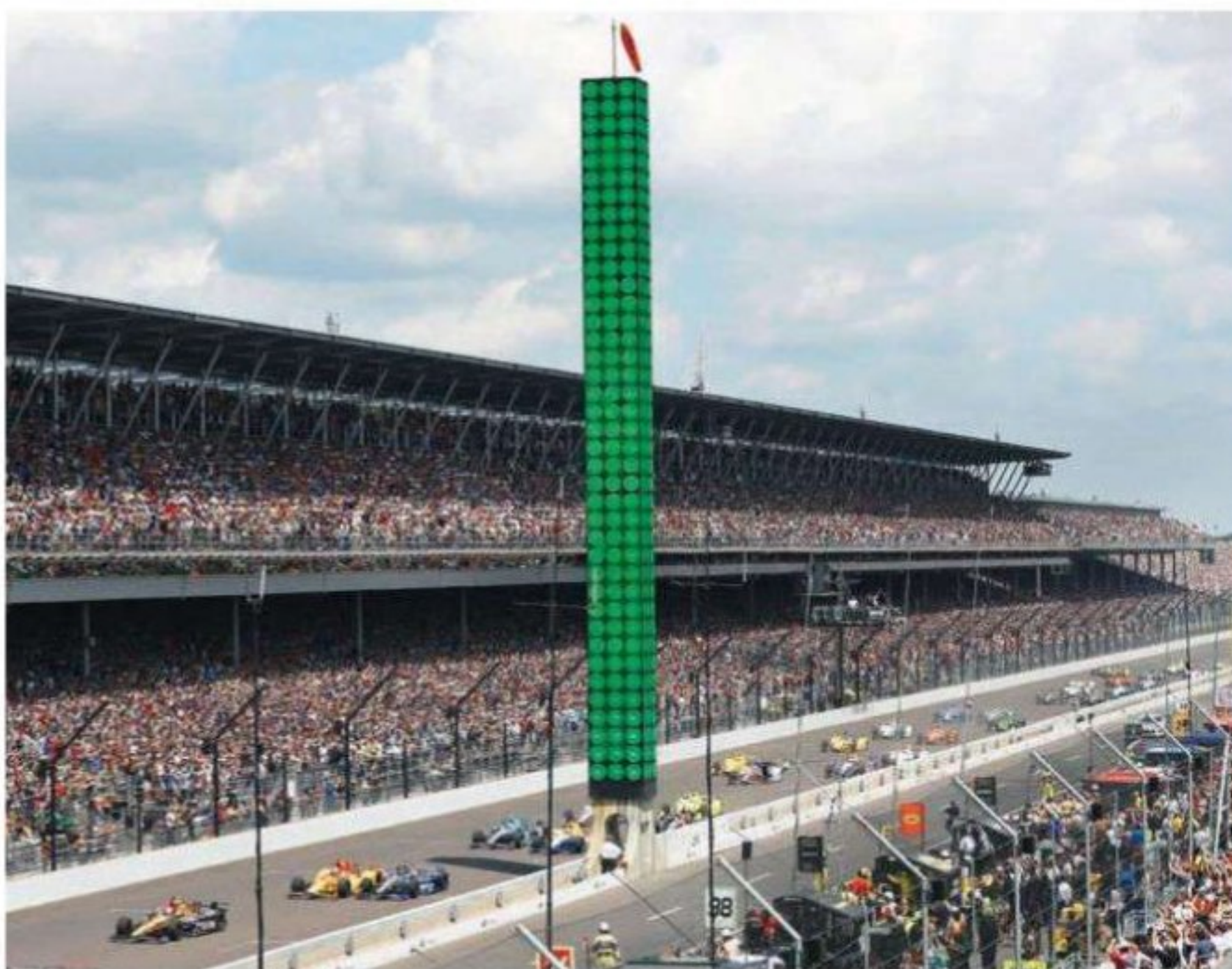
In 1990, eight of the top 10 drivers in the standings were American, yet by the end of the decade that number was down to two, or four from North America if you include Canadians Paul Tracy and Greg Moore. The series was becoming a legitimate alternative, or even rival, to F1 before George's



Alonso will help raise Indy's global profile



Zanardi was part of CART's 1990s boom



Indy 500 is most popular IndyCar event, selling out last year for first time in 20 years

moves took American open-wheel racing down from the inside.

The continued success of CART through the rest of the '90s showed that the split, and the resulting loss of the Indy 500 from the schedule, took a long time to have a truly damaging effect. The series initially flourished, with Honda, Mercedes, Ford and Toyota doing battle in the engine stakes, while teams held on to the major sponsorship dollars that had started to arrive during the 1980s.

Even after Mansell's exit following a troubled second season, IndyCar's credibility continued to grow when 1995 champion and Indy 500 winner Jacques Villeneuve made the switch in the opposite direction, joining the dominant Williams F1 team and winning races in his rookie year, before defeating Michael Schumacher for the championship the following season. It seemed a far cry from Michael Andretti's disastrous attempt to make the same move with McLaren in 1993.

Alex Zanardi earned cult-hero status during his initial three-year stint in CART, bagging two championships before following in Villeneuve's footsteps by joining Williams. Unfortunately his 1999 season had more in common with Andretti's fortunes than Villeneuve's, while Juan Pablo Montoya would help repair some of the perception after returning from a fruitful spell in America to become a frontrunner in F1.

“IndyCar still needs a spark to have a chance of catching fire again”

Since then, the only crossover has come in the form of drivers seeking salvation after their F1 options have dried up – firstly veteran Rubens Barrichello, and more recently Max Chilton and Alexander Rossi. While Rossi won the Indy 500 as a rookie last year, it owed a lot to a fuel-mileage run in the final stint. The fortunes of the recent ex-F1 brigade suggest that Alonso will have his work cut out given his lack of specialist experience.

Andretti ran NASCAR star Kurt Busch to sixth place in 2014, although he had a deep understanding of oval racing. Villeneuve also made a one-off return in that race, staying on the lead lap to finish 14th. But those visits were before the move away from the 'spec' version of the Dallara DW12 led to cars with more power that are trickier to handle.

It has taken IndyCar a long time to get over its darkest days, with plenty of thought over what could happen next to continue the revival. A two-time F1 world champion wanting to join this year's Indy 500 grid with McLaren would not have featured among many first suggestions.

To facilitate the deal, IndyCar asked Stefan Wilson to give up his planned entry to free up a Honda-powered car as there was no machinery available at short notice. Wilson and his sponsors have been promised it will be made worth their while for 2018, so sacrifices are being made across the board to make sure this incredible story reaches reality. IndyCar knows how big this is.

Alonso is not going to have the same effect Mansell did. Modern IndyCar is not at the level of the series the Brit joined in 1993 and, while Alonso is still an active F1 driver, he's only doing one race. And the 500 is the event needing the least help on the IndyCar schedule. But these things are relative: IndyCar's stock is lower now, so even a small impact can be significant.

Alonso's presence can still tip the scales for the showpiece event, particularly outside America. And who knows what it might lead to? McLaren shareholder Mansour Ojeh has hinted that the team could return to the 500 in the future, or even become a full-time entrant in the championship.

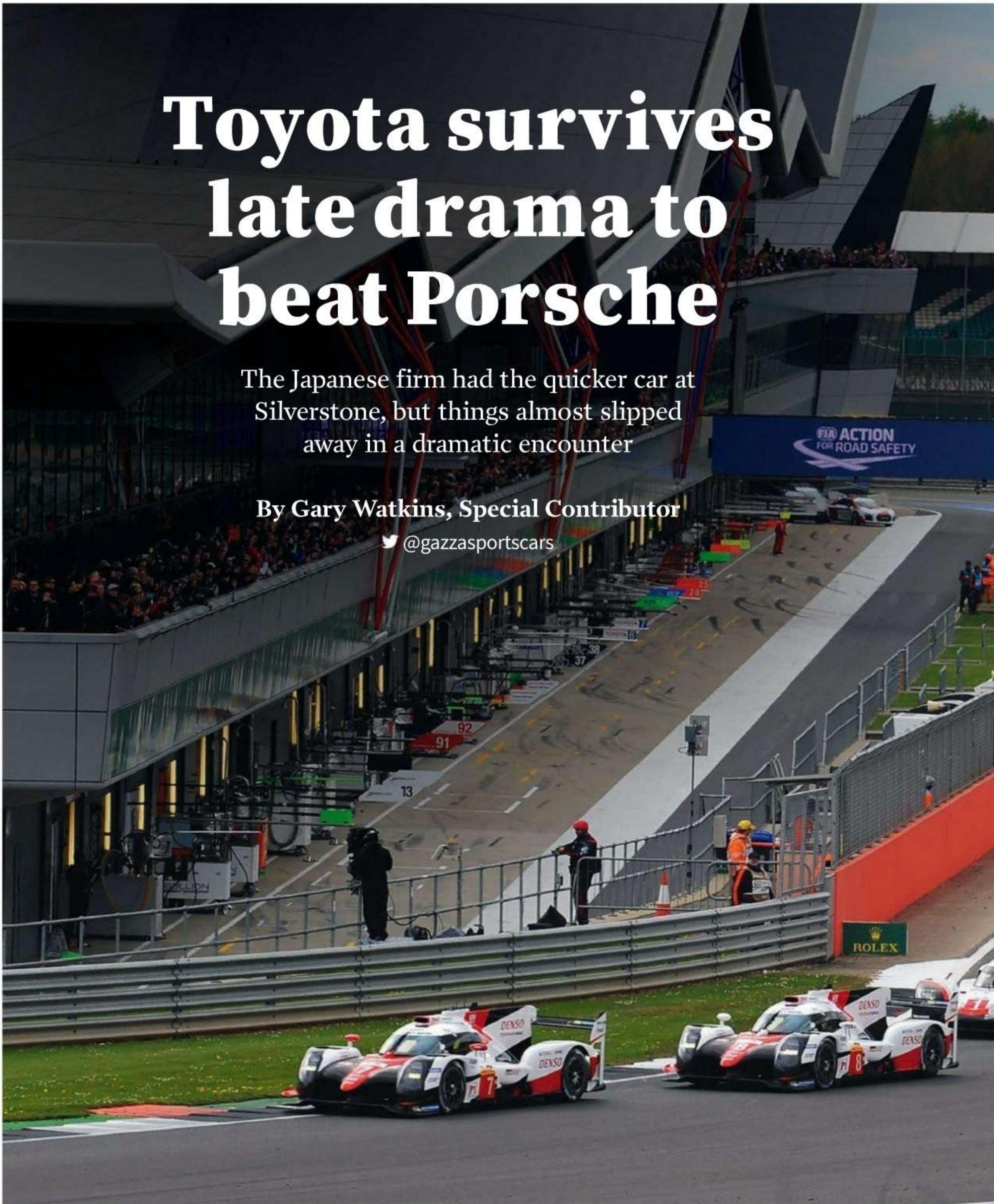
Of all the potential beneficiaries from McLaren-Honda's disastrous circumstances in F1, which have surely played a part in Alonso's decision, the IndyCar Series has got to be one of the most unexpected. ✨

Toyota survives late drama to beat Porsche

The Japanese firm had the quicker car at Silverstone, but things almost slipped away in a dramatic encounter

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

[@gazzasportscars](#)





Porsche didn't just keep Toyota honest at Silverstone last Sunday, it almost pulled off a surprise victory with the slower car in the World Endurance Championship opener. Circumstances contrived to force the Japanese manufacturer to come from behind right at the end of a dramatic race interrupted by rain, as well as safety cars of the real and virtual variety.

Sebastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson and Kazuki Nakajima took the victory by a scant six seconds, but it would have been much more in a less topsy-turvy race. Toyota's high-downforce TS050 HYBRID had the edge – and was always going to around the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit – on a Porsche running in an aerodynamic configuration designed for the Le Mans 24 Hours. But the gap the winning car was able to build up courtesy of that advantage over the first half of the race was undone by a sequence of two full-course yellows and then a safety car.

The victorious Toyota LMP1 had been nearly 40s to the good before the first full-course yellow. That turned into a 25s advantage before the race was neutralised for a second time, first with a virtual and then a real safety car. Suddenly, the advantage of the Toyota was all but gone and the best of the Porsches shared by Brendon Hartley, Timo Bernhard and Earl Bamber was looking at its most competitive for the whole race.

Hartley even edged towards the leader before the next round of pitstops. The Toyota gained when Nakajima continued on the same set of Michelins, and Hartley on fresher rubber couldn't keep pace.

The gap went out to nigh on 20s before Nakajima handed over to Buemi. He got a new set of Michelins because the #8 Toyota had already completed the three double stints necessary to eke out the new allocation of four and a half sets.

Hartley, however, was able to get out ahead of the Toyota when he pitted nine laps later. Not only did he not take tyres, but he required less fuel. The 919 was going a lap longer than the TS050 on a tank of petrol last weekend, although the two cars up front were out of sequence, courtesy of the earlier shenanigans through the rain and yellows.

It took Buemi less than nine laps to close down the Porsche and take the lead with an opportunistic move involving a lot of kerb at The Loop left-hander. Once past, he was gone.

"In the last stint I was on the fresher tyres, so I had to be stronger and a little bit of rain helped," reckoned Buemi, who was awarded the historic Tourist Trophy along with his team-mates for a second



victory in Silverstone's WEC round. "Brendon was kind enough to leave me a little bit of room."

Hartley reckoned that Buemi would have got him sooner or later. "I don't think I could have kept him behind for much longer," he said. "Toyota deserved to win because they had a little bit of an edge. We can be happy with second."

Toyota's close call was of its own making, in a roundabout way. WEC debutant Jose Maria Lopez crashed the #7 Toyota at Copse Corner in the fourth hour and it was his slow lap back to the pits in a car shedding debris and gravel that forced race control to turn a full-course yellow into a safety car proper.

The second Toyota, in which

Davidson, Buemi and Nakajima were relieved to take victory in #8 Toyota

three-time World Touring Car champion Lopez has joined Mike Conway and Kamui Kobayashi for this season, was a match for its sister car, at least before a rear anti-roll bar failure a couple of laps from the end of Conway's opening double stint.

Kobayashi lost time on his out-lap with a fuel pump problem, before the Toyota Motorsport GmbH squad attempted to alleviate the handling issue by fitting a new rear bodywork section that helped balance out the understeer. The car was, however, quickly out of contention.

A straight-on moment in the rain at the end of Vale left the car a lap down. Lopez subsequently crashed



when he hooked a wheel on the damp kerb under braking for Cospé.

The Argentinian managed to get the car back to the pits only after it had been hoisted out of the gravel, a manoeuvre that didn't come with exclusion under WEC sporting rules because he didn't receive assistance in the act of restarting the car. Lopez was on his way to hospital for precautionary tests before the car left the garage, the 66-minute delay leaving it in 23rd position, and with half a point to go with the one that Kobayashi and Conway had garnered for qualifying on pole.

Little blame was laid at Lopez's door by TMG. "Jose Maria had a very different car to the one he had driven in practice,"

said Toyota Motorsport GmbH technical director Pascal Vasselon.

Toyota might have had a problem with the rain, or rather it would've had light drizzle that worsened in the third hour not petered out. The second-place Porsche stopped at just the right time thanks to its consumption advantage and went onto Michelin's uncut 'hybrid' intermediate. Nick Tandy in the sister car was brought in for the same tyre two laps after making his fuel stop.

Both Toyotas stayed out on slicks and when the Porsches had to return to the pits to come off the inters when the rain abated, the status quo was restored. "It probably had a neutral impact on the race," was how >>

QUALIFYING

KAMUI KOBAYASHI PULLED OUT A STUNNER of a lap in qualifying to claim the overall pole for Toyota with Mike Conway, its first since Shanghai in its championship year of 2014. His 1m36.816s was seven tenths up on the next best time from Anthony Davidson.

Kobayashi went head-to-head with Kazuki Nakajima on the first runs, his time eclipsing his fellow countryman's 1m37.639s by eight tenths. Conway ended up with a 1m37.816s after having to go out for a second run, following the deletion of his first time for a track-limits violation. That meant Davidson's 1m37.548s cut the aggregate margin to the pole winners to just under three tenths.

"The car was brilliant and I think that was a good lap time," reckoned Kobayashi. "It's difficult to see how we could have gone quicker."

In fact, no-one has ever gone quicker around the 3.67-mile Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit aboard an LMP1 car. Direct comparisons with last year are, however, not possible because qualifying was wet in 2016.

Porsche was nowhere in qualifying, but then it reckoned that Toyota's advantage from running in high-downforce trim was always going to be at its most extreme over one lap. Nick Tandy set the fastest Porsche time in the #1919 Hybrid, a 1m38.454s, which left him and Neel Jani 1.3s behind on aggregate.

The sister car was nearly half a second further behind in the hands of Brendon Hartley and Timo Bernhard. They were unconcerned, their focus on the race meaning they didn't undertake a qualifying simulation in free practice ahead of the timed session.



FORD OVERCOMES GT SETBACK

THE #67 GANASSI FORD GT CLAIMED POLE BY some margin in the hands of Andy Priaulx and Harry Tincknell and built up a handy advantage in GTE Pro over the opening laps. Yet the car they shared with Pipo Derani looked out of it before the one-hour mark. Five hours later they were celebrating victory.

The car lost time and then had to pit early with a deflating front-left tyre. With the need to make an extra pitstop, a class victory looked a long shot. The safety car changed all that.

Tincknell got back in the car during the second period of yellows and was suddenly back in contention in fourth place and only six seconds behind the leader, the other Ganassi Ford shared by Stefan Mucke, Olivier Pla and Billy Johnson.

The Brit overtook the #91 factory Porsche 911 RSR and then the #51 AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE to move up into the lead once the sister car pitted. Remarkably, the winning machine would complete more than two and a half hours on three of the four new Michelins Tincknell was given at the start of his stint – only the left front was changed at his two mid-stint stops.

The sister car lost a half-minute lead with the safety car, Pla offering that it “screwed our strategy”. He did reveal, however, that the team had been ready to bring the car in before the full-course yellow morphed into a full safety car. A late-race suspension problem left the car fourth at the finish behind the Ferrari driven by James Calado and Alessandro Pier Guidi, and the Porsche of Frederic Makowiecki

and Richard Lietz. Both marques were happy with their podium finishes on a day that they knew they couldn't match the Fords.

“We had perfect strategy and I'm not sure we could have done any better,” said Pier Guidi, pointing to some creative tactics from AF Corse that included two stops for Calado during the second yellows. “We have to be realistic – the Ford is quicker.”

The Aston Martins were nowhere on Sunday. Nicki Thiim, Marco Sorensen and Richie Stanaway finished a lap down in fifth in the best of the Vantage GTEs, but the size of their predicament can be understood by the fact that they were less than 10s off the lead after the safety car.

The starting Balance of Performance, which has increased the minimum weight of the Vantage by 25kg from last year, had something to do with it, reckoned Aston Martin Racing technical boss Ben Sayers. He also summarised that Michelin may have stolen a march – or at least caught up – on Dunlop over the winter and reckoned Aston's tyres probably weren't at their best in the cold Silverstone conditions.

Aston's day wasn't much better in GTE Am. A big lead for Pedro Lamy, Mathias Lauda and Paul Dalla Lana disappeared with the safety car, and then Lamy tangled with the second-placed Spirit of Race Ferrari with Miguel Molina at the wheel at Stowe on the final lap. That allowed the closely following Clearwater Ferrari shared by Matt Griffin, Keita Sawa and Weng Sun Mok to take the win.

LAT IMAGES

Porsche gained a lot of time with fast stops



Bernhard summed up the short episode.

The second Porsche, in which Tandy was joined by Neel Jani and Andre Lotterer, wasn't consistently on the pace of its sister car on the way to third place. Jani struggled over his opening double, while former Audi driver Lotterer admitted that he still has a way to go before he can get the most out of the 919 Hybrid. Tandy, however, had a good race and was immediately on the pace in the dry and overtook the winning Toyota when the rain came, even before he stopped for inters.

Tandy got back in the car after a short double from Lotterer and then found himself right behind Hartley after the second-placed Porsche made its stop nine laps later. The Briton then took on two fresh tyres at his final pitstop and ended up 40s in arrears at the chequered flag.

“We kind of rolled the dice on strategy, but I couldn't exploit my lighter fuel load because I was behind Brendon,” he explained. “We probably finished where we should have done today.”

The only privateer P1 car in the field,





“Toyota deserved to win as they had a little bit of an edge. We can be happy with second”

the ByKolles team’s ENSO CLM-NISMO P1/01, didn’t make the finish after a late incident. The car sustained front-end damage when Aston Martin GT driver Jonny Adam didn’t spot the car as he dived across the track into the pitlane in the final hour.

The latest version of the long-serving CLM had finally got some proper running with its new V6 Nissan twin-turbo engine in the back at Snetterton in the week of the race. The team reckoned it had made a big step forward, but the car still wasn’t on the pace of the frontrunning LMP2 machinery and lost five minutes early in the race with a sticking brake caliper that required changing.

“We’ve now got a stable platform to

work from and develop the car,” said team returnee James Rossiter, who was partnered by Oliver Webb and Dominik Kraihamer. “I thought Colin [Kolles, the team owner] was going to have a go at me for damaging the nose, but he said it doesn’t matter because we’ve got new bits coming for Spa.”

Porsche’s ability to push the Toyota so hard with the low-downforce 919 might suggest that it is going to be in the ascendency when its Le Mans car goes up against two high-downforce Toyotas at Spa at the beginning of next month. The Belgian circuit requires less downforce than Silverstone, of course, but the equation isn’t as simple as it might seem.

Silverstone might have been Toyota



Lopez crashed #7 Toyota at Copse in fourth hour

territory last weekend, but traditionally it has been the reverse. The circuit lacks multiple heavy braking zones, which mitigates against the Japanese manufacturer’s twin kinetic energy-recovery systems and favours Porsche’s mixture of KERS and exhaust recovery.

“Porsche will definitely be in a better aerodynamic window at Spa, but there are other elements of our packages to consider,” said Vasselon, whose team >>



will field its regular WEC entries with high downforce and its additional entry with low downforce in Belgium. “There are many other performance factors to consider.”

Silverstone must have raised some worries for Toyota, more for what happened in the pitlane than out on the race track. Porsche was faster than its

rival in the pits. A new system of captive wheel nuts, *a la* Formula 1, probably played a part, but it also had the upper hand at the stops when there was no change of tyres.

“We were losing massively on #8; there was a discrepancy between our two cars on refuelling that we will have to investigate,” revealed Vasselon. “But

Bernhard/Bamber/Hartley #2 Porsche ran Toyota close to the end

it is also true that Porsche did have an advantage today.”

Not on the race track, of course. But the fact that Porsche came so close to victory must have made it a squeaky bum moment for a manufacturer that had chosen to bring its sprint car to Silverstone in the name of a championship bid. ❄

JARVIS KICKS OFF LMP2 CAREER WITH WIN

OLIVER JARVIS BEGAN THE NEW chapter of his WEC career as he had finished the old. The Briton followed up his outright victory for Audi in last November’s curtain-closer with an LMP2 win for Jackie Chan DC Racing in this year’s opener together with Ho-Pin Tung and Thomas Laurent.

The best of the pair of Jota-run ORECA-Gibson 07s bearing the name

of Hollywood action hero Chan moved into contention during the safety car period. Time had been lost during the rain when Laurent had been put onto Dunlop intermediates, only to be brought back in for slicks after one lap, but a big lead for the Signatech Alpine squad was wiped out by the deployment of the safety car.

Laurent emerged in second, before

dropping to third with a quick spin. The Frenchman, the team’s mandatory silver-rated driver, led before handing over to Jarvis, who proved more than equal to a challenge from Bruno Senna in the best of the Rebellion Gibsons.

“We were focusing on Signatech, but then Senna popped up as our main competition,” said Jarvis. “When I saw he didn’t take tyres at the last pitstop,

I felt confident and then he had to go into fuel-save mode, which took the pressure off.”

Jarvis reckoned he and his team-mates had something for the Signatech crew of Nicolas Lapierre, Gustavo Menezes and Matt Rao, even though they were 45s back before the safety car. Rao had only just taken over the Alpine-badged ORECA when the second full-course yellow fell and the team’s race unravelled. A downshifting problem in the final laps left the long-time leader an unrepresentative fourth at the finish.

Rebellion boss Bart Hayden explained that the team played “the long game” with the car Senna shared with Nicolas Prost and Julien Canal. That explained the Chan team’s surprise when it emerged in contention in the final couple of hours.

G-Drive Racing claimed pole position with Alex Lynn and Pierre Thiriet, but a broken door catch spoiled their race. An early stop to tape it up and a second to change it lost the car time but also had a strategic knock-on. It lost out in both yellow periods, the car the pole winners shared with Roman Rusinov ending a lap down in fifth.

Jarvis and team-mates took LMP2 victory



RESULTS ROUND 1/9, SILVERSTONE, APRIL 16 (197 LAPS – 722.342 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	TIME
1	Sebastien Buemi (CH) Anthony Davidson (GB) Kazuki Nakajima (J)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota TS050 HYBRID	LMP1	6h00m33.211s
2	Timo Bernhard (D) Earl Bamber (NZ) Brendon Hartley (NZ)	Porsche LMP Team	Porsche 919 Hybrid	LMP1	+6.173s
3	Neel Jani (CH) Andre Lotterer (D) Nick Tandy (GB)	Porsche LMP Team	Porsche 919 Hybrid	LMP1	+46.956s
4	Ho-Pin Tung (PRC) Oliver Jarvis (GB) Thomas Laurent (F)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-13 laps
5	Julien Canal (F) Nicolas Prost (F) Bruno Senna (BR)	Vaillante Rebellion	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-13 laps
6	Francois Perrodo (F) Matthieu Vaxiviere (F) Emmanuel Collard (F)	TDS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-13 laps
7	Nicolas Lapierre (F) Gustavo Menezes (USA) Matt Rao (GB)	Signatech Alpine Matmut (ORECA)	Alpine-Gibson A470	LMP2	-14 laps
8	Roman Rusinov (RUS) Pierre Thiriet (F) Alex Lynn (GB)	G-Drive Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-14 laps
9	Tor Graves (GB) Jonathan Hirschi (CH) Jean-Eric Vergne (F)	CEFC Manor TRS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-14 laps
10	Roberto Gonzalez (MEX) Simon Trummer (CH) Vitaly Petrov (RUS)	CEFC Manor TRS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-15 laps
11	David Cheng (USA) Alex Brundle (GB) Tristan Gommendy (F)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-15 laps
12	Mathias Beche (CH) David Heinemeier Hansson (DK) Nelson Piquet Jr (BR)	Vaillante Rebellion	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-25 laps
13	Andy Priaulx (GB) Harry Tincknell (GB) Luis Derani (BR)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK	Ford GT	GTE Pro	-26 laps
14	James Calado (GB) Alessandro Pier Guidi (I)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Pro	-26 laps
15	Richard Lietz (A) Frederic Makowiecki (F)	Porsche GT Team	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	-26 laps
16	Stefan Mucke (D) Olivier Pla (F) Billy Johnson (USA)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK	Ford GT	GTE Pro	-26 laps
17	Davide Rigon (I) Sam Bird (GB)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Pro	-27 laps
18	Nicki Thiim (DK) Marco Sorensen (DK) Richie Stanaway (NZ)	Aston Martin Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Pro	-27 laps
19	Darren Turner (GB) Jonny Adam (GB) Daniel Serra (BR)	Aston Martin Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Pro	-29 laps
20	Weng Sun Mok (MAL) Keita Sawa (J) Matt Griffin (IRL)	Clearwater Racing	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	-31 laps
21	Paul Dalla Lana (CDN) Pedro Lamy (P) Mathias Lauda (A)	Aston Martin Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-31 laps
22	Christian Ried (D) Matteo Cairoli (I) Marvin Dienst (D)	Dempsey-Proton Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-31 laps
23	Mike Conway (GB) Kamui Kobayashi (J) Jose Maria Lopez (RA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota TS050 HYBRID	LMP1	-38 laps
24	Mike Wainwright (GB) Ben Barker (GB) Nick Foster (AUS)	Gulf Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-54 laps
R	Thomas Flohr (CH) Francesco Castellacci (I) Miguel Molina (E)	Spirit of Race (AF Corse)	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	165 laps-accident
R	Oliver Webb (GB) James Rossiter (GB) Dominik Kraihamer (A)	ByKolles Racing Team	ENSO CLM-NISMO P1/01	LMP1	155 laps-acc dam
R	Michael Christensen (DK) Kevin Estre (F)	Porsche GT Team	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	95 laps-fire

Winner's average speed 120.205mph.

Fastest lap Conway 1m39.656s, 132.457mph.

LMP2 Jarvis 1m46.256s, 124.229mph. **GTE Pro** Priaulx 1m57.416s, 112.422mph.

GTE Am Molina 1m59.567s, 110.399mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Kobayashi/Conway 1m37.304s; 2 Davidson/Nakajima 1m37.593s; 3 Tandy/Jani 1m38.615s; 4 Hartley/Bernhard 1m39.063s; 5 Lynn/Thiriet 1m44.387s; 6 Lapierre/Rao 1m44.433s; 7 Jarvis/Laurent 1m44.591s; 8 Senna/Canal 1m45.194s; 9 Rossiter/Webb 1m45.235s; 10 Beche/Heinemeier Hansson 1m45.323s; 11 Vergne/Graves 1m46.102s; 12 Vaxiviere/Perrodo 1m46.183s; 13 Petrov/Gonzalez 1m46.494s; 14 Brundle/Cheng 1m47.250s; 15 Priaulx/Tincknell 1m56.202s; 16 Rigon/Bird 1m57.011s; 17 Thiim/Sorensen 1m57.117s; 18 Mucke/Pla 1m57.269s; 19 Turner/Adam 1m57.414s; 20 Calado/Pier Guidi 1m57.466s; 21 Makowiecki/Lietz 1m58.003s; 22 Christensen/Estre 1m58.066s; 23 Lamy/Dalla Lana 1m59.562s; 24 Castellacci/Flohr 2m00.608s; 25 Cairoli/Ried 2m01.347s; 26 Griffin/Mok 2m01.621s; 27 Barker/Wainwright 2m01.925s.

Fastest in each class **LMP1** Kobayashi 1m36.793s; **LMP2** Lynn 1m43.412s;

GTE Pro Priaulx 1m55.858s; **GTE Am** Griffin 1m58.704s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

LMP drivers **1 Davidson/Buemi/Nakajima 25; 2 Bamber/Hartley/Bernhard 18; 3 Tandy/Jani/Lotterer 15; 4 Laurent/Tung/Jarvis 12; 5 Prost/Canal/Senna 10; 6 Collard/Perrodo/Vaxiviere 8.**

LMP manufacturers **1 Porsche 33; 2 Toyota 25.5.**

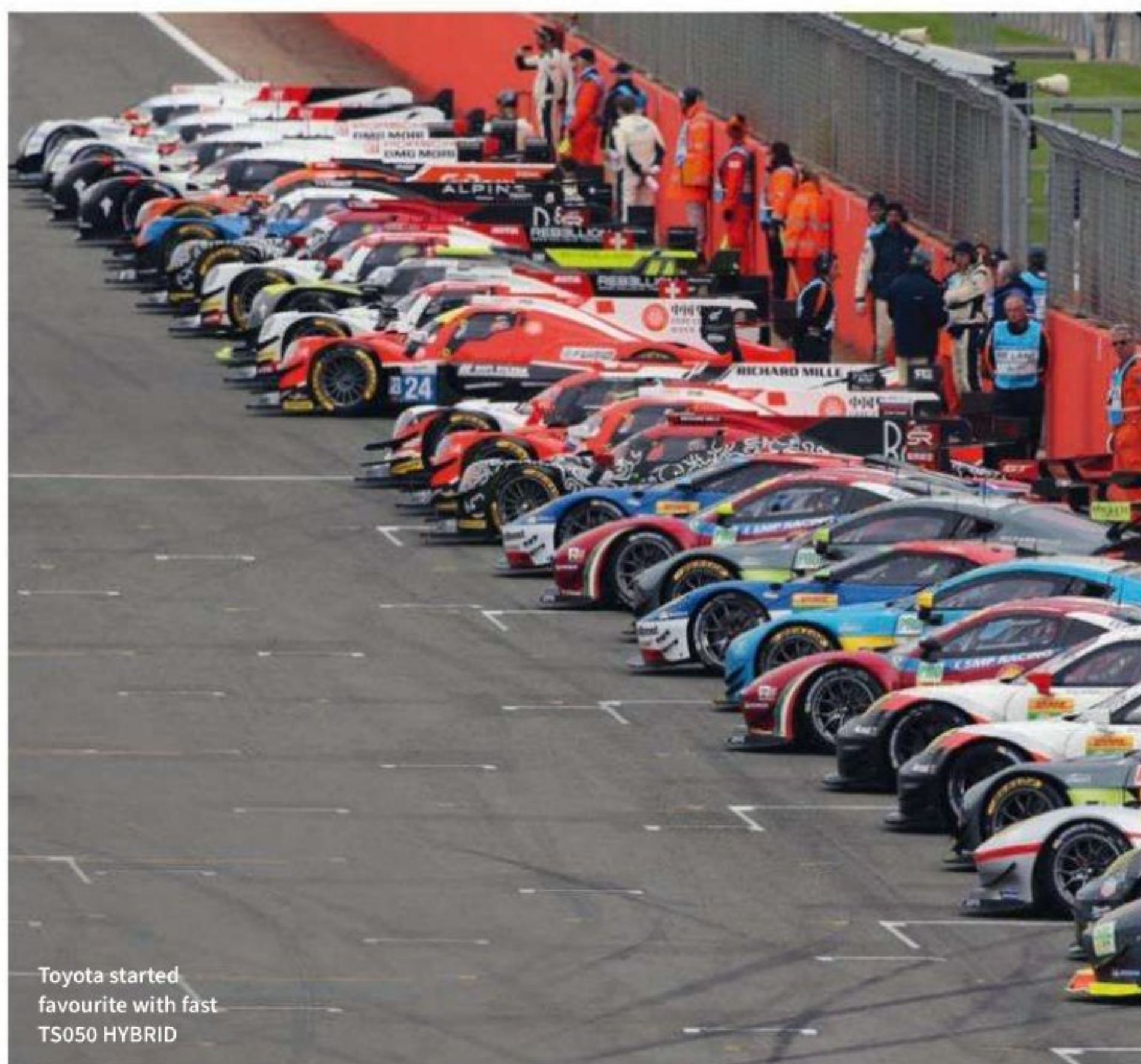
LMP2 drivers **1 Tung/Jarvis/Laurent 25; 2 Senna/Canal/Prost 18; 3 Collard/Perrodo/Vaxiviere 15; 4 Menezes/Rao/Lapierre 12.**

GTE drivers **1 Priaulx/Tincknell/Derani 26; 2 Pier Guidi/Calado 18; 3 Makowiecki/Lietz 15; 4 Johnson/Pla/Mucke 12; 5 Rigon/Bird 10; 6 Sorensen/Thiim/Stanaway 8.**

GTE manufacturers **1 Ford 38; 2 Ferrari 28; 3 Porsche 16; 4 Aston Martin 14.**

GTE Am drivers **1 Sawa/Griffin/Mok 25; 2 Lauda/Dalla Lana/Lamy 19;**

3 Ried/Dienst/Cairoli 15; 4 Barker/Wainwright/Foster 12.



Toyota started favourite with fast TS050 HYBRID



Game on for F3 as top tr

Lando Norris and Callum Ilott were the home heroes, but Joel Eriksson took the other victory – and his form is ominous

By Marcus Simmons, Deputy Editor

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The good news for the Formula 3 European Championship arrived at Silverstone: it looks like we're in for a blistering season, and three

race winners from three different teams is a genuine reflection of the ultra-competitive state of play in F3 this year.

For starters, Lando Norris grabbed a stunning pole position on only his third FIA F3 race-weekend appearance with the fastest lap ever seen in the category around the Silverstone Grand Prix

Circuit, and then the 17-year-old Carlin-run McLaren-Honda protege converted that into a breathtaking maiden win in tricky conditions. Fellow Brit Callum Ilott – this year with the all-conquering Prema Powerteam – also took a brilliant victory in the final race of the weekend after a sensational pass on Joel Eriksson for the lead.

But in many ways it was the win of Eriksson in the middle encounter, and the championship lead he brings away from Silverstone thanks to a second and a fourth in the other races, that is viewed as the most significant development of the weekend. The Swede had never driven at Silverstone before free practice

Callum Ilott (53) led at the start of race three, but had to fight back after losing out to Joel Eriksson (1)

began on Friday, and the Motopark team that runs him had very little experience of the circuit with the current generation of F3 cars, yet Eriksson, the 2016 rookie F3 champion, looked absolutely on it right from the start of free practice.

Motopark was the only one of the five teams not to take part in a private test at Silverstone last December. It planned to attend, but Eriksson was called up instead by BMW – he was signed up last year by the Munich manufacturer as a junior driver – for a DTM test at Jerez. So the Oschersleben-based squad's only live data from the circuit was the opening round of the 2015 championship, its first race weekend back in Euro F3 after a three-year



io share wins

absence. Eriksson himself said during the build-up that he would be happy to take a podium away from Silverstone and looked forward to the subsequent tracks where he would be more competitive.

That changed after qualifying. He was fourth in the first session, and moved up to third in the second, 0.055s off Ilott's pace. "We worked to improve the car and my driving, and did a step on both sides," he said. "It looks good for the races. Hopefully a good start and I will give the British guys a good challenge I would say!"

This he did, but he would have to wait, initially taking fourth in race one after only the briefest of bids on third-placed Maximilian Gunther. Bearing in mind his poor standing starts in subsequent races, Norris was given something of a break in Friday's opener, which was confusingly started behind the safety car despite only a small shower of rain before the start. But there were reports to race control from marshalling posts of further sprinkles on the far side of the track, and the safer option was chosen.

Even so, Norris controlled it beautifully. He was 1.482s up on Ilott at the end of the

opening lap of racing, before Ilott's car swapped ends on him as he touched the brakes for Abbey Curve, and he speared off backwards into the gravel. "I was going 5km/h slower than the lap before, maybe even more," groaned Ilott. "And I still lost it. From what I'm told, it rained a bit more on that lap maybe. Obviously it's shit, but it wasn't just a stupid mistake."

With fast qualifier Nikita Mazepin also in the gravel at Luffield after a clash with Pedro Piquet, the safety car was called again – at pretty much the exact point that Jake Dennis passed Gunther for second. Dennis, driving for Carlin for the first three rounds, had sprinted through from eighth on the grid: "It was like they were driving on ice and I was on slicks! But I struggled a bit in qualifying. Everyone says it's my home track, but it's one of my weakest – although I'm obviously all right when it's damp..."

The timing of the move survived an investigation by the stewards, and Dennis defended second from the challenging Gunther after a third safety car, caused when Ralf Aron tripped over sideways Hitech team-mate >>



Norris battled past Gunther in final race

PASSING INTEREST

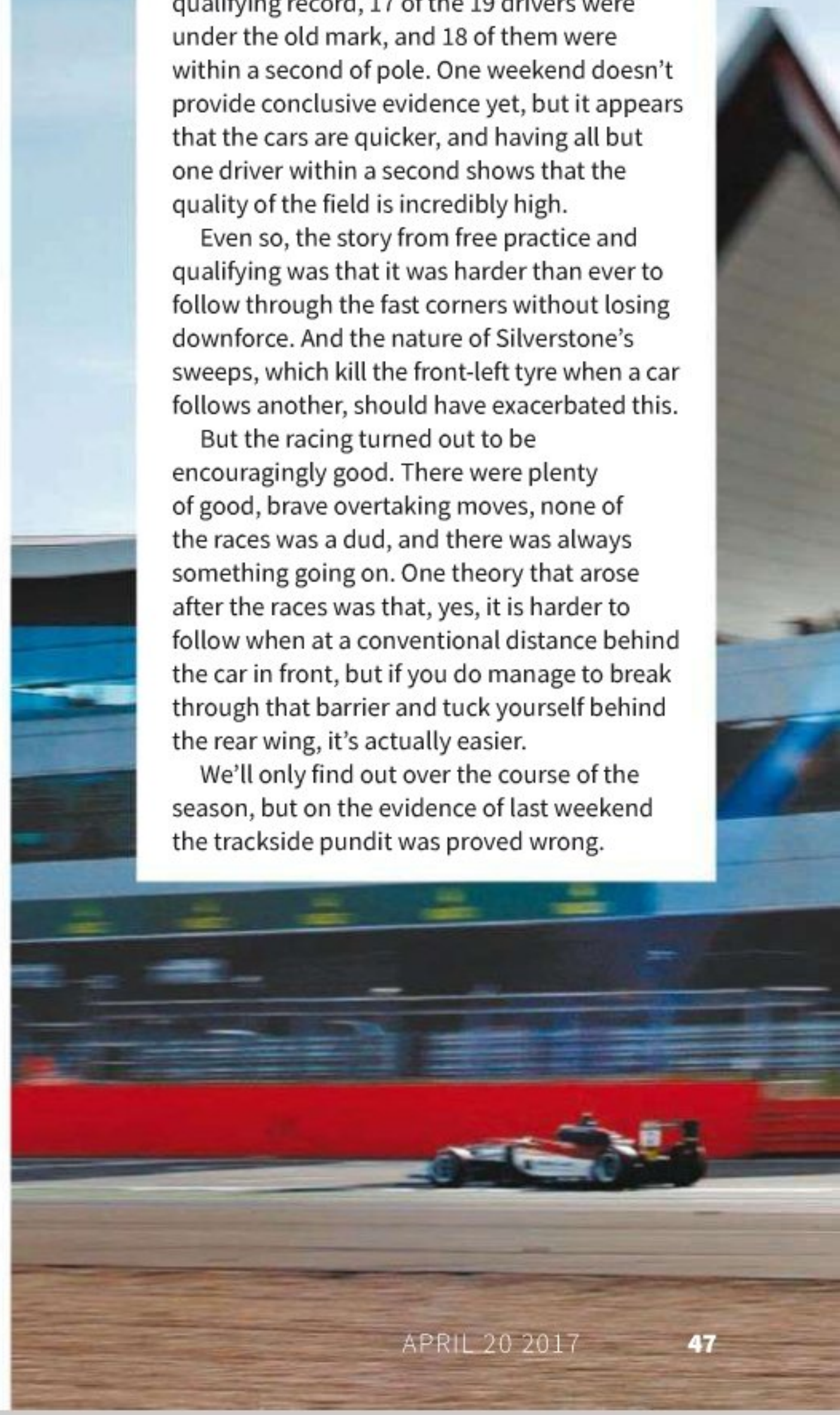
THE TRACKSIDE-PA ANNOUNCER RATHER surprisingly denounced F3 just before the second qualifying session began at Friday lunchtime, saying the "races are often all over bar the shouting by the first corner" and criticising the "drone of the engines". It seemed an odd way to try to whip up the already sizeable crowd into a frenzy, and annoyed some of the FIA big wigs present.

But there were worries in the F3 paddock. The new aero that comes with the 2017 Dallara update kit obviously works from a performance perspective: Lando Norris's race-one pole was 0.913 seconds faster than Felix Rosenqvist's previous Silverstone F3 qualifying record, 17 of the 19 drivers were under the old mark, and 18 of them were within a second of pole. One weekend doesn't provide conclusive evidence yet, but it appears that the cars are quicker, and having all but one driver within a second shows that the quality of the field is incredibly high.

Even so, the story from free practice and qualifying was that it was harder than ever to follow through the fast corners without losing downforce. And the nature of Silverstone's sweeps, which kill the front-left tyre when a car follows another, should have exacerbated this.

But the racing turned out to be encouragingly good. There were plenty of good, brave overtaking moves, none of the races was a dud, and there was always something going on. One theory that arose after the races was that, yes, it is harder to follow when at a conventional distance behind the car in front, but if you do manage to break through that barrier and tuck yourself behind the rear wing, it's actually easier.

We'll only find out over the course of the season, but on the evidence of last weekend the trackside pundit was proved wrong.



Jake Hughes at Luffield and launched into the barriers.

Norris's textbook win was consummated over the seven-lap dash to the flag, and there was every reason to expect him to challenge for honours in the remaining two races, both of which he would start from second. He had been quick from the start of free practice, despite being unhappy with the balance. But he then reported big improvements from the Carlin squad for qualifying, able to stave off the threat of Prema duo Iltis and Gunther in the first session, even though the tyres were going off and he had to take bigger risks in the high-speed stuff. Norris felt his own performance was "pretty poor" in second qualifying, but that was good for the front row alongside poleman Iltis for races two and three.

Bearing in mind the circumstances behind the safety-car start for race one, Norris was perhaps unlucky the second race didn't begin in similar fashion. The track was pretty dry, except the right side of the grid, which was still glistening from overnight rain. Norris sat there with his wheels doing Hangar Straight speeds but the car not moving, and was ninth by the time he reached Abbey.

Iltis led, but his tyres weren't warm enough and Eriksson – whose Hankooks were obviously in the window on temperature – pulled alongside on Wellington Straight and swept around the outside into Brooklands to take the lead. He sprinted away to a 2.910s lead within three laps, then allowed the warmed-up Iltis to chip it down to within a second as he managed his tyres and monitored the gap. A lairy moment for Iltis, when he ran wide at Becketts on the penultimate lap, cast aside any doubts over who would win.

Hughes benefited from being on the dry side of the grid to jump from fifth to third and take the sole podium of the weekend for Hitech, which seemed mysteriously off the pace at its home track. The 'Banzai Brummie' reported that the team had stuck to its programme of data-collecting through free practice, and opined that



Norris took his maiden FIA Formula 3 win in the first race

this had left the squad effectively a session behind for the weekend. He fended off an early challenge from Gunther for third, saying: "With the pace we had we probably overperformed."

Gunther then turned his attentions to fending off Dennis. On the wet side of the grid, the Austro-Bavarian did a good job to maintain his fourth grid slot, but destroyed his front-left tyre behind Hughes. Dennis, who had set off the hotel fire alarm that morning by burning his croissant in the toaster, moved in for a brilliant battle, which both drivers hugely enjoyed. They were side-by-side for half a lap before Gunther prevailed.

Norris recovered to seventh and then attacked Mick Schumacher for sixth. But in doing so he clocked up some track-limits warnings and was one away from being issued a drivethrough penalty. When he got momentum on Schumacher to draw side-by-side into Copse, he had to sit within track limits – rather than run wide as is normal practice – and the lost impetus cost him places to Guan Yu Zhou and Jehan Daruvala.

Norris also lost ground at the start of

the dry third race, dropping from second to fourth, with wheelspin again. "The starts are a big thing for me to improve," he confessed. Eriksson again burst through from the second row, and once more pulled off an audacious outside pass on Iltis to take the lead at Brooklands. But this time Iltis had more early-race pace. "Up until halfway through the first lap it was a replay of the race before so I was a bit annoyed," he said. "I tried to challenge [the passing move of] Joel but he still got me. But I had a bit more tyre temperature this morning. We made some changes so we could stay in the slipstream and not kill the tyres."

That paid off, and a small mistake by Eriksson at Becketts on lap four allowed Iltis under his rear wing, before sweeping around the outside at the high-speed Stowe in a brilliant move. This time Eriksson didn't have the race pace, so he focused on keeping the car on track, as Iltis cruised away to win by nearly 7s.

Gunther was the only one of the top four not to have two new Hankooks left in the bank for this race – "I don't want to make excuses but it made life a bit more difficult" – and had Norris swarming all over him. Finally the diminutive Brit made the pass on lap six, finding a gap on the inside of Stowe, keeping momentum around the outside of the left-hander at Club and slotting up the inside at the right. More good news for Carlin was the qualifying pace of Daruvala – the Indian was in the top six on all three grids, and at last got a decent first couple of laps in during a race, before Dennis passed him for fifth.

A great weekend for F3, and the start of what should be a great season. "It's very tight this year," said 2016 runner-up Gunther. "If everything doesn't work properly you're not P1."

"It's less drivers, but the quality of the drivers is higher I would say," pointed out Eriksson, who as points leader stands as the highest-quality of all. ❄



Eriksson leads the points and scored a victory

RESULTS ROUND 1/10, SILVERSTONE, APRIL 14-16 RACE 1 (16 LAPS – 58.667 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Lando Norris (GB)	Carlin · Dallara-Volkswagen F317	36m34.049s
2	Jake Dennis (GB)	Carlin · Dallara-Volkswagen F316	+1.683s
3	Maximilian Gunther (D)	Prema Powerteam · Dallara-Mercedes F316	+2.432s
4	Joel Eriksson (S)	Motopark · Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+3.207s
5	Joey Mawson (AUS)	Van Amersfoort Racing · Dallara-Mercedes F316	+4.991s
6	Harrison Newey (GB)	Van Amersfoort Racing · Dallara-Mercedes F316	+9.376s
7	Guan Yu Zhou (PRC)	Prema Powerteam · Dallara-Mercedes F315	+13.253s
8	Mick Schumacher (D)	Prema Powerteam · Dallara-Mercedes F317	+14.154s
9	Pedro Piquet (BR)	Van Amersfoort Racing · Dallara-Mercedes F316	+14.644s
10	Jehan Daruvala (IND)	Carlin · Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+15.574s
11	Tadasuke Makino (J)	Hitech GP · Dallara-Mercedes F315	+16.282s
12	Ferdinand Habsburg (A)	Carlin · Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+17.263s
13	Jake Hughes (GB)	Hitech GP · Dallara-Mercedes F315	+17.447s
14	David Beckmann (D)	Van Amersfoort Racing · Dallara-Mercedes F317	+19.947s
15	Keyvan Soori (D)	Motopark · Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+22.883s
16	Marino Sato (J)	Motopark · Dallara-Volkswagen F314	+23.410s
R	Ralf Aron (EST)	Hitech GP · Dallara-Mercedes F316	6 laps-accident
R	Callum Irott (GB)	Prema Powerteam · Dallara-Mercedes F317	3 laps-spun off
R	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Hitech GP · Dallara-Mercedes F316	2 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 96.261mph. **Fastest lap** Norris 1m51.183s, 118.724mph.

QUALIFYING 1

1 Norris 1m50.094s; **2** Irott 1m50.100s; **3** Gunther 1m50.179s; **4** Eriksson 1m50.304s; **5** Daruvala 1m50.377s; **6** Zhou 1m50.416s; **7** Mazepin 1m50.460s; **8** Dennis 1m50.481s; **9** Mawson 1m50.510s; **10** Makino 1m50.600s; **11** Hughes 1m50.607s; **12** Schumacher 1m50.668s; **13** Aron 1m50.847s; **14** Piquet 1m50.915s; **15** Beckmann 1m50.937s; **16** Newey 1m50.938s; **17** Habsburg 1m51.001s; **18** Sato 1m51.015s; **19** Soori 1m51.792s.

RACE 2 (19 LAPS - 69.668 MILES)

1 Eriksson 35m26.312s; **2** Irott +2.336s; **3** Hughes +15.397s; **4** Gunther +18.679s; **5** Dennis +19.202s; **6** Schumacher +23.124s; **7** Zhou +23.779s; **8** Daruvala +24.829s; **9** Norris +25.412s; **10** Newey +25.942s; **11** Mawson +27.679s; **12** Sato +30.495s; **13** Habsburg +31.187s; **14** Soori +46.091s; **15** Mazepin +55.119s; **16** Aron +59.333s; **17** Beckmann +59.860s; **18** Piquet +1m01.489s; **19** Makino -1 lap.

Winner's average speed 117.952mph.
Fastest lap Eriksson 1m51.193s, 118.713mph.



Dennis raced well for Carlin

QUALIFYING 2

1 Irott 1m50.482s; **2** Norris 1m50.507s; **3** Eriksson 1m50.537s; **4** Gunther 1m50.562s; **5** Hughes 1m50.654s; **6** Daruvala 1m50.655s; **7** Dennis 1m50.836s; **8** Zhou 1m50.948s; **9** Schumacher 1m50.969s; **10** Makino 1m51.025s; **11** Mawson 1m51.101s; **12** Habsburg 1m51.101s; **13** Aron 1m51.145s; **14** Mazepin 1m51.183s; **15** Piquet 1m51.282s; **16** Newey 1m51.338s; **17** Sato 1m51.396s; **18** Beckmann 1m51.489s; **19** Soori 1m51.788s.

RACE 3 (19 LAPS - 69.668 MILES)

1 Irott 35m32.355s; **2** Eriksson +6.815s; **3** Norris +7.626s; **4** Gunther +10.974s; **5** Dennis +11.755s; **6** Daruvala +14.734s; **7** Mazepin +19.509s; **8** Mawson +20.019s; **9** Newey +24.171s; **10** Aron +26.587s; **11** Piquet +28.376s; **12** Habsburg +31.240s; **13** Hughes +33.082s; **14** Beckmann +40.611s; **15** Makino +41.086s; **16** Soori +41.578s; **17** Sato +48.201s; **18** Schumacher +51.382s; **R** Zhou 2 laps-accident/damage.

Winner's average speed 117.617mph.
Fastest lap Irott 1m51.253s, 118.649mph.

GRID FOR RACE 3

1 Irott; **2** Norris; **3** Eriksson; **4** Gunther; **5** Daruvala; **6** Hughes; **7** Zhou; **8** Dennis; **9** Makino; **10** Schumacher; **11** Mazepin; **12** Aron; **13** Mawson; **14** Habsburg; **15** Piquet; **16** Newey; **17** Sato; **18** Beckmann; **19** Soori.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Eriksson 55; **2** Irott 43; **3** Norris 42; **4** Gunther 39; **5** Dennis 38; **6** Hughes 15; **7** Mawson 14; **8** Daruvala 13; **9** Schumacher 12; **10** Zhou 12.

IN THE HEADLINES

MAWSON IS VAR HIGHLIGHT

Van Amersfoort Racing had a tough weekend at Silverstone, with reigning German Formula 4 champion Joey Mawson (above) taking its best result: fifth in race one. Team principal Frits van Amersfoort felt that there wasn't one specific problem; it was more a combination of little things at a track where the squad has never been totally satisfied with its performance. The aggressive Mawson impressed with his race performances. So too did Harrison Newey.

DENNIS IN FOR THREE ROUNDS ONLY

Carlin is looking to fill its fourth seat – currently occupied by Jake Dennis – from the fourth round at the Hungaroring onwards. Team boss Trevor Carlin said that the plan is for Dennis to continue for Monza and Pau, before he concentrates on his GT commitments. “He’s a stabilising influence really, who’s been there and done it,” he said.

MOTOPARK: THREE FOR NOW

Motopark is the other team currently with its fourth seat available, but team supremo Timo Rumpfkeil is pessimistic that it will be filled before the end-of-season rounds. “My business case is a very romantic one,” he said, having a dig at the opposition teams with wealthy investors. “They have sugar daddies. But at my team they [the drivers] pay some bills, and we go racing!”

ROSENQVIST COACHES PREMA

Prema Powerteam welcomed Felix Rosenqvist back to its awning at Silverstone as driver coach. Its regular long-time coach, Winway's Nuno Pinto, is accompanying Lance Stroll to Formula 1 races.

MAKINO FAST, BUT REPRIMANDED

Honda protege Tadasuke Makino (below) did a good job to qualify in the top 10 for all three races on his European debut with Hitech, despite a fuel-pressure-sensor problem losing him at least half an hour of free practice. But the Japanese was given a reprimand after a thrilling battle with David Beckmann in race three, the stewards ruling that ‘attempted wheelbanging took place in an intimidatory fashion’.



Marcel Albers

A talent taken too soon

Exactly 25 years ago, a very popular Dutchman was killed in a horrific Formula 3 crash at Thruxton. He remains sadly missed by those who reckon he could have gone a long way in the sport

By Marcus Simmons, Deputy Editor

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At just after half past two on Easter Monday, April 20 1992, Gil de Ferran and Marcel Albers led the field around to the Thruxton grid to continue their fight for the British Formula 3 Championship title. After the opening two rounds the scores stood at one win apiece: Albers had triumphed at Donington Park; de Ferran at Silverstone.

Eight laps later at the Chicane: screams, shouting, silence. Albers, who was attempting to fight back up the field after dropping to seventh, had clipped the rear of team-mate Elton Julian's car as he tried to slipstream him on the approach to the Chicane. Albers' Ralt lifted skywards, before it flipped, somersaulted, cleared the tyre wall and smashed into the protective fencing. Debris showered the terrified spectators, some of whom sustained minor injuries. The car itself did not get through, but 24-year-old Marcel Albers was dead from a huge blow to his head on a fence support.

Across the North Sea, Albers' Dutch racing friends were at Zandvoort for their first big meeting of the year, blissfully unaware – in these pre-internet days – of the tragedy that had unfolded. The news would only reach them as they feted the first win in cars for a new young talent named Jos Verstappen...

"Marcel was my best friend for eight years," says Albers' karting team-mate Rob Niessink, who today is CEO of top Formula 3 and 4 team Van Amersfoort Racing. "He had a really sweet character. He didn't like any confrontations except when he was on track – and when he was on track he started fighting more than you could ever expect from him."

That Albers and Niessink ever met VAR boss Frits van Amersfoort, who fielded the car with which Albers started his car-racing career, is one of those typical motorsport stories of chance, coincidence and even paradox. The Albers family was wealthy – his grandfather established a successful company in

post-war Netherlands importing Japanese cameras and sound systems including Akai, Asahi, Fuji and Pentax. The family business sponsored famed Dutch 50cc motorcycle racer Piet Plompen, before in 1977 Marcel's older brother Ronald was bought a kart by their father Jacques and began racing. "Marcel was very interested, but he didn't have the strength to push the kart and get it started," remembers Jacques. "Ronald helped him, so he could drive around a bit."

Needing an engine rebuild, Jacques Albers took the kart to Plompen, who by now was renowned as a top tuner of two-stroke 50cc powerplants. Intrigued by the sport, Plompen went to watch Ronald and Marcel compete in what was Marcel's first-ever race meeting. It was 1983. "He immediately saw Marcel's great talent," says Albers Sr. "Piet stopped his own [bike] racing team and started training Marcel. Ronald did not

go on karting and instead concentrated on the sport he really loved: hockey. In the meantime I told Marcel he could go on karting, but serious racing in a racing car was out of the question."

Meanwhile, Niessink had been watching karts

"He immediately saw Marcel's great talent and started training him"

from the main grandstand at Zandvoort. In his early twenties, he already had a hire-car business based in Rotterdam – the Albers family's home city – and when he got to work he started phoning around various motorcycle shops to ask if they knew anything about karting. They put him in touch with Plompen: "He said, 'You can buy one of the second-hand karts of Marcel,' and from one day to another, very slowly, I ended up in the same team as Marcel. I was more the recreation level, club-racing stuff, and then we found there was a Marlboro Challenge."

This prize had been established one year earlier, offering a free season in Formula Ford 1600 with a Van Diemen run by Van Amersfoort Racing. "This was the hot thing in Holland!" remembers Niessink. "We all filled in the forms and we were all rejected, because the marketing agency behind it had put questions on the forms, and one of the questions was, 'Do you feel you need to win the race or complete the race?' And of >>>





Albers was taken out of the Festival in clash with Stapley...



...but he had already shown his pace with a heat victory



Opel Lotus success (left) preceded move to F3

course everyone filled in 'winning the race'. The agency were completely unaware of any racing culture and thought, 'Well, it's more important to be on the track all the time to give the brand more exposure'. So they told everyone we weren't in, including Marcel and myself!

"At one stage all the competitors of the Marlboro Challenge were invited onto outdoor tracks in rental karts to show what they could do. Piet was the chairman of one of the tracks, so he put on a demo with us in our race karts, and of course the speed difference was spectacular! One of the guys from the jury said, 'Why aren't you in the Challenge?' and we told him we were kicked out. And so we were let in again – and Marcel won."

"After many wins and two championships [in karting], Marcel asked me if car racing was still forbidden," says Jacques Albers. "I nodded, but he was so determined to go racing he told me he would do it his way. He told me he had entered the Marlboro Challenge, and when I asked him how many entrants there were he told me about 15,000. I wished him good luck and thought the possibility to win was very small. One day [when the entrants had been whittled down to the final three]

I got a telephone call from Marlboro asking if I would allow Marcel to race if he should win. I discussed the matter with his mother, and we gave him our blessing. We understood that we could not stop him."

Albers won and, when Frits van Amersfoort asked him if he knew a mechanic, Niessink came along too: "And today I'm still here!"

"I met him and Rob in the old Mickey's Bar on top of the old pit boxes in the Zandvoort pitlane," recalls van Amersfoort. "I was drinking a coffee, waiting for Marlboro to present me the winner. Immediately I felt this was a nice guy, and so was Rob. We were all fond of racing. I had his new car [a Marlboro-liveried Van Diemen RF89] in the back of my truck and said, 'Let's have a look!' And they nearly fainted!"

"His father didn't want him to race, and Marcel always told us that in the first couple of laps he drove the Van Diemen he thought, 'Bloody hell, I've got it, I've done it, I'm in it!' That's of course a sentence I'll never forget."

In 1989, Albers scored five wins and claimed the Dutch title, but was denied the Benelux crown in the Zandvoort finale when he collided with rival Evan Kersbergen. "We'd had one or two technical mayhems in the Benelux rounds," says van Amersfoort. "Evan and Marcel crashed, and that decided the championship."

There was a sixth FF1600 win for Albers. He went to Brands Hatch for the Formula Ford Festival, taking pole and winning his heat. In his quarter-final, he was running third behind Michael Vergers and David Coulthard when he was taken out spectacularly in a clash with Brands specialist Andy Stapley. Still in Britain, he tested for the Eddie Jordan Racing and Alan Docking Racing F3 teams – both were impressed but recommended that he contest one season in the mezzanine Opel Lotus Euroseries.

Van Amersfoort wanted to step up to Opel Lotus with Albers,

"but Jacques said, 'No, no, we're going to an experienced team'". The logical choice was Team Lotus Nederland, with Dutch racing deity Jan Lammers as team figurehead and which had carried Peter Kox to the 1989 Euroseries title. Albers blew everyone away in the opening round at Donington, but that proved a false dawn and his only win. After three rounds he still jointly led the standings with Rubens Barrichello, but a disastrous sequence of non-finishes put paid to his hopes. While Barrichello would win a fight with Vincenzo Sospiri for the title, Albers finished sixth. "To be honest we were a bit spoilt with Kox the year before – he basically did his own thing," says Ronald Heiligers, who engineered the sister car of Andre Ribeiro. "We were only 19 or 20 at the time – younger than Marcel! – so we were learning as well. At the beginning we were struggling, and then we hired some outside engineering and it went better."

Heiligers, who would establish AR Motorsport for 1992 and go on to take Jason Watt, Etienne van der Linde and Tomas Scheckter to Euroseries titles, remembers that Lammers was busy for much of the season with his Jaguar Group C and IMSA commitments. "Jan wasn't involved a lot at times," he says. "Marcel expected more from the team, and maybe we expected more from him. To be honest we didn't have the experience."

"I remember one race at Spa, it was for the German championship or something, he finished on the podium, and when he got out of the car he realised he still had his normal shoes on – Timberlands I think – and went to the podium in them. He'd forgotten to put on his race boots!"

After testing Albers a year earlier, Docking signed him up for British F3 in 1991. The newcomer started brightly with a third at Silverstone, but his technique – turning in too fast, so damaging his exit speed – caused results to tail off. Mid-season tuition from renowned coach

John Stevens and recent F3 ace Derek Higgins turned things around, and by season's end he was outpacing team-mate Hideki Noda. Seven consecutive top-four finishes brought him fifth in the points, as Barrichello beat Coulthard to the crown in a final-round showdown. "Marcel was working on his road cars here [at the workshop] when he got a moment," says Docking. "He was mad keen on little Fiats and restored this 600. He lived in Brackley and was just wide-eyed about F3 in the UK and the circuits. Everything was new and it was quite a step up but he was going for it, he loved it."

The dedication of Albers was highlighted at the Macau Grand Prix when he hired a Mini Moke, which he took around the circuit in the evenings while Higgins stood at each corner to watch his lines. It paid off when he was fourth in qualifying on day one, only to hit the wall twice on the second day. Albers finished 11th in heat one, then massively jumped the start of heat two to get himself up into fifth. He was still in that position when he spun at Lisboa on the last lap, causing >>



“He was wide-eyed about F3. It was quite a step up but he was going for it”

team-mate Noda to hit the tyres in avoidance. Oops.

Still, he would definitely be a contender for his second season of British F3. With an exodus of teams to Reynard, Docking was the only team in Class A left as a Ralt customer. The new RT36 was designed by Andy Thorby – who'd been responsible for the 1991 TOM'S – and soon Albers was raving about it.

Chris Weller, who engineered Albers in 1992, recalls: "It was a good car. And Marcel was obviously a very talented driver. It was a sociable team – we used to do quite a lot of things together. We'd go for meals and I played squash with Marcel probably once a week. We tried to look after him and because he was such a superb bloke it was no hardship to do that."

When Albers won the Donington opener, fighting back after being beaten away from pole by Oswaldo Negri, it looked game on for the title. At Silverstone for round two, Albers was closing in on de Ferran to challenge for the lead when he was forced into a lengthy pitstop because of a misfire. "It was a stupid misfire," bemoans Docking. "It was data-logging that had a bit of a short in the sensor, and that power was running down the sensor to the ground and it was overheating the data-logging box, which was also a computer

for the car. It was overheating it and a thermal fuse was cutting in and out. That was a bugger."

But the title was still on when disaster struck at Thruxton in round three. It has never been 100% cleared up why Albers had dropped back from challenging de Ferran: one theory is an incident; one is a temporary gearbox glitch. "Elton [Julian, in the sister car] was in the thick of it – he was a pretty talented young driver but he had never been in that situation before," says Docking. "Marcel towed up behind him and just clipped him – Marcel's left-front wheel just ran over the back of Elton's right-rear wheel and that was that. Everything was just running against him. There was a lot of rain the week before and when the car rolled the rollover bar dug into the ground, where normally it would have been rock hard and he would have just bounced along. But that ripped the rollover bar off and it was just a disaster from then on."

"We soon twigged that Marcel was involved and you never assume it's going to be serious," adds Weller, who now engineers Toby Sowery at Lanar Racing in BRDC British F3. "Then the drivers started coming back, and when drivers are quiet you know it's fairly serious. That's the first sign – when nobody says anything. I went down there and saw where the car had ended up, and the fact that he was still in the car at that point... that was six or seven minutes after it had happened. And the car was impaled in the fence and even then you think, 'It'll be fine' – you have to assume the best in this business. As it unfolded, things quite obviously weren't fine. It took quite a long time to rescue him from the car, and then we heard the worst."

Unusually, Albers' family was not at this race – from fighting against his passion they had turned to fully supporting it – and his stunned father received the news while on business in Japan.

Over at Zandvoort, meanwhile, the Benelux Opel Lotus series was kicking off. Van Amersfoort Racing had finally graduated to the category with Marlboro's new star karter Jos Verstappen; Heiligers was a still-very-youthful team principal of his brand-new AR Motorsport squad. "I had to go home for a bit," says Heiligers, "and I always looked at teletext to see what Marcel's results were. And I couldn't believe what I saw, because there was only one sentence, and it was 'Marcel Albers died at Thruxton in an F3 race' or something. I was really shocked. Then I went back to the circuit..."

"That was the weirdest experience ever," says Niessink. "Jos won the race, and we were standing in front of the podium cheering, completely over the moon, absolutely excited about the achievement. While we were cheering Ronald came to me in the pitlane. There were tears in his eyes and my first thought was, 'It can't be that you're so emotional about not winning; what's happening?' And he said, 'Have you heard?' I said, 'No, no,' still cheering. 'Have you heard about Marcel?' 'No.' 'He had an accident.' 'Oh? OK...' And then, very slowly, the coin started to drop, and I said, 'How serious is it?' And he said, 'He's dead!'

That was the most extreme experience I ever had, you know? Cheering for one driver, then finding out your best friend has been killed in a race accident."

Niessink wasn't the only guy who loved Albers; most within his racing orbit did. And most are convinced he could have been a decent F1 driver, if not a professional in sportscars or touring cars – or even rallying. "He had enormous car control," points out Niessink.

"He and the family were pretty special," says Docking. "At his funeral, his father said that if Marcel could have had his time again, he would have done exactly the same to support him because that's what he wanted to do. Marcel was ambitious, and he was liked by everybody. We had a church service for him at Silverstone and that was rammed – he was



"When drivers are quiet after an incident you know it's fairly serious"

only here for a year and a half and the amount of local people who got to know him... Just an outgoing type of kid."

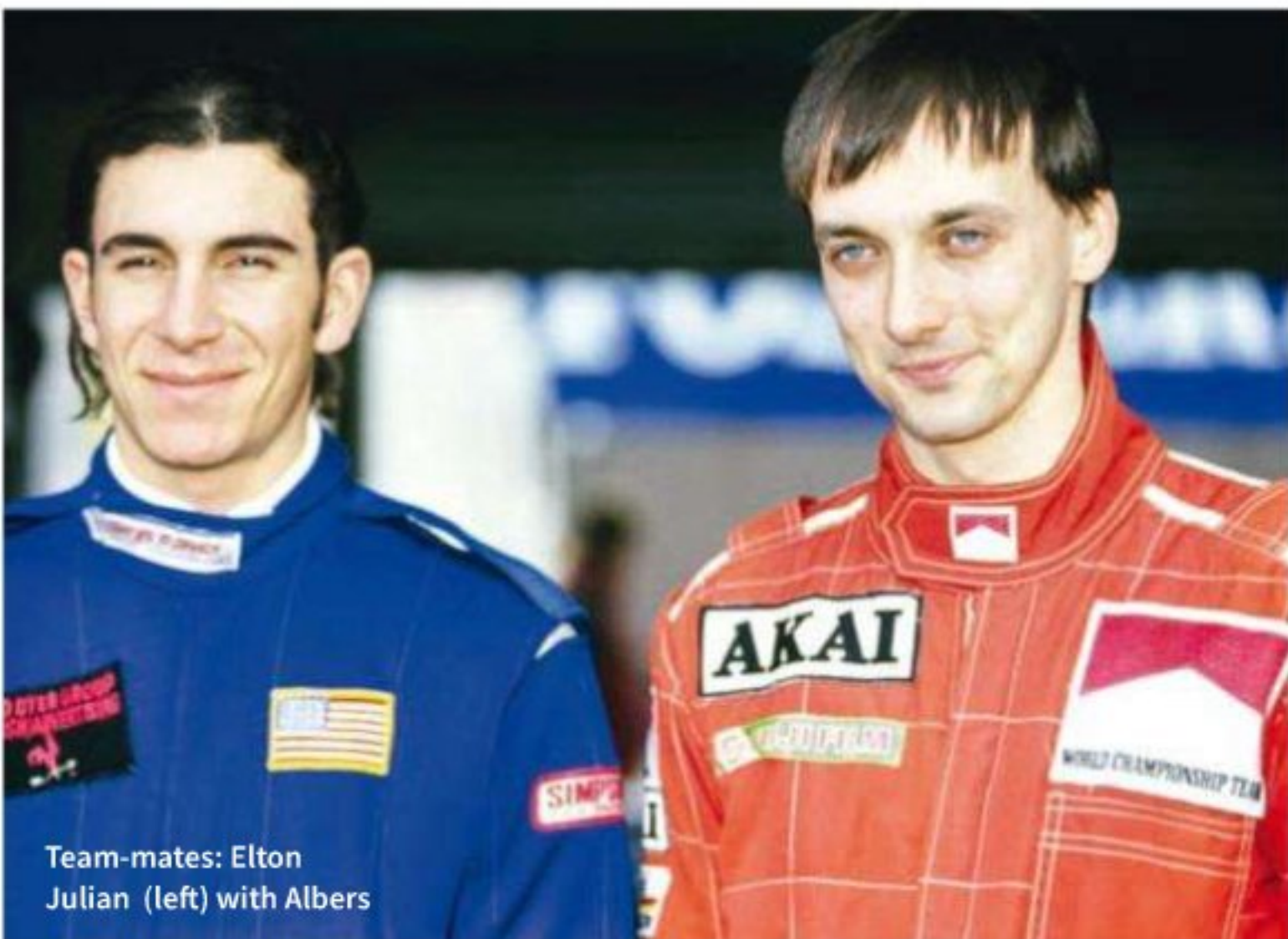
Marcel Albers would be 50 next week, but achieved a lot in his almost-25 years. And he's commemorated at Zandvoort not only by the 'Marcel Albers Straat' walkway above the pits, but in memorial trophies at the circuit, including the Spring Bank Holiday FF1600 extravaganza and for the fastest lap in the Masters of F3, a race in which he finished third in 1991.

"There aren't many race drivers that become true friends, but Marcel was surely one of them," sums up van Amersfoort. "It's incredible that a guy who never got into F1 is still so remembered. I think it's an honour for his family, and his friends are very happy with that. Me too." ❄️

Our thanks to Raymond de Haan (haanfoto.nl) for the Jacques Albers quotes, which are published on the 'Marcel Albers' Facebook page.



Unknown issue caused him to fall back before Thruxton crash



Team-mates: Elton Julian (left) with Albers



Albers was quick at Macau before error



Albers opened his 1992 account with Donington victory

Ingram stakes his claim

The Toyota driver rode his luck well to leave Donington leading the points

By Matt James, BTCC Correspondent

[@MattJMNews](#)

Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Avensis driver Tom Ingram will soon be changing his favourite colour to red. The British Touring Car Championship points leader has had two meetings where red flags have been his friend. He had the slate wiped clean when he was scheduled to take a drivethrough penalty in the second race at Brands Hatch during the first meeting of the campaign at the start of the month.

And again at Donington Park the gods were smiling on him. Race three had started after a cloudburst, and it was a voyage into the unknown for the entire grid, none of which had raced on the new wider Dunlop tyres with their wet-weather pattern.

Ingram started eighth on the grid for that precarious final encounter, but with the full 75kg of success ballast after zooming clear to a win in race two. As he skittered into the gravel at the Old Hairpin on the opening tour, his heart must have sunk.

But there was that colour red again. It hadn't only been Ingram who had slipped up – one third of the field aquaplaned off the track in the near-impossible weather and the stoppage flags flew again. The race was a complete restart with all of the injured parties back in their original positions – apart from front-row starter Matt Neal's Team Dynamics Honda Civic. He had been deemed to have received outside assistance to regain the track after his splashdown at McLeans. So that was one less rival for Ingram to deal with...

After some feisty battles, Ingram settled for sixth in the finale – which was enough to bring a smile to his face

as he contemplated a job well done. The grin got even wider an hour or so after the race had finished: news filtered through that on-the-road winner Gordon Shedden's Team Dynamics Honda had failed a post-race rideheight check.

So, from being three points behind the Scot in the hunt for the crown, Ingram suddenly found himself 14 points clear of Colin Turkington's WSR BMW 125i M Sport, which inherited race three glory.

When fortune was picking its favourite for the 2017 BTCC, it certainly smiled on Ingram.

"It isn't just about the luck, though," pointed out Speedworks team manager Christian Dick. "Look at the other cars that went off at the start of race three – they were all allowed to restart back in their original positions. It wasn't just us."

Dick was right, and Ingram hadn't been outside of the top five positions in any of the practices, qualifying session or races.

That was despite a brave gamble in the opener, when the second-placed car in the championship had come to the meeting with 66kg of ballast and Dick and Ingram decided to bolt on the harder-spec Dunlops for race one. The theory was to take all the pain in the opening race and battle back from there, and it worked superbly.

Despite consistency being his watchword this year, Ingram rolled up his sleeves and held off a queue of cars behind in that opener to bank what he could with fifth. "I actually enjoyed being a bit of an arsehole in that race," said Ingram. "It is nice to frustrate other people."

"Then in race two, I saw the chance to overtake leader Aiden Moffat and I had to go for it. You have to know when to push, and who to push >>



Ingram drove clear of the field to win race two





Moffat took impressive first BTCC win



WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE, WILL DRIVERS OBEY NEW RULE?

CONTACT IN THE BRITISH TOURING Car Championship is a moot point. Yes, it is a series that encourages door handle-to-door handle action, but there are moves that go too far.

The judicial system is robust, with cameras in each of the cars and data traces available to driving standards officer Jeff Allam and the stewards.

But for Donington Park, a new rule was introduced. The series bosses have decided to put some of the onus back into the hands of the drivers. They have determined that should a driver 'push to pass', or give a shove to the car in front to gain an advantage, in other words, then they can decide to redress the balance themselves. If they back off and let the delayed rival back through before the same point on the following lap, then no action will be taken.

However, if a driver decides not to give the place back, then the repercussions when they are interviewed by the clerk of the course later on could be even more serious than they otherwise would be.

Eurotech Racing's Jack Goff said: "You don't want to kill the action in the BTCC – because that is what it is all about and there has to be an



Drivers have doubts about new BTCC rule

element of rubbing – but this is a good rule. It gives the driver an option to do something about any contact themselves."

World Touring Car Championship racer Tom Chilton, who is also tackling the BTCC, said it was a regulation he was used to. "In the WTCC, if you straightline a chicane and gain ground on anyone, you have to slow down and give the place back. It works very well there, but in the competitive world of the BTCC, I am not so sure. It is not going to be something you can do all the time."

WSR BMW 125i M Sport racer Andrew Jordan agreed. "It depends on the situation of any contact," said Jordan. "If you are in a queue of cars, dropping back one place could end up costing you lots of places. You are going to have to do it on a case-by-case basis."

Teams watching from the pitwall could have a big influence on the decision of a driver to restore a position he might have got through robust means, according to Speedworks Toyota driver Tom Ingram.

"You will do what you are told," said Ingram. "I don't think a driver is going

to give up a place unless your team can see it clearly on the TV screens. In the heat of battle, every driver thinks he is going to be right. It will be interesting to see who decides to do this and who doesn't."

The chaotic scene at Donington, with a tightly bunched pack and a downpour in race three, meant that not a single driver opted to self-police throughout the course of the trio of encounters, and it will be interesting to see if any driver has the gumption to take the decision into their own hands in rounds to come.

MATT JAMES

Ingram was happy with win and two fifths



against, and I think I have judged it well so far this season.”

For Shedden, that race three disqualification was hard to swallow. The points leader going into Donington had banked a seventh in the opening race with the full 75kg of success ballast on board the Civic, and then taken the softer tyres in race two to land sixth place – despite a mysterious late-race off caused when the team thought he had run over some debris on track. Nevertheless, it was enough to put him right in the mix for the reversed grid final.

In that chaotic opening lap before the red flag, Shedden had been spat onto the grass at Hollywood and took a wild ride down the grass at the Craner Curves.

There was no sign of trouble at the restart and, in two sublime laps after a safety car for the opening tour, he climbed from row two to first and headed off for what he thought was an easy win.

“At the original start, I was going flat-out down the Craners backwards on the grass after someone had fired into me,” explained the perplexed Scot. “That damaged the back of the car, and when it went to the rideheight after the end of the race, it failed. What am I supposed to do?”

“I know rules are rules, but this is tough to take and every single point is important in this championship.”

His team-mate Neal had a right to be fed up, too. After a DNF at Brands Hatch, he came into the meeting with no weight and qualified in fifth spot.



He benefited from the early battles to run third and then jumped Rob Austin’s Handy Motorsport Toyota Avensis when his foe suffered a gear-cut problem.

The 66kg and the harder tyres meant that race two was a damage limitation exercise and Neal struggled home in seventh, but that gave him a front-row start slot for the reversed grid clash. After his car had been towed out of the gravel, he returned to his original front-row starting slot, only to be told he was not allowed to race because he had received outside assistance. It was pretty galling given the confusion that had reigned during the aborted getaway.

Neal’s woe and Shedden’s penalty meant that Laser Tools Racing Mercedes-Benz A-Class driver Moffat rounded off his weekend, which had

Shedden took seventh and sixth in first two races but lost win in third because of rideheight infringement

started with his maiden BTCC win, with an eighth-place finish. It was the 20-year-old’s most accomplished performance yet at this level on a circuit where he usually excels.

He qualified on the second row of the grid in a car free from ballast, claimed third from the start and then dispatched Austin into the Old Hairpin on lap three. From there, he was free to hunt down Ingram and used superior traction against his ballast-laden rival to snatch the lead into Hollywood on lap five.

“The car was superb, the engineers really had it in the sweet spot,” grinned Moffat. “I had grip where I wanted it and a race is easy when a car is as good as that. I could happily go to the pub for a pint now and call it a day.”

He couldn’t, of course, and had to take the 75kg in race two. That meant he slumped to 14th, but he was right back in the hunt in race three for another top 10 finish.

Also in the hunt throughout the weekend was Adam Morgan in his Ciceley Racing Merc. He had come to the meeting with 48kg of ballast and built his weekend around race three, after an eighth in race one (which was seventh on the road, but he was docked 0.5s for passing Shedden on the grass) and 11th in race two. His opportunism in sticking his nose into a battle between polesitter Dave Newsham (BTC Racing Norlin Chevrolet Cruze) and Ash Sutton (Team BMR Subaru) in a scrap for third in race three was handsomely >>>



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rewarded. His excellent racecraft meant he jumped them both – and it became second when Shedden was pinged.

After all of the controversy in race three, it was easy to overlook the fact that it had actually been won by Turkington. None of the WSR cars had been comfortable over the practice and qualifying sessions, and the double champion joined his team-mates Rob Collard and Andrew Jordan in the search for a balance on the BMW 125i M Sport.

The Northern Irishman was the highest of the trio in qualifying with 10th spot, but made up four places off the start (as the rear-wheel-drive cars are prone to do) before picking them off one-by-one to land fourth. Fifth with ballast in race two set him up for an advantageous second row start slot for

Turkington inherited race-three win and is now second in the points

race three, and he capitalised. He tracked and passed polesitter Newsham for second spot at the end of lap eight, but Shedden was already gone. He got the news in parc ferme that it would become a win with the Japanese car's censure.

"That race was all about just holding on," said Turkington, right in the championship hunt. "I was on the limit everywhere – so to take BMW's first win in the wet is special. We really didn't want it to be damp – that doesn't suit the rear-wheel-drive cars – so I was probably the only one who was happy when it decided to tip down properly, but that was still one heck of a race."

Collard did his typical feat of struggling in qualifying after some small technical issues during the free practice running. He went from 13th to sixth in

the opener – again, another trademark of his – before battling up to second in race two after leapfrogging the roadblock that had been Moffat's heavy Merc.

He was one of the cars to slide wide at the Old Hairpin at the start of race three, and ended up returning to the reformed grid with damage from contact affecting the rear of his car. That led to an off-track excursion at the restart and he battled for the minor points thereafter.

Jordan had a weekend to forget. He scored three points in the opening two races before a clash in race three, and a puncture, left him out of the picture.

One of the most interesting performances of the weekend was Sutton in the Team BMR Subaru Levorg. While his team-mates Jason Plato, James Cole and rookie Josh Price struggled to get on top of the handling of their cars, Sutton clicked with his.

He set a time good enough for pole before being dumped to the back of the grid for an overboosting issue with the two-litre turbocharged engine. From there, he mounted a mammoth comeback that resulted in third in race two and another podium in the finale once Shedden had been excluded.

Another to lift silverware was Austin, who clung on to a top three slot in the opener. He had started from pole but received a mighty whack at the first corner of race one as the cars concertinaed up into Redgate. He rescued that for third, but was dumped into the gravel by similar rough tactics in race two. In the finale, he drove from the back to 13th to show that the pace was genuine. ❄️



Sutton drove well in race two to claim third

RESULTS ROUND 2/10, DONINGTON PARK, APRIL 16, RACE 1 (16 LAPS – 31.626 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Aiden Moffat (GB)	Ciceley Racing · Mercedes A-Class	18m59.693s
2	Matt Neal (GB)	Team Dynamics · Honda Civic Type R	+1.504s
3	Rob Austin (GB)	Handy Motorsport · Toyota Avensis	+2.164s
4	Colin Turkington (GB)	WSR · BMW 125i M Sport	+2.433s
5	Tom Ingram (GB)	Speedworks Motorsport · Toyota Avensis	+14.539s
6	Rob Collard (GB)	WSR · BMW 125i M Sport	+14.984s
7	Gordon Shedden (GB)	Team Dynamics · Honda Civic Type R	+15.358s
8	Adam Morgan (GB)	Ciceley Motorsport · Mercedes A-Class	+15.668s
9	Jeff Smith (GB)	Eurotech Racing · Honda Civic Type R	+17.996s
10	Josh Cook (GB)	Team Parker/Maximum · Ford Focus	+18.095s
11	Mat Jackson (GB)	Motorbase Performance · Ford Focus	+18.330s
12	Jack Goff (GB)	Eurotech Racing · Honda Civic Type R	+18.878s
13	Ash Sutton (GB)	Team BMR · Subaru Levorg	+19.858s
14	Senna Proctor (GB)	Power Maxed Racing · Vauxhall Astra	+20.556s
15	Andrew Jordan (GB)	WSR · BMW 125i M Sport	+21.074s
16	Ant Whorton-Eales (GB)	AmD Tuning · Audi S3 Saloon	+21.327s
17	Ollie Jackson (GB)	AmD Tuning · Audi S3 Saloon	+21.714s
18	Matt Simpson (GB)	Team Dynamics · Honda Civic Type R	+22.005s
19	Dave Newsham (GB)	BTC Norlin Racing · Chevrolet Cruze	+24.829s
20	Stephen Jelley (GB)	Team Parker · Ford Focus	+25.278s
21	Josh Price (GB)	Team BMR Racing Academy · Subaru Levorg	+39.276s
22	Will Burns (GB)	Team Hard · Volkswagen CC	+41.935s
23	Aron Taylor-Smith (IRL)	Triple Eight Racing · MG6	-1 lap
EX	Luke Davenport (GB)	Motorbase Performance · Ford Focus	+23.791s-passing under yellows
R	Daniel Lloyd (GB)	Triple Eight Racing · MG6	12 laps-accident damage
R	Michael Epps (GB)	Team Hard · Volkswagen CC	9 laps-accident
R	Chris Smiley (GB)	BTC Norlin Racing · Chevrolet Cruze	4 laps-accident damage
R	Tom Chilton (GB)	Power Maxed Racing · Vauxhall Astra	4 laps-accident damage
R	Jason Plato (GB)	Team BMR · Subaru Levorg	3 laps-lost power
R	James Cole (GB)	Team BMR · Subaru Levorg	0 laps-went off
R	Martin Depper (GB)	Motorbase Performance · Ford Focus	0 laps-accident damage
R	Jake Hill (GB)	Team Hard · Volkswagen CC	0 laps-off

Winner's average speed 99.89mph. **Fastest lap** Turkington 1m10.193s, 101.49mph.



Austin's Toyota led opener until first-corner bump



Moffat took race one honours

QUALIFYING

1 Austin 1m09.514s; 2 Goff 1m09.555s; 3 Ingram 1m09.710s; 4 Moffat 1m09.728s; 5 Neal 1m09.753s; 6 Shedden 1m09.803s; 7 Epps 1m09.819s; 8 Morgan 1m09.907s; 9 J Smith 1m09.933s; 10 Turkington 1m09.939s; 11 Taylor-Smith 1m09.957s; 12 Chilton 1m09.995s; 13 Collard 1m09.998s; 14 Jordan 1m10.032s; 15 Plato 1m10.042s; 16 Lloyd 1m10.149s; 17 Cook 1m10.194s; 18 M Jackson 1m10.205s; 19 Proctor 1m10.211s; 20 Smiley 1m10.250s; 21 Simpson 1m10.290s; 22 Newsham 1m10.315s; 23 Cole 1m10.395s; 24 Burns 1m10.427s; 25 O Jackson 1m10.492s; 26 Depper 1m10.668s; 27 Davenport 1m10.675s; 28 Price 1m10.691s; 29 Whorton-Eales 1m10.697s; 30 Jelley 1m10.708s; 31 Sutton 1m09.412s-time disallowed due to overboosting; 32 Hill 1m09.737s-time disallowed due to rear-wing angle infringement.

RACE 2 (16 LAPS – 31.626 MILES)

1 Ingram 19m09.281s; 2 Collard +3.865s; 3 Sutton +4.085s; 4 Cook +10.112s; 5 Turkington +14.134s; 6 Shedden +15.340s; 7 Neal +20.817s; 8 Newsham +21.912s; 9 Goff +24.793s; 10 Chilton +27.670s; 11 Morgan +28.118s; 12 Whorton-Eales +28.196s; 13 J Smith +28.241s; 14 Moffat +35.766s; 15 Jordan +36.144s; 16 Davenport +36.500s; 17 Smiley +36.829s; 18 Taylor-Smith +37.210s; 19 Proctor +37.474s; 20 Plato +37.775s; 21 Lloyd +38.046s; 22 Jelley +39.632s; 23 Epps +40.332s; 24 Cole +41.484s; 25 Depper +41.684s; 26 Hill +1m00.116s; 27 Burns +1m14.522s; 28 Price -2 laps; R O Jackson 14 laps-accident damage; R Simpson 13 laps-accident damage; R Austin 3 laps-off; R M Jackson 0 laps-accident.

Winner's average speed 99.06mph.

Fastest lap Jordan 1m10.409s, 101.18mph.

GRID RACE 2

Decided by result of Race 1.

RACE 3 (17 LAPS – 33.605 MILES)

1 Turkington 23m56.681s; 2 Morgan +9.476s; 3 Sutton +9.637s; 4 Newsham +10.492s; 5 Ingram +10.769s; 6 Goff +10.976s; 7 Cook +14.909s; 8 Moffat +15.500s; 9 Taylor-Smith +15.835s; 10 Proctor +18.672s; 11 Hill +20.957s; 12 Collard +21.503s; 13 Austin +25.346s; 14 Chilton +27.901s; 15 O Jackson +28.666s; 16 Plato +30.334s; 17 Smiley +36.728s; 18 Jordan +39.386s; 19 Jelley +41.070s; 20 Simpson +42.400s; 21 Epps +44.608s; 22 Cole +46.574s; 23 Price +47.057s; 24 Depper +51.305s; 25 Davenport +52.124s; EX Shedden -4.585s-rideheight; R Whorton-Eales 16 laps-puncture; R Lloyd 10 laps-off; R J Smith 9 laps-accident damage; R Burns 4 laps-accident damage; R M Jackson 0 laps-accident; R Neal 0 laps-not allowed to start.

Winner's average speed 84.20mph.

Fastest lap Lloyd 1m20.511s, 88.48mph.

GRID RACE 3 Decided by result of Race 2. Top eight reversed.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ingram 86; 2 Turkington 72; 3 Morgan 69; 4 Shedden 67; 5 Collard 67; 6 Goff 46; 7 Jordan 44; 8 Neal 44; 9 Cook 40; 10 Chilton 37.



Markelov wins as Leclerc learns fast

FORMULA 2
BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT (BRN)
APRIL 15-16
ROUND 1/11

HOMEWORK PROVED TO BE THE KEY TO success in the sweltering conditions facing the 20 drivers tackling the first races of the 2017 Formula 2 season (nee GP2) in Bahrain.

Temperatures in the mid-40C range for both the feature and sprint encounters made keeping the already fragile Pirelli tyres alive for as long as possible even tougher, and opened the possibility for ambitious strategies – laden with risk – to provide high rewards.

“I learned a lot from last year about managing the tyres, and that was what really helped me here,” said feature race winner Artem Markelov after he artfully turned a 10-second deficit into a 7.9s margin of victory by running longer on his first stint on the medium tyres.

The Russian Time driver had quickly surged up to third place from seventh on the grid, then followed the battling Charles Leclerc (who had taken pole position for his first appearance in the Formula 1 feeder series for Prema Racing) and Norman Nato for much of the first stint.

When they pitted – Nato on lap 14 of the 32-lap race and Leclerc one tour later – Markelov opted to switch his strategy and embrace the risk of extending his first stint

by two laps. It initially appeared to be the wrong call as he emerged a long way behind his rivals, with Nato leading for Arden after pulling off a sweeping move on Leclerc on the latter’s out-lap.

It looked like Nato had victory in his grasp, but Markelov, leaning heavily on his tyre-management experience, began to make rapid progress in the final five laps and dispatched both Leclerc and Nato to seal his first victory since the 2016 GP2 Monaco feature race.

“[My] engineer was saying to me that I had to be patient and it will come to me at the end, and it was a really nice strategy,” he said.

After fading badly in the second half of the feature race, Leclerc studied his data long into the night and it aided his charge in the sprint race. His victory in that came from a combination of another brave strategy call and scintillating pace from the 19-year-old to make up 13 places in just nine laps.

Luca Ghiotto, the effective polesitter after hydraulic problems meant ART Grand Prix’s Nobuharu Matsushita had to start from the pitlane for the 23-lap reversed-grid race, held the lead for much of the first stint until he began to struggle for tyre life.

Leclerc went from sixth on the grid to third on a frenetic first lap, which ended with the safety car being deployed after Nato was pitched off seconds after Oliver Rowland’s front wing sliced into one of his tyres. He then moved into the



LAT IMAGES

lead and began to pull away. Leclerc had opted for a mid-race stop, having learned in testing that high degradation in the Bahrain heat could cost him a significant amount of time.

He therefore extracted all he could from the medium tyres and built a nine-second lead before coming in for fresh softs. As with Markelov in the first race, it initially looked like the wrong call as Leclerc emerged 14th – and 24s behind Rowland and Ghiotto, who were disputing the lead.

But Leclerc lit up the timing screens, at times going four seconds a lap quicker than the leaders. He decisively dispatched his rivals until he arrived on the tail of Ghiotto and Rowland midway through the penultimate lap.

An easy DRS pass put him into second on the main straight, past Rowland who had been searching for consistency all weekend after struggling with braking feel. Ghiotto then locked up and ran wide at Turn 4, which finally handed Leclerc the lead and the win. Ghiotto was frustrated with his lack of fight on the final lap but never thought he could realistically hold on to first place.

“It was an unbelievable race,” said Leclerc afterwards. “We looked at the data yesterday and saw some things were wrong on my part that I had to improve, and today I made them right.”

The 2016 GP3 champion leaves Bahrain with an eight-point lead over Markelov, who came home eighth in the sprint race after his own alternative strategy – soft to medium tyres – did not pay off. The last rookie to win the title in what was GP2 was Nico Hulkenberg in 2009. While Leclerc was reluctant to make any bold claims at this early stage, the title is undoubtedly in his sights. “I’m pushing for the win,” he said. “There’s no reason we cannot do it.”

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Leclerc charged to well-judged victory in the sprint race

RESULTS ROUND 1/11, BAHRAIN, APRIL 15-16, RACE 1 (32 LAPS – 107.459 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	TIME
1	Artem Markelov (RUS)	Russian Time	58m18.977s
2	Norman Nato (F)	Arden	+7.891s
3	Charles Leclerc (MC)	Prema Racing	+13.780s
4	Jordan King (GB)	MP Motorsport	+17.478s
5	Oliver Rowland (GB)	DAMS	+18.144s
6	Alexander Albon (T)	ART Grand Prix	+19.744s
7	Luca Ghiotto (I)	Russian Time	+27.056s
8	Nobuharu Matsushita (J)	ART Grand Prix	+29.971s
9	Antonio Fuoco (I)	Prema Racing	+30.950s
10	Nyck de Vries (NL)	Rapax	+35.726s
11	Nicholas Latifi (CDN)	DAMS	+47.578s
12	Ralph Boschung (CH)	Campos Racing	+52.529s
13	Sergio Sette Camara (BR)	MP Motorsport	+55.146s
14	Sergio Canamasas (E)	Trident	+56.311s
15	Johnny Cecotto Jr (V)	Rapax	+1m06.723s
16	Stefano Coletti (MC)	Campos Racing	+1m12.933s
17	Sean Gelael (RI)	Arden	+1m18.579s
18	Gustav Malja (S)	Racing Engineering	+1m24.483s
19	Nabil Jeffri (MAL)	Trident	+1m38.982s
20	Louis Deletraz (CH)	Racing Engineering	+1m39.106s

Winner's average speed 110.561mph. Fastest lap Coletti 1m45.843s, 114.379mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Leclerc 1m38.907s; 2 de Vries 1m39.665s; 3 Nato 1m39.696s; 4 Ghiotto 1m39.948s; 5 Fuoco 1m39.585s*; 6 Matsushita 1m40.011s; 7 Markelov 1m40.018s; 8 Rowland 1m40.053s; 9 Albon 1m40.140s; 10 Sette Camara 1m40.168s; 11 King 1m40.201s; 12 Cecotto 1m40.262s; 13 Latifi 1m40.280s; 14 Deletraz 1m40.453s; 15 Boschung 1m40.501s; 16 Jeffri 1m41.604s; 17 Malja 1m40.473s***; 18 Gelael 1m40.778s**; 19 Canamasas 1m40.810s**; 20 Coletti 1m41.416s**. * Three-place grid penalty for impeding Markelov
** Five-place grid penalties for failing to slow for virtual safety car
*** Five-place grid penalty for driving "in a potentially dangerous manner"

RACE 2 (23 LAPS – 77.193 MILES)

1 Leclerc 43m01.023s; 2 Ghiotto +1.569s; 3 Rowland +2.898s; 4 Latifi +7.575s; 5 King +9.962s; 6 de Vries +10.865s; 7 Albon +11.382s; 8 Markelov +18.953s; 9 Cecotto +19.150s; 10 Fuoco +19.983s; 11 Canamasas +28.829s; 12 Deletraz +31.187s; 13 Malja +33.622s; 14 Matsushita +34.392s; 15 Coletti +35.901s; 16 Jeffri +41.595s; 17 Gelael +52.029s; 18 Sette Camara +1m08.570s; R Boschung 9 laps-suspension; R Nato 0 laps-accident.
Winner's average speed 107.668mph. Fastest lap Sette Camara 1m43.950s, 116.462mph.

GRID FOR RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1, with top eight finishers reversed.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Leclerc 36; 2 Markelov 28; 3 Rowland 20; 4 Ghiotto 18; 5 Nato 18; 6 King 18; 7 Albon 10; 8 Latifi 8; 9 de Vries 5; 10 Matsushita 4.



Top two: Markelov greets Leclerc



LAT IMAGES

Albuquerque exploits G-Drive woe

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES
SILVERSTONE (GB)
APRIL 15
ROUND 1/6

FILIPE ALBUQUERQUE DEPARTED Daytona despondent after Ricky Taylor's late smash-and-grab cost him 24 Hours victory, but you couldn't wipe the smile off his face after the European Le Mans Series opener at Silverstone.

On his return to the championship alongside sportscar rookies Hugo de Sadeleer and Will Owen, the Portuguese driver produced a stunning final stint to hunt down and pass Toyota protege Ryo Hirakawa with two laps to go, giving United Autosports the best possible start to life in LMP2.

Since the latest breed of LMP2 cars are capable of lapping three seconds under the previous ELMS lap record – thanks to an extra 100bhp and around 40% more downforce – tyre wear was a topic of discussion all weekend and would ultimately prove decisive.

Hirakawa climbed aboard the Dragonspeed-run G-Drive ORECA with 30 seconds in hand after a stellar double stint from Leo Roussel, but was soon struggling to keep his Dunlops alive and consequently haemorrhaging time to the Ligier of Albuquerque, who was fighting back after de Sadeleer was penalised for passing under yellows.

The sister Dragonspeed of Nicolas Lapierre, running six laps down after a gearbox problem, played a rearguard action for several laps but it only delayed

the inevitable. Once clear of Lapierre, Albuquerque wasted no time in making his move, diving inside Hirakawa at Village and clearing off to the tune of six seconds by the flag.

"It was a lot about tyre management and he definitely killed his tyres," said Albuquerque. "It looked like he was struggling because I was catching him so much – when I passed him, I knew that he couldn't do anything.

"I was not expecting to win so early because we are just putting everything together, but I'll take it!"

Behind the despondent Hirakawa, Roussel and Memo Rojas, the High Class Racing Dallara of Anders Fjordbach and Dennis Andersen completed the podium on the car's competition debut, ensuring three different manufacturers filled the top three positions.

The all-Danish crew didn't have the pace of the Graff Ligier started by Richard Bradley, who charged from 28th on the grid (after a qualifying spin) to the lead inside 30 laps, but the Dallara was kinder to its tyres. This allowed Fjordbach to reclaim the position from Franck Matelli in the final hour.

Sean Rayhall and Jon Falb made it a double success for United Autosports with a dominant run in LMP3. Starting second, Rayhall easily cleared category debutant Alexander Talkanitsa Jr and the Ligier was never headed thereafter, despite a lurid spin for Falb at Copse.

In GTE, Le Mans Cup champions Euan Hankey and Salih Yoluc made a seamless transition to the ELMS with

Experience counted as Albuquerque moved clear in the closing stages of the race

a comfortable victory in the TF Sport Aston Martin they shared with factory driver Nicki Thiim.

After the Dane gave the team a debut pole, Yoluc kept Aaron Scott's Ferrari in sight in the opening stint before handing over to Hankey, who cruised past Duncan Cameron into a lead he would never lose. Hankey even had time for a quick spin at Abbey following contact with Gianluca Roda's Ferrari, before Thiim brought the car home.

"Salih did an amazing job, he made us comfortable to do an easy stint and just bring the car back," said Thiim. "It's a perfect start to the season."

JAMES NEWBOLD

RESULTS

1 Hugo de Sadeleer/Will Owen/Filipe Albuquerque (Ligier-Gibson JSP217) 126 laps in 4h01m24.751s; 2 Leo Roussel/Memo Rojas/Ryo Hirakawa (ORECA-Gibson 07) +6.339s; 3 Anders Fjordbach/Dennis Andersen (Dallara-Gibson P217); 4 Richard Bradley/James Allen/Franck Matelli (ORECA-Gibson 07); 5 Nigel Moore/Philip Hanson (Ligier-Gibson JSP217); 6 Roberto Lacorte/Giorgio Sernagiotto/Andrea Belicchi (Dallara-Gibson P217). **LMP3** Sean Rayhall/John Falb (Ligier-Nissan JSP3). **GTE** Salih Yoluc/Euan Hankey/Nicki Thiim (Aston Martin Vantage GTE). **Points 1 Sadeleer/Owen/Albuquerque 25**; 2 Rojas/Roussel/Hirakawa 18; 3 Fjordbach/Andersen 15; 4 Bradley/Matelli/Allen 12; 5 Moore/Hanson 10; 6 Lacorte/Sernagiotto/Belicchi 8. **LMP3 1 Rayhall/Falb 25**; 2 Matthieu Lahaye/Jean-Baptiste Lahaye/Francois Heriau 18; 3 Wayne Boyd/Mark Patterson/Christian England 15. **GTE 1 Thiim/Hankey/Yoluc 26**; 2 Christian Ried/Joel Camathias/Matteo Cairoli 18; 3 Andrew Howard/Ross Gunn/Darren Turner 15.

Colciago wraps it up early

**TCR INTERNATIONAL
BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT (BRN)
APRIL 15-16
ROUND 2/10**

'YOU CAN'T WIN A RACE AT THE first corner, you can only lose it', so the saying goes. But as 1990 Italian Formula 3 champion Roberto Colciago proved in the first race of the Bahrain Grand Prix-supporting TCR International double-header, you can win it *before* Turn 1.

The Honda Civic driver made a perfect start from third, scything between the Opel Astra of poleman Pierre-Yves Corthals and Hugo Valente's SEAT Leon off the line. From there, he controlled the race immaculately, coming home 5.5 seconds ahead of Valente.

With Corthals (who inherited pole after DG team-mate Mat'ò Homola was sent to the back of the grid because of an engine change) slipping to third at the start and unable to threaten Valente, the battle for third place lit up the closing stages of the race.

On the penultimate lap, Jean-Karl Vernay capitalised on Dusan Borkovic diving up the inside of Corthals into



the left-hander at the end of the back straight to jump from fifth to third after the pair made contact and ran wide.

This completed a good recovery by Vernay, who had a half spin on the opening lap after contact with Davit Kajaia and dropped to sixth. Kajaia later retired from fourth with a driveshaft failure.

Lanky Serbian Borkovic won the reversed-grid second race after passing polesitter Attila Tassi's Honda on lap one.

James Nash, who finished seventh in race one, settled into second early on having passed the fading Tassi. Valente

Colciago had charged from third to first before the first corner

overtook Vernay to take the final podium position, with Colciago fifth.

EDD STRAW

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Roberto Colciago (Honda Civic Type R) 9 laps in 20m15.241s; 2 Hugo Valente (SEAT Leon) +5.502s; 3 Jean-Karl Vernay (VW Golf GTI); 4 Dusan Borkovic (Alfa Romeo Giulietta); 5 Pierre-Yves Corthals (Opel Astra); 6 Pepe Oriola (SEAT). **Race 2 1 Borkovic** 9 laps in 20m20.221s; 2 James Nash (SEAT) +4.154s; 3 Valente; 4 Vernay; 5 Colciago; 6 Ferenc Ficzá (SEAT). **Points 1 Vernay 52**; 2 Borkovic 51; 3 Colciago 50; 4 Oriola 45; 5 Davit Kajaia 39; 6 Valente 38.

Fittipaldi's promising start to sophomore season

**WORLD SERIES FORMULA V8 3.5
SILVERSTONE (GB)
APRIL 15-16
ROUND 1/9**

PIETRO FITTIPALDI LARGELY FLEW under the radar in his rookie Formula V8 3.5 campaign in 2016, but looked a man reborn at Silverstone as he dominated both races from pole.

The Charouz-Lotus driver had built a six-second lead in the opening race until a broken exhaust pipe allowed Egor Orudzhev to close. However, 20-year-old Fittipaldi rallied to claim his first win by 1.6s over Alfonso Celis Jr and Matevos Isaakyan, as Orudzhev was disqualified for running underweight.

After dispatching Fittipaldi's team-mate Rene Binder at Luffield, Celis set the fastest lap of the race while piling pressure on Isaakyan, who relinquished the place at Chapel four laps from home.

Fittipaldi carried on where he left off in race two, pulling a 4.5s gap over last year's double-winner Roy Nissany and Orudzhev inside the first two laps.

A sluggish wheel change for Nissany during the pitstops promoted Orudzhev to second, but the Russian could do nothing about Fittipaldi, despite the appearance of the safety car following a tangle between Isaakyan and Nelson Mason at Brooklands.

After the restart, Fittipaldi once again pulled away to secure a second victory ahead of Orudzhev and Nissany, who

Change of team seems to have galvanised Fittipaldi in 2017



had retired from race one following contact with Konstantin Tereschenko.

"I did two years with Fortec in F3 and World Series, I learned a lot with them but in the end it just wasn't really clicking," said Fittipaldi, whose grandfather Emerson took his final F1 win at Silverstone in 1975.

"I had to get a change, so I tested with Lotus and the team really believed in me. This performance gives everyone a boost, so I think it was a good change – I'm very happy."

Fittipaldi already has a 24-point lead in the championship heading to Spa and, on this form, will take some catching.

JAMES NEWBOLD

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Pietro Fittipaldi 24 laps in 42m05.753s; 2 Alfonso Celis +1.584s; 3 Matevos Isaakyan; 4 Rene Binder; 5 Damiano Fioravanti; 6 Nelson Mason; 7 Konstantin Tereschenko; 8 Diego Menchaca; 9 Yu Kanamaru; 10 Giuseppe Cipriani. **Race 2 1 Fittipaldi** 22 laps in 41m50.035s; 2 Egor Orudzhev +2.623s; 3 Roy Nissany; 4 Binder; 5 Konstantin Tereschenko; 6 Celis. **Points 1 Fittipaldi 50**; 2 Celis 26; 3 Binder 24; 4 Orudzhev 18; 5 Tereschenko 16; 6 Isaakyan and Nissany 15.

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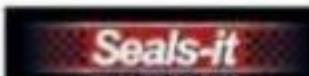
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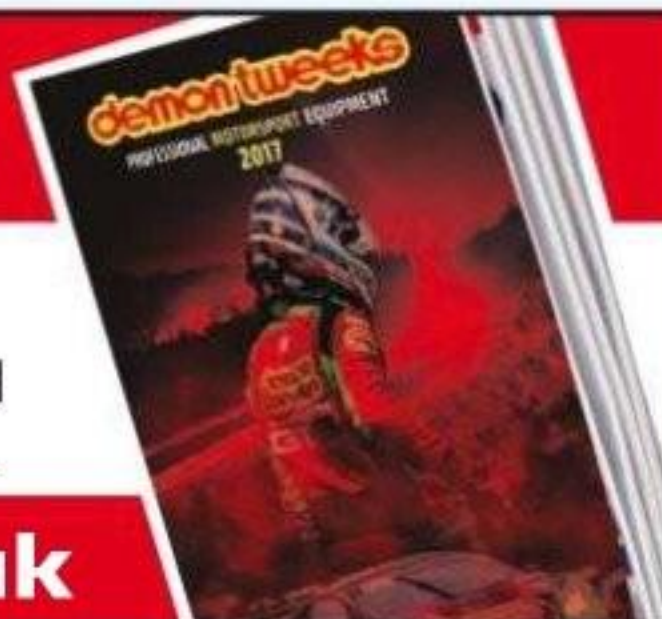
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Monger was still being treated as Autosport went to press



BRITISH F4

Monger suffers serious leg injuries in horrific F4 crash

BILLY MONGER HAS SUFFERED SERIOUS leg injuries after a horrific crash during the third British Formula 4 race at Donington Park last weekend.

The 17-year-old JHR Developments driver was airlifted to the Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham after colliding with Patrik Pasma at Schwantz Curve.

It is believed that Pasma had spun, and the unsighted Monger then ploughed into the stranded Carlin car at full speed.

It took medics nearly two hours to extract Monger from his car before he was taken to hospital by air ambulance. He was conscious and talking after the shunt but was then rushed to intensive care, where he was operated on.

The precise extent of his injuries was not yet known as Autosport closed for press on Tuesday

afternoon. The Surrey-based driver was still undergoing treatment and his family was yet to issue a statement.

Pasma was also taken to the same hospital as Monger, by road, for checks but was released on Monday without any serious injuries.

Monger had finished third in the first race of the weekend, and remains sixth in the overall standings and second in the Challenge Cup element. He was 12th in the championship last season in his first year of single-seaters after switching from Ginetta Junior.

Pasma remains third in the F4 points despite the crash, after taking a podium in the second Donington race.

Since the race was red-flagged after just three laps, Double R's Linus Lundqvist was declared the winner but only awarded half points.



MESSAGES OF SUPPORT FLOOD IN FOR MONGER

BRITISH FORMULA 4 POINTS LEADER Jamie Caroline led a host of racing drivers and personnel in sending supportive messages to Billy Monger in the wake of the youngster's crash.

Caroline has raced with the 17-year-old since they were in karting, having graduated through Ginetta Junior to F4 together.

He shared pictures of the two on Facebook and wrote: "Love this little guy, and couldn't be more proud of everything he's achieved over the years!"

"We've raced alongside each other every year of our careers bar one and can proudly say he's given me some of the best battles I've had!"

"Really hope he has a speedy recovery. Bill, love ya mate! See you soon."

McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist Sennan Fielding was Monger's mentor at JHR last year when the duo competed alongside each other in F4.

He said it was "absolutely devastating news", adding: "I know you're a fighter mate. All of my thoughts are with you and the family."

The wider racing community expressed support on social media: new BTCC points leader Tom Ingram, Power Maxed Racing team principal Adam Weaver, and Red Bull-backed Formula Renault Eurocup driver Dan Ticktum took to Facebook, while Monger's list of well-wishers on Twitter included 1996 Formula 1 world champion Damon Hill.



ALL PICS: EBREY/LAT

HISTORIC SPORTSCARS

Historic prototype and GT series planned

A NEW SERIES FOR PROTOTYPE AND GT Le Mans cars built between 1995 and 2011 has been launched for 2018, with former Peugeot factory driver Nicolas Minassian at the helm.

Masters Historic Racing has unveiled its plans to introduce the series with a pilot race at Spa this September ahead of a six-date championship next season. It announced at the same time that 44-year-old Minassian will be series director.

The category will be split into multiple classes. There will be LMP1, LMP2, GT1 and GT2 categories for three age groups of car, 1995-99, 2000-05 and 2006-11.

Eligible prototypes include everything from the Ferrari 333SP through machinery built for the SR2 category, such as the Lola-Nissan B2K/40, to the turbodiesel Audi and Peugeot challengers of the third age group. GT machinery allowed to take part encompasses a variety of Porsches and Ferraris, GT1 exotica such as the Mercedes CLK-GTR, and more recent GT1 cars such as the Aston Martin DBR9.

Masters boss Ron Maydon said: "I have been looking at the bigger picture and what will be the next era of historic racing for a long time and feel this is the perfect series."

Minassian explained that he would have a wide-ranging role in putting the series together.



"I'm helping with the regulations because this is my era and I know all about the cars," he said. "I will also be working with potential entrants to help them to get their cars out on track."

"There are so many great cars out there just sitting around, and this series will give their owners a chance to race them and show them to the fans."

Minassian said that he had been inundated with enquiries since last week's announcement.

"I've been speaking to people who are telling me they've got this car or that car," he continued. "It's not just people with P1s and P2s, but also owners of GT1 cars like the Ferrari 550 Maranello and the 575GTC."

A grid of 20 cars is the target for a 45-minute pilot race at the Masters meeting on September 15-17, according to Minassian.

"Judging by the buzz around this, I think that is reasonable," he said.

BRITISH GT

Practice damage hits British GT entry

TWO GINETTA G55 GT4s were unable to start the opening British GT round at Oulton Park after a practice shunt involving Mike Newbould (right) and Steve Fresle.

Newbould spun his Team Hard Ginetta into the barriers exiting Druids and bounced back into the path of the unsighted Fresle (Century Motorsport), who was behind another car.

Both drivers went to hospital for precautionary checks and were released,

but the cars were not repairable and require work to be ready for Rockingham on April 29-30.

"The car is back at the workshop now, the guys are stripping it down and we're going to take the chassis to Ginetta," said Century boss Nathan Freke.

"I would imagine it will be a total loss," added Team Hard boss Tony Gilham. "It's not in good shape at all but it did its job. It protected the driver and that's the main thing."



LMP3 CUP

Spence to LMP3 for full-time return

FORMER BRITISH F3 DRIVER JAMIE SPENCE will compete in his first full season of racing in more than a decade this year when he contests the new UK LMP3 Cup.

Spence will share a Ligier JSP3 with former Radical racer Jason Rishover. Nielsen Racing will run the car, alongside the Ecurie Ecosse entry of Alasdair McCaig and Colin Noble Jr.

Spence was the 1992 British Formula Ford champion and won British F3 Class B in 1993. He contested a final year in 2001 with Duma Racing.

Spence returned to racing recently in Radicals with Rishover, who facilitated the LMP3 move.

• Christian England will stand in for CJ Wilson at United Autosports alongside Andrew Evans at rounds in which Wilson is unable to compete.

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GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

MX-5 champ Roche wins in Supercup

REIGNING MAZDA-MX5 CHAMPION TOM Roche was a late call-up for Laser Tools Racing in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup last weekend, filling the seat of Jack Mitchell, and claimed a victory in his second race.

The Welshman, who is racing in the MX-5 SuperCup this year, stepped in for Aston Martin Vantage GT3 racer Mitchell because he was participating in the opening British GT round at Oulton Park.

"It was a bit of a surprise really," said

Roche. "Rob [Boston, team boss] gave me a call on Wednesday and said, 'Are you busy on the weekend, I've got a Ginetta you can race?' I was down to work, but I decided to not to!

"I'd love to [contest more races], it's a great championship and the cars are awesome to drive. It's something I'd like to do more often."

In spite of not having tested the GT4 until the Thursday before the race meeting, Roche managed two podiums, including a race win in the second outing of the weekend.



Orrock (centre) went flying for second weekend in a row

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

Orrock's car written off in pile-up

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP RACER Lucas Orrock escaped injury after his second roll in as many meetings last weekend.

Orrock was part of a pile-up at the start of the opening race initially triggered by Shayne Deegan and Paul Rivett

colliding out of Redgate when battling for the lead. Behind, Orrock was tipped into a roll in an incident that also involved Ollie Pidgley, Luke Reade, Aaron Thompson and Oscar Rovelli.

The car, Ant Whorton-Eales's title-winning machine

from last year, was written off and Orrock now plans to return to his original Clio, which was damaged in a testing roll at Brands Hatch earlier in April.

"I need to start an airline because I've got so many air miles!" he said.



CLASSIC FORMULA FORD 1600 Ian Jeary will honour the memory of the late John Surtees by sporting a range of different liveries on his Elden Mk8 this year. Jeary is known for running retro Formula 1 liveries on his cars, and now intends to run various paint schemes made famous by 1964 F1 champion Surtees and his team. He ran in blue and white, depicting an early 1970s Surtees, at the Silverstone CFF1600 season opener. **Photo by Paul Lawrence**

IN BRIEF



TONKIN RETURNS TO RACING IN BRABHAM

Former Clubmans racer Paul Tonkin has broken a 17-year layoff from racing to field a 1600cc F3 Brabham BT41. Tonkin quit racing in August 2000 but was talked into a return by fellow former Clubmans racer Glenn Eagling. The Brabham went to Sweden when new and competed in the UK in 1973. It ran at Monaco in 1974 with a two-litre engine and was found more recently in Denmark. It has since been rebuilt by Dan Eagling at Lifetime Racing.

'LONG' CARRERA CUP RACE PLAN SHELVED

Plans for the Porsche Carrera Cup GB to hold a longer-than-usual race at Donington Park last weekend were shelved after the lengthy delays caused by Billy Monger and Patrik Pasma's crash. The series had hoped to run a 33-lap race ahead of the 45-minute contest the drivers will face at Le Mans in June, but instead race two only ended up lasting one more lap than the opener.

FIELD AND STREATHER CLASH AGAIN

Relations between Renault Clio Cup drivers Graham Field and Paul Streather soured further after another collision at Donington Park. The pair crashed in testing at Brands Hatch earlier this month, leaving both unable to compete, and they tangled again in the first Donington race, leaving Streather in the gravel. Field was penalised, while Streather was also sanctioned for 'abusive language'.

LATEST BRDC RISING STARS ANNOUNCED

Australian Joey Mawson is among four drivers to have been awarded a place on the BRDC's Rising Star scheme. Mawson, who beat Mick Schumacher to the German F4 title last year, was named as a Rising Star last week alongside Clio Cup drivers James Dorlin and Nathan Harrison, as well as British GT driver Alex Reed.

BROWN TO GT5 AS CLIOS FALL THROUGH

Lewis Brown will contest the Ginetta GT5 Challenge this season as a privateer. Brown, who was third in Ginetta Junior last year, was expected to race in the Clio Cup but instead made an appearance in the GT5 Challenge at Oulton Park last weekend. "A sponsorship deal fell through, but I'm happy to be doing GT5 instead," he said.





HISTORICS An ex-Alan Jones Williams FW06 will return to racing next month in the hands of Australian racer Martin Bullock. Chassis 2 was mainly used as a spare in the 1978 season but Jones raced it in the United States, Spanish and British Grands Prix. It was then raced by motorbike ace Giacomo Agostini in the Aurora AFX Championship in 1979 and 1980. More recently, chassis 2 spent time on the wall of a casino. Only four FW06s were built and just two are still in active use. Bullock, who spends some of the summer racing historics in Europe, plans to debut the car in the FIA Masters Historic Formula 1 Championship round at Brands Hatch at the end of May. **Photograph by Mick Walker**

BRSCC FIESTAS

DRIVERS ASK FOR SEPARATE CLASSES

DRIVERS HAVE CALLED for the BRSCC Ford Fiesta Championship to run separate races for Class C cars at its next round at Cadwell Park in May after a troubled opening weekend at Brands Hatch earlier this month.

The series currently caters for four versions of Fiesta, ranging from the quickest two-litre ST model in Class C to the slowest 1400cc Zetec that runs in Class B.

The result is a wide variation of lap times, which drivers felt contributed to a number of accidents in the Brands races that featured capacity grids of 34 cars.

Jamie White, who won Class D for the newest 1600cc Zetec S models in all three Brands races, said he would consider staying away from the races if the grid is not split.

"To be out there with cars that have got 90bhp more is just asking for chaos," he said. "It's not going to work. Why go and waste all the money?"

A congested Brands timetable ruled out the split grids, while series co-ordinator Steven Connor suggested entry fees may have to rise to accommodate extra races elsewhere with the current level of entries across all of the classes.

JIM CLARK MUSEUM

Stewart: Fund Clark museum

THREE-TIME FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPION Sir Jackie Stewart has called for people to donate to a crowdfunding campaign for a multi-million pound museum to honour late two-time F1 champion Jim Clark.

The Scottish Borders Council has confirmed an investment of over £600,000 for the project, but the Jim Clark Trust needs another £300,000 before the build can commence.

Stewart, the Trust's honorary president, said: "Great drivers like Jimmy deserve to be remembered. [The new museum] is justified with Jimmy's success. Duns is the wee village and for that to be done there is very important.

"I would encourage [people] to give, it's a good cause. There are very few drivers that have had the recognition Jimmy has had on a global basis."

A small 'Memorial Room' has existed in Duns since 1969 and the Trust believes it has had over 300,000 visitors.

The new museum will expand from the Memorial Room, featuring some of the cars in which Clark raced, as well as trophies, new memorabilia and picture galleries.

Stewart has made a fresh appeal for people to donate as the current crowdfunding campaign comes to an end on Friday (April 21). However, the Trust will keep fundraising until it achieves the total it needs to complete the construction of the museum.

Four-time IndyCar champion Dario Franchitti, triple Le Mans 24 Hours winner Allan McNish, F1 race winner David Coulthard and Goodwood's Lord March are all also among the Trust's patrons.

SUPER TOURING TROPHY

New class added to HSCC series for 2001-05 touring cars

THE HISTORIC SPORTS CAR Club's Super Touring Car Trophy has added a class for pre-2006 normally aspirated Super 2000 cars after receiving interest from drivers with ex-British Touring Car Championship machinery.

With limited options in terms of championships to compete in for the pre-2006 cars, and lower pre-1990 entries, the Club

has started the new ST4 class.

Although the S2000s are more modern, championship officials researched lap times set by the cars in their eras and believe new additions should not have a pace advantage over Super Tourers.

The regulations also permit the organisers to add weight to the cars should they become dominant in the series.

The new class has led to two pre-2006 cars joining the grid for the first round at Donington Park at the end of the month: Bernard Hoggarth's Honda Integra and ex-BTCC driver Jason Hughes (MG ZS).

"I've had this car for eight years in a showroom," said Hughes. "I was convinced to bring it out. There's plenty of BTCC machinery lying around."





West Country racing is strongly rooted

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@autosport](#)

I HAVE BEEN A DEVOTEE OF CLUB RACING AT CASTLE Combe for 50 years, having first visited in 1967, and this term pass 44 at Thruxton, an hour's drive southeast of the Strawford family's fortress. Both venues are dear to my heart, 'home circuits' since ladhood. Although neither is as close as South London's Crystal Palace, three miles from where I spent my first four years, I've spectated, marshalled, reported, commentated and competed at both. Even if push came to shove, I'd find it impossible to pick one over the other.

For decades, Combe's resident championships have been the nucleus of its meetings. Its (British Racing and Sports Car Club SW-originated) Formula Ford series has been run since '69, when Bryan Sharp (Merlyn) emerged champion. In fact, American Dan Hawkes won Combe's first race for the category, three weeks after its debut at Brands Hatch on July 2, '67. Early championships visited Llandow in South Wales, then Thruxton. Since '73, though, HQ has enjoyed an exclusive.

Ever a hotbed of talent, like the Champion of Brands competition, it has developed a posse of specialists whose intimate knowledge of the former airfield perimeter track allows them to take on allcomers. Competitor numbers are not what they were, what with the strength of the Oulton Park scene, the growth of Historic/Classic FF and the renaissance of National FF1600 and offshoots. Nevertheless, the quality is high, with new waves of young hopefuls challenging the 'old guard' in a top value niche.

Combe's Saloon Car championship, inaugurated in 1997, has never looked stronger, with a wide variety of highly developed vehicles, unusual choices, and tough competition in each

division. Watching Gary Prebble cut a sub-record 91.46mph pole lap on Monday in the SEAT that was wiped out – as an innocent party – at Tower last Easter, was a treat. No wonder Prebbs' win record is unrivalled, yet the speed Bill Brockbank wrings from his SEAT Ibiza and the pace of former champion Will Di Claudio and Geoff Ryall in Peugeot 106s is remarkable.

The GT series has come alive this year, with David Krayem's fearsome ORECA-developed 8.4-litre V10 Chrysler Viper and Nigel Mustill's Reiter Motorsport-built Lamborghini Gallardo shifting the pace up a couple of notches. I can't wait to see Keith Murray's sensational Dialynx two-litre turbocharged VW-engined Audi R8 get among them. Sadly its gearbox grenaded on a recent test day, but the Swindon marque tuning specialist demonstrated its potential in hillclimbs last year.

Offering opportunities for owners of tweaked tin-tops, the fledgling Hot Hatch series started promisingly on Monday, drawing in some 'Saloonatics' for a second shot. Some may also explore further afield with the 750 Motor Club, which has re-ignited its long-dormant series, lack of new small hatchbacks in the marketplace having hastened the modern Stock Hatch staple's demise, although the Classic version for Peugeot 205s, Ford XR2s and the like is booming.

Another organisation that has listened to its customers in shaping a fine package of series is the Classic Sports Car Club. It is on parade this weekend at Thruxton, following an immensely popular debut last August, with the Special Saloons v Modsports showpiece guaranteed to evoke memories for those of us around in the 1970s. I'm certainly looking forward to calling the action and revisiting my youth. ✨



PADMORE'S MIGLIA DEBUT ENDS EARLY

A first-lap shunt at the Esses ended FIA Masters Historic F1 champion Nick Padmore's Mini Miglia debut in father Keith's ex-Bill Sollis car at Castle Combe last Monday. "I'd always wanted to race one, but did only a few laps at Brands before qualifying," he said. "From damage at the back it appears I was tagged, but poor Martin Wager had nowhere to go, hit my left-front corner and had a low-speed roll."



DEBUTANT EASTWELL DRIVER OF THE DAY

Contesting his third car meeting, US F-Series karting champion Michael Eastwell, 21, was named Castle Combe Racing Club Driver of the Day having driven a Kevin Mills Racing Spectrum 012 (above) to a strong sixth in last Monday's Formula Ford opener. The Hampshireman was one of three series debutants to impress: Matt Cox (Spectrum 011b) and Archie Hine – son of 1980s F3 racer Ringo – (Van Diemen JL12) were eighth and ninth.

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CARRERA CUP APRIL 15-16

Catch-up man Cammish loses points lead

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2014, DAN Cammish has left a Porsche Carrera Cup GB meeting not heading the standings, but it could have been so much worse for the double champion.

Cammish was on just his third lap in qualifying when his points advantage appeared to be blitzed. He collided with Pro-Am 2 driver Rupert Martin as they approached Schwantz Curve.

"There was nothing I could do with the closing speed," said Cammish. "We went through and I thought he was going right and I went left. But he just pulled left."

Not only did his Redline team have a lengthy repair job, Cammish had only qualified 10th and 20th for the races. For most drivers that would have been their weekend over. But Cammish is not most drivers and he set about working his way up the order.

By the end of lap one he was eighth. He then pulled off a succession of brilliant passes to move up to fourth. That became third with five laps to go after a sublime move on Lewis Plato through the Craner Curves. And in the end he was classified an incredible second as JTR drivers Plato and second-placed Dino Zamparelli were excluded for running incorrect camber on the cars.

"That was maybe the best race I've ever had against this [level of] competition and when we've bounced



back from a smashed car," said a delighted Cammish.

Up front was Cammish's team-mate Charlie Eastwood who, after pulling away from Plato, was a comfortable winner.

"Because it's quite a long race we just wanted to make sure we still had it [pace] at the end of the race," he said of the first few laps. "An opportunity like that won't really come around very often so it was great to be able to go out and win."

Cammish had it all to do again in race two but by the closing stages had worked his way up to fourth, before getting stuck behind the stubborn Zamparelli.

Ahead, Eastwood was again untroubled as Plato and Tom Oliphant spent the first half of the contest squabbling over second until a move from Plato at Redgate led to Oliphant losing a handful of places.

Therefore the only scare for Eastwood came on the final lap. As he came up to

Eastwood stole a march after Cammish's qualifying crash

lap a group of tussling Pro-Am 2 racers there was a collision just in front of him but Eastwood was able to pick his way through the debris to win.

"I didn't think that would be my battle!" he said. "In motorsport you can never expect it to be plain sailing."

Eastwood now leads the championship by four points but it could have been a much bigger gap to Cammish.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

RESULTS

RACE 1 (23 LAPS) 1 Charlie Eastwood; 2 Dan Cammish +1.959s; 3 Tom Wrigley; 4 Euan McKay; 5 Tio Ellinas; 6 Daniel McKay. **Fastest lap** Cammish 1m07.783s (105.11mph). **Pole** Eastwood. **Starters** 22.
RACE 2 (24 LAPS) 1 Eastwood; 2 Lewis Plato +1.262s; 3 Dino Zamparelli; 4 Cammish; 5 Ellinas; 6 Tom Oliphant. **FL** Cammish 1m07.689s (105.25mph). **P** Eastwood. **S** 22.
POINTS 1 Eastwood 76; 2 Cammish 72; 3 Oliphant 47; 4 Zamparelli 44; 5 McKay 43; 6 Ellinas 43.

BRITISH F4 APRIL 15-16

Caroline wins before horror crash

THE SECOND MEETING OF THE British F4 season was overshadowed by a horrific accident during Sunday's race in which Billy Monger and Patrik Pasma were both taken to hospital. The race was red-flagged after three laps and not restarted, with the half points win going to Double R's Linus Lundqvist.

Saturday's races were more positive, though, as Carlin's Jamie Caroline became the first winner of race one and two in the series under its current format, putting on a performance that gave further credit to his unofficial title of 'the man to beat'.

Finishing comfortably ahead of Lundqvist in race one, Caroline started from sixth in the reversed grid race

two but, just as he had done a year earlier at Donington, made a perfect getaway.

"I 'James Hunt-ed' it. I had massive confidence and know I can get the cold tyres going," said Caroline, after leaping into the lead in the space of a lap.

A pass around the outside of Lundqvist and JHR driver Monger at Redgate was quickly followed by a daring move on both Oscar Piastrri and Fortec's Oliver York through McLeans moments later.

That left only poleman Pasma in Caroline's way, but he quickly dispatched the Finn through the Roberts chicane. While Caroline cruised to victory, York caught out Pasma to take second – his first podium in the series.

DOM D'ANGELLILO



Caroline did the double, which included reversed grid charge

RESULTS

RACE 1 (18 LAPS) 1 Jamie Caroline; 2 Linus Lundqvist +5.432s; 3 Billy Monger; 4 Oliver York; 5 Oscar Piastrri; 6 Patrik Pasma. **Class winner** Monger. **FL** Caroline 1m08.055s (104.69mph). **P** Lundqvist. **S** 18.
RACE 2 (18 LAPS) 1 Caroline; 2 York +2.769s; 3 Pasma; 4 Harry Webb; 5 Piastrri; 6 Ayrton Simmons. **CW** York. **FL** Logan Sargeant 1m08.007s (104.76mph). **P** Pasma. **S** 17.
RACE 3 (3 LAPS) 1 Lundqvist; 2 Piastrri +2.174s; 3 York; 4 Sargeant; 5 Webb; 6 Yves Baltas. **CW** York. **FL** Piastrri 1m10.889s (100.50mph). **P** Lundqvist. **S** 18.
POINTS 1 Caroline 110; 2 Piastrri 70; 3 Pasma 63; 4 Simmons 49.5; 5 York 47.5; 6 Monger 44.

Harper can't take full advantage

ONE YEAR ON FROM HIS MAIDEN car racing victory at Donington, Dan Harper was again the man to beat in Leicestershire. However, he was only able to capitalise on his pace by winning race two after a trio of action-packed contests.

Harper was on pole for the opener and held the lead at the start but after a safety car period he was under pressure from the pack behind. Sure enough, Tom Gamble dived down the inside at Redgate, with Harper's Douglas team-mate Kiern Jewiss also squeezing ahead. And that was how it stayed to the finish, with Jewiss claiming his maiden podium in just his fourth ever car race.

"We knew if we worked hard enough results would come at some point," said Jewiss. "And we worked a lot harder and it paid off."

Harper fought back with a lights-to-flag win in a crazy race two as he stayed clear of a succession of incidents behind him to take a comfortable win. Tom Wood, Gamble and Scott McKenna had a brilliant battle for second place,

with Wood just scraping home.

Harper made a poor start to the finale and lost out to Gamble and Wood, but the top five remained locked together throughout, with Gamble eventually taking his second win of the weekend after a breathless scrap from Jewiss and Wood. Harper was third on the road but was demoted to sixth after a track limits penalty, but has now closed to within five points of the championship summit.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

RESULTS

RACE 1 (10 LAPS) 1 Tom Gamble; 2 Kiern Jewiss +0.583s; 3 Daniel Harper; 4 Harry King; 5 Tom Wood; 6 Seb Priaulx. **FL** Priaulx 1m24.245s (84.57mph). **P** Harper. **S** 20. **RACE 2 (12 LAPS) 1 Harper;** 2 Wood +6.600s; 3 Gamble; 4 Scott McKenna; 5 Harry Dyson; 6 Matt Luff. **FL** Harper 1m24.363s (84.45mph). **P** Harper. **S** 20. **RACE 3 (12 LAPS) 1 Gamble;** 2 Jewiss +1.047s; 3 Wood; 4 McKenna; 5 Connor Grady; 6 Harper. **FL** Jewiss 1m24.715s (84.10mph). **P** Harper. **S** 19. **POINTS 1 Gamble 126;** 2 Harper 121; 3 Wood 116; 4 King 97; 5 Priaulx 94; 6 Dyson 82.



Harper had three poles but only converted one to victory

Post-race decisions blight races

FOUR DIFFERENT DRIVERS WERE declared winners of the two Clio Cup races at Donington amid farcical scenes.

The opening race was red-flagged after a multi-car pile-up triggered by Shayne Deegan colliding with Paul Rivett as they battled for the lead out of Redgate.

Mike Bushell then seemed to win the restarted contest after a robust move on Lee Pattison at Coppice with a few laps to go. But he was later demoted to third because of the contact, promoting Max Coates to the win. That marked a turnaround in fortunes for the Ciceley driver as he was initially excluded, having been caught up in the first crash, but was reinstated for the win.

It looked like he had secured a double win, too, after another red flag in the second race. Heavy rain fell during a lengthy safety car period mid-race and on the restart Rivett locked up on cold

slicks and punted team-mate Pattison out of the lead. Coates appeared to be the beneficiary but Rivett was later deemed the winner as, despite causing the red flag, he was still running after the incident – unlike Pattison.

But the result remains provisional as WDE has gone to the MSA Court of Appeal to try and get Pattison reinstated.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

RESULTS

RACE 1 (7 LAPS) 1 Max Coates; 2 Lee Pattison +0.837s; 3 Mike Bushell; 4 Ash Hand; 5 Sam Osborne; 6 Nathan Harrison. **FL** Jack McCarthy 1m16.940s (92.60mph). **P** Dan Zelos. **S** 25. **RACE 2 (10 LAPS) 1 Paul Rivett;** 2 Coates +0.549s; 3 Bushell; 4 Daniel Rowbottom; 5 Zelos; 6 McCarthy. **FL** Rowbottom 1m16.884s (92.66mph). **P** Pattison. **S** 23. **POINTS 1 Bushell 110;** 2 Coates 96; 3 Rivett 94; 4 Pattison 88; 5 McCarthy 62; 6 James Dorlin 59.

Grass is Greener for Ben with new car

CENTURY MOTORSPORT'S BEN GREEN MAY be hesitant to hand back his loaned Ginetta GT4 after a change of fortunes at Donington Park brought him a win and a second place.

"Less than bad" was how he described his opening weekend, a meeting blighted by unusual mechanical failures and an unavoidable collision, but bad luck still seemed to haunt Green in race one when an attacking George Gamble tapped him through Redgate, forcing both drivers off the track. While Gamble retired with steering damage, Green managed to get his Ginetta back on track and dragged it to eighth.

It was a race Carl Boardley looked to have in the bag, before a last-lap track limits penalty demoted him to fifth. This handed Callum Pointon a maiden win, ahead of late Laser Tools Racing call-up Tom Roche.

Roche went on to win race two in just his second Supercup race, while Green secured second – equalling his best finish this season. More importantly perhaps, Green had finally benefited from the misfortunes of other drivers. Both Boardley and race leader Pointon lost control through Old Hairpin and Redgate respectively, handing Green two simple overtakes at the business end of the field.

It wasn't until victory in race three that the fog of the opening weekend seemed to truly lift the spirits of Green and his squad. "The team put out an amazing car, the pace was unbelievable. It was a great weekend," he said. The win highlighted everything Green had shown during the opening two weekends – raw pace and an eye to overtake – as he finished three seconds ahead of Pointon and team-mate Declan Jones.

The only question that remained is whether Green will keep this car for the remaining rounds. "We'll have to work out what to do about that," he joked.

DOM D'ANGELLILO

RESULTS

RACE 1 (15 LAPS) 1 Callum Pointon; 2 Tom Roche +0.905s; 3 Charles Ladell; 4 Declan Jones; 5 Carl Boardley; 6 Tom Hibbert. **FL** Roche 1m09.844s (102.00mph). **P** George Gamble. **S** 20. **RACE 2 (17 LAPS) 1 Roche;** 2 Ben Green +3.392s; 3 Jones; 4 Hibbert; 5 Reece Somerfield; 6 Ladell. **FL** Gamble 1m09.469s (102.56mph). **P** Pointon. **S** 20. **RACE 3 (16 LAPS) 1 Green;** 2 Pointon +3.342s; 3 Jones; 4 Roche; 5 Boardley; 6 Hibbert. **FL** Pointon 1m18.953s (90.23mph). **P** Somerfield. **S** 20. **POINTS 1 Pointon 158;** 2 Gamble 110; 3 Jones 110; 4 Green 109; 5 Ladell 109; 6 Boardley 102.



Car switch helped Green to first win of year



OULTON PARK
BRITISH GT APRIL 15-17

Keen and Minshaw kick off with double as Bentleys come to blows

JON MINSHAW AND PHIL KEEN GOT their British GT championship challenge off to the best possible start by winning both races at Oulton Park.

The Barwell Motorsport duo dominated the opener in wet conditions, then took advantage of a disastrous second race for the polesitting Team Parker Racing Bentley to take a maximum haul of points, despite a 10-second time penalty.

Minshaw and Keen served warning of their wet-weather prowess in torrential conditions at Silverstone last season, and picked up where they left off to lead home a Lamborghini one-two in the first race, ahead of Liam Griffin and championship debutant Sam Tordoff.

At his local circuit, Minshaw breezed past poleman Rick Parfitt Jr on the run to Old Hall and had five seconds in hand by the end of lap one, despite slithering across the grass at the Hislops chicane.

Minshaw was the only man able to lap inside the 1m47s bracket in the worst of the conditions before the pitstops and had an 18s margin over Parfitt and Griffin before handing over to Keen, who extended the gap to a commanding 37s by the finish.

"I tend to start off quickly and then settle into a rhythm, but I didn't expect five seconds and to be given the outside of Old Hall," explained Minshaw.

After taking over from Parfitt, Morris found himself a sitting duck on cold tyres as first Tordoff and Jonny Adam's TF Sport Aston Martin breezed past on successive laps into Hislops. Morris rallied as the track dried, but Adam's defences would not be breached.

Reigning champions Adam and Derek Johnston fought back from 11th on the grid after Johnston tangled with Lee Mowle's AmD Tuning Mercedes in qualifying.

Their cause was helped by the third-placed MacMillan Aston Martin expiring on the dummy grid, a spin for Ian Loggie at Brittens, and Mowle running wide at Island Bend, but Johnston expertly judged the loss of momentum resulting from Tim Eakin's spinning Nissan at Cascades to pass Mark Farmer and Harry Gottsacker.

Adam rejoined behind Farmer's team-mate Jon Barnes after the stops, but sliced back ahead into Lodge, then followed Tordoff past the struggling Morris to take an unlikely podium.

"If we'd qualified in the top three then I would still have been happy with a P3, so to come through from 11th to P3 is pretty amazing," said Johnston. "It's a great result, I'm very happy."

Barnes finished a lonely fifth, while an irate Matt Griffin stole sixth at the line from Callum MacLeod in the second Team Parker Bentley after spending

Barwell Lambo of Keen heads the field through Cascades at the start of race two

several laps stuck behind Martin Short's AM class-winning Mercedes.

GT4 was a race that seemingly nobody wanted to win. Poleman Sandy Mitchell dominated the early going in the Garage 59 McLaren 570S, but lost a lap in the pits with a seized wheelnut.

Despite losing a bonnet after contact with William Phillips on lap one, the Academy Motorsport Aston Martin started by Will Moore took over the lead after the stops, but dropped to third when Matt Nicoll-Jones had to serve a stop-go penalty for a pitstop below the minimum time and was subsequently excluded due to Moore's opening-lap misdemeanour.

That promoted debutants Adam Balon and Adam Mackay in the Track Club McLaren, although it was far from plain sailing as reigning Lotus Cup UK champion Mackay had to serve a stop-go of his own for an identical offence.

It ultimately mattered little however, as the birthday boy rejoined ahead of the HHC Motorsport Ginetta shared by Will Tregurtha and Stuart Middleton to win.

"It's really not what we expected, but our luck came through today," said Mackay.

Minshaw said race two was Bentley's to lose, with Morris and Parfitt again starting from pole in dry conditions, but nobody could have foreseen the manner in which the race fell into his lap.



MacMillan GT3
Aston failed to
take R1 start



Lanan pairing Pittard
and Reed won GT4 R2
after passing Nissan
near the finish

Morris was swamped at the rolling start and dropped to third behind Keen and MacLeod. In his haste to recover lost ground, the Welshman punted MacLeod into a spin at Hislops on lap two and was hit with a drivethrough penalty, which ruined his race.

After a spin at Knickerbrook, Parfitt took the car over in fifth behind Griffin and Duncan Cameron's Ferrari, a poor return on a race that had promised much. Team boss Stuart Parker was unimpressed.

"We need to go away and have a good look at things. We definitely snatched defeat from the jaws of victory," he said.

The intra-Bentley fracas helped Barnes to take second from Tordoff, a fast-starting Adam (up from 11th) and MacLeod, who then lost more time with a grassy moment at Cascades.

After Tordoff retired with a suspected engine problem, Adam latched onto the tail of Barnes but couldn't find a way by, allowing Keen to pull out a 13s lead that negated their pitlane success penalty carried over from race one.

Minshaw had five seconds in hand over Farmer when he emerged from the pits and could afford to breathe when the Aston ran wide at Brittens and dropped behind Johnston to third.

A heavy crash with 17 minutes remaining involving Loggie and Richard

Neary's Mercedes on the run to the second chicane brought the race to a premature end and ensured Barwell its second clean sweep from the last three meetings after Snetterton last year.

"We'll certainly savour it and appreciate it. I think Parker will be really disappointed they didn't clean up in the dry this weekend," said team boss Mark Lemmer.

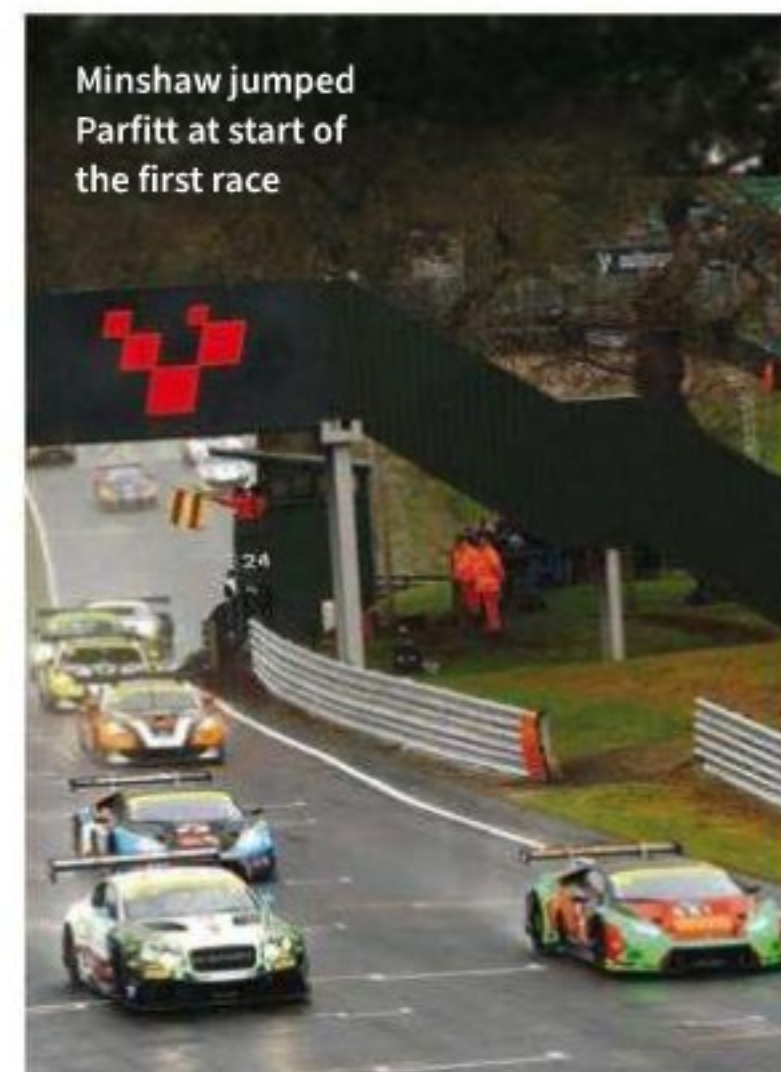
"I can't say enough about the way everyone has stuck to their task. We tested here on the new tyre and we were nowhere, but the drivers and the engineers have worked through a big test programme to get the car balanced – it's like a different car."

David Pittard and Alex Reed claimed the GT4 victory in the Lanan Racing Ginetta after a topsy-turvy race.

Pittard took advantage of Scott Malvern's ill-judged move on polesitter Mike Simpson at Cascades on lap five to hold third at the pitstops behind Martin Plowman's RJN Nissan and Mackay's McLaren. A shorter stop allowed Reed to emerge second and it wasn't long before he found a way past Plowman's co-driver Richard Taffinder to take a lead he wouldn't lose.

"To come back after two years of incomplete seasons and open up with a win, I'm over the moon," said Pittard.

JAMES NEWBOLD



Minshaw jumped
Parfitt at start of
the first race

RESULTS

BRITISH GT (33 LAPS) 1 Jon Minshaw/Phil Keen (Lamborghini Huracan GT3); 2 Liam Griffin/Sam Tordoff (Lamborghini Huracan GT3) +37.207s; 3 Derek Johnston/Jonathan Adam (Aston Martin Vantage GT3); 4 Rick Parfitt/Seb Morris (Bentley Continental GT3); 5 Mark Farmer/Jon Barnes (Aston Martin Vantage GT3); 6 Duncan Cameron/Matt Griffin (Ferrari 488 GT3). **Fastest lap M Griffin 1m42.761s (94.30mph). **Pole** Parfitt/Morris. **Starters** 12.**

RACE 2 (30 LAPS) 1 Minshaw/Keen; 2 Johnston/Adam +1.936s; 3 Farmer/Barnes; 4 Cameron/M Griffin; 5 Parfitt/Morris; 6 Jack Mitchell/James Littlejohn (Aston Martin Vantage GT3). **FL M Griffin 1m34.897s (102.12mph). **P** Morris/Parfitt. **S** 11.**

POINTS 1 Minshaw/Keen 50; 2 Johnston/Adam 33; 3 Farmer/Barnes 25; 4 Parfitt/Morris 22; 5 Cameron/M Griffin 20; 6 L Griffin/Tordoff 18.

GT4 (32 LAPS) 1 Adam Balon/Adam Mackay (McLaren 570S GT4); 2 Will Tregurtha/Stuart Middleton (Ginetta G55 GT4) +8.877s; 3 Will Moore/Matt Nicoll-Jones (Aston Martin Vantage GT4); 4 Graham Johnson/Mike Robinson (Ginetta G55 GT4); 5 William Phillips/Jan Jonck (Aston Martin Vantage GT4); 6 Alex Reed/David Pittard (Ginetta GT4). **FL Nicoll-Jones 1m52.209s (86.36mph). **P** Sandy Mitchell/Ciaran Haggerty (McLaren 570S GT4). **S** 16.**

RACE 2 (28 LAPS) 1 Reed/Pittard; 2 Marcus Hoggarth/Matthew Graham (McLaren 570S GT4) +1.216s; 3 Johnson/Robinson; 4 Tregurtha/Middleton; 5 Dean Macdonald/Akhil Rabindra (McLaren 570S GT4); 6 Balon/Mackay. **FL Mitchell 1m44.428s (92.80mph). **P** Mitchell/Haggerty. **S** 16.**

POINTS 1 Reed/Pittard 35; 2 Balon/Mackay 33; =3 Middleton/Tregurtha and Johnson/Robinson 30; 5 Hoggarth/Graham 18; 6 Phillips/Jonck 16

Cayman of Malvern (66) got into
GT4 polesitter Simpson



ALL PICS: EBREY/LAT



Ahmed was imperious throughout and claimed a hat-trick

OULTON PARK
BRDC BRITISH F3 APRIL 17

Awesome Ahmed seals Oulton triple

ENAAM AHMED LIVED UP TO HIS billing as a championship favourite in BRDC British Formula 3 with a clean sweep of three victories, but it was a tough start for rival Toby Sowery.

United States Formula 4 champion Cameron Das upstaged Ahmed, his Carlin team-mate, by claiming pole position by almost a quarter of a second in qualifying on Saturday, but barrier damage in a Mini Challenge race that rendered the circuit unsafe for single-seaters meant the first race didn't take place until Monday morning.

When rookie Das suffered wheelspin away from the lights on a wet track, the fight for the race one win was between Sowery and Ahmed.

Sowery initially built a second's advantage on lap one but Ahmed gradually worked away at this, and made a dive to the inside of the Lanar Racing driver at Old Hall with less than five minutes on the clock. As they ran side-by-side into Cascades, Sowery locked up and slid through the gravel trap, dropping him to third, while Ahmed built a margin of nearly three seconds over team-mate James Pull in the final three laps.

"I went a little bit deeper on the brakes to try and hold on to the position, but I just locked an outside wheel and then couldn't make the corner," Sowery said.

Ahmed came from eighth on the reversed-grid to win race two, with much of the work done by staying out of trouble during a chaotic initial start on a slightly damp track, in which Sowery

and Harry Hayek made contact, sending them spinning. Petru Florescu and Jamie Chadwick were also caught up.

Further around the lap, polesitter Omar Ismail spun away the lead to Callan O'Keeffe, with Ahmed moving up to second before the race was red-flagged to allow the damaged cars to be cleared.

At the restart, O'Keeffe got away poorly while Ahmed powered past into the lead, and over the reduced four-lap distance went on to open up a 7.7-second advantage over second-placed Ben Hingeley, who felt affected by damage from the initial skirmish but managed to keep O'Keeffe at bay.

Ahmed's fastest lap got him pole position for race three with ease, but converting that into victory in the finale was not made easy by Das, who on newer

tyres gradually reduced his deficit from one second after four laps to half that following the same distance again. Ahmed responded with the fastest lap, though, and won by 1.833s, while Pull completed a Carlin 1-2-3.

Starting 13th owing to his best lap being set in the wet first race, Sowery had to make do with seventh in the final encounter, and is already 56 points behind Ahmed's perfect score of 95.

"I didn't think it was possible to win three but to do that has been exceptional," said Ahmed, the first to achieve the feat since Sennan Fielding at Silverstone in the BRDC F4 era in 2014. "Everyone from Carlin has given me an amazing car. Let's hope we can take that momentum to the next round."

PETER ALLEN

Sowery led Ahmed in R1 (below), but made a mistake and dropped to third. Hingeley (below right) ended weekend as highest non-Carlin driver



ALL PICS: EBREY/LAT

OULTON PARK
SUPPORTS APRIL 15-17

Wakefield and CBH share wins

THE OPENING ROUND OF THE MINI Challenge JCW Championship started dramatically when 2016 Pickup Truck champion Freddie Lee crashed heavily at Island Bend while on a fast lap in Saturday's qualifying session.

Lee was uninjured, but the frontal damage to his car was such that further running was impossible. The accident also caused major delays to the rest of the day's timetable, and meant Monday's first Mini race was shortened.

Last year's Mini Cooper champion Max Bladon started that race from pole but made a poor start and ended up fourth. It was instead Mark Wakefield who made a lightning getaway to snatch the lead into the first corner, and he headed the field from then on.

Brett Smith charged through the field, overtaking Bladon before seeing off Charlie Butler-Henderson (who had been forced by a clutch issue to wait on the grid in neutral) for second a few laps later. Butler-Henderson launched a late attack to regain his lost position, but ran out of laps and settled for third.

A reversed grid meant that Bladon once again lined up on pole in race two, but Butler-Henderson took the lead from the start and led from then on to land a dominant victory. Bladon followed him all the way to claim second, ahead of Rob Smith. Wakefield had run third for much of the race and looked set for another podium, but he incurred a 10-second penalty for a false start, which dropped him to fifth behind Brett Smith, who earlier had enjoyed an entertaining intra-family battle with father Jeff. James Turkington was on for a strong result but ran wide across the grass at Cascades after contact and retired.

Saturday initially marked a dream car



Wakefield won Mini opener but was hit with a penalty in R2

racing debut for Michael Crees in the opening Ginetta Racing Driver's Club+ round, having made the step up from karting. Crees claimed pole position for Saturday morning's first race, but a spin in the latter half left him fourth. The race was ultimately won in dominant fashion by Phil Ingram, while Jack Oliphant and Richard Tetlow were second and third respectively in a very close finish.

Ingram also went on to win the second race but his lead was reduced by Crees, who finished just 0.7 seconds behind him. Tetlow was once again third. The top eight were reversed on the grid for the final race of the day and Crees finally made the most of his pace, fighting his way through to claim a first win in cars.

The Northern Saloon and Sports Car Championship brought the biggest and most diverse field of the weekend, with an entry of 36 cars. Rob Spencer in his Stuart Taylor Locosaki led from lights to



Crees avoided trouble – and wildlife – to win on first GRDC+ weekend

flag in race one, and won again in race two – although on that occasion he encountered a challenge from the BMW M3 of Paul Brydon until an overtake at Cascades secured Spencer a double.

Sunday's first Ginetta GT5 Challenge race was run on a damp track, with Oliver Wilkinson starting from pole. A slipping clutch at the start dropped him to ninth and then a tussle while in the mid-pack resulted in his bonnet pins snapping, leaving him to drive the race blind. But a resilient effort meant he came home fifth. The race was won by Max Bird, despite a poor start in which an electronics issue led him to believe he was in reverse gear on the grid.

Shane Stoney won an exciting second race, outraking Nick Zapolski for the lead at Lodge Corner. Debutant Lewis Brown was just seconds behind him, having fought his way from 13th after a disappointing first race.

Owen Walton won the first Volkswagen Racing Cup in his Audi TT, advancing from 15th on the grid thanks in part to a gamble on using slick tyres in changeable conditions. Race two was won by Tom Witts from Philip House and Kenan Dole, but marred by a last-lap accident in which Walton's car rolled over the barrier at Druids, leading to the final Ginetta GT5 race of the day being cancelled. Walton emerged uninjured.

LUCY MORSON

RESULTS

BRDC BRITISH F3 (11 LAPS)

1 Enaam Ahmed; 2 James Pull +2.897s; 3 Toby Sowery; 4 Ben Hingeley; 5 Cameron Das; 6 Harry Hayek. **Fastest lap** Ahmed 1m41.505s (95.47mph). **Pole** Das. **Starters** 18.
RACE 2 (4 LAPS) 1 Ahmed; 2 Hingeley +7.749s; 3 Callan O'Keeffe; 4 Pull; 5 Nicolai Kjaergaard; 6 Das. **FL** Ahmed 1m34.972s (102.04mph). **P** Omar Ismail. **S** 15. **RACE 3 (14 LAPS) 1 Ahmed;** 2 Das +1.833s; 3 Pull; 4 O'Keeffe; 5 Ismail; 6 Hingeley. **FL** Ahmed 1m30.687s (106.86mph). **P** Ahmed. **S** 17. **POINTS 1 Ahmed 95;** 2 Pull 71; 3 Das 63; 4 Hingeley 60;

5 O'Keeffe 56; 6 Ismail 40.

MINI CHALLENGE (7 LAPS)

1 Mark Wakefield; 2 Brett Smith +0.711s; 3 Charlie Butler-Henderson; 4 Max Bladon; 5 James Turkington; 6 Reece Barr. **FL** B Smith 2m01.405s (79.82mph). **P** Bladon. **S** 30.

RACE 2 (8 LAPS) 1 Butler-

Henderson; 2 Bladon +0.889s; 3 Rob Smith; 4 B Smith; 5 Wakefield; 6 Barr. **FL** R Smith 1m50.358s (87.84mph). **P** Bladon. **S** 30.

GINETTA RACING DRIVERS CLUB+

(8 LAPS) 1 Phil Ingram; 2 Jack Oliphant +5.650s; 3 Richard Tetlow; 4 Michael Crees; 5 Rob Keogh; 6 Phil McGarty. **FL** J Oliphant 2m01.054s (80.05mph) **P** Crees **S** 22.

RACE 2 (6 LAPS) 1 Ingram; 2 Crees +0.707s; 3 Tetlow; 4 Keogh; 5 J Oliphant; 6 Paul Oliphant. **FL** Ingram 2m00.281s (80.57mph). **P** Ingram. **S** 22.

RACE 3 (8 LAPS) 1 Crees; 2 Keogh +3.579s; 3 J Oliphant; 4 Ingram; 5 Gary Wager; 6 Tetlow. **FL** Tetlow 2m00.911s (80.15mph). **P** Wager. **S** 21.

NORTHERN SALOONS AND SPORTS

CARS (8 LAPS) 1 Rob Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 2 Paul Brydon (BMW M3) +5.985s; 3 Andy Robinson (Ford Falcon); 4 Andrew Morrison (SEAT Leon Eurocup); 5 Mike Cutt (M3); 6 Darren Smith (TVR Tuscan). **CW** Brydon; Scott Hubel (Peugeot 205 T16R); John McCullagh (Porsche Caymen S);

Danny Carroll (Caterham 7); Lee Underwood (Honda); Paul Lightburn (E36). **FL** Spencer 1m47.09s (90.49mph). **P** Spencer. **S** 36.

RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Spencer; 2 Brydon +9.763s; 3 Bill Addison (Caterham Superlight); 4 Robinson; 5 Cutt; 6 Morrison. **CW** Brydon; Kirk Armitage (BMW M3); Hubel;

Mark Leybourne (Westfield FW); Underwood; Gary Bower (E46); Daniel McKay (Ford Fiesta RS1600). **FL** Spencer 1m46.392s (91.09mph). **P** Brydon. **S** 35.

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE (8 LAPS)

1 Max Bird; 2 Nick Zapolski +4.927s; 3 Shane Stoney; 4 Ryan Hadfield; 5 Oliver Wilkinson; 6 Alex Toth-Jones.

FL Stoney 2m03.109s (78.72mph). **P** Wilkinson. **S** 26. **RACE 2 (7 LAPS)**

1 Stoney; 2 Lewis Brown +0.159s; 3 Bird; 4 Zapolski; 5 Wilkinson; 6 Hadfield. **FL** Brown 1m59.958s (80.78mph). **P** Bird. **S** 26.

VW RACING CUP (10 LAPS) 1 Owen

Walton (Audi TT); 2 Darrelle Wilson (Scirocco) +4.125s; 3 Jamie Bond (Golf); 4 Phil House (Scirocco); 5 Tom Witts (Scirocco); 6 Bobby Thompson (Golf). **FL** Walton 1m55.459s (83.93mph). **P** House. **S** 27.

RACE 2 (8 LAPS) 1 Witts; 2 House +0.542s; 3 Kenan Dole (Golf); 4 Kieran Gordon (Scirocco); 5 Paul Ivens (Scirocco); 6 Bond. **FL** Witts 1m51.296s (87.07mph). **P** Thompson. **S** 27.

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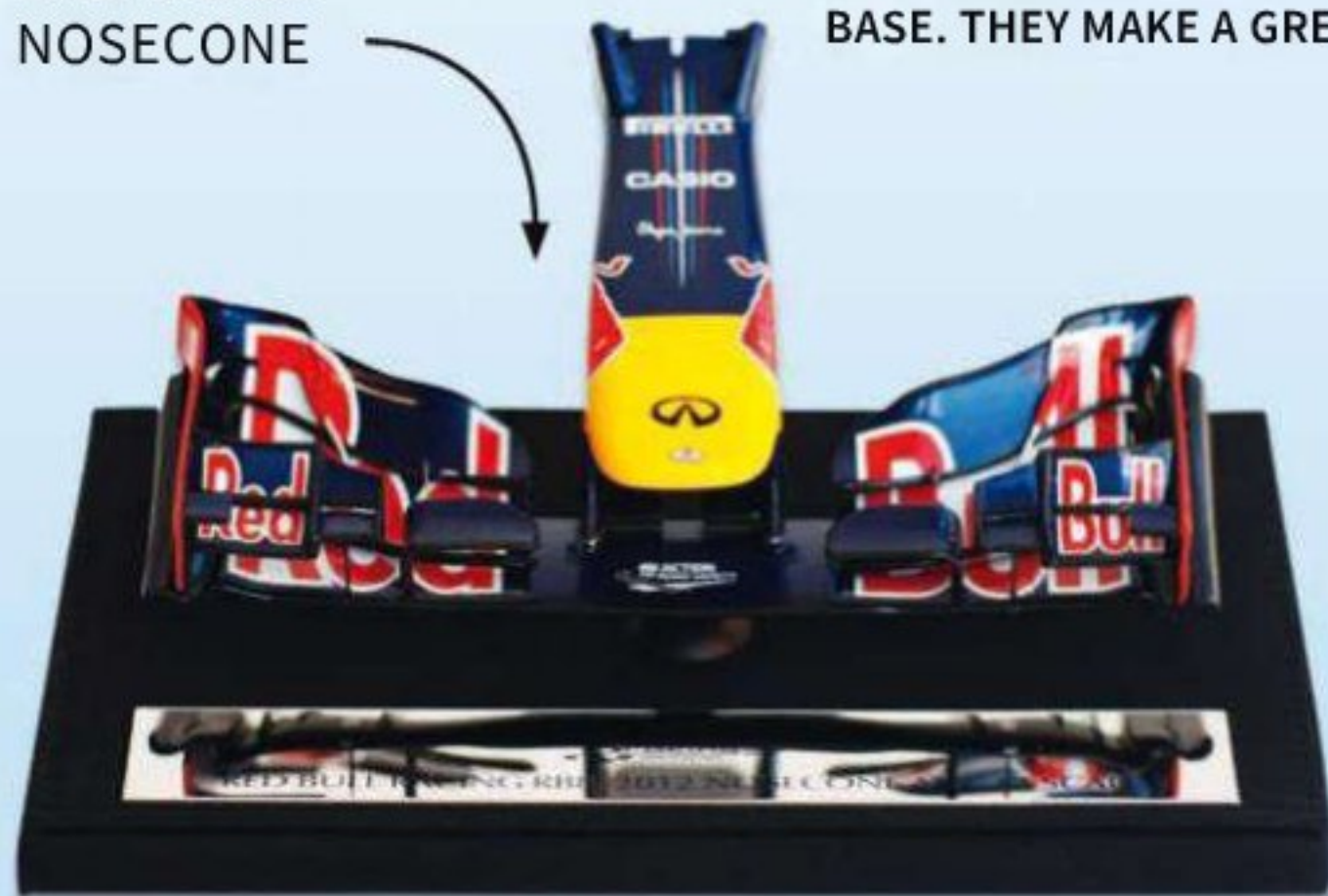
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CASTLE COMBE
CCRC APRIL 17

Krayem takes comeback Combe win



Viper driver Krayem spun before coming back to win GT encounter

SPUN OUT BY A TAP FROM Barry Squibb – whose Mitsubishi Lancer blew a tyre as a result – at the Esses on lap one of a Castle Combe GT championship opener interrupted by two safety car periods, polesitter David Krayem blasted his Chrysler Viper from plum last to victory.

Early leader Steve Hall's Audi TT clone broke, and Nigel Mustill retired his Lamborghini Gallardo after spinning out of Quarry in drizzle, but Chris Vinall (SEAT Leon Supercopa) chased Krayem gamely, securing second from hard-charging Tim Woodman (Caterham) and Bob Higgins in son Adam's Ginetta G55. Ilsa Cox's SEAT caught fire, causing one of the safety cars.

Michael Moyers led the Formula Ford round from start to finish, with Josh Fisher breathing down his neck, but as in qualifying Moyers fell foul of track limit rules. The penalty dropped him to second, while defending double champion Roger Orgee brought his new Ray from sixth to third after brake dramas in qualifying.

Having sizzled his SEAT Leon Cupra to a 1m12.818s pole, Gary Prebble blitzed the Combe Saloon round, although Bill Brockbank (SEAT Ibiza Cupra) kept him in sight. Will Di Claudio (Peugeot 106 GTi) shot from fifth to second at the lights and clung on to third, with Simon Thornton-Norris (Mitsubishi Colt) bumped to fifth by a corner-cutting penalty.

Mark Wyatt (Vauxhall Astra) overcame flywheel issues to win the inaugural Combe Hot Hatch race, seeing off Prebble's Peugeot

205 and Craig Tomkinson's two-litre Vauxhall Nova, caught on the line by Mike Webb's Ford Focus.

Poleman Wayne Marrs (F355) broke Gary Culver's multi-season Combe Ferrari Formula Classic monopoly. Fourth-qualifier Culver (328 GTB) rose to the challenge, shadowing Marrs in both legs and erasing David Tomlin's lap record. Tim Mogridge finished third in race one, but a clash with Chris Compton-Goddard at Quarry in the sequel sidelined both, promoting Peter Fisk's 550 Maranello to bronze.

Fifty-one years to the day after the first Mini Seven race, Lewis Selby scored a memorable double, beating 2013 and '14 champion Andrew Deviny by just over a tenth of a second in each close-fought encounter. An excursion at Old Paddock while ahead on the final lap cost Deviny the opener. "I went a lap too early and messed it up big-time," he rued. Top qualifier Charlie Budd and triple title-winner Paul Spark had to settle for third places. Justin Cooper aced the S

class both times.

The Mini Miglia drivers put on a superb show after a stoppage when Nick Padmore was tagged at the Esses on lap one and Martin Wager unavoidably hit him and rolled. At the restart 2014 champion Rupert Deeth, Aaron Smith and Sam Summerhayes broke clear. Each led, but Summerhayes was denied when Smith zapped him on Avon Rise on the last lap.

Lee Gillard outgrunted Spring Cup rivals in his Subaru Impreza either side of a safety car called for an incident at Folly. Matt Cherrington (BMW Z3) carved through from seventh to second, trumping the rapid Peugeots of Don Hughes and Andy Mitchell. Thus promoted to the front row, Cherrington was swamped at the start of race two where a three-car pile-up brought red flags. Willem Verhaak and Craig Walker were transferred to hospital for routine check-ups. With insufficient time to fix the barriers, both it and the Mini Miglia finale were scratched.

MARCUS PYE



Wyatt (98) was the Hot Hatch victor in his Astra

RESULTS

COMBE GTs (15 LAPS) 1 David Krayem (Chrysler Viper ORECA GT3); 2 Chris Vinall (SEAT Leon Supercopa LR) +11.253s; 3 Tim Woodman (Caterham 7); 4 Bob Higgins (Ginetta G55); 5 Bradley John (Mitsubishi Lancer); 6 Oliver Bull (Vauxhall Tigra Silhouette). **Class winners** Vinall; Woodman; David Hathaway (Ferrari 360); Clive Hawkes (MG ZR). **Fastest lap** Krayem 1m09.006s (96.51mph). **Pole** Krayem.

Starters 19.

COMBE FF1600 (15 LAPS) 1 Josh Fisher (Van Diemen JL14); 2 Michael Moyers (Spectrum 011c) +4.795s; 3 Roger Orgee (Ray GR17); 4 Rob Hall (Ray GR16); 5 Luke Cooper (Swift SC16); 6 Michael Eastwell (Spectrum). **CW** Andrew Higginbottom (Van Diemen RF88); Paul Barnes (Swift SC92) **FL** Moyers 1m10.126s (94.97mph). **P** Moyers. **S** 17.

COMBE SALOONS (15 LAPS)

1 Gary Prebble (SEAT Leon Cupra); 2 Bill Brockbank (SEAT Ibiza Cupra); 3 Will Di Claudio (Peugeot 106 GTi); 4 Dave Scaramanga (Volkswagen Scirocco); 5 Simon Thornton-Norris (Mitsubishi Colt); 6 Mark Wyatt (Vauxhall Astra). **CW** Di Claudio; Thornton-Norris; Michael Good (Vauxhall Corsa). **FL** Prebble 1m13.478s (90.63mph). **P** Prebble. **S** 31.

COMBE HOT HATCH (14 LAPS) 1 Mark Wyatt (Vauxhall Astra); 2 Gary Prebble (Peugeot 205 GTi) +7.341s; 3 Craig Tomkinson (Vauxhall Nova); 4 Mike Webb (Ford Focus); 5 Paul Hatton (Focus); 6 Andy Roberts (Honda Civic). **CW** Roberts; James Blake (MG ZR); Mark Sutton (MG ZR). **FL** Wyatt 1m15.183s (88.58mph). **P** Prebble. **S** 22.

FERRARI FORMULA CLASSIC (16 LAPS)

1 Wayne Marrs (F355); 2 Gary Culver (328 GTB) +0.324s; 3 Tim Mogridge (F355); 4 Richard Cook (F355); 5 Peter Fisk (550 Maranello); 6 Richard Moseley (328 GTB). **CW** Culver; Chris Butler (328 GTB); Paul Ugo (308 GT4 Dino). **FL** Culver 1m15.558s (88.14mph). **P** Marrs. **S** 16.

RACE TWO (12 LAPS) 1 Marrs;

2 Culver +0.222s; 3 Fisk; 4 Cook; 5 Butler; 6 R Moseley. **CW** Culver; Butler; Peter Moseley (308 GTB). **FL** Marrs 1m15.970s (87.66mph). **P** Marrs. **S** 15.

MINI SE7ENS (13 LAPS) 1 Lewis Selby;

2 Andrew Deviny +0.137s; 3 Charlie Budd; 4 Paul Spark; 5 Daniel Budd; 6 Gareth Hunt. **CW** Justin Cooper. **FL** C Budd 1m24.228s (62.96mph). **P** C Budd. **S** 32.

RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Selby; 2 Deviny +0.102s;

3 Spark; 4 C Budd; 5 Kieren McDonald; 6 Dom Burger. **CW** Cooper. **FL** Selby 1m24.948s (78.40mph). **P** C Budd. **S** 11.

MINI MIGLIA (12 LAPS) 1 Aaron Smith;

2 Sam Summerhayes +0.506s; 3 Rupert Deeth; 4 Daniel Wheeler; 5 Robert Howard; 6 David Drew. **FL** Smith 1m17.094s (86.38mph). **P** Deeth. **S** 18.

SPRING CUP (11 LAPS) 1 Lee Gillard

(Subaru Impreza); 2 Matt Cherrington (BMW Z3) +4.829s; 3 Don Hughes (Peugeot 306 XSi); 4 Andy Mitchell (Peugeot 205 GTi); 5 Nick Gwinnett (Renault Clio); 6 Robert Buckland (Clio). **FL** Gillard 1m15.949s (87.69mph). **P** Gillard. **S** 29.



The battle to succeed Norris

Max Fewtrell, Dan Ticktum and Will Palmer are all aiming to become the third British Formula Renault Eurocup champion in succession

By Stephen Lickorish

[@sdlickorish](#)

ENTRY LIST

DRIVER	TEAM
Sacha Fenestraz (F)	Josef Kaufmann Racing
Luis Leeds (AUS)	Josef Kaufmann Racing
Ye Yifei (PRC)	Josef Kaufmann Racing
Gabriel Aubry (F)	Tech 1 Racing
Max Fewtrell (GB)	Tech 1 Racing
Thomas Maxwell (AUS)	Tech 1 Racing
Thomas Neubauer (F)	Tech 1 Racing
Max Defourny (B)	R-ace GP
Raul Guzman (MEX)	R-ace GP
Will Palmer (GB)	R-ace GP
Robert Shwartzman (RUS)	R-ace GP
Henrique Chaves (P)	AVF
Axel Matus (MEX)	AVF
Rodrigo Pflucker (PE)	AVF
Gregoire Saucy (CH)	AVF
Frank Bird (GB)	Fortec Motorsport
Alexey Korneev (RUS)	Fortec Motorsport
Alex Peroni (AUS)	Fortec Motorsport
Najiy Ayyad bin Abd Razak (MAL)	Fortec Motorsport
Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer (F)	JD Motorsport
Alexander Vartanyan (RUS)	JD Motorsport
Sun Yue Yang (PRC)	JD Motorsport
Presley Martono (RI)	Mark Burdett Motorsport
Julia Pankiewicz (PL)	Mark Burdett Motorsport
Jarno Opmeer (NL)	MP Motorsport
Neil Verhagen (USA)	MP Motorsport
Richard Verschoor (NL)	MP Motorsport
Ghislain Cordeel (B)	Arden Motorsport
Zane Goddard (AUS)	Arden Motorsport
Dan Ticktum (GB)	Arden Motorsport



British F4 champ Fewtrell will drive with Tech 1



Lando Norris might only be small in height, but as reigning Formula Renault Eurocup champion he has left big shoes to fill. After Jack Aitken's success in the series the previous year, there is now a trio of hopefuls aiming to make it three British champions in a row in arguably junior racing's toughest series: Will Palmer, Dan Ticktum and Max Fewtrell.

Of these, Palmer arguably stands the best chance going into the Monza opener this weekend. The 20-year-old has a year's experience in the series after finishing seventh in the standings last season. He also broke his win duck in the final meeting at Estoril to head into this year without the doubt a winless campaign would bring.

"I think it's a big confidence boost to get that under my belt and know I could do it," says the 2015 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner. Another good sign is he will be remaining with the R-ace GP squad he competed for last year, which has allowed a very focused winter.

"I think that should help me a bit," he adds. "Through last year we gelled quite a lot. To have that consistency through testing [was good] as well, we could work on our own programmes.

"There's always extra pressure to really deliver on the potential shown in the first year but I'm confident, given

our testing performance, that we should be there.

"In the first test at Magny-Cours we didn't go so much for outright lap times, and then the next two tests went really well. At Paul Ricard I was really fast in the wet and the Nurburgring was a track I hadn't been to before and that was also a good test."

But Palmer is well aware of the challenge he faces. "It would be nice to make it three British champions in three years – that has got to be the target," he says. "There's a lot of depth at the front of the field – my team-mates Robert Shwartzman and Max Defourny are coming back for a second season having done well last year, and there are a number of Formula 1 junior drivers coming in, so it's really difficult to call."

One of those junior drivers hoping to be in the mix is Ticktum. Much has been written about his year-long ban from racing after passing cars behind the safety car to deliberately crash into Ricky Collard during an MSA Formula race back in 2015, but he's treating this year as a fresh start.

"I'll concentrate on doing my own thing," he says. "I get people asking about it all the time, which is a bit depressing, but if you create a name for yourself it's sometimes hard to shake that off."

Ticktum's racing comeback came in European Formula 3 ahead of a Macau Grand Prix bid, and he extensively tested the Dallara chassis, but when he became part of the Red Bull junior programme there was a change in direction. With Helmut >>

Ticktum will make full-time racing return with Arden after securing Red Bull backing

Marko reluctant to support another F3 campaign following concerns over engine reliability, the decision was taken to switch Ticktum to the Eurocup.

"I am slightly disappointed I'm not in F3 because I loved that car, but at the end of the day I've now got Red Bull on the side of my car," admits the 17-year-old. "In 2015 and '16 I thought it was all over, and now I have a chance of getting to F1 if I do well."

"Marko has a bit of a reputation for being ruthless, but I think most of those decisions are logical. The Red Bull junior programme is the best there is and there's a reason for that – he is never supporting a driver that probably shouldn't be there. But I'm a bit nervous of what he might wake up and say [after a race weekend]."

There shouldn't be any surprises with the Formula Renault machine, however. Ticktum is still familiar with the car after a toe-in-the-water Eurocup outing in 2015 and also extensive testing the year before when he was first making the transition from karts. He will be racing for Arden this year – a team that despite its junior single-seater success has never competed in the category before. But that doesn't worry Ticktum.

"It's not an advantage but I don't think it's too much of a disadvantage," he says. "Formula Renault is not the most complicated championship of them all, so if there's any team that can manage that [be successful in first year of new series] Arden should be able to. I think they have managed it very well and the only bad thing is they haven't got lots of track data from previous years."

Ticktum says one of his main targets is beating fellow Red Bull juniors Richard Verschoor and Neil Verhagen (both driving for MP Motorsport), something he managed to achieve during pre-season testing. Despite the experience of competing at a higher level in F3, Ticktum believes winning the title this year will be a real challenge.

"I think it's probably the toughest Formula Renault field for a few years," he reckons. "There are probably about eight drivers who can win races, so I'm not going into the season thinking this is going to be easy. It's going to be hard."

"I'm confident, I want to win but I'm going to keep my expectations open. But I need to be in the top three."

Ticktum is not the only Briton keen to impress an F1 team that is backing him. Reigning British F4 champion Fewtrell has also made the switch to the Eurocup this season and as a Renault Sport Academy member will be under scrutiny from the French manufacturer.

"It adds extra pressure but it doesn't bother me too much. If I want to reach F1 I've got to deal with the pressure," he states.

For Fewtrell, switching to the Eurocup for this season with the Tech 1 Racing squad – the only team to take the title besides Josef Kaufmann Racing and the now-departed Koiranen GP since 2010 – was an easy decision after such a successful 2016 campaign, winning British F4 with Carlin.

"It was a really attractive package because of all the tracks we race at and the level of the competition, so it was something I wanted to do," says the 17-year-old. "I've only raced in cars for one year so FIA Formula 3 against some really experienced drivers wouldn't have been a smart move."

That lack of single-seater experience – he has just a partial MRF Challenge campaign to add to his victorious F4 year – could limit his chances. "My main rivals will be anyone who has raced in it before!" he quips. But he has certainly taken note of what Norris achieved as a rookie last season.

"That is the plan [to repeat the 2016 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner's success]," he adds. "There are a few targets but the season hasn't started yet and I'm just going out there to try to do my best."

The best Fewtrell managed during the three pre-season collective tests is certainly due to put him in the mix. He has finished most days with a top-10 time when up against an incredibly strong field. In fact, all three British aces have regularly featured high up the timesheets, with Palmer setting the fastest time of the Paul Ricard test and the second-best of the Nurburgring one, with Ticktum consistently starring too.

But it has not only been Brits featuring at the top. Josef



Kaufmann Racing has a strong record in the series and Sacha Fenestraz has impressed in testing. The Frenchman was fifth in the standings in his rookie season last year and is sure to be one to watch again. Other testing frontrunners have been Palmer's team-mates Defourny (the highest placed driver from last season to return after finishing third in 2016) and Schwartzman, as well as Fewtrell's fellow Tech 1 racer Gabriel Aubry, who was a top-10 contender last year.

There are other star names on the entry list too, which in total features four F4 champions across the world. Besides Fewtrell, there is French (not an FIA series) champion Yifei Ye with Josef Kaufmann, Spanish and Russian champion Verschoor (with MP Motorsport) and Mexican title-winner Axel Matus (AVF). Combine that with US F1600 top points-scorer Verhagen and it's a field full of champions.

There are also plenty of familiar names for British fans. A trio of Aussies who competed in the UK last season are also on the entry list, led by Luis Leeds who was third in British F4, along with Zane Goddard and Thomas Maxwell, while the fourth and final Brit on the grid is Frank Bird.

So there is clearly no shortage of talented candidates to fill Norris's shoes. And with two British drivers finishing in the top four in three of the past four seasons, Palmer, Ticktum and Fewtrell will be hoping that run can continue. ❁

Palmer will benefit from the consistency that staying with R-ace GP brings



CALENDAR

DATE	CIRCUIT
April 21-23	Monza (I)
May 12-14	Silverstone (GB)
May 19-21	Pau (F)
May 26-28	Monaco (MC)
June 30-July 2	Hungaroring (H)
July 14-16	Nurburgring (D)
July 21-23	Red Bull Ring (A)
August 25-27	Paul Ricard (F)
September 22-24	Spa (B)
October 27-29	Barcelona (E)

A REVAMP THAT HAS WORKED

THIRTY CARS FOR THE OPENING round of the season suggests a championship in rude health. And it's certainly very surprising when you compare the Eurocup entry to other junior single-seater championships across the world. Formula 2? Twenty cars. GP3? Nineteen at best. European F3? Another 19. Formula V8 3.5? A pathetic 12. BRDC British F3? Nineteen again. British F4? Seventeen for the opening round. You get the idea.

And it's not hard to see why the series has attracted so many talented drivers from every corner of the globe. Ahead of the season, Renault decided to renew its commitment to the category and give it a revamp.

Gone was the old seven-round, 14-race calendar and in comes a 10-round, 23-race one. And the circuits are now much more relevant for F1 aspirants too. Nine of the 10 venues should also have F1 races in 2018 and tracks like Estoril and Aragon have been ditched.

Palmer admits that the quality of the circuits for 2017 was a big factor in him returning to the series for another year. "I definitely didn't go into it thinking it would be a two-year plan," he says. "It wasn't an easy decision on whether to remain in the series or move on to a higher-level championship. The expansion of the calendar and F1 tracks makes it really strong

and that helped me decide."

A modified calendar isn't the only change for this year. Renault's support has increased: two drivers from the Eurocup grid become Renault Sport Academy members at the end of the year with their 2018 drives funded – a path for Palmer to go on and emulate his older brother Jolyon perhaps.

The changes have also enticed leading single-seater squad Arden into the two-litre Formula Renault sphere for the first time, while MP Motorsport has returned after a brief break.

Considering the numbers and quality of the entry for this year, those tweaks have certainly worked.



WHAT'S ON



Prospective racers can experience F4

A way to virtually become a British

RACING FANS ARE CURIOUS. IT doesn't matter how close to the action they can get or how well informed they are, there has always been a line between what they know and what they want to know. Luckily, British Formula 4 has blurred that line and at select outings over the course of the season, you can get a chance to experience the junior series in a way that hasn't been seen by any other championship in the UK before.

British F4 is one of the prime destinations for those stepping onto the single-seater ladder and now, with the help of VR (virtual reality), you can see at first hand the ins-and-outs of a race weekend without breaking the bank. The Ford-backed series has teamed up with creative agency Infinite Pixel to produce a virtual experience of a day in the life of a British F4 driver's weekend. If you've ever wanted to see racing from a different perspective, this is it.

Using a Samsung Gear and filmed using a full 360° camera during pre-season testing at Donington Park, the demo opens with you sat at the front



Fans get the chance to see what being a driver is all about

of a driver's meeting. Look behind you and you'll see the familiar faces of the 2017 grid deep in thought. Next, we're inside Sharp Motorsport's trailer during a briefing before transitioning into the pits, where engineers are making the final adjustments to the cars. The whole thing is presented with a beautiful musical score and a truly thought-provoking narration on the importance of teamwork and dedication in any success a driver is merited with.

For those fans wanting to get onto the circuit, it's not all spreadsheets and meetings as you jump into a car heading to the grid. The angle is more or less the same as the onboard camera from F1, but the 360° nature means that pivoting on your seat allows you to watch from angles that you may never have dreamed of previously. Something as simple as watching a race start by looking to the rear of a car and then turning forwards to watch through Turn 1, all while feeling as if you're actually part of the action, is an experience that watching television coverage just doesn't give you.

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F4 driver

If you're looking for a fully immersive simulation and want to get your hands on the latest racing game, you're looking in the wrong place. This VR demo is virtual reality by definition. It gives you the chance to listen and see at first hand everything it takes to get a car and driver onto the circuit. Most scenes are from stationary points across the circuit and it's a passive affair where you do very little but observe.

But don't get us wrong, if VR is how we will soon consume sport in the not-so-distant future, what British F4 has is a product that could kick-start a whole new way to get involved with motorsport. If the demo proves a hit, the series is considering producing more experiences of the same sort, including full races and more camera angles, all to help in promoting the brand and getting fans as close to the action as possible.

- The VR experience is set to be available at the Oulton Park, Croft, Knockhill, Silverstone and Brands Hatch F4 rounds.

DOM D'ANGELILLO



HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube TOYOTA NEW BOY LOPEZ COPS IT AT COPSE

Search for: FCY as drama happens on TOYOTA #7

Jose Maria Lopez straight out at Copse

WEC rookie Lopez spears into the barrier during the opening round at Silverstone. See also the following clip showing the heavily damaged car limping back to the pits, after which it was repaired and finished the race – albeit in 23rd place.



LAT IMAGES

**PICK
OF THE
WEEK**

BARBER INDYCAR

BT Sport ESPN
Sunday 2030

IndyCar has been very much in the headlines lately thanks to a certain Spaniard's decision last week. But before we get to the Indy 500 next month, this weekend marks the latest round of the regular IndyCar season at Barber Motorsports Park. Given the unpredictable races so far this year, this is one not to be missed.

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

INDYCAR SERIES

Rd 3/16
Barber Motorsports Park,
Alabama, USA
April 23
WATCH ON TV
Live BT Sport ESPN,
Sunday 2030

INDY LIGHTS

Rd 2/10
Barber Motorsports Park,
Alabama, USA
April 22-23

BLANCPAIN ENDURANCE CUP

Rd 1/5
Monza, Italy
April 23

FORMULA RENAULT EUROCUP

Rd 1/10
Monza, Italy
April 22-23

SUPER FORMULA

Rd 1/7
Suzuka, Japan
April 23

JAPANESE FORMULA 3

Rd 2/9
Suzuka, Japan
April 22-23

WORLD RALLYCROSS

Rd 2/12
Montalegre, Portugal
April 22-23

NASCAR CUP

Rd 8/36
Bristol, Tennessee, USA
April 23
WATCH ON TV
Live Premier Sports,
Sunday 1830

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

Rd 3/14
Phillip Island, Victoria,
Australia
April 22-23

V8 STOCK CARS

Rd 2/12
Velopark, Brazil
April 23

SUPER TC2000

Rd 2/12
Potrero de los Funes,
Argentina
April 23

NURBURGRING 24 HOURS QUALIFICATION RACE

Nurburgring, Germany
April 23

MOTOGP

Rd 3/18
Austin, Texas, USA
April 23
WATCH ON TV
Live BT Sport 2,
Sunday 1945

UK MOTORSPORT

KIRKISTOWN 500MRCI

April 22
Historic FF2000, Future
Classics, Road Sports,
Fiesta Zetec, FF1600

DONINGTON PARK MSVR

April 22-23
LMP3 Cup, GT Cup, F3
Cup, Radical Challenge,
Trackday Championship,
Aston Martin GT,
AMOC Intermarque

CADWELL PARK MSVR

April 22-23
FF1600, Monoposto,
Trackday Trophy,
Allcomers, Production
BMW, Racing Saloons,
Toyota MR2, Lotus Speed
Championship

SILVERSTONE VSCC

April 22-23
Vintage and Pre-War races,
HGPCA, Morgans, 500cc F3,
Coombs Challenge, FISCAR

PEMBREY BARC

April 22-23
Trucks, Caterham
Graduates, Welsh Sports/
Saloons, Pickups

THRUXTON CSCC

April 22-23
Jaguar Saloon/GT, Tin
Tops, Swinging Sixties,
Future Classics, Magnificent
7s, Modern Classics, Special
Saloon and Modsports,
Classic K, New Millennium,
Open Series

SNETTERTON 750MC

April 22-23
Clio 182, Club Enduro,
BMW 330, RGB, Roadsports,
Historic 750 Formula, Civic
Cup, Classic Stock Hatch,
Hot Hatch, MX-5 Cup,
M3 Cup, Super Cooper

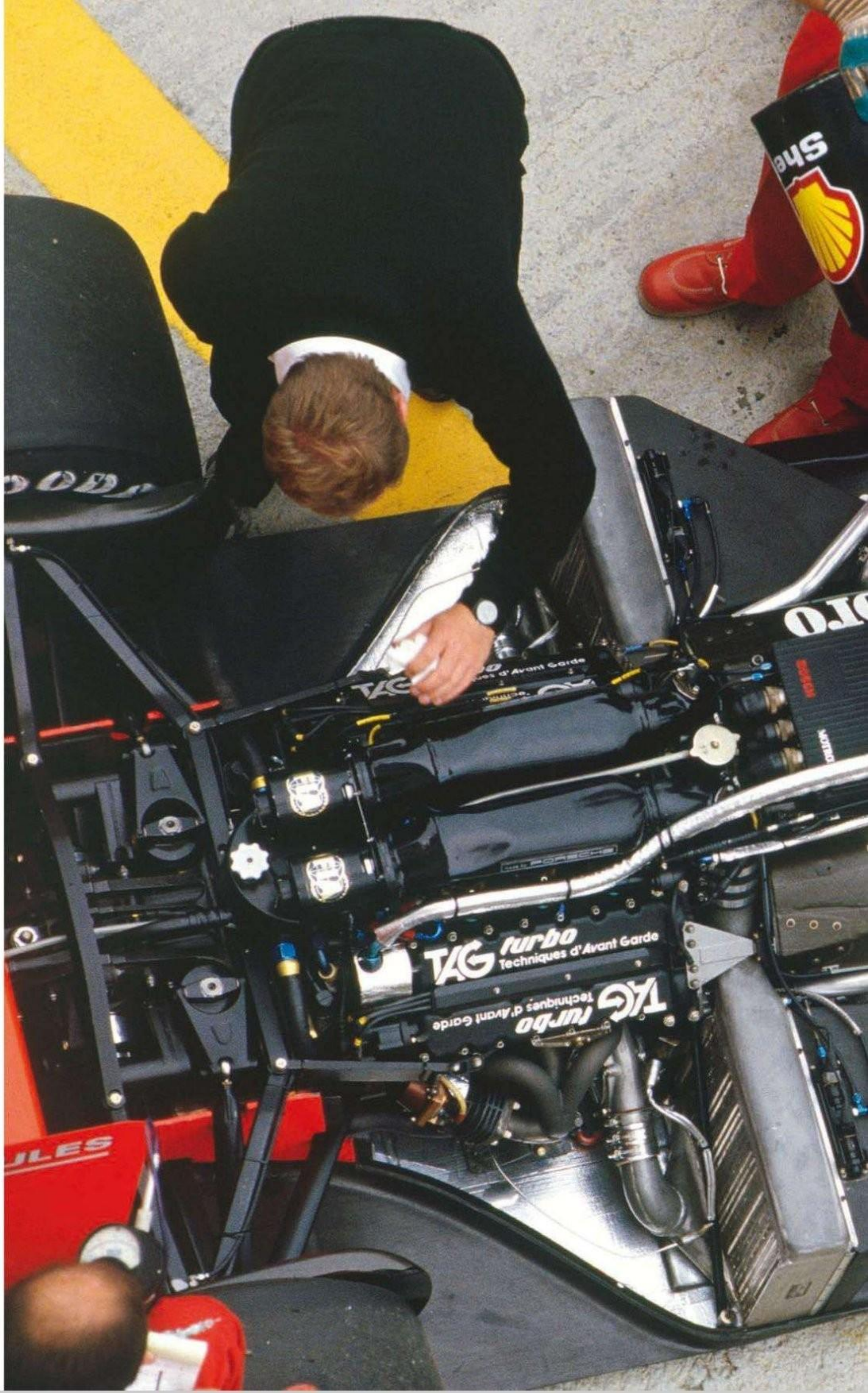
ANGLESEY BARC

April 22-23
Mighty Minis, NW Sports/
Saloons, Junior Saloons,
Legends, Scottish
Legends, Karts

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Alain Prost sits in his McLaren-TAG Porsche MP4/3 while one of his crew administers an old-school fuel top-up ahead of the 1987 Hungarian Grand Prix. Prost qualified fourth and finished one place higher (the race was won by Nelson Piquet in a Williams-Honda FW11B). But the big news at this event was that Ayrton Senna announced he was quitting the Lotus team and in '88 would be joining McLaren as Prost's team-mate...

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TOP FIVE

FORMULA 2 CHAMPIONS

Last weekend the 'new' Formula 2 championship kicked off, with Ferrari junior Charles Leclerc leading the charge. The revival of F2 means the return of a category that's produced plenty of fine F1 material over the years – although the European iteration that ran from the 1960s to the '80s has a more successful list of graduates than the Jonathan Palmer-devised version of the last decade. Which of those champions will Leclerc and co be trying to emulate?



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1 JACKY ICKX

Although he won two fewer Formula 1 world championship races than the next man on this list, Ickx's incredible achievements in F1 and at the Le Mans 24 Hours make him the standout Formula 2 champion. Eight grand prix wins across spells with Ferrari and Brabham contributed to a brace of runner-up finishes in the world championship in 1969 and '70. More famously, Ickx mastered the Circuit de la Sarthe to claim six Le Mans victories.



2 RONNIE PETERSON

Had he not died after a crash in the 1978 Italian GP, surely the Swede would have continued – or built on – the momentum of a fine season with Lotus and, eventually, become a world champion? His posthumous confirmation as the '78 runner-up was the second time he finished as bridesmaid – having come second, behind Jackie Stewart, during a winless '71 season. That was also the year he won the F2 title!



3 CLAY REGAZZONI

The Swiss driver won the 1970 Euro F2 title with the Tecno team while also finishing third in F1 during a race-winning rookie campaign with Ferrari. His efforts tailed off over the next couple of years, although he got a second chance at Ferrari after a poor spell at BRM in '73 alongside Niki Lauda. Regazzoni's world championship peak followed in '74 at Ferrari, losing the title to McLaren's Emerson Fittipaldi.



4 RENE ARNOUX

Arnoux was the pick of a set of title-winning French drivers that included Jean-Pierres Jarier and Jabouille, Jacques Laffite and Patrick Depailler. Arnoux won the 1977 F2 title after finishing runner-up the previous year (to Jabouille) and, after serving his F1 apprenticeship in Martini and Surtees machinery, became a race winner with Renault. With more luck, he could have been F1 champion in 1982.



5 MIKE HAILWOOD

Hailwood is the closest any driver has got to matching the legend that was John Surtees (a champion on two wheels and four). By finishing second in the Italian Grand Prix in 1972 – driving for Surtees' team in F1 alongside his title-winning F2 campaign – he added an F1 podium to a CV that includes four consecutive 500cc world motorcycle grand prix crowns. A true great.



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