

F1 BOTTAS BEATS VETTEL IN TENSE RUSSIAN GP

AUTOSPORT

F1's NEWEST WINNER

BOTTAS BREAKTHROUGH

**Why Hamilton struggled
and how Ferrari lost out**

**“I’ve always
known I can win”**

VALTTERI BOTTAS

**“He was the
man of the race”**

SEBASTIAN VETTEL



PLUS EVANS' ARGENTINA HEARTBREAK
Neuville snatches Brit's rally on final stage

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Bottas delivers on his promise in style

NOW THINGS ARE REALLY GETTING INTERESTING.

Until last weekend, the 2017 Formula 1 World Championship looked like being a straightforward Lewis Hamilton-vs-Sebastian Vettel duel.

After a difficult Bahrain Grand Prix, Valtteri Bottas was in danger of being branded as Mercedes' number-two driver. Team orders had already been mentioned. But there's no doubt who the leading Silver Arrows driver was in Russia.

It's a long time since Hamilton has been so comprehensively beaten by a team-mate (Bottas was quicker in every session). Bottas has always been very fast at Sochi and, save for a big lock-up as Vettel closed in, drove brilliantly to defeat a strong Ferrari challenge. He is a very worthy addition to the list of F1 winners.

Of course, Bottas will need to put in that sort of performance regularly to truly give himself a chance in the title fight. But the point is, he has now proved – to Mercedes and himself – that he can deliver at the very highest level. Quite whether that turns out to be a hindrance or a help to the chances of a Mercedes driver winning the crown remains to be seen, but Vettel will probably be rather pleased with the result in Russia. He is now 13 points ahead of Hamilton.

Just missing out on taking a first top-level victory last weekend was Elfyn Evans. The Welshman has had a trying past couple of years and a win on Rally Argentina would have been a fine reward for all his hard work. A combination of factors, including a small error, meant he lost out by 0.7 seconds, but he too has shown he deserves a seat at the table.



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NIGEL ROEBUCK

Should he stay or should he go?

IT WAS FLAVIO BRIATORE WHO YEARS ago said that Kimi Raikkonen made Mika Hakkinen sound like Jerry Lewis, but if Kimi is indeed a man of few words, sometimes he uses them to express a simple truth, as at Sochi last Sunday: “We [Ferrari] lost out at the start – and then not a lot happened after that...”

Fortunately, a comatose Russian Grand Prix was resuscitated by its tense closing laps, but the circuit at Sochi, which reminds one more than anything of the now defunct Valencia, does not represent Hermann Tilke’s finest hour. There is one decent corner – a quick left-hander that goes on for ever – but mainly it is long straights and pedestrian 90-degree turns.

That said, something about it has always brought out the best in Valtteri Bottas, and last weekend he was scintillating, outpacing Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton on both Saturday and Sunday, and – rather against expectation, given Ferrari’s lockout of the front row – getting the better of Sebastian Vettel and Raikkonen in the race. Valtteri was the essence of Finnish cool as he held off Sebastian, and with Lewis having one of his mysterious ‘off’ weekends, it was a very good moment to excel: without him it would have been a Ferrari one-two.

We are only four races into the season, but

so quick and composed was Bottas at Sochi that Messrs Wolff and Lauda may be starting to think of him as more than a stop-gap driver, hired in emergency circumstances. If Valtteri’s form continues like this, the situation may change, but for now another plus is that he and Lewis have an amicable working relationship.

Several drivers, with an eye on a Mercedes drive next year, will have hoped that Bottas would prove nothing more than an efficient number two to Hamilton, and while it will be a surprise if Lewis does not assert himself as the season progresses, the replacement of Valtteri for 2018 is by no means the foregone conclusion many believed.

Such thoughts may well have been in the mind of Fernando Alonso, who had time on his hands on Sunday afternoon, having – thanks to Honda’s latest disaster – no part to play in the race, his McLaren stammering to a halt on the formation lap. Alonso watched the race only because it proved impossible to get an earlier flight to Indianapolis, where he will this week sample an IndyCar – and an oval – for the first time.

For all Ferrari’s resurgence, Alonso continues to insist that he does not regret leaving early for McLaren at the end of 2014, but at Sochi must have wished he had stayed over in the United States, following his visit to Barber

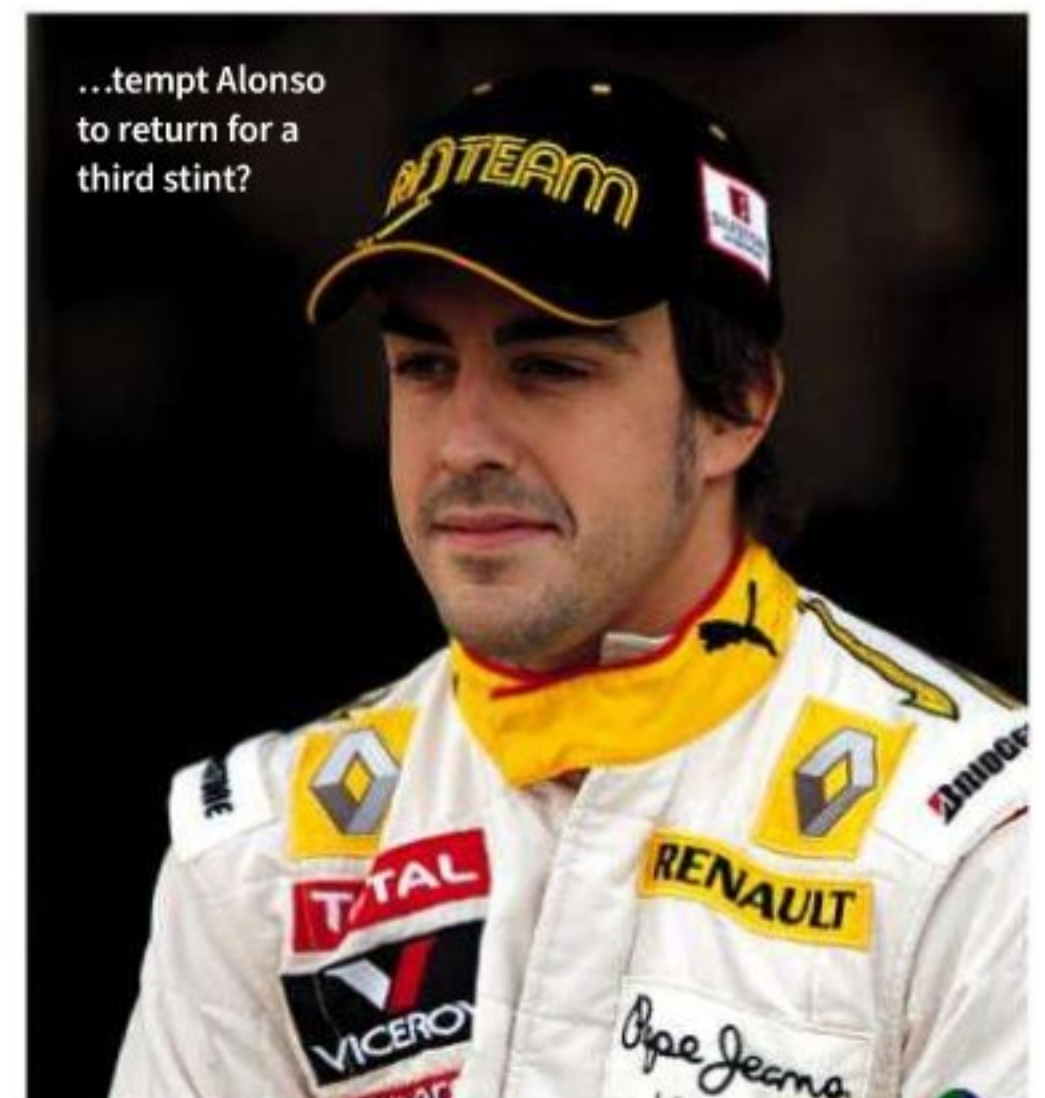


the previous weekend. The McLaren MCL32 might be much to his taste, and in qualifying he drove the wheels off it, as usual, but through the trap the Honda was the slowest, which meant that Alonso started – or would have started – 15th.

There’s no doubt that Fernando very



Will pace shown by Hulkenberg at Renault...



...tempt Alonso to return for a third stint?



much likes the McLaren environment – even more so with Ron Dennis gone and Zak Brown at the helm – but his last three seasons have been squandered in all save the financial sense, and inevitably the rumours are strong that he will move at the end of the year.

Where, though, does he go? For all their problems as team-mates 10 years ago, he and Hamilton get along fine nowadays, Lewis saying he laments Fernando’s absence from the battle at the front, even claiming he would have no objection to his joining Mercedes, but Toto Wolff is unlikely to consider it so long as Hamilton is aboard – and, as we have said, may anyway find himself with no reason to replace Bottas.

Even though the divisive Marco Mattiacci is long gone, and many Ferrari people still regret Alonso’s departure from the team, a return to Maranello is, to put it mildly, unlikely, not least because Vettel would veto it. Should Daniel Ricciardo go to Ferrari in 2018, Red Bull – keen not to lose Carlos Sainz from the fold – would assuredly promote him from Toro Rosso, so no vacancy there.

Hence the suggestions that, unless Honda makes significant strides very soon, Alonso could return to Renault, with whom – a decade ago – his two world championships were won.

“Fangio had an ability to choose the right team at the right moment; Alonso tends to do the opposite”

At the beginning of last year, when Renault, after much dithering, returned to Formula 1 in its own name, CEO Carlos Ghosn told me at the launch that he would kill to have Alonso back one day.

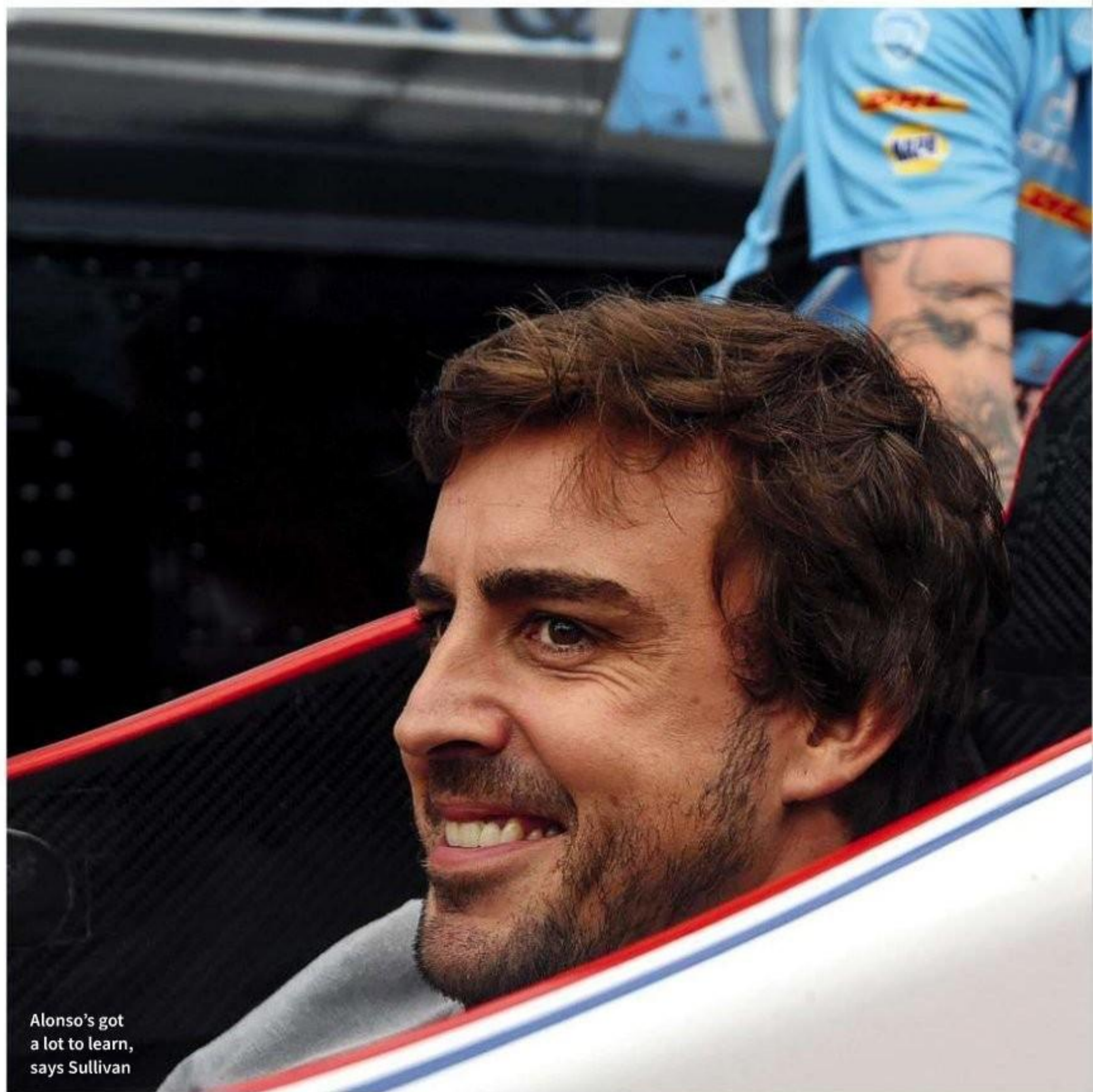
Ghosn added, though, that it would be some time before Renault was in a position to attract someone like Fernando, and, having made the decision to commit to Formula 1 so late, it was hardly surprising that the car was nowhere last season. This year, though, Nico Hulkenberg’s performances have been encouraging, and Alonso might indeed be tempted.

Whereas, though, a man like Juan Manuel Fangio had an uncanny ability to choose the right team at the right moment, history shows that, sadly for him, Fernando has an almost Chris Amon-like tendency to do the opposite. After leaving Ferrari in 1969, Chris suffered pangs of regret ever after, not least whenever

the new flat-12 engine powered Jacky Ickx and Clay Regazzoni past him.

Whether or not it comes down to a choice between staying with McLaren, hoping to reap some reward after three years of tribulation, or going to Renault, where he had so much success in the past, inescapably Alonso – closing on his 36th birthday – is pondering probably the last major decision of his Formula 1 career.

Renault’s power unit, while still not a match for Mercedes and Ferrari, is a good deal closer than what he currently has available to him, but against that, nothing stands still forever in Formula 1, and at the back of Alonso’s mind will be the thought of making the move, then having a McLaren-Honda come blasting by. Or, worse, a Sauber-Honda. These are difficult days for the great warrior of Formula 1. ❧



Alonso's got a lot to learn, says Sullivan

INDYCAR

Alonso gets advice from

FERNANDO ALONSO NEEDS TO SACRIFICE qualifying and focus on his late-race pace in his attack on this month's Indianapolis 500, says a former winner of the race who knows the McLaren driver from Formula 1.

Danny Sullivan made his Indy 500 debut in 1982 before contesting a single F1 season in '83, and then returning to the States to win the 500 in '85. He remains close to F1, acting as an FIA steward at last month's Bahrain Grand Prix, which gave him the opportunity to offer Alonso some advice ahead of this month's Indy 500.

"In my quick conversations with him I said run every lap you can, and get out in traffic, and really set the car up mechanically," Sullivan told Autosport. "Don't worry about the aerodynamics to start with, and don't worry about qualifying, because it's not that important in the whole scheme of things. A lot of the racing in F1, it's 'go' every lap. [At Indy] it's about getting through the first 400 miles on the lead lap, and getting your set-up and your balance right, so you can race the last 100 miles."

Alonso attended the recent IndyCar round at Barber Motorsports Park, and has already had a seat fitting with Andretti Autosport, for which he will race a Dallara-Honda. He has also driven the car in the Honda simulator ahead of his test

debut at Indianapolis, which was scheduled to take place yesterday (Wednesday).

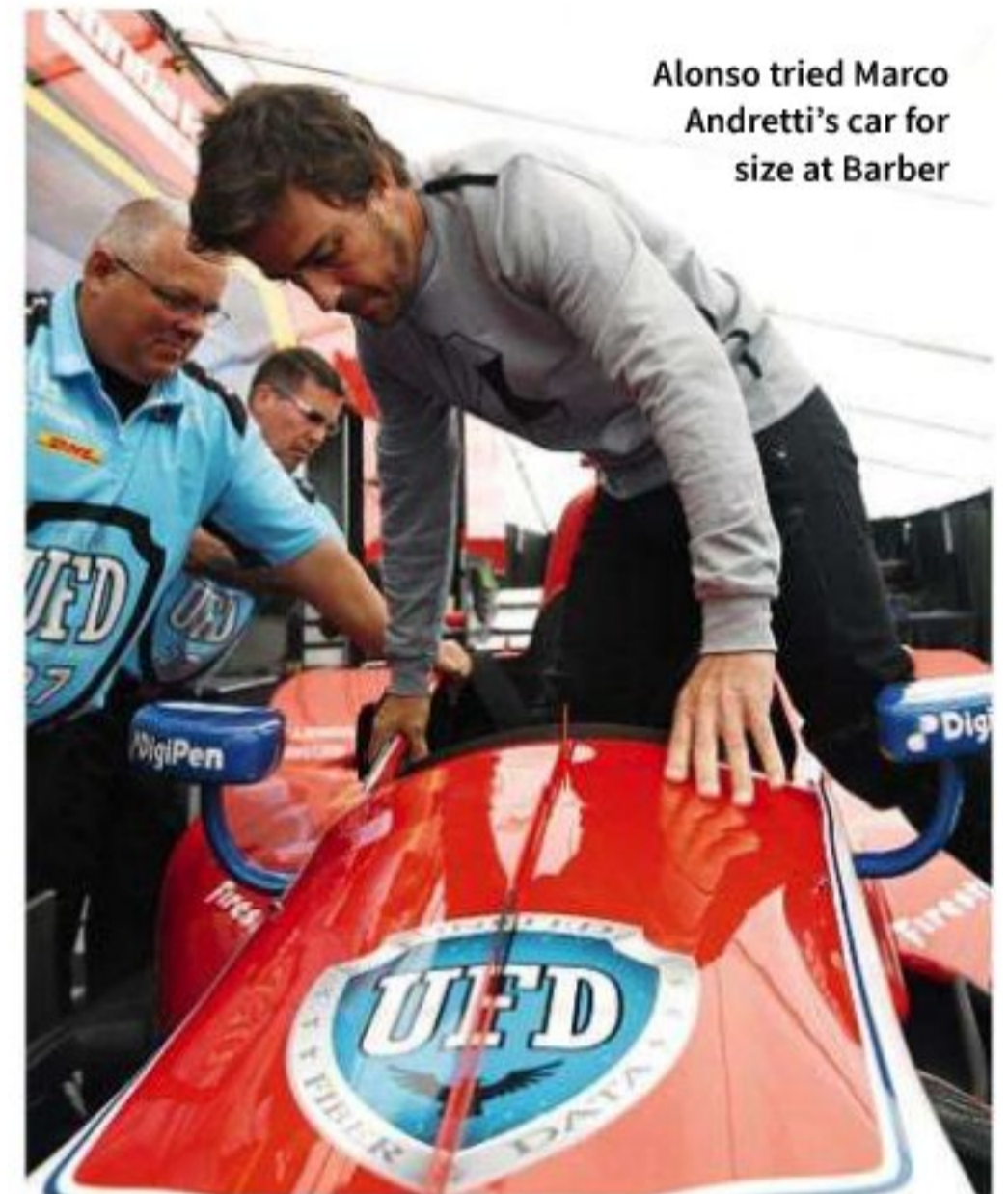
Sullivan believes that even with thorough preparation, including a total of nine days of running during practice and qualifying in the two-week build-up to the Indy 500, Alonso will have to get used to the relative lack of data and engineering support compared to F1. But this is counterbalanced by the fact that he has five team-mates at Andretti Autosport.

"In one way, yes, but on the other hand you're getting data from five cars," said Sullivan when asked if Alonso will struggle with the different level of data compared to F1. "You might not get it instantly the way you do in F1, but when you go back and do a debrief, or when those guys go back to the garage to make a change, the engineers will ask, 'What are you guys doing?', and stuff like that. However, I told him, 'Be careful, because you don't want to chase another driver's set-up! He'll adapt to the technical side – it isn't as technical as it is in F1. All of those things coming at him, he'll be able to adapt to. I think it's the nuances outside the technical [side] and the driving."

"He's going to be thrown in at the deep end with just Indy, because of what Indy is. There's the crowd and the access to the drivers. That's



Long experience of Indy makes Andretti the ideal team boss



Alonso tried Marco Andretti's car for size at Barber

Indianapolis 500 winner Sullivan

going to be a big factor. If you want to go and use the bathroom, you've got to walk out into the public to get there. You can't get your bodyguards or personnel around you – they expect you to be a part of the deal. And even the press have much more access. So it will be about learning all of those things."

Sullivan believes it will take time for Alonso to adjust to the intricacies of Indy racing, such as restarts. He is critical of how poor F1 drivers are at this, something that could punish Alonso at Indy. It is an area where some converts have struggled in the past, with Nigel Mansell famously losing the lead of the Indy 500 in his rookie season in 1993 and finishing third after getting caught out at a restart.

"When you have a yellow in F1, these guys are worried about their delta, and so on," says Sullivan. "You have a yellow come on in practice [at Indy], you come right out the throttle, and you're going to come right into the pit."

"One thing I've said to the F1 team managers is that restarts in IndyCar are aggressive, and everybody's on the deal. They're not very good at restarts after yellows in F1. They'll come around and the guy will be half a second behind you. You ain't going to get that in IndyCar – there'll be 12 guys trying to pass you in Turn 1,

because they've got a run on you!"

"I said to Fernando, every time I came to the pits I'd come in like I was in the race, making my pitstop. You've got to make seven to nine stops in the race, and you want to have it down like second nature. You don't want to wait until race day. The more you do that, and the crew's waiting for you in that capacity, it just helps you when race day shows up."

Sullivan has warned Alonso about the typical rookie oval mistake of attempting to turn into a slide when the back end steps out.

"I told him one of the most critical parts is if the car starts to slide, you might take a millisecond trying to correct it, but if it bites, you're going nose-first to the wall. It will be 'snap, bam,' like that. When it goes, it's not [a case of] let's put a bit of opposite lock in it and catch it. It's not quite the same. And that's a hard thing to do. That's why sometimes it's better to get some experience on the smaller ovals before you get to the Brickyard."

"He has to adapt and take all that into his

"They are not very good at restarts after yellows in F1"

brain and process it. But he's around a good team, and Michael [Andretti, team boss] certainly has a long history there, and they've put a good coach with him, in Gil de Ferran. I'm not worried. He'll adapt."

Sullivan also believes Alonso has the ideal team boss in Andretti. While he never won the Indy 500, he finished in the top six seven times, with a best finish of second in 1991.

"With Michael it's not like driving for a Penske or a Ganassi," says Sullivan. "No disrespect to them, but Michael has done it, and he's done it on both sides, so he'll understand. And Michael

will be his guy on the radio. I think that will help him a tremendous amount. Michael is as good as anybody, he just unfortunately never won it. He's going into a good environment."

Despite his warnings, Sullivan is confident that Alonso will adapt well to Indy and prove equal to the challenge.

"He's a very, very talented guy and a smart guy," concludes Sullivan. "So I don't worry about him from that point of view."

ADAM COOPER

Q&A

MONISHA KALTENBORN SAUBER FORMULA 1 TEAM PRINCIPAL



Sauber has made its much-anticipated move to Honda engines from 2018, ending its current eight-year stretch as a Ferrari customer

Taking Honda engines appears an odd move...

That is very momentary, and nobody knows the future. We are absolutely confident that Honda will make improvements and sort out their issues. We were in a similar situation in 2014 when there were big differences in the competitiveness of the engines, but that was no reason for us to start questioning or criticising, because we knew Ferrari were doing everything they could, and they did. We just feel that it strengthens or fits more into the way we want to go.

Will you run young Honda proteges?

We will see. It's far too early to say. In these kinds of partnerships, as we have done in the past, you discuss drivers with your partner, and at the end of the day it is the team's responsibility.

How hard is it to end the Ferrari relationship?

It's not an easy step. If you look at all that we have gone through, it does have its emotional side to it as well. It might sound easy to say we are ending it but Ferrari has been very helpful towards us, particularly since the team was bought back from BMW because they were very difficult times. Before that we had a lot of cooperation with Ferrari when we still had Petronas as our partner.

BEN ANDERSON



GIORGIO PIOLA

FORMULA 1

Shields get nod over halos for F1

THE CONTROVERSIAL HALO cockpit-protection system, which was slated to be introduced to Formula 1 next year, has been shelved in favour of pursuing an alternative design named the 'shield'.

This decision was made by F1's Strategy Group last week, and subsequently approved by the F1 Commission. This followed concerns expressed by the F1 drivers who all tried a dummy version of the halo last year that it compromised visibility too much. It is expected that the shield will be trialled on track this season ahead of its introduction next year.

"A number of more integrated solutions for additional frontal protection have been studied, and the decision has been taken to give priority to the transparent 'shield' family of systems," said an FIA statement. "The FIA aims to carry out track tests of this system during this season in preparation for implementation in 2018."

It's a logical move for F1. Many drivers, albeit only some publicly, objected to the extent to which the halo changed the aesthetics of grand prix cars by creating an unsightly halfway house between a closed and open cockpit. While visibility was the thing many criticised, plenty of drivers objected to it on a philosophical basis. But there are concerns that the shield design could be less safe.

"The shield looks nicer, it looks beautiful but it's a bit worse for safety," said Felipe Massa, who suffered life-threatening injuries when a lateral damper spring shed by the Brawn of Rubens Barrichello hit him in the head during qualifying for the 2009 Hungarian Grand Prix. "The halo has more safety. I'm in favour of improving the safety, so the

shield is better than how the car is now, but we need to see how the view is."

Analysis has shown that, while the halo would stop all large objects from hitting the driver's head, only 17% of small objects would be stopped. As yet, it's unclear how the shield stacks up in comparison and whether Massa's claim that it is less safe stands up to scrutiny.

F1 has also outlawed two of the least-popular consequences of the 2017 regulations for next season, the appearance of T-wings and reappearance of shark fins.

This year's regulations were conceived to make the cars look more spectacular, but many fans took against the jagged shapes of the new designs, with the FIA's Charlie Whiting suggesting ahead of the season-opening Australian Grand Prix that they would be banned for 2018.

There were suggestions that T-wings could be banned during this season, with Red Bull boss Christian Horner stating after Friday practice for last month's Bahrain Grand Prix that they could be outlawed immediately on the grounds of safety and cost after one shed from Valtteri Bottas's Mercedes damaged Max Verstappen's floor. But the F1 Strategy Group last week approved a regulation to do so for 2018. This has been achieved by banning bodywork in the area above the engine cover through the addition of Article 3.5.1c to the technical regulations.

This states: "When viewed from the side, no bodywork forward of the rear wheel centre line may lie above a line parallel to the diagonal boundary defined in [the rule dictating the dimensions of the engine cover] and intersecting the rear wheel centre line 650mm above the reference plane."

EDD STRAW



LAT IMAGES



ADAC GT MASTERS BRDC British Formula 3 Championship runner-up Ricky Collard had a dream start to his new career in the German-based ADAC GT Masters series at Oschersleben last weekend. BMW junior Collard took victory in the second of the two races, sharing with Philipp Eng in a BMW M6 GT3 run by the fabled Schnitzer Motorsport team. "BMW and my team boss Charly Lamm took a big gamble when they signed me, because I had no GT experience and I have never raced outside the UK before," said Collard. "I've been given a great team-mate in Philipp, from whom I've already learned a lot. We just kept adjusting our expectations upwards." **Photograph by ADAC Motorsport**

FORMULA 1

FIA stipulates size of new race numbers

THE FIA HAS OUTLINED THE details of rules governing the display of car numbers and driver names, which will be fully enforced from next week's Spanish Grand Prix.

A letter from race director Charlie Whiting says that race numbers should be at least 230mm high, and that the names should be 150mm, and on the external bodywork. Teams have the option to use the official timing-screen abbreviation, such as HAM (Hamilton).

As well as outlining the season-long allocation of numbers, Article 9.2 of F1's sporting regulations states that "this number must be clearly visible from the front of the car and on the driver's crash helmet". It adds: "The name or the emblem of the make of the car must appear on the front of the nose of the car and in either case be at least 25mm in its largest dimension. The name of the driver must appear on the external bodywork and be clearly legible."

Whiting also confirmed that failure to meet the new rules could mean that a car is ineligible to take part, writing "...in order to fully comply with the F1 Sporting Regulations, we expect all cars to be presented in Barcelona with this new, much clearer, identification. A report will be made to the stewards concerning any car that does not comply with the above minimum requirements."

ADAM COOPER



DTM



DTM BANS IN-RACE PIT-TO-CAR RADIO

THE DTM HAS OUTLAWED TEAM-TO-DRIVER RADIO communication during race conditions ahead of this weekend's opening 2017 round at Hockenheim.

Other than during yellow-flag periods to provide safety instructions, or while drivers are in pitlane, teams will be limited to sending their drivers messages via pitboards.

The move is one of a handful of changes to sporting regulations. Double-file restarts from safety car periods will now be used, while DRS usage has been simplified in line with unified durations for Saturday and Sunday races. While last year's DRS allowance was based on the number of laps in any given race, drivers will now be able to activate the system up to three times on 12 laps, a total of 36 activations per race.

Qualifying now gives points: 3-2-1 to the top three.

"We want to put the sport into the centre of the attention," said Gerhard Berger, the new chairman of DTM promoter ITR.

MITCHELL ADAM



NASCAR

DALE JR: 'I DIDN'T CARE; I WAS SICK'

NASCAR FOLK HERO
Dale Earnhardt Jr has revealed that he thought he would not race again during his long layoff last year due to concussion.

Earnhardt, who last week announced that this season will be his last before he hangs up his helmet, said: "There were several chunks of time where I was like, 'I don't think I can race again if I wanted to'. So there were several points in the deal last year where not driving cars was a real possibility.

"I didn't even really care; I was so sick and I just wanted to be normal. You didn't care whether you got to race again. So it wasn't like it happened this season where I was, 'I've made my mind up'. What I went through last year, as I got well the idea of racing became a real possibility, but retirement was kind of always in the back of my mind, and I could never get myself to 100% say, 'Man, I want to do an extension, I'm going forward 100%'. I couldn't ever get there. I just was like, 'That must mean it's time for me to hang it up'."

Earnhardt added that he hopes to remain involved in the NASCAR Cup series with the Hendrick Motorsports team he drives for.

"Rick [Hendrick] told me he wants me to be involved in HMS," he said. "I don't know what that means, but I want to be a part of racing. I'm open to sitting down and seeing how I can be useful."

CONNELL SANDERS JR



WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

WRC eyes increase to 16 rallies over next five years

THE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP WILL BEGIN A staged return to a 16-round calendar with one extra event being added to the existing 13-event schedule next season.

Not since 2007 has the WRC run 16 rallies in a year, but the series promoter is confident of a return to that level as early as '22. More immediately, it is expected that Rally New Zealand will run in a September slot alongside the existing events next season. That is, of course, provided the current rallies achieve the FIA's required safety standards.

Croatia is about the only event standing in the way of a New Zealand return, with the Balkan nation running a rally at candidate status in September. A decision on the 2017 schedule will be made and proposed to the WRC Commission and subsequent World

Motor Sport Council in the autumn.

WRC Promoter's Oliver Ciesla told Autosport: "We have a global audience of 60million for every round and I would rather have 16 times 60million than 13 times 60million. But we have to work with the other stakeholders as this will mean an increase in costs, and we have to make sure it offers the additional benefit."

Hopes of taking the WRC to China have faded with Ciesla accepting that the Far East remains at least two years away. The controversial Turkish bid remains, while South America could also be in for another round, with Ciesla flying directly to a national rally in Chile with a view to the Pacific side of the Andes being represented within the next few years.

DAVID EVANS



OBITUARY

Joe Leonard 1932-2017

A TWO-TIME INDYCAR CHAMPION WHO was much admired by the sport's greats, Joe Leonard died last Thursday in a California nursing home. He was 84.

Leonard was a multiple motorcycle champion before quitting two wheels in 1961 to concentrate on cars. He was hired by Dan Gurney in '65 (above), and gave the All-American Racers team its first Indycar win at Milwaukee that year.

He drove for AJ Foyt's team in 1967, before switching to the STP turbine Lotus of Andy Granatelli and taking pole for the '68 Indy 500. He was leading with 10 laps to go when the car failed. A move to Parnelli Jones's team brought him the '71 and '72 USAC titles, in the latter year defeating team-mates Mario Andretti and Al Unser in an acknowledged 'superteam'.

His career would end at Ontario Motor

Speedway in 1974, when he had a massive crash and suffered extensive injuries to his feet and legs. He tried a comeback in '75, but failed his medical and sued tyre supplier Firestone.

His best finish in the Indy 500 was third, in the 1967 and '72 races.

Leonard had suffered ill health in recent years, including strokes and heart-bypass surgery.



GP3 SERIES

Doubts over F1 roles

ART GRAND PRIX BOSS SEBASTIEN Philippe believes that Formula 1 development-driver roles can be an unhelpful distraction for up-and-coming racers.

Philippe, whose team fields Mercedes F1 junior George Russell, Renault Academy driver Jack Aitken and Honda protege Nirei Fukuzumi in the GP3 Series, as well as Honda-backed Nobuharu Matsushita in Formula 2, also oversaw Ferrari Driver Academy member Charles Leclerc on his way to the 2016 GP3 title with the squad.

Although F1 development roles offer the chance to impress top-level squads, Philippe reckons that the additional workload means young drivers sometimes struggle to stay focused on their primary targets in the junior categories. "It never helps, to be honest," he said. "I now have quite a big experience of having drivers with F1 deals – Jack has his with Renault, George with Mercedes, I also have Fukuzumi with Honda and in the past I had Leclerc with Ferrari.

"I think it's very difficult in their minds to manage this, because as we all know their dream is to be in F1 and sometimes to be very close like this can be difficult to keep focused on the main thing, which is GP3 this year for [Russell, Aitken and Fukuzumi].

"It's a hard job to make sure that their first priority is to win the title when you are also having a job in F1. I think it's more something that could play against you than with you."

When asked how he kept Leclerc – who made four F1 practice appearances for the Haas team in 2016 – focused upon his main

goal for last season, former Japanese Formula 3 champion Philippe explained that constant communication was key to the Monegasque's success. "I had hard work saying that to Charles and he did a perfect job," he said. "We had a lot of discussions to make sure that he was keeping his focus in GP3. His goal of going into F1 could only come through a title in GP3, so I talked with him a lot and I will do the same with the others."

ART's 2017 GP3 line-up is completed by Anthoine Hubert, who has no formal links to an F1 team, and the squad took part in the series' last pre-season official test at Valencia last week. The overall fastest time over the two days was set by Formula Renault 2.0 ace Dorian Boccolacci, whose deal to race for Trident has still not been confirmed, on the first morning. Aitken (above), who was second to Boccolacci on day one, was joint quickest with Arden International's reigning Euroformula Open champion Leonardo Pulcini on the second morning. The slower afternoon sessions were respectively topped by Russell and Alessio Lorandi (Jenzer Motorsport).

But Philippe is confident heading to the first round of the season, supporting the Spanish Grand Prix next week, and feels that his drivers have settled in well.

"They have learned and understood quite a lot and they are as optimistic as me for the first race," he said. "We used testing to learn each other and the different way of working the car and the Pirelli tyres, which are quite different from other categories."

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

IN THE HEADLINES

NO SOCHI NIGHT RACE, SAYS DEPUTY PM

Russian deputy prime minister Dmitry Kozak has ruled out plans for his nation's grand prix to become a night race. "We have been watching the TV feed from Sochi as it is now and it's fabulous," said Kozak. "We can see the beautiful Olympic venues, great landscapes and there are no reasons to move it to evening hours."

PIRELLI TO DO MORE WET TESTING

Pirelli wants to undertake more wet-weather testing of its Formula 1 tyres this season, but will have to use 2015-spec cars in order to stay within current regulations. The F1 Strategy Group approved the move last week, and Pirelli is now talking to teams about the availability of two-year-old machinery.

MIKKELSEN BACK IN HIS SKODA

In the absence of an agreement with a manufacturer World Rally Car team, Andreas Mikkelsen will drive a Skoda Fabia R5 at the Rally of Portugal later this month. The Porto-based event will be the Norwegian's first gravel outing in the Czech car following his WRC2 wins in Monte Carlo and Corsica. Mikkelsen tested recently for Hyundai and has been linked with the marque's WRC squad.

ALBUQUERQUE AT UNITED FOR LE MANS

Versatile Portuguese racer Filipe Albuquerque has been confirmed in the United Autosports line-up in the LMP2 class for next month's Le Mans 24 Hours. Albuquerque joined Hugo de Sadeleer and Will Owen in last month's opening round of the European Le Mans Series at Silverstone, the trio winning the race in their Ligier. They took part in last week's Magny-Cours night test.

TARQUINI PUTS MILES ON HYUNDAI

Evergreen tin-top veteran Gabriele Tarquini put the first track mileage on Hyundai's new i30 TCR car at Motorland Aragon last week. Testing continues through the summer with the first customer deliveries projected for December.

BONANOMI SUBS FOR KIMBER-SMITH

Sometime Audi LMP1 racer Marco Bonanomi replaces British sportscar ace Tom Kimber-Smith alongside Jose Gutierrez in the PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports Ligier for this weekend's IMSA SportsCar round at Austin. Kimber-Smith is tending his mother, who is ill with cancer.

HANLEY GETS EARLY WEC DEBUT

ELMS star Ben Hanley will make his World Endurance Championship debut at Spa this weekend. The Yorkshireman (below), who will compete next month at Le Mans with his ELMS team DragonSpeed, has been called up to replace Matthieu Vaxiviere in TDS Racing's ORECA alongside Emmanuel Collard and Francois Perrodo. Vaxiviere broke his foot while jumping over a small river and hopes to be fit by Le Mans.





Lighting the F3 fuse

This season's F3 European Championship grid may be modestly sized, but it's burning with talent and competitiveness

By Marcus Simmons, Deputy Editor

[@MarcusSimmons54](#)

WHEN DALLARA OUTLINED THE SUBSTANTIAL performance and safety upgrades for its Formula 3 update kit last summer, and the FIA followed suit with new sporting regulations designed to cut back on aerodynamic development – including a ban on windtunnel testing – that overused, utopian and naive phrase ‘level the playing field’ was getting bandied around in its usual mildly irritating fashion.

Prema Powerteam's domination of European Formula 3 – six titles on the trot when Lance Stroll wrapped things up in 2016 – wasn't going to disappear overnight. But the hope was that potential drivers for the F3 European Championship would be sufficiently encouraged to sign up to smaller teams in the hope that they could at least be competitive. Sadly, that didn't happen and Euro F3 2017-style opened with just 19 cars on the grid at Silverstone – and one of them, Jake Dennis, is just helping out the Carlin team over the opening three rounds alongside his Blancpain GT programme.

But the quality of those 19 is undeniable, and I believe that, after two of the 10 rounds, we're in the midst of a classic season – second only in recent years to the 2014 belter in which Esteban Ocon, Max Verstappen and Tom Blomqvist starred, and such talents as Lucas Auer, Antonio Giovinazzi, Antonio Fuoco and Felix Rosenqvist played the major supporting roles.

This year, we've seen some terrific racing: lead changes in two of the three races at Silverstone and battles down the field; and great slipstreamers last weekend at Monza, helped by excellent marshalling, which averted two possible safety cars.

The leading lights after Silverstone and Monza are championship-topping BMW junior Joel Eriksson, McLaren-Honda protege and 2016 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Lando Norris (just one point behind the Swede), and Callum Iloft, a driver who arguably has more natural talent than anyone we've seen since Verstappen. Each has taken two wins. And, importantly, each drives for a different team: Eriksson with Motopark; Norris with Carlin; and Iloft with Prema. This is hugely encouraging for F3's perception in the marketplace. The management at Prema are so charming and media-friendly that no neutral observer actively wants the team to lose, but for the good of the category it's important that the Italian squad is seen to be beatable.

One subject that did rear its head at Monza was that of engines. I've touched on this in the race report (page 44),

so I'm going to focus here on the drivers. For starters, both Eriksson and Iloft have fabulous car control. Eriksson's hands were a blur through Parabolica at Monza, and both he and Iloft looked totally comfortable catching slides at Ascari. Eriksson has a down-to-earth, blokey, bullshit-free charm; Iloft is an independent, freewheeling, genuinely funny guy.

Norris? His driving style is smooth, nowhere near as spectacular as his main two rivals, but he's turned into a fantastic racer – which he has to be, bearing in mind his duff starts. He has a lot of support from his personal team around him. But as a guy he's grown up, not just physically, but also with a great, thoughtful and occasionally self-deprecating personality that can only win him fans. He's reminiscent of Jenson Button in his early F3 days, only with better racecraft.

The contrast between Norris's style and Iloft's came into focus at Silverstone. A new sporting rule this year gives teams access to data from the fastest driver in first qualifying, while each engine manufacturer also traditionally gives data from its quickest car to its other competitors. On this occasion Norris

“Norris is reminiscent of Jenson Button in his early Formula 3 days”

had pole from Iloft, meaning the Merc teams had data from both. An insider from one of them had watched the session from Luffield, seen Iloft slide wide on his quick lap, stabbing the throttle on exit as he tried it get back into shape, losing time. They

couldn't believe it when half a minute later they saw a purple sector, and when they looked at the data they saw why. Norris was good everywhere. Iloft had lost time in the slow stuff, but his data was utterly incredible through Becketts. This is where I was standing, and he had the car dancing through the high-speed direction changes.

Norris's win from that pole was not necessarily surprising: Carlin has always been mega in the cold at Silverstone, and it would surely be subsequent races where the team's mettle would be proved. Encouragingly, he then took victory at Monza. As Jake Dennis said: “It shows the amazing job Carlin have done over the winter, and proves that they don't just have a high-downforce car, which everyone expects.”

There is a fourth man in the mix too. Amiable Mercedes DTM junior Maximilian Gunther is alongside Iloft at Prema, and hasn't been totally happy with his race weekends to date. But he's only four points behind Iloft, and 32 adrift of leader Eriksson. Yet he seems to be racing better than in 2016, when he finished runner-up to Stroll – an indication of a dynamite season on which the fuse has only just been lit. ✨

FEEDBACK

Button, Alonso share bad timing



Gutted though I was when Jenson Button announced he'd not be racing in F1, but rather fulfilling an ambassadorial role, with a reserve-driver role if needed, I did wonder if a number of people knew something the rest of us could make an educated guess at – that Honda would be an unmitigated disaster again.

Fernando Alonso and Jenson are two of my favourite drivers. It is so disappointing that their team yet again is failing to deliver the goods.

It's amazing they have both ended up spending so much of their careers in cars/teams at the wrong time – though in Honda's case, there hasn't been a right time in the third or fourth spell in F1!

Daniel Heathcote
By email

Cameras show who's who

First, well done Valtteri Bottas – a great win, although it was a non-race until the last eight laps or so!

Second, I'm sick of all the bitching

about being unable to identify drivers and wanting bigger numbers and 'three-letter identifiers' on the side on the cars. Have a day off! The cars are mandated to have a camera on the airbox; for several seasons each team has had one black camera and the other yellow. Hamilton has a black camera, Bottas yellow, Vettel black and Raikkonen yellow, Ricciardo black and Verstappen yellow.

You can tell which car (and, therefore, driver) at a glance whether the view is front, rear, side or even a 'long shot' – no confusion whatsoever! It really isn't hard.

Derrick Holden
Marlow, Bucks

Bashing is not racing

Is it time something was done about poor driving standards? All this bashing into each other is not motor racing!

When an incident can be attributed to a specific driver there should be swingeing penalties. Like a six-month ban and fines to pay the cost of other cars' damage (and

Button and Alonso:
great drivers, not so
great career moves

trackside damage). This would soon weed out the idiots and serve as a deterrent.

Let's also clamp down on the track-limits issue. Watch a movie of racing in the 1960s. Tracks didn't have *any* kerbs and the corner apexes were green grass!

Jonathan Moorhouse
York

Hail the demise of the halo

Halo-bloody-lujah – the halo is no more. Someone has some aesthetic sense and care for F1's history, mystique, style and culture. Just wonder why it took so long.

The shield is OK, but I worry about 'sanitising' F1 until it is safer than most sports and social activities. Without ridiculing safety, do we really need that?

Guy Dormehl
South Africa

Look to the '70s for sexy F1

If we think the new-generation F1 cars look sexy, then we are kidding ourselves. Yes, they are much better than 2016 (and previous) but that isn't difficult.

However, the FW06 (p78, April 20), is the real deal. No stupid bargeboards and other aerodynamic appendages, plus a proper relationship between the sizes of front and rear wheels. Now that is how an F1 car should look. Sexy too!

Ross Brawn and Liberty please note and get it sorted for next year. No dilly-dallying. Get it done; please.

Ian Grimsley
Chelmsford, Essex

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Bottas proves he's no number two

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





THERE IS NO BETTER WAY TO PROVE THAT YOU ARE NOT MERELY THE NUMBER-two driver to a triple Formula 1 world champion than single-handedly defeating your quicker rivals to score your first grand prix victory, and utterly obliterating your decorated team-mate in the process.

Amid an electrifying start to F1 2017, with Ferrari and Mercedes closely matched at the front, and Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel the class of the field over the first three races of the campaign, Mercedes new boy Valtteri Bottas has found himself facing difficult questions about the likelihood of having to play faithful rear gunner in a fight between two legends of modern grand prix racing.

But Bottas believes he is so much more than that. In his mind, he knows he can compete with the very best in F1. He hasn't come to Mercedes to give Hamilton an easy ride and support his quest for a fourth world championship. Bottas has come here to win for himself, and win big. But self-belief is one thing; action quite another. In the Russian Grand Prix, Bottas finally showed F1 that he truly means business.


Bottas could be forgiven for having some doubts coming into the Sochi weekend. Yes, he had scored his first F1 pole position last time out at Sakhir, but the race turned out disastrously as he struggled badly for speed and ended up having to twice give way to his faster team-mate.

Bahrain was ultimately the Vettel- and-Hamilton show again,

as Bottas trailed home a distant third, more than 20 seconds shy of victory. There was no obvious technical explanation for Bottas's woes there, beyond Mercedes' general propensity to be unkind to the Pirelli super-soft tyres. But Bottas also struggled on the preferred soft compound compared to Hamilton, and whatever he tried he couldn't get the rear end under control.

Hamilton made Bottas look a bit amateurish in the end, which was unfortunate when you consider how a self-proclaimed "amateur mistake" trying to warm his tyres behind the safety car in China cost Bottas a decent result in that race too. Instead of fighting for a podium, as he'd made a good job of first time out in Australia, Bottas trailed home sixth, behind two underpowered Red Bulls.

Coming to Russia, Bottas had shown flashes of potential, but hardly the sort of convincing form that could fully justify Mercedes' decision to replace retired world champion Nico Rosberg with an unproven driver from a midfield customer team. At Sochi, Bottas answered his critics with a flourish of sustained brilliance. What's more, he became a grand prix winner on a weekend when Mercedes looked to be in serious trouble.



Bottas vaulted
both Ferraris
at the start

LAT IMAGES

The rear-tyre-preservation problems that so hampered Mercedes in Australia and Bahrain, allowing Ferrari to convert a losing position into a winning one, were alleviated by the Russian venue's super-smooth track surface, which made thermal tyre degradation almost non-existent. This dramatically reduced the chances for strategic variation in the race, but also meant Mercedes would theoretically stand a much greater chance of properly converting the qualifying advantage it had enjoyed over Ferrari in the first three races.

The trouble was, that qualifying advantage disappeared in Russia, as Mercedes encountered fresh difficulty trying to get the ultra-soft tyre into the ideal operating-temperature range. Mercedes trailed Ferrari by nearly seven tenths of a second after Friday practice, struggling in a similar fashion to Singapore 2015, when it couldn't get the super-soft tyre working at all.

Hamilton looked particularly lost, toiling over one lap and the long runs on both the ultra-soft and super-soft compounds. The bright spot for Mercedes was Bottas's long-run pace on the ultra-soft. It took him a while but, having been urged to alter his technique to try to extract more grip from the tyre, he set a pace that looked a match for Vettel's Ferrari.

Mercedes set to work correcting its set-up for Saturday, and Bottas came close to beating the Ferrari drivers to pole position – fastest of all in Q1 and Q2, and less than a tenth away from taking top spot when it counted too.

Conversely, Hamilton still looked all at sea at a track where he

usually performs well. He kept losing control of the rear of the car through the twisty final sector of the lap, where 90-degree turns come thick and fast. It cost him the chance to top final practice and it cost him in qualifying too. He was unusually more than half a second down come the end of Q3. If there was going to be a Mercedes in this fight, Bottas would be the one driving it.

But how to penetrate the first all-Ferrari front row since the French Grand Prix of 2008? Yes, this was the first time this year where Kimi Raikkonen had looked in proper form in qualifying, and he was less than six hundredths of a second short of beating Vettel to pole.

With two fast Ferraris starting ahead of him, facing the prospect of a comfortable one-stop race and minimal tyre degradation, Bottas's only real chance was to nail both at the start. This is an aspect of Formula 1 racing where Bottas has displayed weakness in the past, often finding himself in the wrong position and shuffled back on the first laps of races during his Williams days.

This time he hooked up an excellent getaway from the second row of the grid, immediately moving past Raikkonen and taking advantage of the slipstream offered by Vettel to drive around the outside of the other Ferrari. Bottas pulled ahead before the braking zone and drove into Turn 2 clearly in the lead.

"I've been working a lot on the race starts," Bottas explained. "Actually we put a lot of effort in with the team in January, February; we did so many hours analysing all of my race starts from every single year, and I've learned a lot. >>



Bottas defied pedigree of his pursuers



“The start here was OK. It was only the minimum difference compared to Sebastian. Obviously slipstreaming here is the key and how you make the approach to Turn 1 and 2. That was the key to get ahead. It would have been difficult after that to try to beat them.”

Raikkonen admitted he wheelspun his own chances away with a “pretty poor” start, but Vettel’s getaway was actually fine – he was just a sitting duck starting on pole and driving into a headwind on such a long run down to the first proper corner of the lap.

“There was not much I could do,” said Vettel. “I think Valtteri might have had a better jump initially. It was a drag race. Obviously I didn’t have a tow. There was a bit of a headwind as well, so it’s another 10–15km/h [6–9mph] off the speed that you lose with the wind blowing against you rather than from behind. I was hoping I could have the inside for braking. I didn’t and I had to accept there was no way to fight with him into Turn 2.”

From that point on the destiny of this race was clearly in Bottas’s hands, but Mercedes was nervous of Ferrari’s pace in race trim, and there were fears that the red cars might still find some way to reverse positions, as they had done so successfully in Australia and Bahrain.

“The main worry for us was the beginning of the stint,” confirmed Bottas. “Ferrari seemed to be quite a lot quicker on Friday with high fuel, and in qualifying they were able to get the tyres ready very quickly. For us it took some time, but today everything worked well.

“At the beginning of the stint, the car, the tyres felt good, and actually through all of the stint with the ultra-soft it was very good. We made some good progress from Friday to Sunday to get that gap

– get that front end and rear end working the same way.”

Bottas produced what Vettel called an “amazing” first stint on the ultra-soft tyre, lapping a tenth quicker than the Ferrari on average for 23 laps following the safety-car restart on lap four. This was something else Bottas nailed to keep Vettel at arm’s length from the off, after marshals had cleared the wreckage of the first-lap collision between Jolyon Palmer’s Renault and Romain Grosjean’s Haas that briefly neutralised the race.

But Vettel closed the gap as Bottas began negotiating traffic, and the Mercedes dived into the pits at the end of lap 27 of 52 to switch to the super-soft tyre with Bottas’s advantage whittled down to a fraction over three seconds.

With new super-soft tyres fitted, Bottas was able to lap a couple of tenths quicker than Vettel. So with no chance to jump Bottas in the pits, Ferrari’s hopes rested on leaving Vettel out for as long as he

could maintain decent pace on his worn ultra-softs. Vettel stayed out until the end of lap 34, which gave him a tyre-life advantage of seven laps over Bottas for the sprint to the flag on super-softs.

Vettel was significantly quicker than Bottas over the final portion of the race, lapping 0.241s faster than the Mercedes on average. Bottas’s own situation was not helped by a huge lock-up under braking for Turn 13 on lap 38. Bottas snatched both front wheels, and was lucky not to crash. He survived this flirtation with disaster, but it left him with 14 laps to run to the flag with bad flat-spots on both front tyres. “Our metrics showed it was pretty severe damage to the tyres, which harmed his performance at the

“There was not much I could do. I think Valtteri had a better jump at first”



LAT IMAGES

QUALIFYING



FORMULA 1 HAS WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THIS. ALMOST NINE years. That's how long it's been since Ferrari, the most successful of all F1 teams, last locked out the front row of a grand prix grid.

Back then F1 still raced annually in France, and incidentally the French GP of 2008 is also the last time Kimi Raikkonen sat on pole position in F1. The '07 world champion has often struggled in qualifying since, and has been under pressure after a slow start to '17, but he was on excellent form through practice and qualifying for the Russian GP, and came mighty close to ending that drought.

Ferrari set the pace throughout free practice, as Mercedes struggled to get the ultra-soft tyre working over one timed lap, but by the end of Q2 Valtteri Bottas was comfortably the fastest man on track and looked the favourite to claim pole.

But Ferrari turned things back around at the start of Q3, and Raikkonen sat on provisional pole after the initial runs, a scant 0.036 seconds ahead of Bottas. Raikkonen's team-mate Sebastian Vettel was Ferrari's form man through practice, but trailed by

“I tried to get it back in the last corner and it didn't pay off”

Kimi Raikkonen

0.173s after those first Q3 runs, while Lewis Hamilton was way back in fourth after twice snatching the inside front brake on his hot lap.

Raikkonen looked on for a slightly faster time on his second run, but overreached at the very end of the lap, running wide at the final

corner and dropping nearly half a second compared to his earlier best. But even had he matched his earlier time through the final sector – which turned out to be the fastest of the session – it still wouldn't have been enough to take pole.

“We had traffic on the out-lap on the last set and couldn't make the tyres work as well as the first run,” explained Raikkonen. “I tried to get it back in the last corner and it didn't pay off.”

Vettel said his first Q3 run “wasn't tidy”, but he cleaned up with his second, taking two and a half tenths out of Raikkonen through the first two sectors and stealing pole with a last-gasp lap of 1m33.194s, despite a final sector that was almost two tenths slower than Raikkonen's best.

In spite of Ferrari's strong form, Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff still felt Bottas probably should have claimed pole. Try as he might, Bottas couldn't replicate his Q2 form in sector three, despite improving around the rest of the track, so he ended up slower in Q3 than he went in Q2 overall, just 0.095s shy of pole. Had he combined his three best sector times, he would have been fastest by more than a tenth.

Hamilton struggled throughout qualifying and his first run in Q3 was also compromised by a track-position squabble with Nico Hulkenberg's Renault. He improved on his final run, but dropped a lot of time in the final sector and ended up almost half a second slower than Bottas. Hamilton said that particular electronic and differential settings made the rear of his W08 too weak for the final sector, despite a similar set-up to Bottas overall.



Above: Bottas held off a charging Vettel in the closing stages

Left: Hamilton struggled throughout the weekend

end,” explained team boss Toto Wolff. “It was a bit of a stressful moment, but he kept it together.”

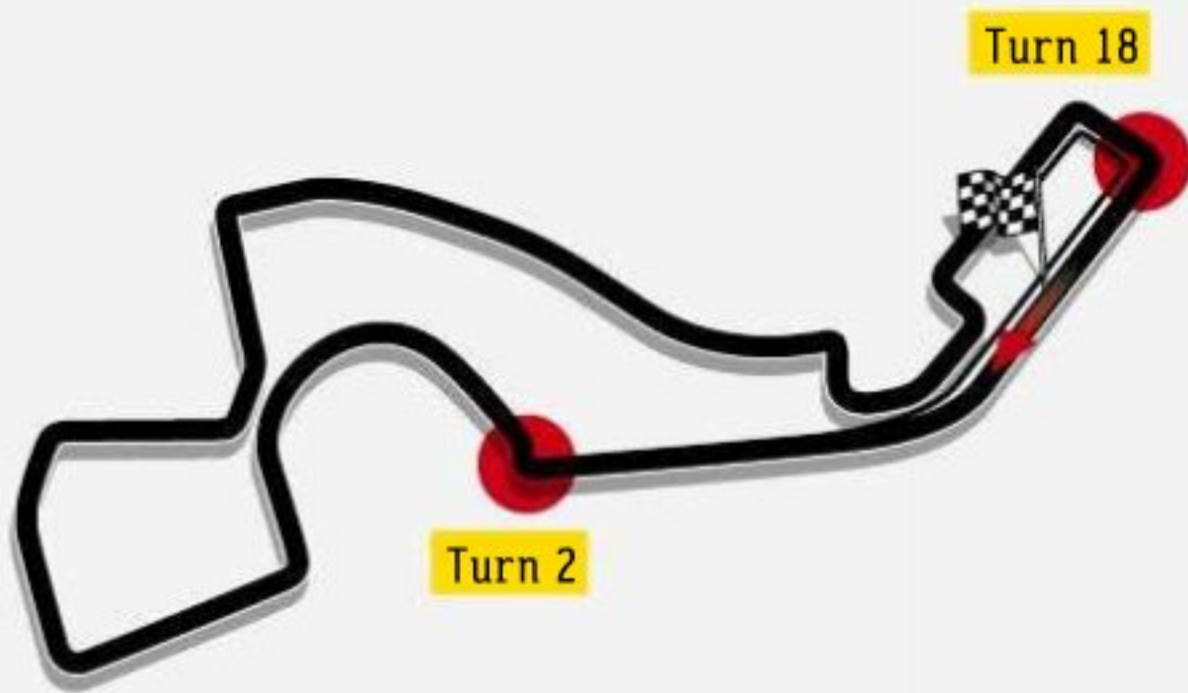
Vettel smelled blood and relentlessly homed in on the Mercedes in the closing laps. With those severe flatspots to contend with, plus the difficulty of negotiating backmarkers on such a tricky track for overtaking, could Bottas really hang on, or would he crumble, overwhelmed by the prospect of winning a grand prix for the first time after 81 starts?

“The team was asking me to go forward with the brake bias, giving advice just to help the tyre temperatures,” Bottas said. “I had the flatspots so then I had to go rearwards. I also had a little bit of traffic during that point. This track, if you find the rhythm then you can be so quick here and get consistent lap times. But if you lose it, it always takes a few laps to get it back.

“I kind of lost the rhythm for a bit. Once I was in free air again, >>



“THE SEQUENCES OF 90-DEGREE BENDS EASILY TEMPT DRIVERS INTO MISTAKES”



THE SOCHI AUTODROM'S expansive straights, street-circuit-style corners and super-smooth asphalt make it a challenging place for Formula 1 drivers to master.

It's difficult to get the tyres working without proper fast corners to load them up, and the sequences of 90-degree bends easily tempt drivers into mistakes. Before you know it you've overcommitted to one of the 18 turns and ruined your lap.

At Turn 2, the first big stop of a long, 3.6-mile lap, there are some discrepancies in how late different drivers brake early on in first free practice. Most target the 100-metre

marker, but it's noticeable that the Ferraris can go beyond that quite comfortably, the Red Bulls too. The McLarens and Mercedes are more reserved initially, but last of the late brakers, inevitably, is Romain Grosjean.

Further round at the exit, the Ferrari-engined cars look impressively nailed coming off the corner, blessed with ample driveability and traction. The works Ferrari rides the kerbs particularly well too. The Renault-powered cars look decent, but the customer cars especially lack some punch.

The Mercedes-engined racers seem OK, but it looks



McLarens needed swift shifts to keep rear end in check

and sounds as though it's easier for them to spin the rear wheels. The mapping of the McLaren-Honda engine sounds much improved compared to Bahrain, but some aggressive gearshifting is still required to keep the rear of the car in check under acceleration.

For the final free practice session Autosport takes residence at the final right-hander at Turn 18, one of those 90-degree corners typical of this circuit, where we

often see drivers spin on rear tyres stressed out by 11 prior low-speed torture sessions.

Max Verstappen, Carlos Sainz Jr and Felipe Massa are particularly aggressive in taking out the excess steering lock as quickly as possible after they turn in. Verstappen produces a particularly stylish rotation, the rear end coming around balanced by his skilful control of the throttle and steering.

The Ferrari definitely looks

more agile than the Mercedes. Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen turn in earlier on a shallower line without paying a price, while Valtteri Bottas and Lewis Hamilton need all the road, always waiting for the front to bite, with Hamilton's particular efforts to mitigate then upsetting the rear too easily.

This will eventually cost the triple world champion dearly when it comes to qualifying.

BEN ANDERSON



Massa played fortuitous last-lap role



Bottas's first win confirms he's no Merc second-fiddle



able to focus on my job, I managed to get the tyre temperatures back up and pick up the pace. I was also asking for a bit of radio silence from the team, for me to just get on with it really, to focus on every single corner, making every lap perfect, and losing minimum time with the backmarkers.”

Vettel finally closed to within DRS range of the Mercedes entering the final two laps, but Bottas tactically recharged his battery through the final part of lap 50 to help repel Vettel along the main straight.

On the final lap, Bottas received the benefit of DRS himself, thanks to Felipe Massa's Williams. Massa then did Bottas what Vettel called a "favour twice" by allowing Bottas through under braking for Turn 2, but not the Ferrari. Vettel had to slot in behind, then drive around the Williams through the long flat-out left-hander at Turn 3. He eventually passed the Williams on the inside of Turn 4, but the move was tentative and Massa didn't make it obvious that he would step aside. Vettel lost six tenths in the first sector getting past, and that proved enough to end the Ferrari driver's chances of a final bid for glory.

"I had 10 laps where I was flat-out trying everything I could to get into the DRS zone and chase him down," said Vettel, who trailed by just 0.617s at the flag. "I just about succeeded with a couple of laps to go and in the last lap I was hoping to get closer for the back straight because we were really strong in the middle sector.

"Felipe did him a favour twice – once handing him a tow and then he cost me a bit of time. But that's how it is with backmarkers.

“It wasn't the easiest race to win, but it feels better if you need to earn it”

Initially I was a bit angry, but I think Valtteri was so in control that he had it anyway, even if I could have used the DRS on the back straight.”

For Bottas this was a breakthrough result, on a track where he always excelled for Williams, qualifying on the front row in 2016 and best of the rest behind the Mercedes drivers in '14 and '15.

He finished more than 36s clear of Hamilton, who could not make the Mercedes set-up work for him in the same way, and also struggled with an overheating engine in the first part of the race, thanks to being stuck in dirty air while running a cooling configuration set in anticipation of slightly cooler air temperatures forecast ahead of the race. But Hamilton was gracious enough in

defeat to congratulate Bottas on a superb maiden victory in F1, one achieved in a manner that disproves what Wolff called “crazy” speculation that Bottas should play second fiddle to Hamilton's own title aspirations this season.

Bottas can now draw extra confidence from finally winning a grand prix, strengthening his own credentials as a potential title contender. It is confirmation of the steely self-belief he has always possessed that he belongs at the very front of Formula 1.

“Getting the first win is something special,” Bottas said. “Even though you always believe in yourself, actually getting the confirmation, getting the result, definitely gives me confidence that I can do it. It wasn't the easiest race to win, but it feels better in a way if you actually need to earn it. For my first one it's very special.”

And most probably the first of many. ✎



MASSA DENIES BLOCKING VETTEL

WILLIAMS DRIVER FELIPE Massa insisted that he did not block Sebastian Vettel while being lapped on the final lap of the Russian Grand Prix, which curtailed a thrilling battle for the lead between Vettel's Ferrari and the Mercedes of race winner Valtteri Bottas.

Bottas passed Massa's ninth-placed Williams into Turn 2, with Vettel stuck behind the Brazilian through the long Turn 3 left-hander. Vettel then hesitated while attempting to lap Massa into the slow Turn 4 right-hander, asking "what was that?" over the radio after the incident.

"I completely left the inside part for him, I backed off before Turn 4 and he didn't want to go," said Massa. "He was afraid to dive inside, I was completely on the left, then I let him by straight away after."

"I'm also sure he was not going to pass Valtteri on the last lap of the race. Anyway, he really likes to complain."

Massa ran sixth early on but faded to ninth after suffering two slow punctures, which forced him to make an extra pitstop.

He was delighted to see his ex-Williams team-mate Bottas score his first grand prix victory, and believes that the win vindicates Mercedes' decision to sign the Finn.

"He'll achieve a lot more than what he has today," Massa predicted.



Hamilton mysteriously off the

LEWIS HAMILTON COULD NOT explain his baffling loss of form in the Russian Grand Prix, where he finished a distant fourth as Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas claimed his first victory in Formula 1.

Hamilton had a 100% pole-position record for 2017 coming into this race, but was off the pace from Friday practice, struggling to get the

Pirelli tyres to work properly over a single lap and the longer runs.

Mercedes made set-up tweaks overnight and both Hamilton and Bottas were more competitive in final practice, when Hamilton was on for the fastest time of the session before suffering some snaps of oversteer through the final sector that spoiled his lap.

Hamilton's difficulties in taming

the rear end of his W08 through sector three continued in qualifying. He was almost half a second down on Bottas and could not easily explain after the session why he was struggling so much more than his team-mate, given that they were running similar set-ups, save for some particular differential and electronic settings.

Hamilton made a good start to

Red Bull's 'very strange' rear-brake failure ruins Ricciardo's afternoon

RED BULL SUFFERED A REAR-brake failure for the second race in a row, as Daniel Ricciardo was forced out of the Russian Grand Prix with what team boss Christian Horner called a "very strange" problem.

Ricciardo lost places to team-mate Max Verstappen and Felipe Massa after getting pushed out in a three-wide fight with Lewis Hamilton and Kimi Raikkonen at the start, and was running seventh just after the early safety-car restart when he noticed his right-rear brake was on fire.

Red Bull told him to bring the car back to the pits gently, and then retired it after an inspection.

Verstappen had crashed out of the previous race in Bahrain with brake failure. Horner said the team would investigate Ricciardo's problem, but early indications suggested it was a different issue from the one Verstappen suffered at Sakhir.

"It's a similar outcome but different issue, so we need to understand the cause," Horner said. "There needs to be a full investigation. Was it a touch at

the second turn, was it something else? Because immediately after the restart the component failed.

"Everything seemed under control, so it was absolute sudden failure. It's very strange to happen immediately after the restart."

Red Bull told Verstappen to wind his brake balance forward after the incident as a precaution. He finished in a lonely fifth, comfortably ahead of the Force Indias but over a minute adrift of winner Valtteri Bottas.

Horner felt Verstappen got "everything he could out of the car".



LAT IMAGES

pace at Sochi

the race, but could not quite get past Kimi Raikkonen heading into Turn 2, so slotted into fourth. He struggled to keep pace with the Ferrari throughout the event, suffering in the early stages with an overheating engine. Hamilton eventually finished more than 25 seconds behind Raikkonen and more than 36s behind Bottas to cap a deeply underwhelming weekend.

“I think somewhere we must have taken a wrong junction,” reckoned Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff. “I don’t want to speculate. He knows his way around – he has won two races here, so he has an extremely good record at Sochi. It is something in the interaction between the car, the tyres and the driver that didn’t work and we need to find out what it is.”

Q&A

LEWIS HAMILTON

You’ve struggled all weekend for pace; are you able to explain what’s gone wrong?

“I can’t explain it right now. I have some theories about how it felt in the race and qualifying, but lots of work will be done to figure it out.”

You suffered those snaps of oversteer in qualifying. Was the car any better in the race?

“The car was exactly the same in the race.”

Can you explain the overheating problems you had?

“From probably lap five onwards I just had to slow down and stay in fourth – lots of turning down of the settings and power unit. We had cutting of one of the cylinders, because of the temperature issues. I was going to be fourth from very early on.”

Were the handling issues costing you more time than the temperature issue?

“I was slow from yesterday so that doesn’t really change. I think I could kind of match those times at the front maybe, but whether I would have lasted as long... probably not with the set-up I had. With the backing off for the temperature I was losing seven tenths, maybe a second a lap.”



Was there much difference between your set-up and Valtteri Bottas’s?

“Not a huge difference; quite close. A little bit different in low and medium [speed], which is where I struggled. And on the electronic side, different diff settings.”

Why were those things not working for you?

“I don’t really know the fine details. I’ve been asking my engineers for a summary. The direction he was able to go I wasn’t able to go, and I don’t understand fully why. Our driving styles are quite similar. I’m not sure what else stopped me going in that [same] direction.”

Raikkonen shows better form after ‘rough start’ to 2017



KIMI RAIKKONEN HAS NOT enjoyed an easy start to 2017, but had said after last month’s Bahrain Grand Prix that he was feeling much happier with the handling of his Ferrari.

In Russia Raikkonen showed markedly improved form in qualifying, falling just 0.059s short of claiming his first Formula 1 pole position since the 2008 French GP. But at the start he immediately lost second place to Valtteri Bottas’s Mercedes.

“I had a pretty poor start,” he explained. “I got wheelspin and really thought I was going to lose

a lot more. Luckily both of these cars [Bottas’s and Sebastian Vettel’s] went side-by-side and I started to get the tow and managed to stay ahead of Lewis [Hamilton].”

Raikkonen lacked the consistency needed to challenge the frontrunners, but was also unthreatened from behind thanks to Hamilton’s struggles. He was happier with his performance, but not particularly enthralled by a “boring” race or his first podium finish of the year.

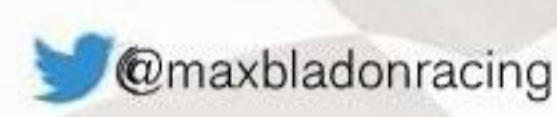
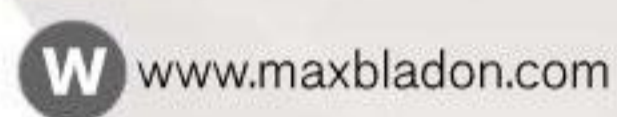
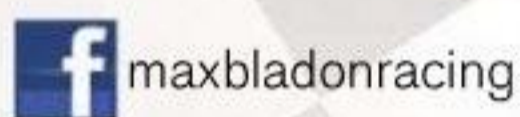
“I’ve had a little bit of a rough start to the season,” he said. “I’m more happy this weekend but obviously not happy to be third.”

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*To rising star Max Bladon on his maiden MINI Challenge JCW victory at Rockingham.
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CONGRATULATIONS

To Graham Davidson on a hat-trick of victories in the opening round of the GT Cup at Donington Park!



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We would like to thank all the sponsors and the team for all of their support in 2017.



Photos by Ollie Read

Palmer thought Grosjean would 'use his brain'

JOLYON PALMER CRITICISED Romain Grosjean for not doing more to avoid the crash that put them both out of the Russian Grand Prix.

Grosjean hit the right-rear of the Renault after bouncing across the kerb on the inside of Turn 2 following the start, and went into the barrier as Palmer spun back around into the Haas.

The stewards took no action after a post-race investigation, but Palmer said the blame lay with Grosjean.

"I couldn't give him any space, otherwise I would have hit a Sauber," Palmer explained. "He was far too ambitious. I had to turn and hope that he uses his brain, but he just committed too hard."

But Grosjean was adamant that

Palmer just turned in on him. "I was on the inside, he turned, we had contact, he spun his car," Grosjean said. "He came back and hit me a second time and that put me in the wall."

The crash capped difficult weekends for both drivers, with Palmer suffering technical problems in practice before crashing in qualifying, while

Grosjean was off team-mate Kevin Magnussen's pace all weekend, struggling to balance his Haas.

Magnussen copped a five-second penalty for not respecting track limits at Turn 2, which cost him a points finish. Haas team boss Gunther Steiner said he was "pissed off" with a weekend in which "everything that can go wrong went wrong".



Grosjean and Palmer blamed each other

Alonso fails to start as McLaren-Honda's struggles continue

HONDA SUSPECTS AN energy-recovery-system failure stopped Fernando Alonso's McLaren from starting the Russian Grand Prix.

Alonso's nightmare season continued at Sochi, where he reported problems with his car over the radio and stopped at the pit entry before completing the formation lap.

It was Alonso's fourth retirement in four races and

the second time this season that a McLaren has failed to take the start, following the MGU-H problem that prevented Stoffel Vandoorne from racing in Bahrain.

"As soon as we started the formation lap we didn't have normal power," explained Alonso. "They asked me to change a few things on the steering wheel to try to recover the ERS, but there was no way and at the end of the lap the car stopped."

Honda also suffered an MGU-K problem on Vandoorne's car in first practice, which required the whole engine to be changed and put Vandoorne over the legal limit for MGU-H and turbo parts, which were updated for reliability ahead of the weekend.

A subsequent 15-place penalty sent Vandoorne to the back of the grid, but he recovered past both Saubers to finish 14th.



Perez lauds Force India 'big miracles'

SERGIO PEREZ BELIEVES FORCE INDIA IS performing "big miracles" to continually outscore its midfield rivals, despite a pace deficit.

Force India is the only team other than Mercedes and Ferrari to have scored points with both drivers at each of the first four races of 2017. Perez finished the Russian GP sixth, with team-mate Esteban Ocon seventh, as Force India strengthened its grip on fourth place in the constructors' championship.

Perez and Ocon qualified ninth and 10th, jumped Nico Hulkenberg's Renault on lap one of the race, and gained further places thanks to Daniel Ricciardo's brake fire and Felipe Massa's slow punctures.

Perez reckons the results flatter the Force India, which he says is far slower than the Red Bull and the Williams. "At the moment, we're really far [off]," he said. "We've been doing big miracles to be where we are."



DRAWING BOARD

BY JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE AND GIORGIO PIOLA

WILLIAMS AND SAUBER TRY NEW T-WINGS

Both Sauber and Williams brought new T-wing designs to Russia. Each followed slightly different philosophies.

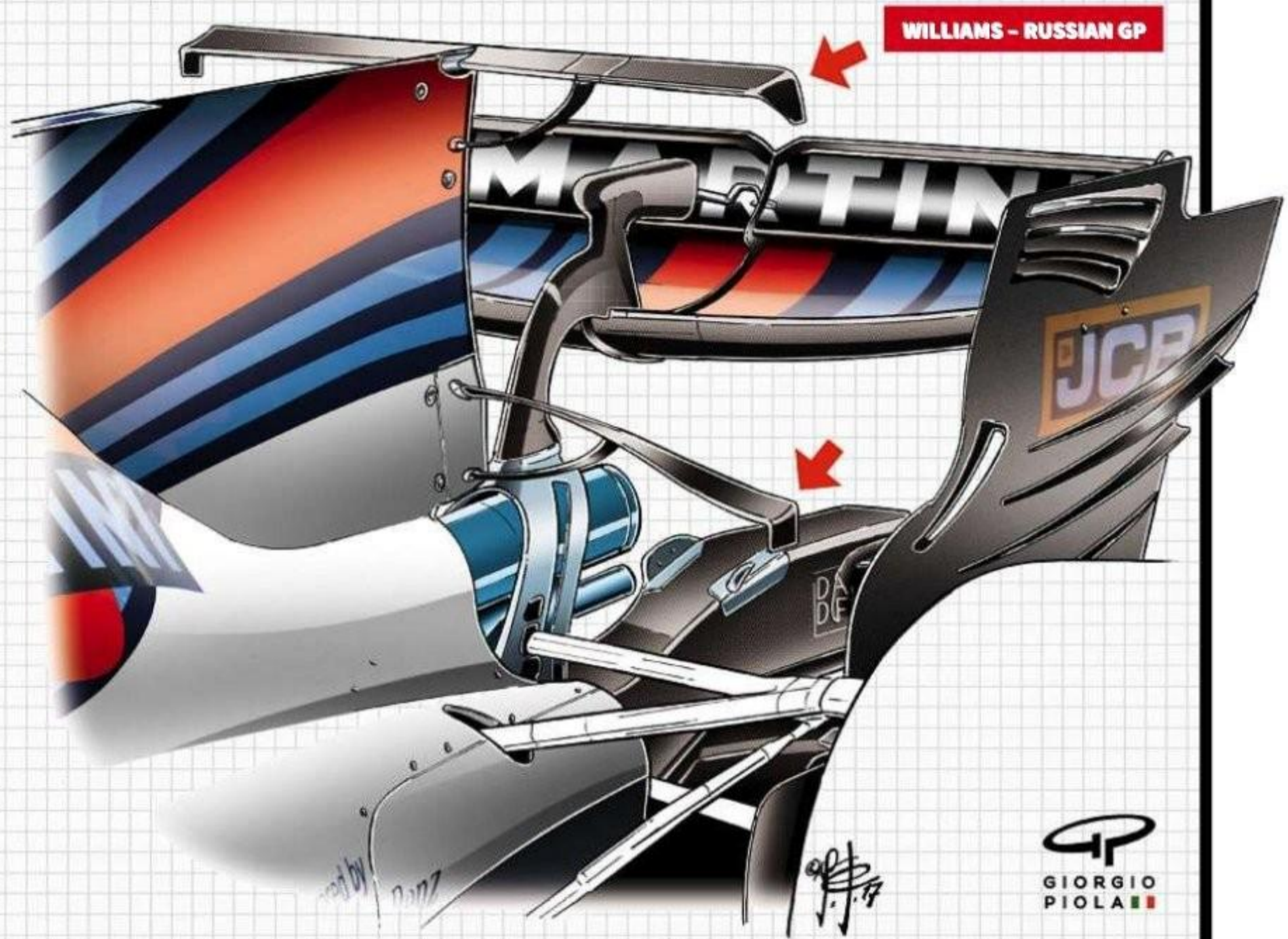
Williams has replaced its single T-wing with a double-element design. Doing this creates a greater upwash effect, which elevates any unsteady airflow over the rear wing and improves its efficiency.

Another way to do this would be to add more camber to the single-wing design, increasing the curvature of the profile, but this adds a higher drag penalty in comparison with multiple shorter-chord elements.

Williams has also done away with the small added wing above the exhaust pipe, considering it surplus to the requirements of managing airflow at the rear.

Sauber has experimented with a number of T-wing designs, and raced in Russia with a format similar to that used by McLaren since China. This consists of a cambered wing element that curves around and back underneath to add an extra point of attachment to the shark-fin, reducing the wing's flex under load. This also offers greater control over the direction of airflow, helping shape any vortices to be directed away from the rear wing.

The team also continued with the twin-bargeboard design it trialed in Bahrain.



FERRARI ADOPTS DOUBLE 'MONKEY SEAT'

Ever since Formula 1 adopted the central tailpipe to combat exhaust-gas trickery, adding a 'monkey seat' above the rear crash structure has been a popular route to improving rear-end downforce.

It also helps the engineers to manage the exhaust-gas flow and reduce the effect on

the car's wake, cutting drag generated from turbulence.

Ferrari has added some complexity to this area by adding a second monkey seat in front of its existing one, attaching it near the base of the swan-neck rear-wing mounts. This adds a little extra downforce and also

helps to contain the flow from the exhaust as it leaves the pipe.

Since prolonged exposure to heat from the exhaust can potentially cause deformation of components, wrapping the mounting points in gold foil helps to conduct that heat away.

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F1/RUSSIAN GRAND PRIX RESULTS

STARTING GRID



Race results / 52 laps – 188.842 miles

Fastest laps

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	TIME IN PITS	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	1h28m08.743s	44	○●	29.356s	1	Raikkonen	1m36.844s	-	49
2	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	+0.617s	8	○●	30.097s	2	Vettel	1m37.312s	+0.468s	49
3	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	+11.000s		○●	30.152s	3	Bottas	1m37.367s	+0.523s	49
4	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+36.320s		○●	29.739s	4	Massa	1m38.232s	+1.388s	45
5	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-Renault	+1m00.416s		○●	29.567s	5	Kvyat	1m38.300s	+1.456s	50
6	Sergio Perez	Force India-Mercedes	+1m26.788s		○●	29.868s	6	Hamilton	1m38.398s	+1.554s	18
7	Esteban Ocon	Force India-Mercedes	+1m35.004s		○●	30.253s	7	Hulkenberg	1m38.418s	+1.574s	52
8	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	+1m36.188s		○●	30.280s	8	Verstappen	1m38.429s	+1.585s	47
9	Felipe Massa	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		○●○	59.843s	9	Perez	1m38.661s	+1.817s	51
10	Carlos Sainz	Toro Rosso-Renault	-1 lap		●●	29.973s	10	Ocon	1m38.745s	+1.901s	50
11	Lance Stroll	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●	29.791s	11	Sainz	1m38.858s	+2.014s	51
12	Daniil Kvyat	Toro Rosso-Renault	-1 lap		●●	29.991s	12	Stroll	1m38.870s	+2.026s	50
13	Kevin Magnussen	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●	36.559s	13	Magnussen	1m39.566s	+2.722s	40
14	Stoffel Vandoorne	McLaren-Honda	-1 lap		●●●	1m06.004s	14	Vandoorne	1m39.790s	+2.946s	47
15	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●●	1m02.890s	15	Ericsson	1m39.835s	+2.991s	48
16	Pascal Wehrlein	Sauber-Ferrari	-2 laps		●●●	1m02.065s	16	Wehrlein	1m40.922s	+4.078s	37
R	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-Renault	5 laps-brakes		○	-	17	Ricciardo	1m42.285s	+5.441s	4
R	Jolyon Palmer	Renault	0 laps-collision		●	-	18	Palmer	-	-	-
R	Romain Grosjean	Haas-Ferrari	0 laps-collision		●	-	19	Grosjean	-	-	-
NS	Fernando Alonso	McLaren-Honda	0 laps-power unit		●	-	20	Alonso	-	-	-

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 40C, air 25C WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 128.536mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 135.079mph ● New ○ Used | ● Ultra-Soft ● Super-Soft ● Soft ● Medium ● Hard ● Wet ● Intermediate

5

Valtteri Bottas is the fifth Finnish driver to win a world championship race

7

Esteban Ocon took a career-best F1 finish in seventh place

31

This is the first time in 31 races that a Mercedes has failed to start on the front row

45

This was the 45th time Kimi Raikkonen has set the fastest lap. Only Michael Schumacher has more

81

Bottas's first F1 victory came after 80 winless starts

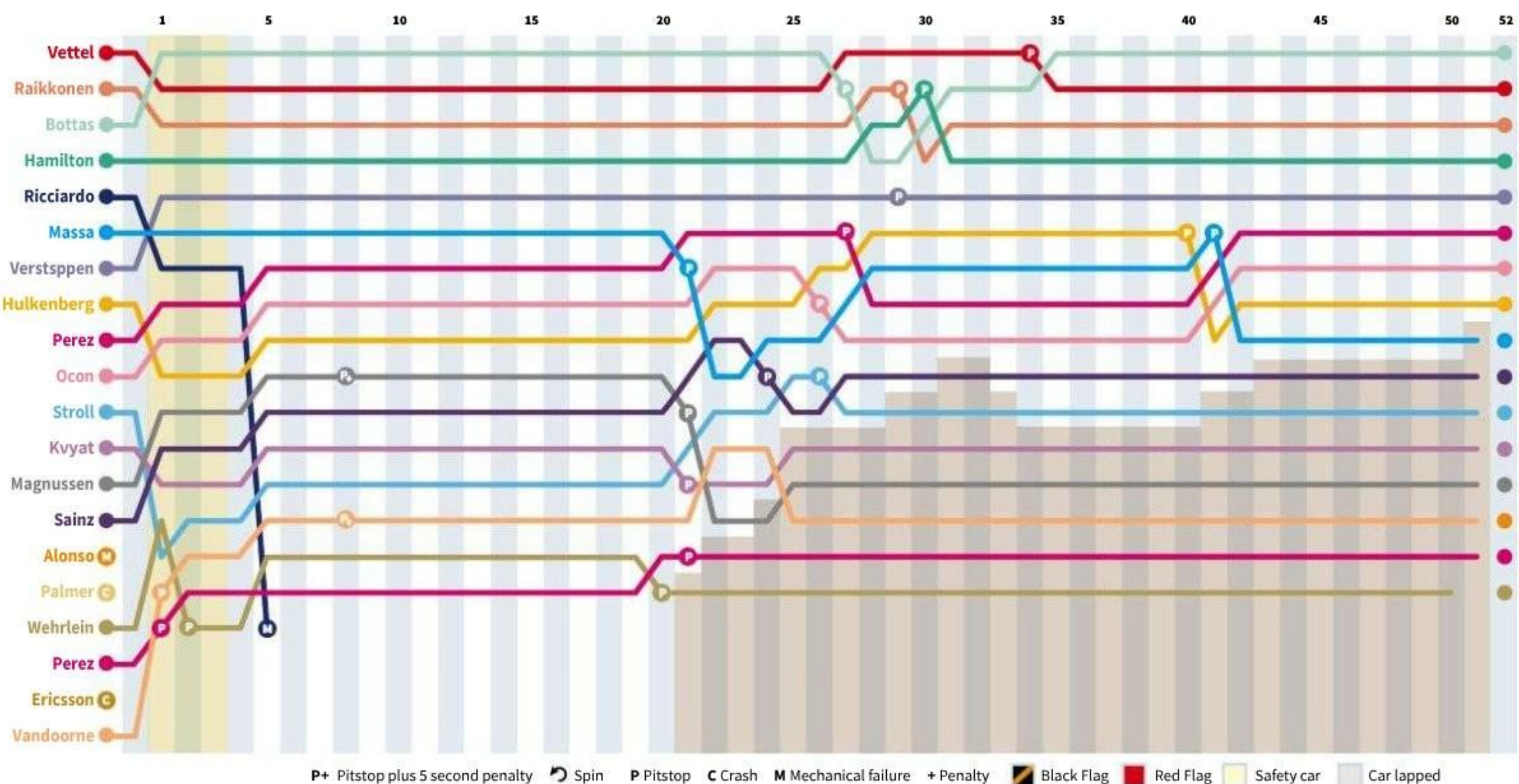
90

Vettel now has 90 podium finishes in F1, the fifth highest in history

97

Bottas is the 97th driver to win a world championship GP (excluding Indy 500s that counted between 1950 and 1960)

Lap chart / What happened, when





Qualifying 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m34.041s
2	Hamilton	1m34.409s
3	Vettel	1m34.493s
4	Raikkonen	1m34.953s
5	Verstappen	1m35.301s
6	Ocon	1m35.372s
7	Hulkenberg	1m35.507s
8	Ricciardo	1m35.560s
9	Sainz	1m35.827s
10	Massa	1m35.828s
11	Kvyat	1m35.984s
12	Perez	1m36.185s
13	Stroll	1m36.279s
14	Alonso	1m36.353s
15	Magnussen	1m36.408s
16	Palmer	1m36.462s
17	Vandoorne	1m37.070s
18	Wehrlein	1m37.332s
19	Ericsson	1m37.507s
20	Grosjean	1m37.620s

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 40C, air 21C

Qualifying 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m33.264s
2	Raikkonen	1m33.663s
3	Hamilton	1m33.760s
4	Vettel	1m34.038s
5	Massa	1m35.049s
6	Verstappen	1m35.221s
7	Hulkenberg	1m35.328s
8	Ricciardo	1m35.483s
9	Perez	1m35.513s
10	Ocon	1m35.729s
11	Sainz	1m35.948s
12	Stroll	1m35.964s
13	Kvyat	1m35.968s
14	Magnussen	1m36.017s
15	Alonso	1m36.660s

Race briefing

FRIDAY PRACTICE
SERGEY SIROTKIN replaced Hulkenberg at Renault

Qualifying 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m33.194s
2	Raikkonen	1m33.253s
3	Bottas	1m33.289s
4	Hamilton	1m33.767s
5	Ricciardo	1m34.905s
6	Massa	1m35.110s
7	Verstappen	1m35.161s
8	Hulkenberg	1m35.285s
9	Perez	1m35.337s
10	Ocon	1m35.430s

Race briefing

GRID PENALTIES
SAINZ Three-place penalty for causing a collision in the Bahrain GP
VANDOORNE 15-place penalty for additional power-unit elements used

RACE PENALTIES
MAGNUSSEN Five-second penalty (served during pitstop) for track-limits infringement
VANDOORNE Five-second penalty (served during pitstop) for track-limits infringement

SEASON STATS

Drivers' championship

1	Vettel	86
2	Hamilton	73
3	Bottas	63
4	Raikkonen	49
5	Verstappen	35
6	Ricciardo	22
7	Perez	22
8	Massa	18
9	Sainz	11
10	Ocon	9
11	Hulkenberg	6
12	Grosjean	4
13	Magnussen	4
14	Kvyat	2
15	Wehrlein	0
16	Stroll	0
17	Giovinazzi	0
18	Palmer	0
19	Vandoorne	0
20	Alonso	0
21	Ericsson	0

Constructors' championship

1	Mercedes	136
2	Ferrari	135
3	Red Bull	57
4	Force India	31
5	Williams	18
6	Toro Rosso	13
7	Haas	8
8	Renault	6
9	Sauber	0
10	McLaren	0

Wins

Vettel	2
Hamilton	1
Bottas	1

Fastest laps

Hamilton	2
Raikkonen	2

Pole positions

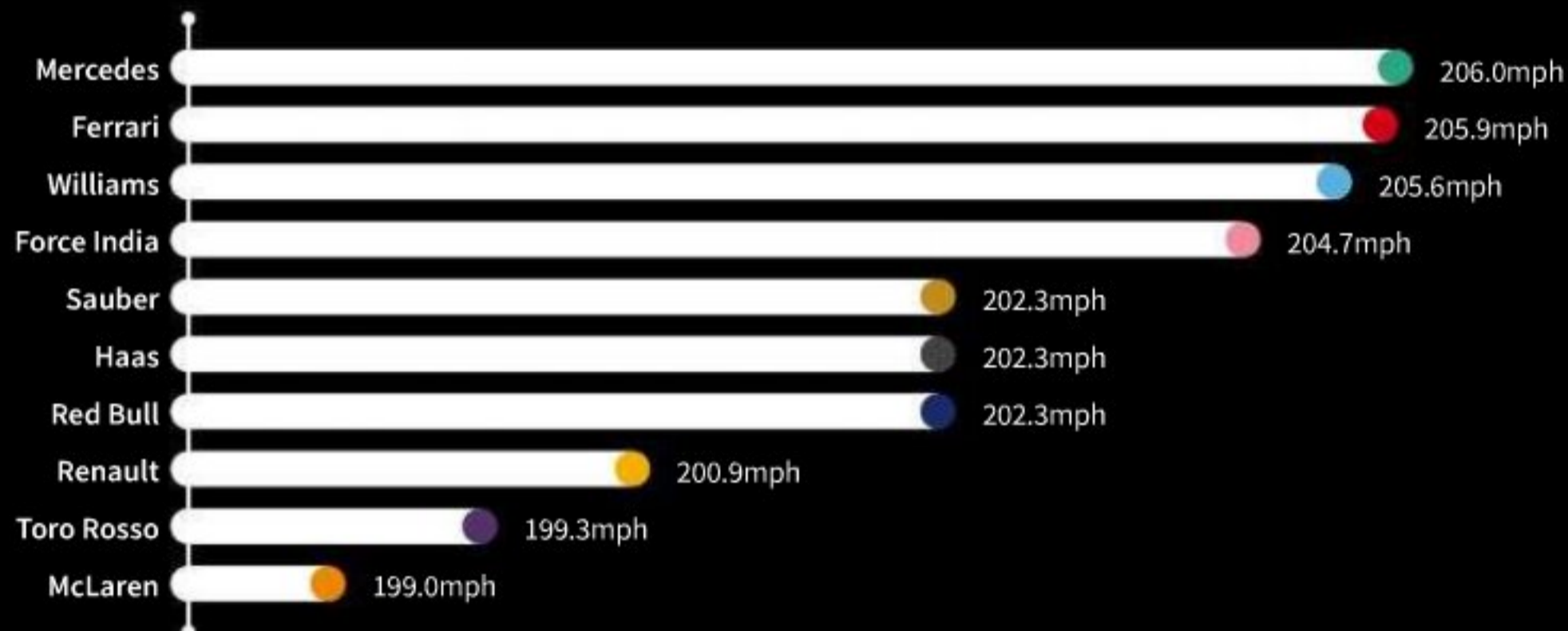
Hamilton	2
Bottas	1
Vettel	1

Qualifying battle

HAM	2	2	BOT
RIC	3	1	VER
VET	4	0	RAI
PER	3	1	OCO
STR	0	4	MAS
VAN	0	4	ALO
KVY	2	2	SAI
GRO	2	2	MAG
HUL	4	0	PAL
ERI	0	2	WEH
ERI	2	0	GIO

SPEED TRAP

Fastest for each constructor in qualifying



Friday practice 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Raikkonen	1m36.074s
2	Bottas	1m36.119s
3	Hamilton	1m36.681s
4	Verstappen	1m37.174s
5	Vettel	1m37.230s
6	Ricciardo	1m37.290s
7	Perez	1m37.457s
8	Massa	1m37.900s
9	Stroll	1m37.944s
10	Ocon	1m38.065s
11	Kvyat	1m38.496s
12	Magnussen	1m38.747s
13	Alonso	1m38.813s
14	Sainz	1m38.976s
15	Palmer	1m39.158s
16	Grosjean	1m39.533s
17	Vandoorne	1m39.541s
18	Wehrlein	1m39.731s
19	Ericsson	1m40.079s
20	Sirotkin	no time

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 34C, air 19C

Friday practice 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m34.120s
2	Raikkonen	1m34.383s
3	Bottas	1m34.790s
4	Hamilton	1m34.829s
5	Verstappen	1m35.540s
6	Ricciardo	1m35.910s
7	Massa	1m36.261s
8	Hulkenberg	1m36.329s
9	Magnussen	1m36.506s
10	Perez	1m36.600s
11	Ocon	1m36.654s
12	Alonso	1m36.765s
13	Palmer	1m36.771s
14	Grosjean	1m37.039s
15	Sainz	1m37.083s
16	Vandoorne	1m37.125s
17	Kvyat	1m37.300s
18	Wehrlein	1m37.441s
19	Stroll	1m37.747s
20	Ericsson	1m37.819s

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 40C, air 22C

Saturday practice 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m34.001s
2	Raikkonen	1m34.338s
3	Bottas	1m34.364s
4	Hamilton	1m34.542s
5	Verstappen	1m35.452s
6	Massa	1m35.471s
7	Hulkenberg	1m35.662s
8	Ricciardo	1m35.830s
9	Sainz	1m36.164s
10	Magnussen	1m36.556s
11	Stroll	1m36.649s
12	Ocon	1m36.676s
13	Kvyat	1m36.846s
14	Alonso	1m36.869s
15	Perez	1m36.962s
16	Grosjean	1m37.164s
17	Vandoorne	1m37.182s
18	Ericsson	1m37.503s
19	Wehrlein	1m37.657s
20	Palmer	no time

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 33C, air 19C

Bottas comes of age in Russia

Leading duo, a midfielder and a non-starter are the star performers at Sochi
 By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

[@BenAndersonAuto](#)

MERCEDES



5 LEWIS HAMILTON
 “One of those weekends” for Hamilton, who struggled worst with Mercedes’ ultra-soft-tyre troubles and was behind his team-mate in every session. Engine overheating spoiled the first part of his race, but regardless this was the first event of 2017 where he was clearly second best at Mercedes.



9 VALTTERI BOTTAS
 Bottas did a much better job than Hamilton coping with Mercedes’ tyre difficulties at Sochi. Could perhaps be faulted for narrowly missing pole after topping Q2, but came of age in the race. Was fortunate to survive that huge lock-up at Turn 13, but managed the pressure from Vettel expertly at the end.

RED BULL



8 DANIEL RICCIARDO
 Ricciardo struggled in practice, but switching tyre-preparation strategy in Q3 seemed to do the trick and he qualified as high up as the Red Bull merited. Made a good start but got trapped by Raikkonen and Hamilton on the outside through Turn 1, before a brake fire curtailed his chances of fighting back.

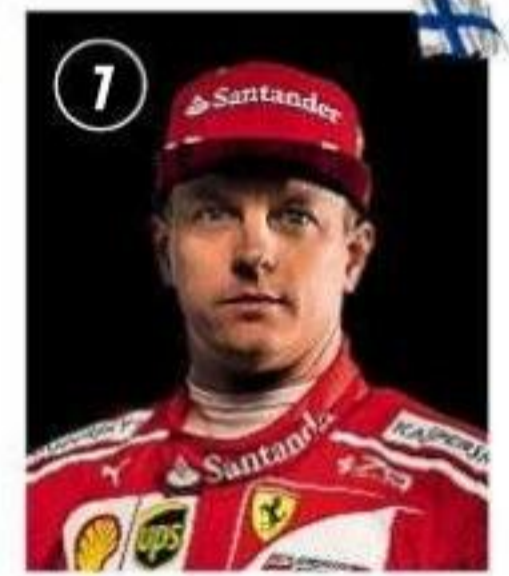


8 MAX VERSTAPPEN
 Seemed to suffer a similar but less severe case of Hamilton’s weak-rear-end illness in Q3, where Verstappen ended up behind Massa’s Williams. Made up for that with a typically feisty first lap, before settling into a lonely race where he was so underoccupied he could watch the lead battle on the TV screens.

FERRARI

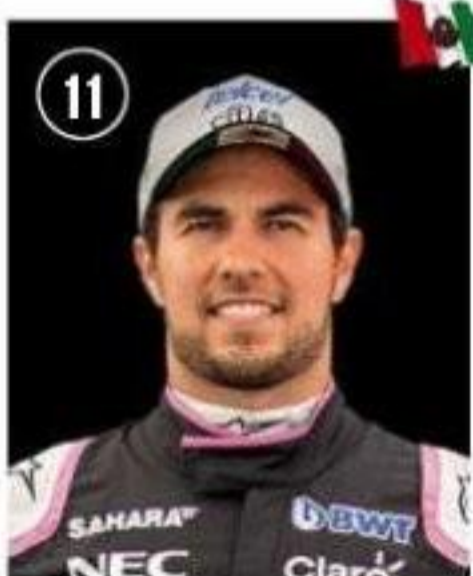


9 SEBASTIAN VETTEL
 Vettel did an excellent job to steal in ahead of Bottas and Raikkonen and claim pole with an expertly controlled lap under pressure in Q3. Was probably powerless to resist Bottas at the start of the race, but came back brilliantly at the end. Slight hesitation behind Massa curtailed a thrilling showdown.

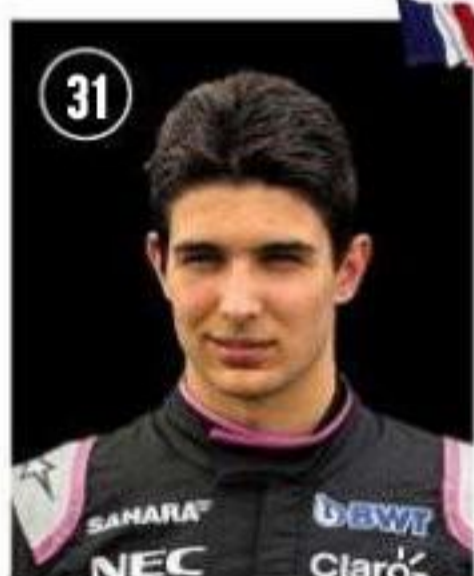


8 KIMI RAIKKONEN
 Couldn’t quite deliver a clean lap at the crucial moment in Q3, but this was his best effort of 2017 so far. Paid for another bad start in the race, where he was almost two tenths per lap slower than Vettel on average. Fastest lap by almost half a second shows Raikkonen can be rapid, but he still lacks consistency.

FORCE INDIA

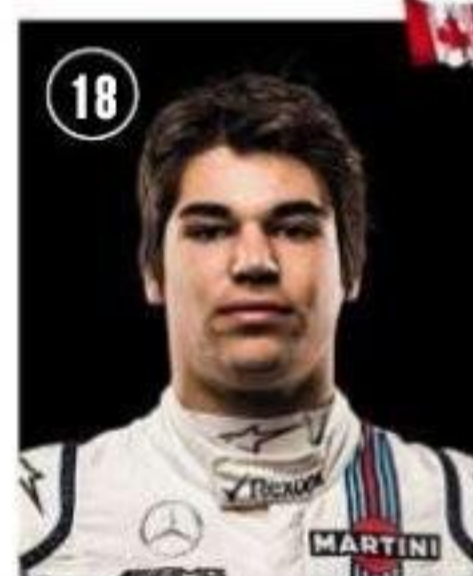


9 SERGIO PEREZ
 Perez is driving very well this year, in a car that is not the best in the midfield. Recovered from an error on his first Q2 run to make the top-10 shootout and drove a strong race, jumping Hulkenberg at the start and briefly challenging Ricciardo and Massa too. Benefited from their problems to finish sixth.



8 ESTEBAN OCON
 Ocon feels the post-Bahrain GP test has helped to better integrate himself within Force India, and the result was his strongest qualifying performance so far in 2017, making Q3 and lapping within a tenth of Perez. Wasn’t quite on that level in the race, but didn’t finish far behind. This was his best weekend this season.

WILLIAMS



6 LANCE STROLL
 Stroll’s difficulties getting the Pirelli tyres to work continued here and he was nearly a second off Massa in qualifying, struggling to put clean laps together. Needed a clean race, but spun over the kerb at Turn 7 while racing Hulkenberg on lap one. Recovery to 11th was decent and he finished, but points went begging.



8 FELIPE MASSA
 Another strong effort from Massa, who is clearly revelling in this year’s Williams and being the team’s lead driver. Perhaps should have beaten both Red Bulls in qualifying after being quicker than Verstappen in FP3, and lost out at the start, but was on for sixth until a slow puncture forced an unscheduled stop.

McLAREN



7 STOFFEL VANDOORNE
 Another tough weekend for Vandoorne, who struggled with the tyres and qualified more than seven tenths behind Alonso. Engine penalties sent him to the back, but he jumped the Saubers early on and kept pace with Stroll’s Williams for a time. Did what he could in a difficult car and finally finished a race.



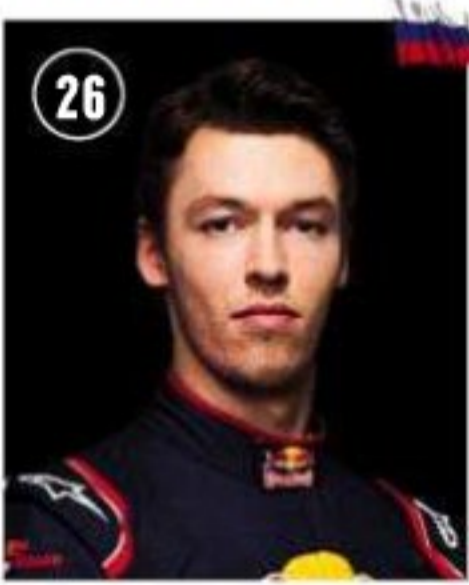
9 FERNANDO ALONSO
 Alonso called the qualifying lap that put him into Q2 again “unbelievable”, and he did his usual excellent job capitalising on others’ struggles. Said the Honda engine was costing 2.5s on the straights, which would have meant a long and arduous race but for the ERS failure that forced him out before the start.

Ocon had his best run so far for Force India

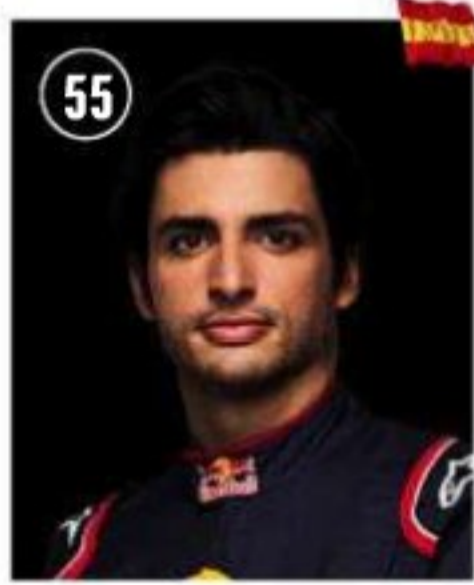


LAT IMAGES

TORO ROSSO



7 **DANIIL KVIAT**
Said the car never felt good through practice, but a set-up correction for qualifying put him back in the mix and he qualified within two hundredths of his team-mate. Kvyat's race unravelled thanks to a bad start, a poorly timed stop, and a subsequent "mess" of getting lapped by the leaders. Not a race to remember.

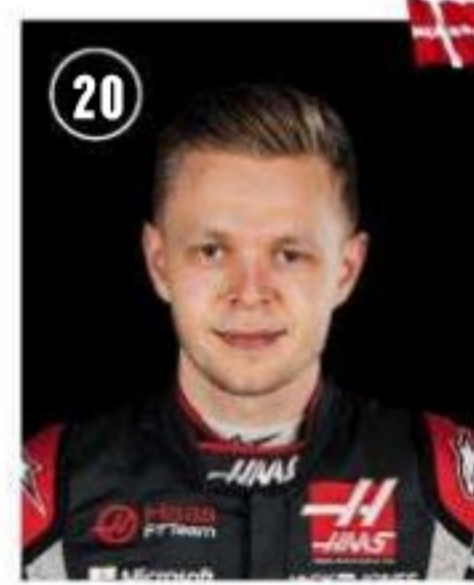


7 **CARLOS SAINZ JR**
Not comfortable on Friday, but "a lot of changes" brought familiarity with the car back to Sainz and he was more competitive on Saturday. Mysteriously lacked grip on his second Q2 run so missed Q3, but jumped Kvyat and Stroll on lap one, Magnussen in the pits, and stroked it home while managing a suspension problem.

HAAS

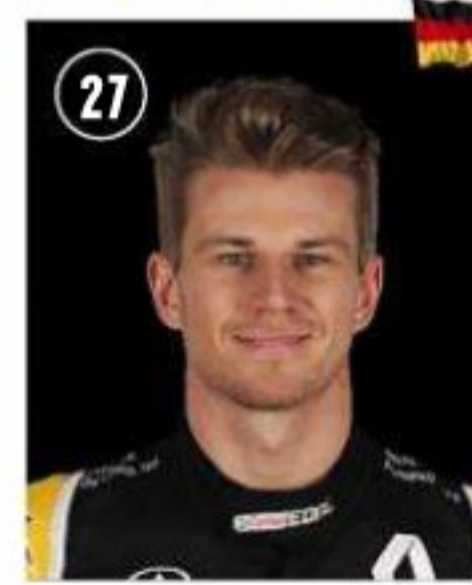


3 **ROMAIN GROSJEAN**
A woeful weekend for Grosjean, who couldn't get comfortable in the Haas, struggling with oversteer in some places and severe brake locking and understeer in others. He was way off Magnussen's pace and anticipated a "long and painful" race, but that lasted only a few metres before he collided with Palmer at Turn 2.

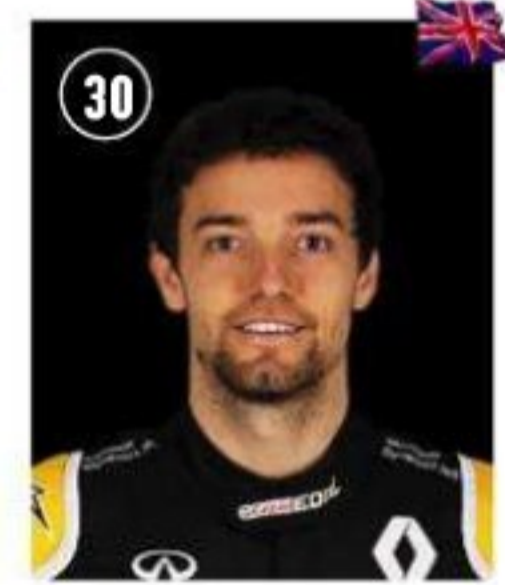


7 **KEVIN MAGNUSSEN**
Suffered much less than Grosjean with the balance of the car, but scraped through Q1 behind Alonso. Made a better job of Q2, where he was within a tenth of qualifying 11th. Should have scored a point in the race, but paid dearly for not following procedure after running wide to avoid the Turn 2 melee after the start.

RENAULT



7 **NICO HULKENBERG**
Qualified strongly again – within two tenths of the faster cars of Massa and Verstappen and ahead of the rest of the midfield. Dropped behind both Force Indias on the first lap, which cost him a top-six finish. Ran a long first stint to try to fight back at the end. He homed in, but the need to save fuel spoiled his fun.

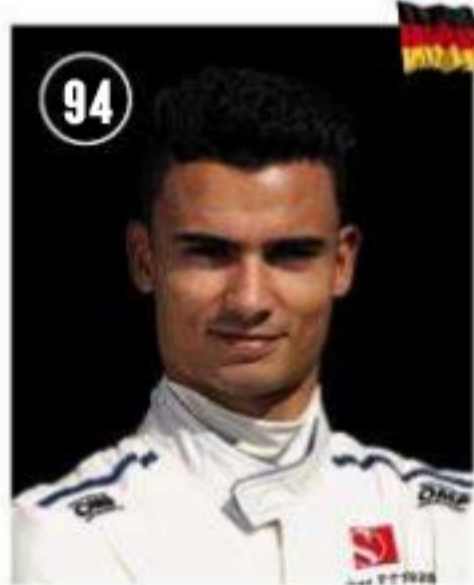


4 **JOLYON PALMER**
Nightmare start to 2017 continued in Russia, where an exhaust problem wrecked his chassis on Friday and a mysterious power loss spoiled final practice. Palmer crashed trying to recover in Q1, which meant another major repair job, before an unfortunate prang with Grosjean at the start of the race.

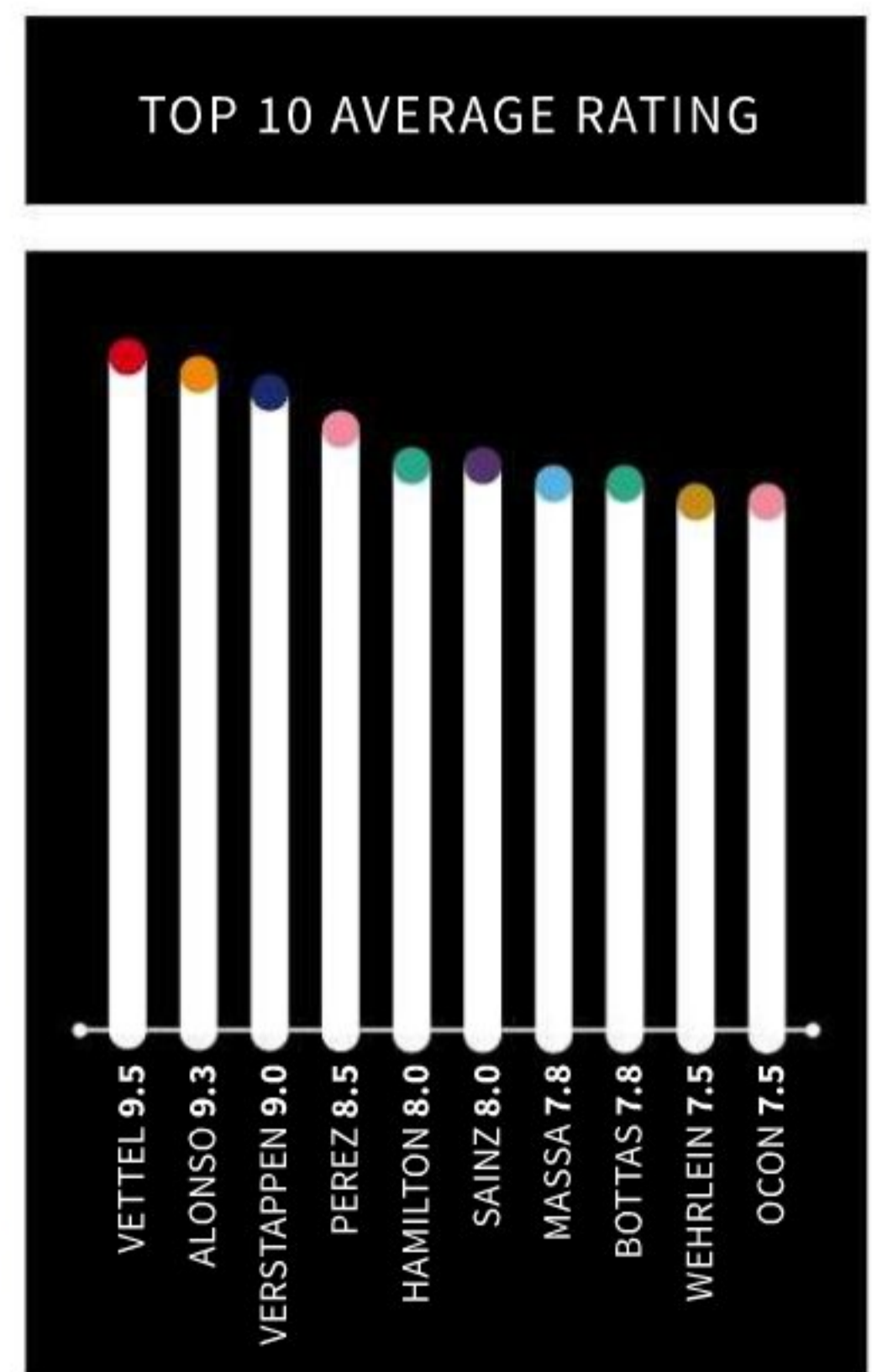
SAUBER



7 **MARCUS ERICSSON**
A pretty decent weekend overall for Ericsson, who was a shade under two tenths slower than Wehrlein in qualifying and endured a "terrible" first 10 laps of the race, but thereafter improved dramatically. Jumped Wehrlein in the pits and chased after Vandoorne. Finishing within three seconds was a good effort.



6 **PASCAL WEHRLEIN**
A puzzling event for Wehrlein, who was the quicker of the Sauber drivers in qualifying and for the first 18 laps of the race. He lost a heap of time around the second pitstop phase, saying floor damage cost him downforce, but his pace picked up again for 10 laps or so afterwards, before tailing off badly.

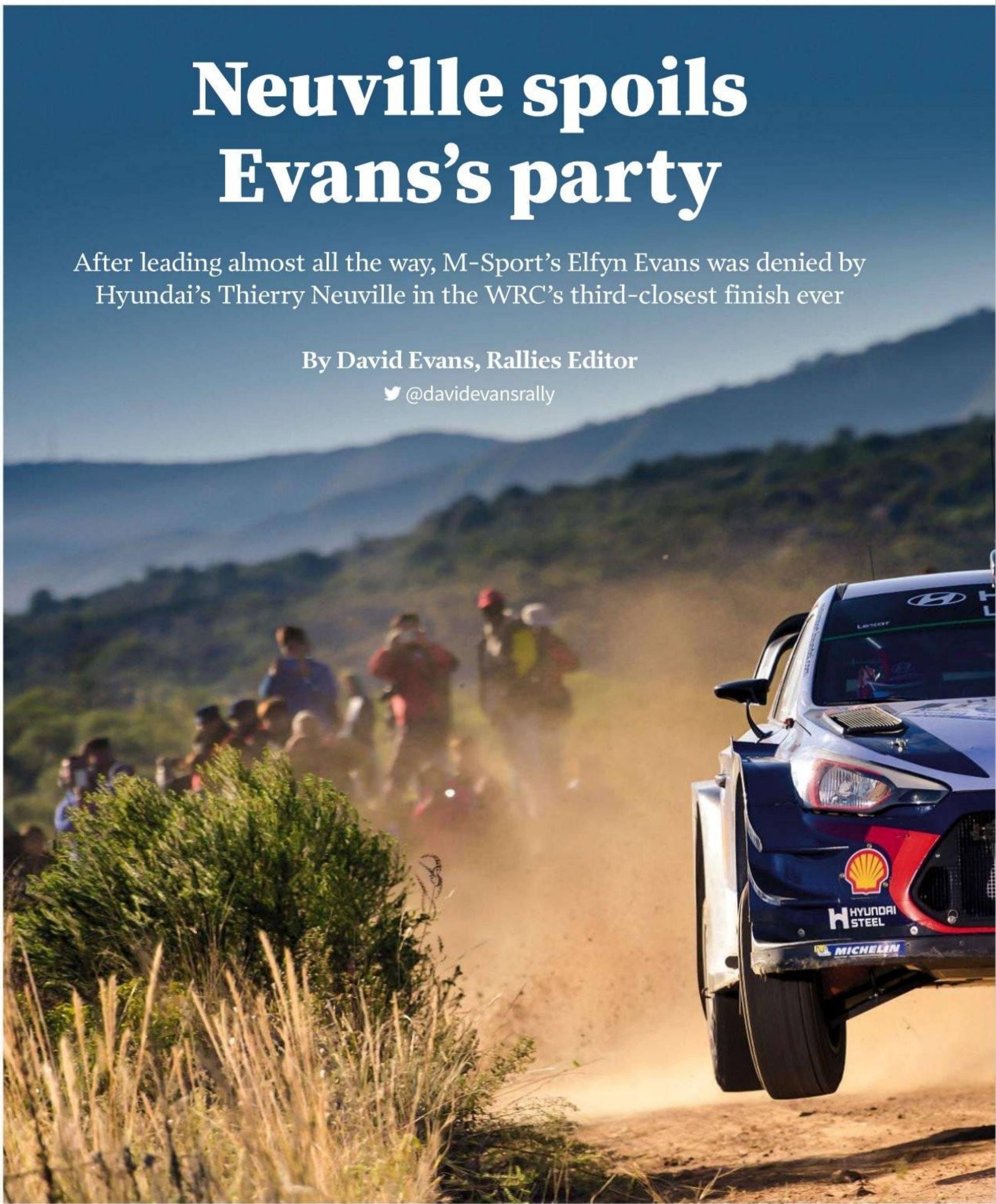


Neuville spoils Evans's party

After leading almost all the way, M-Sport's Elfyn Evans was denied by Hyundai's Thierry Neuville in the WRC's third-closest finish ever

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

[@davidevansrally](#)





The stage was set. It wasn't the biggest; it was just about shoehorned in between the rocks. But the speakers that flanked the stage were... well, they were massive. It was still 39 hours – two nights – before the first rally car would be passing, but this particular party was well under way.

El Condor sits in a rock formation at 7500 feet; it's a World Rally Championship pilgrimage and last week was no different. Year on year, tens of thousands of fans pour into the stage, perching high in the foothills of the Andes to watch their heroes thread the eye of a needle and hurl half-million-pound World Rally Cars between boulders that litter the season's most surreal landscape.

Last week, Elfyn Evans and Thierry Neuville took things to another level for the pilgrims. Split by just 11.5 seconds when they arrived at the start of two runs at El Condor (split by a dash through the equally iconic Mina Clavero-Giulio Cesare stage just down the road), the pair was ready to put on a show that had been worth waiting for.

Argentinian rally fans are among the most passionate and emotional of them all, and Welshman Evans and Belgian Neuville gave them a great storyline last weekend.

Twelve months ago, give or take, Evans was in Carlisle griping about beating the bogey and losing the Pirelli Rally. Banned by the M-Sport World Rally Team, he was fighting for his career in a season that would define the rest of his life.

On paper, he emerged from 2016 as British Rally champion. In reality, he emerged from the year as a different person, a hardened fighter ready to return to the WRC's mean streets. Reunited with co-driver Dan Barritt, the partnership clicked and was – almost – immediately on the pace. Fastest times on the Monte Carlo Rally in January not only highlighted Evans's potential, but also that of the DMACK-tyred Ford Fiesta WRC he was driving. From the next three rallies things went slightly awry: the DMACKs didn't like Sweden; a pre-event engine change scuppered Mexico; and hydraulic failure put the kibosh on Corsica.

But through each of those events there had been spikes: fastest splits, fastest times. There was hope. But the glory would have to wait.

Wait until Argentina. Evans has fond memories of Villa Carlos Paz. Two years ago, when Kris Meeke celebrated his first World Rally win, Evans and Barritt shared the Argentinian podium after finishing third. Evans was, however, more than three minutes behind the Northern >>

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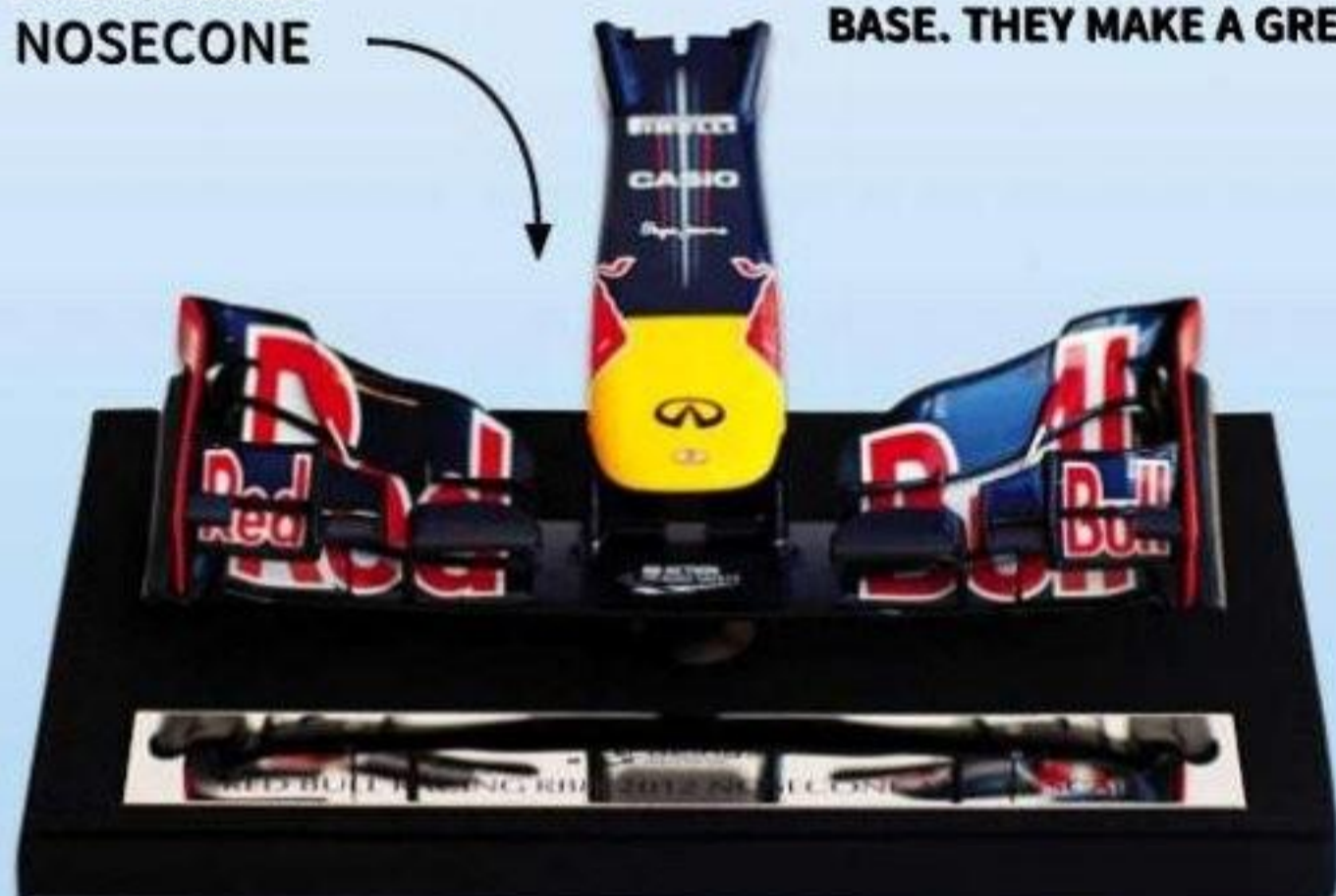
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Irishman, and Meeke was the first to admit that his pace had slackened following the demise of all three factory Volkswagens on the event.

Twenty-four months on and Evans left the best in the world trailing as he pulled fastest time after fastest time to open a lead of more than a minute.

Much was made of Evans's starting position of ninth on the road on day one, but this wasn't about those ahead cleaning the stages. Championship leader Sebastien Ogier, Evans's fellow M-Sport driver, was out front all day and the Frenchman was gracious enough to concede that sweeping loose gravel clear hadn't cost him too much.

No, Friday was about two things: a harder soft tyre from DMACK and a purple patch for the fastest thing to come out of Dolgellau since Evans the older, Gwyndaf.

Success in Argentina is about speed – not the ultimate speed, but a speed that can be safely maintained. Evans found that, slotted into that groove and drove beautifully for the first day and the first stage of Saturday. A couple of punctures, a damper-related issue and an inspired fightback from Neuville slashed the gap and brought us to a nervous Sunday morning.

Over Sunday-morning eggs, Evans was talking the talk: "If he wants it, he's going to have to bloody well fight for it."

M-Sport team principal Malcolm Wilson loved it. "That's great," he said, "that's what we want. This is the new Elfyn, this is the hungry Elfyn, the fighter we knew was in there."

Any advice? "I told him to do what he was doing on Friday – he was unbeatable then. He's got to give it absolutely everything and see what happens."

Two doors along lay the hunter, relaxed and polishing his glasses. "If I can do the same pace I did yesterday, it should be OK," said Neuville. "But, you know, we can't forget [Ott] Tanak is not far behind, I will be looking over my shoulder a little bit as well."

Nobody was buying that. The Hyundai man would be looking forward more than



he would backward. There was definitely more tension at M-Sport.

Suddenly, the world had descended on the DMACK car. Not since Tanak's near-miss in Poland last season had the boys in black, white and red been in such demand. And that was another part of last week for Evans. Leading a round of the WRC really is about so much more than just sitting in P1.

The pressure is everywhere – it's in the fact that you find yourself doing live TV well into the evening when you'd been hoping to watch tomorrow's onboard just one last time. It's in the fact that you're mobbed every time you step out of the car.

The fans in Argentina are some of the most passionate anywhere in the world and, last week, the centre of their attention was Evans.

M-Sport's Evans drove beautifully for the first day and the first stage of Saturday...

"Ealveen" was the early effort, but that gave way to the more straightforward: "Evans, Evans!", which was slightly surreal from this writer's perspective.

"I could hire you to deal with them for me," laughed the leader on the Saturday night.

Post-breakfast on Sunday, Evans needed to be away. He spent a good 10 minutes nervously unscrewing a bottle of water, only to tighten the lid back up without drinking anything.

Finally service was done and Evans and Barritt could go into their own world and get on with their job. Three minutes further up the road towards El Condor and party town, Neuville and his co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul were plotting, planning.

Things didn't quite go to plan through the first Sunday stage, with Evans suffering more of the brake problems he'd endured on the opening day. "My foot went to the floor," he said at the finish, "but then by some miracle the brakes came back in the middle of the stage."

He dropped 2.5s to Neuville. Worse was to come. After having its brakes bled, the DMACK Fiesta was stopping perfectly in Mina Clavero, but it just wasn't quite so keen on going anymore. The engine had started to overheat, costing him a further 8.4s.

So, one stage still to run and the gap to Neuville was chopped to just six tenths of a second.

The atmosphere among the hardcore went up another notch, and the 100mph local radio commentary more than conveyed the urgency and excitement >>



...but he wasn't so happy by the end of the rally

STRANGE CASE OF THE CRASHING CITROENS

TEN WINS IN THE PREVIOUS 12 YEARS OF RALLY Argentina, allied to Kris Meeke's Mexican success and Corsican speed, ensured that Citroen had arrived in Villa Carlos Paz as favourite to add to its glorious South American story.

But when the front-right wheels of both C3 WRCs hit the same rock in a super-fast right-left sequence on the road from Santa Rosa to San Agustin, all bets were off.

Rock? Hmm. Nobody else noticed the rock, a fact born out by the universal pace note for that corner, which led all the crews across the same line. Yet only the two French cars were sent skywards, with the quicker of those two slapping a bank and being pitched into a roll. And this came just hours after a compression in the first gravel stage left Meeke and Breen staring at blue sky.

"We have done some analysis already on what happened," said Citroen team principal Yves Matton, "but I cannot give you a definitive answer on what happened until we do more. One of the difficulties is that we cannot recreate this kind of road in Europe. One thing is clear – this was not the mistake from the drivers."

Mistake or not, both cars were out. Breen's car was locked in fifth gear, while Meeke's C3, which had been travelling 9mph faster at the point of impact, went off the road.

On the upside, both drivers returned and showed solid speed. Meeke and co-driver Paul Nagle weren't done with the rolling thing yet, though, and they endured the biggest crash of their careers in SS14.

"I'll take that one on the chin," said Meeke, "I ran a fraction wide in a long flat-right and, of course, there was a small rock waiting for us. We touched that and the car started to roll. It was a big, big accident."

Neuville and Evans after the tense encounter



that accompanied a six-tenths scrap through the final 10 miles.

With radios clamped to their ears, the locals looked on as the final chapter of what had been another breathtaking round of the 2017 World Rally Championship got under way.

Down the hill and across the lake in service, the door to M-Sport's command centre remained shut as the team radioed advice to Evans. Solemn-faced engineers slipped in and out, offering no comment and making it impossible to read or interpret the severity of the problem. Hyundai, by comparison, was serene.

No surprise given Neuville's comments coming out of the penultimate stage. "Everything was good," he said. "My notes were perfect, we got good

traction, I felt fully confident."

Evans at the same point? "More problems in there, I've got to go..."

His Ford had got a little too warm, forcing the ECU to deprive him of anti-lag for the second half of the stage. There had been a seismic shift in momentum, but it's important not to underplay Neuville's role in affecting it. Yes, Evans had been pretty much plagued by niggling issues since Saturday morning, but the Corsica winner had been on superb form to haul his Hyundai back into contention through the weekend. Both drivers could lay claim to this one; both deserved it.

The only split in Condor comes 3.5 miles into the stage and it's not rare to see big differences given the twisty and technical nature of that first sector. Two



Ott Tanak also proved a threat to Neuville





Fans in Argentina are some of the most passionate

days before, Evans had delivered green splits at just about every turn. As the people at M-Sport watched and waited, their screens were eyed with some degree of trepidation.

Another turn... he's 3.1s up! The M-Sport boys and girls made some noise.

Game back on. Evans was flying between the boulders and over the bridges. The third and final bridge, however, was a bridge too far. The entrances to all of those crossings are so narrow, they demand absolute precision. Running out of grip at the rear, the Fiesta slid a couple of inches wider than expected and touched the parapet. With no time for a TV repeat, it was impossible to judge the damage.

The next minute or so took an absolute lifetime. The rally went to Neuville. By seven tenths.

Delight and devastation were as one when Thierry put his arm around Elfyn. Neuville first: "That was the worst time of my life, waiting. He was quicker at the split and I didn't know. Unbelievable."

'Unbelievable' worked for Evans too. Hours after finishing on the wrong end of the third-closest rally finish in WRC history, Evans's face was still full of emotion.

Answering questions about the absence of seven tenths, there was the occasional pause and skyward look – a moment to gather thoughts and composure. Both he and Barritt looked punch-drunk, exhausted.

For the Brits, the hangover arrived far too hard on the heels of the party. ❄️

RESULTS ROUND 5/13, RALLY ARGENTINA, APRIL 27-30

POS	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Thierry Neuville (B)	Nicolas Gilsoul (B)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	3h38m10.6s
2	Elfyn Evans (GB)	Daniel Barritt (GB)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+0.7s
3	Ott Tanak (EST)	Martin Jarveoja (EST)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+29.9s
4	Sebastien Ogier (F)	Julien Ingrassia (F)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+1m24.7s
5	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	+1m48.1s
6	Hayden Paddon (NZ)	John Kennard (NZ)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+7m42.7s
7	Juho Hanninen (FIN)	Kaj Lindstrom (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	+11m16.9s
8	Dani Sordo (E)	Marc Marti (E)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+14m44.1s
9	Mads Ostberg (N)	Ola Floene (N)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+15m11.3s
10	Pontus Tidemand (S)	Jonas Andersson (S)	Skoda Motorsport · Skoda Fabia R5	+17m32.1s
OTHERS				
15	Craig Breen (IRL)	Scott Martin (GB)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	+1h22m01.5s
R	Lorenzo Bertelli (I)	Simone Scattolin (I)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	SS17-accident
R	Kris Meeke (GB)	Paul Nagle (IRL)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	SS14-accident

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ogier 102; 2 Latvala 86; 3 Neuville 84; 4 Tanak 66; 5 Sordo 51; 6 Evans 42; 7 Breen 33; 8 Paddon 33; 9 Meeke 27; 10 Hanninen 15.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 M-Sport WRT 162; 2 Hyundai Motorsport 140; 3 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC 99; 4 Citroen Total 71.

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 SSS Ciudad de Cordoba 1.09 miles	Ogier 1m53.8s	Ogier	Evans +0.9s
SS2 San Agustin - Villa General Belgrano 1 12.40 miles	Evans 12m42.3s	Evans	Meeke +6.4s
SS3 Amboy - Santa Monica 1 12.70 miles	Evans 10m18.8s	Evans	Meeke +8.7s
SS4 Santa Rosa - San Agustin 1 14.82 miles	Evans 13m44.8s	Evans	Latvala +23.6s
SS5 SSS Fernet Branca 1 (2 Laps) 3.75 miles	Evans 4m43.5s	Evans	Latvala +30.1s
SS6 San Agustin - Villa General Belgrano 2 12.40 miles	Evans 12m35.9s	Evans	Ostberg +47.6s
SS7 Amboy - Santa Monica 2 12.70 miles	Evans 10m21.1s	Evans	Ostberg +47.7s
SS8 Santa Rosa - San Agustin 2 14.82 miles	Paddon 13m39.0s	Evans	Ostberg +52.8s
SS9 SSS Fernet Branca 2 (2 Laps) 3.75 miles	Neuville 4m49.4s	Evans	Ostberg +55.7s
SS10 Tanti - Villa Bustos 1 12.92 miles	Evans 11m00.2s	Evans	Neuville +1m01.5s
SS11 Los Gigantes - Cantera El Condor 1 24.03 miles	Meeke 20m01.6s	Evans	Neuville +55.9s
SS12 Boca del Arroyo - Bajo del Pungo 1 12.75 miles	Meeke 13m18.2s	Evans	Neuville +44.1s
SS13 Tanti - Villa Bustos 2 12.92 miles	Tanak 10m47.9s	Evans	Neuville +45.5s
SS14 Los Gigantes - Cantera El Condor 2 24.03 miles	Tanak 19m45.5s	Evans	Neuville +30.4s
SS15 Boca del Arroyo - Bajo del Pungo 2 12.75 miles	Neuville 12m59.5s	Evans	Neuville +11.5s
SS16 El Condor - Copina 10.14 miles	Tanak 13m07.0s	Evans	Neuville +9.0s
SS17 Mina Clavero - Giulio Cesare 14.07 miles	Neuville 18m05.0s	Evans	Neuville +0.6s
SS18 El Condor [Power Stage] 10.14 miles	Neuville 13m00.1s	Neuville	Evans +0.7s

LAT IMAGES



Mr Versatile's new challenge

Loic Duval is a world champion and Le Mans winner, but starts from zero in his first season in the DTM

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

[@gazzasportscars](#)

He's won Formula Nippon and Super GT titles in Japan, and, more recently, the Le Mans 24 Hours and the World Endurance Championship. Loic Duval should be regarded as a modern-day all-rounder of our sport even before you factor in a couple of A1GP wins and Formula E podiums, but he knows he faces one of the biggest challenges of his career this year with a move to the DTM with Audi. He's up for it though, while not underestimating the task that lies ahead.

"It's a positive thing knowing that you've won championships in most of the things you've done," says Duval, who lines up this weekend at Hockenheim aboard a Phoenix-run Audi RS5 for his first race with the German marque after the end of its WEC programme. "That gives you confidence, but I know the DTM isn't going to be easy."

You'd think seven years in Super GT between 2006 and '12 in an ostensibly similar type of racing car might stand Duval in good stead as he makes the transition from a four-wheel-drive Audi LMP1 turbodiesel hybrid. But he's not so sure. He reckons the DTM control Hankook tyre makes his experience more-or-less meaningless, even if there's new-spec rubber available this season.

"It's almost as though I haven't driven a car like this," explains the Frenchman. "The cars are quite similar, but the tyres are so different, the way they behave, the way you have to drive on them. It's not a question of the tyres being good or bad; it is about understanding them. I know from LMP1 that when you can't get the tyres in the correct window, you are nowhere."

Duval also knows he's up against some experienced hands who have that understanding in the German-based tin-top series, including the odd one who was competing when he was on the DTM undercard in the Formula 3 Euro Series in 2004-05.

"When I was a young driver doing F3 and looking up at the DTM thinking how awesome it was, Mattias Ekstrom was

already there and winning the title. He's still super-competitive today because he has so much experience. Even some of the really young drivers have a lot of experience."

And that is something Duval does not have as he heads to Hockenheim. He initially sampled a car back in his first season with Audi in 2012, but didn't climb back into one until a test at Jerez last December. That was in one of last year's cars, so his total time in the 2017 DTM challenger amounts to half a day at the Algarve circuit earlier in the year (in a car that wasn't in full 2017 specification) and a day and a half at Hockenheim earlier this month.

"Experience is so important when you look at how close it is in qualifying in the DTM; if you are missing three tenths you are at the back," says Duval. "If you make only a small mistake in qualifying, you are on the back foot."

Put it to Duval that it might take him a year to get to grips with his new challenge, and he says he "wouldn't be happy with that".

"The question mark is whether my engineer and I are going to put everything together for the first weekend or if it is going to take some time," says the 34-year-old. "I'm really aware of that, so I'm not going to say that I'm going to be on the podium from the first weekend. When we put everything together, then the results will come."

Duval reveals that the chance to move to the DTM was there almost straight away after the announcement last October that Audi's LMP1 programme was coming to an end.

"The door was open a few hours after we were told that Audi was stopping racing in the WEC," he says. "There were details to work out and I had some good options for the WEC and for Le Mans, but I'm not going to say from who, like some other guys." That's a cheeky reference to other Audi drivers insisting they had the chance to join Toyota for 2017.

"When the boss rings and says he'd like to keep you to do the DTM, you get a lot of confidence," he continues. "I feel really comfortable at Audi Sport; they gave me the opportunity to win Le Mans and become world champion."

Duval joined Audi for a partial 2012 WEC campaign, >>





including Le Mans, after two successful seasons racing the French ORECA team's semi-factory Peugeot 908 HDi FAP, a stint that yielded victory at the Sebring 12 Hours in 2011 and fastest race lap at Le Mans in 2010. It also made him hot property in the sportscar world.

Duval was testing for the Peugeot factory squad and had an offer for an endurance programme in 2012. He was also in contact with Toyota through ORECA, a key partner in the Japanese manufacturer's WEC campaigns.

"I had a lot of opportunities to be honest, but I wanted to go to Le Mans and win it," says Duval. "This was 2011, remember, and we all know what Audi achieved in the years before. On top of that I already had two really good friends in Benoit [Treluyer] and Andre [Lotterer] at Audi. It was an easy decision in the end."

And a fortuitous one, given that Peugeot would announce its withdrawal from the LMP1 ranks just two months before the reborn WEC was about to begin. "The more I think about it, going with Audi was the dream choice," he says.

Duval contested three races with Audi in 2012 before being promoted to its full-time WEC squad for the following year. Le Mans success and the world title followed alongside Tom Kristensen and Allan McNish in his first full season, but '14 was interrupted by the monster shunt in the Porsche Curves at Le Mans that threatened to derail his career. Some have suggested that it took a driver who spent the summer plagued by double-vision a year to get back to his best.

But Duval disagrees with that: "The accident came at the wrong time for me. We struggled for the rest of that season with a car that wasn't competitive against the Toyota and then the year after we weren't competitive against the Porsche. It was easy for people to say that the crash was the reason we were not winning."

Duval points out that during the race at Le Mans in 2015, he set the fastest split time through the scene of his accident in free practice 12 months before.

"Maybe that doesn't mean anything, but for me it was

important to say, 'Look, the crash doesn't matter anymore,'" he says. "It took a weight off my mind."

If the accident came at a bad time for Duval, so did the news of Audi's withdrawal from the WEC. Last year's radical R18 e-tron quattro was finally coming good, with a dominant victory for the Frenchman together with Lucas di Grassi and Oliver Jarvis in the season finale in Bahrain. And so too was his partnership with his team-mates after a difficult first season in 2015, a campaign during which they appeared to have a monopoly on Audi's bad luck.

"We needed a bit of time," he says. "If you have some luck straight away, it helps fix everything together and allows you to build as a team of drivers. Even if we weren't that lucky last year if you look at Silverstone and Mexico [where hybrid and wheel-bearing issues intervened respectively], we were becoming a good trio. We didn't have any contact and not one of us put a wheel off the track. We had a feeling that it was all coming good."

"We also knew we were going to have the weapon to do well this year. We know we would have had strong opposition, but we believed we were going to have a car that could win races."

Duval still has ambitions in sportscar racing for the future. He wants to "got back to Le Mans in good conditions to try to win it again", and there's also the little matter of the Daytona 24 Hours, success in which would make him a member of the elite group to win the unofficial triple crown of endurance after his 2011 Sebring and '13 Le Mans victories.

"I want to go back to Daytona," confirms Duval, who contested the race for the first time this year with the DragonSpeed squad. "It would be nice to win all three of those big races and there's only one more to win now."

First though, he needs to meet the new challenge of the DTM. He's going there as a former world champion with a bulging CV, but there's one fact about his 2017 campaign that he's happy to point out.

"I am," he says, "the only complete rookie." ❄️

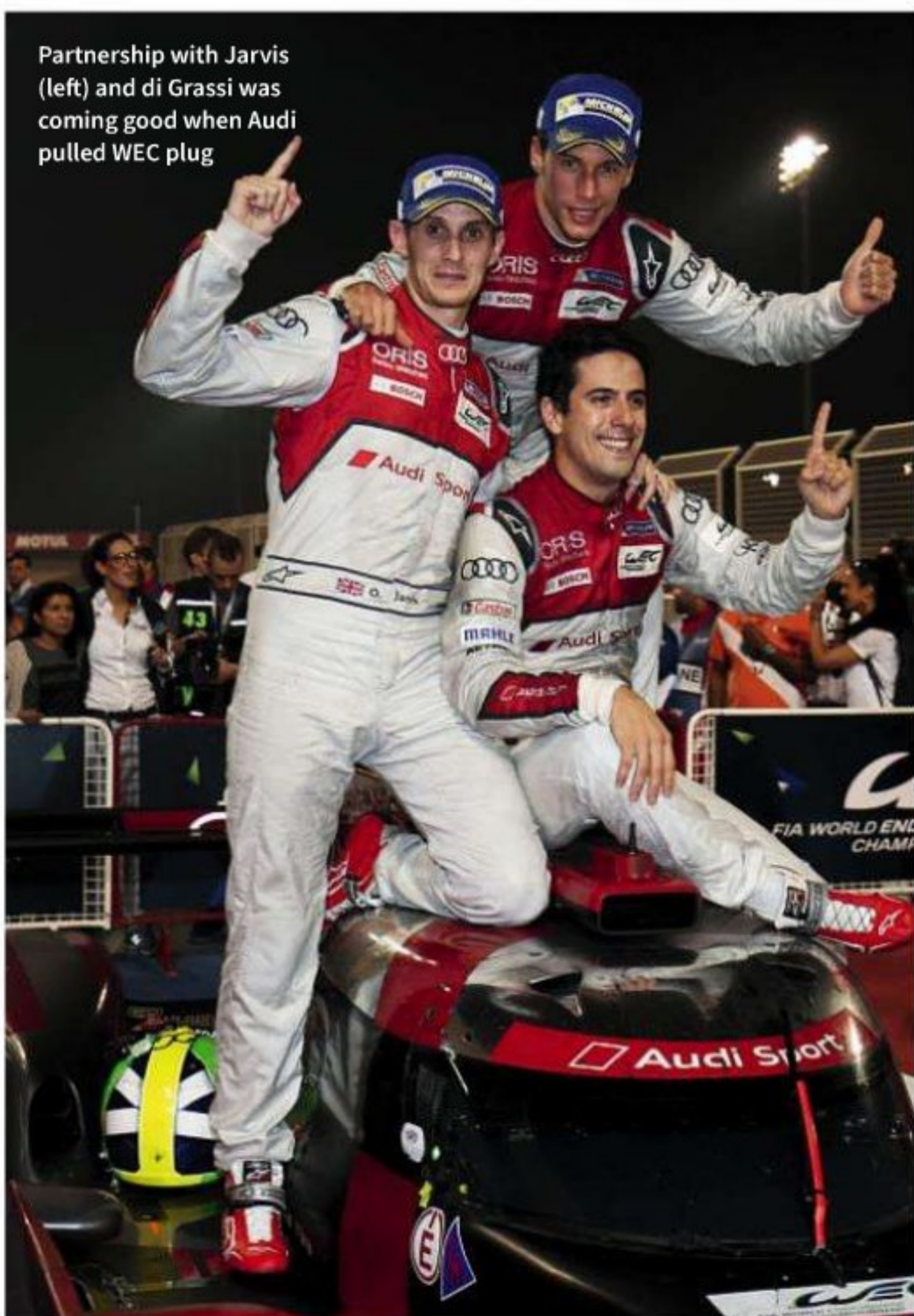
Le Mans win – and the world title – came in 2013 with McNish and Kristensen

Duval will continue to race in Formula E



Duval, here alongside Lotterer, won 2009 Nippon crown

Partnership with Jarvis (left) and di Grassi was coming good when Audi pulled WEC plug



Audi's take on the new rules

THE DTM TECHNICAL RULES have been tweaked for 2017, aimed at making the cars faster and more challenging to drive.

To help improve the on-track spectacle, the DTM has widened the air restrictors from 28mm to 29mm, boosting the power output to over 500bhp and increasing torque. The pistons, intake geometry and manifold have also been slightly modified.

Audi project leader Stefan Guger believes the changes could be good for fans: "We have more engine power; therefore end-of-straight speed will be higher. This is better for the show and maybe we will see more mistakes from some drivers."

This year's DTM cars will also feature a new DRS, which is closer to F1's current concept. "We've used DRS since 2013, but that system was a monoplane and the new system is with a bi-plane, a little bit more like Formula 1 and it is more efficient," explains Guger.

There has been a significant change to the tyres, with Hankook producing a soft-compound range, designed to open up variable tyre strategies. Tyre blankets have also been abandoned.

"The degradation is quite high and you have to find a compromise in the set-up for

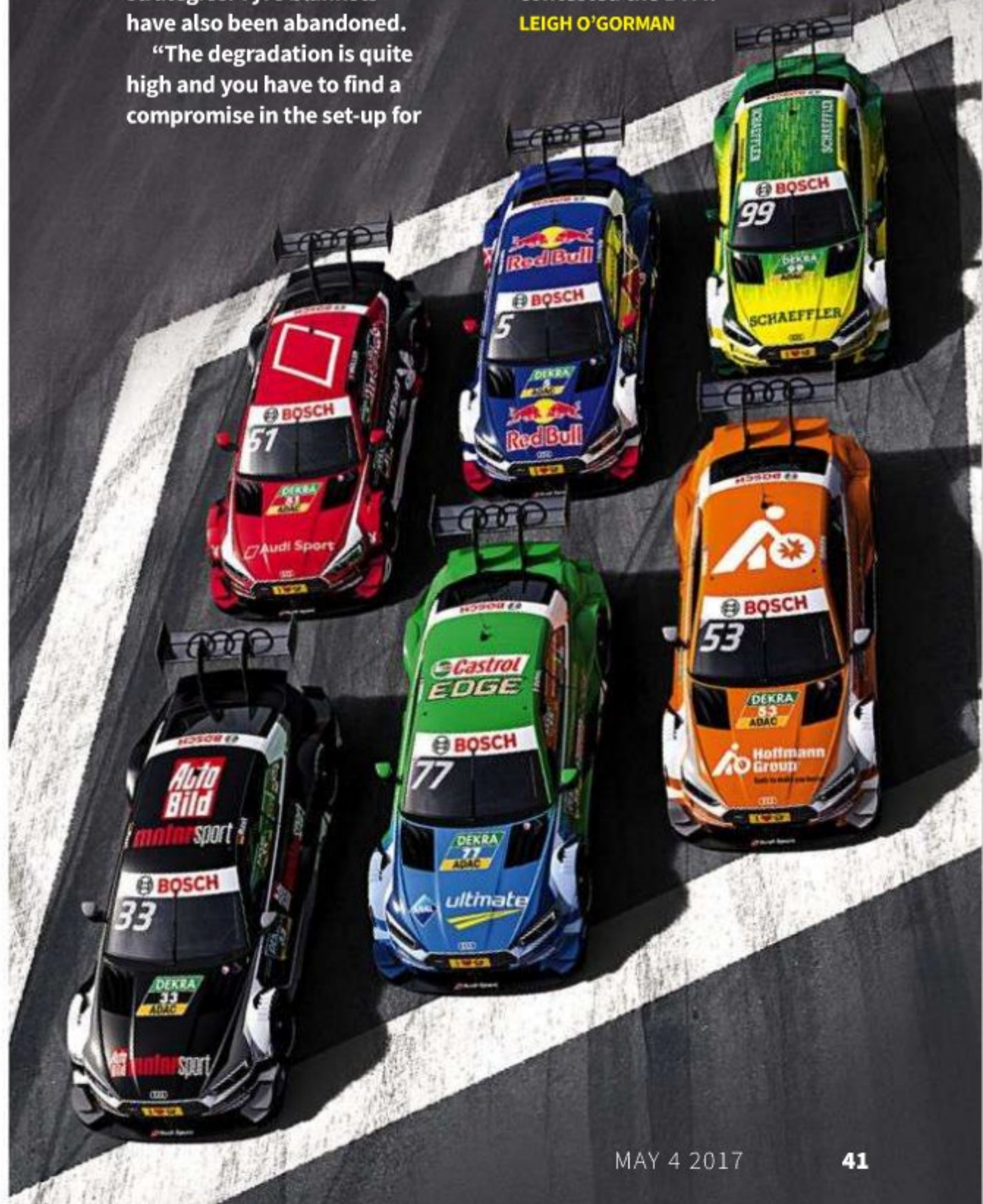
the qualifying and the race," says Guger, who also believes the new tyres will play into the hands of more instinctive racers. "The driver has to feel maybe more than with the old tyre, but still he has to go for the maximum and this will be very difficult this year."

In an effort to save on costs, the series has introduced a number of control parts, agreed upon by the manufacturers, which includes a common front splitter, a divided underfloor, rear diffuser, brakes and gearbox.

Guger confirms that while the suspension – an open area for development until 2017 – is now common, the teams still have some small variability to play with: "You can choose between two caster angles and the damper ratio is fixed, but still you can play with the kinematics, like the anti-dive, camber and all these things. It is still enough to play around for the engineers."

In a more visible effort to save money, each manufacturer has also agreed to drop two cars each, shrinking the field to 18 entries – the lowest since 2011 when only Audi and Mercedes contested the DTM.

LEIGH O'GORMAN





Caution fortune aided Pagenaud's win

Pagenaud powers to first oval IndyCar win

INDYCAR SERIES
PHOENIX (USA)
APRIL 29
ROUND 4/16

"I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU, THIS IS JUST incredible," gushed Simon Pagenaud after scoring his first oval win and the 10th of his IndyCar career. "This is my best win because it's so strategic to win on an oval. You have to study what the others are doing, how your car is responding, adjust it during the race to be good at the end, and today was a perfect day. I couldn't be any happier."

Pagenaud might have got a lucky break to get into the lead, but the reigning champion's joy was a rare relief after a weekend of grumbling discontentment among several competitors.

It would be gratifying were IndyCar ever to hold an oval test or race weekend where conversations with drivers and engineers weren't dominated by discussions about downforce levels. Following the mid-February test at Phoenix International Raceway, the championship's competition department decided to increase the maximum allowable height/angle of the z-wing, the rearmost

element at the top of the rear wing, to create more downforce for the race weekend.

"We're hoping the cars will now race a little better," Bill Pappas, IndyCar's vice president of competition and race engineering, explained to Autosport before the race. "More downforce should allow them to run a greater variety of grooves around the track, give the cars more adjustability. But we'll have to see."

Not everyone was convinced of the merits of this change. "I'm not sure how increasing the downforce is going to improve the racing," said Team Penske president Tim Cindric. "The best racing and passing comes when you have tyre degradation, and added downforce gives you less."

"To make short-oval racing better, we need to run more power and less downforce. You know, there have been really good races here, so it's not like it's the track that's the problem. We need to get the package to fit the race track."

This echoed what Will Power had said before the race (and throughout his IndyCar career): "We keep trying to tell the series we need less downforce. Give us road-course horsepower and speedway wings. Let us leave dark marks on the exit of corners."

Some cars did that, but sadly the marks

AT A GLANCE

- 1 Pagnaud Penske
- 2 Power Penske
- 3 Hildebrand Ed Carpenter Racing

→ P48 RESULTS



LAT IMAGES



First-corner crash took out five cars



Hildebrand (right) scored first podium since 2011

were on the track's walls. With passing difficult, the starts and restarts, and in-laps and out-laps with the tyres not up to operating temperature, were the key chances to gain track position, and the first lap of the race was desperate.

From pole, Helio Castroneves held the lead, Josef Newgarden got around JR Hildebrand and then Power to take second, but at the end of lap one Mikhail Aleshin's Schmidt Peterson Motorsports car pinched down low at Turn 4 and looped into a spin. The accident also eliminated Marco Andretti, Graham Rahal, Max Chilton and championship leader Sebastien Bourdais.

Once the debris was cleared and the race got back under way on lap 22, there were four Penskes followed by Hildebrand and the strongest Honda-powered cars – Ganassi pair Tony Kanaan and Scott Dixon chased hard by SPM's James Hinchcliffe.

Following the first round of pitstops, although Power had slipped behind Pagnaud right before his stop, strong in and out-laps and a flawless performance by his pitcrew meant the 2014 champion emerged at the front, and he would lead the next 59 laps.

However, at the following round of stops around the 135-lap mark, Takuma Sato pushed

up the track on cold tyres and hit the Turn 4 wall (as Andretti Autosport team-mate Alex Rossi would do a couple of laps later), bringing out the second caution of the day. All the leaders had stopped by this point except Pagnaud, who was therefore able to put almost a lap on the whole field before pitting, effectively for a 'free' stop while his pursuers were slowed by the safety car.

The race restarted with Pagnaud having the handy buffers of Dixon, Kanaan, Hinchcliffe and Ryan Hunter-Reay between himself and Power, and while the Penske driver got around the latter two, he could not get a decent run on the Ganassi aces. Therefore with 100 of the 250 laps still to go the race was pretty much over. Pagnaud simply doesn't make mistakes when he's under no pressure.

Instead eyes turned to Newgarden and Hildebrand. Newgarden had had to make a front-wing change and had been supremely aggressive as he fought back. But in the final stint, as he tried to follow Dixon past a struggling Hunter-Reay, he clipped the Andretti Autosport car, necessitating another wing change. The following Castroneves moved up, and Hildebrand used the opportunity to pass all of them. He then rapidly closed in on Power, who

in the final stint was trapped behind Hildebrand's team-mate and team owner, Ed Carpenter, as he tried to lap Ed Jones.

Eventually blue flags waved and both Carpenter and Jones made way for the Power and Hildebrand combination and they continued their battle to the end, crossing the line nine seconds adrift of Pagnaud but with barely any time between them. It was Hildebrand's first top-three result since his infamous runner-up finish in the Indy 500 six years ago. Castroneves came home fourth, with Dixon and Kanaan the best of the Honda runners.

Power didn't curse his luck regarding the timing of the yellows, despite losing the lead through sheer chance, but he was puzzled as to why drivers already put a lap down by Pagnaud did not continue to have the blue flags waved at them to allow easier passage for the second and third-placed drivers. As the man who set fastest lap of the race, he felt he could have hunted down his victorious team-mate, but doubted he could have passed him.

If IndyCar wants to make oval races compelling, its 2018 car needs to have drastically different tyres and aerokits.

DAVID MALSHER



Eriksson leads
Schumacher (25),
Ilott (53) and Norris (31)

Norris, Eriksson and Ilott are supreme

FORMULA 3 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP
MONZA (I)
APRIL 29-30
ROUND 2/10

JUST AS IN THE EPIC 2014 SEASON OF Esteban Ocon, Tom Blomqvist and Max Verstappen, if you don't watch the Formula 3 European Championship this year then you're seriously missing out on the evolution of some amazing talents. Remarkably, Monza last weekend brought the same winners – Lando Norris, Joel Eriksson, Callum Ilott – in exactly the same order as the round-one Silverstone races. But the back-stories are making this compulsive viewing.

The most prominent of those back-stories at the high-speed Autodromo concerned the engine battle between Volkswagen and Mercedes. The Vee-Dubs – such as those used by Carlin (Norris's team) and Motopark (Eriksson's) – have generally been acknowledged during the current engine formula to have a very slight top-end advantage over the Mercs, which are a tad better on torque, so Monza would be a circuit where you would expect the VWs to flourish. It also appears that concessions given to VW tuner Spiess last autumn to make reliability improvements in the build-up to the Macau Grand Prix have not harmed their performance either.

There were grumblings among the Mercedes drivers that they were losing out in a straight

line, and it did seem during the first two races at Monza that Merc-powered Ilott had trouble overtaking. But, on the other hand, average speed-trap figures from qualifying proved inconclusive. And Ilott's Prema Powerteam squad would not be drawn to any conclusions before the whole team's performance was analysed. Besides, it does appear that Carlin and Motopark have made big strides over the winter.

Norris's win came from a VW lockout of the top five places race one, but on the other hand Ilott could have grabbed pole had he not run wide exiting the Lesmos on his last flying lap. Simultaneously, Jehan Daruvala grabbed a nice tow from Carlin team-mate Ferdinand Habsburg to pip Norris and Jake Dennis to pole in a 1-2-3 for the Carlin squad.

As at Silverstone, Norris made heavy weather of his starts. "I understand what to do but for some reason my feet just don't do it!" he remarked. "I've not had a race yet where I've got a good start, and it's always made my life pretty hard." In race one he initially dropped to fifth, but after six laps had worked his way past the feisty Dennis for second in a side-by-side move that ended with Dennis sailing down the escape road at the Roggia chicane.

From a deficit of 2.5 seconds, Norris chipped away at Daruvala's advantage and made the move with five laps to go at the Rettifilo chicane: clean, incisive and he was through. Daruvala didn't let him get away, but the Indian reported that he

was losing ground at the Ascari chicane and Parabolica, meaning he had little chance of getting sufficiently into the tow for the prime passing spot at Rettifilo.

Habsburg completed the Carlin joy by beating Eriksson – on old tyres for this race – to complete a team podium wipe-out, while the other Carlin driver Dennis sparked the other main back-story. At Monza the lanky GT professional was suffering from a mystery brake problem, which caused him to flat-spot his tyres. Now hobbled, he fell back and made life tough for Ilott and the Prema boys. The fuming Ilott already had a holed nose from contact with a Carlin car, picked up further damage in various collisions, and fell to a distant ninth. That was partly because Dennis did a fantastic defensive job, without ever crossing the line of acceptability. "I did my best to look after the Carlin cars in front," he grinned. "As a team result the 1-2-3 was perfect and I feel I did my best to contribute to that."

Finally, Dennis – who one paddock wag said should have accepted Carlin's team award on the podium – was inadvertently punted down the Rettifilo escape road by Prema's Maximilian Gunther, who had risen from a lowly grid position caused by traffic problems in qualifying and then a mistake when he flat-spotted his left-front at the crucial moment. But both he and Ilott were beaten by Prema's less-fancied duo of Guan Yu Zhou and Mick Schumacher.

Eriksson's first race had been hampered by his



Ex-Ferrari team boss Stefano Domenicali greets Schumacher Jr

AT A GLANCE

RACE 1

- 1 Norris Carlin
- 2 Daruvala Carlin
- 3 Habsburg Carlin

RACE 2

- 1 Eriksson Motopark
- 2 Norris Carlin
- 3 Schumacher Prema

RACE 3

- 1 Ilott Prema
- 2 Norris Carlin
- 3 Gunther Prema

P49 RESULTS



Daruvala led first race from action man Dennis

me in Monza F3 thriller

track position in qualifying – at the front, and without a tow. But on another circuit he hadn't seen before (as at Silverstone) he was truly impressive at Monza. He put it right in second qualifying to grab pole for races two and three, once a raft of track-limits time deletions had been reversed after it was found that a bunch of bogus reports had come in from observers.

Eriksson led all the way in race two, while Schumacher – Michael's boy had gained a monster tow from Ilott to grab himself a Tifosi-pleasing third on the grid – jumped the slow-starting Norris to run an initial second.

The McLaren-Honda protege passed Schumacher on lap six and, even on old tyres, was able to make inroads into Eriksson's advantage, but

couldn't quite get close enough. "That made it a bit difficult for me and I just had to speed it up," said BMW junior Eriksson, while Norris said he lacked pace in the all-important Parabolica turn.

Once again Dennis had brake problems and got stuck into a fight in a group that included Ilott. From this warfare, Gunther emerged from a battle with Habsburg to chase home third-placed Schumacher, while Dennis sustained a puncture from contact with a charging Harrison Newey.

Ilott, again annoyed, was seventh in this one,

but did exactly what he had to in the finale. It was as if he sat there and thought, 'Well, sod this, I'm just going to blitz them all'. He made a storming start from third on the grid and straight away put himself just out of slipstreaming range while Norris fathomed a way past Zhou for second. Once there, he couldn't catch Ilott, despite the leader suffering locking brakes and losing a chunk of time at Rettifilo with a couple of laps to go.

It was the perfect riposte from Ilott, who showed great strength of character to bounce

back from his woes in the first two races. Team-mate Gunther recovered well too. After his bad opening qualifying, he reckoned he was too conservative in finding a clear space in a traffic-averse strategy for the second session, yet he raced well to third. Don't

regard 2017 as a straight Norris-Eriksson-Ilott fight; Gunther will be there in the coming races.

The German Mercedes junior had a full-fat fight with Eriksson, who was suffering a lack of grip after a bad start. The Swede settled for fourth after being edged onto the grass into Rettifilo and shooting down the escape road, and then keeping an eye on the shadowing Habsburg.

A spellbinding weekend, and it's Pau next... Could F3 2017 be any better?

MARCUS SIMMONS

“A perfect riposte from Ilott, who showed strength of character”

IN BRIEF

ADAC GT MASTERS

BMW junior Ricky Collard took a win at Oschersleben on his series debut with Philipp Eng in their Schnitzer-run M6. Eng built up a lead in the first stint, and Collard hung on through a safety car-infested second stint to beat the Chevrolet Corvette of Jules Gounon and Daniel Keilwitz. The Team75 Porsche of Michael Ammermuller and Mathieu Jaminet had won on Saturday from Klaus Bachler and Alex MacDowall (Schutz Porsche).

GERMAN FORMULA 4

Estonian Juri Vips pulled off a late pass on Nicklas Nielsen to win the first race at Oschersleben in his Prema Powerteam car, with Jonathan Aberdein third. Dane Nielsen, run by Ralf Schumacher's US Racing, won the second race from Felipe Drugovich and Fabio Scherer. Lirim Zendeli beat Oliver Soderstrom in the reversed-grid race for a Mucke Motorsport one-two.

PIRELLI WORLD CHALLENGE

Ferrari duo Andrea Montermini and Daniel Mancinelli recovered from a collision with the Audi of Pierre Kaffer, when Mancinelli was at the wheel, to win the first race at Virginia International Raceway. Montermini pipped the Mike Skeen/Andrew Davis Audi. Scot Ryan Dalziel and Canadian Daniel Morad dominated race two in their Mercedes, with the McLaren of the charging Ben Barnicoat (who went from sixth to third in his stint) and Alvaro Parente second. The race was red-flagged due to a massive late crash involving the Ferrari of ex-F1 hero Stefan Johansson, but all drivers were released from the medical centre.

FRENCH FORMULA 4

Star karting graduate Victor Martins wriggled free of the slipstream to win race one at Monza as Florian Venturi beat Christian Munoz to second. But Martins finished the finale upside-down after a red-flag-inducing crash at the Roggia chicane while battling winner Charles Milesi. Arthur Rougier was second in that one, and took the same place in a reversed-grid thriller won by Pierre-Alexandre Jean.

EUROPEAN TOURING CAR CUP

Neither race of the opening round at Monza was won by the driver who finished first. Christjohannes Schreiber passed Rikli Motorsport Honda team-mate Peter Rikli to 'win' race one, but both were penalised for starting out of position, so Petr Fulin (Krenek SEAT) inherited the win. Rikli beat Schreiber in race two, but a track-limits penalty for Rikli handed victory to his customer.

ITALIAN GT

Reigning champions Mirko Venturi and Stefano Gai won both races at Imola in their Black Bull Swiss Racing Ferrari. Michele Beretta and Alex Frassinetti were second in each race with their Ombra Racing Lamborghini Huracan.



Chilton scored his fifth WTCC career win

FLAMAND/DPPI

Chilton and Bjork share Monza wins

WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
MONZA (I)
APRIL 29-30
ROUND 2/10

AFTER THREE YEARS OFF THE calendar, the World Touring Car Championship's return to Monza delivered one of the more exciting meetings in recent times.

Tom Chilton and Thed Bjork not only became the third and fourth different winners from four races, but also four different manufacturers – Chevrolet, Honda, Citroen and Volvo – now all have one victory each.

Citroen and Volvo were expected to be the ones to beat at Monza after the WTCC held its season launch and official pre-season test at the Italian track, but that projection was torn up early on when the Hondas showed surprising speed, with championship leader Tiago Monteiro placing second on the grid behind Bjork's Volvo S60.

In fact, the Hondas were the fastest cars in a straight line, with Monteiro and Norbert Michelisz clocking 160mph

during qualifying – over three clear of Volvo's aerodynamically superior S60.

After qualifying, the drivers traded insults over each other's interpretation of track limits as several cars had put all four wheels off the track, with some ambiguity over what was deemed as allowed during the drivers' briefing.

But come race day, track limits became a side issue to a busy first race. Reversed-grid polesitter Tom Coronel stalled his Chevrolet, handing Morocco's Mehdi Bennani an easy lead into the Rettifilo.

The super-fast Honda of Michelisz was soon on a charge to make up for a sluggish start to his championship bid, and was quickly up with Bennani's Citroen. The Hungarian went for a move down the inside at the Parabolica on lap three, but Bennani turned in on him, reporting after the race that he didn't expect anyone to be there, and both their races were over because of suspension damage.

This promoted Tom Chilton, Bennani's team-mate, to the lead; but the British driver was soon caught by Munnich Citroen driver Rob Huff, with the 2012

champion also aiming to make up lost ground after making a poor start to his championship in Morocco.

But Huff was unable to find a way past Chilton, who secured his fifth win in the WTCC, and perhaps surprisingly the first 2017 victory for a Citroen. Monteiro made the best use of Honda's newfound speed to move up from ninth on the grid to finish on the final spot on the podium.

A track limits violation meant Bjork was demoted to fifth behind Esteban Guerrieri, with the Argentinian part-timer impressing again and leaving Monza ahead of his Volvo factory-backed countryman Nestor Girolami in the points. Yvan Muller's nephew Yann Ehrlacher was deprived of a sixth-place finish due to a penalty for exceeding track limits at the start when he swerved around Coronel's Chevy, but he did score his first points in the main race instead.

That event was an altogether quieter affair. Monteiro launched into the lead from second on the grid, but Bjork produced a masterful move around the outside of the Parabolica to retake first place on the second lap, proving that a clean pass was possible.

The Swedish driver then pulled out a two-second margin over Monteiro, who was fighting a rearguard action to keep Huff behind. The Briton's Citroen couldn't match the top speed of the Honda, but he secured another podium result to ignite his championship charge, albeit one race behind schedule.

Bjork took the biggest points haul of the weekend, and is now just 15 points shy of Monteiro in the standings.

NEIL HUDSON

AT A GLANCE

RACE 1

- 1 Chilton Citroen
- 2 Huff Citroen
- 3 Monteiro Honda

RACE 2

- 1 Bjork Volvo
- 2 Monteiro Honda
- 3 Huff Citroen

→ P49 RESULTS



Bjork resisted Monteiro to win race two

LENORMAND/DPPI

Logano leads Penske 1-2 at Richmond

NASCAR SPRINT CUP
RICHMOND (USA)
APRIL 30
ROUND 9/36

JOEY LOGANO LED JUST 25 LAPS before taking his 18th NASCAR Cup victory, and his first of the 2017 season, at the Richmond International Raceway.

Logano, who had qualified fifth but started at the rear of the 38-car field due to a pre-race transmission change, held off his Penske team-mate Brad Keselowski by 0.775s to secure the win after taking the lead with 16 of the 400 laps remaining.

Denny Hamlin finished third, Ricky Stenhouse Jr was fourth and Kevin Harvick rounded out the top five.

A late caution caused by Ryan Blaney hitting the wall with a flat left-rear tyre had brought most of the field into the pits for new tyres, but six drivers, led by Kyle Larson, stayed out. Logano, Keselowski and Hamlin were the first three to rejoin with new tyres and lined up seventh, eighth and ninth at the restart with 19 laps remaining. Logano put his fresh rubber to good use



and took just three laps to get back into the lead, which he did not lose again.

"I knew Keselowski was so much faster than everybody and I had to get out there as quick and as far as I could. He was on his way to catch me," said Logano after taking his second Cup career win at Richmond. "I think he was catching me a couple tenths a lap. That was all I had inside the car and I burned them up trying to go. We executed under pressure today and brought home a car that was a fifth-to-10th-place car to victory lane."

JIM UTTER

Logano held on to score his second NASCAR Cup career win at Richmond despite starting at the back of the field

RESULTS

1 Joey Logano (Ford Fusion) 400 laps in 3h12m08s; 2 Brad Keselowski (Ford) +0.775s; 3 Denny Hamlin (Toyota Camry); 4 Ricky Stenhouse Jr (Ford); 5 Kevin Harvick (Ford); 6 Jamie McMurray (Chevrolet SS); 7 Ryan Newman (Chevy); 8 Kurt Busch (Ford); 9 Aric Almirola (Ford); 10 Martin Truex Jr (Toyota).
Playoff qualifying 1 Keselowski 327/2 wins; 2 Jimmie Johnson 270/2; 3 Kyle Larson 398/1; 4 Truex 358/1; 5 Logano 333/1; 6 Newman 225/1; 7 Kurt Busch 192/1; 8 Chase Elliott 346; 9 Harvick 286; 10 McMurray 282; 11 Clint Bowyer 266; 12 Kyle Busch 235; 13 Hamlin 231; 14 Ryan Blaney 229; 15 Trevor Bayne 216; 16 Stenhouse 201.

Ahlin continues perfect start with Pirelli Rally win

BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
PIRELLI INTERNATIONAL RALLY (GB)
APRIL 29-30
ROUND 2/7

FREDRIK AHLIN TOOK A SECOND British Rally Championship victory in a row on the Pirelli International Rally – the second round of the series in 2017 – but it didn't all go the Swede's way.

Tom Cave, who gave the Hyundai i20 R5 its BRC debut, won the first two stages before a suspension failure on SS3 ruled

him out of the reckoning. Osian Pryce, the winner of the 2014 event, took up the chase in his Ford Fiesta R5, scything into Ahlin's overnight lead of 21 seconds in two stages on Sunday, first to 14s and then to just 3.4s after SS6.

However, the Welshman's charge came undone when his handbrake, a key piece of equipment given the event's many chicanes, broke and he ended the event with a 39.4s deficit.

Skoda driver Ahlin suffered from heavy tyre wear and made an error at a chicane in

Ahlin (right) has made a perfect start to the 2017 BRC season with two wins from the opening two events

an eventful final day, but he held on to win ahead of Pryce and Marty McCormack.

David Bogie, quickest on all four stages on Sunday after losing time to a brake issue the previous day, took fourth ahead of Matt Edwards (Fiesta R5), who was suffering from flu.

The WRC2 driver Eyvind Brynildsen made his BRC return after nine years, but suffered a handbrake and differential issue on the first stage in his Fiesta R5. He returned but damaged a brake disc on the penultimate day and was forced to retire.

Meanwhile, in the Junior British Rally Championship, Northern Irishman William Creighton took the lead on the final stage of the event to win by just 0.4s in his Peugeot 208 R2 after over 70-miles of action on the stages.

JACK BENYON

RESULTS

1 Fredrik Ahlin/Torstein Eriksen (Skoda Fabia R5) 1h29m28s; 2 Osian Pryce/Dale Furniss (Ford Fiesta R5) +39.4s; 3 Martin McCormack/David Moynihan (Skoda); 4 David Bogie/Kevin Rae (Skoda); 5 Matt Edwards/Darren Garrod (Ford); 6 Rhys Yates/Carl Williamson (Ford).
Points 1 Ahlin 55; 2 Pryce 33; 3 Tom Cave (Hyundai i20 R5) 22; =4 Yates and Edwards 18; 6 McCormack 15.





Emil Frey Lexus took the spoils in race one

Scott on top as Lexus claims GT double

EUROFORMULA OPEN
ROUND 1/8
INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN
ROUND 1/7
ESTORIL (P)
APRIL 29-30

HARRISON SCOTT SCORED a double win in the opening Euroformula round, but had to survive an early scrap to take the first of the victories. Scott, driving for the Italian RP Motorsport team, got beaten away by his ex-Formula Renault rival Nikita Troitskiy. After an early safety car the Briton passed the Russian, but Troitskiy got him back. Scott made the winning move shortly after, while Ameya Vaidyanathan followed him through to take second in his Carlin car. Troitskiy was then caught by the group behind, and retired after a clash with Yan Leon Shlom. Reigning Brazilian F3 champion Matheus Iorio came through to complete the podium. Troitskiy took pole in a wet qualifying session for race two, but the Drivex pilot was beaten away by Scott, who went on to win by over 11 seconds. Thiago Vivacqua passed Shlom to finish third. In the GT Open series at the same meeting it was a cracking weekend for the brand new GT3 Lexus machine. The first race was won by the Emil Frey-run car of ex-single-seater starlet Albert Costa and Philipp Frommenwiler. McLaren duo Rob Bell and Come Ledogar led Costa in the first stint, but Frommenwiler was quicker than the McLaren duo's respective co-drivers Shaun Balfe and Alexander West. First the Swiss passed the Balfe Motorsport 650S, and then he hunted down the Garage 59 machine of West, who ran wide to let Frommenwiler by.

Another Lexus pair, Farnbacher brothers Dominik and Mario, won on Sunday. Duncan Tappy took the early lead in his Garage 59 McLaren, chased by Dominik Farnbacher, while Antonio Felix da Costa (BMW) passed the Bentley of Michael Meadows for third, but da Costa retired soon after. Once the stops were over Mario Farnbacher was in the lead from Tappy's co-driver Michael Benham – the McLaren had been involved in contact when Tappy was still driving with the Bentley, now with Jordan Witt at the wheel. While the Lexus sped to victory, Giovanni Venturini was in the Imperiale Lamborghini started by Thomas Biagi, and denied Benham of second on the final lap.

RESULTS
EUROFORMULA OPEN
Race 1 Harrison Scott 20 laps in 35m31.577s; 2 Ameya Vaidyanathan +1.368s; 3 Matheus Iorio; 4 Jannes Fittje; 5 Eliseo Martinez Merono; 6 Petru Florescu. **Race 2** 1 Scott 20 laps in 32m53.058s; 2 Nikita Troitskiy +11.467s; 3 Thiago Vivacqua; 4 Fittje; 5 Devlin DeFrancesco; 6 Simo Laaksonen.
Points 1 Scott 52; 2 Fittje 24; 3 Vaidyanathan 20; 4 Troitskiy 19; 5 Iorio 17; 6 Vivacqua 15.
INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN
Race 1 1 Albert Costa/Philipp Frommenwiler (Lexus RC-F GT3) 41 laps in 1h10m18.762s; 2 Rob Bell/Shawn Balfe (McLaren 650S GT3) +3.651s; 3 Come Ledogar/Alexander West (McLaren); 4 Dominik Farnbacher/Mario Farnbacher (Lexus); 5 Thomas Biagi/Giovanni Venturini (Lamborghini Huracan GT3); 6 Vitantonio Liuzzi/Hiroshi Hamaguchi (Lamborghini). **Race 2** 1 D Farnbacher/M Farnbacher 35 laps in 1h00m03.939s; 2 Biagi/Venturini +23.115s; 3 Duncan Tappy/Michael Benham (McLaren); 4 Bell/Balfe; 5 Mikkel Mac/Miguel Ramos (Ferrari 488 GT3); 6 Marco Cioci/Piergiuseppe Perazzini (Ferrari). **Points** 1 Farnbacher/Farnbacher 23; 2 Bell/Balfe 20; 3 Venturini/Biagi 18; 4 Costa/Frommenwiler 18; 5 Ledogar/West 12; 6 Tappy/Benham 11.

RESULTS

INDYCAR

ROUND 4/16 PHOENIX (USA), APRIL 29 (250 LAPS – 255.500 MILES)

1	Simon Pagenaud (F) Team Penske • Dallara-Chevrolet	11h46m24.9473s
2	Will Power (AUS) Team Penske • Dallara-Chevrolet	+9.1028s
3	JR Hildebrand (USA) Ed Carpenter Racing • Dallara-Chevrolet	+9.3417s
4	Helio Castroneves (BR) Team Penske • Dallara-Chevrolet	+16.5864s
5	Scott Dixon (NZ) Chip Ganassi Racing • Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
6	Tony Kanaan (BR) Chip Ganassi Racing • Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
7	Ed Carpenter (USA) Ed Carpenter Racing • Dallara-Chevrolet	-2 laps
8	Charlie Kimball (USA) Chip Ganassi Racing • Dallara-Honda	-2 laps
9	Josef Newgarden (USA) Team Penske • Dallara-Chevrolet	-2 laps
10	Carlos Munoz (CO) AJ Foyt Enterprises • Dallara-Chevrolet	-3 laps
11	Ed Jones (GB) Dale Coyne Racing • Dallara-Chevrolet	-3 laps
12	James Hinchcliffe (CDN) Schmidt Peterson Motorsports • Dallara-Honda	-4 laps
13	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA) Andretti Autosport • Dallara-Honda	220 laps-acc damage
14	Conor Daly (USA) AJ Foyt Enterprises • Dallara-Chevrolet	-70 laps
15	Alexander Rossi (USA) Andretti Autosport • Dallara-Honda	141 laps-accident
16	Takuma Sato (J) Andretti Autosport • Dallara-Honda	135 laps-accident
17	Mikhail Aleshin (RUS) Schmidt Peterson Motorsports • Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident
18	Marco Andretti (USA) Andretti Autosport • Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident
19	Sebastien Bourdais (F) Dale Coyne Racing • Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident
20	Max Chilton (GB) Chip Ganassi Racing • Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident
21	Graham Rahal (USA) Rahal Letterman Lanigan • Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 144.058mph. Fastest lap Power 19.7446s, 186.340mph.

QUALIFYING
 1 Castroneves 194.905mph; 2 Power 194.017mph; 3 Hildebrand 193.912mph; 4 Newgarden 193.676mph; 5 Pagenaud 193.414mph; 6 Kanaan 192.539mph; 7 Aleshin 192.327 mph; 8 Dixon 192.050mph; 9 Andretti 191.387mph; 10 Bourdais 191.349mph; 11 Hinchcliffe 191.194mph; 12 Hunter-Reay 190.799mph; 13 Chilton 190.768mph; 14 Kimball 190.565mph; 15 Rossi 190.405mph; 16 Jones 190.029mph; 17 Rahal 189.786mph; 18 Sato 189.779mph; 19 Munoz 189.301mph; 20 Daly 188.536mph; 21 Carpenter 186.360 mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP
 1 Pagenaud 159; 2 Dixon 141; 3 Newgarden 133; 4 Bourdais 128; 5 Hinchcliffe 120; 6 Castroneves 118; 7 Power 91; 8 Kanaan 87; 9 Hunter-Reay 82; 10 Jones 81.



Pagenaud's win puts him top of the standings

ROUND-UP

FORMULA 3 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

ROUND 2/10, MONZA (I), APRIL 29-30

RACE 1 (20 LAPS – 71.992 MILES)

1	Lando Norris (GB) <i>Carlin</i> · Dallara-Volkswagen F317	35m00.127s
2	Jehan Daruvala (IND) <i>Carlin</i> · Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+0.649s
3	Ferdinand Habsburg (A) <i>Carlin</i> · Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+5.360s
4	Joel Eriksson (S) <i>Motopark</i> · Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+5.803s
5	Guan Yu Zhou (PRC) <i>Prema Powerteam</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F315	+17.245s
6	Mick Schumacher (D) <i>Prema Powerteam</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F317	+17.937s
7	Maximilian Gunther (D) <i>Prema Powerteam</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F316	+19.334s
8	Ralf Aron (EST) <i>Hitech GP</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F316	+22.580s
9	Callum Ilott (GB) <i>Prema Powerteam</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F317	+22.947s
10	Jake Hughes (GB) <i>Hitech GP</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F315	+22.975s
11	Nikita Mazepin (RUS) <i>Hitech GP</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F316	+23.653s
12	Tadasuke Makino (J) <i>Hitech GP</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F315	+34.515s
13	Marino Sato (J) <i>Motopark</i> · Dallara-Volkswagen F314	+34.937s
14	Joey Mawson (AUS) <i>Van Amersfoort Racing</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F316	+48.992s
15	Keyvan Andres Soori (D) <i>Motopark</i> · Dallara-Volkswagen F315	19 laps-accident damage
16	Pedro Piquet (BR) <i>Van Amersfoort Racing</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F316	19 laps-accident damage
17	Harrison Newey (GB) <i>Van Amersfoort Racing</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F316	-1 lap
18	Jake Dennis (GB) <i>Carlin</i> · Dallara-Volkswagen F316	18 laps-tyres
R	David Beckmann (D) <i>Van Amersfoort Racing</i> · Dallara-Mercedes F317	7 laps-puncture

Winner's average speed 123.407mph. Fastest lap Norris 1m44.288s, 124.257mph.

QUALIFYING 1

1 Daruvala 1m44.105s; 2 Norris 1m44.135s; 3 Dennis 1m44.202s; 4 Ilott 1m44.370s; 5 Habsburg 1m44.552s; 6 Eriksson 1m44.554s; 7 Zhou 1m44.694s; 8 Hughes 1m44.922s; 9 Schumacher 1m44.925s; 10 Mawson 1m44.996s; 11 Mazepin 1m45.006s; 12 Sato 1m45.011s; 13 Piquet 1m45.142s; 14 Gunther 1m45.304s; 15 Makino 1m45.570s; 16 Aron 1m45.797s; 17 Soori 1m45.456s*; 18 Beckmann 1m45.894s*; 19 Newey 1m57.543s.

RACE 2 (20 LAPS – 71.992 MILES)

1 Eriksson 34m53.980s; 2 Norris +0.735s; 3 Schumacher +9.037s; 4 Gunther +13.533s; 5 Habsburg +14.829s; 6 Zhou +15.347s; 7 Ilott +15.930s; 8 Daruvala +18.991s; 9 Aron +22.615s; 10 Mazepin +23.826s; 11 Sato +27.555s; 12 Soori +30.542s; 13 Hughes +30.703s; 14 Makino +31.641s; 15 Beckmann +1m44.114s; 16 Mawson +1m50.735s; R Newey 13 laps-accident damage; R Dennis 13 laps-puncture; R Piquet 6 laps-spun off.

Winner's average speed 123.769mph. Fastest lap Ilott 1m43.989s, 124.614mph.

QUALIFYING 2

1 Eriksson 1m43.720s; 2 Norris 1m43.786s; 3 Schumacher 1m43.824s; 4 Ilott 1m43.846s; 5 Habsburg 1m43.993s; 6 Dennis 1m44.002s; 7 Gunther 1m44.065s; 8 Zhou 1m44.095s; 9 Daruvala 1m44.102s; 10 Aron 1m44.190s; 11 Newey 1m44.269s; 12 Sato 1m44.407s; 13 Mawson 1m44.460s; 14 Hughes 1m44.478s; 15 Mazepin 1m44.101s*; 16 Makino 1m44.597s; 17 Soori 1m44.742s; 18 Beckmann 1m44.978s; 19 Piquet 1m44.507s*.

RACE 3 (20 LAPS – 71.992 MILES)

1 Ilott 35m05.538s; 2 Norris +0.736s; 3 Gunther +2.705s; 4 Eriksson +9.074s; 5 Habsburg +9.762s; 6 Schumacher +12.135s; 7 Piquet +13.627s; 8 Aron +14.980s; 9 Daruvala +15.371s; 10 Zhou +17.436s; 11 Mazepin +17.873s; 12 Sato +19.376s; 13 Makino +27.198s; 14 Beckmann +28.094s; 15 Newey +29.742s; 16 Mawson 19 laps-accident; R Soori 7 laps-accident; R Dennis 1 lap-accident damage; R Hughes 1 lap-accident damage.

Winner's average speed 123.090mph. Fastest lap Eriksson 1m44.452s, 124.062mph.

GRID FOR RACE 3

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

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Eriksson 104; 2 Norris 103; 3 Ilott 76; 4 Gunther 72; 5 Schumacher 43; 6 Dennis 38; 7 Daruvala 37; 8 Habsburg 35; 9 Zhou 31; 10 Hughes 16.



Habsburg heads a slipstreaming pack at Monza

WTCC

ROUND 2/10, MONZA (I), APRIL 30

RACE 1 (9 LAPS – 32.396 MILES)

1	Tom Chilton (GB) <i>Sebastien Loeb Racing</i> · Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	17m17.330s
2	Rob Huff (GB) <i>Munnich Motorsport</i> · Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+0.329s
3	Tiago Monteiro (P) <i>Honda Racing Team JAS</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	+2.630s
4	Esteban Guerrieri (RA) <i>Campos Racing</i> · Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1	+6.899s
5	Thed Bjork (S) <i>Polestar Cyan Racing</i> · Volvo S60 Polestar	+7.793s
6	Tom Coronel (NL) <i>ROAL Motorsport</i> · Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1	+11.100s
7	John Filippi (F) <i>Sebastien Loeb Racing</i> · Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+12.928s
8	Nicky Catsburg (NL) <i>Polestar Cyan Racing</i> · Volvo S60 Polestar	+18.067s
9	Kevin Gleason (USA) <i>RC Motorsport</i> · Lada Vesta WTCC	+18.449s
10	Daniel Nagy (H) <i>Zengo Motorsport</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	+19.200s
11	Yann Ehrlacher (F) <i>RC Motorsport</i> · Lada Vesta WTCC	+20.207s
R	Norbert Michelisz (H) <i>Honda Racing Team JAS</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	5 laps
R	Mehdi Bennani (MA) <i>Sebastien Loeb Racing</i> · Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	4 laps
R	Nestor Girolami (RA) <i>Polestar Cyan Racing</i> · Volvo S60 Polestar	4 laps
R	Ryo Michigami (J) <i>Honda Racing Team JAS</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	2 laps
R	Aurelien Panis (F) <i>Zengo Motorsport</i> · Honda Civic WTCC	0 laps

Winner's average speed 112.430mph. Fastest lap Bjork 1m53.976s, 113.695mph.

GRID FOR RACE 1

1 Coronel; 2 Bennani; 3 Guerrieri; 4 Chilton; 5 Michelisz; 6 Girolami; 7 Catsburg; 8 Huff; 9 Monteiro; 10 Bjork; 11 Michigami; 12 Ehrlacher; 13 Filippi; 14 Panis; 15 Gleason; 16 Nagy.

RACE 2 (12 LAPS – 43.195 MILES)

1 Bjork 23m51.974s; 2 Monteiro +2.174s; 3 Huff +2.779s; 4 Catsburg +3.269s; 5 Girolami +6.180s; 6 Michelisz +6.181s; 7 Bennani +9.582s; 8 Guerrieri +11.522s; 9 Ehrlacher +11.877s; 10 Filippi +12.077s; 11 Coronel +12.836s; 12 Panis +16.637s; 13 Gleason +19.306s; R Nagy 6 laps; R Chilton 4 laps; R Michigami 4 laps.

Winner's average speed 108.593mph. Fastest lap Bjork 1m53.381s, 114.292mph.

QUALIFYING

Q3 1 Bjork 1m52.505s; 2 Monteiro 1m52.821s; 3 Huff 1m52.968s; 4 Catsburg 1m53.013s; 5 Girolami 1m57.834s.
Q2 Bjork 1m52.202s; Monteiro 1m52.385s; Catsburg 1m52.407s; Girolami 1m52.488s; Huff 1m52.523s; 6 Michelisz 1m52.606s; 7 Chilton 1m53.081s; 8 Guerrieri 1m53.404s; 9 Bennani 1m53.584s; 10 Coronel 1m53.678s; 11 Michigami 1m53.973s; 12 Ehrlacher.
Q1 Girolami 1m52.218s; Bjork 1m52.284s; Catsburg 1m52.404s; Huff 1m52.754s; Monteiro 1m52.922s; Guerrieri 1m53.016s; Michelisz 1m53.267s; Bennani 1m53.588s; Chilton 1m53.612s; Coronel 1m53.803s; Ehrlacher 1m54.059s; Michigami 1m54.108s; 13 Filippi 1m54.123s; 14 Panis 1m54.221s; 15 Gleason 1m54.978s; 16 Nagy 1m55.040s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Monteiro 85; 2 Bjork 70; 3 Catsburg 50; 4 Michelisz 46; 5 Chilton 44; 6 Huff 44; 7 Guerrieri 41; 8 Girolami 39; 9 Bennani 33; 10 Coronel 16.



Bennani and Michelisz lead before clash

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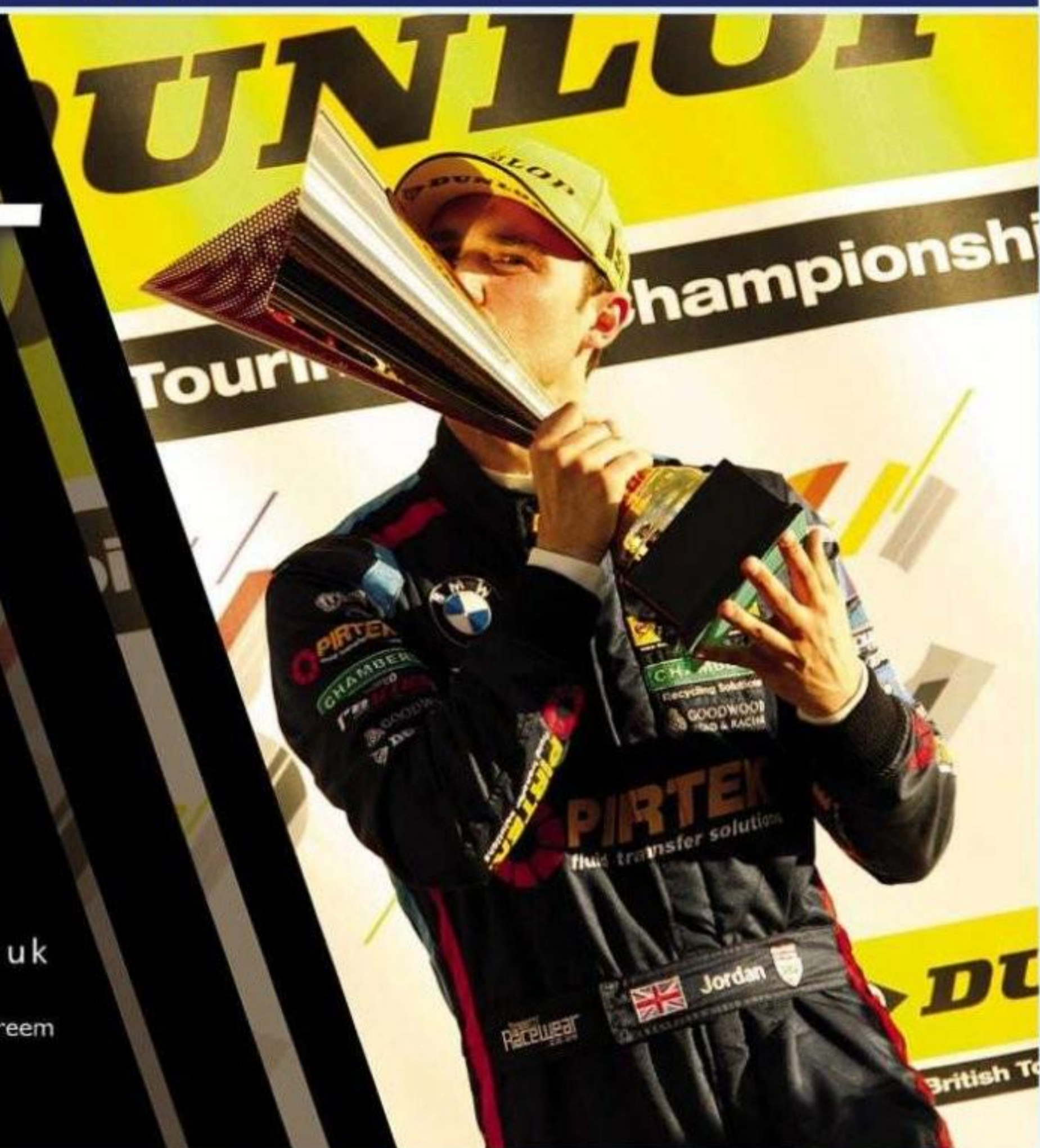
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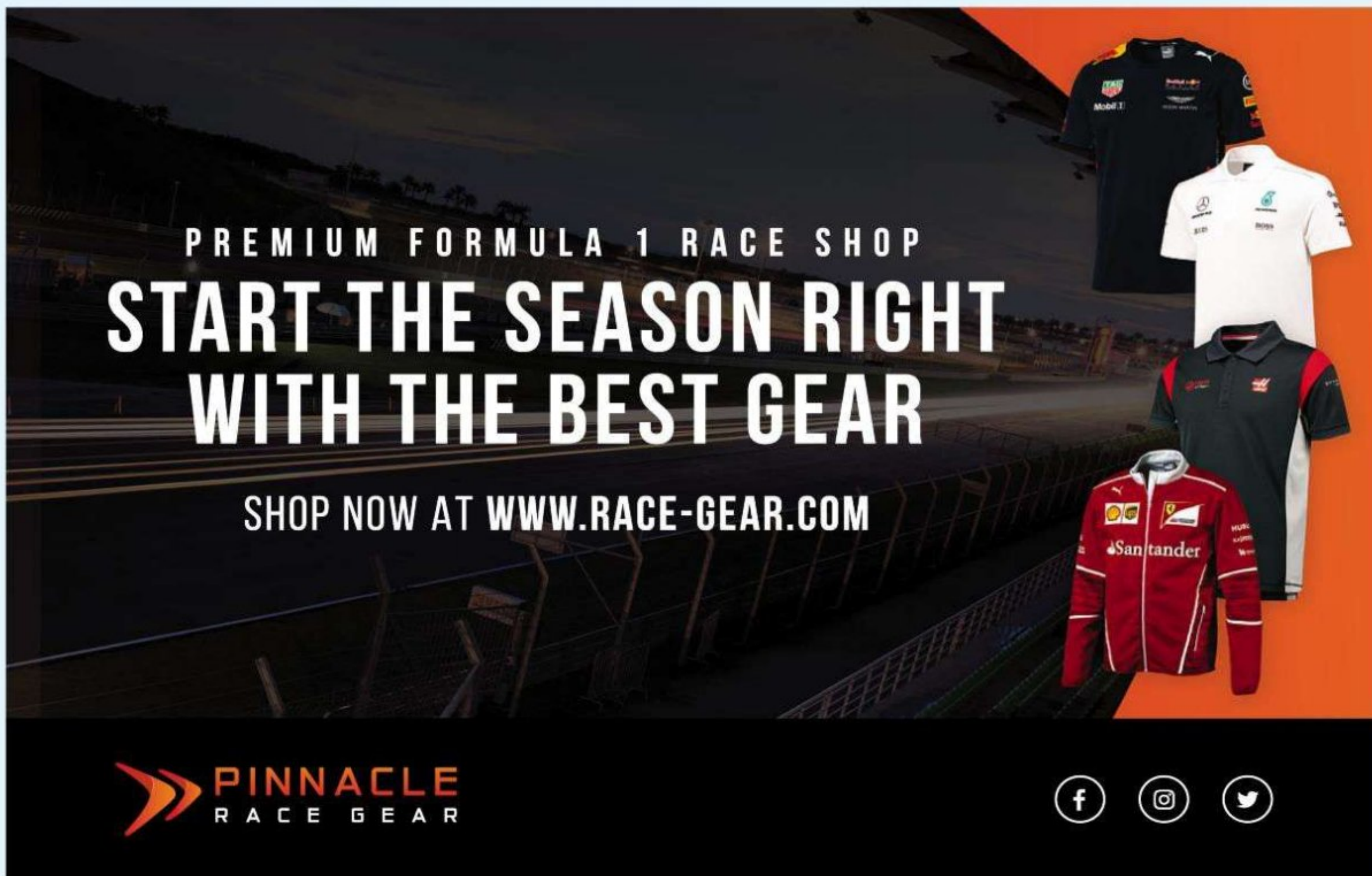
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MACHINE LEARNING ENGINEER SW1600

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OK, SO LET'S TRY TO unravel this mess. Who allowed this to happen to one of Britain's best and most respected racing championships?

Was it purely the officials' mistake, a display of either incompetence or sheer arrogance? Not even close.

Bernard Cottrell and his team were forced into the decision to let Matt Griffin's Ferrari past the safety car by the MSA rules they signed up to enforce. Everyone in race control knew what the outcome would be, they just couldn't do much about it.

Sure, common sense would have suggested leaving the car where it was, but 'use common sense' isn't enshrined within the rule book as an acceptable escape clause.

Clearly a rethink is needed when the two rules overlap like they did.

British GT officials and teams are working on it. Incidents such as this, which have made a prominent national championship look amateurish, do tend to force action.

BRITISH GT

Safety car confusion mars BGT

BRITISH GT CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS AND officials are planning to hold crunch meetings to find a solution to the safety car issue that blighted last weekend's event at Rockingham.

The two-hour race became mired in confusion when Matt Griffin's AF Corse-run Ferrari 488 GT3 was waved past the safety car, despite being the on-track race leader. The issue stemmed from the car carrying a five-second penalty for exceeding track limits, which made the car appear in fifth place in the live timings.

Once released, Griffin was immediately handed a race-winning advantage over the Team Parker Racing Bentley Continental GT3 of Rick Parfitt Jr and Seb Morris. Although Griffin was later demoted to second place for contact with Morris, the events of the race have raised serious concerns about the current track-limits rules and how they interact with safety car protocols.

The Motor Sports Association's Blue Book states: "When ordered to do so, the observer in the safety car will wave past any cars between the safety car and the race leader."

MSA rules also currently forbid track-limits penalties of less than 30 seconds being handed out post-race.

British GT clerk of the course Bernard Cottrell, who also sits on the MSA's Race Committee where rule changes are discussed, said: "British GT is an MSA championship and we must enforce the MSA rules, however this has shown that there is a loophole. We'll consult with the teams to find a way forward."

Team Parker Racing's Stuart Parker said: "In my view [the enforcement of] track limits has gone too far and it's ruining the racing. Everybody was robbed of a potentially great race finish by this. We all need to sit down and discuss what's going on as something has to change."

One potential measure could be to replace the time penalties imposed for track-limits violations with drivethrough penalties, since they change the order in a more obvious way.

British GT Championship manager Benjamin Franassovici said: "Today we found an anomaly, which will be investigated fully. One way or another there must be changes to avoid this situation arising again."

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Above left: Williams carried special Monger stickers in Russia

Above: British Touring Car competitors are demonstrating their support for the cause

Left: British GT ran #BillyWhizz sun strips last weekend

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Monger gives thanks for support

BILLY MONGER HAS PAID tribute to the medics and marshals who have treated and supported him since his horrific British F4 crash at Donington Park.

The 17-year-old JHR Developments driver had his right leg amputated below the knee and his left leg amputated further up his thigh as a result of the crash.

In his first comments after the accident, Monger wrote: "A huge thank you to each and every one of you! Your kind words have given me and my family the strength to get through this week.

"The love and generosity of our motorsport family, fans and everyone that has supported me is awesome and truly inspirational. The marshals, medics, doctors, air ambulance and extraction crews at Donington, along with all the staff at Queens Medical Centre, what can I say? Without you guys I wouldn't be here today!

"I will always thank you all for saving my life!

"The one true hero of this tragic event has been my sister, Bonny, who gave me the will to keep fighting – a value that I will

continue to hold now, and for the rest of my life."

JHR team boss Steve Hunter said: "I think the way he is taking it is amazing. He's doing really, really well – it's awe-inspiring how positive he is."

A number of Formula 1 teams and drivers carried special stickers in support of Monger at the Russian Grand Prix last weekend.

Teams including McLaren, Williams and Haas ran #BillyWhizz stickers on cars, while three-time champion Lewis Hamilton was among the drivers

to feature decals on his helmet in support of the Surrey youngster.

British GT and Formula 3 cars also sported Monger sun strips at the top of their windscreens at Rockingham last weekend.

This weekend's TOCA meeting at Thruxton is the first since Monger's crash, and numerous dedications to the young driver are planned. As well as stickers and 'Billy Whizz' numberplates on each BTCC car, teams and fans will be invited on the grid walk, with a minimum £5 donation to Monger's fund.

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

WDE partner with Finsport in Clio series

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP team WDE Motorsport has formed an allegiance with the Finsport Clio Cup Junior team as it seeks to expand.

WDE currently runs four cars in the Clio Cup but that is set to increase to six later this year. The partnership will allow Finsport – a team new to Clios – to focus on running drivers in the Junior series as well as supporting WDE in the main category.

"We've got a little allegiance, a bit like

20Ten/Pyro, so it would be like a WDE junior team," said WDE boss Wayne Eason. "We will let Jay [Finlay, Finsport team principal] do the Juniors with our support. Jay is a good guy, I've known him a long time, and it will help him massively. We've become a victim of our own success and couldn't expand without appearing to overstretch ourselves."

WDE runs Paul Rivett, Lee Pattison, Paul Streather and Dan Zelos in the Clio Cup this year.



GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

Junior contender Nicosia to GT5

GINETTA JUNIOR RACE WINNER GERI Nicosia will contest two race weekends of the Ginetta GT5 Challenge this year when the series appears on the British Touring Car support bill.

The 17-year-old finished sixth in the Junior standings, but has been without a drive for the start of this season. He will now race at the Thruxton and Knockhill TOCA events in a Ginetta G40 with the JHR Developments team.

"I'm really excited to be back in a Ginetta and back with JHR Developments," said Nicosia. "Thruxton and Knockhill were both circuits where I went well last season, so I'm filled with the confidence that I can challenge for podiums."

Nicosia also raced in the two Toyota MR2 races at Silverstone last weekend, taking a best result of second.

RADICAL CHALLENGE

Formula Renault squad to Radicals

SINGLE-SEATER SQUAD SCORPIO Motorsport has decided to switch to the Radical Challenge Championship for 2017.

The Formula Renault UK BARC title-winning team is running Radical race winner Jack Manchester and former British GT racer Sean Byrne in the series this year. The team endured a frustrating first weekend at Donington Park last month, with a best result of fourth for Manchester, but were pleased with the pace.

"I have always been a single-seater purist, but it's just not a viable business anymore, which is a shame," said team boss Jon Pettitt. "Radical was really pleased to have a new team in the championship.

"It's brimming with a 30-car grid – that shows where people are racing now and we've got plans to use this as a springboard for the future. We didn't get the results we wanted [at Donington], but we were certainly very pleased with the pace."



750 RGB

Albone calls for longer RGB races

RGB RACER BILLY ALBONE HAS called for a tweak to the championship's format by making races longer than their current format of 13 minutes plus one lap.

"Longer races would make for cleaner racing and possibly more exciting finishes to races, with people's tyres going off," said Albone.

Club competition secretary Giles Groombridge said he had no qualms about proposing the idea of longer races, but he did not want RGB to become a spending battle.

"There certainly are some talented drivers in RGB, but we don't want to move it too far away from its roots," he said. "Fundamentally it's still

a clubman championship where privateers can buy a car from a manufacturer, or build one themselves, and not feel the need for a serious level of support."

"Our ethos is making sport accessible and affordable. I think the balance we have is something that's not seen in many other formulas."



HISTORICS

Bonnier McLaren to race in Europe

AN EX-JO BONNIER McLAREN M6B WILL race in Europe this season, nearly half a century after its only European race to date.

Bonnier bought chassis 50-15 to race in the 1968 Can-Am Championship, but first raced it at Karlskoga in his native Sweden and finished second in that event to David Piper's Ferrari 330 P3/4.

The McLaren was then shipped to the United States, where Bonnier contested a handful of Can-Am races.

Now the former Ecurie Suisse McLaren is in the UK in the hands of brothers Max and Andrew Banks from Alfa Romeo competition specialist Alfaholics. Former owner Bob Lee restored the car in the US and it came back to the UK last summer.

The brothers plan to race the car with Masters and Peter Auto. The McLaren last ran at Laguna Seca in 2015.

Bonnier was an F1 race winner in 1959 at the Dutch Grand Prix in a BRM.

IN BRIEF



STILP AND RUDD STEP IN FOR RCIB

Britcar racer Simon Rudd and Jordan Stilp raced the RCIB Ginetta G55 GT4 in last weekend's British GT round at Rockingham. Regular drivers Mike Newbould and Michael Caine withdrew after Newbould aggravated an injury from the first round at Oulton Park while racing in the LMP3 Cup at Donington Park recently. Both drivers are expected to return for the next round.

MSV TIGHTENS MOPED RULES

MotorSport Vision has introduced new rules regarding the use of motorbikes and scooters in paddocks at its circuits. With immediate effect, powered vehicles can only be used if they are insured and driven by the person who has insured them. They must be over 17 and will need to sign on at each meeting to prove the vehicle is insured. Anybody who uses one without insurance could be excluded from the meeting.

OLIPHANT TO PORSCHE SUPERCUP

Porsche Carrera Cup GB driver Tom Oliphant will contest two rounds of the Porsche Supercup this year. The 2015 Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion will contest the Barcelona and Silverstone rounds of the Formula 1-supporting series with the Lechner Racing squad – the same team his GB Redline team-mate Dan Cammish will compete with.

FIESTA FEE CLARIFICATION

Autosport would like to clarify a story regarding the BRSCC Fiestas splitting races. Championship coordinator Steven Connor did not suggest that 2017 entry fees may have to rise for competitors.

EX-DE ANGELIS CHEVRON CELEBRATION

Classic F3 racer Nick Taylor is sending his ex-Elio de Angelis Monaco-winning Chevron B38 to Italy in June to be part of a celebration of the life of the grand prix driver. The June 16 event at Potenza Picena will honour de Angelis, who died following an accident at Paul Ricard in 1986 when testing his Brabham BT55.



Taylor's Chevron for de Angelis celebration



MALLORY PARK

CLASSIC FORD STARS AT MALLORY

MALLORY PARK'S season-opening car-racing meeting attracted a total entry of just 40 cars last Sunday, and half of those were participating in the BARC-run event's Classic Formula Ford Championship round.

Reigning champion Adriano Medeiros's streak from the 2016 season came to an end as he failed to win for the first time in seven races. His Van Diemen RF80 retired with engine failure four laps from the end of the opening race.

Pressure had been applied by Mark Bates (Royale RP24) throughout, and the Mallory specialist went on to take his second victory of the day in the later race, having triumphed over former Star of Mallory Stuart Kestenbaum in the non-championship Historic FFord thrash earlier on.

After dropping to fourth on the second lap, Bates fought his way back to the front of the race-two order, but not before a 10-second penalty had been applied for a false start, which left him classified sixth. Nigel Lingwood academically swapped track position with Bates on a couple of occasions, and the RF80 driver was later awarded the win from Kestenbaum (Crossle 16F).

Jon Halliwell extended his winning streak in the MaX5 Championship to four with a brace. An entertaining duel with fellow Mk4 MX-5 man Paul Roddison in the opening race preceded a tepid rematch in the later event, in which Matthew Tidmarsh and Josh Malin earned divisional honours.

SILVERSTONE CLASSIC

'Captain Picard' races A35

SIR PATRICK STEWART WILL MAKE HIS RACING return at the Silverstone Classic in July in an Austin A35.

The noted Shakespearean actor and Hollywood A-lister has recently passed his ARDS test in readiness for his participation in the celebrity section of the HRDC Academy Austin A35 race on the Saturday of the July 28-30 weekend. He debuted in a Morgan race in 2012.

"It was a lot of fun," said Stewart after qualifying for an MSA competition licence. "For someone who has followed motor racing since being a teenager, to drive around Silverstone and negotiate such corners as Becketts and Stowe is just such a thrill."

The 76-year old's career on stage and screen has encompassed characters as diverse as Claudius in *Hamlet*

and Captain Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

"Speed is not a particularly big passion of mine," he said. "But when you're behind the wheel of a nice car it's quite exhilarating to open it up, and I'm looking forward to the Silverstone Classic very much. Everybody has got a little bit of competitiveness and aggression about them, so it will certainly be entertaining!"

Other famous names due on the grid include Olympic gold medallists Mark Hunter, Jason Kenny, Greg Searle, Jonny Searle and Amy Williams. Bike racing world champions Wayne Gardner and Freddie Spencer will also compete, as will former England test cricket captain Mike Gatting, *Dragon's Den* TV star Theo Paphitis, *Wheeler Dealers'* Ant Anstead and adventurer Charley Boorman.

HISTORICS

Talbot-Lago returns after a decade at Donington

THE FIRST TALBOT-LAGO T150C of 1936 made a racing return at the Donington Historic Festival last weekend, finishing sixth in Motor Racing Legends' pre-war showcase with Till Bechtolsheimer and Tony Bianchi.

Supplied to Frenchman

Francisque Cadot, chassis 82930 (later run in Speciale guise), which New York-based Briton Bechtolsheimer bought at Artcurial's Retromobile sale in Paris in February – and had not driven prior to Friday qualifying – boasts a huge history. It contested four

Le Mans 24 Hours, numerous European grands prix, the Mille Miglia, Spa 24 Hours and Tourist Trophy.

The four-litre, six-cylinder machine, with its Wilson pre-selector gearbox, ran at Le Mans in 1937 (Luigi Chinetti/Louis Chiron), '38

(Jean Trevoux/Pierre Levegh), '39 (Rene le Begue/Levegh) and '49 (Louis Rosier/Jean-Louis Rosier), but failed to finish on each occasion.

Drivers including Cadot, Levegh and Pierre Veyron drove in the bolide's grand prix outings, spanning 1936-50.



WALKER



Donington Historic Festival comes of age

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@autosport](#)

SOMETHING APPEARED TO CLICK WITH LAST weekend's Donington Historic Festival – from Thursday afternoon's set-up I sensed that this year's event had shifted up several gears. I've attended six of Historic Promotions' seven DHFs, from the inaugural event of 2011. And while it's impossible to credit a specific element as catalyst for the change, this one was lifted by the Friday-Sunday Bank Holiday format, day one being purely qualifying, greater car-club activity on the infield and a better atmosphere in the expanded, resurfaced paddock, which imbued it with a more sociable and inclusive feel.

The event is for enthusiasts and, while the scope of the grids was not as great (the lack of grand prix cars from pre-war and early world championship periods missed an important link with the past in the modern venue's 40th-anniversary year), a stronger HSCC-led Formula 2 element filled the breach admirably for me at the place where I relished reporting European Championship rounds in 1977 and '78, won by Bruno Giacomelli and Keke Rosberg respectively. That said, a movable feast is always a good thing, since no matter how keen, racegoers don't want the same show every year.

Competitors brought some incredible cars I'd not seen before, which made paddock trawls a must. Till Bechtolsheimer's newly acquired Talbot-Lago T150C, veteran of four Le Mans 24 Hours races, was among the stars of Duncan Wiltshire's splendidly eclectic 'Mad Jack' pre-war sportscar race – celebrating 1935 Donington GP winner Richard Shuttleworth – and Graham Adelman's

Ferrari Dino 166 F2 car had fans drooling. The return to the tracks of the ex-John Gott Austin-Healey 3000 SMO 746, last raced in 1972, took me back to my teens. The sight of Dominik Roschmann's Precision Liegeoise yellow BMW 3.0 CSL dicing with the sister cars of Eric Mestdagh and Daniel Mursall in separate races was a personal highlight.

Noticeable this time round, on a relentless programme of largely mini-enduro-format contests, which the organising teams and marshals did brilliantly to keep running close to timetable, was that splitting the U2TC showpiece into two shorter legs – as so often a recipe for similar results – tipped the balance too far towards tin-tops. Saloons thus provided seven of the 19 races, some pre-1966 runners having another go against rumbling V8s in Sunday's frantic HRDC race, or its earlier set. Both of these were well-supported with a huge variety of cars – including three Triumph Heralds, two-stroke Saab, Jowett Javelin and bulbous Standard Vanguard Phase 1.

Due to disparate machinery (to which can be added resources and driving ability, as in any racing contest) within some staple grids, a lot of longer-distance historic events are prone to repeat runaway winners. While the short, sharp, historic events that are the norm in Australia and New Zealand would not find favour in Europe, a couple more sprint races wouldn't go amiss at future DHFs, particularly if the Saturday evening '1000KM' race – shortened to 90 minutes this time – frustratingly can't muster more than 14 starters. It's a Catch 22 situation, but for me the four Formula Junior races, particularly the front-engined pair for once, were the pick of this year's crop. 🏆



MX-5 CHAMPION FLIES IN E-TYPE

Mazda MX-5 champion Ben Short stunned the establishment by pushing winner Gary Pearson all the way in Sunday's Jaguar Heritage Challenge race at Donington in Nick Riley's E-type. "It's huge thanks to Nick, but I'd love to do more historic racing," said the Wiltshireman, who had previously raced the car at Le Mans last year.



WELLER MAKES DEBUT IN RARE ELFIN

Australian Steve Weller made his UK racing debut at Donington, contesting the HSCC's FIA Formula 2 International Series event in his 1968 Elfin 600B. Sydneysider Weller is leaving the 1600cc Lotus twin-cam-engined car – designed and built by Garrie Cooper in Adelaide – here for the European season.



GOTT'S HEALEY BACK AFTER 40 YEARS

The ex-John Gott Austin-Healey 3000 raced for the first time in 45 years at Donington on Sunday, and was one of three works cars in the GTSCC field. Police chief Gott suffered a fatal heart attack in SMO 746 at Lydden in 1972. Long-time custodian Arthur Carter sold the warhorse to Martyn Corfield, who had Jeremy Welch rebuild it.

ALL PICS: WALKER

ROCKINGHAM
BRITISH GT APRIL 28-30

THE ATTITUDES ON THE PODIUM said it all. Matt Griffin was beaming with delight, Seb Morris was simply fuming.

Rockingham's two-hour British GT round was one that was steeped in controversy and, quite often, mired in confusion. Over an hour after the race, the emotions on the podium had done an about-turn – the Team Parker Racing Bentley duo of Morris and Rick Parfitt Jr had their win, and Griffin and Duncan Cameron's Ferrari was put back to second. The result, much like the race, was largely played out in the stewards' office.

The contentious issue of the race arose due to a perfect storm of track-limits penalties, and literally interpreted MSA safety car rules. On sheer pace, Griffin and Cameron had this race won; but in reality they were handed a bizarre gift, only to then leave Corby feeling robbed.

The flashpoint occurred with little more than 20 minutes of the contest remaining. Griffin had taken over the Spirit of Race Ferrari 488 GT3 from Cameron, and had charged his way into the lead battle. But he had an uphill struggle, with Cameron having copped a five-second track-limits penalty after repeatedly taking too much of the school pitlane on the exit of Tarzan. Because of this, the Ferrari was running third on the road, but lower on corrected times on the timing screens. That was issue one.

Issue two arrived along with the lead battle. James Littlejohn had worked wonders to build a sizable margin in the Macmillan AMR Aston Martin Vantage GT3, despite two safety car periods during his stint, before he handed the car, and the lead, over to Jack Mitchell.

With no success penalty to serve after a dire season-opener at Oulton Park, Morris took advantage of the quicker stop to take over from Parfitt and rejoin in second, with the charging Griffin in tow.

The three cars ran as one, until Morris dived inside Mitchell for the lead at the Brook Chicane and Griffin followed him through. Morris defended hard, knowing that he would have at least five seconds in hand over Griffin, so the win would be assured so long as he could shadow the Ferrari to the flag if it got through.

Griffin's mentality was different. He had to get past and then push like hell. Griffin and Morris rubbed at Chapman Curve, the Bentley slithered wide and Griffin pulled off a great move to run around the outside of the recovering Morris through Pif-Paf.

Once in front, the Irishman got the hammer down and was looking well on course to overturn the five-second deficit and win the race outright until a third and final safety car arrived.

That was that, surely? Game over for the Ferrari. Not quite.

Parfitt and Morris win amid safety car farce



Team Parker Bentley bounced back from tough outing at Oulton for unconventional win

The MSA's rules demand that the safety car picks up the race leader. While Griffin was first on the road, he was fifth on his corrected times. To the letter of the law, he was waved past the safety car early. However, in doing so he was automatically handed an advantage that way outweighed his track-limits censure.

"It was absolutely mad," said Griffin after taking the flag 26 seconds clear of the visibly frustrated Morris. "I was pushing like a madman to get the gap and when I saw the safety car I thought

that was that, but then I got the signal to overtake it. I was just doing what I was told to do. In truth, I think I would have won the race anyway on sheer pace. We were flying out there."

Morris was less enthused. "It's a joke," he ranted. "It's a joke to us, to the team and to the fans."

Morris's biggest beef was the fact that the contact with Griffin during the lead battle had gone unpunished. That was until the stewards confirmed (as soon as the flag fell) that the incident would be investigated.

Griffin was later handed a 26s penalty to put him back behind Morris in the amended result. That masked some of the safety car farce, but the incident has highlighted a glaring loophole in the rules (see p61).

Mitchell/Littlejohn took a fine third after a stellar performance in their Aston, which was running a hefty amount of ballast due to their silver-silver driver grading. The Barwell Lamborghinis finished fourth and fifth, with the Jon Minshaw/Phil Keen car salvaging solid points from



Griffin was denied victory in 100th British GT race



ALL PICS: EBREY/LAT

an otherwise difficult weekend. The duo had to have an engine change – Barwell’s second such issue in as many BGT rounds – after a valve problem in FP1. Liam Griffin and Sam Tordoff had a solid run to fifth in the sister car.

TF Sport’s twin Aston Martins had started on the front row, but both hit trouble in the race. Derek Johnston/Jonny Adam’s car led early on but lost time when Johnston picked up wheel damage after striking a kerb at full pelt. Another track-limit penalty demoted them to eighth behind Mark Farmer/Jon Barnes, after Farmer spun at Gracelands.

The GT4 fight was a thriller, with polesitting HHC Motorsport rookies Will Tregurtha and Stuart Middleton putting in a superb display of pure pace and strategy to secure a first category victory in only their second outing.

After dropping to third on the opening lap, Tregurtha drove a blinding 70-minute opening stint, during which he went wheel-to-wheel with Ciaran Haggerty’s Garage 59 McLaren. The field was so closely matched that a total of five cars were in the lead train mid-race.



Tregurtha (right) and Haggerty were inseparable in GT4

HHC surged ahead by stopping five laps later than anybody else, with the plan being to take advantage of fresher tyres. It worked a treat. “The McLaren is faster than us in a straight line, but its tyre degradation is much worse as a result,” said Tregurtha. “I stayed out as long as I could and gave Stuart five-lap fresher Pirellis and he did the business.”

A fine move up the inside of Sandy Mitchell at Gracelands secured the win, with Optimum Motorsport’s Graham Johnson and Mike Robinson taking Pro-Am class honours in third.

ROB LADBROOK

RESULTS

BRITISH GT (83 LAPS) 1 Rick Parfitt Jr/Seb Morris (Bentley Continental GT3); 2 Duncan Cameron/Matt Griffin (Ferrari 488 GT3) +0.948s; 3 Jack Mitchell/James Littlejohn (Aston Martin Vantage GT3); 4 Jon Minshaw/Phil Keen (Lamborghini Huracan GT3); 5 Liam Griffin/Sam Tordoff (Lamborghini Huracan GT3); 6 Lee Mowle/Ryan Ratcliffe (Mercedes AMG GT3). **Fastest lap Keen 1m19.095s (88.29mph). **Pole** Derek Johnston/Jonny Adam **Starters** 12. **POINTS 1 Minshaw/Keen 68; 2 Parfitt/Morris 59.5; 3 Cameron/M Griffin 47; 4 Johnston/Adam 39; 5 Mark Farmer/Jon Barnes 34; 6 L Griffin/Tordoff 33.****

GT4 (79 LAPS) 1 Will Tregurtha/Stuart Middleton (Ginetta G55 GT4); 2 Ciaran Haggerty/Sandy Mitchell (McLaren 570S GT4) +9.813s; 3 Graham Johnson/Mike Robinson (Ginetta G55 GT4); 4 Dean Macdonald/Akhil Rabindra (McLaren 570S GT4); 5 Will Moore/Matt Nicoll-Jones (Aston Martin Vantage GT4); 6 Alex Reed/David Pittard (Ginetta G55 GT4). **FL Mitchell 1m24.781s (82.37mph). **P** Tregurtha/Middleton. **S** 17. **POINTS 1 Middleton/Tregurtha 67.5; 2 Johnson/Robinson 52.5; 3 Reed/Pittard 47; =4 Adam Balon/Adam Mackay and Haggerty/Mitchell 33; 6 Rabindra/Macdonald 28.****



ROCKINGHAM
BRDC BRITISH F3 APRIL 29-30

Hingeley ends Carlin domination

ALL PICS: EBREY

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A SENSE of déjà vu for the chasing pack at Rockingham last Saturday when Enaam Ahmed won the opening British F3 race of the weekend from the second row.

Ahmed had done exactly that a fortnight earlier at Oulton Park, and his repeat success in race one at Rockingham preserved the Carlin man's 100% win rate in 2017, leaving him with a healthy 38-point advantage after just four races – more than a main race win's worth, and certainly more than enough to have his rivals quaking in their boots.

But while he still ended the weekend ahead overall, breakthrough wins for team-mate Cameron Das and Fortec's Ben Hingeley a day later offered the first suggestions that the season might not be the foregone conclusion it had appeared on Saturday afternoon.

Ahmed didn't start the opener from the front – a session-ending red flag, just as his tyres came into play in qualifying, meant Das enjoyed that privilege – but he'd managed to race into the lead by the end of the first sector and ultimately took a controlled fourth win of the year.

Having first dispatched Hingeley for third through Turn 1, Ahmed seized control of the race with an assertive move just a corner later. As Das plumped for the inside line at the Deene hairpin and the fast-starting Omar Ismail ran deep, Ahmed was able to sweep around the outside and had enough momentum to clear his team-mate.

Das did come at Ahmed, but in a cat-and-mouse affair the points leader always had something in reserve and held on to take win from ahead of his team-mate and Douglas Motorsport's Callan O'Keeffe, who stayed with the pair throughout.

Ahmed's unbeaten start to the season

was finally ended in race two, as he was held up by an incident on the opening lap at Deene, but there was nevertheless a familiar shade of blue atop the podium after Das advanced from seventh on the grid to claim his first victory.

Jamie Chadwick started the reversed-grid race from pole, but spun her wheels at the start and dropped behind Ismail before clipping the kerb at Deene as the field rounded the hairpin for the first time, tagging James Pull and ending the Carlin man's race almost on the spot.

Das avoided that altercation to sneak into third, and although Ismail briefly escaped at the front, he was soon caught after Das had worked his way around Chadwick on the approach to Yentwood. Ismail provided a stout defence of the lead on lap four, but one tour later offered less resistance as Das dived to the inside for Deene after stamping on the anchors later than Ismail dared to claim the lead.

Das scampered off from there and was more than six seconds clear at the flag, with Ismail an untroubled and impressive second ahead of Chadwick and Hingeley. Chadwick ran the risk of a post-race demotion for her part in the Turn 1 clash, but instead was handed a five-place grid

Hingeley became the first non-Carlin winner this year in race three

penalty for the finale and therefore held onto her podium place. The delayed Ahmed was classified eighth.

Fresh from that victory, Das looked well-placed to double his tally in Sunday's final race as he launched well from pole, but the race's defining moment came at the halfway point following a safety car restart.

Das had tailed the safety car closely on its in-lap, and bunched the pack right up into the Brook chicane. But that allowed Hingeley and Pull to both get a run across the start/finish line. Though Pull looked to have the best exit, Fortec man Hingeley pulled off a spectacular move, diving late on the brakes on the inside into the hairpin before showing Pull out wide on the exit.

Hingeley survived a second restart in much better fashion than Das had managed and ran comfortably from there to become the first non-Carlin driver to win a race in 2017, beating Pull and Das over the line.

"Cameron left it very late to start the run [off the final corner], but luckily I was close enough to get the run and follow them all the way through Turn 1," said Hingeley. "James was on the outside and I was a little bit boxed in, but then a gap opened up and I thought, 'You know what? Go for it!'"

Ahmed was again caught out on the outside line at the start and dropped to the tail of the field after running deep at the hairpin, but the teenager produced a similar recovery drive to race two to again finish eighth. He admitted after the race he'd been "willing to take the risk" and go all out for victory, but with his rivals making up ground in the points that might not be a luxury he's afforded every weekend from now on.

JACK COZENS



Ahmed made it four wins from six this year in race one

Brown kick-starts title challenge

LEWIS BROWN HAD A WEEKEND TO remember as he took two wins and a brace of second places in the Ginetta GT5 Challenge to kick-start his championship charge.

In the first race, Brown made a daring lunge from third at the Brook chicane to claim the runner-up spot. In race two, a move up the inside of polesitter and race one winner Ryan Hadfield at Deene enabled Brown to push on and win by over four seconds.

Brown couldn't find a way past Shane Stoney in race three, as the erstwhile championship leader stuck his elbows out to claim his only win of the weekend. However, Brown redeemed himself with another bold move up the inside of Hadfield at Deene to claim victory by two seconds in the additional race carried over from Oulton Park.

In the Mini Challenge, Max Bladon took his first victory in the JCW class. He survived a safety car and a red flag restart, after Will Neal became stranded across the track at the exit of the Tarzan Hairpin.

Mark Wakefield finished a distant second, fighting off a train of cars headed by Reece Barr and David Grady

to cross the line with 0.345s in hand.

The second race went Barr's way, as the Northern Irishman charged through the field to become the fourth winner in as many races this year. Fifth at the end of the first lap, Barr pulled off stunning moves on his rivals to find himself leading in the closing stages.

Poleman Charlie Butler-Henderson had to settle for third, as he was overtaken first by Grady into turn one, and then Barr at Gracelands.

After initially running third, Bladon struggled with tyre degradation in the second race and slipped to 11th at the finish. Using the same tyres that took him to victory in the opener, Bladon struggled for grip coming out of the hairpins and didn't have the confidence to go flat through the banked turn one.

Bobby Thompson converted pole position into a first race victory in the VW Racing Cup, before being caught up in another driver's incident in race two and eventually limping home 19th.

Tom Witts took the second race victory, moving from fifth to first at Deene on the opening lap and holding off reigning champion Phil House for the remainder of the 20-minute race.



Junior graduate Lewis Brown bagged two wins and a brace of second places

Witts' move was emulated in the VAG Trophy by Paul Taylor, who also shot from fifth to first as he took advantage of the two Slidesport Audi TTs of Simon and Owen Walton spinning at Deene. He couldn't repeat those heroics in race two, however, as Kenan Dole benefited from an off-track excursion for Taylor at Brook to take his first win of the year.

Michael Crees took two lights-to-flag victories in the Ginetta Racing Drivers' Club to start off the season with a bang. Want2Race competition winner Bond To finished a close second in both races, unable to find a way past Crees, while Tom Sibley took a brace of thirds.

JOE HUDSON



Thompson won first VW Cup outing before trouble struck



Barr (88) collected a race two victory

RESULTS

BRDC BRITISH F3 (ALL 14 LAPS)

1 Enaam Ahmed; 2 Cameron Das +1.011s; 3 Callan O'Keeffe; 4 Ben Hingeley; 5 James Pull; 6 Omar Ismail. **Fastest lap** Das 1m14.622s (93.59mph). **Pole** Das. **Starters** 16. **RACE 2** **1 Das;** 2 Ismail +6.436s; 3 Jamie Chadwick; 4 Hingeley; 5 O'Keeffe; 6 Toby Sowery. **FL** Das 1m14.659s (93.54mph). **P** Chadwick. **S** 16. **RACE 3** **1 Hingeley;** 2 Pull +0.987s; 3 Das; 4 Sowery; 5 O'Keeffe; 6 Jeremy Wahome. **FL** Hingeley 1m15.744s (92.20mph). **P** Das. **S** 15. **POINTS** **1 Ahmed 156;** 2 Das 141; 3 Hingeley 134; 4 Pull 119;

5 O'Keeffe 115; 6 Sowery 86.

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

(9 LAPS) **1 Ryan Hadfield;** 2 Lewis Brown +0.514s; 3 Shane Stoney; 4 Simon Traves; 5 Alex Toth-Jones; 6 Luke Pinder. **Class winner** Richard Evans. **FL** Oliver Wilkinson 1m31.298s (76.49mph). **P** Wilkinson. **S** 24. **RACE 2 (10 LAPS)** **1 Brown;** 2 Hadfield +4.126s; 3 Wilkinson; 4 Traves; 5 Katie Milner; 6 Steven Wells. **CW** Adrian Campbell-Smith. **FL** Brown 1m31.930s (75.97mph). **P** Hadfield. **S** 23. **RACE 3 (10 LAPS)** **1 Stoney;** 2 Brown +0.897s; 3 Wilkinson; 4 Milner; 5 Wells; 6 Max Bird. **CW** Campbell-Smith. **FL** Wilkinson 1m32.080s (75.84mph).

P Bird. **S** 23. **RACE 4 (10 LAPS)**

1 Brown; 2 Hadfield +2.159s; 3 Traves; 4 Milner; 5 Stoney; 6 Nick Zapolski. **CW** Campbell-Smith. **FL** Wilkinson 1m31.544s (76.29mph). **P** Milner. **S** 21. **MINI CHALLENGE (11 LAPS)** **1 Max Bladon;** 2 Mark Wakefield +4.455s; 3 Reece Barr; 4 David Grady; 5 Charlie Butler-Henderson; 6 Brad Hutchinson. **FL** James Turkington 1m29.763s (77.80mph). **P** Bladon. **S** 30. **RACE 2 (14 LAPS)** **1 Barr;** 2 Grady +7.474s; 3 Butler-Henderson; 4 Brett Smith; 5 Stuart Gough; 6 Hutchinson. **FL** Barr 1m29.000s (78.47mph). **P** Butler-Henderson. **S** 30.

VW RACING CUP (BOTH 13 LAPS)

1 Bobby Thompson (Golf); 2 Tom Witts (Scirocco) +5.815s; 3 Jamie Bond (Golf); 4 Philip House (Scirocco); 5 Kieran Gordon (Scirocco); 6 Jack Walker-Tulley (Scirocco). **FL** Thompson 1m29.002s (78.47mph). **P** Thompson. **S** 23. **RACE 2** **1 Witts;** 2 House +1.024s; 3 Gordon; 4 Walker-Tulley; 5 Toby Davis (Golf); 6 Bond. **FL** Davis 1m29.125s (78.36mph). **P** Walker-Tulley. **S** 23. **VAG TROPHY (7 LAPS)** **1 Paul Taylor (VW Golf);** 2 Ben Wallace (Golf) +0.830s; 3 Nick Beaumont (Golf); 4 Kenan Dole (Golf); 5 Tim Docker (VW Scirocco); 6 Chris Milford (Golf).

CW Martyn Culley (SEAT Leon). **FL** Wallace 1m29.606s (77.94mph). **P** Simon Walton (Audi TT). **S** 18. **RACE 2 (10 LAPS)** **1 Dole;** 2 Taylor +0.954s; 3 Wallace; 4 Beaumont; 5 Matthew Wilson (Golf); 6 Docker. **CW** Culley. **FL** Wallace 1m30.300s (77.34mph). **P** Wilson. **S** 17. **GINETTA RACING DRIVERS' CLUB (10 LAPS)** **1 Michael Crees;** 2 Bond To +0.462s; 3 Tom Sibley; 4 Graeme Bishopp; 5 Tom Golding; 6 Robert Pugsley. **FL** To 1m37.802s (71.40mph). **P** Crees. **S** 18. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS)** **1 Crees;** 2 To +0.645s; 3 Sibley; 4 Golding; 5 Bishopp; 6 Dimitro Sedashev. **FL** To 1m37.644s (71.52mph). **P** Crees. **S** 18.

DONINGTON PARK
HSCC APRIL 28-30

Sykes' Merlyn Mk2 weaves its magic

THE SEVENTH DONINGTON HISTORIC Festival was the best yet, with many extraordinary cars making their event bow and new winners breaking the stranglehold of the discipline's elite from which Chris Ward emerged with a treble.

If Frazer Gibney was shell-shocked at winning the HSCC Formula 2 opener in his stunning Polifac BMW Junior-team liveried March 782, John Sykes was effusive about a superb front-engined Formula Junior double in the unique Merlyn Mk2.

"[Merlyn designer] Selwyn Hayward was a great engineer and a perfectionist. By the time this car was ready, it was dead in the water against rear-engined opposition, but I'm sure he was smiling down on me today," said Sykes, who fought off Lola duo Robin Longdon and Justin Fleming. Diff failure thwarted poleman Longdon on Saturday, but even a tag from Fleming couldn't deny him second in Sunday's frenetic UK counter.

When top F2 qualifiers Richard Evans (metering unit), Mark Dwyer (misfire) and debutant Daniel Gibson (fuel pump belt) retired, Gibney scored a surprise maiden victory over 1600cc standouts Robert Simac and Marty Bullock. Gibney's engine misfired from the off on Sunday, however, and for four glorious laps Mike Bletsoe-Brown led before Evans, Dwyer and Gibson arrived from the back.

Suffering with gear linkage problems, Evans was let off the hook when Dwyer's exhaust detached and Gibson's Chevron B42's Hart engine dropped a valve. Dwyer still finished second ahead of defending quadruple champion Simac, while a clutchless Mike Wrigley (March 79B) won the Formula Atlantic class, son Matt (Ralt RT1) having fought the victorious Peter Alexander all the way the previous day.

Unscathed following a big crash in the ex-Cyril Wick Cooper-Jaguar T33 in RAC Woodcote Trophy qualifying, Chris



John Sykes took his unique Merlyn to a Formula Junior double (above); delightful Polifac-liveried March carried Frazer Gibney to F2 win (below)

Ward won Saturday's Historic Touring Car Challenge, Stirling Moss Trophy and '1000Km' races.

The most satisfying of the trio was the HTCC win with Steve Soper. Their Rover Vitesse had lain unused since it broke under Soper in 2015. The tussle for second between David Tomlin (Ford Escort RS) and Dominik Roschmann (BMW CSL) went the way of Tomlin.

Will Nuthall put up a sensational fight in the Moss race as he and Ward traded places in a Lister-Costin-versus-Knobbly confrontation. Ward narrowly had the upper hand when Nuthall was penalised a minute for car owner Barry Wood's decision to leave him in at the stops, not as declared. He kept second, despite running out of fuel.

For the third successive year, Paul Gibson and Ward won the '1000Km' homage, this time over 90 minutes, in the former's Lola T70 Mk3B continuation car. They outgrunted Leo Voyazides/Simon Hadfield and Chris Beighton/Nigel Greensall in historied T70s.

Gary Pearson won the Jaguar Historic Challenge in Carlos Monteverde's E-type, but was pushed mighty hard –

and passed audaciously a couple of times – by Mazda MX-5 star Ben Short, second time out in indisposed Nick Riley's ex-Jeremy Welch version.

The 'Mad Jack' (Shuttleworth) pre-war and RAC Woodcote Trophy sportscar races provided Fred Wakeman/Pat Blakeney-Edwards with one-lap victories. Bentley boys Clive and Peter Morley and Chris Hudson/Stuart Morley pursued the Frazer Nash gamely in the pre-war encounter, finishing two seconds apart. Once Gary Pearson retired the ex-Jim Clark Jaguar D-type, the '50s contest was decided in favour of Wakeman/Blakeney-Edwards' Cooper-Jaguar T38, although Simon Hadfield's charge to second in Wolfgang Friedrichs' Aston Martin DB3S entertained.

With a fresh engine, James Murray won Saturday's rear-engined Formula Junior race from 17-year old Benn Tilley, racing Paul Smeeth's Lotus 22 for the first time. Twice they plunged down the Craner Curves abreast on Sunday before Murray quarried the Old Hairpin gravel, resuming third. Tilley parked with a leaking sump gasket, allowing John Fyda through to win from Murray.

Martyn Corfield's ex-John Gott SMO 746 appearing among three works Austin-Healey 3000s was the talk of the GTSCC, but it threw a rear wheel passing the pits. Undeterred, co-driver Jeremy Welch jumped into Nils Nyblaeus' sister car and won the GT3 class. The oily demise of David Smithies' 3000 triggered a safety car intervention spanning more than half of Grahame Bryant's short middle stint in the family AC Cobra, in which son Oliver duly repeated 2016's win, over a very on-form Carlos Monteverde/Gary Pearson and John





Clark/Alasdair McCaig in Jaguar E-types.

James Dodd (Honda Accord) outran the Super Touring opposition both days, but FWD debutant Chris Beighton set fastest lap on Saturday, grappling with Neil Smith's Alfa over second. Behind Dodd, a spate of late mechanical problems re-ordered Sunday's race. Beighton stopped with alternator failure and Keith Butcher's Audi started smoking, leaving James' father Graeme and Jason Hughes (MG ZS) to join him on the podium.

U2TC has a new format this year, twin 40-minute races instead of a single hour, but the Banks brothers won again in their shrill Alfa Romeo GTA. The lighter but less advantageously equipped Lotus Cortinas pursued in vain, led by Steve Soper in a new Team Dynamics-built car.

Both HRDC races repeated 2016's results. David Tomlin just kept his battle-scarred Cortina ahead of Graham Pattle's example in the Pre-'66 set, after a thrilling early skirmish between Jack Drury (Ford Falcon) and Soper ended prematurely. Soper repassed the American V8 having boxed Drury behind Les Ely's BMW during lappery at Schwantz Curve. Three into one at McLean's simply wouldn't go – and, as Ely turned in, contact pushed Soper's left front wing onto its tyre. The Beemer cannoned into Drury, whose left rear wing was savaged as he left the track, puncturing a Dunlop. "One of those things," shrugged Soper.

Not even the growling Jaguar Mk1 of Tom Butterfield/Pete Dorlin or engine guru Neil Brown's scuttling Austin A35 could live with Mike and Andy Jordan's flat-cornering A40 in the (Pre-'60) Touring Car Greats set.

MARCUS PYE

RESULTS

FJHRA/HSCC FORMULA

JUNIOR, FRONT-ENGINE (BOTH 14 LAPS) **1 John Sykes (Merlyn Mk2)**; 2 Justin Fleming (Lola Mk2) +0.557s; 3 Nick Taylor (Elva 100); 4 Ian Phillips (BMC Mk1); 5 Harindra da Silva (Lola Mk2); 6 Tom Smith (Scorpion Rytune). **Class winner** Smith. **Fastest lap** Fleming 1m24.838s (83.98mph). **Pole** Robin Longdon (Lola Mk2). **Starters** 19.

RACE 2 **1 Sykes**; 2 Longdon +0.289s; 3 Fleming; 4 da Silva; 5 Taylor; 6 Ralf Emmerling (Gemini Mk2). **CW** Smith. **FL** Sykes 1m25.432s (83.40mph). **P** Longdon. **S** 18.

HSCC HISTORIC F2 FIA INTERNATIONAL SERIES

(22 LAPS) **1 Frazer Gibney (March-BMW 782)**; 2 Robert Simac (March-BDA 712M) +14.789s; 3 Martin Bullock (Chevron-FVA B17C); 4 Mike Bletsoe-Brown (Chevron-BDG B27); 5 Alain Lagache (March-BDA 712); 6 Luciano Arnold (Brabham-BDA BT36). **CW** Simac; Peter Alexander (Chevron-BDA B29). **FL** Richard Evans (March-BDG 742) 1m04.940s (109.71mph). **P** Evans. **S** 25.

RACE 2 (23 LAPS) **1 Evans**; 2 Mark Dwyer (March-BDG 742) +36.962s; 3 Simac; 4 Bletsoe-Brown; 5 Bullock; 6 Jeremy Wheatley (Surtees-Hart BDA TS10). **CW** Simac; Mike Wrigley (March-BDA 79B). **FL** Evans 1m06.208s (107.61mph). **P** Evans. **S** 23.

HISTORIC TOURING CAR CHALLENGE & TONY DRON TROPHY

(45 LAPS) **1 Steve Soper/Chris Ward (Rover Vitesse)**; 2 David Tomlin (Ford Escort RS1800) +36.226s; 3 Dominik Roschmann (BMW 3.0 CSL); 4 Steve Dance (Ford Capri RS2600); 5 Eric Mestdagh (BMW 3.0 CSL); 6 Chris Ward/John Young (Jaguar XJS). **CW** Tomlin; Roschmann; John Spiers/Neil Merry (Ford Capri); Tony Hart/Will Nuthall (Renault 5 GT

Turbo). **FL** Soper 1m16.585s (93.03mph). **P** Soper. **S** 29.

STIRLING MOSS TROPHY FOR PRE-'61 SPORTS CARS

(44 LAPS) **1 Chris Ward (Lister-Jaguar Costin BHL133)**; 2 Will Nuthall (Lister-Jaguar Knobbly) –1 lap; 3 Justin Maeers/Charlie Martin (Cooper T49 Monaco); 4 Steve Boulton Brooks/Martin O'Connell (Lister-Jaguar Flat-Iron); 5 Carlos Monteverde/Gary Pearson (Lister-Jaguar Costin); 6 Sam Thomas/Colin Turkington (Lister-Jaguar Knobbly). **CW** Maeers/Martin; Louis Zurstrassen (Elva Mk5); Ben Mitchell/Jason Yates (Lotus 11). **FL** Nuthall 1m19.547s (89.57mph). **P** Ward. **S** 24.

'1000KM' FOR PRE-'73 PROTOTYPE, TOURING & GT CARS

(75 LAPS) **1 Paul Gibson/Chris Ward (Broadley Lola T70 Mk3B)**; 2 Leo Voyazides/Simon Hadfield (Lola T70 Mk3B) +8.377s; 3 Chris Beighton/Nigel Greensall (Lola T70 Mk3B); 4 Mike Whitaker (Lola T70 Spyder); 5 Steve Boulton Brooks/Robert Beebe (Chevron B8); 6 Jason Wright/Andy Wolfe (Ford GT40). **CW** Whitaker; Boulton Brooks/Beebe; Daniel & Peter Mursall (BMW 3.0 CSL). **FL** Ward 1m08.351s (104.24mph). **P** Ward. **S** 14.

JAGUAR CLASSIC PRE-'66 CHALLENGE

(29 LAPS) **1 Gary Pearson (E-type)**; 2 Ben Short (E-type) +14.096s; 3 James & Graeme Dodd (E-type); 4 Julian Thomas/Calum Lockie (E-type); 5 Joaquin Folch/Simon Hadfield (E-type); 6 Alistair Dyson (E-type). **CW** Ben Eastick (C-type); Tim Mogridge (E-type); Bob Binfield (E-type); Chris & Claire Keith-Lucas (XK150); Andy Keith-Lucas (XK120). **FL** Thomas 1m19.820s (89.26mph). **P** Pearson. **S** 34.

'MAD JACK' PRE-WAR SPORTS CARS

(25 LAPS) **1 Fred Wakeman/Patrick Blakeney-Edwards (Frazer Nash Supersports)**; 2 Clive & James Morley (Bentley 3/4½) –1 lap; 3 Clive Hudson/Stuart Morley

(Bentley 3/4½); 4 Richard Iliffe (Riley Kestrel); 5 Lukas Halusa (Bugatti T35C); 6 Tony Bianchi/Till Bechtolsheimer (Talbot-Lago T150C). **CW** Morley/Morley; Iliffe; Halusa; Bianchi/Bechtolsheimer; Richard Wilson (Squire Skimpy); Martin Halusa (Alfa Romeo 8C 2300 Zagato). **FL** Blakeney-Edwards 1m34.816s (75.14mph). **P** Wakeman. **S** 21.

ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB WOODCOTE TROPHY FOR PRE-'56 SPORTS CARS

(42 LAPS) **1 Fred Wakeman/Patrick Blakeney-Edwards (Cooper-Jaguar T38)**; 2 Wolfgang Friedrichs/Simon Hadfield (Aston-Martin DB3S) –1 lap; 3 John Ure/Nick Wigley (Cooper-Bristol T23/25); 4 Ben Eastick (Jaguar D-type); 5 Till Bechtolsheimer (Allard J2); 6 Malcolm Paul/Rick Bourne (Lotus-Bristol MkX). **CW** Friedrichs/Hadfield; Ure/Wigley; Bechtolsheimer. **FL** Wakeman 1m23.318s (85.51mph). **P** Wakeman. **S** 29.

FJHRA/HSCC FORMULA JUNIOR, REAR-ENGINE

(BOTH 15 LAPS) **1 James Murray (Lola Mk5A)**; 2 Benn Tilley (Lotus 22) +2.744s; 3 John Fyda (Brabham BT6); 4 Peter Morton (Lightning Envoyette); 5 Andy Willis (Lotus 20/22); 6 Mark Woodhouse (Lotus 20/22). **CW** Andrew Wilkinson (Lynx T3); Nick Finburgh (Envoy Mk1). **FL** Murray 1m18.539s (90.71mph). **P** Murray. **S** 30.

RACE 2 **1 Fyda**; 2 Murray +7.796s; 3 Morton; 4 Michael Hibberd (Lotus 22); 5 Woodhouse; 6 Willis. **CW** Lukas Halusa (Lotus 20/22); Finburgh. **FL** Morton 1m19.348s (89.79mph). **P** Murray. **S** 26.

GT & SPORTS CAR CUP FOR PRE-'66 GT & PRE-'63 SPORTS RACING CARS

(80 LAPS) **1 Oliver/Grahame Bryant (AC Cobra)**; 2 Carlos Monteverde/Gary Pearson (Jaguar E-type) +38.902s; 3 John Clark/Alasdair McCaig (E-type); 4 Leo Voyazides/Simon Hadfield (AC Cobra); 5 Fred Wakeman/Patrick Blakeney-Edwards (Lister-Jaguar Coupe); 6 Michael Wilkinson/Jamie Boot (Jaguar E-type). **CW** Nils-Fredrik Nyblaeus/Jeremy Welch (Austin-Healey 3000); Michael Malone/Rob Hall (Lotus 15); Malcolm Paul/Rick Bourne (TVR Grantura MkIII); Jason Yates/Ben Mitchell (Lotus 11). **FL** O Bryant 1m21.117s (87.83mph). **P** Hadfield. **S** 40.

HSCC SUPER TOURING CHALLENGE

(BOTH 17 LAPS) **1 James Dodd (Honda Accord)**;

2 Neil Smith (Alfa Romeo 156 STW) +15.025s; 3 Chris Beighton (Accord); 4 Graeme Dodd (Accord); 5 Colin Turkington (BMW M3 E30); 6 Keith Butcher (Audi A4). **CW** Turkington; Butcher; Mark Wright (Ford Sierra RS500); Ric Wood (BMW M3 GTR). **FL** Beighton 1m13.280s (97.22mph). **P** J Dodd. **S** 14.

RACE 2 **1 J Dodd**; 2 G Dodd +41.086s; 3 Jason Hughes (MG ZS); 4 Harry Whale (BMW M3 E30); 5 Beighton; 6 Butcher. **CW** Whale; Butcher; Wright. **FL** J Dodd 1m13.773s (96.58mph). **P** J Dodd. **S** 11.

U2TC PRE-'66 UNDER 2-LITRE TOURING CARS

(28 LAPS) **1 Andrew & Maxim Banks (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GTA)**; 2 Steve Soper (Ford Lotus Cortina) +23.917s; 3 Ambrogio Perfetti/Oscar Rovelli (Ford Lotus Cortina); 4 Andy Wolfe (Ford Lotus Cortina); 5 Geoff/Alan Letts (Ford Lotus Cortina); 6 Graham Pattle (Ford Lotus Cortina). **CW** Endaf Owens (Morris Mini Cooper S); Oliver Bryant (BMW 1800Ti). **FL** Andrew Banks 1m23.557s (85.27mph). **P** A Banks. **S** 33.

RACE TWO (24 LAPS) **1 Banks/Banks**; 2 Soper +3.468s; 3 Wolfe; 4 Perfetti/Rovelli; 5 Carlos Monteverde/Gary Pearson (Ford Lotus Cortina); 6 Richard Shaw/Ross Hyett (BMW 1800Ti). **CW** Shaw/Hyett; Peter Baldwin/Graham Churchill (Austin Cooper S). **P** A Banks. **FL** Soper 1m24.228s (84.59mph). **S** 31.

HRDC COYS TROPHY PRE-'66 TOURING CARS

(31 LAPS) **1 David Tomlin (Ford Lotus Cortina)**; 2 Graham Pattle (Ford Lotus Cortina) +1.470s; 3 Mark Burton (Ford Mustang); 4 Julian Thomas/Calum Lockie (Ford Falcon); 5 Michael Squire (Mustang); 6 Martin Strommen (Ford Lotus Cortina). **CW** Burton; Mike & Andrew Jordan (Austin A40); Bruce Chapman (Austin A35 Academy). **FL** Jack Drury (Ford Falcon) 1m24.375s (84.44mph). **P** Drury (Falcon). **S** 34.

HRDC PRE-'60 TOURING GREATS & TC63

(29 LAPS) **1 Mike & Andrew Jordan (A40)**; 2 Tom Butterfield/Peter Dorlin (Jaguar Mk1) +25.641s; 3 Neil Brown (Austin A35); 4 Nigel Webb/John Young (Jaguar Mk2); 5 Dave Devine (Riley 1.5); 6 Gavin Watson (Alfa Romeo Giulietta Ti). **CW** Butterfield/Dorlin; Webb/Young; Devine; Watson; Anthony Lucas (Austin A35 Academy); Mark Cross (Morris Minor). **FL** A Jordan 1m27.556s (81.37mph). **P** A Jordan. **S** 40.

Dodd was the man to beat in Super Touring



BRANDSHATCH
MGCC APRIL 29-30

Makar proves his mettle in MG Trophy

ROSS MAKAR HAD PLENTY TO celebrate after the hotly contested MG Trophy made its only visit to Kent, winning one race and finishing second in the other. On-track action was intense and a little wild: a huge crash took nine cars out of race two before the first corner.

The fastest qualifier was Jason Burgess, but a gentle tap sent him spinning as 27 other cars plunged down Paddock in race one. Burgess's recovery to fourth was almost as remarkable as his escape from disaster in those early seconds.

Just inside the top 10 after missing second gear at the start of race one, Makar hit the front on lap 11, helped by Doug Cole having gearbox problems of his own. Gary Wetton took second, but Burgess was too far back to threaten Cole.

A reduced field contested the restarted second race, and leader Burgess had another fright when a backmarker forced him off the track. Makar briefly took advantage but ultimately had no answer to Burgess's pace. Paul Luti won the ZR 170 class in race one but lost out to Jack Roberts after a race-long duel second time around.

Mark McAleer (996) won both opening races in this year's Porsche Club Championship, and son Jake (Boxster) scored a double class triumph. Best of the rest was Mark Sumpter, third and second in his venerable but still effective 964.

In trouble early on, Neil Fowler spent the opening MG BCV8 race making up lost time. Race leader James Wheeler had to back off – his car was running hot – but he still beat Ian Prior. Wheeler stopped on the race-two green-flag lap, giving Fowler a clear run to victory. Ollie



Neaves took third and a class win.

Tom Smith (MGB) won both Equipe GTS Group A races despite pressure from Rob Cull's TVR. Cull led while Smith nursed his overheating car in race two, but threw it away with a spin. Tim Greenhill (MGB) wasn't the quickest in the Group B races, but resisted all advances in race one before finally yielding to pressure from David Griffiths' TR4 in the second outing.

Richard Wildman and Ed Reeve each won a Midget/Sprite Challenge race. The result in race two was a surprise to Wildman, who discovered he'd been penalised for a jumped start. The fastest man on the day was Stephen Collier, but his car let him down in both races.

Dale Gent (Subaru Impreza) started last in the Modified Saloons race after electrical problems. He passed Rod Birley's Ford Escort for the lead but retired when a head gasket failed, handing Birley the first of two easy wins. With Gent and third-place man Malcolm Wise (hub failure) missing from race two, Birley's main opposition came from Tony Skelton (Renault Clio).

Burgess (16) prevailed over Makar (73) in the second MG Trophy race as chaos erupted in their wake

Birley lost his chance of weekend win number three on a hectic first lap in the opening Tin Tops race. James Ross (Vauxhall Astra) squeezed his way to the front, chased by Daniel Fisher and Chris Whiteman (Honda Civics) until Fisher strayed at Paddock and lost the place. Birley took his Honda Integra to fifth, a result he repeated in race two as Ross won again. Rikki Taylor (Ford Fiesta) beat defending champion Mikey Day in his class in race one, but brought the meeting to an early end by rolling at Paddock.

Dick Trevett and Mike Williams shared winning honours in the Metro Cup. Trevett led race one apart from a brief spell with Lee Connell in front, and a track-limits penalty dropped Connell to fifth. Trevett's car failed at the start of race two, leaving Williams to defend against Connell. Brothers Jack and Andrew Ashton were third and fourth.

A wonderful grid of classic cars gathered for two Triple M races, which were both shortened by red flags. Both were also won by a Wolseley Hornet Special, piloted by Tony Seber in race one and David Seber in race two.

Lotus Elites won two Iconic 50s races. Jonathan Smare took race one when poleman Robin Ellis started late after stalling. He reached third behind Steve Watton's Turner, Watton having his first race in four years and the first ever in this car. Ellis made no mistake at the second attempt, while a slow start cost Smare any chance of another win.

Tom Diment (ZR) took a while to pass Alan Brooke's flying Metro for top spot in the first MG Cup race, then retired with fuel pressure problems. A couple of mistakes cost the Metro driver the lead in race two, while Diment progressed from fifth on the grid and led from James Darby's MGB on lap nine.

BRIAN PHILLIPS



Mark McAleer was the form man in the Porsche Club races

[P77 FULL RESULTS](#)



SILVERSTONE
750MC APRIL 29

Traynor was denied MR2 double after contact with Rowe

Traynor and Ward share the spoils in tight MR2 dramas

SHAUN TRAYNOR, 2015 TOYOTA MR2 champion, fought his way to victory in the first race at Silverstone after a qualifying battle in which the top four cars were covered by less than a second.

Traynor was unable to make it a double, however, as contact with Ben Rowe put him off at Becketts in a similarly intense battle for the lead early in race two. More drama was to follow for Rowe, as Geri Nicosia tried to pass on the inside of Brooklands for the lead, but they made contact and Rowe spun off.

That gave Lewis Ward a chance at his maiden win and he needed no second invitation to pass Nicosia at Luffield on the following lap. A sterling defence from Ward meant 2014 Fiesta Junior champ Nicosia had to settle for second.

The slipstream festival continued in the Locost Championship. Steve Paddock took the lead off the line ahead of Tim Penstone-Smith, who had started on the second row. They and reigning champion Ian Allee swapped positions almost every lap, but it was Paddock who took the chequered flag first ahead of Penstone-Smith, while Allee was forced out of the lead battle following contact with polesitter David Winter, who fell down the order to eighth.

Tom Robinson led from the third row in race two, with Allee in hot pursuit. Allee soon got ahead, chased by Paddock, and strategically allowed his rival to pass him to try to break away from the pack. On the final lap, Allee then swept around the outside at Brooklands to take the win.

Robin Gearing (Darvi P88) eased his

way to victory in the first 750 Formula race, despite Bill Cowley's best efforts in the Cowley MkIV. However, Ed Pither in his PRS 1b then denied Gearing a repeat in race two. Cowley made a bold move on the outside of Brooklands on Gearing for the lead, and Pither took full advantage, passing both Gearing and Cowley on the following lap. Gearing came home second after Cowley retired with a gearbox problem.

Clive Hudson took two convincing victories in the Sport Specials Championship. He beat fellow Eclipse SM1 driver Paul Boyd, who recovered to second in the first race after contact with Hudson during an attempt for the lead at Copse had dropped him to fifth.

Reigning champion Matthew Booth took third in both races in his MK Indy RR. Martin Farrelly (Rogue Xenon) and Charles Hall (Locost 7) enjoyed a close fight for the Class B lead in both races, with Farrelly edging out his rival by just 0.11s in race one. Hall got one back on him in race two by 0.19s.

Jon-Paul Ivey dominated the Bikesports races in his Radical PR6, while Phil Knibb (Radical RS3 RSX) put in two great performances to recover to second from a poor qualifying. After a wretched start to his championship defence at Donington Park, Knibb went from sixth to second in the space of two laps in race one, and managed to do so in even less time in race two – he was staring at the back of leader Ivey's car before they even reached Brooklands.

Darren Berris took another clear on-track victory in the Armed Forces Race Challenge, lapping the field in his Westfield V8.

CHRIS STEVENS

RESULTS

MR2 (BOTH 12 LAPS) 1 Shaun

Traynor; 2 Ben Rowe +2.64s; 3 William Gallacher; 4 Geri Nicosia; 5 Lewis Ward; 6 Timothy Heron. **Class winner** Gallacher. **Fastest lap** Traynor 1m10.25s (84.07mph).

Pole Traynor. **Starters** 35.

RACE 2 1 Ward; 2 Nicosia +0.29s; 3 Kristian White; 4 Tim Allen; 5 Darren Aldworth; 6 Heron.

CW Gallacher. **FL** Traynor 1m10.35s (83.95mph). **P** Traynor. **S** 35.

LOCOST (BOTH 12 LAPS)

1 Steve Paddock; 2 Tim Penstone-Smith +0.76s; 3 Tim Neat; 4 Martin West; 5 Oliver Batten; 6 James Millman. **FL** West 1m13.06s (80.83mph). **P** David Winter. **S** 38.

RACE 2 1 Ian Allee; 2 Paddock +0.26s; 3 Tom Robinson; 4 Lee Emm; 5 Penstone-Smith; 6 Winter.

FL Penstone-Smith 1m12.74s (81.19mph). **P** Winter. **S** 38.

750 FORMULA (BOTH 13 LAPS)

1 Robin Gearing (Darvi P88); 2 Ed Pither (PRS 1b) +2.37s; 3 Bill Cowley (Cowley MkIV); 4 Peter Bove (Darvi Mk4/5); 5 Mark Glover (Racekits Falcon); 6 Ian Barley (Falcon). **CW** Thomas Driscoll (Darvi Mk5/14B). **FL** Pither 1m04.84s (91.08mph). **P** Gearing. **S** 20.

RACE 2 1 Pither; 2 Gearing +0.94s; 3 Bove; 4 Barley; 5 Rod Hill (Mystic T4); 6 Driscoll. **CW** Driscoll.

FL Gearing 1m04.55s (91.49mph). **P** Gearing. **S** 19.

SPORT SPECIALS (BOTH 14 LAPS)

1 Clive Hudson (Eclipse SM1); 2 Paul Boyd (Eclipse SM1) +14.64s; 3 Matthew Booth (MK Indy RR); 4 Stewart Mutch (MEV MX150R); 5 Anton Landon (Cyana Mk2); 6 Stephen Ward (Westfield Aerorace). **CW** Mutch; Martin Farrelly (Rogue Xenon). **FL** Boyd 1m02.49s (94.51mph).

P Hudson. **S** 30. **RACE 2 1 Hudson**; 2 Boyd +2.13s; 3 Booth; 4 Adrian Cooper (Procomp LA Gold); 5 Mutch; 6 Landon. **CW** Mutch; Charles Hall (Locost 7). **FL** Hudson 1m02.13s (95.06mph). **P** Boyd. **S** 28.

BIKESPORTS (BOTH 20 LAPS)

1 Jon-Paul Ivey (Radical PR6); 2 Philip Knibb (Radical SR3 RSX) +6.85s; 3 Richard Stables (PR6); 4 Stefano Leaney (PR6); 5 Doug Carter (PR6); 6 Chris Preen (Radical SR3 RS). **CW** Leaney. **FL** Ivey 56.06s (105.35mph). **P** Ivey. **S** 13.

RACE 2 1 Ivey; 2 Knibb +13.91s; 3 Stables; 4 Leaney; 5 Adrian Reynard (Radical SR3); 6 Preen. **CW** Leaney. **FL** Ivey 55.92s (105.61mph). **P** Ivey. **S** 13.

ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE (37 LAPS) 1 Darren Berris

(Westfield V8); 2 Paul Cook/Wayne Lewis (BMW E46 M3) -1 Lap; 3 Ian Smythe (Fisher Fury); 4 Andy Ebdon (Caterham Seven 310R); 5 Mark Penny (Vauxhall VX220); 6 Ed Fuller (Tiger Super 6). **CW** Cook/Lewis; Penny; Mark Inman (VX220). **FL** Berris 1m04.57s (91.46mph). **P** Berris. **S** 35.



Cowley gave chase to Gearing in 750 Formula



CASTLE COMBE
CCRC MAY 1

Prebble romps to Bank Holiday win

JONES

GARY PREBBLE DOMINATED THE SOLE Castle Combe Saloons race on Bank Holiday Monday in his SEAT Leon, as reigning champion Simon Thornton-Norris starred in his Mitsubishi Colt.

Prebble's path to victory was eased by the absence from the front-row of Bill Brockbank, whose qualifying session had ended in the barriers after a brake failure on his SEAT Ibiza. Thornton-Norris, meanwhile, was ninth on the grid after the deletion of his best qualifying efforts for track-limits infringements.

On a damp track Thornton-Norris made swift progress, and mid-race found himself close to Dave Scaramanga (VW Scirocco) and Oliver Cook (Renault Megane), who were dicing for third. It took little more than a lap for Thornton-Norris to make his way past both Scaramanga and Cook, after which he chased down the returning Tony Hutchings in his newly built Audi TT. With less than a lap remaining Thornton-Norris wrestled second from his rival, but Prebble crossed the line with a margin of just over five seconds to secure his second win of 2017.

Craig Tomkinson's overly swift

reactions in his Vauxhall Nova at the start of the Hot Hatch race earned him a 10-second penalty for jumping the start but this didn't prevent him fighting off the advances of Gary Prebble (Peugeot 205 GTi) and Mark Wyatt (Vauxhall Astra) for the lead. Wyatt ultimately usurped both of his rivals, adding to his success from the opening Howard's Day meeting. Prebble added a second to his earlier victory in the Saloons encounter, with Tomkinson classified third.

Having qualified fifth, leading front-engined entrant Stuart Philps wasted little time in making his way to the front of the order in the first MG Owners Club event. Closing on pole position man and race-long leader Martin Wills, Philps made a bold move for the race lead around the outside at Folly in his ZR. As Wills lost the lead his TF lost drive, the legacy of a broken gear lever. Philps was victorious once more in the second race.

After early race-leader Spencer McCarthy exited proceedings when his Mallock dropped a valve, the similarly mounted duo of Alan Cook and Mark Charteris were left to contest the lead

Prebble raced away to comfortable Combe Saloons victory

of the first HSCC Classic Clubmans encounter. After unseating Cook with greater momentum off Camp corner on lap five, Charteris pulled out an eventual winning margin of just over 42-seconds. Charteris and Cook were once more the class of the order in the second race, but the winning margin was much reduced, just under 10 seconds on this occasion.

Barry Squibb was denied victory in his Mitsubishi Lancer E9 by a transmission failure in the sole Combe GTs event. Steve Hall (Audi TT Silhouette) and Oliver Bull (Vauxhall Tigra Silhouette) were separated by just half-a-second for the remainder of the contest. Hall just hung on to the victory by seven tenths of a second.

It was a Brabham BT21 brace in the HSCC Historic Formula 3 races. Peter Thompson won the rain-affected opener while Jon Milicevic prevailed in the much brighter second race.

Kevin Mills Racing team-mates Michael Moyers and Roger Orgee led the order in the single Combe Formula Ford event, with round-one winner Josh Fisher finishing third on this occasion.

LEE BONHAM

RESULTS

COMBE SALOONS (15 LAPS)

1 Gary Prebble (SEAT Leon Cupra); 2 Simon Thornton-Norris (Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart) +5.360s; 3 Tony Hutchings (Audi TT); 4 William Di Claudio (Peugeot 106 GTi); 5 Dave Scaramanga (VW Scirocco); 6 Julian Ellison (Vauxhall Astra VXR). **Class winners** Thornton-Norris; Di Claudio; Alex Kite (Citroen Saxo). **Fastest lap** Thornton-Norris 1m14.060s (89.92mph). **Pole** Prebble. **Starters** 27.

COMBE HOT HATCH (16 LAPS)

1 Mark Wyatt (Vauxhall Astra); 2 Gary Prebble (Peugeot 205 GTi) +2.413s;

3 Craig Tomkinson (Vauxhall Nova); 4 Michael Harris (Peugeot 205 GTi); 5 Matthew Bawtree (Honda Integra); 6 Sam Stride (Honda Civic). **CW** Bawtree; Izaac Channing (Peugeot 106 GTi); Craig Robertson (Suzuki Swift). **FL** Wyatt 1m14.565s (89.31mph). **P** Wyatt. **S** 21.

MGOC (BOTH 15 LAPS) 1 Stuart Philps (ZR); 2 Simon Kendrick (F VWC) +2.925s; 3 Alan Forster (ZR); 4 Stuart Plotnek (F); 5 Steve Williams (ZR); 6 Phil Walker (ZR). **CW** Kendrick; David Amphlett (B Roadster). **FL** Philps 1m21.789s (81.42mph). **P** Martin Wills (TF). **S** 22. **RACE 2 1 Philps;** 2 Kendrick +1.874s; 3 Forster; 4 Mark Baker (F);

5 Plotnek; 6 Williams. **CW** Kendrick; Amphlett. **FL** Philps 1m22.096s (81.12mph). **P** Wills. **S** 21.

CLUBMANS (18 LAPS) 1 Mark Charteris (Mallock Mk20/21); 2 Alan Cook (Mallock Mk20/21B) +42.743s; 3 Mike Lane (Mallock Mk18); 4 David Wale (Mallock Mk20/21); 5 Jonathan Loader (Tiga SC80); 6 Clive Wood (Mallock Mk20B). **CW** Loader; Wood. **FL** Charteris 1m06.292s (100.46mph). **P** Charteris. **S** 11. **RACE 2 (17 LAPS) 1 Charteris;** 2 Cook +9.373s; 3 Wale; 4 Loader; 5 Wood; 6 Philip Hart (Mallock Mk16). **CW** Loader; Wood. **FL** Charteris 1m06.221s (100.57mph). **P** Charteris. **S** 9.

CASTLE COMBE RACING CLUB GTs

(15 LAPS) 1 Steve Hall (Audi TT Silhouette); 2 Oliver Bull (Vauxhall Tigra Silhouette) +0.737s; 3 Tony Bennett (Caterham Ford Duratec); 4 Bob Higgins (Ginetta G55); 5 David Hathaway (Ferrari 360); 6 Tony Hutchings (Audi TT). **CW** Hathaway; Hutchings. **FL** Squibb 1m09.415s (95.94mph). **P** Squibb. **S** 10.

HISTORIC FORMULA 3 (14 LAPS) 1 Peter Thompson (Brabham BT21); 2 Jon Milicevic (Brabham BT21) +1.030s; 3 Jim Blockley (Brabham BT21B); 4 James Claridge (Tecno F3); 5 Michael Scott (Brabham BT28); 6 Keith Messer (Vesey VF3). **FL** Andrew

Hibberd (Brabham F3 BT18) 1m12.771s (91.52mph). **P** Hibberd. **S** 14. **RACE 2 (17 LAPS) 1 Milicevic;** 2 Claridge +3.191s; 3 Thompson; 4 Blockley; 5 Scott; 6 Marcus Mussa (Tecno F3). **FL** Milicevic 1m13.245s (90.92mph). **P** Milicevic. **S** 12.

COMBE FF1600 (15 LAPS) 1 Michael Moyers (Spectrum 011c); 2 Roger Orgee (Ray GR17) +5.430s; 3 Josh Fisher (Van Diemen JL14); 4 Robert Hall (Ray GR16); 5 Michael Eastwell (Spectrum); 6 Matt Rivett (Ray GR10). **CW** Andrew Higginbottom (Van Diemen RF88); Paul Barnes (Swift SC92). **FL** Moyers 1m10.579s (94.36mph). **P** Moyers. **S** 16.

Miloudi leads R1
winner Macaulay
at damp Brands



HAWKINS

BRANDS HATCH
MSVR MAY 1

Miloudi breaks his duck at Brands GP

CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS LEADER BEN Miloudi finally unlocked the secret of winning a race after three runner-up results in a row this year, when the Formula Vee championship visited a wet Brands Hatch circuit.

Oulton Park winner Craig Pollard brought his GAC into contention in race one with the help of two safety car periods. Sadly he misunderstood the green-flag restart procedure, along with three others, and started racing before reaching the flag. So although he was the winner on the road after passing Adam Macaulay, Pollard was demoted to fifth by a 20-second penalty. Miloudi was promoted to second behind Macaulay, and James Clennell inherited third.

Miloudi was "proper chuffed" after race two, beating race-one spinner Ian Jordan to victory, with Macaulay third.

"I feel a bit more like a proper racing driver now! It felt a bit silly, leading the points without a win," said the Warwickshire driver.

Tim Davis mastered changing and ultimately undriveable conditions to win the Bernie's V8s pitstop race, which attracted a varied field of more than 40 cars. Jack Tetley's Opel Manta dominated the early stages, leaving his stop late in the pit window, and Davis overtook before David Tetley rejoined in the Stars and Stripes-liveried car. The James and Jonny Wheeler MGB GT V8 passed Tetley for second on the lap when the red flag was shown because of a car parked dangerously, so they missed out on countback. A cloudburst made a restart impossible.

Clive Richards got the better of a big Caterham field in two races for the MSVR 7 Series in tricky track conditions. Silverstone victor Paul Thacker was poised in second, ready to pounce, but

didn't see a last-lap flag and missed his chance. Poleman Phil Jenkins had too much wheelspin at the start and didn't realise racing was about to resume after the second safety car, losing his opportunity to improve on third. Down in 16th, Oscar Lawry narrowly beat class rivals Lucy Redding and Richard Pursglove.

Thacker kept Richards honest in race two until he fell off at Graham Hill Bend. Luckily for Thacker, a car off at Clearways brought red flags, and on countback Thacker retained second. Lucy Redding won the 1600cc class this time.

Ken Savage (2-Eleven) celebrated his first race in 18 months with a runaway win in the first Lotus Cup and Elise Trophy race. Bob Drummond's Exige fell more than half a minute behind in a damp/wet/improving race in which tyre choice was critical. Third, another minute back, was Elise winner William Stacey.

Savage struggled in race two until the track dried, leaving wet-shod Drummond to contest the lead with Simon Atkinson's dry-shod Exige. Atkinson easily got the better of things on an improving track, Savage moved up to third, and in the Elises Stacey overcame a moment early on to overhaul Alex Ball for the class honours.

Rod Birley's prayers for rain were well and truly answered before the first Allcomers' race, but even the local favourite might agree the weather gods overdid things. The 4WD Ford Escort beat the potentially quicker Chris Enderby Radical, with Luke Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra clone third.

A dry race two went to Mike Cantillon's Caterham, with Armiger second and Birley third. The Radical, now in David Enderby's hands, just kept fourth in front of three Caterhams.

BRIAN PHILLIPS

RESULTS

FORMULA VEE (10 LAPS) 1 Adam Macaulay

(Sheane); 2 Ben Miloudi (Storm) +3.926s; 3 James Clennell (AHS Challenger); 4 Jack Wilkinson (Sheane Mk3); 5 Craig Pollard (Bears GAC); 6 Paul Taylor (Bears GAC). **CW** Wilkinson. **FL** Pollard 1m52.300s (78.00mph). **P** James Harridge (Maverick). **S** 30.

RACE 2 (5 LAPS) 1 Miloudi; 2 Ian Jordan (Shane) +0.681s; 3 Macaulay; 4 Clennell; 5 Wilkinson; 6 Christian Goller (AHS Challenger). **CW** Wilkinson. **FL** Miloudi 2m07.266s (68.83mph). **P** Harridge (absent). **S** 27.

BERNIE'S V8s (18 LAPS) 1 Tim Davis (TVR Tuscan); 2 Jack & David Tetley (Opel Manta V8) +1m06.981s; 3 James & Jonny Wheeler (MGB GT V8); 4 Simon Cripps (MGB GT V8); 5 Peter Samuels (MGB GT V8); 6 John Plant (Allard J2). **CW** Wheeler/Wheeler; Samuels; Andy Larholt (Caterham 310R); Russell McCarthy (MGB GT V8); Keith Vaughan Williams (TVR Chimera); Barry Holmes (MGB GT V8); Guy Samuels (MGB). **FL** Davis 1m51.116s (78.83mph). **P** Michael Saunders (Ford Escort). **S** 41.

7 RACE SERIES (16 LAPS) 1 Clive Richards; 2 Paul Thacker +0.350s; 3 Phil Jenkins; 4 Steve Day; 5 Justin Armstrong; 6 Steve Ruston. **CW** Oscar Lawry. **FL** Jenkins 1m37.921s (89.45mph). **P** Jenkins. **S** 38.

RACE 2 (8 LAPS) 1 Richards; Thacker +0.376s; 3 Jenkins; 4 Day; 5 Chris Wright; 6 Armstrong. **CW** Redding. **FL** Thacker 1m52.715s (77.71mph). **P** Richards. **S** 37.

LOTUS CUP & ELISE TROPHY (17 LAPS) 1 Ken Savage (2-Eleven); 2 Bob Drummond (Exige V6 Cup) +35.868s; 3 William Stacey (Elise S2); 4 Axel van Nederveen (Elise 111R); 5 Sam Tomlinson (Elise S2); 6 John Atherton (Elise). **CW** Stacey. **FL** Savage 1m47.270s (81.66mph). **P** Savage. **S** 18.

RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Simon Atkinson (Exige V6 Cup); 2 Drummond +25.171s; 3 Savage; 4 Stacey; 5 Alex Ball (Elise S1); 6 Simon Oakley (Elise). **CW** Stacey. **FL** Atkinson 1m45.121s (83.33mph). **P** Atkinson. **S** 18.

MSVR ALLCOMERS (7 LAPS) 1 Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC); 2 Chris Enderby (Radical SR4) +1.862s; 3 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra); 4 Andy Thompson (SEAT Toledo); 5 Jonny Pittard (Caterham Superlight); 6 Andy Robinson (Ford Falcon). **CW** Enderby; Jamie Jeffrey (BMW Z4). **FL** Birley 1m 52.560s (77.82mph). **P** Birley. **S** 25.

RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Mike Cantillon (Caterham); 2 Armiger +4.389s; 3 Birley; 4 David Enderby (Radical SR4); 5 Merrick Linnet (Caterham); 6 Pittard. **CW** Birley; Jeffrey. **FL** Cantillon 1m43.302s (84.79mph). **P** Birley. **S** 24.

The sight of Graham Turner's 917K replica splashing through the Bernie's V8s encounter evoked memories of legendary 1970 BOAC 1000Km race



HAWKINS

CROFT
BARC APRIL 29-30

Davies continues his 2CV success in thrillers

VICTORY IN SUNDAY'S two-hour Classic 2CV Championship endurance race with co-driver Ainslie Bousfield enabled reigning champion Lien Davies to extend his points lead.

Davies, who scored his maiden series win at Oulton Park in March, also finished second to 2015 champion Pete Sparrow in a closely fought first race. Sparrow and Davies exchanged late-braking lunges into Tower as they jostled for the lead, then ran side-by-side through the Esses, until Sparrow eventually came out on top by the flag. The battle for third was equally fraught, as Alec Graham staved off Sandro Proietti, Jim Henshaw and Nick Crispin at the line.

A stunning second race was decided by a matter of inches as polesitter Ash Carter edged out Crispin under acceleration from the final corner to take his first victory by just 0.04 seconds. Behind the top two, Luca Proietti finished third ahead of a chasing pack that somehow managed to run four abreast from Hawthorns to Tower without contact.

Davies and Bousfield drove a tactical masterpiece in the enduro by completing all three compulsory pitstops within the opening five minutes. The duo went down a lap but returned to the head of the field when Matt Hollis made his final stop, beating the Sparrow/Carter pairing, with Henshaw coming third.

James O'Reilly survived last-lap contact with backmarker Andy Johnson to take a comfortable victory in race one of the British Superkart 250/450 ahead of Dan Clark, whose fastest lap gave him race-two pole, and Andy Bird. Defending English champion Jack Layton finished sixth.

O'Reilly could only

manage fifth in a tighter second race, won by Bird. In the 450 class, honours went to Stephen Clark in his Anderson/KTM. O'Reilly and Ross Allen then shared Sunday's English Championship wins.

Liam Morley claimed two dominant F125 English Superkart Championship victories, beating his sole challenger Lee Harpham in each race. Sam Moss finished third but lost fourth in race two with a spin on the final lap. Morley backed up his main-series wins with a double in the English F125 series.

Ben Palmer withstood race-long pressure from Anton Spires to take victory in the first of the Clio races, while Nic Harrison won the Road class after Shanel Drewe outbraked herself into Sunny In on the last lap.

Roles were reversed in race two as Spires led Palmer away from pole, but a mistake from Spires at Sunny In enabled Palmer to take his second win of the weekend. Spires did, however, snatch the extra point for fastest lap.

Jonty Hair was denied a Clubmans Cup treble after his Beagle MkIV suffered a loose plug lead in the third and final race. Hair took the ex-Derek Bell car to two comfortable wins on Saturday, beating James Clarke in his Mallock Mk27. Clarke then celebrated his 17th birthday in style with a maiden victory in race three. Mike Evans, Brian John Hunter and David Barnett took class wins.

Andrew Morrison won the first Northern Saloon & Sports Cars race after poleman Michael Cutt stalled on the grid. Although Cutt fought back to run fifth, he then slid off into the barrier at Clerveaux. Morrison again beat Cutt in the second race, with Eduardo De Sousa third.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

Willis powered to victory in Northern Ireland



CRAIGANTLET
BRITISHHILL CLIMB APRIL 29

Willis extends points lead with Craigtantlet double

THE LARGEST NUMBER OF registered competitors this century ventured across the Irish Sea to the venue used only for a maximum of 12 hours each year. On this showing, Trevor Willis, Wallace Menzies and Dave Uren look likely to be the men to beat with six-time champion Scott Moran absent.

It wasn't all plain sailing for 2012 champion Willis, despite taking a double win ahead of Menzies. "My timing strut got broken as we queued for round three," he said. "It was quickly fixed but the wing had cracked and then failed at the final corner, causing me a major moment."

Willis and Menzies didn't qualify fastest for either encounter. Instead, it was Uren and Will Hall who took that honour, with Uren winning the unlimited class in the process and Hall then finishing fourth each time. Menzies' wife Nicola shares with Uren and drove with care and precision all day, claiming ninth in round four.

Alex Summers ramped up the effort in his pretty new V6 DJ for fifth in the first encounter, but the brakes failed at the end of the run and could not be repaired, so his day was over mid-afternoon.

Again it was mighty giant-killer Richard Spedding who thrust the dart-like Raptor into sixth each time as the best 1600.

Ed Hollier also starred. He had never seen the hill until practice

and never crossed the Irish Sea before. Spedding and Hollier beat big V8 cars each time, with Craigtantlet novice Jason Mourant behind them both in round three. Also failing to match their pace was championship co-sponsor Graham Wynn, with support from Wolverhampton University motorsport engineering students.

Scottish motoring journalist David Finlay again took a completely standard production road car to a championship point in the factory demonstrator Lexus RC F on very hard tyres unsuitable for competition.

He gained his point as Hollier pushed a little too far and another Ulster first-timer Darren Gumbley spun out on the second bend in his brand new Force TA.

Retired TT motorcycle racer, regular former Ulster Road Racer and 1988 Manx Grand Prix victor Allan McDonald brought his unusual Mini Evo across from the mainland for the first time.

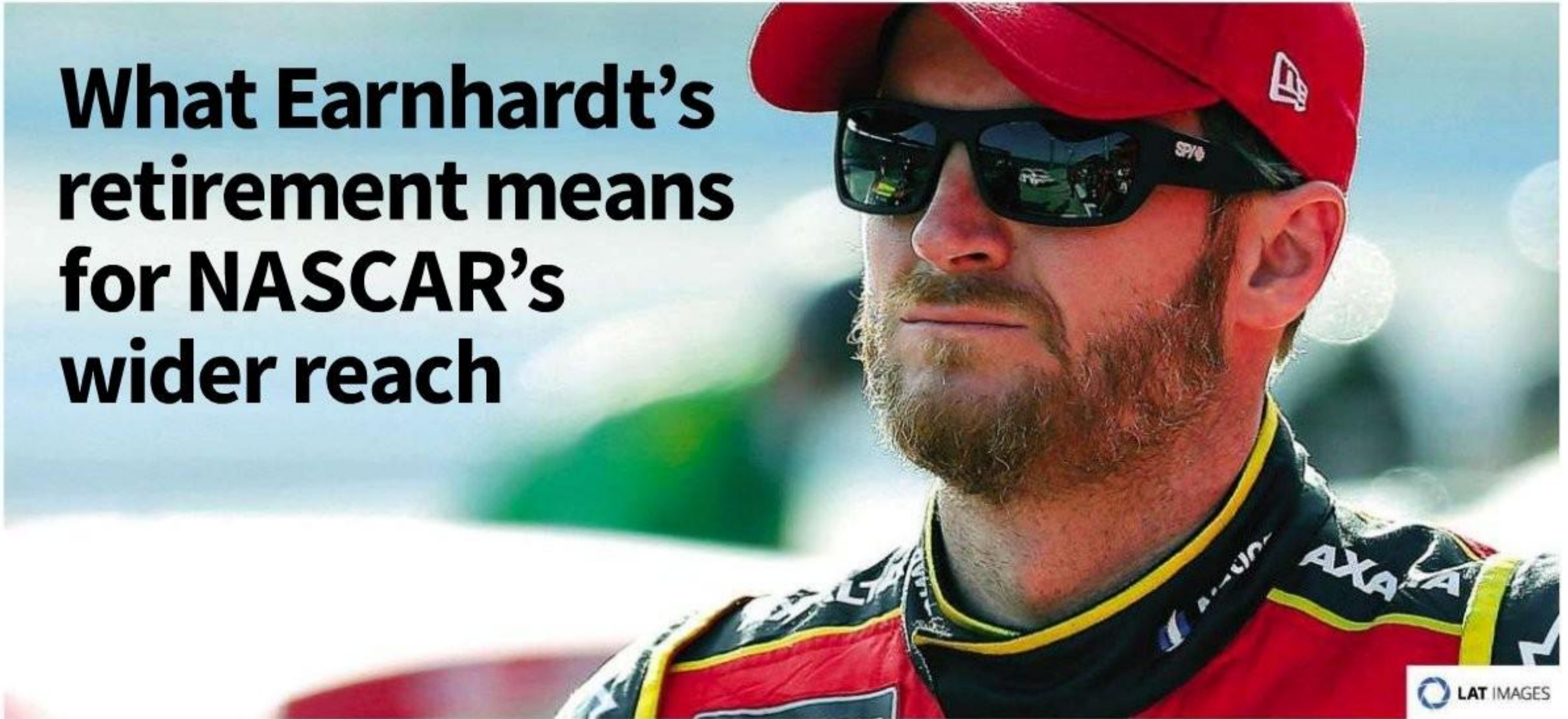
Taking a replica Morris Mini glassfibre and carbon bodyshell over a tubular spaceframe, McDonald had also somehow shoehorned in the all-wheel-drive running gear of a Mitsubishi Lancer E2. Very low gearing limited the car's speed on the quick upper reaches of the hill, and the engine ran a big end through the finish, so the car didn't appear again.

EDDIE WALDER

➔ P77 FULL RESULTS

WHAT'S ON

What Earnhardt's retirement means for NASCAR's wider reach



LAT IMAGES

NASCAR WILL EMBARK UPON A NEW chapter in 2018 following Dale Earnhardt Jr's retirement at the end of this season.

At the age of 42, the series' most popular driver for the past two decades (even in 2016 when he missed 18 races with concussion) announced he would walk away from NASCAR last week.

There may be an encore – Jeff Gordon filled in for Earnhardt last season even though Gordon had retired at the end of 2015 – but when the season comes to a conclusion in November, as the sun sets over Homestead Miami Speedway, Earnhardt will no longer be a full-time Cup series driver after 631 races.

His presence in NASCAR will leave a lasting impact, particularly on fans who identify as members of his fan-club, 'JR Nation', by tattooing, sticker-bombing, and shedding tears and sweat for the #88 Hendrick Motorsports driver.

This is the kind of obsession reserved for those in the highest echelons in their respective sports: David Beckham, Sachin Tendulkar, Lewis Hamilton and Shaquille O'Neal. It may be a begrudging admission for some, but it's an undeniable comparison.

For those in the boardroom, he taps into the younger end of the 18-49 demographic, which Nielsen – the market-research company with a reach befitting Big Brother – views as the most

lucrative group to attract advertisers.

Earnhardt's career arc represents a cultural shift within NASCAR that is still going through the motions. Cooler, more relatable drivers begin to enter and they like hip-hop as much as country, don't have horribly short tempers and strive to engage fans on social media.

A *Rolling Stone* interview with Earnhardt in May 2000 caught the trend early, calling his refreshing marketability and personality as a rookie "a titanic shift in the cultural direction of NASCAR. Imagine the NBA beginning to be dominated by white guys."

NASCAR's ruling clan, the France family, is worth around \$6 billion and 10% of a multi-year, \$4 billion NBC TV deal enters its pocket, according to *USA Today's* Brant James. But what happens next for NASCAR is crucial for teams, drivers and tracks that rely on the rest of that money.

As a result of Earnhardt's candid, sometimes shy, and wholly endearing manner, Forbes estimates that he's earned \$400 million over his 18-year Cup career with a net worth of \$225 million.

In some ways he's acted as a parachute for the France family. The 604 races he's entered so far summon JR Nation spectators, and he's synonymous with NASCAR to many outside the sport. His cameos in Will Ferrell's 2006

Earnhardt is NASCAR's most popular driver by some distance, and is a big asset for the series

comedy *Talladega Nights* and in Disney's *Cars* were calculated for impact.

NASCAR will lose the luxury of having an icon representing it 24/7, and it may get worse as his generation begins to retire. Tony Stewart, Carl Edwards and Jeff Gordon have already left, with Matt Kenseth under the same, inevitable spotlight now. Reassuringly, current champion Jimmie Johnson is looking for a record eighth title.

The antidote lies in the intake of new drivers who are leading NASCAR's pseudo-renaissance under Monster Energy sponsorship. They are increasingly dominating the races, with 24-year-old Kyle Larson currently leading the championship and Chase Elliott, Earnhardt's 21-year-old team-mate, not far behind, filling out a growing list.

Earnhardt's valuable persona will be sorely missed at a crucial time for NASCAR – it needs to increase the value of its TV deals in order to retain sponsors and teams alike.

The weight on his shoulders as a flag-bearer looks like a lot to carry for the new generation, but it remains possible – Larson is touted as a potential successor.

There's no shortage of long-term heirs for Earnhardt, but, as when any phenomenon leaves, it will be hard to fill the void when it opens up in November.

SAMARTH KANAL

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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube OVER AND OUT FOR MEEKE

Search for: WRC - YPF Rally Argentina 2017: CRASH Kris Meeke in SS4

Co-driver Paul Nagle makes his feelings known as his C3 WRC is pitched into a roll. Citroen reckoned the incident was no fault of the crew (see p36), but that wasn't the case on SS14...

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Rd 2/9
Spa, Belgium
May 6

WATCH ON TV

Live Motorsport.tv, Saturday 1315

WORLD SERIES FORMULA V8 3.5

Rd 2/9
Spa, Belgium
May 5-6

WATCH ON TV

Live BT Sport 1, Friday 1500

TCR INTERNATIONAL

Rd 3/10
Spa, Belgium
May 5-6

WATCH ON TV

Live Motorsport.tv, Friday 1620, Saturday 1030

DTM

Rd 1/9
Hockenheim, Germany
May 6-7

WATCH ON TV

Live BT Sport ESPN, Saturday 1330, Sunday 1400

WORLD RALLYCROSS

Rd 3/12
Hockenheim, Germany
May 6-7

WATCH ON TV

Live Motorsport.tv, Sunday 0900

SUPER GT

Rd 2/8
Fuji, Japan
May 4

IMSA SPORTSCAR

Rd 4/12
Austin, Texas, USA
May 6

WATCH ON TV

Live Motorsport.tv, Sunday 0000

NASCAR CUP

Rd 10/36
Talladega, Alabama, USA
May 7

WATCH ON TV

Live Premier Sports, Sunday 1830

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

Rd 4/14
Barbagallo, Western Australia
May 6-7

WATCH ON TV

Live Motorsport.tv, Saturday 0730, Sunday 0645

24 HOUR SERIES

Rd 4/7
Paul Ricard 24 Hours, France
May 6-7

SCANDINAVIAN TOURING CARS

Rd 1/7
Knutstorp, Sweden
May 6



SPA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Motorsport.tv
Saturday 1315

Toyota dominated qualifying for the first round of the 2017 World Endurance Championship at Silverstone last month but it was pushed hard by Porsche in the race. The second round takes place at Spa and is the last chance the teams will have to fix any issues before Le Mans.

SUPER TC2000

Rd 3/12
San Martin, Argentina
May 7

EUROPEAN RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Rd 2/8
Las Palmas, Canary Islands, Spain
May 4-6

MOTOGP

Rd 4/18
Jerez, Spain
May 7
WATCH ON TV
Live BT Sport 2, Sunday 1245

UK MOTORSPORT



BTCC THRUXTON

OULTON PARK BRSCC

May 6
FF1600, BMW Compacts, Ford XRs, Fun Cup

THRUXTON TOCA

May 6-7
BTCC, British F4, Renault Clios, Ginetta GT5, Ginetta Juniors
WATCH ON TV
Live ITV4, Sunday 1115

BRANDS HATCH

May 6-7
Blancpain GT Sprint Cup, GT4 European Northern Cup,

Lotus Cup Europe

WATCH ON TV
Live BT Sport ESPN, Sunday 1145, 1530

CADWELL PARK BRSCC

May 6-7
Fiestas, Fiesta Juniors, Formula Jedi, Alfa Romeos, Mazda MX5s, Sports 2000

SNETTERTON BARC

May 6-7
Britcar Endurance, Kumho BMWs, Junior Saloons, Hyundai Coupes, Citroen C1s

BISHOPSCOURT BARC

May 6-7
Supercars, Formula Vee, Formula Libre, Stryker Sportscars, SEATs, FF1600, Fiestas, Legends, Global Lights, Saloons

KNOCKHILL SMRC

May 7
Ferrari Classic, Mini Coopers, Fiestas, FF1600, Classic Sports and Saloons, Legends, Sports and Saloons, BMWs





FROM THE ARCHIVE

A long exposure captures the frenzied activity of a night pitstop by the TWR Jaguar team during the 1991 Le Mans 24 Hours. Three of the squad's XJR-12s finished second, third and fourth behind Mazda's rotary-engined 787B.



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MY FIRST MOTORSPORT MEMORY



LAWRENCE BARRETTO

@lawrobarretto

GAMING ACTION SPARKS RACING PASSION

My favourite computer game of all time is Super Mario Kart on Super Nintendo for the simple reason that it was and still is the only one I am good at. But the one I've played the most is TOCA Touring Car Championship, based on the 1997 BTCC season. My best mate received the game for Christmas and we would play it after school, on weekends and during the holidays. I'm not ashamed to say he was better than me, winning 95 consecutive championships. To give me any chance of beating him, and at least try to make it a little more interesting for him, I was always Alain Menu as he won the title that year and the Renault Laguna was arguably (*definitely!* – ed) the best car. I mention this because it's linked to my first motorsport memory.

After spending so many hours playing that game, and watching BTCC races on the BBC's *Grandstand* programme, my dad took me to my first live motorsport event – the final round of the 1998 BTCC at Silverstone. I supported Menu, given what we had been through together in TOCA. It had not been the title defence Menu would have hoped for. Though he picked up three wins and eight other podiums, the consistency and ability to keep mistakes to a minimum that had been the core of his '97 success had deserted him.

We sat in the grandstand on the outside of Abbey corner. It was where all the action usually happened and that weekend was no different. I remember Anthony Reid in the Nissan Primera getting his braking all wrong and clobbering the back of James Thompson's Honda Accord in the first race. That dropped him well down the field and all but handed Rickard Rydell, driving a Volvo S40, the championship on a plate. Menu didn't have such a great day, scrapping with Peter Kox and ending up being squeezed off the track and across the gravel in front of us when the Honda used him as a brake. He ended up ninth in race one and failed to finish the second.

But that didn't spoil my day. I loved how close the racing was and how drivers were not scared of a little contact, which in turn resulted in some very ambitious overtaking attempts.

A similarly aggressive approach when I next played TOCA was not so successful and a championship win still eludes me. But I had a lot of fun trying, and that day out at Silverstone ended up being the first of many. 🏁

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