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10 greatest
victories

F2 How Russell
earned his
GP chance

BTCC Can Toyota
beat the best
on its return?

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JANUARY 3 2019

KUBICA NOW IT GETS EVEN HARDER

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WHAT CAN KUBICA DO ON HIS RETURN TO F1 RACING?

Robert Kubica's story is a remarkable one. The Pole's Formula 1 career seemed over after the rally accident that left him severely injured in February 2011, but he battled back. Just lining up for Williams on the Australian Grand Prix grid in March will be an important milestone in Kubica's long journey of recovery.

But what can we expect from Kubica this season? Along with Fernando Alonso, Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel, Kubica was in the absolute elite of F1 drivers at the time of his crash. To expect him to reach that level again would not be reasonable, but perhaps that's not the point. As Kubica tells Scott Mitchell in our cover piece (page 12), he's got his own ideas on what he can do and what would constitute a successful comeback. What anyone else thinks doesn't bother him.

The situation is ideal for Williams's other driver, rookie George Russell. Kubica has experience operating at the highest level, even if the cars are very different to the normally aspirated V8s of his first F1 career. He will surely be a useful asset to the team as it tries to pick itself up after a torrid 2018.

At the same time, Kubica will probably be beatable. Russell has shown all the qualities on the way to F1 to suggest he will succeed, and beating someone of Kubica's ability – whatever the circumstances – won't do him any harm.

At the same time as looking at the return of one top driver, we also look back at the successes of Michael Schumacher, who is 50 years old today (Thursday). Sadly, the seven-time world champion won't be celebrating in the way we would all like following his 2013 skiing accident, but we thought it right to mark his half-century by picking out his 10 best F1 victories (p21).



COVER IMAGES

Motorsport Images; Dunbar

PIT+PADDOCK

- 4 McLaren eyes 2021 Le Mans 24 Hours
- 6 Sirotkin set to sub for Button in WEC
- 8 Tordoff gets Honda for 2019 BTCC
- 10 European exodus for Japanese F3 test
- 11 In the paddock: Edd Straw

INSIGHT

- 12 **COVER STORY**
Kubica on his latest F1 challenge
- 21 Schumacher's 10 greatest wins
- 27 Michael Schumacher's F1 legacy
- 30 Autosport show: introduction
- 32 Autosport show: Toyota's BTCC return
- 36 Autosport show: Esports Le Mans prize
- 38 Autosport show: celebrating F5000
- 40 F2 review: how Russell took the crown
- 46 GP3 review: Hubert's ART attack

CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 60 Stars bid farewell to the UK Clio Cup
- 62 McLaren reveals junior GT roster
- 64 Rating the new series of 2018...
- 66 ...and introducing 2019's offerings

FINISHING STRAIGHT

- 68 What's on this week
- 71 Top five rehomed race engines
- 72 From the archive: 1960 Monaco GP
- 74 Pit your wits against our quiz

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

- 70 Save money in our January sale



Kevin Turner

KEVIN TURNER
EDITOR

kevin.turner@autosport.com

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Winning McLaren F1 GTR leads the way at Le Mans in 1995. Will the make be back in 2021?



McLAREN, A NEW CONCEPT

WEC

McLaren could enter the World Endurance Championship with a hypercar concept prototype before the end of the inaugural 2020-21 season of the new formula. It's a significant admission and one that offers an insight into the WEC's efforts to get manufacturers onto the grid as early as possible.

The British sportscar manufacturer had previously said that it would be unlikely to join the new top class of the WEC during season one. It isn't now saying that it will be ready to compete some time early in 2021. Rather, according to McLaren Racing boss Zak Brown, that doing a race or two before the Le Mans 24 Hours series finale that summer is "in discussion".

There can be no firm plan at McLaren for the moment. It is still evaluating how to make a hypercar programme work for the company after the publication of the regulations early last month. A decision, said Brown, isn't imminent, but will likely come some time in the first half of 2019.

Yet the WEC and its promoter, the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, need decisions from the manufacturers, and they need them quickly. That probably explains why McLaren is looking at an early entry.

The WEC and the ACO are known to be pushing hard to get likely participants to

join the party in time for the first Le Mans run to the new rules. They need to build a momentum that can only be provided by manufacturers putting their hands up and saying 'yes we are coming'. They have big aspirations for the hypercar concept and want multiple manufacturers on the grid by June 2021. Four or five by the end of the first season seems to be the target.

McLaren has been vocal in its support of the hypercar concept, perhaps the most enthusiastic along with Toyota of any of the manufacturers around the table as the regulations were formulated. That hasn't changed with the sign-off of the rules by the FIA World Motor Sport Council in December. "We are closer to a decision now that the rules are final," said Brown. "We are pleased with the way they have ended up, so the ball is now in our court."

Those are the kind of words the WEC and the ACO want to hear, but not the commitments they need. The WEC has suggested that there is one on the way from a major manufacturer, but

**"THEY NEED CAR
MAKERS TO PUT
HANDS UP AND SAY
'WE'RE COMING' "**



Rallycross king joins Loeb team

WORLD TOURING CARS

Rallycross's loss is the World Touring Car Cup's gain for 2019, with double World Rallycross champion Johan Kristoffersson the latest star driver to join the tin-top series.

Kristoffersson, who won 11 of last year's 12 World RX rounds for Petter Solberg's PSRX squad, was left with no realistic opportunity to defend his crown after Volkswagen decided to pause its involvement in the wake of rival manufacturers' withdrawals.

While his World RX exit has now been confirmed, Kristoffersson will remain part of the Volkswagen stable next year as part of its roster of WTCR drivers. He will be part of a four-car line-up – split into two teams – at Sebastien Loeb Racing, which will be a works-supported VW operation, alongside Rob Huff and Mehdi Bennani. A fourth driver is set to be announced at a later date.

"I'm very much looking forward to the WTCR," said Kristoffersson. "After four years of rallycross, 2019 will be my first full touring car season on the international stage since 2013. Most of the circuits are entirely new territory for me and therefore represent a huge challenge. I'm also looking forward to working with my new team-mates, especially [2012] world champion Rob Huff. What's more, Sebastien Loeb Racing is an experienced team and I'm delighted to be moving within the Volkswagen family."

This year will be Kristoffersson's first in World Touring Cars, but the Swede is no stranger to tin-tops – he claimed the 2018 TCR Scandinavia title driving a Volkswagen Golf GTI, was the Scandinavian Touring Car champion in '12 and also won the Superstars crown that year.

Volkswagen is the third make to commit four cars to the WTCR for 2019, after Hyundai and Lynk & Co.

JACK COZENS



– AND A DEEP MYSTERY

it's not going to be McLaren given the timeline Brown mentioned.

Toyota, as an incumbent marque competing in the WEC, may be the favourite to sign up first. It traditionally makes its annual motorsport announcement in late January or early February. But it isn't certain that it will make a firm pledge to the hypercar concept in the coming weeks.

Toyota Motorsport GmbH technical director Pascal Vasselon has pointed out that company policy is to "announce its participation year by year". That suggests confirmation of the continuation of the LMP1 programme through the 2019-20 season is imminent, but not a firm commitment to the new rules. It would seem implausible, however, that Toyota's annual motorsport announcement can pass without mention of the hypercar concept.

If we accept that Toyota will be a participant from the beginning, then who else is likely to be on the grid sometime in 2020-21? Of the six manufacturers known to be around the rulemaking table, it is not going to be BMW or Ford.

BMW Motorsport boss Jens Marquardt has suggested that the German manufacturer is unlikely to be "an early adopter". Ford, meanwhile, never made any secret of its desire to see the hypercar concept adopted by the IMSA SportsCar Championship in North America. But

there appears to be no appetite for that among the existing manufacturers competing in IMSA's top Daytona Prototype international class, and the series organisers have stressed that they will be led by their stakeholders.

"A global set of rules was a big part of what we were aiming and hoping for," said Mark Rushbrook, global head of Ford Performance Motorsports. "Our programme with the Ford GT works well because we can share the investment and race it in two arenas [GTE Pro in the WEC and GT Le Mans in IMSA]." Rushbrook insists that no decisions have been made about Ford's future motorsport plans, but it can be taken as read that it won't be joining the hypercar class.

That leaves Aston Martin and Ferrari of the six manufacturers known to be involved in the rules deliberations. Aston's position is that it is still "interested in principle" and continues to "evaluate its options", while Ferrari is "looking deeply into the rules to understand if there's room for a project".

But there is another manufacturer out there with a real interest, according to sources. It's a European marque and a major one at that. But whether this mystery manufacturer is prepared to stand up and be counted to give the hypercar concept the momentum it needs remains unclear.

GARY WATKINS

Sirotkin set to sub for Button in SMP line-up



motorsport
IMAGES

WEC

Ex-Williams Formula 1 driver Sergey Sirotkin is set to make at least two World Endurance Championship outings with the SMP Racing LMP1 team this year.

Sirotkin, who could make his WEC LMP1 race debut as soon as March's Sebring 1000 Miles in the Russian squad's #11 BR Engineering BR1, would replace Jenson Button, who is skipping Sebring and the following event at Spa due to his clashing Super GT commitments with Honda.

While Button will be back for the 2018-19 season-closing Le Mans 24 Hours, Sirotkin – who made his debut in the race in 2017 in an LMP2 Dallara for SMP – said he would be “for sure” returning to the French classic in June, raising the prospect of a further shuffle of the SMP line-up.

“WEC is not even an option, it is almost an obligation,” Sirotkin told Autosport. “I can almost guarantee you that you’ll see me racing in WEC next year. I think it’s clear for which team and in which car. Maybe even from Sebring onwards,

and Le Mans for sure.”

Meanwhile, Audi has confirmed that it will retain all six of its 2018 DTM works drivers – Team Rosberg pair Rene Rast and Jamie Green, Abt Sportsline duo Nico Muller and Robin Frijns, and Team Phoenix pair Mike Rockenfeller and Loic Duval – for this season. This would mean that Sirotkin, who says DTM is an option after testing for the new privateer WRT Audi squad at Jerez, would likely line up with the Belgian team if he does compete in the series.

JAMIE KLEIN AND YAROSLAV ZAGORETS

Jean-Pierre van Rossem 1945-2018

OBITUARY

The words ‘colourful’ and ‘eccentric’ that so often prefix the name of Jean-Pierre van Rossem, who has died at the age of 73, barely do justice to a man who played a major role in the short-lived Onyx Formula 1 team.

The Belgian made the successful Formula 3000 team's graduation to the big time in 1989 possible with sponsorship from his Moneytron investment

company. The team's star shone brightly with a podium in Portugal with Stefan Johansson, and then waned almost as quickly.

Van Rossem had become a major shareholder in the team over the course of the season and threw his rattle out of the pram when he failed to land Porsche V12 engines for 1990. He sold out to Swiss car maker and collector Peter Monteverdi and the renamed team limped out of existence the following year.

Onyx founder Mike Earle said that without van Rossem the team “probably wouldn't have got to F1.

“He was flamboyant and unpredictable, but without doubt highly intelligent and ultimately a nice guy if you sat down with him away from the limelight.”

An economist by education, van Rossem was also variously an author, philosopher and a politician over what he described as a “hectic life”.

GARY WATKINS



IN THE HEADLINES

KHAN UP FOR LONDON GP

Brexit-opposing London mayor Sadiq Khan has said that a grand prix in the UK capital is realistic. "The Mayor believes that it should be possible to organise a race in London in the future and has asked his team to explore options with F1," said a spokesperson. F1 sporting director Ross Brawn reckons a race on the city's outskirts is a better proposition. "Because F1 is a week-long activity minimum, the disruption it would cause in the centre of London would be unacceptable," he said. "But there are things on the periphery that are being explored – not slap-bang in the centre of London but Greater London. We'd like to see London complement Silverstone, not replace it."

CHANDHOK BACK TO SKY

Ex-F1 racer Karun Chandhok is returning to Sky Sports' F1 team for 2019 after several years as Channel 4's analyst. He joins Martin Brundle, Damon Hill, Paul di Resta, Anthony Davidson, Johnny Herbert and Nico Rosberg as ex-racers on the squad at Sky, which next year is the UK's exclusive live broadcaster.

MORE CARS FOR MASTERS

The DTM-supporting Formula European Masters continuation series for the old Formula 3 cars says it has attracted 16 entries so far. As well as expected participation from Motopark, Van Amersfoort Racing and Fortec Motorsport, FEM has received entries from Mücke Motorsport, Double R Racing and Jo Zeller Racing, all of which had dropped off the European F3 grid in recent years.

EHLACHER AT CYAN

World Touring Car Cup race winner Yann Ehrlacher has become the fourth and final member of the Cyan Racing line-up for 2019. Ehrlacher joins his uncle Yvan Muller on the roster to drive the new Lynk & Co 03, as well as Muller's fellow World Touring Car champions Thed Björk and Andy Priaulx. The 22-year-old was due to get his first run in the car this week at Barcelona. It is yet to be decided how the Cyan quartet will be split, with WTCR rules dictating two-car teams from a maximum of four drivers per marque.

HITECH TO RUN W SERIES

Leading F3 team Hitech GP is to operate the cars in the women-only W Series, which will run for Regional F3 cars on the DTM support package this season. The Silverstone-based squad will provide around 50 staff to run the machines. Hitech dominated the inaugural Asian F3 series, which uses the same Tatuus chassis/Alfa Romeo engine combination that W Series is based upon. It will also compete in the FIA F3 Championship.



Brawn hails 'surreal' champ

FORMULA 1

Lewis Hamilton's off-track endeavours have taught Formula 1 managing director of motorsport Ross Brawn "a lesson" in how an elite driver must behave.

Hamilton clinched a fifth world championship in 2018, a year in which he launched his own clothing line in collaboration with major US brand Tommy Hilfiger. The Briton has been criticised at times for his off-track exploits, but he has always contested that they have helped him to find happiness and keep his motivation high.

"I've got a lesson from this," said Brawn. "I probably had a traditional view of racing drivers that they probably should follow a certain lifestyle when they are out of the car to maximise the performance in the car."

"It is underestimated what Lewis does outside the car in respect to his fitness and his training and his preparation. That doesn't tend to be highlighted. He has a passion to travel around the world for pop events, music events or fashion shows. That's unique and I think his success told everyone that you can do these things and still achieve. If somebody hadn't been successful and he was conducting this lifestyle, that would be said to be the reason why they are not successful –

because you are so used to a more conservative approach."

Hamilton dovetailed a jam-packed personal schedule in 2018 with his joint-most successful year in F1, despite Mercedes' increased competition from Ferrari and Red Bull. He claimed 11 wins and 11 pole positions, and Brawn says one of those qualifying performances – an unexpected pole in Singapore – was an example of Hamilton doing what the likes of Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher have done before.

"Sometimes you get a driver who finds the performance you just don't expect," said Brawn. "There are a couple of occasions, particularly in qualifying, when Lewis did that. He just took people's breath away. Everyone thinks they are the references and suddenly the driver does something that changes the reference."

"I was fortunate to see that sometimes in Michael Schumacher. We saw drivers like Ayrton Senna. I think we saw this on a couple of occasions with Lewis [in 2018]. Singapore was quite exceptional. He did it in Abu Dhabi again. Those are the things you remember because, as an engineer, you must work out where it's come from. It's like a surreal level they reached – that's very special when you see a driver do that."

SCOTT MITCHELL AND FRANKIE MAO

Tordoff spearheads line-up as AmD takes Honda Civics



Tordoff has scored seven BTCC wins since 2013, in MG, BMW and Ford machinery

BTCC

British Touring Car Championship ace Sam Tordoff believes he can win races after switching to the AmD Tuning Honda Civic Type R line-up alongside Rory Butcher for the 2019 season.

Tordoff, who was runner-up in 2016 with a WSR BMW, was a race winner last year in a Motorbase Performance Ford Focus on his way to 11th in the standings.

"I'm sure there will be some people

who are surprised by this move and, while there is some appeal in going into 2019 as an underdog, the reality is that I have one aim and that is to fight for the championship title," said 29-year-old Tordoff. "AmD have put a lot of investment into not only getting the cars [from Eurotech], but in strengthening the team behind the scenes in order to move to the next level – there can be no excuses."

Butcher, 31, will return for a second season with AmD after a best finish of sixth in 2018.

The Scot, who is the brother-in-law of three-time BTCC champion Gordon Shedden, said: "You only have to look at the stats for the Honda in recent years to see how well it has performed, and on paper there is huge potential for us to do some big things in 2019. It's a big step up for the team and I, and I'm confident that this package will give us a great chance of success. It would be silly not to aim for podiums and race wins."

MATT JAMES

TOP 3

ALBON'S REAL RACING HEROES?

Toro Rosso F1 new boy Alex Albon has chosen #23, jesting that it's half the number of hero Valentino Rossi's #46. But we'd like to think he's been studying F1 history...



TONY BRISE

When permanent numbers were introduced to F1 in 1973, the first to carry #23 was Mike Hailwood at Surtees. The following year it was the part-time Trojan team with Tim Schenken. But you can't argue with the late, lamented lost talent of Tony Brise. Here he is taking the little Hill team to a point in the 1975 Swedish GP.

Five months later tragedy would strike.



BRUNO GIACOMELLI

Various Ensign drivers – including rapid new boy Patrick Tambay with Theodore Racing in 1977 – used the #23 before it became an Alfa Romeo staple from 1980-85. Bruno Giacomelli pedalled the V12 machines to good effect, taking a shock pole for the US Grand Prix in '80. Here he is in action the following year, when he partnered Mario Andretti, at the Monaco GP.



PIERLUIGI MARTINI

OK, OK, we know Heikki Kovalainen (McLaren) and Rubens Barrichello (Brawn) carried the #23 to victories in the late 2000s, but we're more enthused by the relative obscurati here. So it was a flip of the coin between various of Takuma Sato's Super Aguri team-mates or the ultimate cult-hero F1 team: Minardi. Here's Martini in action in the 1990 Australian GP.

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PHIPPS

SCHLEGELMILCH

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From F1 prospect to zero... to Indy 500

INDYCAR SERIES

IndyCar Series newcomer Ben Hanley will complete a remarkable career turnaround when he lines up on the grid for the St Petersburg opener in March.

The 33-year-old Mancunian (below) was confirmed as the driver for series rookie DragonSpeed before Christmas, and will take in a limited schedule of five races, comprising St Pete, Barber Motorsports Park, Road America, Mid-Ohio and the Indianapolis 500. The Elton Julian-run team will use Chevrolet power in its part-programme, before embarking on a full-season effort in 2020.

Cast aside by the Renault Driver Development scheme after a tough start to the 2008 GP2 Series, Hanley became something of a forgotten talent. He impressed in the short-lived Superleague Formula before returning to race karts, where he became a factory driver for ART and won a European championship in 2015.

It was after his FIA driver rating was lowered to Silver that Hanley got his shot



at career redemption with DragonSpeed in the 2016 European Le Mans Series. Such was the impression he made on ex-British F3 racer Julian that Hanley was kept on for '17, despite being bumped back up to a Gold rating, and then was chosen to lead the team's graduation into LMP1 of the World Endurance Championship last year with its BRE-Gibson (above).

Hanley admits it was an opportunity he never expected to present itself, but welcomes Julian's vote of trust. "Over the past couple of years he's worked with a number of drivers, so it's great that he's trusted me and believes that I can do the job required," he said. "It's a great opportunity for me – it's always something that I've been interested in and wanted to try,

so it's mega to be a part of it."

Although he has not raced a single-seater since 2010, Hanley has logged extensive test mileage in GP2/Formula 2 and GP3 machinery conducting tyre-development work, which should help DragonSpeed on its steep learning curve.

"I've done a lot of mileage in the background and the experience that you gain when you're doing tyre testing and car development is massive," he said. "That obviously plays a big role when teams take on a new venture, like this year with the LMP1 car. The more knowledge you have on the development side of things, the quicker you can identify problems and also help with some solutions."

Hanley is in no doubt about the size of the challenge facing the driver and team, with neither having any prior experience of oval racing, but he is looking forward to the first open test at Austin next month to gauge how DragonSpeed will shape up against the competition.

"We know we've got a big battle to get on the pace – it's not going to happen overnight but we've got to start somewhere, so there's no better time than in pre-season testing," he said. "It's good that I can get familiarised with the car. We're not just jumping straight in to the Indy 500 – the programme that DragonSpeed have picked is the best we can do with the partial season [competing in early-season races rather than making a series debut at Indy]. Straight away we're at the pre-season test with all the other cars so we can compare against each other and identify the areas we need to improve."

"We all know each other and we all know each other's roles, so when we get to that first test we'll just focus on familiarising ourselves with the car as opposed to forging new relations on the engineering side, so it's a big positive to have that continuation."

JAMES NEWBOLD



IN THE HEADLINES

KATSUTA'S WRC2 ATTACK

Toyota protege Takamoto Katsuta will contest the World Rally Championship this season as the manufacturer prepares him for a future at the top of the sport. Katsuta, who took his maiden WRC2 win on last year's Rally Sweden, will tackle 13 of the 14 rallies in WRC2 with a Ford Fiesta R5. Katsuta, who will be co-driven by Briton Dan Barritt, will also get a run in a full-fat Yaris WRC on two Finnish championship rounds.

TICKFORD RESHUFFLE

Ford factory-backed Australian Supercars team Tickford Racing has snapped up Lee Holdsworth to complete its line-up for 2019. Holdsworth replaces Kiwi Richie Stanaway, the former GP3 title contender who has been dropped after just one season due to disappointing results. The team's other three drivers will be Chaz Mostert, Cam Waters and Will Davison, with the squad's 2015 champion Mark Winterbottom switching to Holden squad Team 18 – which coincidentally is Holdsworth's old seat.

RED BULL BRIT INTO CARS

Red Bull Junior Jonny Edgar is to step up to car racing in 2019. The British racer, who has been competing on the international karting scene, will race in the Italian Formula 4 Championship with Jenzer Motorsport. Edgar, who is still only 14 years old, will also contest selected German F4 rounds.

TRS ENTRY BUILDING

The Toyota Racing Series in New Zealand, which kicks off next week at Highlands Motorsport Park, had attracted 12 confirmed entries as we went to press. Local Brendon Leitch, who has won races in each of the past four TRS seasons, tops the list. Another Kiwi, German F4 runner-up Liam Lawson, joins the field, along with European F3 points scorer Artem Petrov, Euroformula Open racer Cameron Das and Toyota-backed Japanese F4 prospect Kazuto Kotaka.

ORDONEZ'S NISSAN SPLIT

Lucas Ordóñez, the first winner of Nissan's gamer-to-racer GT Academy, has ended his relationship with the manufacturer. The Spaniard has been with Nissan for 10 years.



Ilott, Fenestraz in JF3 test

FORMULA 3

The influx of Europeans to Japan's flagship Super Formula and Super GT series is already starting to filter one step down the ladder – to Japanese Formula 3.

The Japanese organisers have decided to stick with the older-spec F3 machinery for 2019. And after evaluating but rejecting the FIA's new Regional F3 category, they are one of the group of promoters who have asked constructor Dallara to investigate building a new F3-style car for '20, after the homologation of the existing model runs out at the end of '19.

A two-day test at Suzuka just before Christmas featured F3 European Championship race winner Sacha Fenestraz, and former F3 star and latter-day GP3 Series racer Callum Ilott.

Fenestraz was out with B-Max Racing, which has formed a liaison with top Euro F3 squad Motopark. With the Frenchman dropped from the Renault F1 Junior programme, Japanese F3 now looks like a very realistic option for next season. "Sacha's in a great place right now – he's got some really nice options and Japan is one of them," said Fraser Shearer of ADD Management, which looks after Fenestraz.

"It would be with a multi-year intention. Initially it would be doing F3, and having

Super Formula and Super GT very much at the front of our minds for the future."

Ilott was out with YTB, the Okayama circuit-based team. F3 racer Yoshiaki Katayama – whose father owns the Okayama track – partnered Ilott in the Carlin line-up at last November's Macau Grand Prix. YTB, which is managed by ex-Formula Nippon/Super GT champion Richard Lyons, then bought the Carlin Dallaras raced in Macau by Ilott (above) and Jehan Daruvala, and Carlin provided assistance at the Suzuka test.

"We're happy," said Carlin boss Trevor Carlin. "The guys enjoyed it and perhaps we can do some more next year with them." That would be without Ilott, who appears certain to race in Formula 2 with Charouz Racing System.

James Pull, the 2017 BRDC British F3 runner-up, also drove with YTB, while ex-BMW Junior Ricky Collard took part in the test with ThreeBond Racing.

Lucas Auer and Harrison Newey, who are expected to race in Super Formula with the B-Max with Motopark squad, drove with B-Max to learn the Suzuka track.

Toyota protege Ritomo Miyata, runner-up in the 2018 standings, topped the test for TOM'S from Fenestraz. Ilott, who drove in just one of the three dry sessions, set the overall third quickest time.

MARCUS SIMMONS



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THE PATH TO GLORY

Michael Schumacher's Benetton years are seen by some as but a prequel to his later success with Ferrari – but it was there that he first demonstrated greatness

EDD STRAW

To be successful as an elite athlete requires skill, dedication, mental strength, physical excellence and backing from the right people. It's necessary to have all of those things to be an all-time great, and on top of that something extra. They must also be a transformative force, redefining what it is to be the best in their chosen discipline and influencing those who follow.

Michael Schumacher had that extra in abundance – he proved that with five consecutive world championships with Ferrari from 2000–04. But his double title success with Benetton in 1994–95 is too often relegated to the status of little more than a prequel to those glory years. It shouldn't be, because this showcased something remarkable about Schumacher that's too often overlooked when we rightly celebrate the galvanising effect he had on Ferrari.

Before Schumacher's arrival, Benetton had grown from the days when it failed to qualify 90% of the time in its first season as Toleman back in 1981 to an occasional race winner that was only intermittently a thorn in the side of Williams, McLaren and Ferrari. But it was Schumacher's arrival that led to that changing.

"We were a team that were finishing third, fourth, fifth in the championship," says Pat Symonds, Schumacher's race engineer for

"SCHUMACHER WAS ABLE TO TAKE A GOOD, EFFECTIVE UNIT AND MAKE IT BETTER"

those two titles. "We were an independent team, we weren't a particularly well-financed team, we were proud of what we were doing. But all of us wanted that step on and it wasn't obvious to us what we needed. Then Michael came along and we suddenly realised that was a very large part of what we needed."

"I'm not saying the team was perfect and we just needed a good driver, because that's disingenuous to the drivers before Michael, some of whom were very good indeed. But Michael showed us that it's not just that ability he had, but the whole approach to racing that all of us needed to change."

An emerging team signing an established champion as a final piece of the puzzle is not unusual. A top-liner who has been there and done that is often the crucial ingredient that makes a good team into a great one. But Schumacher wasn't anything approaching that kind of driver back then. Or at least, he shouldn't have been because he didn't have that grounding.

This is at the crux of the remarkable story of Schumacher at Benetton. He didn't simply take what he'd learned in another established team and capitalise on it. He was able to look at a good, effective unit like Benetton and help to make it better while simultaneously making himself better. He had the vision, that understanding of what needed to be done to act as a driving force.

It's easy to forget that Schumacher went into the tumultuous 1994 season with just two F1 victories under his belt. Yet suddenly, once Ayrton Senna was lost, he instantly became the one true megastar in grand prix racing. And he was equal to the challenge.

Regardless of what you think about the controversies of 1994 and the way he clinched the title on the streets of Adelaide after hitting Damon Hill's Williams, Schumacher was outstanding. This period set the course for Schumacher's career, and it all came thanks to seizing his unexpected chance at Jordan.

That was another Schumacher strength: seizing a single opportunity. You can draw a straight line from that moment to his becoming central to the building of the Ferrari superteam. Why? Because he redefined the way a driver could build a team around themselves, and some of the outstanding personnel he worked with at Enstone also made their way to Ferrari.

There was another aspect where he raised standards too. His fitness was exemplary and that's another defining factor of Schumacher's contribution to F1 – others had to follow his lead and the expectation of what a grand prix driver was physically changed beyond recognition during his time. It wasn't as if drivers before Schumacher were overweight, chain-smoking layabouts – they were athletes – but he saw a way to give himself an edge and pursued it. This too was already in evidence during the Benetton years.

He also exhibited his ability to improvise in races, such as his famous drive to second while stuck in fifth gear in the 1994 Spanish Grand Prix. This capacity was within Schumacher, rather than given to him from the outside. That's what the greats do. They don't simply become vessels for conventional ideas and aggregate the marginal gains. That's part of what they do, but they also bring new methods and thinking and impact those around them.

The Schumacher of the Ferrari era was objectively a better driver. He had more experience, continued to raise his game, smoothed out the rough edges and therefore became greater than the Schumacher who won two titles for Benetton. But he was a driver magnified, augmented, rather than transformed.

That's why this part of his F1 career deserves to be remembered beyond the odd reference to what happened in Spain or Australia. Maybe it wasn't Schumacher at his very best, but even a Schumacher in his formative years produced some of the greatest feats ever delivered by a grand prix driver.  **P21 SCHUMACHER'S GREATEST WINS**

INSIGHT

ROBERT KUBICA'S RETURN • MICHAEL SCHUMACHER'S BEST WINS
• AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL • F2/GP3 2018 REVIEWS

GALLOWAY





IT HAS BEEN A
BIG CHALLENGE
FOR ME TO GET
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AN EVEN BIGGER
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OF ME.

ROBERT KUBICA

*Against all odds, the popular Pole is back in Formula 1.
Can this fairytale have a happy ending?*

SCOTT MITCHELL

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

ROBERT KUBICA ended his last Formula 1 season as one of the most-talked-about drivers on the grid. He finished eighth in the championship in 2010, but was rated the second-best performer of the year by Autosport and ranked fifth in our poll of the team bosses' best drivers. How he would fare in his next campaign was due to be a major subplot of the season.

To be fair, it still is – it's just that it's happening eight years later than it was supposed to.

Kubica will start the 2019 campaign as he ended '10: as one of the main storylines. It is a tale of epic proportions: an incredible, unbelievable, *impossible* journey from almost-amputee to F1 racer once again. That Kubica has made it back to F1, and the fact that almost eight years have passed since his life-altering crash, makes it easy to forget, or dismiss, the severity of the injuries he sustained when he slid into a barrier on a right-hand turn during a national rally in Italy in February 2011. The left side

of his Skoda Fabia ran along the barrier, pushed one length back and exposed the leading edge of the next segment, which pierced the engine compartment and went into the car.

Kubica's injuries were numerous, and severe: multiple fractures down most of the right of his body and sub-amputation of the right forearm, which means losing it completely was a possible outcome. He arrived at hospital "presenting an extremely complex trauma", according to hand specialist Dr Igor Rossello, who assisted in the first seven-hour surgery in a bid to prevent the loss of Kubica's right hand and to recuperate its severed main nerves.

What followed was an immensely long, painful and often interrupted recovery process. Reading Kubica's brutally honest assessment of the darkest moments in that time, when he spoke to Autosport in 2014, revealed the extent of how hard he found it to have his F1 dream ripped away from him, and how unlikely it was that he would ever get it back.

Against all odds, though, he has. And as he puts it now: "I see

" I WANT A DRIVER WHO IS REALLY PUSHING EVERYONE IN THE FACTORY. ROBERT IS EXACTLY THAT MENTALITY "



it's a story which probably nobody has believed. The only one that probably never gave up was myself and the people around me. But we all knew that it might be something unachievable and this day shows that, somehow, nothing is impossible."

Kubica's stunning comeback is only partially successful, of course. There is little doubt that even making it onto the grid with Williams, after a year as its development driver and after two rejections for a 2018 drive – from the Grove team and Renault – is an immense triumph. But in Kubica's own words, being competitive and making the most of being back is a new challenge entirely: "I'm happy that one difficult period is ending, but my feet are on the ground and I know what is coming next is a big challenge from a sporting point of view."

Winning over Williams was not the work of a moment, and Kubica was not alone in trying to bag the seat alongside Formula 2 champion George Russell. It required the support of a decent financial package, believed to be around €12million, and as a result Polish fuel company PKN ORLEN will have branding on the rear wing, nose, airbox and both mirrors of the 2019 Williams challenger.

But Williams also insists that it needs a driver of Kubica's experience and spirit as it bids to drag itself out of the hole it fell into in 2018, when the team recorded the worst result in its history by finishing last in the constructors' championship.

Deputy team principal Claire Williams says she is completely convinced by Kubica's ability to be competitive, "especially from his work ethic". "I've been able to spend a lot of time with him,



and to see how committed he is to improving as a team has been really positive," says Williams, who thinks her squad needs some of Kubica's "fighting spirit".

"He's in the garage all the time, but then his determination to follow up and see how developments come through, and make sure we are doing what we need to do back in the factory to develop a better racing car, is really impressive. I want to hear back from him next year in the car – I want a driver who is really pushing everyone back in the factory to deliver the best racing car they can for Sunday afternoon. And Robert is exactly of that mentality."

Kubica will need to be more than just a development driver in 2019, though. It is not the case that he can afford to be the brains that helps Williams progress in the background and Russell leads its on-track charge. Were that all Kubica needed to do, Williams would just keep him in a development role. Were that all Kubica wanted to do, he would have accepted Ferrari's offer of a simulator-based job.

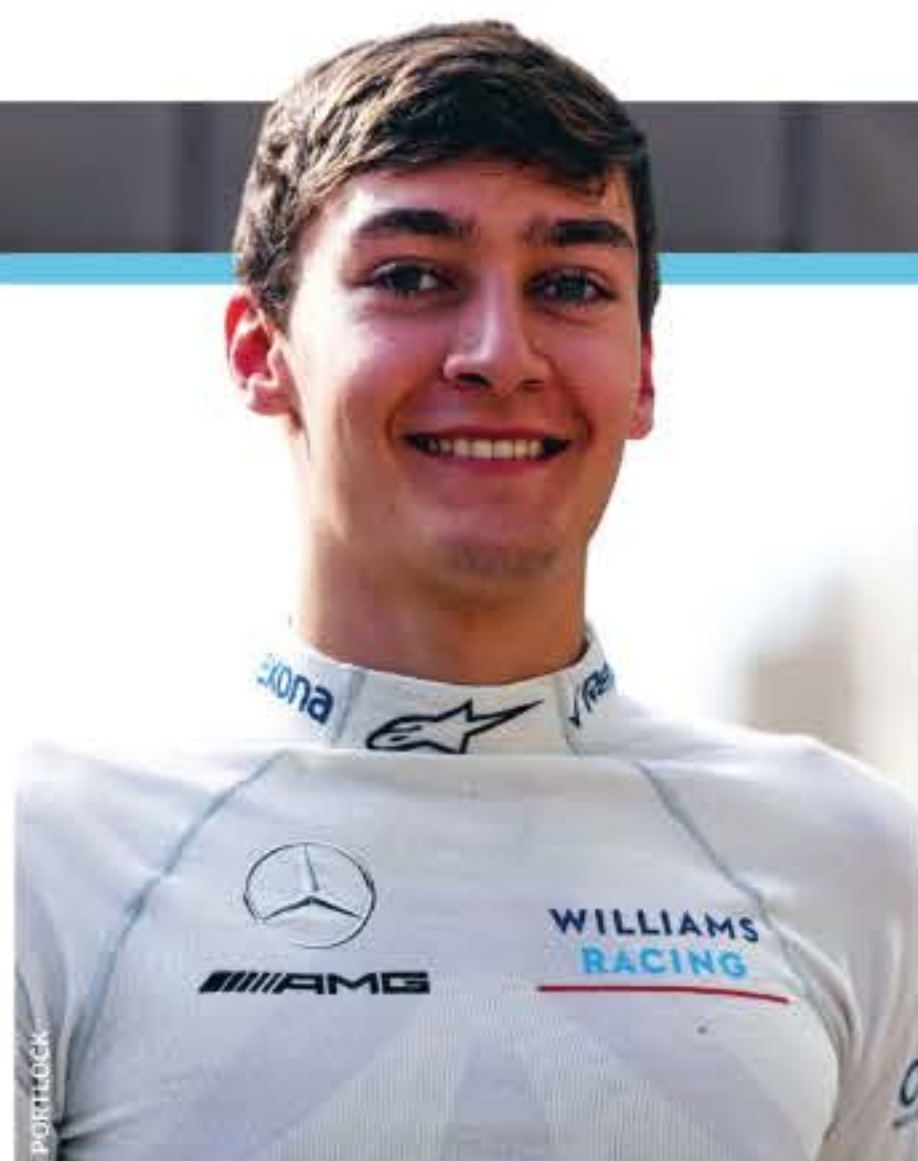
It's tough to judge exactly where Kubica's abilities are now, but it is fair to say that he is not the same driver who won the 2008 Canadian Grand Prix and was such a star in his last F1 campaign. That is not opinion, but based on the fact Kubica's rehabilitation now as a left-handed man, and by extension a left-handed driver, means he is simply not driving the same as before.

Arguably he doesn't need to be as good as he was before. Kubica was considered world champion material, so even if he is only back to a fraction below that level that would still put him ahead of most drivers on the grid. The question should not be 'will he be as good?', but rather 'how close will he be to that level?'. Any further than a fraction off it and he could start to look very ordinary, for this is elite sport and the level is immensely high.

Kubica believes the one-year delay with his return, having been "partially" ready to race in F1 in 2018, has helped that.

"Last year gave me more time to learn and it's true that driving an F1 car in testing is helpful, but you don't learn everything," he says. "It's more about discovering, not learning. All drivers have to do it with the new cars, the new tyres, with the new systems. I think >>





WILL WILLIAMS'S REAL ROOKIE DEFEAT ITS FAUX-ROOKIE?

ROBERT KUBICA'S FORMULA 1 RETURN IS A STELLAR story, but it will only have a truly happy ending if he overcomes probably the worst possible team-mate scenario he could have asked for.

With question marks remaining over how good Kubica will be on his F1 comeback, more than eight years after his last start, going up against a highly rated, dedicated youngster – who also happens to be the reigning Formula 2 champion – means that any deficiencies will be ruthlessly exposed.

George Russell is playing the team card. The British driver, a Mercedes protege signed for two years at Williams, says he is “really excited” to be team-mates with Kubica. While Kubica considers himself a rookie of sorts heading into 2019, Russell is a real rookie. With that comes less expectation and more career momentum, which means Russell's effectively in a win-win situation. Beat Kubica and he cements his status as a quality talent who has adapted well to F1; fail to beat him and he probably gets the benefit of the doubt as someone who had to adjust to a new challenge. Russell, though, is not underestimating his new team-mate.

“There is no doubt about his natural talent,” says 2018 Mercedes reserve driver Russell. “He's extremely motivated and has huge knowledge about the car on the technical side. It's no secret Williams had a tough year in '18. With his experience and my experience at Mercedes, we have a huge amount to bring.”

While Sergey Sirotkin, or someone with more recent F1 experience, would have been a better immediate benchmark for Russell, the 2014 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner reckons it means little unless Williams makes progress after finishing last in '18.

“I really wanted a team-mate like Robert to go up against and show what I am capable of,” says Russell. “But if I'm beating my team-mate but it's for last position, there's no joy or glory for anybody. Myself and Robert will be working really hard together, firstly to get the team to where they deserve to be. Then we'll see how the results are after that.”



this is a perfect moment for me and that's why I decided to go for it.

“I have to be realistic, and I know it will not be easy. It has been a big challenge for me to get into Formula 1 – it will probably be an even bigger challenge, from a sporting point of view, to make sure I'm delivering what is expected from my side. But I'm not scared at all. I'm ready and excited.”

Kubica will be one of seven grand prix winners on the grid this year, and have more starts to his name than almost half the field – 76 more than the driver on the other side of the Williams garage, for starters. Despite that, the Pole and his team reason that he will be more like a rookie in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

He logged 1986km of testing with Williams in 2018, added to 1333km across his Yas Marina and Hungaroring '17 outings with Williams and Renault respectively. That's a grand total of 3319km of driving in modern F1 machinery. It's fractionally higher than Russell's count (2750km of testing, and 270km from Friday FP1 outings in '17) but, to put Kubica's testing experience into the context of his 'first' F1 career, Kubica racked up 21,105km of racing laps alone. When you consider the massive difference between the cars Kubica drove from 2006-10 and those in



the current V6 turbo-hybrid era, the relevance of Kubica’s experience is dimmed somewhat.

So, should we judge him as a grand prix winner, a veteran of 76 starts and the man who Ferrari signed to drive alongside Fernando Alonso for 2012 – or as a rookie?

“Honestly, I don’t care,” says Kubica. “All I care about is my job and what I am doing. There will always be someone judging you and in different ways. In Australia, I am more the rookie driver than the one who has already done five seasons, because F1 has changed so much.

“What helps me is that I lived this sport on such a high level, so I experienced what it means to be an F1 driver and what it means to race against the top drivers. I hope that this experience will help me to achieve the levels which I would like to and this is the goal.

“I am more like a rookie if you were to ask me if I knew how the tyres would work if I was following someone, because I wouldn’t know. When you are testing, you would do it alone. There is a mix of things but I’m pretty sure that I can work on myself, work together with the team and prepare well for the start of 2019.

“I think the experience will help but there are still many »





Williams knows her team needs a boost, and reckons that Kubica can provide it

things I have to discover.”

Claire Williams agrees that it is fair to view Kubica as rookie for the start of the season. As well as having no knowledge of how the tyres behave in traffic, he will need to get used to the demands of race distances again and adjust to the loss of downforce when racing these cars. He must also get back into the groove of racing altogether. Kubica was WRC2 champion in 2013 and competed in the top tier of the World Rally Championship, showing zero fear or hesitation in returning to the discipline that almost killed him, but his circuit-racing experience is limited to a couple of GT outings. He hasn't competed in single-seaters at all since the 2010 Abu Dhabi GP.

“I remember when Robert was in F1 and the excitement around him then, but it has been a long time since that period of his life,” Williams cautions. “This generation of the cars is very different. This generation of the sport is very different.

“I would consider Robert more of a rookie than someone who has driven in this sport for five years. He hasn't raced these cars yet and it's going to take him as much as any new driver coming into the sport. It's going to take a few races to get up to speed.

“But knowing Robert, his work ethic, his tenacity and determination, I don't doubt that it will take a very short period to get to the point that he wants to get to.”

If it feels like the odds are overwhelmingly against Kubica making a major impact on his F1 comeback, typically for the man himself he is not bothered by that at all. Are you going to judge him? He doesn't care. Do you think he'll get beaten by Russell? He doesn't care. Do you think he should stay away unless he's going to be the driver of championship-challenging calibre we saw nine years ago? He really doesn't care.

“From a driving point of view, it is very simple,” says Kubica. “You just need to wait two months and you will see. If I thought I will not be able to drive competitively fast I would not be here. If I do my job well, I'm sure everybody will be happy.”

It wouldn't be surprising if the thing that Kubica is looking forward to the most about the race season starting is people no longer asking the same questions about his limitations or the concerns he has, or how he will get on. He's made it clear that “if I was a team principal I would also have doubts”, but also that he is not scared by the challenge. Kubica beat death, survived an amputation scare and overcame immense physical and emotional torment just to even be around a race track again. With that in mind, it does feel nonsensical to think he would be worried by getting back to what he does best.

Assuming, of course, that being a top-class F1 driver is still the thing he does best. ✎



“IF I THOUGHT I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DRIVE COMPETITIVELY FAST I WOULD NOT BE HERE”

EDD STRAW'S

FIVE MEGA KUBICA MOMENTS



2006 ITALIAN GP

Having excelled on his Friday outings for BMW Sauber, Kubica replaced Jacques Villeneuve for the final six races of the season and finished third on only his third outing. While a mistake cost him a few places on the grid, he drove an excellent race – holding off and then pulling away from the faster Ferrari of Felipe Massa during the first stint – and took his first points in Formula 1.



2008 CANADIAN GP

Kubica's only F1 victory came in Montreal, and put him in the lead of the world championship seven races into the season. He had the help of others suffering misfortunes – as well as one-stopping BMW Sauber team-mate Nick Heidfeld letting him past – to be able to make his two-stop strategy work. But it was still a superb drive.



2009 AUSTRALIAN GP

The 2009 BMW Sauber was a middling car at best, yet somehow Kubica qualified fourth. He retired after being hit by Sebastian Vettel when passing the Red Bull driver for second place late on. It's a long shot but, given his offset tyre strategy, it's not impossible that without the collision Kubica might have been able to pressure winner Jenson Button in the remaining two and a half laps.



2010 MONACO GP

Kubica was simply stunning behind the wheel of the Renault R30, which he hurled spectacularly between the barriers throughout the weekend. Only denied pole position by Mark Webber's late improvement, Kubica finished third after losing a position to Sebastian Vettel at the start, but proved beyond any doubt his mastery of the most challenging of street tracks.

2010 JAPANESE GP

Kubica's qualifying performance at Suzuka was astonishing, lapping fourth fastest in a car that wasn't second-row worthy and starting third thanks to a penalty for Lewis Hamilton. His race didn't last, as he retired after two laps having run second early on, but on a true driver's track he had again shown his pace.





12th January 2019

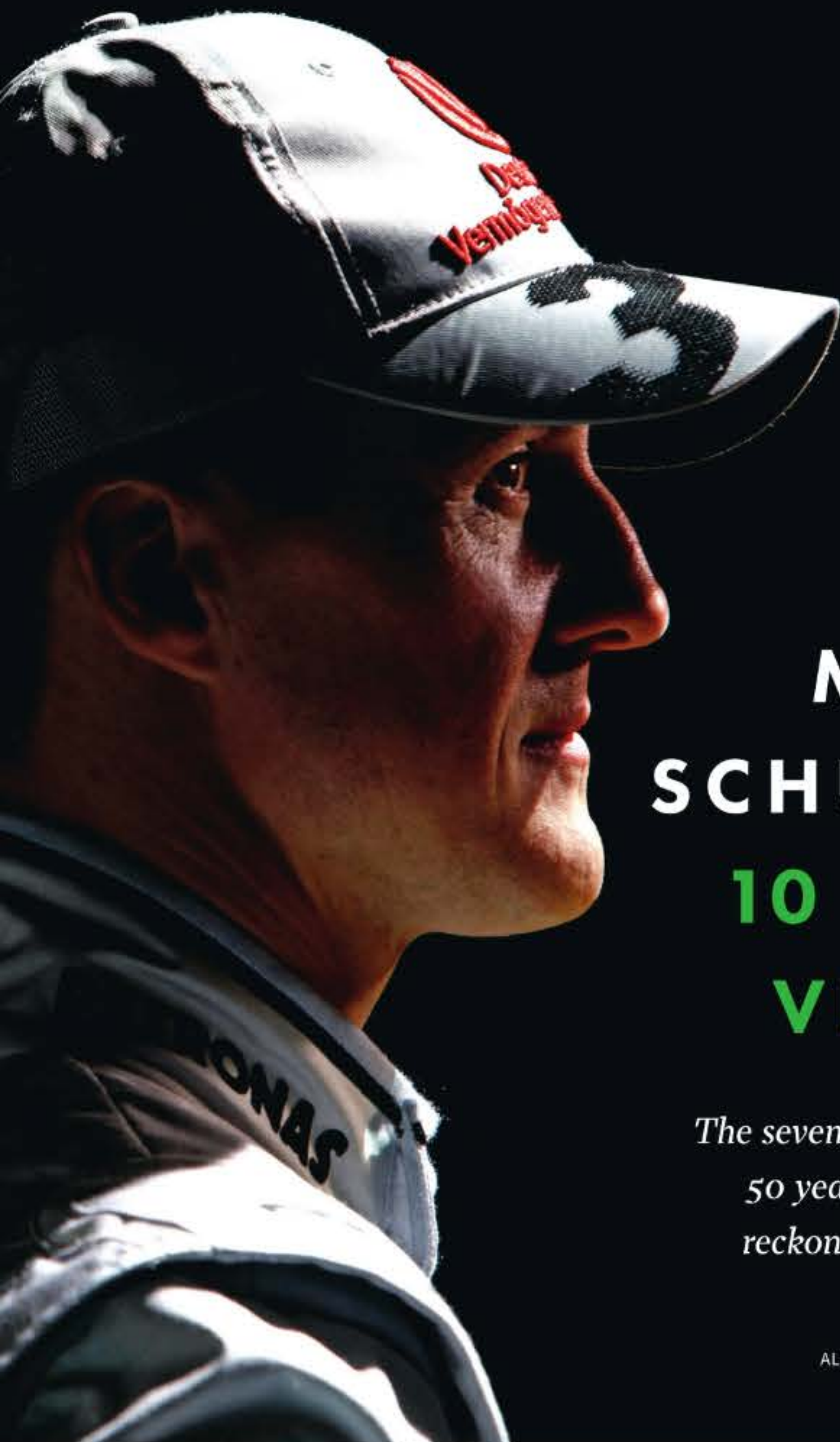
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MICHAEL SCHUMACHER'S 10 GREATEST VICTORIES

*The seven-time world champion was born
50 years ago today. Here's what we
reckon were the best of his victories*

GLENN FREEMAN

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY



motorsport
IMAGES

2006 CHINESE GP

SHANGHAI **FERRARI 248 F1**

10

Our countdown begins with the 91st and final victory of Schumacher's career, one that came at a crucial time in the 2006 title race.

Schumacher ran sixth in the early laps while championship rival Fernando Alonso streaked away in the lead in his Renault, but by lap 17 he was up to third, hounding the second Renault of Giancarlo Fisichella. At the first round of pitstops Schumacher and Fisichella opted against changing their intermediate tyres, while Alonso's decision to take on new fronts proved costly.

Schumacher chased the Renault drivers as



Fisichella made a bit of a mess of dealing with his struggling team leader. Once they were both past Alonso, it was up to Fisichella to keep the Ferrari at bay. But Schumacher seized an opportunity when Fisichella came out of the pits on slick tyres, the Renault running wide at the damp first corner and leaving just enough room for Schumacher to sneak up the inside.

Alonso recovered from his forgettable middle stint and a disastrous second stop to close a 24-second gap to just three by the end, but it was too little too late. With so much on the line in the title race, Schumacher didn't crack under the increasing pressure and the final victory of his career put the rivals level on points with two rounds remaining.

2004 FRENCH GP

MAGNY-COURS FERRARI F2004

9

It's hard to pick out the standout performances from the most-dominant years of the Schumacher/Ferrari partnership, mainly because they made their competition

look average on an almost weekly basis.

But one race that stood out from Schumacher's record-breaking 2004 season was the French GP, where the Ferrari pitwall outfoxed Renault at its home race with a four-stop strategy.

Renault's starts were superb during this era of F1, so nobody was surprised to see Fernando Alonso convert pole position into an early lead. The question was how could Ferrari find a way to get Schumacher ahead to exploit the fact that he had the faster car in race trim.

Ferrari hatched a plan on raceday to take advantage of the short Magny-Cours pitlane, which meant the time lost making a pitstop was not as big as it would be at most circuits – just 11 seconds plus the time the car was stopped.

The strategy allowed Schumacher to jump Alonso by getting out of sync with the Renault



to find clear track, and it also forced Renault into short-fuelling in the pits when it thought Ferrari had done the same thing.

Alonso paid the price for that by being heavy in his final stint, unable to respond to a string of classic qualifying laps from Schumacher when it counted that allowed the Ferrari to build a gap big enough to retain the lead despite making an extra pitstop.

A Ross Brawn masterstroke? Not this time. Ferrari strategist Luca Badoer cooked this one up, and Schumacher delivered in fine style.



1992
BELGIAN GP
SPA BENETTON B192

8

One year on from his F1 debut for Jordan at the same track, Schumacher became a grand prix winner for the first time at the classic Spa circuit.

Rain in the early laps forced the drivers to pit for wet-weather tyres, but it was the timing of Schumacher's stop to switch back to slicks that put him in a race-winning position.

Having slid off the road on lap 30, Schumacher ended up behind Benetton team-mate Martin Brundle, and on seeing the state of the Brit's rear tyres he made an on-the-spot decision to come in immediately as he assumed his own tyres were also in trouble.

This vaulted him into first position once the other leading cars had come in, and newly crowned world champion Nigel Mansell's pursuit in the dominant Williams FW14B was halted when an electrical problem cost him between 1000 and 1400rpm and dropped him off the pace.

Schumacher just had to bring it home take his first F1 victory, but two laps from the end, in mixed conditions, he was – in the words of Autosport's report – “stunning”, setting a lap time just 0.6s slower than he managed in qualifying.

“Schumacher always had the look of a man for whom it was only a matter of time,” was Autosport's verdict. “This, we may be sure, was the first of many.”

1994 BRAZILIAN GP

INTERLAGOS

BENETTON B194

7

By the start of the 1994 season Schumacher had won just two grands prix, and he kicked off the year by

triumphing in a head-to-head with Ayrton Senna on the three-time world champion's home soil in Brazil.

Senna's Williams led away from pole at the green light, while Schumacher had to deal with the fast-starting Ferrari of Jean Alesi before hounding Senna for the lead as they left everyone else for dust.

With refuelling returning to F1 for 1994, Schumacher's Benetton team managed to jump Senna in the pits on lap 21, and he controlled the gap from there, extending it during the second round of stops.

Schumacher's pace eventually forced the great Senna into an error in the difficult Williams FW16, which was not a patch on its predecessors that had convinced Senna he needed to leave McLaren to join the dominant force in F1. Williams would need a chunk of the season to get on top of the driver-aids ban for '94, and Senna spun out on lap 56 in Brazil, leaving Schumacher to take victory by a lap over Damon Hill.

“I was right at the limit and then I got caught out,” said Senna. “There was



nothing wrong with the car. I was pushing too hard – it was my mistake.”

Schumacher said: “I never really felt under pressure. I could control the gap when necessary, just by pushing a bit harder. Everything felt so easy. I felt sorry for the spectators – I know they'd come here to see a Senna win, but I wanted something different.”





1995 BELGIAN GP

SPA BENETTON B195

6

Schumacher is a six-time winner at Spa, and his 1997 victory is perhaps the most glaring omission from this list. But his '95 success is surely his most famous, featuring a

charge from 16th on the grid and one of several clashes with Damon Hill from that season.

With Hill's Williams only eighth on the grid, the title protagonists were out of the picture early on, but it took them just 15 laps to restore normality and start fighting over the lead.

The next chapter in their spiky on-track history took shape when Hill pitted for rain tyres on lap 21, and Schumacher stayed out on slicks, convinced that the shower was going to pass. His defence of the lead in damp conditions angered Hill and Williams, who protested his driving, resulting in a suspended one-race ban for Schumacher.

Schumacher's justification for his behaviour, to



the amazement of Hill, was to declare that it was OK because he only took risks in lower-speed corners where the consequences of a collision would not be so severe. Crucially, Schumacher's robust combat prevented Hill from taking advantage of his grooved tyres and, shortly after the Williams finally got ahead, the weather changed again to leave Schumacher with the upper hand and Hill heading in for another stop.

While the deployment of the safety car appeared to give Hill another shot at victory, his hopes were dashed when he was penalised for pitlane speeding. That left Schumacher in the clear to romp home to the only win of his career that came from starting outside the top 10.



1996 SPANISH GP

BARCELONA FERRARI F310

5

Before the days when a hint of rain meant a grand prix had to start behind the safety car, Schumacher hardly made the getaway of a man about to take a

dominant victory in atrocious conditions.

"Even Pedro Diniz passed me," he said afterwards, using the poor Brazilian as an example of how far down the order he had fallen from third due to clutch problems.

He ended lap one in sixth place, five places up on Diniz, and after nine laps he was up to second. Three laps later he passed the leading Williams of Jacques Villeneuve to hit the front. From there, the contest was over. Schumacher sailed – almost literally – off into the distance on a dismal Barcelona afternoon, opening a lead of more than a minute before backing off in the closing stages nursing a broken exhaust.

"It was one of the great wet weather drives in history, in comparison with Ayrton Senna's performances at Estoril in 1985 or Donington in 1993," wrote Nigel Roebuck in Autosport's race report. "So mesmeric, in fact, you forgot it was supposed to be a race."

Benetton's Jean Alesi, himself no slouch in wet conditions, beat Villeneuve for second place, but nobody was in the same race as Schumacher, whose fastest lap was 2.2s quicker than anybody else managed all afternoon on his way to the first of 72 wins for Ferrari.





1997 MONACO GP

MONTE CARLO **FERRARI F310B**

4

Monaco, rain, and dreadful tyre choices from major rivals: in 1997 this was a one-horse race from the off.

As the Williams drivers slithered around the damp track

on slicks thanks to poor weather information before the start, Schumacher disappeared up the road.

He led the race by 6.6s after one lap, 11.5s after two, and nearly 16s at the end of lap three. The gap climbed to 75s late on before, following the brief scare of a run down the escape road at Ste Devote on lap 53, Schumacher backed off to take a safe victory.

Behind, his future Ferrari team-mate Rubens Barrichello took an emotional podium for the new Stewart team, one of only three other cars on the same lap as Schumacher, who took the championship lead as a result of Jacques Villeneuve's disastrous afternoon for Williams.

1998 HUNGARIAN GP

HUNGARORING **FERRARI F300**

3

Ferrari's gamble on a three-stop strategy to overhaul the McLarens at the Hungaroring required one simple task: building a lead

of 25 seconds in 19 laps. Easy, right?

When pitwall mastermind Ross Brawn explained that scenario to Schumacher on the radio, the response was a simple "OK" from the cockpit. Schumacher got his head down and built a lead of 26.9s, and he emerged from his extra stop five seconds clear and on his way to a famous victory.

McLaren tried to cover Schumacher's strategy off with David Coulthard to protect the

one-two it held early in the race, but the Scot emerged from his second stop behind the Ferrari, and race leader Mika Hakkinen could offer no resistance when his car developed a handling problem after his second stop.

With Schumacher well into his 19-lap charge, miscommunications on the McLaren pitwall meant the ailing Hakkinen also delayed Coulthard for five laps. The heartache didn't stop there for McLaren, as Coulthard had problems of his own in the final stint due to an incorrect tyre pressure.

There may not have been any wheel-to-wheel brilliance from Schumacher here, but it was a masterclass in how to star in F1's refuelling era.



1995 EUROPEAN GP

NURBURGRING **BENETTON B195**

2

'AWESOME' was the word used on the Autosport front cover to describe Schumacher's performance at the Nurburgring, where he recovered from being

43s behind Jean Alesi's Ferrari to taking the lead just over two laps from the finish.

Alesi inherited the lead thanks to an inspired decision to start the race on slicks despite the track still being damp. So when Schumacher and Williams drivers David Coulthard and Damon Hill pitted, the Ferrari was in the clear out front.

But Schumacher was in determined mood, taking advantage of a lighter fuel load to cut as much as

two seconds per lap from Alesi's lead. When he caught the French-Sicilian inside the final 20 laps, Schumacher was shocked to learn that he still had another pitstop to make while Alesi was going to the end. "We'd been on a two-stop strategy, and I'd made two stops," he said after the race. "But the first of those had really been to change from wets to slicks, and they didn't put much fuel in. On the second stop it was the same. I didn't realise this at the time, so when they told me I needed to come in again I was pretty upset, thinking for sure I would now lose the race."

Schumacher emerged from his surprise final stop 24 seconds behind with 16 laps remaining, and when he saw that championship rival Hill – who

he had collided with yet again earlier in the race – had crashed out, he decided he had nothing to lose with the world championship effectively assured.

He reeled Alesi in again and, after some aggressive defensive driving from the race leader, Schumacher finally muscled his way into the lead at the end of lap 65 of 67 with a daring pass around the outside into the chicane.

"To watch Schumacher in action now was to witness a great racing driver at his absolute best," wrote Nigel Roebuck in his race report.

As Schumacher celebrated what was clearly the best drive of his career up to that point, even Hill stood trackside on the slowing down lap to applaud a phenomenal performance.

2000 JAPANESE GP

SUZUKA **FERRARI F1-2000**

1

There can be little debate about the number-one race on this list, for Schumacher chose it as his greatest for Autosport's *Race of my life* series in 2009.

The combination of the long-awaited first world championship with Ferrari and a relentless lights-to-flag battle with his favourite adversary Mika Hakkinen made this the most special of Schumacher's triumphs.

Schumacher led only 19 laps to Hakkinen's 33 but, thanks to a charge between the Finn's final pitstop and his own, Schumacher went from the hunter to the hunted in their fight for glory.

It was far from a straightforward charge though – he had three laps in which to build a gap after Hakkinen's McLaren had stopped, and had to contend with rain in the air and the spinning Benetton of Alex Wurz, but he still managed to emerge fractionally ahead of Hakkinen.

The gap between the two standout performers in F1 of the time was never larger than six seconds, and Schumacher admitted that Hakkinen pushed him to his very limits in a race that – in his own words – required more than 40 qualifying laps.

"All my life, I will never forget that radio signal from Ross [Brawn]," Schumacher said in 2009. "I was driving down the pitlane after my second stop, and he said over the radio, 'It's looking good, it's looking good'. I was very tense, and fully expecting him to say, 'It was looking good', but suddenly he said, 'It's looking bloody good!' For over 40 laps Mika and I did almost identical times, like a perpetual qualifying lap. Mika was fantastic and pushed me to the very limits."

On crossing the finish line to seal his first world title for Ferrari, Schumacher hit his steering wheel so hard that Ferrari decided to take it out of service in case it was damaged. He added: "I was repeatedly asked what my predominant feelings were at that moment [crossing the finish line], and on no single occasion was I able to find the right words. I didn't know what to do with this happiness."

The next four years would bring four more world championship titles for the Schumacher/Ferrari partnership.



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"I GUESS I HAVE BEEN A PIONEER FOR THE GENERATION THAT RACES TODAY"

Michael Schumacher redefined what it means to be a Formula 1 champion, raising the bar on fitness, focus, commitment, team spirit – and ruthlessness

JAMES ROBERTS

It was the resigned slump of their shoulders that said it all. The way a driver had to apply himself to racing in Formula 1 had changed forever – and they knew it. The podium at the 1992 Belgian Grand Prix heralded the revolution.

Nigel Mansell, then 39, and his Williams team-mate Riccardo Patrese, 38, looked weary. Standing between them was a sprightly Michael Schumacher who, 15 years their junior, had just taken his first grand prix victory – the new heir to the F1 throne.

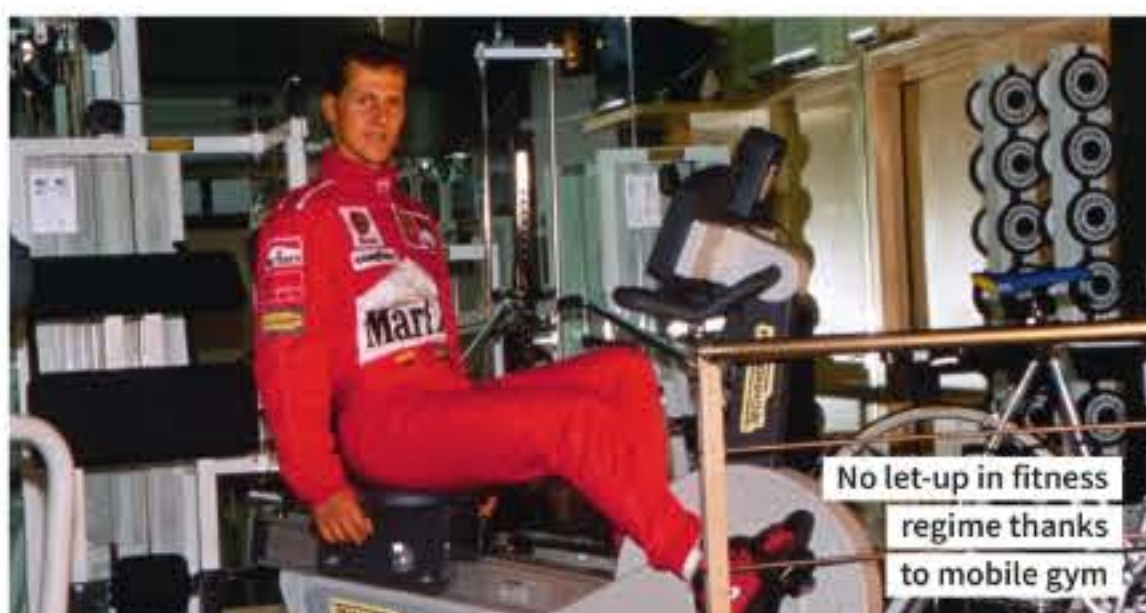
There was barely a bead of sweat on the brow of the young German as he leapt from the top step. Schumacher's Benetton team-mate Martin Brundle immediately recognised his impact. "Michael moved the game forward," he says. "We had to raise ourselves. We had to get fitter and stronger and we had to look for every hundredth of a second. It was clear he was going to be a star of the future."

Fast forward just over 14 years and Schumacher had accrued seven world championships, 91 wins and 68 pole positions to become statistically the most successful driver of all time.

He achieved these feats with an approach that current F1 drivers aspire to today. It started with his fitness, taking a mobile gym with him so he could work out after 100 laps of testing, and continued with an all-encompassing approach to his job. He made sure he memorised all his mechanics' names, and then remembered the names of their wives and children too. It could be considered a cynical attempt to win their favour – but it was a success.

His work ethic became legendary. Despite a gruelling travel schedule and exhausting grand prix weekends, without a moment's thought he'd be back at Fiorano, testing for hour after hour.

"If we needed him to test I would ring Michael up and say, 'Can you be here tomorrow?'" recalls former Ferrari boss Ross Brawn. "Yep, what time?" would be the reply. Never any hesitation. One or two others I would ring up and it would be, 'Oh, well, I want to see my kids tomorrow, it's a birthday party' and all the rest of it.



You never had those discussions with Michael, because he knew if you asked it was important."

The quest to find an advantage over the opposition didn't stop with fitness, a great team spirit and a relentless work ethic. There was a further, unquenchable competitiveness that pushes great drivers further.

Schumacher created an on-track persona that served to intimidate other drivers, and he wasn't afraid to go beyond accepted limits – think of Rubens Barrichello getting pushed towards the pitwall at the Hungaroring in 2010.

And what Michael did after his race wins was significant. He had no qualms in reminding his enemies who was better by throwing himself around on the podium, effectively leaping into a rival's face to claim, 'I'm fitter than you, I'm faster than you, I'm better than you.'

"I think some of what Michael did was about undermining the enemy and destroying the confidence of the opposition," agrees Brawn. "In the early days, Michael would be on the rostrum with two guys wilting, barely able to stand up, and he would be bouncing around and they would be looking at him thinking, 'God, what on earth is this creature we're competing with...'"





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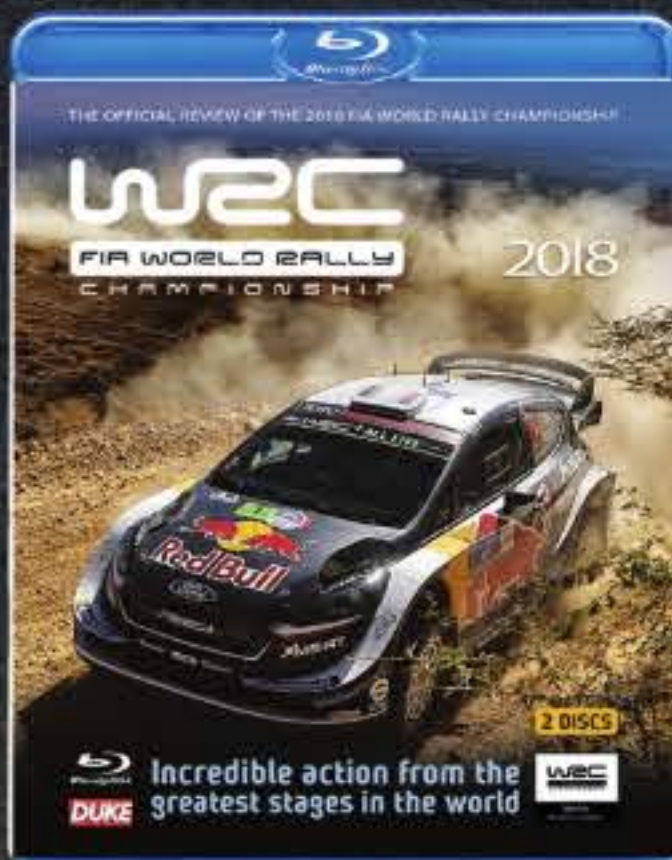
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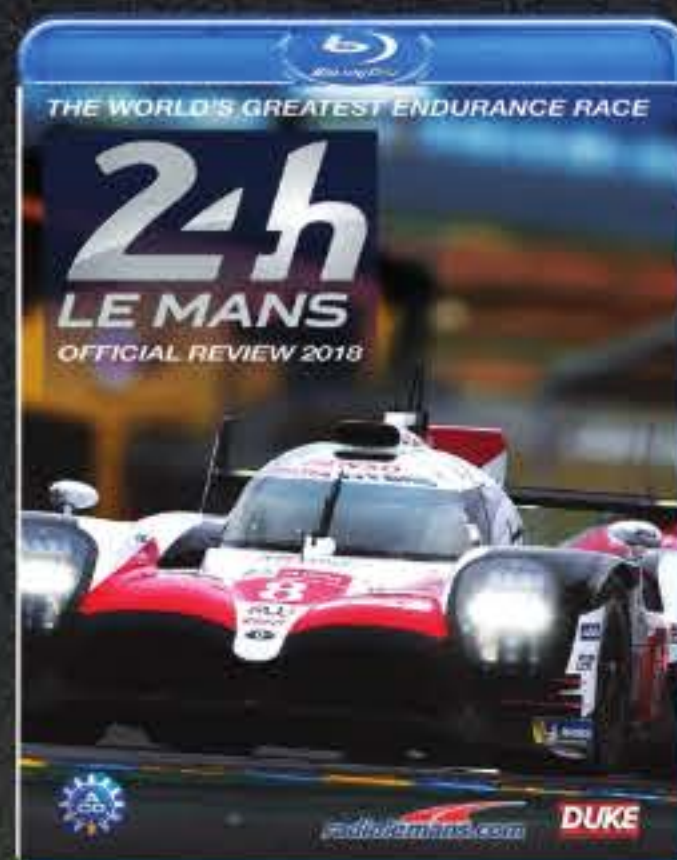
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THE SEASON STARTS HERE

Autosport International gets the racing year under way in style. Here are some potential highlights

MATT KEW

The curtain will raise on this year's racing action in just one week, as the 2019 Autosport International show kicks off at Birmingham's NEC.

Across the January 10-13 event, Europe's largest indoor pre-season motorsport show will return to build on the success of 2018's record-breaking edition.

Stars of Formula 1, the World Rally



Championship and British Touring Cars will take on the Autosport stage, plus there'll be displays and driving demonstrations throughout.

As usual, the Thursday and Friday are dedicated to the motorport industry, before the exhibition hall doors are opened to the public for Saturday and Sunday.

Here's just a small selection of what you can expect to see next weekend...

LIVE ACTION SHOWS

Saturday and Sunday in Hall 5
FREE with ASI tickets

**LIVE ACTION ARENA**

The humble 850cc A-series engine and a Carlin BRDC British Formula 3 car are set to share the limelight in the Live Action Arena shows this year. That typifies the diversity packed into the one-hour performances, which will take place in the NEC's 5000-capacity arena.

Celebrations of the iconic Mini's diamond anniversary will get under way, while Billy Monger will be in the cockpit of the single-seater that took him to four podiums during his return season.

Sky Sports F1's lead commentator David Croft returns as the show's host, and renowned stunt driver Terry Grant is back to orchestrate the action.

Organisers are also promising spectators a unique 'Evolution of Racing' display.

**WRC 2019 SEASON LAUNCH**

For the second year in succession, the World Rally Championship will be swapping the backdrop of Monte Carlo's Casino Square for the halls of the Birmingham NEC as the manufacturers unveil their 2019 weapons of choice.

All the cars, drivers, co-drivers and team bosses will descend on the Britain's Second City for the FIA season launch, and there's much to be excited about. The big news is that this year the unveiling has been moved to Saturday, meaning the fans will be able to get up close to the cars on display and listen to the title favourites being grilled on the Autosport stage.

Expect to see the now six-time champion Sebastien Ogier back in Citroen colours, while Kris Meeke moves across to Toyota, which ended the year with the fastest – but perhaps most fragile – car.

WRC Promoter managing director Oliver Ciesla says: "We are delighted to launch the 2019 WRC at Autosport International on Saturday in front of the thousands of public visitors. Fans will get their WRC fix ahead of the season-opening Monte Carlo Rally."

GUEST STARS

Big names in the world of motorsport have long been a fixture of the Autosport show, and this year's edition continues that tradition. McLaren's new Formula 1 driver line-up leads the way on the guest list, as both Carlos Sainz Jr and Lando Norris (below) take to the main stage.

The top brass, including World Endurance Championship boss Gerard Neveu and W Series CEO Catherine Bond Muir, will join the likes of Sky Sports F1 presenters Johnny Herbert, Karun Chandhok and Simon Lazenby.

And expect the British Touring Car grid to come to (light-hearted) verbal blows in front of a captive audience.

Meanwhile, it falls to broadcaster and presenter Alan Hyde to keep them all in check as he takes on the role of host – stepping into the boots of the late Henry Hope-Frost.



TOYOTA GB IS BACK IN THE BTCC

*Tom Ingram and Speedworks Motorsport have starred as plucky privateers.
Now they are representing the world's biggest car maker, with a new Corolla*

MATT JAMES

BTCC

Stand 2580
Hall 2



One of the major talking points at Autosport International among tin-top aficionados will be the new Team Toyota GB British Touring Car Championship attack.

While the Speedworks Motorsport team is working flat-out to prepare the brand new factory-backed Corolla racer for the 2019 season, to be driven by '18 title runner-up Tom Ingram, the programme has already created a buzz. The Team Toyota GB name has a huge heritage in the BTCC, as does the Corolla. The new version of the road car has been revealed to the public, but the model will not be on sale in Britain until late March/early April, which ties in perfectly with the beginning of the '19 season.

The Corolla took its first BTCC title in 1982 with Win Percy at the controls before Chris Hodgetts took back-to-back crowns in '86 and '87.

Toyota was a factory team during the Super Touring years of the BTCC too,

fielding the Carina model from 1991-95 before the costs escalated and, with success hard to come by, it stepped down.

The world's largest car manufacturer kept a watching brief on developments in the UK's top category, and has been a background supporter of the BTCC since the Next Generation Touring Car regulations were introduced in 2011. The Avensis model was the basis for the development of the new specification of car and several have appeared in the series since.

GPRM, the firm that built the prototype NGTC car, was looking for a manufacturer that wasn't represented on the grid at that stage to undertake the development work. Toyota was the option, and the UK arm of the firm agreed to supply the car.

Toyota has helped in the background with parts and support for various drivers over the course of those opening seasons of the new era of touring car racing in the UK.

There were two full NGTC-spec Avensis cars on the grid in that maiden season:



one for Dynojet and raced by Frank Wrathall; the other for Speedworks Motorsport and driven by Tony Hughes. It was Speedworks' first tentative steps into the top flight of saloon car racing in the UK, and it has remained loyal to the Japanese firm ever since. Now that relationship has blossomed into a factory deal.

Toyota GB head of PR Scott Brownlee explains that the foundations of this agreement were set with the launch of the ►



new car. Originally, it would have been an updated version of the Auris model, but the firm's bosses decided to reintroduce the Corolla name for the car.

That name is synonymous with BTCC glory in many race fans' minds, and the parts of the deal all slotted together.

"It links in beautifully to the heritage and history of the Team Toyota GB name," says Brownlee. "The Corolla is perfect because, with this new model, we didn't want the Avensis out there. The timing was just perfect. Also, when the cars won the titles in the 1980s, they were run by privateer teams with our support. By tying up with Speedworks, we have a similar philosophy. We are very conscious that we don't want this to be seen as a massive comeback, but we are helping Speedworks get the car on the grid."

For Speedworks and for reigning Independents champion Tom Ingram, the factory deal is the next step in their journey together. Ingram joined the BTCC with the team in 2014 for his maiden season in the class, and has developed along with the squad. He was a podium challenger in '16, a multiple race winner in '17 and an overall championship contender in '18.



The development of Ingram as a driver has been remarkable. He is one of a new wave of younger racers who are beginning to dominate the series, along with the likes of Ash Sutton and Josh Cook. It's sometimes easy to overlook the fact that Ingram is just 25 years old, and only now entering his fifth campaign in the BTCC.

Ingram explains: "We have been on this journey together and things have happened very, very quickly. We've gone from being a team where no-one thought anything of us to then getting a podium every so often and then on to a race-winning season and a championship tilt.

step has to come in – Team Toyota GB."

The Team Toyota GB name was revived in 2014 when the Toyota GT86 was born and turned into a British GT Championship racer by GPRM. Although that programme was not successful, the Team Toyota GB moniker rolled back the years, hence its use with the new BTCC attack.

"I think a few people might have remembered the Team Toyota GB name from their childhood," explains Brownlee. "It's just a good umbrella for us to put the motorsport operations under."

And the Toyota input will raise the level of the whole operation. Ingram has taken

This journey has happened over three or four years and naturally that journey has to go somewhere else and the next

nine career wins with the marque, but knew that there needed to be some fresh impetus.

"We could have gone into the new season with the Avensis," says Ingram. "We know what works on the car and we would have just been tweaking things – it would have been an evolution. Now we've got a new programme, it will be a blank sheet of paper, and sometimes you need that different challenge."

"It's a huge responsibility for us because we're not just looking after our own brand now – we're looking after an iconic motorsport name in Team Toyota GB."

While it will be a step for Ingram to front a factory-driven programme, it also marks a leap for Speedworks Motorsport, which was founded by Christian and Amy Dick in 2005 to run Mazdas and Ginettas in club racing.

The Northwich-based team has done the hard yards in the BTCC and is now ready to flourish with its first factory programme.

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Speedworks celebrates 2018 Silverstone triumph



Hodgetts won 1986 and '87 title double with the Corolla

TOP OF THE TOURING CAR CLASS

The Team Toyota GB name has an on-off history in the British Touring Car Championship, and its most successful period came during the 1980s.

The Corolla took championship honours overall in 1982 with Win Percy in the Hughes of Beaconsfield-backed machine, but it really hit its stride when Chris Hodgetts managed back-to-back crowns in 1986 and '87.

He had finished as runner-up in 1985 at the wheel of a Brooklyn Motorsport Ford Escort RS1600i to Andy Rouse in his Ford Sierra XR4Ti, but then Hodgetts had an unexpected visitor.

"I had driven with Toyota earlier in the 1980s, but a representative came back to me at the end of '85 and asked if I would be prepared to build up a new Toyota Corolla AE86 for the British Touring Car Championship," he remembers.

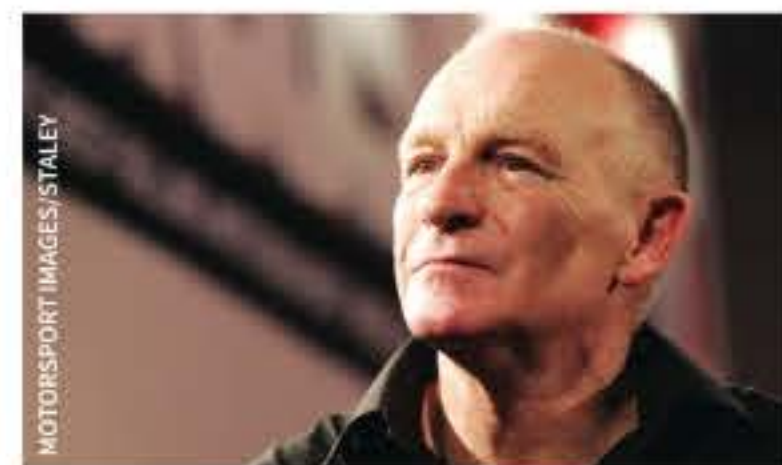
"It would run in the smallest class, Class D, and they would give me £35,000 for the year all in. At that time, in the days of restricted imports and things, there were no Toyota factories based in the United Kingdom either. It was a very different operation to the way things will operate now."

Hodgetts's car was a frontrunner in the class

immediately and was only beaten on one occasion over the course of the nine rounds. He headed Richard Longman's Ford Escort RS Turbo (from a class above) in the points.

Things got even better for Hodgetts in 1987 and he prevailed once again, picking up the title while the top-class Ford Sierra Cosworths and Rover Vitesse split the wins between them.

"We were given £70,000 for the second season because we were the reigning champions," remembers Hodgetts. "It was a great time and a great little car. It was a privilege to be backed by Team Toyota GB, but it certainly made a lot of other drivers on the grid jealous..."



The new car, which is currently seven weeks into its build, has been designed by Ingram's engineer Spencer Aldridge, and that's another source of pride for Christian Dick.

Aldridge has been with the team since he was a teenager and has done every job from sweeping the factory floor to engineering an entire car, and the realisation of the Corolla dream is as much of a staging post for him as it is for Speedworks and Ingram himself. Aldridge has worked on all aspects of the car

through his development with the squad.

Dick says: "It's a new challenge, but one that Spencer is more than capable of handling. He knows the car better than anyone, and he's worked on all aspects of the Avensis since we had it. He knows more about certain aspects of the car than I do, so I just leave him to it. There are certain things that we will look at together and I can offer some input, but it's mostly down to him."

While the detailed design work has been

done, the results are unlikely to hit the circuits until mid-February when the crew will decamp to Spain for early testing.

Although the programme is in the early stages, Dick is enthused by the prospects. "You just have to look at the aero of the car – it's very strong for a BTCC car, almost perfect," he says.

"The footprint is perfect and there's hardly any overhang, which should mean that the handling is strong. Also, it's not as flat-backed as some of the other shapes on the grid, which should help with the drag issues you can get. We should be in a very good place from the beginning."

That beginning will be at Brands Hatch for the opening round of the championship at Brands Hatch on April 7. The Team Toyota GB name will return to the grid as Speedworks, and Ingram aims to recapture the glory that the Japanese firm experienced in the 1980s. ■



Brand new Corolla will spearhead Toyota assault

FINDING THE BEST IN SHOW

The latest round of LMES is set to take centre stage next week at Autosport International

JOSH SUTTILL

The 2019 Autosport International show next week will give gamers the chance to earn their place on the podium at the famous 24 Hours of Le Mans, as it plays host to the fourth round of the Le Mans Esports Series.

The competition, which launched alongside the World Endurance Championship round at Silverstone in August last year, is run in partnership with the Motorsport Network and the Le Mans-organising Automobile Club de l'Ouest.

At the NEC, gamers will fight on *Forza Motorsport 7* for a place at the showpiece Le Mans Super Final, which will give them a chance to claim a share of the \$100,000 prize fund. Three qualification rounds have so far taken place, with nine drivers from the three regions (EMEA, Americas and Asia-Pacific) booking their spot in the Super Final.

The latest qualifying round will feature the EMEA race held live on the Sunday of the Autosport Show, on January 13.

The 10 fastest gamers from the regional qualification events have already sealed their place in the final, held at the NEC. But there will be a second chance for those who missed out on qualifying, with two spots open to the two fastest drivers who set times at the show. There is no requirement for prior involvement in the competition, meaning newcomers to the series could theoretically qualify for the Super Final at the very first attempt.

As with all the rounds so far, the main race at the Autosport Show will last for approximately two hours. It is hoped that this captures the endurance element of Le Mans, and rewards drivers for their strategy, race management and outright pace.

Brands Hatch will be used as the virtual venue for this round, and five high-end GT cars are available for selection from such manufacturers as Aston Martin, Chevrolet, Ferrari and Porsche.



THE STORY SO FAR

The EMEA region has been highly competitive so far. Shaun Arnold is currently the driver to beat, having won the opening qualifier at Silverstone. In doing so, he became the first driver for his region to qualify for the Super Final. He made it two wins from two with a stellar drive around Suzuka, although that winning streak was abruptly ended during the last round around Yas Marina after his controller broke and he was hit by his team-mate.

A lot of *Forza* gamers use the controller for other major events, and this has spurred critics to discredit the *Forza* Esports scene, but Arnold believes that the LMES decision to use onsite wheels and pedals will improve the outward image for the competitors.

"There's quite a lot of stigma in the sim-racing community towards *Forza*," says Arnold. "Players in championships such as the [Forza Racing Championship] use a controller, and people say, 'They shouldn't be using one, it takes no skill'. It will be good that some of us *Forza* people can race well on a [steering] wheel as well."

Isaac Price – the 2017 iRacing Blancpain GT champion who switched from the G2

**LE MANS
ESPORTS**

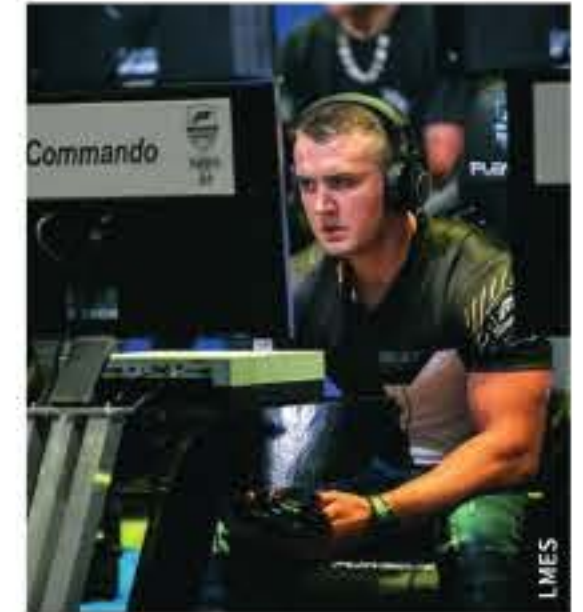
**Stand 1410
Hall 1**



The gamers at the Autosport Show will use *Forza Motorsport 7* to flaunt their skills

BRANDS HATCH

DRIVERS' VIEW



LMES POINTS LEADER Shaun Arnold

"It's a great track. The penultimate corner [Clearways] is very tricky because if you catch the inside kerb wrong on *Forza*, it will flick the car to the right and off the track. You must be very consistent lap after lap at that corner because you don't want to lose time along the start/finish straight as one of the main overtaking spots is going to be through the first two turns.

"There are lots of different lines you can take out of Turn 4 [Surtees] – ideally you want to come in wide, and make a late apex, so you're able to carry as much speed as possible into the longest straight on the track. If someone gets a bad run out of there, they're very vulnerable to been overtaken. It's a great challenge."

WILLIAMS ESPORTS DRIVER Isaac Price

"I always enjoy driving at Brands Hatch. The cars are quite twitchy with the way you have to set them up. They're quite pointy but you have to be smooth with the steering. It's very different to Abu Dhabi [the previous round]; it's more similar to the first round at Silverstone – the time is won and lost in the fast corners."



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/LEPAGE

club to Williams Esports in November – echoed Arnold's thoughts. "If you have the talent you can adapt," Price says.

He has been using a wheel throughout his sim-racing career, and Arnold identified Price and ForzaRC champion Aurelien Mallet as the main competition. Frenchman Mallet labelled Brands Hatch as his "least favourite British circuit," but that's offset by his fondness of the GT machinery.

McLaren's World's Fastest Gamer finalist Price is one of the many Williams drivers taking part in LMES, with increased participation levels from top sim-racing teams. He's a relative newcomer to the game but is taking advice from his more experienced team-mates.

"Our strengths are different," he says. "Their strengths are knowing the game, and every single time I'm driving something on *Forza* it's a first. I've usually never driven the

car or the track on this game. Then, later on, it should reverse around. I've got the experience on the wheel – I can then advise on how to get the most out of that."

Arnold is the points leader and is part of self-professed 'group-of-friends' *Forza* team Japspeed Racing, highlighting the ethos behind LMES – individuals or groups have the opportunity to compete with the professional sim-racing teams. He also encourages newcomers to give LMES a try.

"There's no reason not to give it a go," says Arnold. "It's easily accessible – if you love motorsport and you haven't got the money to do it in real life, then the virtual world is the next best thing. Going to Le Mans would be a dream come true for anyone. Just practice, practice and practice."

Wise words from a gamer currently leading the race to an authentic 2019 Le Mans 24 Hours experience.



FORMULA 5000

*Celebrating 50 years since the pretender to
Formula 1's throne hit UK shores*

PAUL LAWRENCE

Half a century after Formula 5000 was introduced to the UK, the spectacular single-seater category will be celebrated with a display at Autosport International.

The Historic Sports Car Club will bring together a selection of these monstrous racers from a time when thunder and awe were a major element of motorsport's popular appeal. F5000's reign was brief, but at its pomp it was one of the best shows in European single-seater racing.

John Webb, the innovating boss at Brands Hatch, brought F5000 to Europe for the 1969 season. It had been

established a year earlier as Formula A in North America and was based on mating five-litre engines, usually from Chevrolet, to relatively simple chassis. The cars were brutish, fast and loud.

Evolution was rapid and within three years the top cars rivalled Formula 1 for pace. The F5000 pack was used to bolster diminishing F1 entries in the UK's early-season non-championship races, and Peter Gethin famously won the 1973 Brands Hatch Race of Champions against some

quality F1 entries. Notable F5000 alumni include Mike Hailwood, Mario Andretti, Rene Arnoux, Patrick Tambay and Alan Jones.

But the oil crisis and rising costs took the steam out of the category and the

European championship morphed into an open single-seater contest under the Group 8 banner. The F5000 cars faded away but are now alive and well with healthy retro grids in the US and New Zealand, as well as a popular place in the HSCC's Derek Bell Trophy.

**FORMULA
5000**

**Stand 4040
Hall 4**



LOLA T142

Representing the first year of Formula 5000 in Europe is the Lola T142 now owned and raced by Adam Simmonds. This car has a special place in the F5000 story as it was on the grid for the inaugural UK race at Oulton Park over the 1969 Easter weekend.

The T142 was a development of the T140, which was Lola's offering for Formula A in 1968. Though rapidly made obsolete by Lola's later designs, the T142 was successful in those early days.

The car that Simmonds races was first owned by Canadian racer Horst Kroll, who escaped from East Germany as a teenager, and he ran it at Oulton Park before shipping it home. Kroll died just over a year ago, aged 81.

HEPWORTH FF

Otherwise known as the Guyson Sandblaster Special, the four-wheel-drive car built by the late David Hepworth in 1968 raced just twice in F5000 before the drive type was banned.

The one-off chassis, powered by a Traco V8 engine, was loosely based on a Brabham BT19 Formula 1 car, and used a Ferguson 4WD system.

It ran as F5000 at the Oulton Park Gold Cup and at Brands Hatch with Bev Bond and Tony Lanfranchi driving. Meanwhile, Hepworth used the car and engine to far greater success in hillclimbs and won the 1969 British Hillclimb Championship.

The car was put away at the end of the year before finally being restored in 2006 by Hepworth's sons Andrew and Stephen.



LOLA T330

Perhaps the all-time classic F5000 design is the Lola T330 and its T332 development, which were the Lola factory offerings for the 1973 and '74 seasons. The T330 was a big step forward from the T300, featuring a lighter, stiffer and sleeker monocoque, and much of it was carried forward into the T332.

Both designs won championships and many races as Lola set the category standard.

The T330 on show at Autosport International is from the Simon Hadfield stable and is superbly presented in Radio Luxembourg colours as used in period. Over the past decade the car has only raced a handful of times, but always at the front of the action in Hadfield's hands.

SURTEES TS8

Though best known for its grand prix cars, the team set up by 1964 Formula 1 world champion John Surtees also enjoyed F5000 success, notably with fellow former motorcycle ace Mike Hailwood in the '71 European Championship.

The TS8, of which around eight were built, was based heavily on the 1970 TS7 F1 challenger. It was built on the same jigs and the only major difference to the GP car was an extended wheelbase due to a longer bellhousing.

Chassis TS8/005, an ex-Hailwood car, will be on show as now owned and raced by Isle of Wight-based Chris Atkinson. The car has an extensive history and can count the late John Foulston, Professor John Monson and Stephen Gibson as owners and racers across the past three decades.



GURNEY EAGLE FA74

Among the best-looking category designs is the Eagle FA74 built by Dan Gurney's All American Racers operation. Gurney's first foray into F5000 had been in the early seasons, but Formula 1 and Indycar programmes then took priority and it was five years before the team returned to F5000.

Only four examples of the FA74 were built and Frank Lyons owns two of the three surviving cars, one of which has never been raced. The Eagles competed largely in the US in period with drivers such as Brett Lunger and Elliott Forbes-Robinson.

Chassis 04 has been driven by three members of the Lyons family for the past 15 seasons.

OLD BOYS BRIGADE

If current plans are realised, there will be an impressive line-up of period F5000 racers joining the celebrations on the Friday of Autosport International.

Drivers of the standing of Tony Trimmer, Mike Wilds and Mike Walker need little introduction, and all have F5000 firmly inscribed on their career

records. All three are still active racers and Trimmer has raced F5000s with Frank Lyons in recent times.

Less often seen around race paddocks these days are Damien Magee and Teddy Pilette, but both have pledged to be on hand at the NEC. Magee most notably raced F5000 in 1974 on his way to a brief foray in F1, while Pilette won the '73 and '75 European titles for the standard-setting VDS team.





SEASON
REVIEW

RUSSELL HEADS THE FUTURE F1 STARS

The Mercedes protege overcame early setbacks to take the Formula 2 crown on his way to grand prix racing with Williams

JACK BENYON

 PHOTOGRAPHY ZAK MAUGER  **motorsport**
IMAGES


A new car in a single-make formula usually instigates a welcome mixing-up of the order, but no-one could have expected just how exciting, frustrating, brilliant and annoying the Formula 2 season would be.

As it turned out, the final result wasn't even close as ART Grand Prix's George Russell took a second consecutive title – his first in 2017 as a rookie in the GP3 Series, and his second in '18 as a rookie in F2. Seven wins matched the record for a season, previously shared by Charles Leclerc and Stoffel Vandoorne, and winning the crown as a rookie matches Leclerc, Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg and Nico Hulkenberg. Not a bad club to be in.

But the season could have so easily gone the other way for Russell, a mainstay of Mercedes' Formula 1 junior programme. His year had a nightmare start. A slow getaway with F2's tricky clutch (see page 44) ruined a second-place start in the opener in Bahrain, then he was taken out while leading in Baku by Nyck de

**"MERCEDES DIDN'T JUST LOOK
AT THE POINTS WE HAD LOST.
THAT WAS REFRESHING"**

Vries the next time out. Russell won the feature race at Barcelona, following up his sprint-race success in Baku, but then in Monaco his engine expired in practice at a track he'd never been to before, compromising the rest of his weekend. Paul Ricard followed with a feature win and then a clutch issue in the sprint.

All of this came while he was fighting with the media's golden boy Lando Norris, who didn't suffer a problem until Paul Ricard and was on a brilliantly consistent run. It seemed as if every time Russell caught a break, he was instantly yanked backwards by his Dallara F2 2018. But he remained convinced that his ability would see him through and impress the right people.

"Whenever I had my talks with Mercedes and Toto [Wolff, Mercedes F1 boss], they understood what was going on and understood the true potential," he says of his early struggles. >>



Albon, who started season on race-by-race deal, took opportunistic Baku win

"I REMEMBER LITERALLY BEGGING FOR A SEAT THIS YEAR. I DIDN'T HAVE THE MONEY"



De Vries leads Markelov at Silverstone. Both arguably disappointed

"They didn't just look at the overall standings and the points we'd lost. That was refreshing in my mind."

It was at this point of the season that perennial Carlin racer Norris described his campaign as the "worst in my career", despite leading the championship! Qualifying was one area where he particularly struggled, beaten in this discipline over the course of the season by team-mate Sergio Sette Camara, who had worse luck than most in his sophomore year. Norris scored just one win.

It's not easy in F2 – there's one 40-minute practice on the harder-compound tyre, then you're straight out into qualifying on a softer set, having not run at the track on those tyres in those conditions. All that, and drivers have no data on the temperature of their tyres as the series doesn't permit it.

Ultimately, Russell's mid-season run won the title. He took back-to-back feature-race wins at Paul Ricard and the Red Bull Ring, and scored two seconds at Silverstone. Consistency as the season wore on helped, while Norris had the tricky balance of auditioning for an F1 seat, doing double-duty at Monza and Spa.

The man who didn't register on most people's radar pre-season for the F2 title chase was Alex Albon. The British-born Thai driver had a disastrous 2017 season with ART Grand Prix, in which he finished 10th, off the back of a brilliant '16 GP3 campaign, when he was second behind team-mate Leclerc.

On that basis it was no wonder that he didn't rank highly in terms of challengers with so much quality in the field. At the start of the season he was the only driver on a race-by-race deal – with DAMS – because of a lack of cash. But at the end he was third in the standings.

"I'm happy with this year – it's all down to DAMS," he explains. "I remember January/February, on the phone to Francois [Sicard, F2 team boss] literally begging to have the seat for this year and I didn't have the money for it, and he put me in it anyway. From then on it was always about proving a point and staying in the championship."

And prove a point he did. In the three events during which Albon was fighting for the seat at the start of the year – and therefore under the utmost pressure – he took a fourth in Bahrain, won from pole in Baku and scored fifth from pole at Barcelona. A third pole in a row came in Monaco, but the race probably still haunts him.

He had the race apparently wrapped up, before he went to pit under the safety car. He took a wide line into the pits, which made de Vries think Albon was staying out. De Vries pulled a tight line and clipped the DAMS driver into a spin, ruining both their races.

As it turned out, Albon sneaked into the Abu Dhabi finale as the only driver who could topple Russell, after Norris suffered pitstop pandemonium in the penultimate outing at Sochi, when he was released from the box before a wheel was attached.

ROUND BY ROUND

Bahrain

R1 Lando Norris
R2 Artem Markelov

Lando Norris ensures Carlin's return to Formula 2 is golden with a victory from pole position, leading onlookers to wonder if the pre-season favourite would run away with it. George Russell struggles with the clutch and slips back. Artem Markelov takes sprint-race victory, managing the Pirellis well.

Baku

R1 Alexander Albon
R2 George Russell

Russell has the race sewn up until Nyck de Vries forces him off the track with the most outrageous of moves. Antonio Fuoco leads but is caught in smoke, and is jumped by Alex Albon for victory. Sergio Sette Camara is disqualified from second for lack of fuel for a sample post-race. Russell bounces back to victory in the sprint.

Barcelona

R1 George Russell
R2 Jack Aitken

Albon takes a second pole but it's Russell who manages a tricky race from the front to win, surviving a post-race investigation for throwing his water bottle out of the car after it came loose. His ART team-mate Jack Aitken storms to race-two win. Tadasuke Makino reckons the halo saves his life after hit from Nirei Fukuzumi.

Monte Carlo

R1 Artem Markelov
R2 Antonio Fuoco

Albon and de Vries end their challenges when they crash at pit-entry under the safety car. A well-executed strategy from Markelov earns the win, while Sean Gelael takes a best F2 result in second. Fuoco gives Charouz Racing System its first win in the sprint, while Norris is demoted from second to third for a VSC infringement.

Paul Ricard

R1 George Russell
R2 Nyck de Vries

Car issues hit new lows with stalls and sensor problems. Russell takes a brilliant feature-race win, slashing Norris's points lead, as the Carlin man stalls. Russell then has throttle issues in the sprint. De Vries wins after passing Louis Deletraz. Luca Ghiotto takes a second third place of the weekend.

Red Bull Ring

R1 George Russell
R2 Artem Markelov

Russell takes a second pole and feature-race win in a row and is beginning to look unstoppable, rising from eighth to second in the sprint race too. He takes the points lead as Markelov holds on to take a second sprint win of the year, set up by a long stint on his first tyres to take eighth in the feature, securing Sunday pole.



Lacking heat in his tyres, Albon had to watch the 37-point deficit to Russell extend when his rival took Yas Marina pole, and Albon qualified eighth. He then stalled in the feature race as Russell won and sealed a brilliant title. Albon's poor fortune allowed Norris to jump back into second, albeit 68 points behind the title victor.

Artem Markelov (three), de Vries (three) and Antonio Fuoco (two) all outsourced Norris for wins, but Markelov and de Vries both disappointed with multiple sub-par performances in what should have been title campaigns for both. De Vries was with the superb Prema Racing team, but often failed to deliver on that car's advantage in qualifying and races, while anything other than a proper title challenge was unacceptable for Markelov, in his fifth season in the category. His Monaco feature-race win came in

part thanks to the leaders taking each other out, and the other two successes were reversed-grid wins. De Vries at least took two feature-race victories on merit in Hungary and Belgium, and spent the year without a frontrunning team-mate in Sean Gelael.

By contrast, Markelov's Russian Time team-mate produced what has to be one of the moments of the season. Honda junior Tadasuke Makino had only one season of competition in Europe under his belt in four years of racing cars, but there's always been something special about the Osaka driver. At Monza, Russian Time made the call to start him on the soft tyre, and it proved to be the stronger option as the supersofts degraded.

The 21-year old drove through the field before most had pitted in the early running and held on to take a dramatic win. He's known >>

Silverstone

R1 Alexander Albon
R2 M Gunther

A pitstop-limiter issue for ART penalises Russell and Aitken, but the really costly issue for polesitter Russell is a broken wheelgun. By the time the mechanic gets the spare, he's lost the lead to Albon and takes second. Russell comes from seventh to hunt Maxi Gunther in the sprint, but runs out of time as the German takes a first F2 win.

Hungaroring

R1 Nyck de Vries
R2 Alexander Albon

Russell has clutch issue and retires, Norris is sensational in the wet but damage to his front wing compromises performance as the track dries, and de Vries pounces for victory. Albon wins race two after fighting off Ghiotto, while Russell storms from the back to take eighth and the final point. Norris is fourth.

Spa

R1 Nyck de Vries
R2 Nicholas Latifi

De Vries wins in front of thousands of Dutch Max Verstappen fans, while Sette Camara takes second after jumping Russell at the start. Russell and Norris try the undercut unsuccessfully and finish in that order. Nicholas Latifi finally gets to grips with the new F2 car for sprint win, as Norris passes de Vries for second.

Monza

R1 Tadasuke Makino
R2 George Russell

A brilliant Russian Time call to start on softs instead of supersofts allows Makino to drive from 14th to victory. Russell and Norris battle wheel to wheel properly for the first time, with Russell coming out on top and Norris saying his defence is "dangerous". Russell wins the second race after passing Latifi.

Sochi

R1 Alexander Albon
R2 George Russell

Albon wins to narrow the points gap to Russell, while Norris's car is dropped off its jacks before his pitstop is complete, causing retirement. A pointless second race rules Norris out of the title hunt. Russell rebounds to win race two with Albon third, Russell securing a strong lead of 37 points heading into Abu Dhabi.

Yas Marina

R1 George Russell
R2 Antonio Fuoco

Russell takes four points for pole and a seventh win of the year to secure the title. Albon stalls in race one and struggles to recover, while Norris steals second in the points. Latifi is lucky to walk away from a huge startline crash after stalling. Roberto Merhi takes a first podium for Campos since switching from MP.



Clutch problems
blamed for huge
crash in Abu Dhabi

THE PROS AND CONS OF FORMULA 2'S NEW CAR

Introducing a car packed with new technology is never straightforward. And if it costs north of £1.5million to compete in the series, there's not going to be much leeway when it goes wrong.

Let's start with the positives. The new F2 car gave the halo its first test in competition when Nirei Fukuzumi's car took a swipe towards Tadasuke Makino's head, leading Makino to claim that the car saved his life. And that happened long before the device got international acclaim following Charles Leclerc's and Fernando Alonso's crash at Spa. Bravo F2 and the FIA for introducing it.

The car also followed well at most tracks, producing good overtaking, although the tyres and DRS also played their parts significantly in this.

But any acclaim for the car has to be offset against its many issues. It was a tight turnaround to get it ready and delivered to teams in time, and immediately at the pre-season test multiple engines were blown as the turbocharged Mecachrome powerplant made its debut. That meant the unit had to run at reduced power for the majority of the season.

The clutch was also an immediate problem. The mechanism itself proved difficult to operate, with the bite-point window proving narrow. There was also an issue when the system didn't read the input correctly. If a driver engaged the clutch 30%, the system might engage 40% and then return to 30% – but by going over, it would cause a stall.

Some teams got on top of the system, but many didn't, and after multiple attempts to fix it the FIA imposed rolling starts at the Red Bull Ring and Silverstone. After that, the series tested hard – credit where it's due – and brought a new clutch diaphragm and mandated software, which reduced the number of stalls until Abu Dhabi, where it blamed a combination of factors including sticky supersoft tyres allied to the heat of the UAE venue.

Throttle-sensor issues also plagued the first half of the season, but again after the extensive testing following the Silverstone round this was improved.

Ultimately the drivers – some of whom criticised the car's introduction for being too early, and others who questioned the effect it was having on drivers' futures and on the safety at starts due to the clutch issues – raced on and still delivered an entertaining season. But no doubt many feel hard done by thanks to the unreliability, which struck some more than others.

in the paddock for his love of high fashion, but there was nothing dowdy about his rapid drive under pressure in unfamiliar circumstances at the head of the field.

At the previous round, Makino had asked Russian Time why he didn't have a bike on which to do the 'track walk', like stablemate Markelov. The team joked that when he won, he would receive said bike. One week later, mission accomplished.

Makino also played a role in one of the most significant moments of the F2 season at Barcelona in May, when during a crash Nirei

"THE HALO LIKELY SAVED A DRIVER'S LIFE, PROVING HOW IMPORTANT THE DEVICE IS"

Fukuzumi's left-rear wheel hit Makino's halo. One year earlier, the wheel more than likely would have hit Makino's helmet. Many negative words have been written about this year's F2 car – and rightly so – but the introduction of the halo likely saved a driver's life and provided the first example in world motorsport of how important the device is.

That was the 'incident that could have been worrying' of the year; now for the 'curious and bizarre' one, when Santino Ferrucci crashed into Trident team-mate Arjun Maini on the slow-down lap after the Silverstone sprint race.

Ferrucci had also driven between the F2 and F1 paddock ahead of the race without a glove and holding a mobile phone, which led to the American being banned for two rounds. Tempers had flared at various points in the Ferrucci camp during 2018, and this was the final straw for Italian squad Trident, which said it needed to "protect" Maini, and removed Ferrucci – who apologised for the "mental lapse" almost immediately.

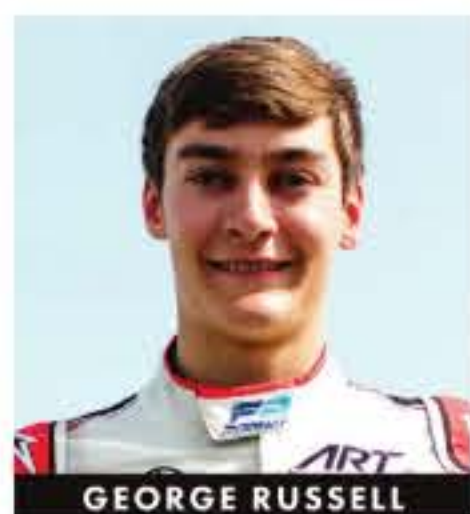
The helped trigger a mid-season driver merry-go-round in the Trident, MP Motorsport and Campos squads – all three struggling to deliver a car to match the F2 frontrunners. There is cause for optimism for Campos after Roberto Merhi delivered a podium following his late-season switch to the squad.

But the year will be remembered most for three of the best young drivers in some time converging in a single championship, outperforming its devil of a car and excelling under incredible pressure. It could be some time before the season is matched or bettered in junior single-seaters. ✎



Brilliant tyre call fired
Makino from 14th to
victory at Monza

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



GEORGE RUSSELL

1 One of the best performances in GP2/F2 history. Had more car issues than some of his main rivals, and had to deal with Norris leading the points for half a season because of it, but took it all in his stride. A cut above in his rookie year.



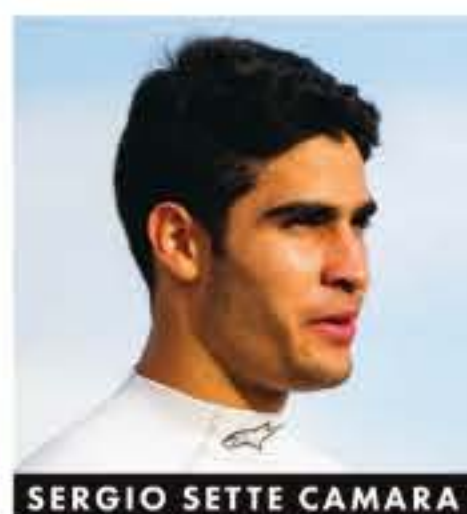
ALEX ALBON

2 Pips Norris on the basis of higher average qualifying and feature-race positions, as well as a phenomenal career turnaround. Tenth in 2017 in F2, he had to beg for his seat at the start of '18. Now he's in F1 with Toro Rosso.



LANDO NORRIS

3 On the face of it, a brilliant year during which McLaren chose him for an F1 seat. F2 didn't quite go to plan, with a lack of wins and poles, although he still displayed consistency and maturity above his experience level.



SERGIO SETTE CAMARA

4 Sette Camara shone in 2018 and, without the number of issues that afflicted him, he probably would have been higher than sixth in the standings. Like Albon, another who produced an excellent turnaround from '17.



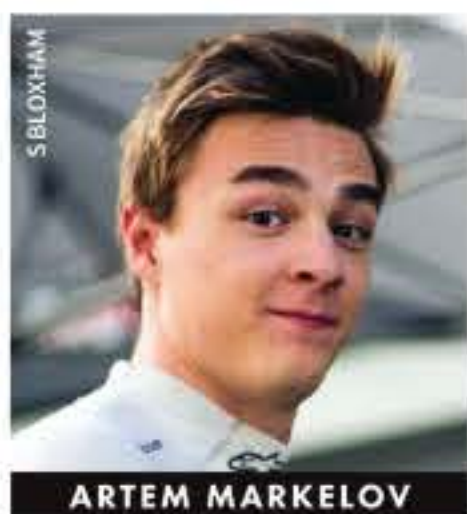
NYCK DE VRIES

5 A flat campaign from the Dutchman, who was supposed to be the next big thing at McLaren, before he was usurped by Norris. Second half of the season showed signs of picking up, but it was a scrappy campaign lacking consistency.



ANTONIO FUOCO

6 Was well and truly beaten up by Prema team-mate Charles Leclerc in 2017, but with a new team Fuoco fell into a leadership role, nicely steering the team to two wins. He lost many chances at scoring big points too, when not his fault.



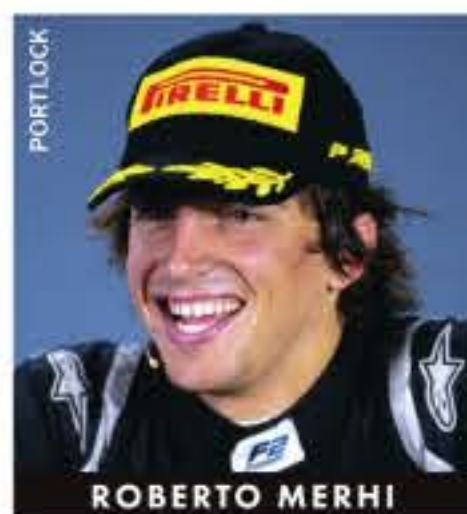
ARTEM MARKELOV

7 Fifth in the standings, but is penalised here for the fact that it was his fifth season in F2, and he did worse than the previous year. Still a strong run, but his only feature-race win came in Monaco, when the leaders took each other out.



LUCA GHIOTTO

8 Lacked the support of an equal at Campos until the final couple of rounds, by which time it was too late. Car struggled for pace, so he often dragged it around by the scruff of its neck. Took a fastest lap and five podiums, including a win.



ROBERTO MERHI

9 Was super-impressive as he drove for arguably two of the worst teams in the 2018 season in Campos and MP. After routinely driving from back to front with MP, he fell out with its engineers, before elevating the second Campos car into the top 10.



TADASUKE MAKINO

10 By the far the greenest rookie with one season racing in Europe under his belt. Close to Markelov in qualifying, and produced a brilliant standout win at Monza as he improved massively in the second half of the season.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	PTS
1	George Russell (GB)	ART Grand Prix	5	19	12	1	1	4	R	R	1	17	1	2	2	2	R	8	3	7	4	1	4	1	1	4	287
2	Lando Norris (GB)	Carlin	1	4	6	4	3	3	6	3	16	5	2	11	10	3	2	4	4	2	6	5	R	R	5	2	219
3	Alexander Albon (T)	DAMS	4	13	1	13	5	2	R	R	R	7	5	5	1	7	5	1	5	3	3	R	1	3	14	8	212
4	Nyck de Vries (NL)	Prema Racing	6	5	R	2	2	R	R	9	5	1	R	14	7	6	1	7	1	4	9	17	3	4	4	5	202
5	Artem Markelov (RUS)	Russian Time	3	1	R	R	8	9	1	4	14	14	8	1	6	4	8	13	6	5	2	2	11	5	2	7	186
6	Sergio Sette Camara (BR)	Carlin	2	3	4	EX	7	R	W	-	2	6	6	3	R	17	7	3	2	9	7	3	5	2	16	10	164
7	Antonio Fuoco (I)	Charouz Racing System	17	12	3	NS	10	7	8	1	4	4	3	4	3	R	3	17	17	19	EX	10	6	9	7	1	141
8	Luca Ghiotto (I)	Campos Racing	12	6	R	14	4	5	R	10	3	3	12	13	5	10	6	2	7	6	10	6	R	14	3	9	111
9	Nicholas Latifi (CDN)	DAMS	11	10	5	3	14	8	9	8	7	8	11	8	17	16	R	16	8	1	5	4	2	R	R	15	91
10	Louis Deletraz (CH)	Charouz Racing System	13	9	R	10	R	10	4	2	6	2	R	R	4	5	17	9	18	13	13	11	12	13	6	6	74

11 Jack Aitken (ART Grand Prix) 63; 12 Roberto Merhi (MP Motorsport/Campos Racing) 61; 13 Tadasuke Makino (Russian Time) 48; 14 Maximilian Gunther (Arden International) 41; 15 Sean Gelael (Prema Racing) 29; 16 Arjun Maini (Trident) 24; 17 Nirei Fukuzumi (Arden International) 17; 18 Ralph Boschung (MP Motorsport) 17; 19 Santino Ferrucci (Trident) 7; 20 Alessio Lorandi (Trident) 6; 21 Dorian Boccia (MP Motorsport) 3; 22 Roy Nissany (Campos Racing) 1; 23 Dan Ticktum (Arden International) 0; 24 Niko Kari (MP Motorsport) 0.



SEASON
REVIEW

HOW HUBERT REACHED THE TOP AT THE END OF AN ERA

In the swansong season of GP3 before it becomes FIA Formula 3, the ART Grand Prix driver followed a consistent path to the crown

JACK BENYON

PHOTOGRAPHY ZAK MAUGER



In its 'final' season, there was never a dull moment in the GP3 Series. Whether it was the cars being uploaded with the wrong software at Spa, the title contenders taking each other out at the Red Bull Ring, or two sons of Formula 1 greats dicing for victory on the historic Monza circuit, there was no let-up in its final year before the series gets a new car and is renamed the FIA Formula 3 Championship for next season.

The series has been spoiled for talent in recent years, with George Russell, Charles Leclerc and Esteban Ocon all winning en route to F1. Yet in 2018 it wasn't clear who would emerge as title favourite and take the mantle as a star of the future.

Nobody proved as dominant a force as Russell or Leclerc, and consistency proved to be the key. And on that score there was no rival to eventual champion Anthoine Hubert. In 18 races he was on the podium 11 times. In the feature races, which are by far the better measure of talent compared to the reversed-grid races on Sundays, he was off the podium just once. And then it was only after he was taken out by his team-mate.

Nikita Mazepin was not highly favoured coming up against second-year driver Hubert, having finished 10th in European Formula

3 the previous season. But he pushed ART Grand Prix team-mate Hubert right to the end and only a couple of errors hindered him as Hubert's squeaky-clean run delivered his first major title.

The fight between the two was intense, culminating at the Red Bull Ring at the end of June. Hubert was fired up after his first mistake of the season in the qualifying session the day before, when he went off the road, collected grass in his radiator and ended up starting 19th. He thought it might cost him the title.

But he was quickly up into the top eight in the race, before Mazepin dived up his inside at Turn 9 while Hubert in turn was trying to pass David Beckmann. Hubert took the racing line and



Hughes, Mazepin, Hubert and Iltott celebrate ART's teams' championship



Mazepin had nowhere to go, clipping Hubert's right-rear and sending him into a spin.

"Obviously we discussed what happened and we came to the conclusion that it was a racing incident. I had no intention of clipping Anthoine, especially as we were fighting for P9 and not a win," said Mazepin at the time.

Things can get fraught when four drivers, in premium machinery, driving for the same squad, are closely matched. Callum Ilott, Hubert's 2016 team-mate in Euro F3, claimed the points lead after his ART team-mates' Red Bull Ring crash, while Jake Hughes spent the season hamstrung dealing with the Pirelli tyres, but still showed flashes of pace.

"The relationship between us, I have seen better in other teams," Hubert says of the atmosphere at ART at the end of the season. "But it's all right, we are professional and we managed it in the end. There has been tension, but in a team like ART where four drivers are fighting for the championship, I think it's quite normal. The team helped us to manage it – we were smart and managed it better."

Ultimately Mazepin lost the title due to a couple of errors, including crashing out at Sochi in September. He'd already lost >>



THE DRIVER WHO PROVED ART WAS BEATABLE

While it has produced top drivers, GP3 is more often associated with team domination. ART and Trident drivers won all but three of the 18 races in 2018, and ART took the teams' title eight times in nine seasons.

So you'd think it would be intriguing to take one of the drivers who's impressed from a minnow team and plonk them in a leading entry to see how they get on. Mid-season, that's what happened when David Beckmann moved to Trident.

It was all very inauspicious at the time. The German hadn't exactly set GP3 on fire with Jenzer Motorsport – although admittedly all of the Swiss team's drivers had struggled. Furthermore, Beckmann had endured a poor 2017, his second in the Formula 3 European Championship, one year after impressing with a couple of podiums in his rookie F3 campaign. But what happened from the Hungaroring round in July onwards with Trident was astounding.

None of his new team-mates won feature races during the year, but Beckmann took two from his first three weekends with the squad, putting his team-mates with famous surnames – Giuliano Alesi and Pedro Piquet – in the shade.

"On one hand it's sad, because you don't know what would have happened if I'd started the season with Trident," says Beckmann. "But on the other I think it's good to show that I don't get down because I have a bad season; I get another car, reset my mind and push again and it works."

"I think that's what a proper racing driver needs to do – not get down because of bad results. It doesn't matter how long you go on without a good result, you have to search and improve. It's nice to show this."

The best man to discuss Beckmann's form is his team boss, Giacomo Ricci. The 2006 Euro and Italian F3000 champion – who beat Marco Bonanomi, Vitaly Petrov and Jerome d'Ambrosio in the process – knows a thing or two about class drivers.

"Thank you to him, because since he joined Trident ART became beatable!" says Ricci. "He is really good at adapting. Whatever you give him, whether the car is understeering or oversteering, he is able to maximise the peak of the tyres. Also in the race he is really consistent."

A brilliant second half of the season has opened Beckmann's options. A step up to Formula 2 down the line appears unlikely "because I don't have the budget". But his performances opened up the chance to take an ART Grand Prix F3 seat for next year. With its pedigree, he could be a strong title challenger.

GP3 POINTS FROM HUNGARORING

1	Mazepin	127
2	Beckmann	125
3	Hubert	114
4	Pulcini	83
5	Ilott	73



Ilott won twice, but had to settle for third in the points



Pulcini was hamstrung by bad luck, then it all came good at Sochi

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	PTS
1	Anthoine Hubert (F)	ART Grand Prix	2	2	1	7	17	9	1	4	3	3	3	2	2	EX	3	4	3	R	214
2	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	ART Grand Prix	1	10	2	5	13	7	2	7	1	12	5	1	5	3	2	R	5	1	198
3	Callum Ilott (GB)	ART Grand Prix	3	7	8	1	1	6	3	5	6	2	6	3	3	EX	13	18	4	4	167
4	Leonardo Pulcini (I)	Campos Racing	4	9	4	8	2	3	6	6	2	4	15	R	14	7	1	8	1	12	156
5	David Beckmann (D)	Jenzer Motorsport/Trident	6	17	18	10	8	R	14	R	4	7	1	NS	1	5	5	1	2	R	137
6	Pedro Piquet (BR)	Trident	9	R	6	2	4	2	7	1	12	9	4	5	7	1	15	11	12	R	106
7	Giuliano Alesi (F)	Trident	7	1	3	6	6	R	8	2	17	16	9	6	6	2	14	17	6	10	100
8	Jake Hughes (GB)	ART Grand Prix	13	3	10	17	5	1	R	8	16	14	7	4	9	4	7	16	7	2	85
9	Ryan Tveter (USA)	Trident	17	14	11	9	7	R	4	3	5	6	2	8	11	16	18	9	11	5	69
10	Dorian Boccia (F)	MP Motorsport	5	5	EX	14	10	5	5	9	8	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58

11 **Alessio Lorandi** (Trident) 42; 12 **Juan Manuel Correa** (Jenzer Motorsport) 42; 13 **Joey Mawson** (Arden International) 38; 14 **Simo Laaksonen** (Campos Racing) 36; 15 **Richard Verschoor** (MP Motorsport) 30; 16 **Tatiana Calderon** (Jenzer Motorsport) 11; 17 **Niko Kari** (MP Motorsport) 6; 18 **Gabriel Aubry** (Arden International) 5; 19 **Diego Menchaca** (Campos Racing) 3; 20 **Jannes Fittje** (Jenzer Motorsport) 0; 21 **Devlin DeFrancesco** (MP Motorsport) 0; 22 **Julien Falchero** (Arden International) 0; 23 **Christian Lundgaard** (MP Motorsport) 0; 24 **Sacha Fenestraz** (Arden International) 0; 25 **Will Palmer** (MP Motorsport) 0; 26 **Jehan Daruvala** (MP Motorsport) 0.

ROUND BY ROUND

Barcelona

R1 Nikita Mazepin
R2 Giuliano Alesi
 Against higher-rated ART team-mates, Mazepin converts a brilliant start into a debut GP3 victory. Giuliano Alesi fights to seventh in the feature race to grab a front-row start for the reversed-grid second race, which he wins ahead of Anthoine Hubert, who completes the weekend with a pair of runner-up spots.

Paul Ricard

R1 Anthoine Hubert
R2 Callum Ilott
 Dorian Boccia is the second successive non-ART poleman. He finishes first, but there's not enough fuel in his MP Motorsport car for a sample post-race, and that hands the win to home hero Hubert. Ilott secures his first win in the sprint race, after opposition early on from Trident's Pedro Piquet.

Red Bull Ring

R1 Callum Ilott
R2 Jake Hughes
 Hubert messes up in qualifying before he performs a stirring drive through the field. But he's taken out by team-mate and title rival Mazepin at Turn 9. Ilott converts pole into a first GP3 victory, while team-mate Hughes wins the reversed-grid event despite struggling with tyres early in the season.

Silverstone

R1 Anthoine Hubert
R2 Pedro Piquet
 It's a dream weekend for Hubert as France marches towards the World Cup, his grandad celebrates his birthday and it's his brother's graduation ceremony. He also takes his first on-the-road win. Perennial reversed-grid contenders Piquet and Alesi battle for honours in race two, with Piquet on top in a Trident 1-2-3.

Hungaroring

R1 Nikita Mazepin
R2 Dorian Boccia
 After being hit in qualifying in a bizarre clash with Niko Kari (but still taking second on the grid), Mazepin takes the win, the key being a start as great as Hubert's is woeful. Broken DRS doesn't help the chasing pack. Boccia wins for MP Motorsport in race two, with Ilott heading Hubert for second.

Spa

R1 David Beckmann
R2 Nikita Mazepin
 In his second round after switching from Jenzer to Trident, Beckmann takes a mature victory from pole in the feature race as the team's cars lock out three of the top four spots, Hubert being the interloper in third. Mazepin takes the sprint race to fight back in the title hunt against Hubert and Ilott in an ART 1-2-3-4.

his pole for a track-limits infringement, and then crashed while challenging for sprint-race honours. That was costly; but he'd made his point, proving many wrong in his ability to challenge for the title.

The penultimate meeting in Russia also ended Iloft's run. A brake problem that wasn't truly resolved until the Abu Dhabi finale meant a 13th and an 18th took him out of contention. Iloft's Achilles' heel has been that he can be too aggressive, or too reactive, causing himself problems in races. He was far more consistent in 2018, but he went too far the other way, as Hubert proved to be faster across the season. Third was all Iloft could salvage.

And that was close. Leonardo Pulcini pushed him after a brilliant season. He was 14th in 2017, but a switch from Arden to Campos seemed to work wonders. Pulcini was head-and-shoulders above his team-mates, taking two wins at the end of the season, but bad luck afflicted most of his year, with a gearbox failure and an errant visor blocking his radiator causing two of his DNFs.

Pulcini's two-wins tally equalled that of the champion. But, as Ocon proved in 2015, it doesn't matter how many victories you have if you wrest the crown. Hubert simply outfoxed the rest and delivered ART its fourth consecutive drivers' title. *W*



Monza

R1 David Beckmann
R2 Pedro Piquet

Beckmann takes another pole and feature-race win, as Hubert grabs second to strengthen his points lead. In the race of the season, Alesi and Piquet battle on Sunday as fathers Jean and Nelson watch from the pitwall. Piquet edges it. Iloft (third) and Hubert (fourth) are disqualified for too-low rear-tyre pressures.

Sochi

R1 Leonardo Pulcini
R2 David Beckmann

Mazepin is robbed of a home pole after a track-limits breach, before Pulcini finally gets a 2018 win to end his run of horrible luck. Mazepin is second ahead of Hubert, but he crashes in the second race, all but gifting Hubert the title. Beckmann wins the second race after a late safety car robs the brilliant Joey Mawson.

Yas Marina

R1 Leonardo Pulcini
R2 Nikita Mazepin

A track-limits penalty for the second round in a row – in the feature race, after taking pole – undoes Mazepin's title hopes as Hubert's third seals the title. Pulcini takes a second win a row, to illustrate what might have been. Mazepin ends the season with the sprint win, the last race of GP3 before it switches to FIA Formula 3.

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 5 DRIVERS

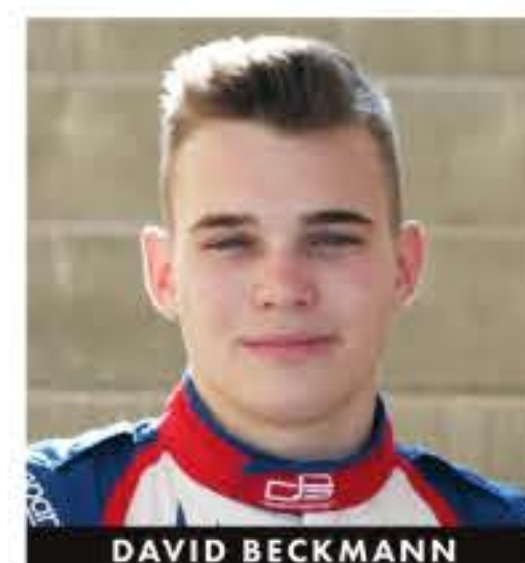


ANTHOINE HUBERT

1 Fourth in the total number of victories may be a stat you get hung up on, but in terms of how to win a championship Hubert is streets ahead. Uber-consistent in taking 11 podiums, he looked to maximise each weekend without taking major risks, and that paid off. Took two poles – as many as anyone – having not scored any in 2017. Qualifying was a big step forward in 2018 and also key to the title.



NIKITA MAZEPIN



DAVID BECKMANN

2 In a four-car team filled with talent, Mazepin appeared the outsider at the start of 2018. But although David Beckmann stole the spotlight after moving to Trident, it was Mazepin who scored highest over the second half of the season. Mazepin stays with ART for next season for his step up to F2.

3 What could have been? A switch to Trident made him an instant threat for victories and poles. Technical issues at Spa stunted his progress and he was taken out in the Abu Dhabi sprint race. A superb drive from 15th to fifth in the Sochi feature set up the sprint win in the following race and showed his ability to bounce back.



LEONARDO PULCINI



JOEY MAWSON

4 Victim of the worst and most bizarre piece of bad luck, when his car ingested a visor strip that blocked the radiator, Pulcini was dogged by ill fortune. There were a couple of mistakes, but he took two wins and was the top non-ART driver in the points. The distance by which he outscored his team-mates boosts his stock further.

5 Callum Iloft could have easily made this spot, but fellow Euro F3 refugee Mawson just pips him after some brilliant performances in what was a poor Arden car. Like Pulcini did at Campos, the Australian proved way ahead of his team-mates. With a bit more luck a couple of wins could have gone his way.

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TEAMS FRUSTRATED AT UK CLIO CUP CANCELLATION

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

Renault UK Clio Cup teams are “frustrated” and “disappointed” that the popular series will be axed at the end of this season.

It was confirmed shortly before Christmas that the manufacturer would not continue to support the series beyond 2019. That coincides with the planned introduction of the new fifth-generation Clio, as well as the end of the category’s current deal to appear on the British Touring Car Championship support bill.

Apart from a hiatus for the Spider Cup from 1996–99, Clios have been ever-present on TOCA since the BTCC support package started in ’93. They have launched countless drivers into the BTCC.

“It’s disappointing really,” said Westbourne Motorsport team boss Richard Colburn. “It’s just a shame after such a long heritage [the series began in 1991]. It’s had some great races over the years and I’m sure they’ve sold many cars [off the back of it].”



Colburn is disappointed by series ending

Matrix Motorsport team principal Dave Hayes, who first began working in the Clio Cup as a 16-year-old in 2000, added: “It was not something we were expecting. Everything comes to an end at some point. It’s a big thing for me because it’s been a part of my life for so long. It’s frustrating but it’s out of our control.”

WDE Motorsport was considering quitting the series, but is now set to remain for the final season. “I could see it coming a mile off,” admitted team principal Wayne Eason. “There was no commitment and nobody looking to renew a contract would leave it until now.”

Renault Sport Racing sporting manager Tarik Ait Said explained that it was not an easy decision for Renault UK to bring the category to an end.

“We had meetings with Renault UK to work out what would be the future,” he told Autosport. “The environment has changed. For Renault it’s very important that it makes sense from a marketing point of view. It was a compromise on what was the best thing to do with the budget that we have.”

“Even if it’s got a grid of 20 to 25 cars, financially speaking a good grid would be above 30. If you rate it from a TV point of view, it’s fantastic with the public. From a marketing point of view, with the new car coming and all the things that would be required, it was hard for them to see how the Clio Cup would fit in 2020.”

STEPHEN LICKORISH

MOST SUCCESSFUL CLIO CUP DRIVERS



PAUL RIVETT – 49 WINS, FOUR TITLES, MORE THAN 200 STARTS



1 “Nothing else at that level offers the value for money it provides. Because I was coming back to the championship time and time again, I think I had a big target on my car for the new racers that were coming in, and that target only got bigger the longer I stayed in the category.

It was hard too, because I could only disappoint people. If I won it, people would say, ‘Well so he should.’ If I didn’t, people felt let down, so that was a tricky situation to be in. But I love the category and I just hope that it’s able to come back in some shape or form in the future.”



JONNY ADAM



STEFAN HODGETTS

2 “When I started, I think I got through three bodysells in my first year, but I finished third and then went on to win it in 2005. That was a sensational result for me and for TCR – and that’s another thing: the teams at the top level of Clios prepared a young driver well. They are all expert and, as a first stepping stone, you work with data. It’s all part of an education, and just look at the names who have come from Clios.”

3 “I loved the 182 and 197 versions of the Renault Clio Cup race cars – they were a great piece of kit. It was right on the edge and could be twitchy, but it had a proper sequential gearbox and taught you so much about car control. My first year in 2007 was really successful – I won five races – but after that I was just brought in when people needed to fill a seat, although I won four races with SVR for Danny Buxton in 2012.”



MIKE BUSHELL



DANNY BUXTON/ANT WHORTON-EALES

4 “I joined in 2012, and it was a baptism of fire: I wrote off two cars in my first three rounds. It was like pinball! The racing was so tough. When I won my first title in 2014, there was so much competition. I was with Pyro and the team taught me a heck of a lot. Then, when I came back to the series in ’16, it was another learning process again. If I had to stop racing tomorrow, I would look back on the two Renault UK Clio Cup trophies I have and be very, very proud.”

5 DB: “It was one heck of a series to learn in. When I did it, there was an influx of single-seater drivers like Tim Mullen, Andrew Kirkaldy and Rob Huff who were all seeing saloons as a pathway to a career.”
AW-E: “I suppose you could say that the Renault Clio has taught me most of what I know about racing. I really enjoyed the older-spec car that we ran until the end of 2013, because it felt like a proper race car.”



OPINION



To say the past 12 months have been a nightmare for Renault in UK motorsport would be a bit of an understatement.

There was the embarrassing debacle with its planned Clio Cup Junior series (above) – a concept the manufacturer foolishly clung to despite a problematic first season in 2017 – and ultimately was culled as the few drivers who did sign up soon went elsewhere.

Then the senior Clio Cup had a tumultuous season with tyre concerns, accusations of cheating and a title that was decided in court weeks after the season concluded. None of which reflected well on the series.

Add in various management changes at Renault UK in the background, a contract with TOCA that was about to expire and a new car due to be introduced for 2020, and it’s perhaps no surprise that the Clio Cup will be axed at the end of this season.

And that’s sad, because it’s without doubt one of the most competitive and entertaining racing series in the country.

The worry now is that it will go out with a whimper. Virtually all of 2018’s top drivers are expected to move on to pastures new, James Dorlin (below) the latest frontrunner to confirm his departure, in his case to GT with McLaren (see page 62).

Attracting new drivers will be tricky with its limited shelf life. Although teams such as Westbourne and Matrix are hopeful of running four cars, other squads have considered quitting altogether.

It would be great if some of the category’s past stars could provide a final flourish, as it would be a real shame if this giant of the national racing scene suffers a disappointing end.

STEPHEN LICKORISH





Left to right: Dorlin, Smith, Collard and Proctor

McLaren recruits three more GT juniors for 2019

GT RACING

McLaren Automotive has signed Renault Clio runner-up James Dorlin, Formula Ford Festival winner Josh Smith and Mini Challenge frontrunner Jordan Collard to join Lewis Proctor in its Driver Development Programme.

The quartet will pair up in two McLaren 570S GT4s in a yet-to-be-confirmed series, although it is expected that they

will contest the British GT Championship.

The three teenagers were chosen after an extensive interview process including fitness tests, engineering knowledge assessments and qualifying simulations, overseen by McLaren factory driver Rob Bell. All will benefit from mentoring from McLaren staff in matters ranging from on-track performance to sponsorship and PR and data analysis.

JAMES NEWBOLD

MEET THE NEW BOYS



JAMES DORLIN

Was perhaps a little unfortunate to see the Renault Clio title slip from his grasp in the courts last year. The mid-season run of form that saw him claim five wins on the bounce offers a tantalising insight into what the versatile 19-year-old – who also has experience in historics – can bring to GT racing.



JORDAN COLLARD

In his first season out of Ginetta Juniors, the youngest son of British Touring Car Championship veteran Rob Collard impressed in the Mini Challenge JCW class by finishing as top rookie in third overall, taking a win at Silverstone. Still only 18, eschewing the single-seater route pursued by brother Ricky could pay dividends.



JOSH SMITH

The 18-year-old Cumbrian's dramatic victory in last year's Formula Ford Festival after a battle with Niall Murray and Ollie White showed his steel under pressure. After a tough 2015 in F4, he rebounded to win the '17 BRSCC Northern title, but the switch to GTs will pose an altogether new challenge.

New US-style Sprint-series car revealed

WILDCAT SPRINT

The first car for the new Wildcat Sprint Car series has been revealed.

The US-style category has been created by Pickups boss Sonny Howard, and will join the trucks and Super Silhouettes as part of his 'Power of Three' package.

The rear-wheel-drive sprint car will feature a two-litre Ford Duratec

engine, with a four-speed sequential gearbox. Its bodywork is made from glass-reinforced plastic.

"It will be exciting because it breaks all of the moulds – but it still fits in with what we're doing," explained series boss Howard.

"It will be a sight to behold and, with the short exhaust system, they'll be spitting flames out of the exhausts."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



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British GT raced into the night at Donington Park in 2011

JEP
motorsport
IMAGES

No 'wacky' GT night race

BRITISH GT

British GT will replicate the two-hour, single-race format of its Donington Park season finale for its additional visit to the circuit in June, having dismissed the possibility of a "wacky" night race.

Championship manager Benjamin Franassovici had told Autosport (August 8) that an 'into-the-night' race was among the options being considered for the extra Donington round, which fills the vacancy left by Rockingham on the calendar.

"We did look at doing something different, wacky, but it had to make sense," he said. "It needed to be packageable."

Franassovici cited a 7pm curfew for track activity as a critical factor against a night race, and said that teams had

"generally accepted" the proposal.

"I'm not closing the door to introducing something interesting if it makes sense, like having the Am finishing the race, which would be different to the end-of-season finale," he added.

The championship claims to have 30 fully-paid entries, but Franassovici said he was prepared to keep the door open for any new GT2 cars that are built by the end of this year to compete.

"If someone has a car and wants to try it out during the season then we will be happy to look at it and see how we could accommodate it for one or two events," he said. "If we have space on the grid, we will do our best to see if it can be fitted in without disrupting what we have."

JAMES NEWBOLD

F3 title winner returns

CLASSIC F3

Three-time Classic Formula 3 champion Steve Maxted will return to the series in 2019, 11 years after his last single-seater outing in an F2 Lola-BDG T360.

Maxted, who won CF3 titles in 1991, 2004 and '05 in an Argo-Toyota JM6 (now with Mike Simpson), has acquired the Ralt-Alfa Romeo RT3/84 last raced sparingly by French driver Bruno Houzelot.

"I looked at several cars, but the Ralt was beautifully presented, bang on the weight limit, and with

an Ellegi-rebuilt engine," said Maxted.

"Chassis 441 was raced in the 1984 Italian F3 Championship by Peruvian Neto Jochamowitz with Enzo Coloni's team [seventh at Varano its best finish]. It came with a massive history file until '86, sat in a garage until 2015, then was rebuilt."

Maxted will return the car to Jochamowitz Budget Rent-a-Car livery over the winter.

Having built an FIA Appendix K Mini Cooper S, he will also race the tin-top in select events in 2019.

MARCUS PYE

IN THE HEADLINES

ELECTRIC ROAD-RACERS

Hull will host its first closed-road race when electric cars take to the streets on April 28. The Greenpower Education Trust – founded in 1999 – is behind the event, with aspiring engineers given the chance to build and race their own cars. There will be a primary school race (for ages 9-11), secondary school race (11-16) and one for over-24s.

DONINGTON UPGRADES

Extensive work on the paddock entrance at Donington Park will be completed ahead of the start of the new season. The old concrete wall has been removed and a new pedestrian access has been created to the right of the existing entrance, allowing pedestrians and cars to be kept apart.

KITE FLIES IN PRIZE TEST

Classic VW Cup Class B frontrunner Alex Kite enjoyed a prize test in a latest-spec Volkswagen Racing Cup Team Hard-run Golf last month. Kite, who regularly competes in a Vento VR6, got his taste of more-modern machinery at Brands Hatch. Kite also received sponsorship advice.

MACPHERSON TO FF1600

Scottish teenager Michael Macpherson will make his National Formula Ford 1600 debut this year after joining Kevin Mills Racing. Macpherson, 17, graduated to cars from karting in 2017 when he competed in Scottish FF1600 with Graham Brunton Racing, finishing fifth in the standings. He sat out last season for budget reasons.

MOTUL F2 CAR TO RETURN

A famous ex-Henri Pescarolo Motul M1 Formula 2 car will return to racing this summer after several decades away from the track. Historic racer and preparer Stephen Worrall has just started restoration of chassis 206, which was the car used by Pescarolo to win the European Formula 2 Championship round at Thruxton on Easter Monday 1973 (below). Worrall is aiming to compete at the Silverstone Classic.



2018

THE NEW CATEGORIES RATED...

Last year's new series enjoyed mixed success, with some attracting nearly full grids while others struggled to get into double figures

JACK BENYON, MATT KEW, STEPHEN LICKORISH AND STEFAN MACKLEY



TCR UK

★★★★☆

At this point last year, some in the motorsport world questioned whether TCR UK was going to happen at all, as the initial buzz about the category had died right down and some teams were selling cars rather than buying them. But, to the organisers' credit, a respectable 13 cars did indeed line up on the grid for that inaugural race at Silverstone.

That proved to be one of the high points of the season, however. Rather than gaining drivers as the year progressed, it lost a few. And there were several blunders during the season – some of which were organisational faults, others outside of their control – that didn't help the series' image. The cars being sent out onto the Knockhill circuit with the grid order still not decided, Laser Tools Racing's blistering

criticism of the organisation and just eight cars turning up at Croft were all low points.

But reigning British Touring Car champion Ash Sutton's guest appearance at Oulton Park was a coup – as was an intriguing title battle at the Donington Park finale, despite Dan Lloyd's early season dominance.

Now changes in personnel in the organising team are planned and a refreshed calendar, that includes an attractive Spa tie-up with TCR Europe, has been revealed.

There's no denying that 2019 is a crunch year for TCR UK. It's often cited that TCR Germany had a difficult first campaign (although its smallest field was still 16 cars) but then hit the big time in year two with grids of up to 40 cars. TCR UK needs to make a similar jump this year in order to secure a long-term future.



HERITAGE FORMULA FORD

★★★★☆

With seemingly countless Formula Ford races and events held across the UK, it was always going to be difficult to create a new concept. But James Beckett, mastermind behind the popular Walter Hayes Trophy, has done just that with the Heritage Formula Ford series.

Spotting a gap in the market, Beckett's MotorSport Vision-run series is only open to cars produced before 1993, allowing machines that are no longer capable of challenging newer cars the chance to still shine.

The five-round series started off impressively as 24 cars turned up for the opening round at Donington Park. Numbers dwindled throughout the season, though, with a low of just 10 at Snetterton in August.

Nevertheless, Heritage Formula Ford has been granted championship status for 2019 as well as a provisional six-round calendar, proving its maiden season was a reasonable success.



EQUIPE PRE '63

★★★★☆

There are few more popular series in the country than Equipe GTS – not many can boast of receiving more than 30 cars for two grids. So when it was announced that the organisers were plotting a new sister series – for slightly older Period E cars, with the likes of Lotus Elans and MGBs not allowed – it was expected that this too would be a success.

And it has been. A diverse range of cars have joined the series for its inaugural year, from Austin Healey 3000s to Lotus Elites, and Turner Mk2s to an Aston Martin Project 214 copy. Any brand new category that can achieve up to 27 cars in its first season is clearly doing something right. And it's likely just a matter of time before it fills a grid.



BMW CAR CLUB RACING

★★★★☆

Autosport is often critical of championships flooding the market, saturating racing with too many options and spreading entries too thin. But Neil McDonald believed there was room for a low-cost BMW catch-all series.

Despite scepticism about whether it was really needed, the fact that it attracted grids as big as 31 at its Silverstone meeting proves its worth. Run in conjunction with the 750 Motor Club, it has upgraded to championship status for 2019.

The series is aimed at production-spec vehicles, with each class divided on the basis of power-to-weight ratio to keep competition even. Allowing different tyre manufacturers has enabled it to attract entries from other BMW series, and competition has soared.

It will also get another boost for 2019 when the 750MC's standalone M3 Cup and 330 Challenge divisions will be scrapped, with those cars instead slotting nicely into the BMW Car Club series' structure.

Bravo to the BMW Car Club for backing the idea.



TURBO TIN TOPS

★★★★☆

Billed as the only multi-marque series that caters exclusively for front-wheel-drive turbocharged and supercharged cars, the Turbo Tin Tops is now the Classic Sports Car Club's 10th formula. However, it's needed the Puma Cup and Smart 4Two Cup to bolster its grid size as just three rounds attracted more than 10 dedicated entries in its maiden season.

The series was created with future-proofing in mind, as fewer hot hatchbacks rely on natural aspiration, so you can bet that numbers will grow. The CSCC remains confident that everything is on target after a cautious first year.



MX-5 SUPER SERIES

★★★★☆

Both the Mazda MX-5 Championship and Supercup have proved popular, so the creation of a Super Series – to provide a middle tier – was an interesting idea.

This Mk3 series was formed to cater for drivers unable or unwilling to race in the Supercup, which joined the TCR UK package in 2018, and enabled drivers to continue racing alongside the Mk1 series.

It attracted 17 cars on average, but there could be trouble ahead, as the initial calendar offered by the British Racing and Sports Car Club was not well received, as it featured unpopular tracks.



SCOTTISH HOT HATCH

★★★★☆

There have been a lot of Hot Hatch-based categories launched in recent years, but sadly the Scottish Motor Racing Club's edition did not achieve the same level of success in its first year as some of the others.

The series shared a grid with Fiesta STs, but you wouldn't have known it. Often just one or two non-Fiestas turned up as Hot Hatch struggled to attract competitors. But there were encouraging signs by season's end as a couple of former time trial drivers entered with Renault Clios, and more are expected to follow suit this year.

2019

...AND A PREVIEW OF WHAT'S TO COME

There's an abundance of fresh initiatives due to launch this year, although some sound rather familiar

JACK BENYON, MATT JAMES, MATT KEW, STEPHEN LICKORISH AND STEFAN MACKLEY



116 TROPHY



TYPE R TROPHY



RX-8 TROPHY

NEW 750 MOTOR CLUB SERIES

The 750 Motor Club has one of the best track records of bringing new championships into the market, and it has three new offerings for 2019.

The first is the 116 Trophy for early BMW 1 Series models. Now, this does mean that yet another BMW category has been introduced, but this is the first dedicated endurance series. Starting off with 45-minute races and building up to nearly two hours by the end of the season, it aims to capitalise on the growing trend for budget endurance racing by offering a rear-wheel-drive alternative. That Team BRIT has decided to run its rookies in the 116 Trophy is an early vote of confidence.

Locost is one of the 750MC's most popular categories, and now there will be the perfect



MA7DA

category for drivers to graduate to. Ma7da still features the same Locost car, but with a significantly more powered 1.8-litre Mazda engine.

Also new is the Type R Trophy. The 750MC was the original home for the successful Civic Cup series and this category will offer a place for the EP3 Civic Type R. Six cars took part in a Hot Hatch guest class last year to help build interest.

Early signs suggest that the Classic Sports Car Club's introduction of the road-legal RX-8 Trophy as a class to the New Millennium grid will be a success.

Granted, the Mazda has its flaws as a road car (so prices are astoundingly low for a used example) but let's assume that within the national paddock, the high-revving rotary engine will receive the attention it needs to run smoothly.

With 230bhp sent to the rear wheels, there are the makings for a great race car. Judging by social media activity within CSCC groups, many agree. This is an exciting addition to one-make motorsport.



TOURING CAR TROPHY

Stewart Lines knows about organising a successful championship, and also about being in the cut-and-thrust of competition in the British Touring Car Championship.

The Midlander heads up the VW Racing Cup and has also taken part in two and a half seasons in the BTCC.

"There is still a big jump from the support classes to the BTCC, and there needs to be something else," he says. "The NGTC-spec British Touring Cars have been around for a while now and there are a few older ones

knocking about. I figured it would make a perfect series as a stepping stone to the BTCC."

Lines has devised the Touring Car Trophy for 2019. It will run over five rounds, with a mixture of older and newer BTCC cars, SEAT Leon Supercopa cars and two-litre turbocharged cars. They will all be equalised and the category will be live-streamed.

BTCC squads HMS Racing and Team Dynamics have already signed up for the category, and Lines says he will aim for 15 cars on the grid in the category's maiden season.



ENDUROKA

The EnduroKA series has a lot to live up to this year. It's basically a copy of the Citroën C1 Challenge, which has proved to be one of the most successful series to sprout up in recent seasons. More than 50 cars took part in the series' Rockingham 24 Hour race, and there were overspill races to help satisfy the huge demand.

A similar format for the KA series may see it prosper, but it lacks the 24-hour races that the C1 Challenge can offer. Running costs will likely be similar for the 1300cc machines, so time will tell if organiser MotorSport Vision Trackdays has found a gap in the market.



FERRARI UK CHALLENGE

If the British Racing and Sports Car Club's new Ferrari UK Challenge can attract even half the number of cars as the popular Ferrari Challenge in Europe, it will be doing well.

As it is, questions remain over how many Ferrari 488 Challenge cars will compete in the four-round calendar this season, with two-race meetings taking place at Brands Hatch, Snetterton, Croft and Silverstone.

Dominic Ostrowski, competitions manager at the BRSCC, says: "Ferrari has put a lot of research into it and there seems to be an appetite to do it."

AND THE OTHERS

When Autosport runs this annual feature, there are usually seven or eight new categories about to be launched. Not this year. A whopping 13 new series are planned and more announcements possible at Autosport International next week. So here's a round-up of some of the other classes due to start in 2019.

One of those new series has a familiar name: **Z Cars**. The series for BMW Z3s and Z4s was originally scheduled to launch in 2017 but never got beyond two cars running in MotorSport Vision Racing's Allcomers series. But now it's back with new management and the signs are much more encouraging, with seven cars racing in Allcomers at Brands Hatch in November.

A properly 'new' offering from MSVR is the **Focus Cup**. This features centrally-run turbodiesel Ford Focus Zetecs that will be randomly selected for drivers ahead of each round to ensure complete parity. The arrive-and-drive element is aimed at drivers on a tight budget.

Speaking of budget, after the success of the Citroën C1 Challenge, the Scottish Motor Racing Club wants to get in on the act by offering sprint races for **C1s** at Knockhill. But whether the 10-lap contests will prove anywhere near as popular as the endurance races south of the border remains to be seen.

A series featuring cars with a little more power than the C1 will be the **UK Sports Prototype Cup**. This British Automobile Racing Club category will feature the brand new Revolution prototype that has been created by Radical co-founder Phil Abbott, as well as a class for Radical SR3s. Given the difficulties the LMP3 Cup has had in attracting entries, and the shortlived Britcar Prototype series, it will be interesting to see if this fares better.

Also new from the BARC is **Series Elite**. This is a one-make Jaguar category aimed at older racers. Originally the F-Type GT4 was going to be raced by the over-fifties, but this has since changed to the XE Project 8 saloon and the age limit has been dropped to over-forties.

And finally, for something completely different, take a look at Sonny Howard's new **Wildcat Sprint Car series** for the US-style racers (more details on page 62). Unlike some of 2019's offerings, this is something genuinely unique.



SWITCH BEAUTY THAT'S ON

VIDEOGAME

GEAR.CLUB UNLIMITED 2
RRP £54.99

The arrival of the Nintendo Switch in 2017 was a gamechanger [pun forgiven – ed], bringing portable gaming back but at much more powerful level than seen before. Uptake from developers outside of Nintendo's own franchises has been a slow-burner, which meant there was a wide open goal for a racing game to steal an early march.

Unfortunately, Microids' *Gear.Club Unlimited 2* hit the post twice before blasting the shot over the crossbar after its first attempt with Switch. The biggest criticism is that the game plays like a

low-budget mobile title, to the point that an offering such as EA's *Real Racing* is vastly superior to the Switch game, despite being played on a touchscreen smartphone.

The fact that *Gear.Club* has noticeable performance struggles in handheld mode, and lags to your control input, makes it unplayable on the go. In short, it feels like a poor mobile game on a high-end console.

The chief gripe with the game is a poor handling system, although it could be argued that the Switch's dual-sticks lack the precision of an Xbox One or a PlayStation 4. But regardless, races were spent deciding where was best to side-swipe a wall and lose minimal time, having given up all expectation of braking





The car list could do with more motorsport entries

ONLY SKIN DEEP



Stunning locations aren't matched by wayward handling

properly. Even the art of tapping the brakes and pre-loading the car before applying the full stopping power into a corner was a wasted effort.

It's clearly a problem because even the pre-set driving aids are flummoxed. It's even tried to apply braking in wheel-to-wheel combat, but it ends up being the biggest hindrance to overtaking by continually slamming the brakes on when drafting. You have to turn all aids off if you want to compete in this game.

A racing game lives and dies by its feel, whether its arcade or a simulation-style racer, and *Gear.Club* falls short to the point that it detracts heavily from the positives.

"RACING GAMES LIVE AND DIE BY THEIR FEEL, AND GEAR.CLUB FALLS SHORT"

The most impressive element of the game is the design, with races through European-flavoured towns, mountain ranges and deserts managing to cleverly look as though they are living and breathing despite the Switch's graphical limitations.

The enjoyment in this game will come through range, with a claimed 1800 miles of track and 250 competitive events, given variety by mixing the format between races, sprints and time trials. It's so good it deserves a fully open world, which the game teases with its maps but never lets you experience.

There's a lot to be said for a racing game attempting to incorporate a story of sorts, something Autosport argues should be considered more by developers. But this one hits every cliché possible: earning a shot chance in a racing team, impressing a doubtful boss and competing in a series of races in a linear, dot-to-dot-style progression.

The fact that the story is told through



TOP 50 DRIVERS OF 2018 EXPLAINED

01:06:08

You've read Autosport's Top 50 Drivers of 2018 in our Christmas double issue. As ever, we're grateful that many of you, and plenty of drivers besides, have taken to social media to voice opinions on who made the cut. So we've picked up the microphones in response and have recorded a special edition one-hour podcast to justify our picks and explain a little more about how the process works. Go to <https://www.autosport.com/podcast>

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Dakar Rally

Lima, Peru

January 7-17

comic-book-style images and speech bubbles makes the story of little interest. Fans of *TOCA 2*'s drama, turn away now. Slow loading times make you all the less likely to persevere as well.

Car selection is sizeable, although the motorsport offering is small – a surprise, considering the story is centred on a racing team. Customisation is decent, with a range of performance-based updates and vinyl wraps to make your motor stand out from the crowd – not that there's any multi-player option for others to see your work.

If you're one of the adopters of the Switch and need your racing fix, it would appear 2019's re-release of *Grid* is the next chance for a racing game to make it big on Nintendo's console.

Considering *Gear.Club*'s mobile roots have barely been disguised, asking over 50 quid for the game is daft considering more mobile-esque offerings on the Nintendo eShop are less than half the price.

TOM ERRINGTON

JANUARY

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TOP FIVE

RENAULT



REHOMED RACE ENGINES

*Four doors, four seats
and 194mph*

MATT KEW

THE HYBRID MERCEDES powertrain that's been the class of the Formula 1 field since 2014 will make its way into the ultimate road car, courtesy of the forthcoming AMG Project One. Here, we take a look at five cars (OK, one's a van) that have had a serious heart transplant.



5 BMW E36 V8 JUDD

Don't believe everything you read online, as this internet-famous BMW E36 hillclimb special actually sources its power from a Formula 3000 Judd KV V8 – not a Formula 1 unit. Enlarged to 3.4 litres, what started life as a humble 320i now produces 560bhp, revs to over 10,000rpm, and is owned by Klaus Wohlfarth – the person behind KW suspension. He bought it after the E36's creator Georg Plasa died in 2011 after crashing his BMW 134 special (the successor to this car) at Coppa Carotti. That wild machine used a LMP-derived V8 for good measure.



4 PEUGEOT 306 COSWORTH KF

It's unlikely that Andy Burton's Peugeot 306 was the inspiration for the PSA Group to buy Opel and Vauxhall. But in a sign of the parts sharing to come, the 2.5-litre Cosworth KF V6 engine that powered the 1995/96 Opel Calibra DTM car found its way into his 306 rally machine. The mid-mounted unit weighs just 89kg but produces around 500bhp, which is sent to all four wheels via a six-speed paddleshift gearbox. You won't see the car on any special stages, as it was mothballed at the end of the 2011 season.



3 FORD TRANSIT SUPERVAN 1

Granted, the third iteration of the Ford Supervan received a Cosworth HB 3.5-litre Formula 1 V8, but it's the 1971 model that gets the nod for this list. It was genesis. The brainchild of Terry Drury, underneath sits a chassis from a GT40 and a five-litre V8 that's good for over 430bhp. In a vague effort to keep that power in check, brakes were borrowed from Can-Am machinery and wider arches were needed to accommodate fatter rubber. It could reputedly hit 150mph.



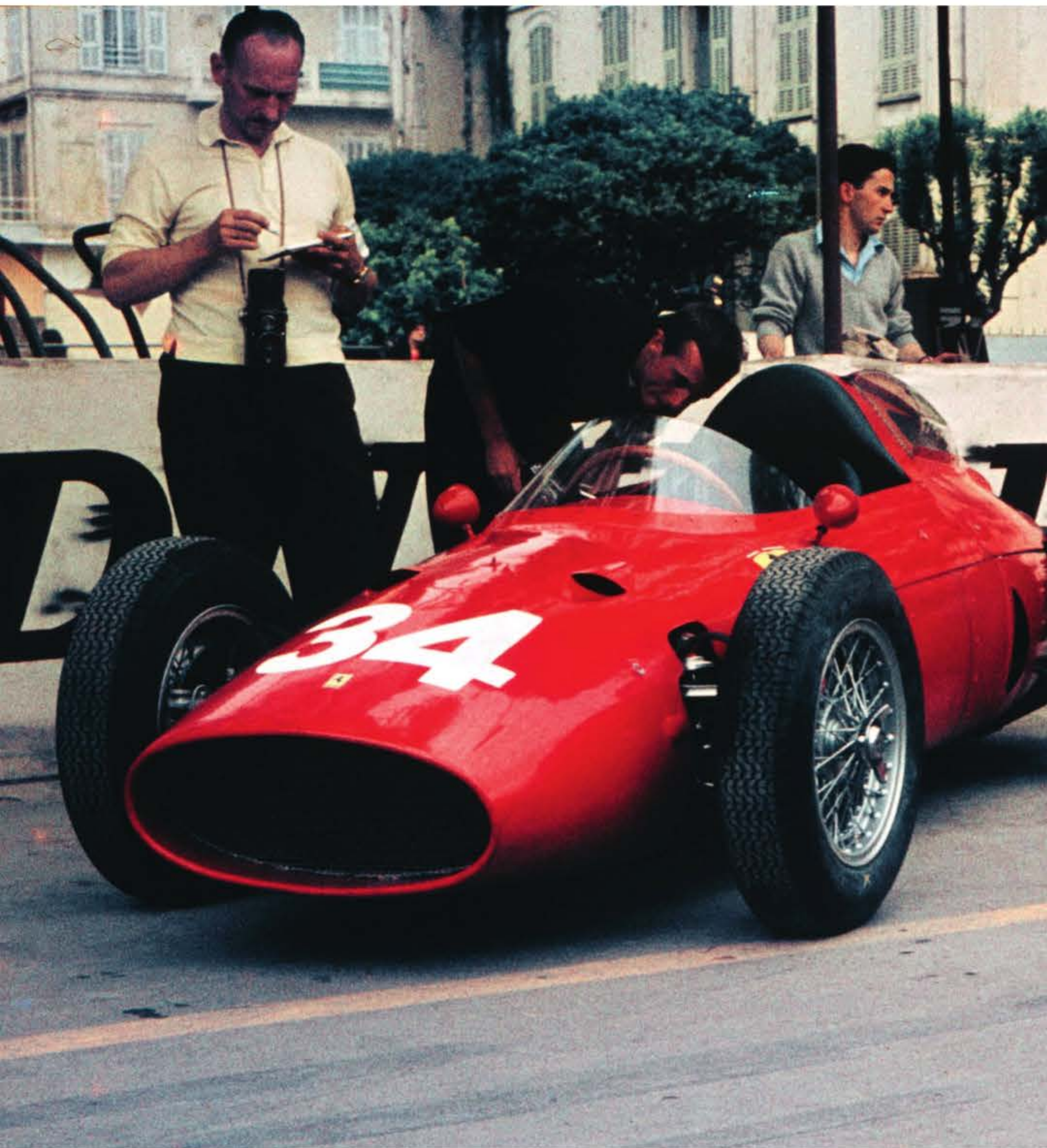
2 ALFA ROMEO 164 PROCAR

To replace the short-lived BMW M1 Procar series, Bernie Ecclestone devised a plan that each F1 engine supplier should drop their powerplant into a saloon. Ingeniously, it was to be called 'Formula S'. Alfa Romeo responded emphatically – a 600bhp V10 and a chassis draped in a carbonfibre and Kevlar body that resembled a 164. A 2.1-second sprint from 0 to 60mph and a top speed of 215mph was the result. Unfortunately, the idea would lose traction when Alfa's fellow manufacturers failed to show similar interest.



1 RENAULT ESPACE F1

Our number one was a zany birthday present. In 1995 Renault decided to gift the Espace people carrier a new heart for its 10th birthday. Overseen by Matra, it received a 3.5-litre V10 as used in the double title-winning 1993 Williams FW15C. A spritely 778bhp dropped the 62mph sprint from a leisurely 13 seconds down to just 2.8s. Flat out, 194mph would be showing on the speedometer. Being based on a humble family wagon meant that the Espace F1 could still accommodate four occupants. Championship-winning pedigree and space for the school run...



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Ferrari hedged its bets at the 1960 Monaco Grand Prix with its car allocation for its North American drivers – #34 was a brand new rear-engined Dino 246P for Richie

Ginther, and #36 a front-engined Dino 246 for Phil Hill (Wolfgang von Trips and Cliff Allison also drove 'conventional' cars). Hill was third, a minute behind the winning Lotus-Climax 18 of Stirling Moss, while

Ginther finished sixth, a whopping 30 laps adrift, pushing his Ferrari across the line. He had retired the car, but then retrieved it from the pits when the race's high rate of attrition offered the chance of a point.



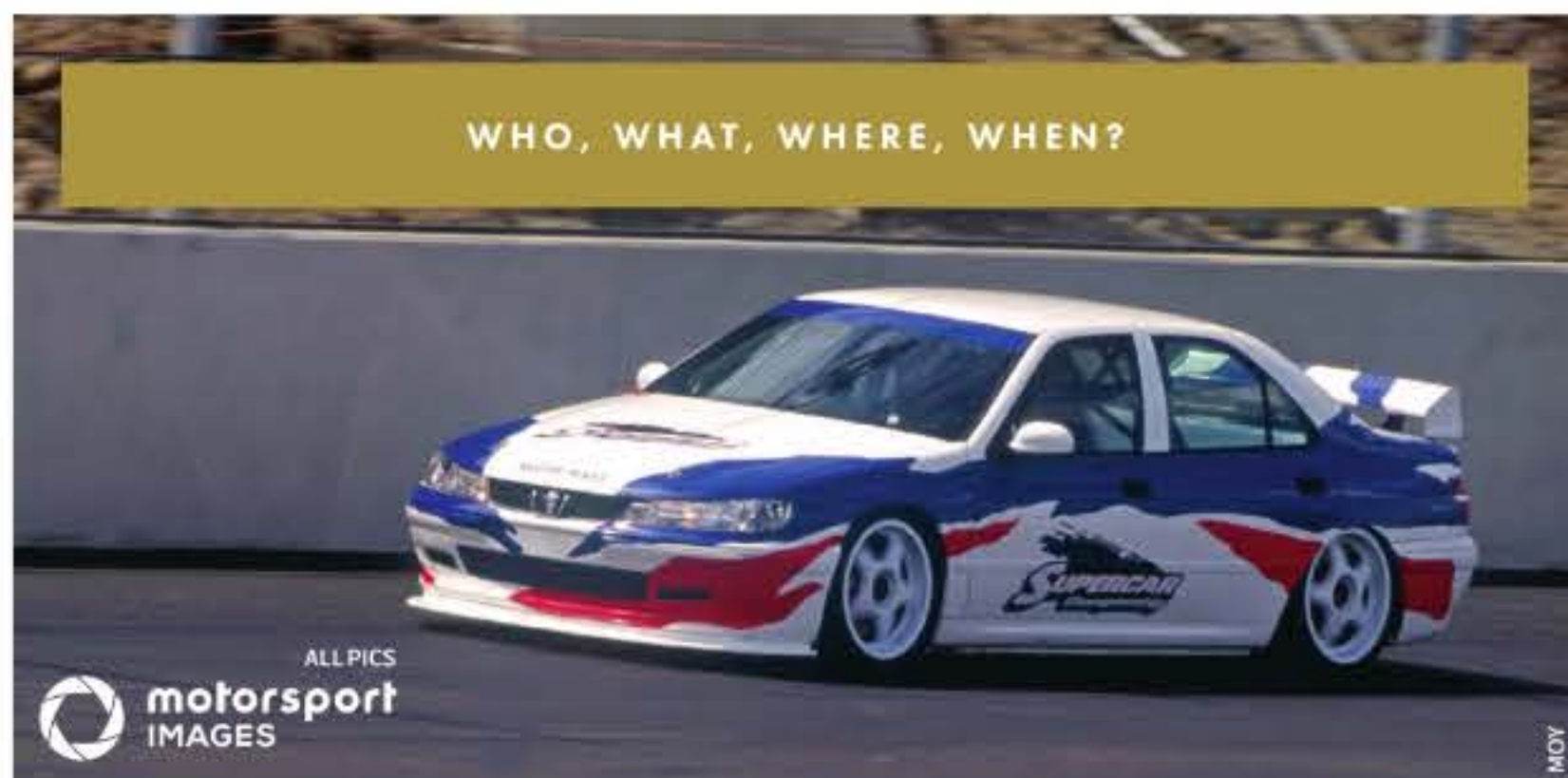
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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

QUIZ

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN?



WHO IS THIS?

What this world-beater lacked in physical stature he made up for behind the wheel.

Having been the man to beat at the grassroots he continued this trend when Henry's formula came calling.

He came out on top of a festival and got his recognition in fabled scrolls. Against a favoured son he came second best, but the wings of change carried him into a testing role.

A minnow gave him the chance to swim with the big fish, although he ultimately ended up on the beach.

The rule of three created a fantastic showcase and the chance to step onto the main stage as an understudy. Life as a supersub continued until it became super in its own right, although Groundhog Day would continue to haunt him.

A switch to longer formats gave him a chance to rule the world and a launchpad for a new career.

ON THIS DAY

1 Willy T Ribbs was born on this day in 1955. With which team did he test an F1 car?

2 Who and in what won the opening round of the Tasman Cup at Levin, which took place on this day in 1970?

3 Which Yorkshireman, born on this day in 1960, was a title contender in the British F3 Championship in the mid-1980s?

4 Stunt driver/racer Joie Chitwood died on this day in 1988. What was his best result in the Indianapolis 500?

5 Which rally driver, born on this day in 1938, became team principal of the Toyota F1 team?

NAME THE HELMET



ANSWERS FOR DECEMBER 20-27 QUIZ

Who what where, when Alexander Rossi, Tatuus-Honda Formula Master, Brno, June 20 2009. **Who is this?** Pete Aron. **On this day** Leyton House, March, Sauber. 2) Lotus. 3) Ricardo Rodriguez. 4) Silverstone. 5) Monza. **Name the helmet** Niki Lauda.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE



2019 KICKS OFF: YOUR GUIDE TO THE AUTOSPORT SHOW

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Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG
Tel +44 (0) 20 3405 8100 **Email** autosport@autosport.com
Individual email firstname.surname@motorsport.com
Website www.autosport.com **Twitter** @autosport

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Photography

Steven Tee
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 Sam Bloxham
 Zack Mauger
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Tel +44 (0) 20 3405 8106 **Email** autosport.ads@motorsport.com
 Sales Director **James Robinson**
 Display Advertising **Jamie Brooker, Karen Reilly, Don Rupal**
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ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

Production Controller **Ben Webster**
Tel +44 (0) 20 3405 8131 **Email** ben.webster@motorsport.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

UK +44 (0) 344 848 8817 **Overseas** +44 (0) 1604 251451
Email help@asm.secureorder.co.uk **Back issues** 0344 8488817
Main office +44 (0) 20 3405 8100

Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG, United Kingdom. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. Subscription records are maintained at Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.



CIRCULATION TRADE ENQUIRIES

Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT.
Tel +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.
 Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, 26 Planetary Road, Wilton, Walsingham, Norfolk, NR25 3LT.
 ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG.

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