

ROEBUCK ON MCLAREN'S NEXT STAR

 **AUTOSPORT**

LEWIS HAMILTON

FORMULA 1'S GREATEST ROOKIE

How he shook the world – 10 years on

“He was a surprise for the sport”

Fernando Alonso



PLUS

OGIER WINS AMID TRAGEDY
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FERRARO/LAT

A year that redefined what a rookie can do

BEFORE 2007, YOU COULD HAVE HAD A HEALTHY debate about the greatest Formula 1 rookie campaign in history. Jackie Stewart in 1965 would have been a candidate, as would Jacques Villeneuve's 1996 season. But 10 years ago, Lewis Hamilton ended the argument.

It's true that Hamilton had a number of factors in his favour – not least an amount of testing no longer possible, as well as already being well versed in the ways of McLaren – but he also had Fernando Alonso as his team-mate. To match one of the best drivers of his generation and come so close to winning the title was truly remarkable.

In our cover piece this week (see page 16), we take a look back at a tempestuous season with some of the key players, including Alonso. He rates Hamilton's efforts highly, perhaps unsurprising given Lewis will be gunning for title number four this year.

Already a four-time world champion is Sebastien Ogier, who underlined his status in rallying by winning first time out in his M-Sport Ford Fiesta at the Monte Carlo Rally last weekend.

Although the result was not surprising, there were plenty of signs to suggest that this will be the most interesting World Rally Championship for years. Sadly, the death of a spectator (see page 6) also brought the sport's dangers into the spotlight at just the wrong moment. The new cars were not blamed, but the challenge of how to make the stages safe remains a tough one.



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COVER IMAGE

Davenport/XPB images; McKlein.de

COVER STORY

16 Hamilton's incredible rookie season

PIT+PADDOCK

- 4** Fifth Column: Nigel Roebuck
- 6** Ecclestone out; Brawn joins F1 top table
- 8** Fans could be putting rallying at risk
- 10** Vinales versus Rossi/McLaren's livery
- 13** In the service park: David Evans
- 15** Feedback: your letters

FEATURES AND REPORTS

- 26** Verstappen's rival: Esteban Ocon
- 30** Monte Carlo Rally: Ogier ends Ford wait
- 38** Montoya wins Race Of Champions
- 42** Daytona preview: a new era begins

RACE CENTRE

- 48** Asian Le Mans Series; Toyota Racing Series; Andros Trophy

CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 61** Ticktum joins Red Bull programme
- 62** Palmer on his Donington deal
- 64** More changes for Formula Ford
- 65** Humble Pye: the voice of club racing
- 66** Club racing's leading rivalry

FINISHING STRAIGHT

- 70** What's on this week
- 72** From the archive: 1981 Welsh Rally
- 74** Have-a-go hero: Andrew Jordan

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NIGEL ROEBUCK

McLaren's next grand prix star

TO McLAREN LAST WEEK, FOR LUNCH with Stoffel Vandoorne, who this year becomes a full-time Formula 1 driver. As I write, the personable Vandoorne has but one grand prix to his name, subbing for Alonso in Bahrain last year, following Fernando's accident in Melbourne: impressively he scored a point, after outqualifying Jenson Button, and may be regarded as a superstar of the coming generation, alongside such as Max Verstappen and Carlos Sainz.

While Olivier Gendebien was one of the greatest sportscar drivers of all time, down the years Belgium has produced curiously few F1 drivers of consequence, with only Jacky Ickx and Thierry Boutsen on the list of grand prix winners. Assuredly Vandoorne will join them.

A member of McLaren's Young Driver Programme since 2013, Stoffel competed in both Formula Renault 2.0 and 3.5 before winning the GP2 championship in 2015. As McLaren's reserve driver, to stay sharp he spent last year in Japan's Super Formula.

"It seemed the best choice available," he explained in his impeccable English. "They're quite nice cars, and I was using a Honda engine, of course, so that helped in building up a relationship with them. There was a lot of jetlag, but I enjoyed Japan, and I loved the tracks – proper 'old school' tracks, without any runoff area."

Ah, the eternal paradox of motor racing. For all we live in an era preoccupied with safety, earnestly discussing 'halos' and the like, this seems never to carry over into the matter of circuits.

"Well, it's the challenge. It's not like going to a new track, where from lap one you do whatever you want because if something happens you just correct and go into a huge runoff. On 'old school' tracks you have to build up to it.

"A place like Sugo, for example, is fantastic – the last corner is 180 degrees, taken at about 240km/h [150mph], with a big bump in the middle, and the only runoff is a metre of grass, and then the wall. At a track like that you really feel satisfied when you do a proper lap, but Formula 1 would never race on most of the Japanese tracks..."

Vandoorne, like most of us, dislikes the 'penalty culture' that has increasingly dominated F1 of late, feeling that drivers should be punished by the circuit, rather than by the stewards.

"The worst thing about the penalties," he said, "is that they're not applied consistently – every weekend is different. At every drivers' meeting the same issue comes up, and by the end of it drivers don't know what they can – and can't – do. It's maybe just better to let us race – we're all grown-up boys, and we



Vandoorne sat in for Alonso last year in Bahrain

TEEN/AT



Vandoorne has learned much from Alonso

don't want to crash into each other: after all, if you break a wing your race is over.

"I think the circuits contribute to it, too. If you make a mistake, it should cost you time, and even a gravel trap, rather than an asphalt runoff, would do that. I prefer the 'old school' tracks because a driver can make more of a difference — and also because if you do something bad, you pay in cash. The tracks are never going to return to how they were because it's all about safety now — in a way, that's good because the last thing we want to see is someone getting badly hurt or dying, but if the risk is not there, it's less challenging."

Opinions vary about what effect the forthcoming technical changes will bring to F1, but one cause for optimism is that the powers-that-be have changed their stance on tyres, requesting now that Pirelli build sensible tyres, after the high-degradation nonsense of the past few years.

In Japan Vandoorne and his rivals used rubber provided by Yokohama, and he said it took a little getting used to. "It was certainly different — in the sense that it was normal!"

You mean it... didn't fall apart after five laps? "Exactly! The Yokohamas were peaky for qualifying, so you had one-lap performance, and then in the race at, say, Suzuka, we could

"I'd love to think that one day a car of mine will be in the McLaren boulevard, next to Senna and Prost"

do 40 laps on the same set of tyres, pushing flat out, with lap times within two tenths..."

Testing, as we know, is as good as banned these days, putting ever more emphasis on extraordinarily sophisticated — and expensive — simulators. How much time did Stoffel spend in the McLaren 'sim' in 2016?

"Not a huge amount — but enough to get bored with it! Of course in my case it was useful from the point of view of learning the tracks, and working with the team, going through set-up changes, but sometimes driving laps, laps, laps at somewhere you know by heart, like Barcelona, can be too much of a good thing. Well, it is for me, anyway! On days like that you have to tell yourself, 'I need to do this because it's valuable to the team.'"

Vandoorne says his relationship with Alonso has been excellent over the past two years. "Of course it's easier to have that when you're not directly competing against each other, but it

was good for me to see how Fernando was managing the team, how he prepared for a race weekend: he's the most complete driver in F1, he performs in any conditions, and every time he goes out he's right there, so I'm glad to have him next to me — if I fare well, it will obviously be good for my career.

"You know," Stoffel said, "for me the coolest moment was walking into this building for the first time, and seeing all the McLarens from the past. I'd love to think that one day a car of mine will be there in the boulevard, next to Senna, Prost and all the others..."

That looks to be guaranteed. Over time McLaren has often turned to Rob Wilson, the celebrated racer-turned-instructor, to coach its young drivers, including the likes of Kimi Raikkonen and Lewis Hamilton. "Stoffel," says Wilson, "has the best car control I've ever seen — in fact, he reminds me of Jochen Rindt..." Quite a statement. ✎

PIT+PADDOCK

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1

CHASE CAREY
Formula 1 CEO
and chairman

2

SEAN BRATCHES
Managing director,
commercial operations

3

ROSS BRAUN
Managing director,
motorsports

2

1

GRIFETHS

New brooms:
top trio takes
over Formula 1



FORMULA 1

Ecclestone ousted, Brawn returns in major F1 shake-up

BERNIE ECCLESTONE HAS BEEN OUSTED from his role as chief executive of Formula 1 as part of a major restructure by new owner Liberty Media that includes Chase Carey replacing the 86-year-old and Ross Brawn returning to grand prix racing in a senior position.

The reshuffle brings an end to a 40-year reign in F1 for Ecclestone, who has been handed an honorary role as chairman emeritus. Liberty said Ecclestone “will be available as a source of advice for the board of F1”, while Carey will add the role of CEO to his existing duties as F1 chairman.

In a statement released by Liberty, Ecclestone said: “I’m proud of the business that I built over the last 40 years and all that I have achieved with Formula 1. I would like to thank all of the promoters, teams, sponsors and television companies that I have worked with.

“I’m very pleased that the business has been acquired by Liberty and that it intends to invest in the future of F1. I am sure Chase will execute his role in a way that will benefit the sport.”

Carey added: “I would like to recognise and thank Bernie for his leadership over the decades.

“The sport is what it is today because of him and the talented team of executives he has led, and he will always be part of the F1 family.

“Bernie’s role as chairman emeritus befits his tremendous contribution to the sport and I am grateful for his continued insight and guidance as we build F1 for long-term success and the enjoyment of all those involved.”

As part of the announcement, Liberty also confirmed that its acquisition of F1 had been completed.

One of its first moves has been to bring former Mercedes team principal Brawn into the fold as managing director, motorsports.

The 62-year-old won 19 world titles across stints with Williams, Benetton, Ferrari and his own Brawn GP squad, and left F1 at the end of the 2013 season after four years with Mercedes.

Brawn, who has been consulting with Liberty in recent months, said: “It’s fantastic to be returning to the world of Formula 1. “We have an almost unprecedented opportunity to work together with the teams and promoters for a better F1 for them and, most importantly, for the fans.”

Carey said: “I am delighted to welcome Ross back to Formula 1. In his 40 years in the sport, he’s brought his magic touch to every team with which he has worked, has almost unparalleled technical knowledge, experience

and relationships, and I have already benefited greatly from his advice and expertise.”

Brawn will be joined by former ESPN executive vice-president of sales and marketing Sean Bratches, who takes on the role of managing director, commercial operations.

“I am thrilled Sean is joining Formula 1,” Carey said. “Sean was a driving force in building ESPN into one of the world’s leading sports franchises. His expertise and experience in sales, marketing, digital media and distribution will be invaluable as we grow Formula 1.

“I look forward to working with Ross and Sean, as well as key current executives including Duncan Llowarch our CFO and Sacha Woodward Hill our general counsel, the FIA, Bernie and Liberty as we work together to make Formula 1 the best it can be for the teams, promoters and fans for years to come.”

F1 will be more fan-friendly and run more freely following Ecclestone’s departure and under the new regime, according to McLaren executive director Zak Brown.

“Bernie will be a very hard act to follow,” he said. “But he’s created a fantastic springboard

from which Chase Carey and his Liberty Media colleagues will be able to take Formula 1 forward and make it even bigger and even better.

“And we at McLaren will be eager to help them – indeed we already enjoy great relationships with

the Liberty Media principals and we’re looking forward to working very closely with them.

“How will ‘bigger and better’ manifest itself? I think the clue is in the words ‘liberty’ and ‘media’. Over the next decade I expect the way Formula 1 is run will become both freer and more fan-friendly, and as such we can expect to see new generations of F1 devotees recruited and delighted via the proactive embracing of digital and social media, gaming, etc.

“Fan engagement is where it’s at these days, and it’s clear the Liberty Media guys get that.”

Brown praised the job done by Ecclestone in transforming F1 into a global sport.

“Formula 1 wouldn’t be the international sporting powerhouse that it is today without the truly enormous contribution made over the past half-century by Bernie Ecclestone,” he added.

“Indeed, I can’t think of a single other person who has had anything like as much influence on building a global sport as he has. Today is a day on which we should all pay tribute to a remarkable visionary entrepreneur called Bernie Ecclestone, and to say thank you to him too.”

LAWRENCE BARRETTO AND SCOTT MITCHELL

“The way F1 is run will be both freer and more fan-friendly”

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

New cars not to blame for fatality

FIA OFFICIALS HAVE INSISTED LAST WEEK'S Monte Carlo Rally accident, in which a spectator was killed, had nothing to do with the new generation World Rally Cars being too fast.

A 50-year-old Spanish man died from his injuries after he was hit by Hayden Paddon's Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC on last Thursday's first stage of the season-opening event.

The accident happened on an icy left-hand corner close to the end of the test. Paddon lost control of the car, which slid sideways, and its right-rear corner hit the fan. The spectator was flown to hospital in Nice, where he later died.

Almost immediately, speculation began that the crash had happened because of the increased speed of the 2017-spec World Rally Cars. FIA rally director Jarmo Mahonen was quick to counter those rumours.

Mahonen told Autosport: "I say to you what I have said to everybody who works with the FIA, 'Calm down, we have to look at the investigation first and then we look what can be done'."

"This is the launch of the new generation car and, of course, they are a little bit faster. We are going to get people who are not inside the sport who will start to complain about the speed. This is nothing to do with the new regulations. It would have happened the same with the [slower] Group N car."

FIA president Jean Todt said he wanted to see an ever-greater effort in educating rally fans about the need to be vigilant over where they choose to spectate.

Todt said: "It's very sad. It should have been

avoidable. In life you must have discipline and if you don't have discipline you must have respect. Motorsport is dangerous if everybody is not working in the same direction. I am very sorry for the family of the victim and I am sorry for the family of rallying.

"I hope this makes people more aware about safety if they are coming to see this great show. People must be educated and follow instructions. The consequences can be horrible and people need to learn."

Due to the ongoing nature of its investigation, event organiser the Automobile Club de Monaco declined to comment beyond the statement it

issued just hours after the accident. It said: "The Automobile Club de Monaco regrets to advise further details following incident of the car #4 in SS1. The spectator was transported by helicopter from the stage to hospital in Nice. Despite the best efforts of the medical

staff, the spectator has sadly died.

"An investigation has commenced into the incident and all involved parties will provide assistance to the authorities. Everyone associated with the event extends their deepest sympathies and condolences to the families, friends and individuals affected."

Mahonen praised the efforts of the ACM, pointing out that the club had worked harder than ever to produce a safe rally for fans.

He added: "I have to thank them, the work they have done has never been done so well."

Hyundai withdrew Paddon's car from the event out of respect for the victim.

Paddon made a statement following the accident and called for media and fans to allow the investigation to run its course.

"Firstly our thoughts are with the family and friends of the spectator involved," he said. "No matter the circumstances, this is never something we want to see.

"I do want to take this chance to ask people not to speculate. Irrespective of how and why the accident happened, finger-pointing will not change anything. The most important thing is that we learn from this, and I am committed to working with the FIA and rally organisers relentlessly to ensure this does not happen again.

"I will take this chance to ask spectators at rallies to please be considerate of where you stand and to respect the instructions of the marshals. We all want to enjoy a good show and go home to our family afterwards.

"I also ask each and every rally fan at the events, if you see someone in a dangerous position to request they move for everyone's best interest.

"As a community, we can work together to prevent this from happening again."

While precise details of the accident are still under investigation, one witness told Autosport: "The place where the spectator was standing was not signed as a no-go area.

"Just before this corner, there were more people standing in what looks to be a dangerous area. Behind the barrier, I was in absolutely the safe place, but some of the [course] cars came before the first competitors and they told us to move from where we were standing and go on the outside of the corner."

DAVID EVANS

"It should have been avoidable. People need to learn" Jean Todt



Concerns over spectator safety have been raised again



S. BLOXHAM/LAT

New Merc junior Russell has joined ART for a GP3 title assault

FORMULA1

Why Mercedes is so keen on Brit Russell

GEORGE RUSSELL'S DEAL TO JOIN Mercedes F1 as a development driver, with a GP3 Series attack with ART Grand Prix, means that the most-complete young British talent in racing today has a dream chance to join the sport's elite in the next couple of years.

Russell, who will be 19 next month, has only the 2014 BRDC Formula 4 Championship as a title success on his car-racing CV, but at the junior levels of the sport it's the impression you make that's as important as the results. That is what has attracted Mercedes.

One man key to this is Gwenael Lagrue, who formerly was involved with the Gravity management scheme and since early last year has looked after the Mercedes F1 development drivers. The Frenchman discovered Esteban Ocon as a schoolboy karter and brought him under Gravity's wing, then smoothed his way to Merc.

Russell earned the admiration of Lagrue in his rookie Formula 3 season with Carlin in 2015, when he competed against Gravity twins Alexander Albon and Dorian Boccia in the company's final season of operation. Discussions with Lagrue – Mercedes' eyes and ears at the sport's junior levels – were ongoing in 2016 and Russell's final approval from Merc's top brass was in the bag before the end-of-season Macau Grand Prix. He is believed to have already worked on the team's simulator by that time.

Russell missed the Far East classic in 2015 due to a difference of opinion with Carlin, so started as an event rookie in '16 with Hitech GP, in its first full year of racing and with which Russell was third in the F3 European Championship after an up-and-down season.

It was in Macau where he really opened eyes with a stunning pole lap, including the fastest-ever time of the current-generation cars – by half a second – in the ultra-long mountain sector, as light drizzle fell. "I'd probably say it's the best moment of my whole career," he says, "with only winning the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award [in 2014] on a par. I put a lot of effort into that race. I had this argument all year with John McGill [Hitech technical director] where I said I'd rather have the recognition of pole than qualify 20th and win because everyone else crashed.

"In F3 I had some good races and some tough races, and each season didn't go as I'd hoped from the start. But I felt Macau made up for a lot of things and showed I'm capable. It was unbelievable."

The GP itself went awry, Russell and team-mate Dani Ventadella labouring to seventh and eighth with a mysterious lack of straightline speed. Even so, Russell believes he could have been in contention had his event not started to unravel with a stunning opportunist slipstream pass by his friend Callum Iloft at the start of the qualification race. Russell, after a terrific start, dropped to fourth and into the pack due to his loss of momentum when he had to check up.

Not that it has slowed his career momentum. Alongside him at ART will be Honda's second-year GP3 driver Nirei Fukuzumi, while end-of-2016 GP3 form man Jack Aitken (a Renault F1 protege) and Russell's fellow F3 race winner Anthoine Hubert are also understood to be under lock and key at the team – they're just not confirmed yet.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Q&A

GEORGE RUSSELL MERCEDES F1 JUNIOR & GP3 HOPEFUL



The 18-year-old Formula 3 graduate is eyeing the GP3 title this season after joining Mercedes' junior programme and inking an ART deal

When was your first contact with Mercedes?

December 2015, after I joined Hitech for my second year in F3. It followed on from my DTM test with BMW, and the first question I got asked was have I got a contract with BMW or not? It was a risk to go with Mercedes as a works-supported driver; that wouldn't have been possible if I'd signed with BMW.

Gwenael Lagrue, the ex-Gravity management man who looks after the Mercedes F1 development drivers, is a fan of yours.

How important was he for your new deal?

I got to know him in 2015 when he was looking after Alex Albon in F3. He's been a big influence on all that's happened, he's had a lot of faith in me and pushed for me. He doesn't have the final say, I hope it would have happened even without him!

Can you emulate Ocon and Leclerc in GP3?

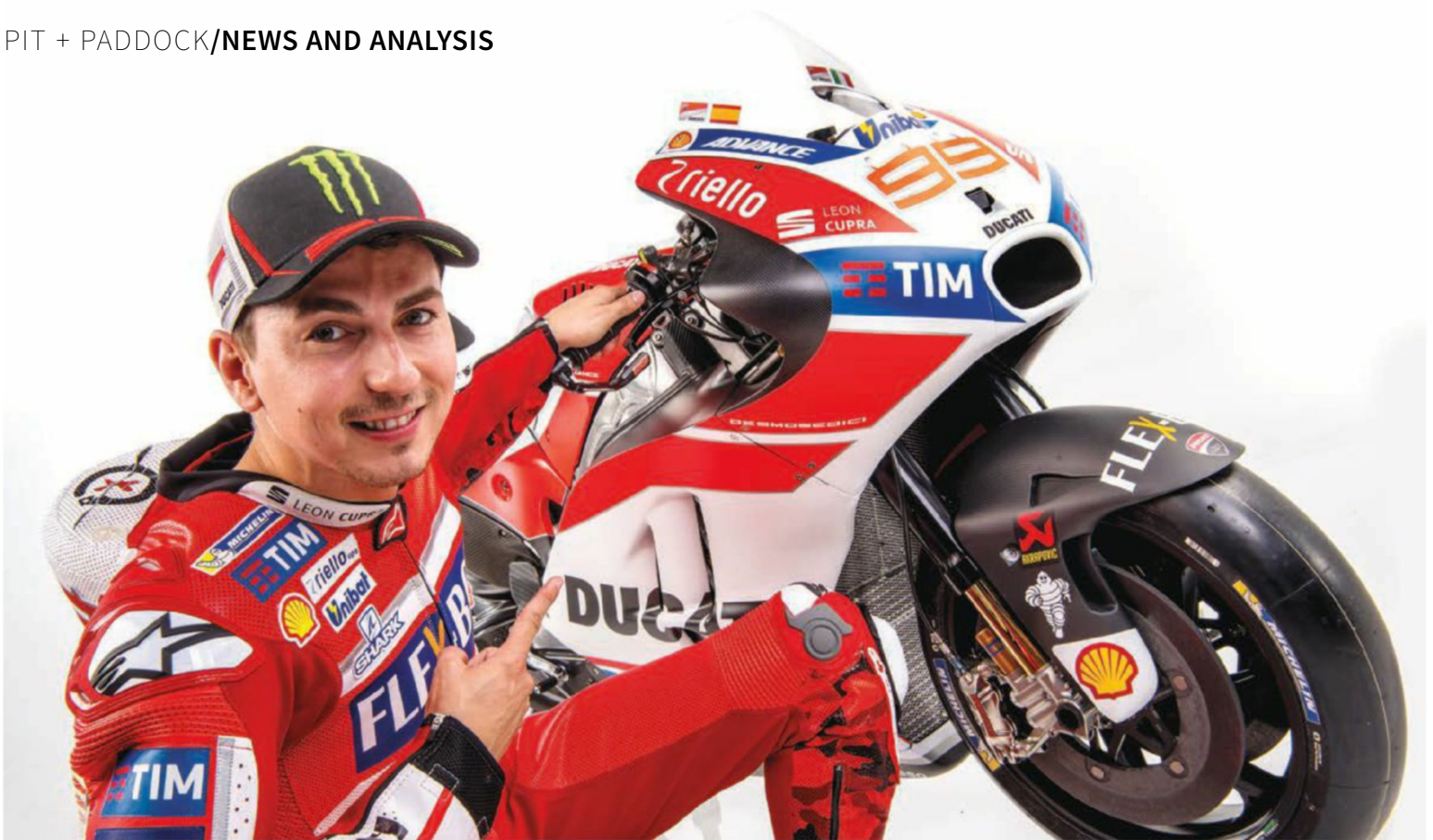
That's my only option. It's going to be tough but Esteban did it, Charles did it. I'm in the best team. The toughest thing will be the tyres – you only get one or two laps in qualifying; it's nine or 10 in F3.

What are you doing with Mercedes F1?

A lot of sim work, developing the 2017 car. I've spent quite a few days down there already this year, putting in the effort while we can. As for testing there's nothing yet. Obviously Esteban and Pascal [Wehrlein] won't be eligible for the rookie days so you could say I'm in prime position, but it's not on my agenda. If any F1 tests come it'll be a bonus.



XPBIMAGES



MOTOGP Ducati has revealed the colours that three-time MotoGP champion Jorge Lorenzo will carry in his first season with the team. Lorenzo left Yamaha at the end of last year to join Ducati, essentially tasked with becoming just the second rider to win the title with the Italian manufacturer, and the first since Casey Stoner in 2007. While Ducati showed off Lorenzo's and Andrea Dovizioso's livery at its Bologna base, don't expect to see its definitive Desmosedici – specifically the front fairing – until the Qatar season opener on March 20, as a result of this year's ban on winglets. Pre-season testing starts at Sepang on January 30. **Photograph by Ducati**

MOTOGP

Vinales is Rossi's problem-in-waiting

IT WAS ALL SMILES EARLIER THIS month as Valentino Rossi joined Yamaha's MotoGP team in wishing new recruit Maverick Vinales a happy 22nd birthday. But it's difficult to see the smiles hanging around too long in 2017's big intra-team battle.

Vinales arrives to replace Jorge Lorenzo, but things don't get any easier for Rossi. In two seasons with Suzuki, Vinales starred – especially in 2016, when he won the British Grand Prix and finished fourth in the championship.

Rossi won't want anything to block the path to winning that elusive 10th title across the three classes. The last thing he would want is the quickest young rider – other than Marc Marquez – in MotoGP rocking up and looking for his own first championship.

As you would expect, both Rossi and Vinales sang from the same hymn sheet last week at Yamaha's launch, talking about their strong relationship.

Vinales finished his stint at Suzuki on

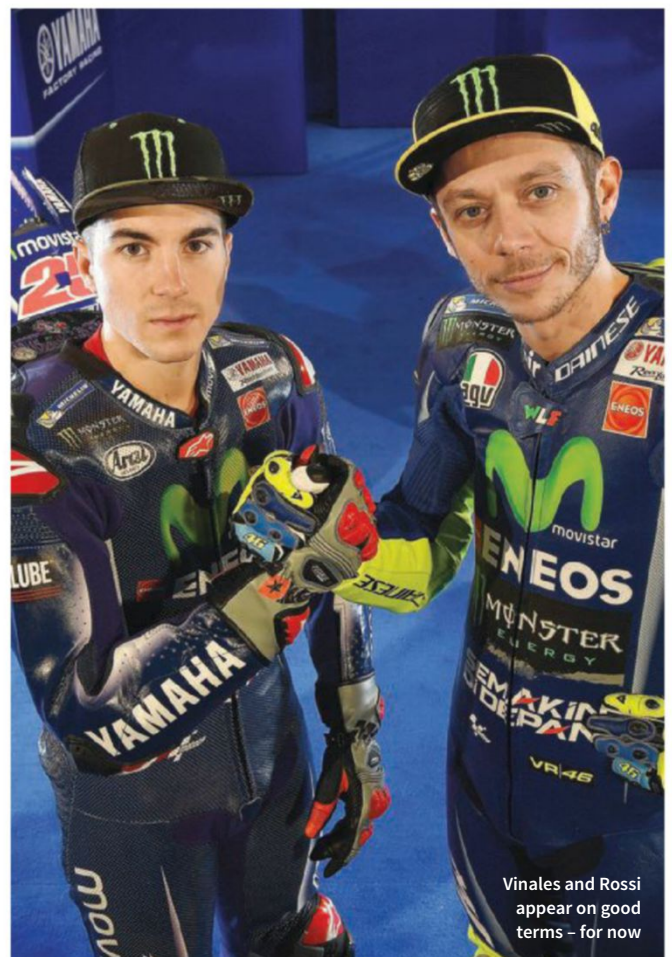
excellent terms with team-mate Aleix Espargaro. That, though, is easy to maintain if you're not rubbing elbows for victories or trading points in a championship fight.

That was the case at Suzuki last year. After Espargaro led the way in 2015, Vinales repaid the favour, outqualifying Espargaro 13-5 over the season. The Rossi-vs-Vinales qualifying record isn't far dissimilar: 15-3 in favour of the Italian veteran, meaning that there was no real competition between them and their relationship was harmonious.

That now changes, and Vinales is well equipped to make those numbers look very different. Rossi would have preferred a new team-mate who's unlikely to command so much attention, and Vinales's test-topping pace on his first two days with Yamaha will have reinforced his view.

Whether they are both smiling at the end of the year remains to be seen.

MITCHELL ADAM



Vinales and Rossi appear on good terms – for now



DUNBAR/LAT

FORMULA 1

McLaren's 2017 livery set for colour change

McLAREN IS SET FOR A MAJOR LIVERY revamp this year, amid mounting suggestions that its new Formula 1 car will incorporate the team's iconic orange branding.

The team is embarking on a new era following the departure of long-time chairman Ron Dennis at the end of last year, with executive director Zak Brown eager to revitalise the Woking-based squad.

Brown has been clear that McLaren will do things differently, and that will include a new look for the MP4-32. Sources suggest that the changes for 2017 could hark back to the famous orange livery that the team ran in

Can-Am and F1 from 1968-71, and in pre-season testing in 2006 (above). It's not known whether the entire car will be orange, or if the colour will only appear on sections.

Brown said earlier this month that the team's 2017 livery had been confirmed, and he dropped a big hint about visual changes.

"We've shown it to the guys and girls at McLaren and we're very excited for our future," he said. "We've just signed off on the car livery and I think the fans will be excited to find out what the car looks like."

McLaren will reveal its car on February 24.

LAWRENCE BARRETTO



REDBULL

RALLYCROSS

Button tests RX Civic

JENSON BUTTON ADMITTED HIS HONDA rallycross test earlier this month showed that he had "no idea" about loose-surface driving.

The 2009 F1 world champion has long cited rallycross – the discipline in which his father John competed – as a career ambition.

Button said last year that the US's Global Rallycross Championship and Super GT's Suzuka 1000km were his most likely race possibilities for 2017 now that he has stepped down from his McLaren F1 race seat.

But he conceded that his first serious

test in a rallycross car, OlsbergMSE's Honda Civic GRC, had been an eye-opener.

"There is so much I've got to learn," he said after the run in Florida. "The stuff that's on the concrete I can deal with, but as soon as you get onto that dirty stuff – I've no idea!"

OMSE owner Andreas Eriksson was more complimentary: "Jenson is enjoying himself. He wanted to see what he can do and how fast he can be and so on, and that's what we're trying to help him answer."

LAWRENCE BARRETTO

IN THE HEADLINES

WORKS AUDI RX BACKING FOR EKSTROM

Reigning World Rallycross champion Mattias Ekstrom has secured factory Audi Sport backing for his title defence. Ekstrom and his own EKS team won last year's World RX title using privately run Audi machinery.

TEAMS FAIL TO AGREE ON PRIVATE VWs

Volkswagen's future in the World Rally Championship remains in the balance after manufacturers and the FIA failed to reach a conclusion on late homologation of the new Polo in a meeting last week. There is potential for a private partner to finance the running of the car, but not before more details of a possible programme are outlined.

GOFF MOVES FROM BMW TO HONDA

Jack Goff will switch from WSR BMW to a Eurotech Racing Honda Civic Type-R in the 2017 British Touring Car Championship. He will line up alongside team owner Jeff Smith in one of the team's BTCC TOCA Swindon-powered two-litre turbocharged cars. It will be Goff's fifth season in the BTCC – he finished 11th in 2016.

CARLIN TO MISS OUT ON INDYCAR MOVE...

Carlin's participation in IndyCar this season looks increasingly unlikely, with team boss Trevor Carlin admitting that talk of a partnership with KVSH Racing had stalled after failing to land driver Mikhail Aleshin.

...SO KVSH RELIES ON MALDONADO

KVSH's last chance to remain on the IndyCar grid appears to lie with Formula 1 race winner Pastor Maldonado. The Venezuelan is pursuing a road-and-street-course programme with the squad, but is not keen on ovals.

EVERY F1 TRACK TO BE UPDATED

All circuits on the 2017 Formula 1 calendar will have to make changes to accommodate this year's faster cars, according to the FIA. Revised aerodynamics and bigger tyres are expected to reduce lap times and increase cornering speeds.

FORMULA E SET FOR TEMPELHOF RETURN

Formula E's Berlin round is likely to return to the Berlin Tempelhof Airport this season. The electric single-seater series is in discussions to use the famous terminal for its German round after the local Green Party objected to the continued use of the city-street circuit.

LYNN LANDS DS VIRGIN ROLE

GP2 race winner Alex Lynn has secured a reserve and development-driver role with the DS Virgin Racing Formula E team. Lynn (below) said he would "be doing a fair amount in the car" regardless of whether he needs to replace Sam Bird or Jose Maria Lopez due to calendar clashes, and said a race drive for the 2017-18 season was his target.



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The WRC lottery

This year's opening rally in Monte Carlo threw up both surprises and disappointments, none of which were really predicted

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

[@daviddevansrally](#)

M-SPORT'S COMMAND CENTRE FLITS BETWEEN intensity, hyperactivity, urgent phone calls and silent prayer.

Harbourside, Monaco, Sunday lunchtime. The door to the big white truck's shut. Nobody's coming in. Right now, the inner sanctum's closed. Secrets and messages are happening.

The atmosphere swings constantly between hope and fear. M-Sport boss Malcolm Wilson's perched on the desk, staring at a green blob on a tracking screen. That green blob represents millions of pounds to M-Sport. If the blob didn't blow the budget, the pair driving it south towards Peira Cava certainly did.

Sebastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassia inch ever-closer towards a first Ford World Rally win since 2012, and a first WRC M-Sport Monte success in 11 years. Every metre heightens the tension, raises the stakes.

As if that's not enough, the sister blob of Ott Tanak's #2 Ford Fiesta WRC keeps stopping. Cue another phone call.

You know the part in Apollo 13 when the technicians have to "...find a way of making *this* fit into the hole for *this*, using nothing but *that*..."? There's been more than a hint of that, ever since the Estonian's call informing,

"Monaco, we have a problem." Glorious success and agonising failure remain firmly in reach of the boys.

Ogier crosses the line to cheering and back slaps. But for head of rally engineering Chris Williams the joy is short-lived. "Let's get the other one back now," he says.

As Tanak trundles out of the tunnel, the job is complete, the dream real. Pre-season testing had shown the Fiesta's real pace, but when Ogier stepped aboard the package was transformed. The Frenchman's issues in the Alps were limited to set-up stresses. Tanak's car developed a gearbox fault forcing a precautionary lunchtime change on Friday, and his cylinder-silencing engine fault was traced to an ignition coil on Sunday.

Granted, Tanak's trouble turned second to third but, after the morning he'd had, he wasn't going to quibble over where he stood on the podium.

Elfyn Evans brought more good news with a breathtaking run to fastest time on three of Saturday's five stages. Crucially, he was fastest on SS13, the driest and most representative stage.

The Fiesta was always in the mix, as was Hyundai's i20 Coupe WRC. The extremes were returning WRC heavyweights: Citroen and Toyota.

Ahead of the start, Citroen was tipped for the top. The Versailles team had the complete package, with dedicated WRC backing free from the distractions of touring cars (even if the budget was reckoned to have been trimmed late last year);

a season to get the car right and a decade of world-leading experience to call on.

Toyota? Let's be honest, it had unwittingly become the joker in the pack. The political shenanigans that led to the programme being run from the back of beyond in Finland and not from Toyota Motorsport's Cologne facility were typical of some apparently nonsensical decision making.

It was no surprise to find the Puuppola team still building its hospitality area as people were walking through the doors last Wednesday. It was more of a surprise to find the gearbox on Jari-Matti Latvala's Yaris WRC was still being bolted together just minutes before shakedown started.

Pre-season, we couldn't have called this more wrong. Tommi Makinen's Toyota was pacey and reliable. The Citroen? Awful.

Watching the cars across a road surface littered with grip changes and endless bumps, dips and cuts offers a graphic display of who's where.

Thierry Neuville looked utterly self-assured and was clearly the most comfortable and quickest throughout the week. The

Belgian should – and would – have bagged his first Monte win had it not been for a right-rear-wrecking meeting of Michelin and bridge parapet in SS13. Remember, the one everybody saw as the first true test of pace...

Forget Dani Sordo's troubled start – the Spaniard comes alive in consistent conditions. The Hyundai's absolutely on

the money. As is M-Sport. Stageside, the Yaris didn't look as planted as the other two, but there's more to come. Much more.

The C3 WRC was the biggest surprise and biggest disappointment. Kris Meeke and Stephane Lefebvre were the only two leading drivers coming down a cog on what was, for the rest of the boys, a flat-out Friday morning dash before us.

Rival teams have an ability to crystallise opinion when it comes to fault-finding for the opposition. Having just watched Meeke and Lefebvre fighting to stay in a straight line, it was hard to argue with the assessment that "it looks like Citroen's wheeled out its touring car". Instead of being the car the world feared, the C3 looked stiff, awkward, unresponsive and too low.

Understandably, Meeke didn't take such criticism well. But laid against the backdrop of a sound thrashing from Citroen's own six-year-old DS 3 WRC (not wishing to take anything away from an inspired and brilliant drive from Craig Breen), it was hard to argue.

Meeke came back to the Monte defence: last week was a lottery. But week in week out, somebody wins the lottery and, last week, Ogier and M-Sport won big. 🍀

“The C3 looked stiff, awkward and just too low”

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FEEDBACK

Don't punish drivers for mechanical faults



Is it fairer to let Formula 1 drivers wipe mechanical failures from the scoresheet?

Now that 2017 has begun, may I make the following suggestion? Although Nico Rosberg is the '16 F1 champion, I don't think anyone would disagree that Lewis Hamilton is the best 'racing' driver of the two of them, and without the mechanical failures would certainly have been champion.

Although it is quite right that the constructors' title should include reliability as a criterion, it is grossly unfair that the drivers' title should also be decided by this.

A sensible and fair solution would be, as it was in the past, that the drivers' worst two (if my memory serves me correctly) results would not count towards the title. However, with the number of grands prix nowadays, this should be the worst three races, where the driver didn't finish as a result of mechanical breakdown or crashes directly attributable to another driver.

Anthony Fenwick-Wilson
Claverley, Shropshire

Careful what you wish for

I found Derek Warwick's wishes that the Circuit of Wales "doesn't happen" very sad. It is not just the racing circuit involved. This development would

bring many sources of employment to a deprived area.

Mr Warwick should be careful what he wishes for, because if they come true I wonder if Jonathan Palmer's new acquisition, Donington Park, may look for the return of the MotoGP there – in fact it may be better if he takes on the role of looking after Silverstone as well. In fact the British F1 GP may be more secure in his hands!

Nicky Reason
Byemail

Roebuck calls it correctly

I am sure Nigel Roebuck's analysis of the rule changes for 2017 is correct (January 19) – more downforce, shorter braking distances and higher cornering speeds will, if anything, lead to less overtaking and less close racing.

Trackside spectators will not appreciate the higher cornering speeds, as they will be moved even further away from the track on the grounds of safety.

Dan Gurney is right – more power and less downforce would make the cars more difficult to control and then we would be able to see the skills of the drivers more clearly.

Aerodynamics may have increased

speeds, but they have taken away the spectacle from F1. Today's racing looks like overgrown Scalextric.

Steve Tan
Runcorn

Fifth Column is first choice

So pleased Nigel Roebuck is back. A superb writer with a wonderful turn of phrase ("Lewis – who always thoughtfully...!"). His Fifth Column always used to be my first port of call and has just become that once more.

Anita Morrish
Byemail

'Sane' solution keeps a reader

Sanity has been restored in the Autosport running order and just in the nick of time – since Clay Regazzoni negotiating the Karussell was on the August 5 1971 cover I've been an unbroken reader, but last year's layout was driving me towards a clean break!

Only one week after Nigel Roebuck was poached, he's been reinstated between the editorial and Pit+Paddock, followed by letters and then the meat, culminating in an invariably evocative archive shot. Bliss!

Now all we need is for Valtteri Kikkas to spice up 2017!

Andrew Hunt
Byemail

Is the boot on the other foot?

Regarding your January 19 editorial (Big chance for Bottas at Mercedes in 2017), I really hope there'll be a repeat of Alonso versus Hamilton. Only now it'll be Lewis in Fernando's shoes. Who's with me?

Bart Przewozny
Byemail

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The greatest F1 rookie

Lewis Hamilton burst onto the grand prix scene in 2007 and very nearly took the world championship amid drama at McLaren

By Adam Cooper, Special Contributor

 @adamcooperF1





Ten years ago Lewis Hamilton was about to embark upon his first season of grand prix racing with McLaren. He was supposed to be the new boy, the apprentice to double world champion Fernando Alonso, but things didn't quite turn out that way. What followed was the greatest rookie season in Formula 1 history.

From the first corner of the first race in Australia he showed that he meant business, and McLaren found itself with the difficult task of balancing the interests of its bought-in superstar and the ambitious homegrown kid. The world title was there for the taking, but at the end of a dramatic season both men lost out to Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen. Hamilton, then 22, might have missed the title by a point, but it was still the best rookie season in F1's history, eclipsing Jacques Villeneuve's debut with a then-dominant Williams team in 1996.

"It was a nice surprise for the sport, the talent of Lewis, and that year I think he performed very well," Alonso recalls. "Unfortunately for the team it was not easy to cope with the pressure and the political aspect of having an English young man who, like [Max] Verstappen now, is the symbol of that moment. It was difficult to cope for everyone. And we ended up losing the constructors' championship and the drivers' championship. So it was a quite bad management of that situation..."

To understand how Hamilton arrived in F1 at such a high level, it's necessary to look at how McLaren nurtured him through the years of karting and into car racing. The team adopted a 'tough-love' approach, not dissimilar to that used by Helmut Marko and Red Bull. McLaren bosses Ron Dennis and Martin Whitmarsh made it clear that Hamilton had to perform to continue receiving McLaren support, which meant winning every time he stepped up a category. He could never take anything for granted.

"McLaren was really tough with Lewis, and I think it was a good attitude," says Fred Vasseur, whose ASM/ART teams ran him in F3 in 2005, and GP2 the following year. "Martin put a lot of pressure on his shoulders. I remember in F3 it was, 'You have to win, or it's the end of the project.' And he won, and he went to GP2, and it was, 'You have to deliver.' They were pushing.

"Now everybody says he was under contract to McLaren, it was quite easy, but that was not the reality. He had a lot of pressure from McLaren, but I think it was a good thing, because he was used to dealing with it. The management by Martin was very tough, but it was good. He was really focused on Lewis."

It's easy to forget now that until the middle of Hamilton's 2006 GP2 season there was no obvious chance to progress with McLaren. Alonso had long ago been signed up for '07 and, with Raikkonen heading to Ferrari, the Spaniard was expected to be partnered by Juan Pablo Montoya. But after the United States GP in early July the Colombian abruptly left the team, and third driver Pedro de la Rosa was drafted in.



ETHERINGTON/LAT

Hamilton attacked from the start and took his first win in Canada (above, left)

The goalposts had moved and there was now a chance to promote Hamilton in 2007, if the team felt that he was ready for such a step. At this stage he hadn't even tested an F1 car, despite being part of the McLaren scenery for so long. Whitmarsh hinted to Hamilton that he might get the seat, and made it clear that winning the GP2 title would greatly help his cause. Not that Lewis needed any extra motivation.

"I think I was convinced that he would move to F1 after Silverstone," says Vasseur. "He won the two races, with a fantastic second one. Ron was there with Martin, and they were so enthusiastic that I was convinced he would do F1 the year after."

"In Turkey he did probably the most fantastic race I saw in my life! He spun on the first lap, was last, and he came back to P2. He was just flying. For sure this was a special one. He had such huge confidence in himself and in the car that he was able to overtake everywhere, every single lap."

Hamilton did what was asked and finished his GP2 season at Monza as champion. At the end of September he and father Anthony were called to a meeting with Whitmarsh and Dennis at Dennis's house — and he was told that he had the job.

A somewhat bemused Alonso was also informed: "First Kimi was supposed to be my team-mate, then they said, 'No, Kimi

"Aren't you better taking a gamble with somebody who can be truly great?"

wants to join Ferrari, Montoya will be your team-mate.' I said, 'Don't worry, it will be OK.' Then Montoya had some difficulties that year. Then they said, 'Maybe Pedro is your team-mate.' I said, 'OK.' Then two or three months before the season started they said, 'Hamilton will be your team-mate!'"

Even within the McLaren camp there were mixed views about the decision. Was he ready or not?

"We had Fernando coming in anyway, which was itself a very exciting prospect," recalls then-engineering director Paddy Lowe.

"He came in as a double world champion, and he remains to this day one of the best drivers on the grid, and that's what a team wants, to have the best drivers. It lifts the motivation of everyone in the place, so we were very, very buoyed by the prospect of Fernando driving."

"And then for me Lewis was a kind of bonus. Everything suggested that he was going to be great, but he was a rookie, so you're taking a little bit of a chance. Personally I was very happy because I've always been of the view that even for a top team it's a bit of a risk to take a rookie, but aren't you better taking a gamble with somebody who can be truly great, than banking on a bloke who makes up the numbers? Kimi was a great driver, so we had this loss, but then it was made up for by this prospect."

"We'd signed Fernando and we had Lewis as our 'second' >>>

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ETHERINGTON/LAT

Alonso and Hamilton battled hard all year. Alonso was ahead at Spa, but both lost out to Ferrari

driver, as everyone thought at the time," says current McLaren technical director Tim Goss. "I remember the big excitement at getting Fernando. Among the team and certainly among the race engineers there was a lot of apprehension at putting Lewis in the car, that he was too young. OK, he might be reasonably quick, but he hadn't really proven himself. I just remember we had to choose which race engineer was going to match up with which driver, and neither of them wanted Lewis!

"It was quite a bold move for McLaren, because until that date our strategy had always been to put a known, competent, proven world-championship-quality driver in the seat. With Lewis it was quite a bold move. Had it not been for the fact that we had Fernando in the other car, we might not have done it."

Any internal doubts were allayed once Hamilton finally got behind the wheel of an F1 car.

"I remember when he first drove the [2006] car at Silverstone, we saw in the data that he had a lot of oversteer at entry," says Lowe. "The steering wheel was all over the place, and we were expecting him to be moaning like anything about the balance. But he didn't mention anything. So he seemed to me from the outset to have exceptional car control."

"Within a few hours of putting Lewis in an F1 car it was quite clear that he was phenomenally quick," adds Goss. "It wasn't long before the engineers running Lewis realised they actually

had something quite special in their hands, and he was going to test Fernando to the very edge. I think Lewis could drive anything. The conversion from karts to GP2 to F1 was really quick and easy for him."

For the nearly six months from his confirmation to the first race in Australia, Hamilton embarked on an intense apprenticeship programme. In addition to physical and mental preparation – overseen by the late Dr Aki Hintsa – he put in many hours with the engineers, and visited all the team's departments, in Woking and at the Mercedes facilities in Brixworth and Stuttgart. This process was as new to the team as it was to Hamilton – things had moved on a lot since they had last employed an >>

Physical and mental preparation helped Hamilton make an immediate impact in Formula 1



TEE/LAT

THE OTHER NEAR-CHAMPION ROOKIE

ELEVEN YEARS BEFORE Lewis Hamilton burst onto the F1 scene, Jacques Villeneuve made a comparable impact as a rookie when he joined Williams as team-mate to Damon Hill.

The Canadian says now that he didn't expect to beat Hill in his first year, although he would take the fight all the way to the final round at Suzuka. He insists that he didn't get any favourable treatment from the team management.

"I came after winning the Indy 500, so I was used to that kind of pressure anyway," he says. "So I didn't need that kind of love. That was a big difference. I got there respecting Damon, and knowing it was his season, and I was there to learn from him. That just stopped us having any animosity or any issues. I knew that 1997 would then be my season.

"I was trying to win it, obviously, and I was fighting back, making it difficult for him. I wasn't going to make it easy, because it was also preparation for the following year. If you suddenly just take it easy because you don't think it's yours, you won't be able to step up

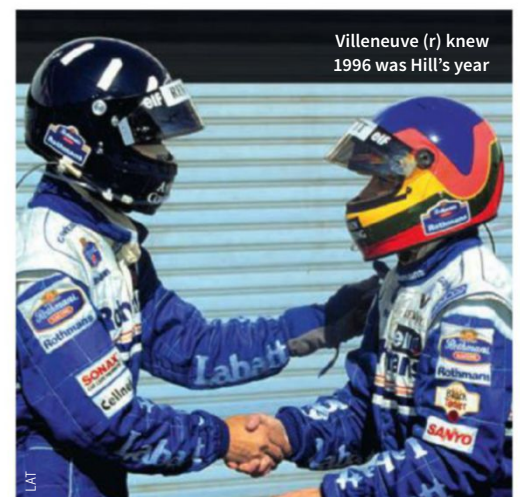
the following year."

Villeneuve says that in 2007 Hamilton enjoyed the ideal environment at McLaren. "It just depends how the team treats you. If they're in there pushing you, pushing down the other driver, using the other driver to push you up – which is what Ron Dennis did – or if the team is a little bit against you... it makes all the difference in the world.

"He had a great situation. He got in protected, and that gave him the time and the freedom to evolve into a champion. Ron shafted

"Ron Dennis shafted Alonso, mentally, with 'Lewis is our guy'"

Alonso, mentally. You take a double world champion and then as soon as you sign Lewis, you say, 'Lewis is our guy.' That doesn't go down well! That's what was being pushed out in the open, and Alonso was well aware of it, and that's when the games started. That was detrimental to the whole team."



Villeneuve (r) knew 1996 was Hill's year

LAT

F1 rookie, Michael Andretti, back in 1993.

"We put a massive effort into his racecraft," says Goss. "Winning races is not just about being a quick driver — you've got to understand all the calls, what we're doing with strategy, the masses of different settings on the car, and we put a huge effort over that winter into bringing him up to speed. He was very good at retaining that sort of information, and hungry to do it."

"He was very, very competitive. I remember we had a training weekend that was for the mechanics, the team and Lewis, and he was immensely competitive. Whether it was cross-country skiing, rock climbing or the ten-pin-bowling competition, he made sure he won every single one of them!"

"The nice thing about working with Lewis was that he knew it was a tall order, and he was a sponge for any information or training or education that we could give him," says Lowe.

"The other thing was that the expectations were all on Fernando, and not on Lewis, so in a way he had nothing to lose. It's a really great way to come in when you're driving what should be one of the best cars on the grid. If all the expectation is on the other side of the garage, then that does relieve you of quite a burden."

Heading to Australia the world at large, and even Hamilton's closest allies in the McLaren camp, still regarded him as the new boy who was there to learn from and support Alonso.

But that perception was to change on that first race weekend. "Absolutely," says Lowe. "I think Fernando realised as well! He was fighting for position at the first corner, and earning it. It's worth pointing out, there's always this talk with rookies — they come in for their first years and they've got a lot to learn, they have a few shunts; he's young, he needs to learn."

"If you look at the record, Lewis didn't go through that phase."

"Lewis wasn't arrogant in any way, he was just totally committed to winning"

He drove straight in and didn't make mistakes, didn't shunt into people, didn't behave irresponsibly. He was then and has always been a respectful driver to other cars on the track, and drives very, very correctly. That was the case from the first race."

Fuel strategy helped Alonso get back ahead, but Hamilton made his mark with third place on his debut, although both men lost out to Raikkonen's Ferrari. Hamilton subsequently embarked on a remarkable run of podiums, finishing second in Malaysia, Bahrain and Spain. Then came Monaco, and the first real flashpoint of the year.

"I remember in Monaco he was P2 in qualifying," recalls Vasseur. "We spoke and I was very positive, 'It's fantastic to be on the first row in Monaco, the first time in F1.' And he was quite disappointed, 'I need to beat Fernando, I will push like hell to overtake.' 'Lewis, you know that it's quite impossible to overtake, the only way if you are behind is to be patient.' And I remember in this race he was trying to overtake on the left, on the right, on the top, everywhere, every single corner!"

He couldn't find a way past, and had to settle for second. After the race he called McLaren's pit strategy into question, prompting an FIA 'race-fixing' enquiry that exonerated the team.

"It started to become tricky, and the smallest of things became quite contentious," Lowe admits. "We had a number of decisions to make back then, including you had to qualify on race fuel [levels] and you got the priority on choosing the stop lap, and therefore the qualifying fuel load. So you never had a straight fight for the grid position, because they'd have a lap difference of fuel. And then how that decision was made, and various things like that, complicated the situation."

The team now realised how hard it was going to be to balance the interests of both drivers.



Only Raikkonen and Massa at Ferrari could regularly compete with the battling McLarens



Difficult Nurburgring weekend ended Hamilton's impressive run of podium finishes



Above: Chinese GP error proved very costly. Above right: awkward press conference after Hungarian qualifying. Below: Lewis was seen as 'McLaren's driver'



ETHERINGTON/LAT



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FORMULA



Hamilton was frustrated to lose to Alonso in Monaco, as intra-team tension grew

TEEL/LAT

“Nobody was really expecting it,” says Goss. “And Lewis wasn’t arrogant in any way, he was just committed, a young kid totally committed to winning, and quite ruthless with it as well. He was there to prove that he was one of the quickest F1 drivers out there, and he didn’t care if one of the world’s greatest was sitting in the opposite side of the garage – he just wanted to go out and prove that he was quicker.”

Hamilton put the Monaco frustration behind him by securing his first pole and first race win in Canada, where the safety car worked in his favour. A week later he won again from pole at Indianapolis, this time just edging out his team-mate. It was clear that he was learning fast.

“It’s learning how to manage a race, how to manage tyres and things like that,” says Goss. “We knew he could drive a race car quickly, it was more a case of getting that full race package, the intelligence around taking a car to a race win; not necessarily by doing it the quickest way, but making sure the car got to the finish ahead of everyone else. That’s the bit he had to learn. We didn’t need to teach him very much about driving quickly!”

Alonso believes that the departure of Michelin, and F1’s move to a single tyre supplier, had played into Hamilton’s hands.

“The people who joined F1 in that year, I think it’s maybe like the people who will join in 2017,” he says. “Starting from zero is easier than getting used to something we were driving. In ’07 Bridgestone was the only supplier, and it changed completely the tyres, the construction, the shoulder, everything.”

“The cars were extremely different to drive, with a lot of oversteer. We all changed our driving style, even Kimi who ended up winning that championship. The middle of the year he was not competitive, because it required a completely different driving style. For Lewis it was a help to start that year, and immediately be very competitive.”

Indy was followed by third places in France and Britain – at which point Hamilton’s luck finally turned. At the Nurburgring a huge accident in Q3 due to a suspension issue resulted in him starting 10th, and then in the soaking-wet race he spun off. He was fortunate to be able to resume.

“The first nine races were podiums, then the 10th one was Nurburgring,” says Lowe. “He was craned back onto the track with the engine still running and carried on. That was the first time that rules were changed as a result of a Lewis precedent!”

“When he arrived on the restart grid we couldn’t get the starter motor in, because there was a stone jammed in it, which eventually Dave Redding managed to heroically retrieve, so we got the engine started. Anyway, he ended up ninth. He called in on the radio after he took the flag and said, ‘Where do I go?’ He’d only ever been on the podium, so he didn’t know what you do if you’re not on the podium! It kind of sums it up, really. I struggle to believe that his record will ever be broken. It was completely unbelievable.”

Meanwhile, McLaren’s season was about to turn upside down. The spying controversy had been bubbling away since first coming to light at Silverstone, and it boiled over in Hungary in August, where Alonso’s relationship with the team broke down. In Q3 he waited in the pits just long enough to prevent Hamilton – parked behind him – from getting out to do his final lap. The Spaniard received a grid penalty, and Hamilton duly won the race.

“We could see that we could get a world championship,” says Goss. “But there was every chance that we could throw it away, with the two of them scrapping among themselves. We had to work seriously hard to bag the points that we could.”

In Turkey Hamilton salvaged fifth after a tyre failure, and he then finished second to Alonso at Monza, and fourth at Spa on a day when Ferrari dominated. Hamilton then won at Fuji to give himself a 12-point advantage over Alonso, and 17 over Raikkonen, with just two races to go (this was still the era of the 10-8-6 etc scoring system).

He looked to be within touching distance of a shock title win, but in China he crashed out on worn wet tyres while entering the pitlane. Heading to Brazil he still had a points advantage, but his job was much harder than it should have been. >>



BELANCA/LAT

“He only needed fifth if I recall,” says Lowe. “And he went off at Turn 4 on the first lap, and slipped quite a few places down. It was, ‘We didn’t need that,’ but it was still fine. Then there was a problem with the car that wasn’t his doing. The hydraulics failed on the gearshift control, and spookily it stopped working for 25 seconds, and fixed itself.”

Hamilton could only recover to seventh, while Alonso was third. Against the odds Raikkonen won the race and with it the world championship, the Finn logging 110 points to the 109 scored by both of the McLaren drivers. That gearbox glitch had proved decisive.

“We found out the problem a long time afterwards,” Lowe explains. “It was a very small piece of metal that had contaminated the valve, and this contamination cleared itself and left the valve and went back out again, and full performance was immediately recovered. If it had only

showing a lot of raw talent, but needing a lot of sorting out.

“I do remember that year there was a bit of a row as we got towards the end of the season, other drivers moaning about his overtaking,” says Lowe. “It was hard, but always very legitimate and respectful. I think some of the old hands resented this young upstart cruising past them so often. But he’s always been fantastic at racecraft and overtaking, as we saw from the beginning.”

Hamilton’s next chance came the following year. “If you look at 2008 physically, emotionally and mentally,” says Lowe, “Lewis took that burden on of being a de facto number-one driver of a team that he’d admired through his whole life.

“And Lewis does take his responsibilities very seriously, so that was a burden for him in ’08, which he actually bore very well, and won the championship with that pressure, which is a great credit to him. But in ’07 that was all unimagined.

“Some of the old hands resented this upstart cruising past them”

gone wrong for 20 seconds rather than 25, he would have won the championship. There are acts of God in a sense that can make a difference one way or another.

“It’s a shame that he didn’t win the championship, because it would have been one of those really remarkable stories. But even so I think it will still be seen as the most impressive rookie season ever. It’s difficult to see how it could be exceeded, but of course you never know.

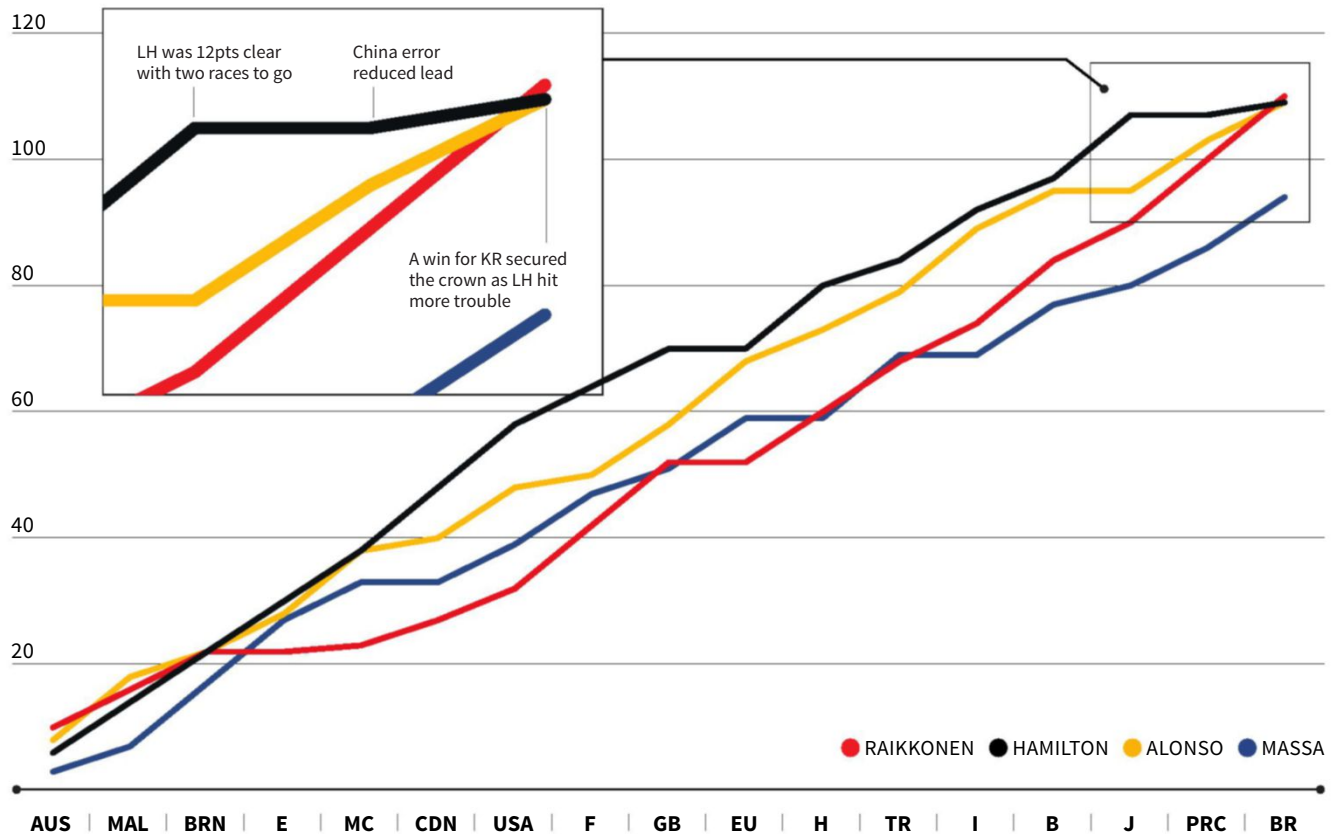
“For me the really remarkable thing was how he came in straight away as a very organised, responsible and reliable driver. Typically these guys have been out of control in their first years,



Fine wet-weather triumph came in Japan (above and below)

FERRARO/LAT

THE FIGHT FOR THE 2007 TITLE



Any result he delivered was a bonus to what we expected.”

The coda to the 2007 story was the sudden departure of Alonso from McLaren after the end of the season.

“As I said it was a very good surprise for the sport, a good team-mate, and very bad management from the team,” Alonso says of the situation with Hamilton, “because with two champions and one of the best cars we managed to lose both championships. It was one of the reasons that I left McLaren in 2007. It was not any problem with Lewis, it was not any problem with Ron personally. I don’t have problems personally with anyone, I’m a very easy guy, but I like to work in a team that is able to perform at 100%.

“If the team is not able to perform, or if the team is not able to manage the pressure, or do things properly, I prefer to find a new motivation, because I’m here to give 100% and have fun and to enjoy my life. If the team is not able to do the same, it’s

better to change. Normally you don’t have that possibility, but I was lucky enough to have that possibility.”

The final word on Hamilton’s rookie season goes to Dennis, the man who first signed up the teenage karting prodigy – and who clearly believes that Hamilton could have done things differently.

“I think he did a tremendous job,” says the departing McLaren boss. “There weren’t many car mistakes, but there was certainly some poor judgement effected by him, pretty much influenced by third parties.

“I think we could have had a much smoother outcome to 2007 if he had just been a bit more balanced in his judgement. We gave him a great car, and people forget that. In that period of time we made some very competitive cars, and anyone who drove them did a great job. It didn’t unfold the best way, but that’s life.”

Hamilton and Alonso were so close that both lost the crown



XPBIMAGES

Mercedes' answer to Max Verstappen: Esteban Ocon

Even though Formula 1's top team has chosen Valtteri Bottas to partner Lewis Hamilton, it's the Force India driver who could turn out to be its brightest prospect

By Adam Cooper, Special Contributor

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Nico Rosberg's sudden retirement hit the Mercedes camp like a juggernaut, but once the dust settled the team was able to pursue an elegant solution by hiring Valtteri Bottas, while leaving its options open for 2018 and beyond. The team is now spoiled for choice. Next year Sebastian Vettel and Fernando Alonso will be on the market, along with other established names. Further down the line, perhaps when Lewis Hamilton decides to stop or go elsewhere, the team may call on one of its talented proteges.

In 2016 Pascal Wehrlein and Esteban Ocon were team-mates at Manor, and have now moved on to Sauber and Force India respectively. While Wehrlein generally caught the eye with his first-lap charges and by getting into Q2 on several occasions, his team-mate has clearly made the bigger short-term step.

Force India could have taken either of the Mercedes youngsters – any commercial considerations in respect of the team's engine supplier were obviously identical.

It was Ocon who got the nod. The team management looked beyond the direct comparison between the two in the nine races they took part in together at Manor, and instead took into account 20-year-old Ocon's whole career to date and – crucially – two tests he did with the Silverstone team in Spain and Austria in May/June 2015. The Frenchman made a good first impression both on and off the track, instantly getting the engineers and other key personnel on his side. In contrast Wehrlein, who had a similar opportunity to make his mark when he drove at the same venues that year, did not.

"The initial impressions that we got from testing with Esteban were very positive," says Force India deputy team principal Bob Fernley. "His feedback was good, his demeanour was good, his ability to work with the team was good, and he was clearly reasonably quick in the car, although it was a test and it was not easy to be able to fully estimate that.

"Following that we've done a number of simulator programmes with Esteban, and he's proved very quick. And

you can't take away from his history. He won F3 in his first year; he won GP3 in his first year. The whole thing ticked the boxes."

Ocon's spectacular CV cannot be ignored, and he'll always be known as the man who beat Max Verstappen to the 2014 European F3 title. Did that help to tip the balance?

"It's part of it, but it's not critical," says Fernley. "I think you've got to take all of it. GP3 as well was a great success for him. We have a certain process that we go through; we use driver-assessment software that rates drivers, and Esteban comes up very highly on that. It's not perfect by any means, but it's indicative of where things are."

Team boss Vijay Mallya ultimately decides who drives his cars, and he was given a full briefing on the available candidates by Fernley and other senior figures.

"It's very difficult to be able to assess Esteban's full potential at Manor because we don't know what was happening there at that time," says Fernley. "So we've got to base it on the equal testing we did. It's a team decision at the end of the day that Vijay either endorses or rejects, and the team felt very positive

towards Esteban. We've made our decision, and we feel it's the right one."

Fernley insists that it wasn't just a case of picking the guy who seemed to be easier to get on with: "It's not essential, because if you

had to put up with somebody who's a bit difficult to manage but was quick, you'd go with them! But if you find somebody quick who fits with the team, it's a bonus. It doesn't hurt, but that's not the criteria, which is basically all on track. And it's up to us as a team to get the best out of the driver, and support him in whatever manner we need to do to achieve that."

Ocon has come a long way since he secured the GP3 title with ART at the end of 2015. He began last year on loan to Renault, for which he undertook four FP1 sessions, before the chance to race with Manor came up prior to the Belgian Grand Prix. Before his final race for the team he'd already signed the Force India deal.

"It was a crazy year," says Ocon. "It was crazy because it was my first year as a professional driver, and also I was driving in F1 at the same time as the DTM. A crazy calendar.

"Then the thing that came earlier than expected: a race drive »



ANOR RACING

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Ocon made a good impression on Force India decision makers during 2015 tests

DUNBAR/LAT

in a grand prix. It was great, I was learning a lot with Manor. For sure, a whole season would have been better, but it was already a bonus to get those nine races and I'm happy that I could get them. And then to get the drive with Force India, it's a fantastic opportunity, so I can't wait to start. I thought I knew quite a lot when I was reserve driver already, but it's totally different once you are a real driver racing in a grand prix. So I hope I've learned enough."

It's easy to overlook the difficulties inherent in jumping into an F1 seat in the middle of a season, especially as Wehrlein had a 12-race headstart.

"It was mega hard, with no preparation and no testing," says Ocon. "It was tough. At the time we had to fix my seat position – it was very small [Ocon is very tall] and I didn't have a great position for the first three races, for example, which made things difficult. Normally you can fix it with testing, and when you arrive at the first race you are ready. Those three races were like a test. But the pace was getting better all the time."

The 'monkey-seat' wing fell off at Austin, and a suspension issue ruined the Mexican weekend, but in the rain at Interlagos

“Esteban has to be ready to score points and be able to push Checo from race one”

Ocon really had a chance to show what he could do. On a day when many big names went off – TV replays showed how he narrowly avoided a crashing Kimi Raikkonen – he put in a superb performance.

"I had more chance to show the potential we had, but I didn't enjoy it all," he says. "It was a mega-dangerous race, and I had to take risks that I didn't want to take really – overtaking guys without seeing is not great. In the end I was happy with my performance. There was not much more I could have done. I was 10th until the last laps, then I was overtaken by

Alonso and Bottas and had no chance there. But the race was good, and I spent 50 laps in the points."

Did he feel during his time at Manor that he was in some kind of shootout with Wehrlein? "Not really, to be honest," he claims. "I think Mercedes placed big trust in us, and they really believe that we are going to be good in the future. There was rivalry, but it was always with respect."

In the end that comparison was not the critical factor, and Ocon had already sown the seeds of his future employment. "The tests I had [with Force India] in 2015 were great, the best tests I had in my career so far, because the atmosphere was so good and we were understanding each other very well."

He's jumping into the team that finished fourth last season, so expectations are high – and Ocon is happy to be up against the highly rated Sergio Perez.

"Now the plan is to do a great season with Force India. They are doing a great job with what they have, and I hope we can continue the momentum of 2016. You never know where we can be; no-one knows who will be quick and what will change the order. It's a new era; everyone starts from zero. We can be last or we can be first, but I'm confident.

"I want to see myself against an experienced driver. It's good also for myself to develop as a driver. My target is to challenge [Perez] for sure. I have a lot to learn with the team first, I need to learn in the winter from him, see what he does and how he works, and learn from his data as well when I drive. Then I hope that I will be ready enough to be challenging him in the first race straight away."

That's what the team wants him to do – and given that he's already done half a season, there will be no honeymoon period.

"I don't see that we're training anybody," Fernley insists. "For me Esteban has to be ready to score points and to be able to push Checo from race one, and we've got to make sure that he's in a position to do that. If we're going to retain our fourth place – and if possible even better that – the only way we can do it is to have two drivers scoring points consistently.

And what of his old F3 nemesis Verstappen, the man who has helped to open the door for a new generation of youngsters?

"I think it's created a lot of opportunities for us," says Ocon. "The teams now believe that a young driver can also do the job, and thanks to him for that. On the other hand he's a target, and he's a normal driver, so there's nothing to be scared of." ❄

Ocon versus Verstappen: an F3 gripper

THE REFRACTED BEAMS of spotlight from Max Verstappen's exploits in the 2014 Formula 3 European Championship also shone brightly upon Esteban Ocon, the eventual title winner.

This helped boost Ocon's profile – if Verstappen was so mega, then the logical reasoning was that the lanky Normandy starlet, who was also an F3 rookie, must also be a big name for Formula 1's future.

Ocon's winter-long preparation with top squad Prema Powerteam – which had included participation in the Macau Grand Prix – gave him a leg-up before the season's start. Verstappen, meanwhile, had completed a relatively late deal with the unproven Van Amersfoort Racing – the same

team with which his father Jos had shot to prominence in Opel Lotus in 1992.

Partly thanks to this, Ocon quickly built up a hefty points advantage, while Verstappen, with a couple of early-season problems setting him back, never had much of a sniff at the title. But once Verstappen was quickly up to speed, the ferocity of the competition with the similarly super-determined Ocon had the F3 paddock enthralled, and even had F1 chiefs paying more attention to the series' live internet stream than they were to the GP2 and GP3 action taking place under their noses.

One flashpoint came at the Pau Grand Prix, Ocon veering across at the start, squeezing Verstappen towards the inside barrier and causing damage to

the Dutchman's car.

Later in the season, at the Red Bull Ring, Verstappen tried to nose up the inside of Ocon – who could have left a little more room – at Turn 1, but hit the kerb, bouncing him into the then Lotus F1 Junior and ruining both their chances. In today's blame culture, it was gratifying that neither driver was censured – it was more a case of a couple of feisty puppies nipping at each other to gain supremacy in the pack.

In between was an incident for which Ocon did earn a warning. Amid a breathtaking duel at Spa, he moved over on Verstappen on the Kemmel straight, the two cars touching but continuing unharmed. It was a bit scary, but wow, that was a thrilling season.


MARCUS SIMMONS



New dawn can't stop Ogier

Faster cars and new driver line-ups heralded the beginning of a fresh era for rallying, but there was a familiar name at the top

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

 @davidevansrally





Standing in front of his new car on Wednesday afternoon last week, Sebastien Ogier glanced absent-mindedly at his phone. Co-driver Julien Ingrassia tapped the roof.

Ogier looked up, put his phone down, gave the Gap massive a wink and slid into his new motor. Backing a Ford Fiesta WRC out of M-Sport's service, Ogier had a new world – even newer than the rest of the world championship's new world – to discover.

South of the mountains last Sunday, he got out of the car four days wiser. The result? Nothing had changed. Ogier still rules the Monte.

Day one: 128.96 miles; 8 stages

As the first page of a new chapter, with faster and more exciting-looking World Rally cars, this was not the story anybody wanted to write. An apparently innocent and typically Monte-style crash had turned horribly sinister for Hayden Paddon. The lack of urgency to right the rolled Hyundai told its own tale.

The true tragedy of that tale unfolded over the next few hours. A spectator had lost his life watching this new start for the sport.

Less than 10 minutes before Paddon's i20 failed to negotiate an icy left-hander – and just half a mile further up the road – Ogier had arrived at the first stage end of the season.

At that point, four-time champion Ogier's feelings about his new Ford were all that mattered. The reigning champ's eyes were reddened from the unblinking commitment required to get M-Sport's all-new rocketship Fiesta WRC through the last 13 miles.

"We can go faster," he said. "This is the first stage of the year. I hope it's not too bad..."

Thierry Neuville's Hyundai was the only other car through before Thursday night's opener was cancelled. Despite feeling the car was too soft, the Belgian's confidence was clear as he scorched his



way through the final icy miles to edge Ogier by seven tenths. Soon after that, the yellow flags turned red and the stage was stopped.

The score was the same after SS2, the first stage to count, when Neuville stopped the clocks 7.8s up on Ogier.

Third fastest for Toyota's Juho Hanninen raised eyebrows, but gave more weight to the theory that this unpredictable rally was at its least

Neuville was on course to win until the final stage on Saturday

predictable as a freezing Thursday night neared an even colder Friday morning on the Breziers stage south-east of Gap.

Rather unkindly, some observers suggested that daylight would bring a rather more recognisable order.

It did. And it didn't.

It started with the alarming news that Ogier was in a ditch. He'd struggled to get the Fiesta turned in at a skating-rink open hairpin-right and was powerless to stop the car slipping off the road at walking pace.

"I wanted to rotate the car," he said, "but pulling the handbrake produced the opposite effect. I don't understand the behaviour of the car in hairpins – I have no confidence in the car in this section and every hairpin I lose time because I can't make the car turn and be progressive like I want."

Ogier dropped to eighth, 49.4s off the lead. The M-Sport team prepared a new set of diff maps and softer rollbars in an effort to help the champion find more confidence from the Fiesta.

Finding any kind of confidence on the switchback roads through the French Alps last Friday brought constant reference to a haystack and a needle.



Kris Meeke's season didn't start well

ALL PICS: MCKLEIN.DE



“At every hairpin I lose time because I can’t make the car turn and be progressive”

Sebastien Ogier

A bespectacled Belgian had a rummage around and came up with said needle firmly in his grasp. As he went fastest on stages four, five and six, Neuville’s confidence went through the roof.

“I am taking a lot of information from the car,” he said. “I can feel the grip. I don’t feel like I’m taking chances or taking risks. On this rally it’s really important to find the confidence early on.”

Drivers rarely admit they’ve been on the doorhandles to do the times they’re doing, but Neuville’s demeanour tallied: he was super-cool, completely collected and 38.2s in the lead after SS6.

By that point, Ogier was back up to third, with just his team-mate Ott Tanak between him and the leading Hyundai. Fastest times on the day’s

final two stages were enough for the #1 Fiesta to edge the Estonian’s sister car by three tenths of a second. M-Sport boss Malcolm Wilson grinned at the question of team orders.

“No chance,” he smiled. “These boys can fight. That’s what we’re here for.”

Tanak ventured it might be a slightly one-sided scrap, not least because Ogier had grown up on the roads around Gap. “I think he has some tricks around here,” laughed Tanak after a sensational first full day back in the factory squad.

Ogier admitted the afternoon had offered some improvement in the feeling, but at the same time he was no longer opening roads and finding the worst of the conditions (apart from in SS6, where he was confronted by a slushy mess) on >>



LOUD CARS, QUIET KLAXONS

THE ROAD LOOKS FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARD. It’s downhill, left and the T-junction then follows the road away up the hill and around to the right. Every other day of the year, this is the convergence of the D23 and D216 on the east side of the village of Chauffayer in the heart of the Hautes-Alpes.

Last Friday it was a tricky mix of bone-dry asphalt and hard-packed ice with a scattering of snow just at the apex of the square-left. Last Friday this was SS4 of the Monte Carlo Rally and my first opportunity to see what all this 2017 fuss was about.

It was everything we’d hoped for and much more. Bruno Saby, lovely chap that he is, in a fruity Renault Megane was absolutely hopeless as a warm-up act.

Sebastien Ogier came into view at the precise point his right foot – formerly hard on the gas – was lifting while his left foot stabbed at the brakes. And he tap-tap-tapped the Ford Fiesta WRC down three cogs.

The mid-corner covering of white stuff brought a moment’s hesitation in the car and, just for that moment, the Fiesta was consumed with pent-up aggression and latent energy.

Back on the throttle and the car side-stepped itself into a brutal four-wheel drift. A nanosecond later, the ruthless efficiency of the new generation World Rally Car showed itself as the Fiesta rocketed forward.

Gear. Gear. Gear. The #1 car howled its way up the hill and away from us. Ogier didn’t flinch from the throttle in the right-hander and the M-Sport-built machine was locked on to planet Earth, demonstrating staggering levels of mechanical grip – even more impressive considering its studded tyres were sitting on top of dry asphalt.

Momentarily, there was silence from the crowd; the klaxons had stopped as jaws dropped and index fingers slackened their grip on the top of the aerosol canisters.

As a first introduction to rallying’s new world, it couldn’t have been better.



FROM BEATING OGIER TO BEATING KOPECKY

THE FULL IMPACT OF VOLKSWAGEN'S departure from the World Rally Championship was laid bare in Monte Carlo last week. Two months after Andreas Mikkelsen celebrated his greatest victory in the World Rally Championship, edging team-mate Sebastien Ogier to a farewell Polo win in Australia, the Norwegian was sizing up the WRC2 opposition from a Skoda Fabia R5.

Some questioned the sense in Mikkelsen's move; surely he could only lose? If he won, he won because he was Andreas Mikkelsen in a factory Fabia. But if he was beaten...

"It's better than sitting at home," ventured the immensely likeable Mikkelsen ahead of the start. We'll see.

And see we did as the cream rose higher and faster than ever before. Mikkelsen slaughtered his WRC2 rivals, Skoda team-mates Jan Kopecky and Pontus Tidemand included.

He won the category by three and a half minutes from Kopecky (who had admittedly suffered a puncture), but spent the second half of the event enjoying himself.

Mikkelsen couldn't have made a better case for his immediate return to the sport's top flight, but it looks like he's going to have to wait.

He's pinned his hopes on Volkswagen getting the green light to homologate its 2017-spec Polo R WRC and his management team bagging enough cash to run it. Right now, the latter looks distinctly more likely.

Mikkelsen said: "We had hoped to do Sweden [next month] in the Polo '17 car, but there was no way to get it homologated in time, so now we're looking at Portugal [in May] and then Poland. We targeted three rallies for this year. I want the Polo, it's the only car I know how to drive - I have done so much testing with it, it's really a special one. It would be nice to make it a reality in the stages.

"If that doesn't work, there's a chance I could do more in the Skoda."

More than most, the rest of the WRC2 field is hoping that Polo finds its way out of Hannover.



a day that demanded studded winter tyres throughout.

But what about the 45 seconds separating him from the top of the timesheets? "Nothing is impossible on this rally," he said quietly.

Neville admitted he'd been cautious on the ice in SS7, dropping 19.6s, but there was more concern in the last test, where the leader talked about a loss of boost for 500 metres.

"I had no boost," he said, "no power. Eventually, Nicolas [Gilsoul, co-driver] found the [button] and pushed it."

Was this Hyundai's first gremlin of the 2017 WRC season?

"No," said team principal Michel Nandan. "He stalled the car because the revs went too low in a hairpin. And when you restart this car, you have to do things in a certain order. He forgot that. And then he remembered it!"

That issue was lost as Neville sat down to supper in service. Everything was looking very good. "I wouldn't say I'm confident," he said, "but I am a bit

more comfortable. We have 45 seconds and that is much."

Checking himself, he grinned and quickly added: "But on this rally, also this is not much! Let's see what is happening tomorrow night."

Hanninen and Toyota team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala justified the optimism of Thursday night with strong stage times when daylight arrived on Friday. Unfortunately Hanninen's efforts came to nought when he slid into a tree "at walking pace" and damaged the front suspension on SS5.

Latvala kept it on the straight and narrow and drove conservatively to fourth overnight. "I have been learning today," said the cheerful Finn. "I learned that I must not take the clutch when I go to the handbrake - this opens the transmission and makes the car spin. And, like I promised to you, I am not playing all of the time with the clicks in the suspension. I'm learning!"

Dani Sordo was also learning, but the Spaniard was far from comfortable.



ALL PICS: MCKLEIN.DE

Hanninen hit trouble
but Latvala took a
podium for Toyota



Running the same set-up as Neuville, he couldn't find any confidence in the Hyundai and dropped close to three minutes to the leader.

Conversely, Craig Breen was driving beautifully in a 2016 DS 3 WRC. The Irishman actually ran ahead of Sordo, before 'the old girl' was outpaced by Sordo and his extra 80 horses in SS8.

Day two: 75.43 miles; 5 stages

Saturday morning's opener posed the perennial Monte problem. The first five or six miles on the road out of Lardier et Valenca were dry and bathed in glorious mid-winter sunshine. After that? Ice. Full ice and snow — lots of it.

Every car went with at least two studded tyres, but the question was how hard to push on the first section. With more power and torque than any of these drivers have ever had before, nobody really knew how much punishment the rubber would take.

Ogier admitted he was too cautious. Neuville was quickest and, arriving at the



finish, his eyes searched the board... another 2.6s out of Ogier. A brief smile and a wink. "It's OK," he said, "it was a clean run. I'm feeling more confident."

Back in Gap after the second stage, you got the feeling that the leader was starting to believe, starting to think about where he was and what he was doing. Another stunner of a time in SS10 lifted his lead above a minute.

Typically, Ogier is quicker on the second run through the stages. He likes to take as much information as possible

Electrical woe for
Tanak cost M-Sport
a one-two finish

on the opening loop and put it to good use on the repeat. But with 60.7s between him and the Hyundai ahead, it was beginning to look like this one might be beyond even him. He took nine out of Neuville on the repeated tests later in the morning and might have had more had it not been for a brief trip to a field in SS12.

"There was a lot of dirt on the road," said a resigned Ogier. He paused for a moment, before admitting: "I needed to do more this morning."

One more Saturday stage, a couple of three-milers and a brace of runs over Turini were all that stood between

"I immediately knew that it was broken"

Thierry Neuville

Neuville and his biggest win yet. "We took the snow tyre for these two," he said. "We are trying to be clever now."

Neuville is clever. He knew full well that his words would be interpreted as a shift into a mode of driving aimed at controlling rather than expanding the gap. And he knew full well that would get back to Ogier.

Approaching the halfway point of Saturday's final test, everything was well for the leaders. They'd dropped a second at the first split, but it was no drama. But as is so often the case with this rally, drama is never far away. For Neuville, it was around the next corner.

A one-second advantage became a 4m19.4s deficit to Ogier at split two. The right-rear suspension on the Hyundai was wrecked, Neuville's dreams destroyed, Hyundai's hopes shattered.

"I'd played a little bit with the diff settings at the start," said Neuville, "but the car felt good. Everything was well. We went wide in a third or fourth-gear corner. There was some gravel, but I knew about it from my crew. I must have gone to the throttle too quick. The car went wide and we hit something."

Something?

"Something concrete," he added disconsolately. "I knew immediately something had broken and we had to stop and fix it. It was a small mistake. I'm so disappointed, more for the team who have worked so hard. I really wanted to bring for them this win."

'Something concrete' was a bridge parapet on the exit of a left-hander. It wasn't for moving. No more words were sought, needed or delivered.

The shock of Neuville's departure from the top spot had barely sunk before the news arrived that M-Sport was now running one-two with four stages left. The British team's base was almost as »

quiet as its South Korean counterpart's. Suddenly, the pressure had gone through the roof. Wilson's face reflected that.

"Please," he said, "let's wait until tomorrow." Understandable sentiment from a man who hadn't won since 2012. And what about the man who hadn't won since Rally GB in October? "We are one-two," said Ogier. "It would be a disaster if one of us doesn't do it!"

Ogier's calming influence was already much in evidence on Saturday evening – except at the end-of-leg press conference, where he sent the massed ranks of French fans wild with a top-three selfie. Back to the front, Ogier was enjoying himself again.

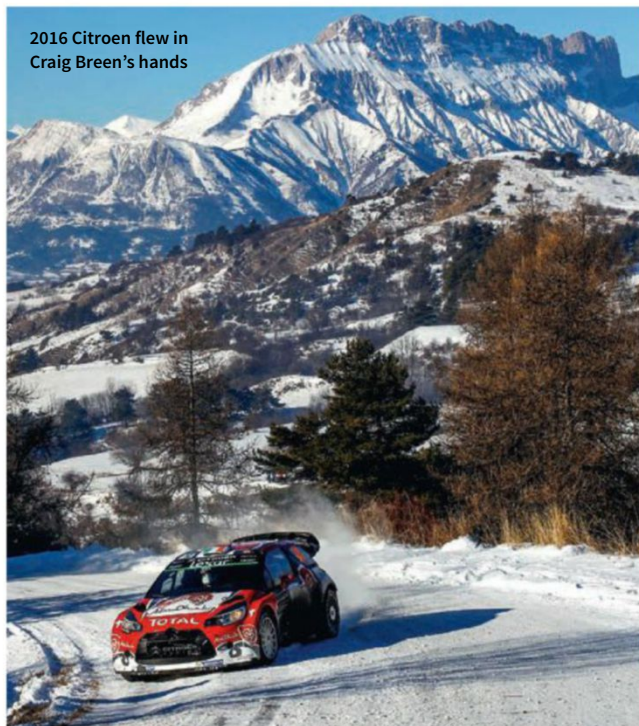
Tanak's car had endured the odd hiccup through Saturday, notably a gearbox with a mind of its own. But, with a minute and a half in hand over Latvala, things were looking good.

J-ML was similarly mindful of the need for Sunday driving with a debut podium looming for the Toyota Yaris WRC.

Breen's heroic effort continued as he battled his way back past Sordo and into fourth with one day to run. And there was more delight right behind the troubled Sordo as Elfyn Evans fought back from a tricky opening day. On Friday, his DMACK tyres offered little resistance on the ice. A bit more asphalt on Saturday gave his Cumbrian boots a chance and Evans took it. Fastest on three of the day's five stages was an exceptional display, but he saved his best until last. The totally dry 13th stage provided the most level of playing fields and Evans, DMACK and the M-Sport Ford smashed everybody.

Talking of smashed, Kris Meeke's season didn't start in the best possible fashion. He went off the road on the

M-Sport took its first win since the 2012 season



2016 Citroen flew in Craig Breen's hands

“Those 2017 cars just drive away from this one. But I'd have taken fifth before the start”

Craig Breen

fourth stage and retired with damaged suspension. He returned and lost 25 minutes with an engine problem on SS10 and then retired completely when somebody drove into him on the road section to Monaco on Saturday night, smashing the right-rear wheel of his Citroen C3. To Sweden...

Day three: 33.38 miles; 4 stages

Wilson was locked into conversation with Ogier and Tanak on Sunday morning. There was energy and intensity in equal measure. The pair departed in search of a result to cheer one corner of Cumbria (M-Sport's HQ) and offer one

Cumbrian (Wilson) some return on a multi-million-pound investment.

Almost immediately, things started to go wrong. At the end of the opening three-miler Tanak's engine had gone sick with an ignition-coil problem. The loss of a cylinder ruined that fabulous growl and threatened to gatecrash M-Sport's planned party.

Tanak was powerless to stop Latvala pinching second, but an epic effort on the downhill section of the final stage was enough to keep his feet on the podium's bottom step. He's a hero.

And so is Ogier. For years, Wilson has eyed Ogier's trademark confidence and

**RESULTS ROUND 1/13, MONTE CARLO RALLY, JANUARY 18-22**

POS	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (F)	Julien Ingrassia (F)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	4h00m03.6s
2	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	+2m15.0s
3	Ott Tanak (EST)	Martin Jarveoja (EST)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+2m57.8s
4	Dani Sordo (E)	Marc Marti (E)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+3m35.8s
5	Craig Breen (IRL)	Scott Martin (GB)	Citroen Total · Citroen DS 3 WRC	+3m47.8s
6	Elfyn Evans (GB)	Daniel Barritt (GB)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+6m45.0s
7	Andreas Mikkelsen (N)	Anders Jager (N)	Skoda Motorsport · Skoda Fabia R5	+9m32.7s
8	Jan Kopecky (CZ)	Pavel Dresler (CZ)	Skoda Motorsport · Skoda Fabia R5	+12m58.1s
9	Stephane Lefebvre (F)	Gabin Moreau (F)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	+14m43.8s
10	Bryan Bouffier (F)	Denis Giraudet (F)	Gemini Clinic Rally Team · Ford Fiesta R5	+16m09.4s
OTHERS				
15	Thierry Neuville (B)	Nicolas Gilsoul (B)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+30m52.5s
16	Juho Hanninen (FIN)	Kaj Lindstrom (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	+32m16.8s
R	Kris Meeke (GB)	Paul Nagle (IRL)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	SS13-road accident
R	Hayden Paddon (NZ)	John Kennard (NZ)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	SS1-accident

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ogier 25; 2 Latvala 18; 3 Tanak 15; 4 Sordo 13; 5 Breen 10; 6 Evans 10; 7 Mikkelsen 6; 8 Lefebvre 6; 9 Neuville 5; 10 Kopecky 4.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 M-Sport WRT 40; 2 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC 24; 3 Hyundai Motorsport 20; 4 Citroen Total 10.

supreme speed with deep envy. No more. He's an M-Sport man now and those character traits transferred brilliantly to deliver a first win since September 2012 for Wilson. Stepping from the car back in Monaco, the pair grinned at each other. The deal had taken some doing, but the dividends were coming early. For both.

There was plenty to celebrate for the Finns too, with Latvala and Toyota team boss Tommi Makinen feeling vindicated in their choice of each other.

The final day's great race — the one for fourth — went Sordo's way. A largely dry day played into his hands. For once an Irishman wasn't pleased to see so much of the...

"Black stuff," said Breen. "That was the problem. Those [2017] cars just drive away from this one in the dry. But still, I'd have taken a fighting fifth before the start."

While Breen's massed ranks of Irish fans went in search of celebration and forgiveness of the black stuff, the world championship was left to reflect on a spectacular new dawn for the sport. ❄️

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Entrevaux-Val de Chavagne-Ubraye 13.20 miles	Cancelled		
SS2 Bayons-Breiziers1 15.84 miles	Neuville 15m01.1s	Neuville	Ogier +7.8s
SS3 Agnieres en Devoluy-Le Motty1 15.30 miles	Tanak 19m17.8s	Neuville	Meeke +16.5s
SS4 Aspres les Corps-Chaillol1 24.20 miles	Neuville 25m41.9s	Neuville	Tanak +25.8s
SS5 St Leger les Melezes-La Batie Neuve1 10.46 miles	Neuville 11m22.2s	Neuville	Tanak +31.7s
SS6 Agnieres en Devoluy-Le Motty2 15.30 miles	Neuville 18m09.6s	Neuville	Tanak +38.2s
SS7 Aspres les Corps-Chaillol2 24.20 miles	Ogier 24m17.8s	Neuville	Tanak +33.5s
SS8 St Leger les Melezes-La Batie Neuve2 10.46 miles	Ogier 11m05.4s	Neuville	Ogier +45.1s
SS9 Lardier et Valenca-Oze1 19.37 miles	Neuville 24m02.9s	Neuville	Ogier +47.7s
SS10 La Batie Monsaleon-Faye1 10.43 miles	Evans 9m15.2s	Neuville	Ogier +1m00.7s
SS11 Lardier et Valenca-Oze2 19.37 miles	Ogier 22m53.0s	Neuville	Ogier +58.6s
SS12 La Batie Monsaleon-Faye2 10.43 miles	Evans 8m56.7s	Neuville	Ogier +51.0s
SS13 Bayons-Breiziers2 15.84 miles	Evans 14m27.5s	Ogier	Tanak +47.1s
SS14 Luceram-Col St Roch1 3.42 miles	Sordo 3m35.7s	Ogier	Tanak +1m48.5s
SS15 La Bollene Vesubie-Peira Cava 1 13.27 miles	Lefebvre 13m51.1s	Ogier	Latvala +2m27.8s
SS16 Luceram-Col St Roch2 3.42 miles	Cancelled		
SS17 La Bollene Vesubie-Peira Cava 2 (Power Stage) 13.27 miles	Neuville 14m14.4s	Ogier	Latvala +2m15.0s

Monster Montoya beats Mr Nice Guy

The Race Of Champions had a fresh venue, new cars and rookie drivers – but it was the same old story for bridesmaid Tom Kristensen as Juan Pablo Montoya won on his debut

By Charles Bradley, Motorsport.com Editor-in-Chief

[@Motorsport_Ed](#)

Comfort zone. It's what all racing drivers seek, and in the top echelons of the sport millions of pounds are spent cossetting the star names to extract their very best performance. And then there's the Race Of Champions.

This star-studded head-to-head event flips that notion on its head, catapulting these well-manicured superstars into an array of machinery that they haven't experienced before (even for ROC veterans, it's been a year or so). For 2017 it moved from London to Miami, and was run inside a baseball stadium. And one of the cars was a three-wheeler that an F1 driver managed to flip...

"It's a celebration of motorsport in general, I always enjoy it," said Tom Kristensen, who just can't stay away. The man who's won Le Mans nine times has now equalled Stig Blomqvist's record number of 15 ROC appearances.

In previous ROCs around the world, he'd made it through to the final of the Champion of Champions on four occasions. In Miami, he made it five. Surely this time?

But up against him were 15 other star-name drivers, and the last man standing in his way was Juan Pablo Montoya.

Montoya might have been an ROC rookie, but it didn't show. Having seen off action-sports legend Travis Pastrana and unretired F1 driver Felipe Massa in the knockout stages, Montoya took on Kristensen in the final.

First up, they were in GRC Rallycross Supercar Lites, in which Montoya won by a car's length – 0.2233 seconds. In the KTM round that followed, Montoya won again – by just 0.0845s this time. JPM punched the air with delight, as TK settled for second again.

Montoya the master

It takes a special talent to win the Indy 500 and the Monaco Grand Prix. And when you consider that he's won the Daytona 24 Hours three times, you wonder just why the hell nobody has ever offered him a serious shot at Le Mans for a chance at a rare triple-crown.

"I remember the first F3000 test I saw him do," recalled Kristensen. "It was at Jerez, and he did it with my team, Auto Sport Racing – you could see he was something special. Totally committed in the fast corners.

"Already then I knew he would have an exceptional career. There's something special about this man. He has very good car control, he throws it into the corner... then looks for it!"

Grip – the racing driver's holy grail. Montoya's backside and fingertips have always seemed hardwired to work in unison

to find that. Don't try to understand this amazing talent; it's as expansive as his waistline – just run with it.

Never try to work out his personality either. Boundlessly enthusiastic one day, arse-achingly painful to deal with the

next – the one constant is that deft feel, that God-given flair, that overwhelming speed. That's what makes him tick. That's what made him so good at this.

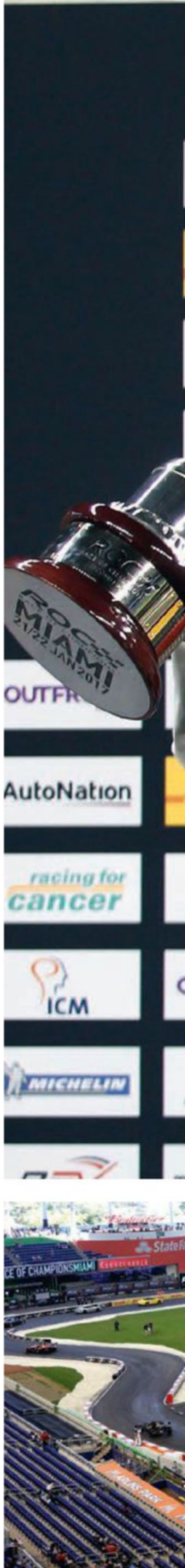
"I ask a lot of questions," said Montoya of his key to victory. "I don't mind asking, I don't have pride. I keep asking people, 'What are you doing?' And I keep trying to add things to the database of what you need to do to win."

Montoya had been invited to contest the Race Of Champions on many occasions – yet simply couldn't be bothered to attend.

"Today I actually regretted not doing this event before, it's unbelievable," he admitted. "Every season I'd go home, see the invite and go, 'Ugh, I've got to get on a plane for 10 hours for this?' Now if you told me I have to fly 15 hours >>

**"I ask a lot of questions,
for the database of what
you need to do to win"**

ROC new boy
Montoya saw
off old hand
Kristensen



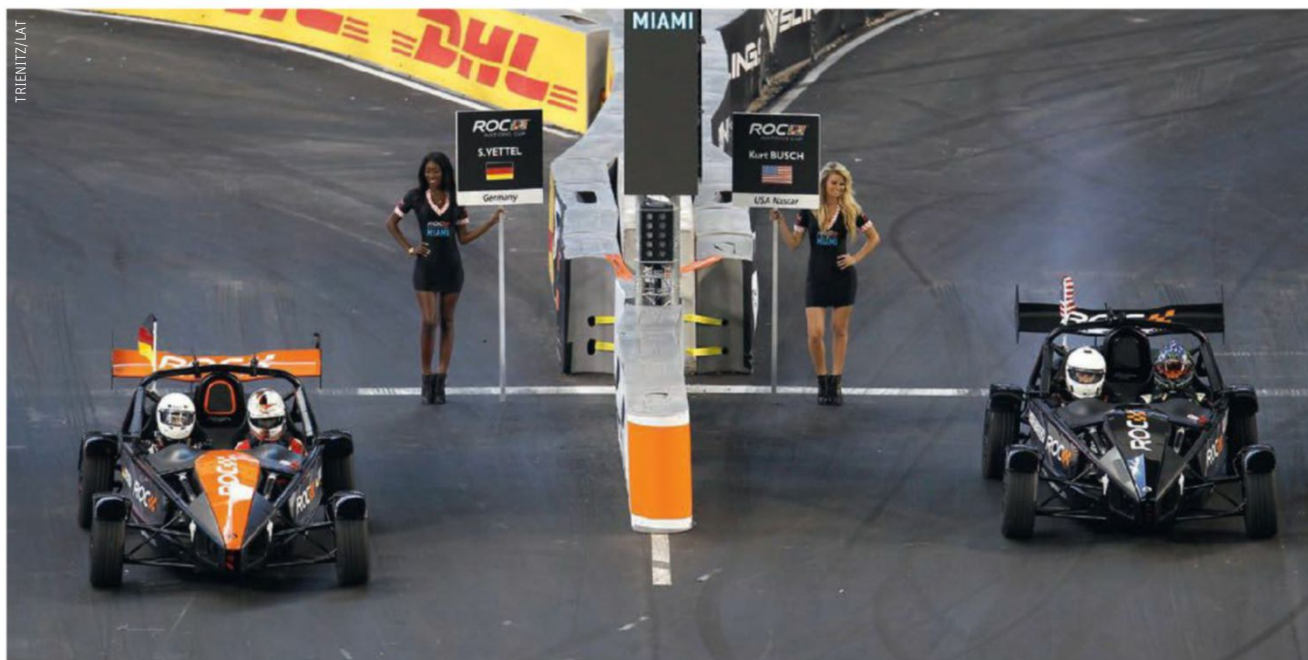
ALL PICS: TRIENITZ/LAT



Miami baseball stadium hosted new ROC track



Kristensen and Montoya battle in KTM X-Bows



One-man German national team Vettel gets the jump on Kurt Busch in Atoms; he then beat Kurt's brother Kyle in GRC cars

to do this, I'd probably do it."

But this year, the race came to him. Long domiciled in Miami, but still fiercely Latino ("I live near Cuba!" he fired back when asked if he should drive for the American Nations' Cup team), it was his wife Connie who talked him into it.

"My wife is the one who said, 'I want to go; you better do it,'" he admitted. "So I said, 'OK, I'm doing it then.' And I thank her because it's been an amazing experience."

Back to that personality; he can be utterly humble too: "I'm really glad I didn't go against Kristensen in that ROC Buggy in the tie-breaker – it slides around so much," he admitted. "If I hadn't beaten him in the KTM, he would have kicked my ass in that."

Kristensen was gallant in defeat. "I guess I'm getting too old, but I enjoy it," said the Dane, who at 49 is eight years older than Montoya. "I was proud to be in the final. I guess I'm just destined to always finish second."

Montoya interjected: "So if you're old and slow, and you finish second, what happened to everybody else then?"

TK replied: "They must be very slow! I've been retired now for two years, but coming here you don't forget what you live for. I love racing, and coming here just brings the best out of us. If you're too cautious, then you don't win."

Massa's moan

The man who could have denied Montoya a trip to the ROC final was Williams's comeback kid, Massa. He'd been strong through the heats, and batted off fellow Brazilian Helio Castroneves in the quarter-finals.

Massa actually beat Montoya in first semi in Ariel Atoms, but not without hitting the wall at the final corner. His right-rear looked damaged, yet Montoya only just beat him in the second race.

But as the cars lined up for a thrilling tie-breaker, Massa was suddenly slammed with a 5s penalty – losing his earlier win – and was waved off the track, his day done, much to his and the crowd's displeasure. "I hit the wall once, it's part of the rules," said Massa. "One time you can hit. I didn't want to hit the wall, it slowed me down, I don't accept [the penalty]. They booed the decision because it was just wrong."

Wehrlein flips out, Vettel sucks

Massa is slightly fortunate to still be with us, after a frightening accident in the group stages. In the Polaris Slingshot three-wheeler, fellow F1 racer Pascal Wehrlein misjudged how close he was to the barriers on the finish straight, clipped one and was sent hard into Massa's car, narrowly missing his left arm. Instead, his front-right wheel,

Wehrlein's error in Polaris Slingshot three-wheeler pitched him into Massa's car, then a dramatic roll



still on full lock, clipped Massa's front-left – which flipped him over. Fortunately both he and his passenger escaped unscathed. "I hit the barrier first with the front-right and that launched me into Felipe," explained Sauber's new signing. "So maybe I looked too much at him and hit the barrier."

The other big shock was the exit of reigning champion Sebastian Vettel in the group stages. He just didn't get his act together, and admitted: "I was a bit surprised. I shouldn't have lost to [Travis] Pastrana, but I did. So the fun is over now."

Vettel's revenge as a one-man nation

With Wehrlein stood down on medical advice, Team Germany became Team Vettel on Sunday – and he made up for his previous day's disappointment in style.

The draw was slanted towards North America, with Team IndyCar and Team NASCAR progressing into the quarter finals. Driving solo, Vettel aced his heats to eliminate Great Britain (David Coulthard and Jenson Button) and Team Nordic (Kristensen and Petter Solberg).

Colombia beat Brazil on a tie-breaker in the final group, setting up a tasty Montoya-versus-Vettel duel in Ariel Atoms in the semi. Vettel aced the start, and Montoya couldn't make up the difference to finish 0.7832s down. The four-time F1 world champion simply breezed past Montoya's team-mate Gabby Chaves to enter the final.

Among the American-filled quarter final, it took a tie-breaker to separate NASCAR and IndyCar. NASCAR's Kurt Busch nailed his start, much to Alexander Rossi's chagrin: "I felt that Kurt jumped the start, and he even alluded to it. But there's no penalty, so..."

That made for an interesting NASCAR-versus-Vettel final, which Vettel made his own. He beat Kurt Busch by a whopping 1.1284s in Atoms and then defeated Kyle Busch by 0.4428s in the GRC cars. It was Germany's seventh title, significantly the first without Michael Schumacher, Vettel and Schumacher having won it in successive years from 2007-12.

"We started this journey together, I learned a lot from him," said Vettel of Schumacher. "We all would love to have had him here, and we still wish him the best even now after a couple of years. I was smart enough to pay attention when he was teaching his lessons." Of his performance, Vettel added: "I had a better day than yesterday! It was a shame Pascal was missing. I was a bit nervous against Kyle, I nearly stalled at the start. But I came back strong."

Kurt Busch summed it up: "I really enjoyed this, but one Vettel took down two Busches!"

The day ended with Team USA versus The World in a Ryder Cup scoring style. The title was decided on the very last run, when World Rallycross star Petter Solberg slayed his American (GRC) counterpart Scott Speed by a whopping 2.3s. 🏆



Skills to pay the bills

THE SKILLSET REQUIRED FOR THE Race Of Champions is quite different from the Indianapolis 500, that's a given. Yet here I am strapped into an Ariel Atom alongside three-time 500 winner Helio Castroneves in a car park at Miami's Marlins Park.

This is the scaled-down version of the big event, but it gives an impressive flavour of a) Helio's whirling hands on the wheel and dancing feet on the pedals, and b) Ariel Atoms really do accelerate from 0-60 in under three seconds – with a bhp/ton ratio of 445!

Slaloming through the chicanes, screeching around the hairpins – it's over in less than 30s, and Castroneves punches the wheel after we smack a corner marker at the hairpin.

"Damn, this handbrake is so sensitive," he says. "But this car is so much fun, I love driving it!"

It's my turn next, as I get a drive in the Polaris Slingshot. I've seen plenty of these cruising along Miami Beach's Ocean Drive, and it's got 173bhp – driving through one rear wheel!

It makes for an interesting

experience, as you need to spin that sole rear wheel to make it slide, otherwise the vehicle dynamic is just huge understeer.

So how about the ROC course proper? My driver is action-sports hero Travis Pastrana, and our steed is the new Vuhl 05 supercar.

"It's an awesome car but it sure does push a lot," he babbles excitedly as we tear around. "I've gotta figure how to get the car in and keep it turning."

We get to do two runs, 'racing' alongside NASCAR star Kyle Busch. This is Pastrana's first run of the weekend, his first time in this car and around this track – and yet I check him glancing across to see how much he 'lost' by. Talk about competitive.

After our runs, he gives me the lowdown: "A lot will be decided by who works out how to start each car the best. There's so much time to be picked up – do you start in first gear, or floor it and start in second? It changes so much from car to car."

Two days later, he beats Sebastian Vettel. Seems like he figured it out.



DAYTONA 24 HOURS/PREVIEW

A NEW ERA



BEGIN



American sportscar racing opens an important new chapter at Daytona this weekend with new cars and manufacturers

By Gary Watkins,
Special Contributor

[@gazzasportscars](#)

This weekend is an important one for worldwide sportscar racing and perhaps a seminal one for the discipline in North America. The debut of the Daytona Prototype international division at the track from which it takes its name heralds a bright new future for the IMSA SportsCar Championship.

The DPis aren't the only prototypes racing for the first time at the Daytona 24 Hours this weekend. The new 'American' cars go up against machinery built to a fresh set of regulations for LMP2, which isn't so much a sister as a mother category. Every DPi car is born of an LMP2, and that explains its success so far and why many are predicting even greater things to come.

The ideas that have resulted in the DPi division came out of a wide-ranging discussion on the future of LMP2 over the winter of 2014/15 involving the FIA and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, as well as IMSA. The category, the US organiser had decided, should be the basis of its top Prototype class from 2017, but it was keen to stress the different requirements it had to the other players around the table.

"Knowing that LMP1 was not an option, we recognised that an LMP2 level of technology was the best fit for a sustainable prototype class in North America," says IMSA president Scott Atherton. "The FIA and the ACO have deliberately and quite rightly configured P2 as a privateer class that is secondary to the manufacturer domain that is LMP1."

"But in order for P2 to be the top class in North America, there had to be manufacturer involvement. For us to have a top category that doesn't allow manufacturers would be as unsustainable as LMP1."

That explains why there are Cadillacs, Mazdas and Nissans on the grid, and why they look – to greater or lesser degrees – like Cadillacs, Mazdas and Nissans. They are clearly distinct from the P2 chassis on which they are based – respectively a Dallara, a Riley and a Ligier. The DPi rules allow for a manufacturer to create its own bodywork and run its own engine in place of the one-make Gibson V8 found in the 'pure' P2 cars that will race in IMSA, the World Endurance Championship and the European Le Mans Series from this year.

But that's about it. The cars look and sound different thanks to their engines, but a DPi isn't so much different to its donor car. Bill Riley, boss of Riley Technologies, describes the DPi regulations as "almost the perfect rules package". Key to that is the 'engine in a box philosophy'. A manufacturer's engine must fit in the same prescribed space as the Gibson V8.

"If you didn't mandate that, you'd potentially be opening a can of worms," he explains. "You have to keep the same suspension and the homologated gearbox [for the base P2 car]. It's one of a bunch of small things that have come together to create a really good set of rules. Keeping the original splitter, underfloor and wings eliminates development costs, and those are the bits that the fans don't notice."

That efficiency "is top of the list of reasons why DPi is proving to be a success", says Atherton. "The ability to use >>



IMSA boss
Atherton is
confident

“New rules for the original DPs in 2012 attracted just two manufacturers”

underpinnings that are identical to those of an LMP2 means a manufacturer doesn't have to take a clean-screen approach and build a bespoke car. They are applying their design elements and their powertrain technology to an existing platform, which is an extremely efficient way of going racing in terms of cost.”

John Doonan, motorsport boss of Mazda's North American operation, is a big fan of the class.

“DPi might have been made for Mazda and we might even be described as the poster child of the class,” he says. “Right now we don't have a model in our range that we could race in GT Le Mans or GT Daytona, but this class allows us to compete at the top level with the brand incorporated into our racing vehicle. If you have to race an off-the-shelf car, it's a much tougher sell in the boardroom.”

The class has other supporters in senior motorsport positions, even at brands that aren't likely to take the plunge into DPi anytime soon. Bentley expressed an interest in the class in 2015 and its motorsport boss Brian Gush says that he “remains convinced it is a great formula” even though the British manufacturer's aspirations remain on the backburner.

What Gush can't say is that the Bentley DPi project got underway in the final couple of months of 2015 before the project was effectively aborted. It was a victim of the same axe that did for sister brands Porsche and Audi's third cars for the Le Mans 24 Hours last year in the initial round of cost-cutting following the 'dieselgate' emissions row that engulfed the Volkswagen Group.

Bentley might not be destined for the IMSA grid with a DPi, but Mercedes, which was close to taking the plunge, may get its plans back on track. Honda has expressed interest, though it is insistent that it will be focusing on its new Acura NSX GT3 programme this season, and has been repeatedly linked to a 2018 entry involving Penske Racing.

Atherton believes that “more content is coming” in a division that has already outstripped its predecessor. New 'generation three' rules for the original Daytona Prototype in 2012 attracted just two manufacturers, Chevrolet and Ford.

“Suggesting that we will have another DPi manufacturer in 2017 is optimistic, but not out of the question,” he says. “But for 2018 we have good reason to think there will be one if not more joining the existing three.”

Doonan, for one, is banging the drum.

“I'm doing everything I can to persuade my counterparts at other manufacturers that they need to join us,” he says. “I keep telling them that this thing is going to grow and grow.” ❄

LEADING CONTENDERS



NISSAN

Extreme Speed Motorsports – Nissan-Onroak DPi

#2 Scott Sharp/Ryan Dalziel/Pipo Derani/Brendon Hartley

#22 Johannes van Overbeek/Ed Brown/Bruno Senna/Brendon Hartley

NISSAN WAS THE LAST OF THE FIRST wave of manufacturers to sign up for DPi, though its involvement isn't in the same overt way as Cadillac and Mazda. It has entered a partnership with the Extreme Speed Motorsports squad, which is returning to North American competition after two seasons in the World Endurance Championship. The 3.8-litre twin-turbo V6 from the GT-R NISMO

GTE powers a DPi based on Onroak Automotive's Ligier chassis.

What they say: “The package shows great potential but we're still in the early stages of development and some way behind the others on track time. The goal is to finish, and if we're still running, the hope is we can put some pressure on the favourites.”

Scott Sharp



ORECA

Rebellion Racing – ORECA-Gibson 07

#13 Nick Heidfeld/Sebastien Buemi/Neel Jani/Stephane Sarrazin

DragonSpeed – ORECA-Gibson 07

#81 Nicolas Lapierre/Ben Hanley/Loic Duval/Henrik Hedman

JDC-Miller Motorsports – ORECA-Gibson 07

#85 Stephen Simpson/Mikhail Goikberg/Chris Miller/Mathias Beche

REBELLION'S MOVE FROM THE LMP1 privateer ranks to LMP2 has enabled it to fulfill its ambition to return Stateside. It is mounting an attack on the North American Endurance Cup component of the IMSA series with a solo ORECA. The JDC-Miller squad moves up from the Prototype Challenge ranks, while DragonSpeed takes in Daytona with

one of its pair of 07s in preparation for its 2017 ELMS campaign.

What they say: “We tried to get kilometres on the car at the Roar [pre-event test] and were pretty good speed-wise. The DPis have a lot of grunt out of the corners.”

Neel Jani



CADILLAC

Wayne Taylor Racing – Cadillac DPi-V.R

#10 Jordan Taylor/Ricky Taylor/Max Angelelli/Jeff Gordon

Action Express Racing – Cadillac DPi-V.R

#5 Joao Barbosa/Christian Fittipaldi/Filipe Albuquerque
#31 Dane Cameron/Eric Curran/Mike Conway/Seb Morris

GENERAL MOTORS MAINTAINS AN involvement in IMSA's Prototype class with Cadillac instead of Chevrolet. The DPi-V.R has been developed out of Dallara's P217 LMP2 design and is powered by the same 6.2-litre V8 found in the back of the Chevrolet Corvette DPs. Longtime US sportscar entrant Wayne

Taylor remains in the GM family and again runs a single car, while Action Express fields two.

What they say: "We've lost a bit of straightline speed with a BoP change and that's a big thing in a race situation." **Joao Barbosa**



MAZDA

Mazda Motorsports (SpeedSource) – Mazda RT24-P

#55 Jonathan Bomarito/Tristan Nunez/Spencer Pigot
#70 Tom Long/Joel Miller/James Hinchcliffe

MAZDA'S NORTH AMERICAN ARM LAID the groundwork for a DPi entry last season with a Prototype class IMSA campaign, using the Indy Lights-based AER two-litre four-cylinder turbo engine in place of the SkyActiv turbodiesel that had previously powered its fleet of ageing Lolas. It has forged a relationship with Riley and Multimatic to develop the RT24-P DPi around the MkXXX LMP2. The SpeedSource squad

again runs two cars with a familiar roster of drivers.

What they say: "It was great to see that we were on the pace given the limited running we've had in comparison to the Cadillacs. We're quite quick on the straights, which is always important, so we are cautiously optimistic, but there are still a lot of unknowns." **Jonathan Bomarito**



LIGIER

PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports – Ligier-Gibson JP217

#52 Tom Kimber-Smith/Jose Gutierrez/Michael Guasch/RC Enerson

ONE OF THE TOP TEAMS IN THE PC class moves up to IMSA's premier division after narrowly missing out on the title in each of the past two years. It has entered a solo Ligier LMP2 with a roster of team regulars.

What they say: "A top-six would be a spectacular result for us as a team in our first race at this level, but we've got a chance of more than that because everyone is going to have issues."

Tom Kimber-Smith



Kimber-Smith hopes for top-six finish



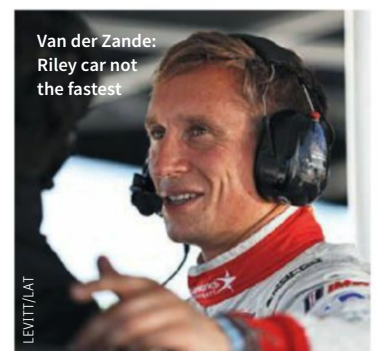
RILEY

VisitFlorida Racing – Riley-Gibson MkXXX

#90 Marc Goossens/Renger van der Zande/Rene Rast

THE SPIRIT OF DAYTONA-RUN SQUAD, formerly part of Chevrolet's works roster, runs an LMP2 Riley this season after missing out on a DPi deal. The car was on order when the plug was pulled.

What they say: "We feel we're a little bit behind on testing, but Riley has a reputation for building strong cars. We're not the fastest on track, but it's not always about that. All the cars are new, so everyone could have problems." **Renger van der Zande**



Van der Zande: Riley car not the fastest

PORSCHE'S BOLD GT WEAPON



After a difficult 2016, the German marque is hoping to strike back with a significant evolution of its iconic 911

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

[@gazzasportscars](#)

Porsche has described its latest GTE car as the “biggest evolution” in the racing history of the 911. Some may dispute that, but to understand the new 911 RSR that makes its debut in the GT Le Mans class at the Daytona 24 Hours it’s worth making a comparison with two cars about which similar claims could be made.

Some suggest the new 911, based on the facelifted 991-shape car, is the spiritual successor to the wild 935 Group 5 racers that first competed in 1976. Others maintain that the departure from the traditional 911 rear-engine layout means it follows on from the 911 GT1 and its Evo derivative of 1996 and ’97.

The truth is that the car with which Porsche will make its full factory return to the World Endurance Championship in 2017 has something in common with both. It is mid-engined like the 911 GT1, but there is no requirement to make road-going cars with a similar layout. Instead, it exploits massive freedoms within the rulebook in the same way that Porsche did with the 935 40 years ago.

Those GTE regulations, introduced for the 2016 season, have enabled Porsche to shunt the engine forward and place the gearbox on the back. Exactly how far forward the four-litre flat-six has been moved, Porsche isn’t saying. It does admit, however, that the car is 60mm longer in the wheelbase than its predecessor.

“Position and orientation of the drivetrain are free,” explains Marco Ujhasi, project manager for GT works

motorsport at Porsche. “If there is an opportunity to push things to the limit in the rules, you go for it.

“There is an opportunity in the regulation to optimise weight distribution and aerodynamic efficiency, and we went for it. But it is still a 911.”

That drive for aero efficiency was made possible by the change in layout. With a rear-mounted engine, Porsche would have been unable to exploit the gains offered by the massive diffusers the cars are now allowed to run.

“The freedom, especially on the aero side, came from the freedom with the engine,” says Ujhasi. “That was necessary to close up to the others.”

It all adds up to a car that feels “much more like a real racing car”, according to Kevin Estre, who undertakes his first full programme as a Porsche factory driver in the IMSA SportsCar Championship this season.

“The first time I sat in the new car, it reminded me of something halfway between a Porsche and a McLaren [whose cars he raced in 2014-15]. It felt like a different car, but not completely opposite to what we had before. It still feels like a Porsche. The new one is an advance in terms of driveability because of the engine position and the weight distribution. With the old car you had to fight it much more.”

Porsche has retained the normally aspirated engine configuration from the previous RSR, though the powerplant is now based on a direct-injection unit. A turbocharged engine was considered but rejected.

So that’s one area in which the 911 RSR has nothing in common with either the 935 or the 911 GT1. ❄

LEADING CONTENDERS



CORVETTE RACING

Chevrolet Corvette C7.R

#3 Jan Magnussen/Antonio Garcia/Mike Rockenfeller

#4 Oliver Gavin/Tommy Milner/Marcel Fassler

IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR THE reigning IMSA class champions.

What they say: "If I was a betting man, I'd say Ford is the favourite, but

we are still going there to win. The way the track evolves, it's all about having a quick car at the end – which is what we've had the past two years."

Oliver Gavin



PORSCHE GT TEAM (CORE)

Porsche 911 RSR

#911 Patrick Pilet/Dirk Werner/Frederic Makowiecki

#912 Kevin Estre/Laurens Vanthoor/Richard Lietz

PORSCHE IS BACK WITH A NEW 911 and a rejigged driver line-up.

What they say: "I believe we are competitive and going into the race

in good shape. We know we have a reliable car because we've done a lot of testing, but to win at Daytona everything has got to be perfect."

Kevin Estre



BMW TEAM RLL (RAHAL)

BMW M6 GTLM

#19 Bill Auberlen/Alexander Sims/Augusto Farfus Jr/Bruno Spengler

#24 Martin Tomczyk/John Edwards/Nick Catsburg/Kuno Wittmer

THE UPGRADED GT3 M6 RACER contests a second season in IMSA.

What they say: "We're in a position where we should be in the mix, but it

is difficult to place where everyone is on the basis of the 'Roar' test earlier this month. It's all about being there in the final few hours of the race."

Alexander Sims



RISI COMPETIZIONE

Ferrari 488 GTE

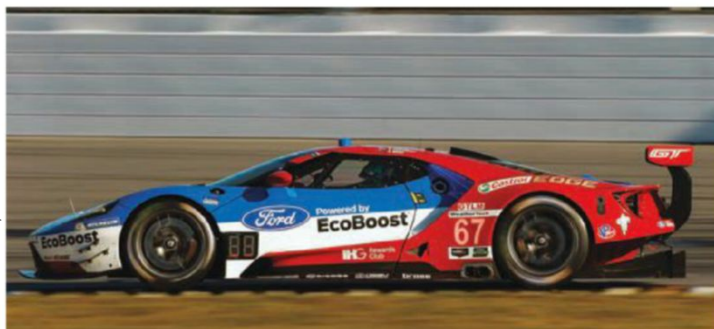
#62 Giancarlo Fisichella/Toni Vilander/James Calado

FERRARI'S HOPES AGAIN REST on a solo car from Risi.

What they say: "Ferrari looks like it will be in a better position than where

it was last year because of the Balance of Performance. We've got a chance of a podium, but Daytona isn't the 488's strongest track."

James Calado



FORD CHIP GANASSI RACING

Ford GT

#66 Dirk Muller/Joey Hand/Sebastien Bourdais

#67 Ryan Briscoe/Richard Westbrook/Scott Dixon

#68 Stefan Mucke/Olivier Pla/Billy Johnson

#69 Andy Priaulx/Harry Tincknell/Tony Kanaan

FORD HAS DOUBLED ITS EFFORT BY bringing in the WEC Ganassi team.

What they say: "It's wide open. Just look how close Petit Le Mans was at

the end of last year between Ferrari, Chevrolet and us, and now Porsche has got a new car. We've got the pace on a circuit that suits us."

Richard Westbrook



ASIAN LEMANS SERIES

Jackie Chan car gets kung-fu kicked

ASIAN LEMANS SERIES
SEPANG (MAL)
JANUARY 22
ROUND 4/4

ALGARVE PRO RACING NEEDED ITS Ligier-Nissan to take its first win in this final event of the four-round Asian Le Mans Series – with the Jackie Chan DC Racing ORECA-Nissan failing to finish – in order to claim the LMP2 title and with it an automatic qualification for a Le Mans 24 Hours entry. Incredibly, that's exactly what happened.

Ex-Formula Renault Eurocup race winner Andrea Pizzitola planted the Anglo-Portuguese team's car on pole by a fraction from Ho-Pin Tung, but the Sino-Dutchman looked a shoo-in to take the drivers' crown with co-driver Gustavo Menezes, along with the all-important Le Mans-qualifying teams' title for the Eurasia Motorsport-run Chan DC squad.

Andrea Roda took the start in the Algarve Pro car, but Giorgio Maggi, who was first up in the Race Performance ORECA-Judd qualified third by Struan Moore, clattered into the right-rear of Tung at Turn 1, causing substantial

damage. Tung managed to crawl back to the pits where the car was repaired. But overheating caused by the ORECA's slow lap proved fatal to the Nissan powerplant, and the car was out after just 45 minutes.

It was a heartbreak for the Eurasia team, which had only needed a finish to earn its ticket to Le Mans. "The #8 [Race Performance] car ran into us, it's as simple as that," said Eurasia team boss Mark Goddard. "The engine failure was a direct response to the very slow lap back to the pits, and this caused the cylinder head to fail, and that's the engine done. This is hugely disappointing for us and for Jackie Chan DC Racing as we've had the speed all year, and with one incident the championship has slipped away."

Pizzitola and Roda, joined for the first time by Australian Aidan Read (the Formula Masters China runner-up who is supported by Oliver Gavin) took the win they needed, with Pizzitola setting fastest lap on the very last tour. After a strong stint by Fabian Schiller, the Race Performance car slowed briefly with a technical issue, but Moore recovered to pass the all-gentleman-crewed second Algarve Pro Ligier – in the hands of

Chaos! Tung is hit by Maggi, Roda (25) is forced wide and Moore takes lead in his LMP3 car

Mark Patterson – for second with a few minutes remaining.

The destiny of the LMP3 title also changed hands at the finale. An inspired Nigel Moore, in Tockwith Motorsports' Ligier, stole the crown from the #4 ARC Bratislava Ginetta, and with it a Le Mans entry for the Yorkshire squad, which plans to contest the 24 Hours in LMP2.

Moore grabbed class pole at the last gasp, and even led the race overall for several laps after the LMP2 snafu at Turn 1. After co-driver Phil Hanson had done his stuff, Moore passed Hiroki Yoshida (in the Jackie Chan DC Racing Ligier he shared with James Winslow) for second, then took the lead late on from Hanss Lin in the G-Print by Triple 1 Ligier.

The ARC Bratislava squad – run in conjunction with Lanar Racing – failed in its title bid at the last gasp. The #4 car, in which Konstantins Calko moved in to partner Darren Burke, lost a stack of time with battery problems caused by a collision with a GT Ferrari, and took sixth.

RESULTS

1 Andrea Pizzitola/Andrea Roda/Aidan Read (Ligier-Nissan JSP2) 115 laps in 4h00m37.713s; 2 Struan Moore/Fabian Schiller/Giorgio Maggi (ORECA-Judd 03R) +1m45.896s; 3 Michael Munemann/Tacksung Kim/Mark Patterson (L-Judd JSP2); 4 Nigel Moore/Phil Hanson (L-N JSP3); 5 Shaun Thong/Hanss Lin (L-N JSP3); 6 James Winslow/David Cheng/Hiroki Yoshida (L-N JSP3).
LMP3 Moore/Hanson; 2 Thong/Lin; 3 Winslow/Cheng/Yoshida. **GT 1 Alex Yoong/Marchy Lee/Kyong Ouk You (Audi R8 LMS);** 2 Alex Riberas/Olivier Beretta/Rino Mastronardi (Ferrari 488 GT3); 3 Alessandro Pier Guidi/Davide Rizzo/Anthony Liu (Ferrari). **Points LMP2 1 Roda 78;** 2 Pizzitola 76; 3 Ho-Pin Tung/Gustavo Menezes 69. **LMP3 1 Moore/Hanson 77;** 2= Darren Burke & Winslow/Cheng 63. **GT 1 Michele Rugolo 62;** 2 Riberas/Beretta/Mastronardi 54; 3 Pier Guidi/Rizzo/Liu 53.

Ferrari crew champs as Audi wins

Ferrari team DH Racing ran out as GT class champion with a solid fifth place for its #5 car crewed by Matthieu Vaxiviere, Stephane Lemeret and Michele Rugolo – the

last-named taking the drivers' crown.

The lead fight was mainly between the sister Ferrari from the AF Corse-aided DH squad (crewed by Alex Riberas,

Olivier Beretta and Rino Mastronardi), the BBT Ferrari of Alessandro Pier Guidi, Davide Rizzo and Anthony Liu and the Team Audi Korea R8 LMS of Alex Yoong, Marchy Lee and

Kyong Ouk You. It was the Audi that won to break the Ferrari hegemony.

The BMWs struggled, the Tom Blomqvist car taking sixth from the Philipp Eng/Ollie Millroy M6.



EIJAN CAMERON

Verschoor stuns with wet-weather mastery

**TOYOTA RACING SERIES
TERETONGA (NZ)
JANUARY 21-22
ROUND 2/5**

DRIVING WITH A MATURITY THAT belied his age, 16-year-old reigning SMP and Spanish Formula 4 champion Richard Verschoor took two wins and a second to extend his series lead.

The opening day had a strong Australasian flavour, with Victory Racing team-mates Tom Randle and Brendon Leitch sharing fastest times in qualifying to take pole for the first and third races.

Racing off pole, Randle won the Saturday morning 15-lap race in the rain, but was judged to have moved before the start, and a 10-second penalty relegated him to seventh in the corrected results. This handed second-on-the-road Verschoor his first win of the campaign and promoted Leitch to second.

Ferrari protege Marcus Armstrong, winner of the first race of the opening round, was struggling with set-up and finished 11th, having tried his signature overtaking move around the outside of Teretonga's long and fast Turn 1 but finding Keyvan Andres unwilling to give way.

The following morning, as a 'weather bomb' broke across Southland, Pedro Piquet proved his mettle with a win from pole in the morning's reversed-grid race.

Leitch's weekend became a nightmare

at the start of that race when he and Ferdinand Habsburg became ensnared in a multi-car crash started by Enaam Ahmed, who pushed up on the pair to go three wide, then moved across and made wheel-to-wheel contact with Leitch.

That spun Ahmed's car into the tyre wall, while Leitch's machine was flicked into Habsburg's and the pair slid all the way to the outside of Turn 1 on rain-slicked grass.

The Leitch car was worst hit, suffering a broken bellhousing in the initial impact along with front and rear-suspension damage and bent wings. Unable to recreate his fast wet-weather set-up for race three, poleman Leitch could not hold the lead past the first few turns.

Out front, Giles Motorsport-run Verschoor showed his mastery of the abysmal conditions and drove away to a 10-second lead, while Jehan Daruvala could only defend second against Randle.

MARK BAKER

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Richard Verschoor 15 laps in 13m39.907s; 2 Brendon Leitch +0.459s; 3 Pedro Piquet; 4 Ferdinand Habsburg; 5 Enaam Ahmed; 6 Taylor Cockerton.

Race 2 1 Piquet 15 laps in 18m08.692s; 2 Verschoor +0.650s; 3 Tom Randle; 4 Marcus Armstrong; 5 Cockerton; 6 Kami Laliberte. **Race 3** 1 Verschoor 20 laps in 20m20.846s; 2 Jehan Daruvala +10.930s; 3 Randle; 4 Armstrong; 5 Piquet; 6 Laliberte.

Points 1 Verschoor 398; 2 Randle 340; 3 Piquet 307; 4 Daruvala 287; 5 Armstrong 273; 6 Cockerton 263.

Mastery in wet weather by a Dutch Red Bull driver... but it's Richard Verschoor, not Max Verstappen



BBBADE

Riviere flowed to a double win

Maximum for Mini man Riviere

**ANDROSTROPHY
LANS ENVERCORS (F)
JANUARY 20-21
ROUND 6/7**

BENJAMIN RIVIERE WAS the class act in his Mini, but it's Renault Clio man Jean-Baptiste Dubourg who has claimed the points lead ahead of this weekend's finale after disaster for multiple champion Jean-Philippe Dayraut.

Riviere topped qualifying on Friday from Dayraut, and then led the BMW throughout the final. But then Dayraut was stripped of his result for a technical irregularity discovered after Q2, promoting Olivier Panis (Audi) and Dubourg to second and third.

The domination continued for Riviere on Saturday, with Dubourg claiming second from Panis. A brilliant pass by Dayraut on the Mazda of Franck Lagorce in the final helped him to take fourth place.

RESULTS

Final 1 1 Benjamin Riviere (Mini Countryman) 8 laps in 6m31.485s; 2 Olivier Panis (Audi A1 Quattro) +6.618s; 3 Jean-Baptiste Dubourg (Renault Clio 3); 4 Evens Stievenart (BMW M2); 5 Bertrand Balas (Peugeot 3008); 6 Franck Lagorce (Mazda 3). **Final 2** 1 Riviere 8 laps in 6m36.562s; 2 Dubourg +2.420s; 3 Panis; 4 Jean-Philippe Dayraut (BMW); 5 Balas; 6 Benoit Treluyer (Audi). **Points** 1 Dubourg 635; 2 Dayraut 618; 3 Panis 607; 4 Riviere 594; 5 Lagorce 580; 6 Treluyer 502.

SOUTH EAST ASIAN F4

Presley is the king after the final round, with 16-year-old Indonesian Presley Martono leaving them all shook up by wresting the crown at the Sepang finale with three wins. The other winners were Isyraf Danish, Danial Nielsen Frost and Akash Gowda. It was heartbreak hotel for Faine Kahia, who held the points advantage but slipped to runner-up.

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HRDC 2017 RACE CALENDAR



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

* Please note these date changes!

KEY:


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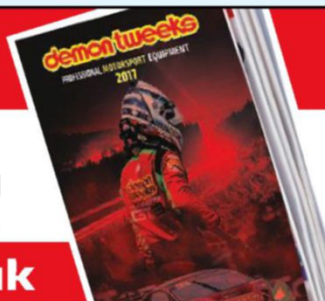
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Situation Vacant

The British Automobile Racing Club Limited wish to appoint a circuit manager at its Motorsport Centre at Croft, Yorkshire. Applicants should be able to demonstrate a good knowledge of motorsport management and a commercial awareness.

Candidates interested in applying for this position are asked to submit an application letter, together with a current CV for the attention of: **Mandy Curley, BARC Ltd, Thruxton Circuit, Andover, Hampshire SP11 8PN**, or by email to mcurley@barc.net.

Closing Date: **Friday, 3rd February 2017**

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The BARC, established in 1912 is Britain's largest motor sport club. Originally based at Brooklands and Goodwood before moving to Thruxton, the BARC runs over 30 championships at more than 70 meetings during the year including circuit racing, hillclimbs, sprints and rallycross.

For further information on the BARC visit: www.barc.net or contact press@barc.net



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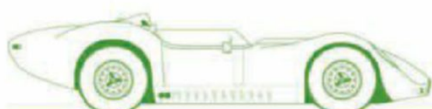
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STEPHEN LICKORISH
SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

🐦 @sdlickorish

Ticktum joins Red Bull junior team for full-time race return

BRITISH TEENAGER DAN TICKTUM HAS JOINED the Red Bull junior team for 2017 and will compete in the Formula Renault Eurocup with Arden.

The 17-year-old made a return to racing late last year in European F3 at Hockenheim after serving a 12-month ban following an incident at Silverstone during an MSA Formula race in 2015. He also competed in the BRDC British F3 Autumn Trophy and Macau Grand Prix.

Ticktum, who had a previous affiliation to Red Bull through its Athletes scheme, will race full-time in the Eurocup as Arden makes its debut in the category.

"Some people will know the mistakes I've made," said Ticktum. "I have changed my attitude massively and I cannot wait to prove that to everyone. [I want] to win the European Formula Renault 2.0-litre championship."

Ticktum also tested with the Tech 1 Racing and R-Ace GP squads at the end of last year before joining Arden.

"He did some work with us at the end of last year,"

said Arden general manager Julian Rouse. "We've known him for a few years and have been following his progress. He's a really talented driver and it's good to see him back racing this year.

"The objective will be to get as close to winning the championship as we possibly can. It's an exciting year for him and he's really motivated."

Ironically, it was a collision with an Arden car that led to Ticktum's racing ban, after he crashed into Ricky Collard in the MSA Formula race while behind the safety car.

Rouse added that Arden is close to finalising its three-car Eurocup line-up.

Ticktum will be joined in the series by two other Red Bull juniors, Richard Verschoor and Neil Verhagen, who are both competing with the returning MP Motorsport squad. But Luis Leeds, who was third in British F4 last year and will contest the Eurocup with Josef Kaufmann Racing, will no longer be part of the Red Bull programme.

JUST OVER A YEAR AGO DAN Ticktum's career was in tatters. He was given a 12-month ban after crashing into Ricky Collard during an MSA Formula race. But in a remarkable turnaround Ticktum has secured a spot in the Red Bull junior team. And it's a place he deserves.

In the aftermath of the Silverstone incident there were calls for Ticktum to be banned for life. But this was a driver who was just 16 and in his first season of car racing. What he did was wrong, but at that age surely he deserved the chance to learn from his mistake.

He's now had a year to think about his actions, a year where he could mature and change his hot-headed approach.

And let us not forget what he achieved in 2015. He took three wins when up against last year's McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalists Lando Norris, Sennan Fielding, Toby Sowery and Collard.

He is a talented racer and it will be fascinating to see how he gets on in the Formula Renault Eurocup. He's been given a golden opportunity, and now he must impress.

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MSV

MSV deal ‘assures Donington future’

JONATHAN PALMER SAYS HIS MOTORSPORT Vision group’s takeover of the operation of Donington Park will assure its long-term future, but he has ruled out a deal for Silverstone.

Palmer’s deal to take on a 21-year lease of the circuit was announced two weeks ago, and the track will join Brands Hatch, Cadwell Park, Oulton Park and Snetterton in MSV’s portfolio.

“It is becoming increasingly difficult for solo circuits to operate well with the funding restraints that come with operating alone,” said Palmer. “By tying up this deal, we will help to build a strong future for Donington Park. We have the infrastructure within the other parts of our business that can only be of benefit to Donington Park and its operation.”

Palmer said that his lease also has a further option, meaning his group could be in charge of the venue for up to 40 years, while also admitting that the circuit required some work.

“We want to keep the heart and soul of the circuit as it always has been – it is one of the most challenging tracks in the UK and it has unparalleled history,” he said.

“We need to look at some of the safety aspects of the track, and some sizeable areas are in need of resurfacing. Those are the sorts of things we will be able to look at straight away. Also, the paddock area needs some work to bring it up to a good standard.”

He added he was no longer pursuing a deal to take over the running of Silverstone.

“We expressed an interest initially, but we are now going to focus our operations on our existing businesses,” said Palmer. “This deal with Donington was not a deal instead of Silverstone – it was completely separate. But we have no plans to operate Silverstone any more.”

● Silverstone owner the British Racing Drivers’ Club insists it has not made a firm decision on whether or not to activate a break clause in its British Grand Prix contract. The BRDC has previously admitted it was considering activating the clause – which would be enacted after the 2019 grand prix – but last week moved to issue a statement saying it was yet to reach a formal decision, despite reports to the contrary.

BRDC BRITISH F3

Das confirms British F3 deal to complete Carlin’s 2017 line-up

AMERICAN CAMERON DAS HAS completed Carlin’s 2017 BRDC British Formula 3 Championship line-up.

The 16-year-old became the winner of the inaugural US Formula 4 Championship last year and also competed in USF2000 before contesting the British F3 Autumn Trophy at Snetterton with Carlin last October, finishing seventh overall with a best finish of fifth.

Das told Autosport after that event that he was keen to contest the full championship in 2017 and was in talks to join Carlin.

His tie-up with the squad – which ran Ricky Collard to second in the revamped championship last year – was confirmed on Monday, with Das joining the previously confirmed James Pull and Enaam Ahmed to complete Carlin’s line-up.

“British Formula 3 feels like the natural next step in my racing development,” said Das.

“I’ve already had a chance to see Carlin in action and I couldn’t be more excited to spend the 2017 season with them. I cannot wait for the first race weekend.”

Das’s deal means he becomes the seventh driver to confirm his place on the 2017 grid.





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THRUXTON

New hospitality suite for Thruxton

THRUXTON CIRCUIT WILL GET ITS FIRST new building in more than 30 years with the creation of a two-storey hospitality suite on the inside of Allard corner.

Bosses at the Hampshire circuit hope to start the build of the new £1.5million fixture just after the British Superbike Championship round in late August.

The structure will be created on the site of the current Goodwood restaurant and Thruxton Suite.

The building's location will provide more space for the construction of a new, longer and wider pitlane, with the build of new pit garages being weighed up for the future.

"The original restaurant and suite were put there in 1984 as part of a temporary solution; it's taken a while to get the answer!" Thruxton group managing director Bill Coombs said.

Coombs added that the building, which will include a viewing balcony, would boast a restaurant for spectators and competitors.

IN BRIEF



CLUBMANS ALTERS CLASS STRUCTURE

The BARC Clubmans Championship has renamed its classes in an attempt to simplify its structure. It previously operated a Clubmans division, with Proto and Sports 1600 classes, and a second division for visiting Classic Clubmans Championship cars split into four classes. It will now run three Clubmans Sports Prototype classes – CSP1, 2 and 3 – to allow guesting HSCC cars to compete in the same categories as the newer machinery.

DORAN BACK TO VAG TROPHY CLASS B

Christie Doran will again compete in Class B of the VAG Trophy this year with Slidesports. The 21-year-old took three wins from the last five races in 2016, when she was driving a Volkswagen Golf Mk5.

PEREZ TO STEP UP TO SUPERCUP

Ginetta Junior driver Seb Perez will step up to the Yorkshire manufacturer's GT4 Supercup for 2017 with JHR Developments. Perez, 17, therefore stays with the team with which he finished 20th and 10th in Juniors in 2015 and '16 respectively.

COWLEY HEADS FOR FF DOWN UNDER

Matthew Cowley will race at the Phillip Island Classic Car Festival of Speed in Australia in March. The 2015 Pre-'90 Northern and National champion will drive a Reynard 88FF owned by Andy Nethercote and previously raced by Rick Morris under the Ecurie Australie banner.

WIGGIN TO MAKE SPORTSCAR START

BMW Compact Cup runner-up Joe Wiggin will switch to sportscar racing as he moves to the 750 Motor Club's RGB Championship. The 21-year-old will spearhead a two-car assault on the title by Aries Motorsport, at the wheel of one of the team's Honda-powered Sabres.

POLLEY SWITCHES TO 750MC CLIOS

Stock Hatch champion Ryan Polley (below) will move to the 750 Motor Club's Clio 182 Championship for 2017. The 17-year-old has acquired an ex-Mark Hammersley/Aaron Williamson car to race in the 14-round series.



MX-5 SUPERCUP

Porsche champion Styryn in MX-5 move

BRSCC PORSCHE CHAMPION Richard Styryn will race in the Mazda MX-5 SuperCup this year.

Styryn, who in 2016 added his third Porsche title to back-to-back successes in '12 and '13, will drive a Mk3 Mazda backed by AK Automotive.

"We won the Porsche titles in 2012 and 2013 and took

some time off before giving it another bash last year," he said. "After that, the thought of another season with the Porsche didn't really fill me with much excitement.

"There are basically dozens of winners on the Mazda grid. This season is going to be great – the grid is huge and I haven't

a clue how I'll get on."

Styryn joins another champion, BMW Compact Cup title winner Steve Roberts, in switching to the series for 2017, while '16 MX-5 Supercup champion James Blake-Baldwin has also confirmed that he will return to bid for another crown.



HISTORICS

De Villota to restore Lyncar

THE UNIQUE FORMULA 1 LYNCAR 006 that New Zealander John Nicholson raced in the 1975 British Grand Prix is being restored by its subsequent owner Emilio de Villota.

The car, in which de Villota won the 1977 ShellSport Group 8 opener at Mallory Park (left of photo, above), will be returned to original spec and Iberia Airlines colours.

De Villota, now 70, reacquired the Martin

Slater-designed machine last year. He has gifted it to son Emilio Jr, owner and operator of the Teo Martin Motorsport team.

De Villota Sr won the 1980 Aurora British F1 title with a RAM-run Williams FW07, plus the Enna-Pergusa and Brands Hatch '81 World Endurance rounds sharing Guy Edwards' Lola-DFL T600. He may demonstrate the Lyncar, but will not race it.



BRSCC series gets race-format, fuel, tyre and class changes for 2017

FORMULA FORD 1600

FF1600 gets rules shake-up

THE BRSCC FORMULA FORD 1600 NATIONAL Championship will run to a new structure this year.

Instead of being divided into post-'89 and pre-'90 classes solely according to chassis age, two new categories – National Pro and Clubman – have been created.

All pre-'90 cars will go into the Clubman class, along with drivers of post-'89 machinery who have not finished within the top three of any FF1600 race within the past three years. The rest of the post-'89 drivers will run in the National Pro division. Clubman drivers will have unlimited tyres, whereas the National Pro participants will retain their restriction of one set per weekend.

The new Clubman division will feature a full range of age-related classes, and championship chairman Ian Wolfenden says it replaces what had become a poorly supported pre-'90 national series.

"Last year we had the two national championships," said Wolfenden. "I competed in pre-'90 – there were only four of us competing for it. There was a whole championship and no need for it. The new Clubman series will allow drivers to run modern cars without

competing with National Pro drivers. It's for drivers like me, who are a bit long in the tooth, or ones who are just starting out and need the experience."

The championship will also run a revised format, switching from two 20-minute races per weekend to three 15-minute bouts.

The first-race grid will be decided by qualifying, while the starting order for race two will be settled by the finishing position in the previous race. The third race of the weekend will feature a ballot-grid draw, with the top eight from race two picking their starting spot out of a hat.

After experimenting with a control fuel at the Formula Ford Festival – also organised by the BRSCC – the championship will roll out a controlled pump-fuel system for all national rounds this year.

- Jack Wolfenden, son of Ian, will drive a Firman RF16 in the championship in 2017. Wolfenden joins Josh Smith, who announced his plans at Autosport International, in a two-car Myerscough Motorsport team.

SPORTS 2000

GINETTA PRIZE FOR S2000 WINNER

THE WINNER OF THIS year's Sports 2000 Duratec Championship will win a fully funded test in a Ginetta GT4 Supercup machine after a link-up with Century Motorsport.

The British GT team has offered the prize, which is worth around £4000, as it seeks to support the series and expand its racing activities.

Team boss Nathan Freke said: "I've known [Sports 2000 regular] Mike Turner for a few years and he's previously recommended some drivers to come and test with us, so this made sense as a prize.

"S2000 has been going for years and is a very credible championship, and a lot of its champions have gone into GT racing."

Turner said: "Every series is looking for a way to make itself more attractive. GT racing is so high-profile at the moment so it's a very relevant prize."

In addition to the Ginetta prize test, S2000 constructor MCR will award a funded test in one of its Duratec cars to the winner of this year's Pinto Championship, which uses the category's initial 138bhp engine.

MALLORY PARK

Mallory Park calendar down to four car events due to date clashes

MALLORY PARK'S CAR-RACING schedule has dropped from six events to four for 2017.

The venue, which has been run by the Real Motorsport group since 2013, played host to five visiting clubs last year, when it planned seven car events before October's Star of Mallory FF1600 meeting was canned.

That has been reduced to three visiting clubs for 2017, with neither the 750 Motor Club nor the MG Car Club

returning for meetings due to calendar clashes.

"We couldn't find a suitable date with the 750 Motor Club," said Real Motorsports events manager Natalie Hansard. "It wasn't that they weren't keen to come; we tried lots of different weekends."

"I spoke to John [Hutchinson] from the MG Car Club at the Autosport show and they've been here the last few years, so they've just changed the calendar for this year but

should be back next year.

"This year it's slightly more imbalanced and we'd love to have more car racing meetings. But on the other side of the coin, we've attracted two very big motorbike clubs back this year that haven't been here since we took over the circuit."

Car events will be April 30 (BARC), August 12 (VSCC), September 24 (BRSCC) and the traditional Plum Pudding meeting on December 26.



VSCC will still entertain the Mallory masses



Taupo Historic GP calls me back to NZ

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@Autosport](#)

AS A LAD I WAS ALWAYS FASCINATED BY MOTOR racing in New Zealand, as far away from Great Britain as the sport is practised. Reading Autosport every week kept me up to speed with the exploits of Bruce McLaren, Chris Amon and their peers in the Tasman Series long before I saw them compete here in Formula 1, towards the pinnacles of their careers. When I first went down under to see racing on their home soil – taking off from Los Angeles late on Christmas Eve 1990, following an unscheduled stop in Dallas, and arriving in Auckland on Boxing Day morning – suddenly a vibrant scene came alive for me.

The venues I visited following Global Sports' Peter Jackson International tour – Teretonga (outside Invercargill), Levels (Timaru) and Ruapuna (Christchurch) on the rugged Southland, then Manfeild (Palmerston North), Bay Park (Tauranga) and Pukekohe (south of Auckland) on the North Island on successive weekends – remain indelibly imprinted on my brain and in back numbers of the magazine. They represent some of my fondest memories, thanks to Brian Lawrence who brokered a deal with magazine editor Peter Foubister to get me to cover the Formula Atlantic-centred events topically. In truth, it was so cost-effective he couldn't refuse. And I had almost eight weeks out of the office as a bonus.

It was an idyllic time, during which I made enduring friendships. Young guns Craig Baird and Paul Radisich took on wily veteran Ken Smith in the feature category – effectively the equivalent of the Toyota Racing Series being contested in NZ now – but I met many other legends along the way. Seeing 1967 F1 World Champion Denny Hulme painting the barriers at Bay Park pre-event, delivering a trailer to 1970 Tasman champ Graeme Lawrence, then staying over

in Hamilton and being introduced to the Prime Minister at Manfeild were among the highlights.

I've subsequently been back a couple of times for big Historic events – even competing on the same tracks as Ken Smith in 2006 in Murray Sinclair's Chevron B23 sportscar, and in 2010 in Frank Lyons's F5000 Viceroy Lola T400 at the inauguration of the Hampton Downs venue – but this weekend I will be back in the Southern Hemisphere for the start of something new.

Many legends of NZ racing will be making the pilgrimage to Taupo's Bruce McLaren Motorsport Park, the country's top FIA circuit upgraded for A1GP's visit in 2007 (when Nico Hulkenberg dominated), for the inaugural Historic GP. At the event's heart is a Race of Champions-style head to head between F5000 and F1 cars of the pre-'78 era. Smith, now 75 and fresh from a stunning run on the lengthened Hampton Downs circuit last weekend in his Lola T332, heads the five-litre stock-block pack. He faces reigning FIA Masters division champion Michael Lyons, a third of his age, whose Hesketh 308E is among nine F1 machines.

Three fifths of the 50-strong Formula Junior field, meanwhile, has travelled from overseas to contest the next round of the FJHRA's Diamond Jubilee World Tour, overseen in NZ by period Gemini Mk4a racer Howden Ganley who, like compatriot Hulme, went on to make his name in F1 and sportscars. Western Australia's Joe Ricciardo, father of Red Bull F1 racer Daniel, is among the international contingent, as are 16 dedicated racers from the UK. Touring Cars – with 1985 European champion Gianfranco Brancatelli reunited with his '87 CiBiEmme BMW M3 – and Formula Fords complete the all-action bill. 🏁



SMITH THE BOSS AT HAMPTON DOWNS

New Zealand Festival of Motor Racing star Ken Smith (Lola T332) won all three of last weekend's SAS Autoparts Formula 5000 Tasman Revival races at Hampton Downs. The period F5000 champion and quadruple Historic title winner was twice chased home by Briton Mark Dwyer (ex-Johnnie Walker Lola T330/332), who Clark Proctor (March 73A) pipped to second in the finale. Smith won all bar one of the Formule Libre and FF1600 races too, in Swift DB4 and Lola T342 respectively.



LAMPLOUGH AND THORNTON WIN IN NZ

Britons have starred in the Historic Formula Junior races at Hampton Downs over the past two weekends. Veteran Robb Lamplough's maiden FJ win in the first production Brabham – the stunning ex-Briggs Cunningham/Augie Pabst BT2, chassis FJ-1-62 (above) – was the talk of the short-circuit event. Greg Thornton (Lotus 20/22) bagged four from four when the action subsequently switched to the long track for New Zealand's first leg of the Diamond Jubilee World Tour.

Inside club racing's closest rivalry

Patrick Fletcher and James Bark have fought relentlessly on track for the last two years, but will the Clio drivers face off again in 2017?

By Stephen Lickorish, Special Correspondent

[@sdlickorish](#)

Five points over two years. That's the difference between Patrick Fletcher and James Bark after 28 races during 2015 and '16. There have been some intense rivalries throughout motorsport in recent years – think Lewis Hamilton versus Nico Rosberg or Jason Plato versus Matt Neal – but few have been as close as the Clio 182 Championship duo.

Right from the moment when ex-Golf GTI Mk2 racer Bark entered the 750 Motor Club series at the start of 2015, it was clear that he would be a driver to watch. Former Stock Hatch champion Fletcher took part in the inaugural non-championship season the year before, but Bark instantly caught his attention.

"James started Clios two years ago and was the new kid on the block," 24-year-old Fletcher recalls. "The second race was wet and he won. Ever since then he's been at the front." And ever since then

one of the most enthralling rivalries in club racing has flourished.

The pair duked it out throughout 2015 and ended the season tied on 261 points after a dramatic Donington Park finale. It was Bark who claimed the title on countback thanks to his greater number of wins (six to four).

Then, in 2016, the duo's superiority was even more marked, as they won every race between them. This time it was Fletcher who sealed the crown by just five points after another tense showdown.

"The year I won it in 2015 we were really lucky because in the middle of the season we were quite a way behind him," remembers 26-year-old Bark. "I wouldn't give up, but it pretty much looked like he would win. Everything had to go right for me to win."

But it did. Fletcher held the advantage going into the final two Donington races, but had a nightmare in the opener, finishing 12th after an attempted move on his rival resulted in him going off. It was Bark's turn to falter in race two when he ran wide out of the lead early on, but second behind Fletcher was enough for

the points to tie and the title to be his.

Fast-forward 12 months and the title battle was equally dramatic, with it once again coming down to the final race.

Very early on in the year it became a two-horse race between the pair, with each driver generally taking one win per weekend – often with Bark winning the opener and Fletcher triumphing in race two. The big exception was Croft, where a gearbox issue for Bark led to the only non-finish for either driver across the two years.

Nevertheless, Bark still headed to the final meeting at Rockingham in a strong position. "We both won seven races last year and if I had won the last race I think we would've tied on points again," he says. "I'm a bit frustrated because the last lap was cut short [there were eight laps instead of the earlier race's nine] and I was right behind him."

"What's frustrating for me is I should've won it. I had a good lead but he caught me and I then thought we had another lap."

So it was Fletcher who this time walked away with the title, but that final weekend wasn't without controversy. As with any good rivalry, the on-track action was hard fought and inevitably paint was exchanged.

"I ran him wide in the first race and we got called into the clerks and they said I shouldn't have done that," admits Bark, who wasn't penalised. "I thought it was on and I just ran him wide so he couldn't come back at me. Then in the last race he came at me from quite a long way back and ran me wide. If I was in his position I would've done the same thing."

But despite having been fierce rivals for the past two seasons, the pair get on well. "He's a really nice guy off the track," says Fletcher. "At the end of the year what was really nice was James gave me a massive hug after the last race."

Bark adds: "We do seem to get on well, which is surprising! He is a really nice lad and he doesn't have an ego about



WINSTANLEY

Bark (r) congratulates Fletcher on taking the Clio 182 title at Rockingham last year



JONES



“Considering it’s only a 750MC championship we take it very seriously – we think it’s like F1!”

him. It doesn’t get heated, but his team wants to beat us and we want to beat him – they’re probably worse than me and ‘Patch!’”

Bark also says that the pair have their own fan bases in the paddock, with Fletcher’s previous Stock Hatch triumph meaning he has the support of many people from the 750MC, while Bark’s former Golf colleagues want him to win.

Considering how close they are on track – they have shared seven one-two

finishes where the winning margin was less than a second – it’s not surprising that their rivalry is all-consuming.

“I’ve really enjoyed those last two years and it’s on your mind constantly,” says Bark. “When you look at how many points are available in a season and all the different variables, it’s quite amazing. You always know you have to beat him and there’s not a day that goes by when you aren’t thinking how you can do better. If it wasn’t competitive between >>



JONES

“I think one of us would’ve been near-suicidal if the other had won both titles!”

us, then we wouldn’t have had the gearbox reconditioned during the year. You have to chuck everything at it to try to beat him.

“I wouldn’t have done it again last year if Patrick wasn’t in it. It’s great – if we had not had him last year we would’ve won it by quite a margin, which is not what you want.

“I was pretty devastated [after losing the 2016 title] and was mardy for a month. I think one of us would’ve been near-suicidal if the other had won both titles!”

Fletcher says that having such a competitive rival added extra pressure in the final stages of the championship. “I was really nervous before the last race at Rockingham and couldn’t really sleep,” he says. “Considering it’s only a 750 Motor Club championship, we take it very seriously – we think it’s like F1! Barky is a bit like Niki Lauda, while I’m more like James Hunt as I feel like I’m going to be sick before a race.”

Having raced together for the past two years, they know each other’s strengths and weaknesses inside out. “Over one lap he is probably faster, but over the course of a race and in the wet I’m quicker,” reckons Bark. “I haven’t lost a wet race in the past two years and I tend to start a bit better. He had a lot more pole positions than I did; and fastest laps – he had five this year and I had one, and that accounts for the difference in points.”

Fletcher also believes that having someone as quick as Bark to race against has brought him on as a driver. “It’s really good because when Barky came along it really highlighted my weaknesses,” he says. “In the wet he was really quick, so it was good as it pushed me to do better. My wet set-up has changed quite a bit because of going back through all the videos of him.”

Knowing each other’s driving styles so

well has also impacted on how they race. “If he’s coming up the inside of you it’s because he thinks there’s a pass on,” says Bark, while Fletcher adds: “It’s different to other rivalries – there’s a lot more trust.”

So after two years, the title victories are balanced at one each. But instead of 2017 being the deciding year between the two, it’s now looking more likely to be the year the rivalry breaks up.

Bark admits he is struggling to raise the budget for another season in Clios, meaning he could be forced onto the sidelines. For the self-employed fish-and-chip-van man, 2016 was a bonus as he had intended to compete on alternate years. The racing weekends were taking a toll – because of the rivalry with Fletcher he was testing on Fridays, but that meant a long commute home in the evening for his business’s busiest day of the week before rushing back to the track for the weekend’s racing.

But Bark is determined to resume the rivalry again at some point, even if he can’t race this year. “I’m not selling the car and if I can I will do it again in 2018,” he says. “Hopefully someone will come along with a good sponsor package for this year.”

Fletcher admits it won’t quite be the same if Bark isn’t competing against him. “Something would be missing if Barky wasn’t there,” he says. But Bark insists that even if the duo were to take each other on again in 2017, they may not have it their own way.

“There’s ex-Stock Hatch champion Jeff Humphries and Matt Digby who was quick in the first year [he was third in the 2015 standings] and some young karters coming in,” he says.

Even so, you can predict fireworks if they do compete against each other on the Clio grid. With the score at 1-1, would it be ‘Barky’ or ‘Patch’ who scores the winner? 🏆

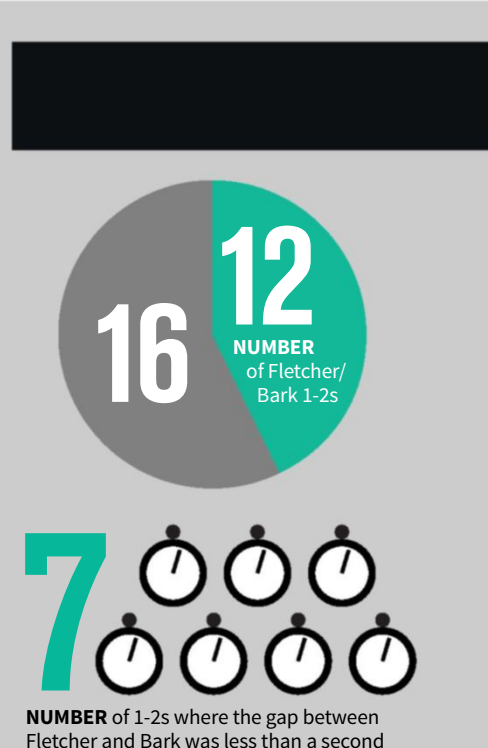


JONES

The racing has often been very close between Fletcher (29) and Bark (85)



JONES



Fletcher and Bark finished first and second 12 times from 28 races in 2015-16



IN NUMBERS



86%

PERCENTAGE
of Clio 182 wins
taken by Fletcher/
Bark over the
past two years

78



NUMBER of points between Fletcher and third-placed Philip Wright in 2016



1

NUMBER
of times
neither
Fletcher nor
Bark finished
on the
podium
in 28 races

TOTAL RACES **NON-PODIUMS**

HEAD TO HEAD FLETCHER VERSUS BARK (2015-16)



FLETCHER

11
12
14
11
1
671
12th

WINS
OTHER PODIUMS
POLES
FASTEST LAPS
TITLES
POINTS
WORST FINISH

BARK

13
8
6
7
1
666
7th

WHAT'S ON

How we could watch motorsport in the future

THINKING ABOUT HOW WE'RE going to be consuming motorsport content in the coming years can be quite fun if you let your imagination run wild. I've often heard the phrase 'Netflix for motorsport' used when people consider racing's televisual utopia. Andros Trophy on demand? I'll have some of that...

Video-on-demand is an option that already exists in 'light' form if you have a proper TV package – access to BT Sport, Motors TV and Sky Sports F1, combined with something like Sky Plus or Tivo, and you're away. Everything you could ever want to watch, at your fingertips.

Except it's not really at your fingertips, and it's only really banking programmes that are coming up. Having access to a vault of footage that you could fire up whenever you want is the dream. And your phone's at your fingertips – ever thought about that being the normal way for you to watch motor racing live?

I once watched the first few laps of a grand prix, streamed on Sky Go on my mobile phone, while bored at London Waterloo station – I've also taken in GP3 and GP2 while hammering along a Southeastern service from Teynham to London Victoria. Entertainment truly on demand. And these aren't even the glory days – that's incredibly basic!

I often like to joke that I love living 'in the future', because I'm constantly



amazed by what we have at our disposal – same-day delivery with Amazon Prime, the ability to record and replay any television show/broadcast we like, and a gargantuan database of podcasts, shows, films and the like easily downloadable to a Kindle or an iPad.

That's why it's so exciting to think of how motorsport could be delivered in the future. The DTM already broadcasts

Traditional TV broadcasting is small fry compared to other options out there

entire races live on YouTube in territories where it doesn't have a serious pay-to-view option, while Formula E uses this service and links it to Facebook to allow you to watch practice sessions and qualifying on your laptop or your phone. There are so many ways to escape the tentacles of traditional TV broadcasting – long gone are the days when if it wasn't in the TV guide, you'd miss out.

But there's so much more to come. Betting companies allow in-app live streaming of some pretty major competitions – I've followed the Australian Open on my Sky Bet app and Serie A football with Paddy Power. I can put up with a 10-second delay if it means I have a legitimate way to follow something that's actually really difficult to watch without illegal streaming. One option could be combining in-race betting with live streaming for F1, or MotoGP, or WEC. There are so many options. What about the ever-



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There are many ways we could soon be watching motorsport via our phones



DUNBAR/LAT

expanding world of eSports? Could we be clamouring to watch huge sim-racing events live on Twitch in the coming years?

Will we reach a point where F1's incredible archive of footage is readily available for people willing to pay a monthly premium? If there was a way to spend £10/£15/£20 per month to access bespoke videos on your laptop, through your smart television or phone, I suspect many fans would jump at the chance – they already do in their droves in wrestling.

I have long been a fan of BT Sport's investment in motorsport coverage, mainly because I really enjoy following the Formula Renault Eurocup, and I've always liked having Motors TV as a free-to-air option. But finding ways to follow any championship – from F1 to low-key series – on television is so small-fry with the options that are out there and waiting to be embraced.

SCOTT MITCHELL



HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube ANYTHING FORMULA 1 CAN DO...

Search for: MotoGP Champion Races Up Snow and Ice at World Cup Ski Course

Last winter Red Bull's Max Verstappen drove an F1 car on the legendary Streif ski course in Kitzbuhel, Austria. This time it's MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez's turn to navigate the route on a Honda RC213V sporting scary-looking tyre spikes.



CANTRELL/LAT

**TV PICK
OF THE
WEEK**

DAYTONA 24 HOURS

MOTORS TV
Saturday 1900

Last week marked the start of the World Rally Championship's new era. This week it's the turn of the IMSA SportsCar Championship to celebrate a new beginning, with the Daytona 24 Hours the first race to feature DPi cars. Motors TV has live coverage of some of the enduro starting from 1900 on Saturday and 1200 on Sunday.

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

DAYTONA 24 HOURS
IMSA SportsCar
Rd 1/12
Daytona, Florida, USA
January 28-29

MRF CHALLENGE
Rd 3/4
Buddh, India
January 28-29

TOYOTA RACING SERIES
Rd 3/5
Hampton Downs, New Zealand
January 28-29

ANDROS TROPHY
Rd 7/7
Super Besse, France
January 28





THE ARCHIVE

The Ford Escort RS of Ari Vatanen and David Richards fights for adhesion – the state of the bodywork indicating that this struggle wasn't always settled in the car's favour – en route to victory in the 1981 Welsh Rally.

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ANDREW JORDAN

Andrew Jordan is renowned for his versatility. Having cut his teeth in rallying, he's gone on to become a leading light in British Touring Cars, and has won historic races in recent years. But his trip to Daytona and its banking still left a lasting impression.

Jordan was just about to embark on a successful BTCC campaign with his family-run Eurotech Honda Civic in 2013 when he decided to contest the SportsCar Challenge race supporting the Daytona 24 Hours. Although he drove a Compass360 Racing Honda in the United States, it was a deal he put together himself, with his own sponsorship.

"We saw the team was advertising for drivers so we contacted them," recalls the 27-year-old. "We thought it'd be good to get my name out there and see what it was like."

Jordan was quickest in the Group N-style ST class on the pre-event test, but his co-driver James Colborn qualified near the back and started the race. "There was a safety car and lots of teams brought their cars in to put their quick drivers in, but we stayed out," says Jordan. "We made our stop under green and when I jumped in we were at the back.

"After that it was really good. We got another safety car and I was able to race my way through."

Jordan came home 31st overall and seventh in class, part of a four-car train contesting fifth. But it was the event as a whole he remembers best. "The whole thing was an eye-opener – the banking, racing three abreast, hearing the GT cars [in the leading GS class] come past, and the side-draft," he says. "I can see why NASCAR drivers earn so much!"

The speed differential between the quick cars and the lower class was a challenge. "If there was a quick car coming up to you at the fast chicane on the back straight, you'd end up blocking them because you didn't want to lose momentum," says Jordan. "You had to work out where was beneficial to you to let them past rather than just jumping out of the way."

Jordan enjoyed it so much he considered starting his own programme: "We looked at running cars out there ourselves, but we couldn't make the numbers work. It was a great experience and I'd love to do more."

KEVIN TURNER



EBREY/LAT

Jordan's a champion in British tin-tops, but a taste of Daytona left him wanting more



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