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F1 How Verstappen beat Mercedes in Abu Dhabi GP

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TOP 50 We rate the best drivers of a remarkable year

AUTOSPORT

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17-24 DECEMBER 2020

TOP 50 DRIVERS of 2020



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New hope for 2021 or another false dawn for Red Bull?

Red Bull started the belated 2020 Formula 1 season around 1% behind Mercedes on raw pace, a gap not seen at the front of the field since the gizmo-laden cars of the early 1990s. But it has diligently chipped away at the deficit, and Max Verstappen's win in last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix was just reward for all involved.

As Alex Kalinauckas shows in our report on page 16, the victory was a genuine one – the first time the W11 has really been beaten in a straight fight, at the 17th time of asking. In the end, Red Bull's average gap to Mercedes reduced to just under 0.6% – a fine effort, albeit not enough for a title challenge. So what does this mean for 2021?

On the positive side, Red Bull has traditionally started on the back foot and then closed on Mercedes during the campaign. Given that the cars will largely stay the same for next season, that means it *should* still be close at the start of 2021. And Mercedes will no longer be able to use the benefit of its much-discussed dual-axis steering.

On the other hand, Mercedes has not bothered with much development on the W11 since the Belgian GP in August. What does it have up its sleeve? And will we see the answer in 2021 or 2022?

For the sake of close competition, let's hope that Red Bull will genuinely be closer next year. We really want to see the top two drivers in our Top 50 (p37) fighting it out more often in 2021...





Kevin Turner
Chief Editor
kevin.turner@autosport.com

NEXT WEEK
31 DECEMBER
F1 season review special
We look back at the highs and lows of F1's strangest year



COVER IMAGES

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PIT & PADDOCK

6 Porsche to return to Le Mans top flight
8 Montoya heading back to Indy 500
10 Loeb joins forces with Hamilton
13 Americans buy into McLaren
14 Opinion: Alex Kalinauckas
15 Feedback: your letters

RACE CENTRE

16 Abu Dhabi GP report and analysis
33 World of Sport: Kyalami 9 Hours

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

37 Autosport's top 50 drivers of 2020
64 Pictures of the year
78 The UK's fastest laps of 2020
80 World of Sport review: WTCR; Australian Supercars; Super GT; Super Formula; Porsche Supercup; Formula Regional European; IMSA; NASCAR Cup; GT World Challenge Europe; ELMS; Euroformula Open; DTM; World Rallycross; Formula Renault Eurocup
90 Christmas quiz
92 Damon Hill's greatest F1 drives
100 Motorsport heroes of WW2
106 Stories of motorsport memorabilia
112 Martin Brundle's gift from 'Santa'

CLUB AUTOSPORT

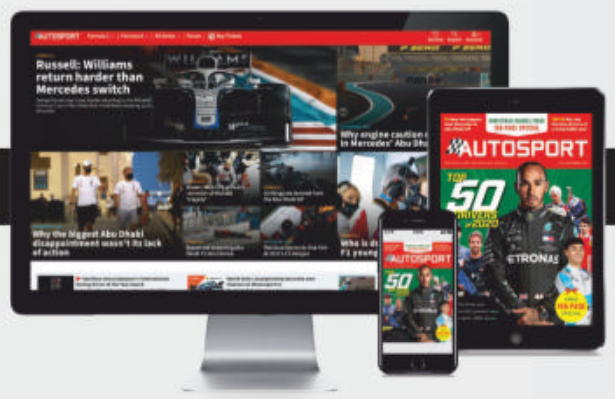
124 Adam/Howard reunite for Brit GT attack
126 AMOC and BRSCC partner for 2021
129 Opinion: Stephen Lickorish
130 National report: Donington Park
132 Marcus Pye's moments of the season
136 Top 10 club drivers of 2020
138 Top 10 club rivalries of 2020
140 National pictures of the year

FINISHING STRAIGHT

148 What's on this week
151 Top five non-F1 stories of 2020
152 From the archive: 1995 Monaco GP
154 Autosport 70: Alonso tops our list

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

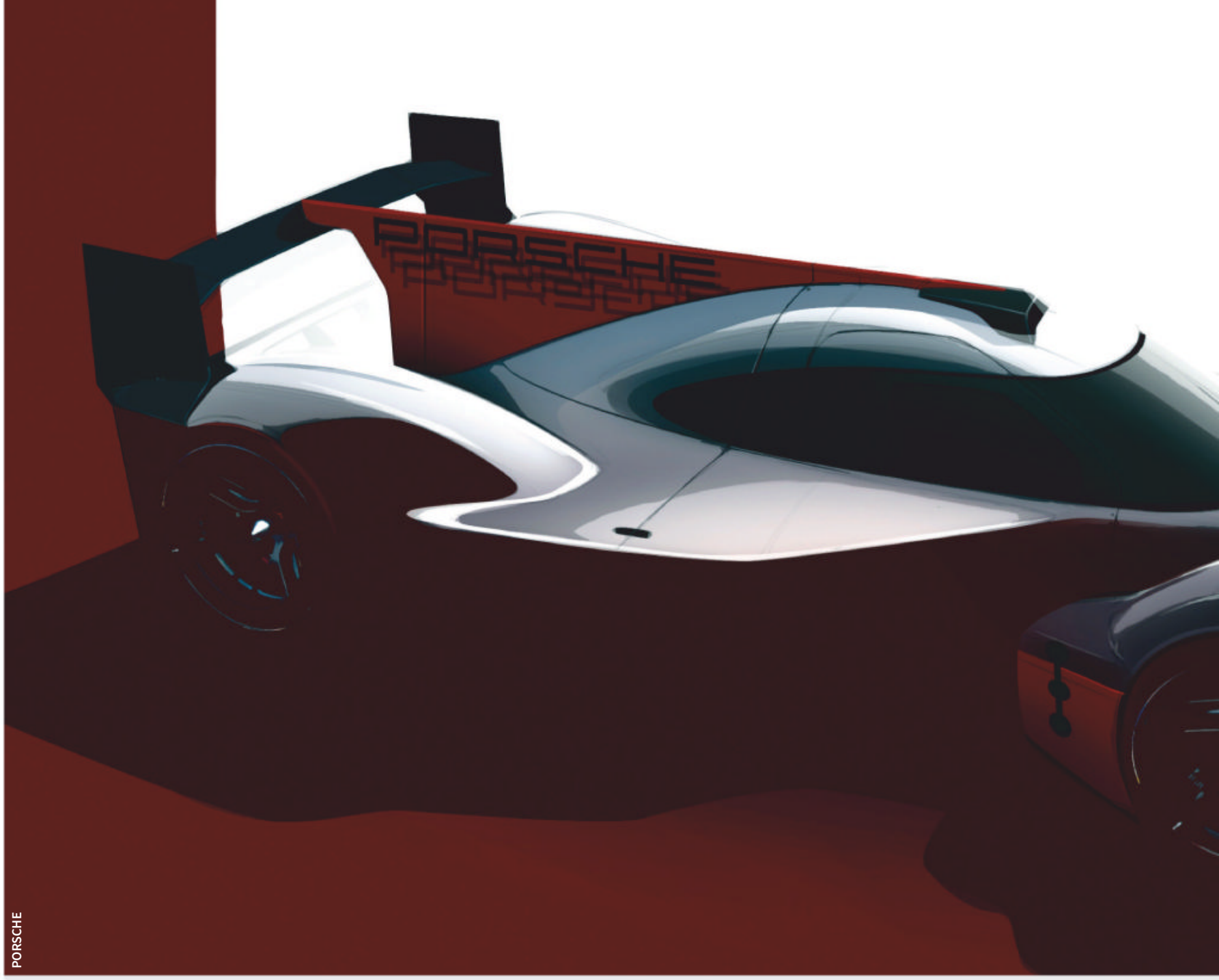
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PORSCHE

PORSCHE RETURNS TO LE MANS

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Porsche will again challenge for outright honours at the Le Mans 24 Hours from 2023. The German manufacturer has announced its return to the top flight of sportscar racing with a new LMDh challenger that will race in the World Endurance Championship and the IMSA SportsCar Championship in North America.

The confirmation of Porsche's plans to develop an LMDh prototype around one of the four next-generation LMP2 chassis for 2023 mean that it will have been absent from the sharp end of the grid for only five years since the end of the 919 Hybrid LMP1 programme after the 2017 season. The LMDh category, announced in January of this year, offered compelling arguments for Porsche to make a quick return after it revealed back in March that it was evaluating the new class.

Chief among them, according to Pascal Zurlinden, head of factory motorsport at Porsche, were the cost-effectiveness of developing an LMDh hybrid and that the category allows a manufacturer to race in both the WEC and IMSA with the same car.

"We are fully convinced of this concept," said Zurlinden. "The best way to look at it is to look at the Daytona Prototype international class in IMSA [from which LMDh takes it principles]. You can see outstanding racing at a high level but at reasonable cost.

"Motor racing at the moment is definitely guided by maximum cost efficiency and, in this light, having some spec parts is an important factor to reduce costs. The LMDh concept allows Porsche to continue to showcase the brand's DNA, which is going endurance racing. We can race both championships and in the biggest races in the world with one car. We intend to run in both championships with full commitment for the full championship from 2023."

Porsche CEO Oliver Blume summed it up succinctly: "The new LMDh category allows us to fight for overall victories with a hybrid system at the Le Mans, Daytona and Sebring classics without breaking the bank."

Porsche has revealed to the world that it will be back at the front line of sportscar racing in two years' time, and put out some images of how it might interpret the LMDh body regulations, which allow a manufacturer to impart its design cues on the car. But it has yet to reveal how it will make that return, which will begin with the 2023 IMSA season opener at the Daytona 24 Hours.

Zurlinden insisted that it had yet to be decided which of the four LMP2 constructors — ORECA, Ligier, Dallara and Multimatic — it will work with. What engine will power the car has also not been decided. "This will be the next step to decide which constructor we will go for," said Zurlinden. "Looking at the powerplant, we have not the final decision, but if you look at all the vehicles we have at Porsche, all the sportscars, we have many engines that could fit in this car."

Asked to clarify whether the LMHh powerplant, which will combine with a spec rear-axle hybrid system, would be based on a production engine, he replied: "This is in the decision, but an engine based on a road car is probably more cost effective."

Porsche has also yet to reveal how it will go racing at the front of the grid in the WEC and IMSA, whether with full factory teams or customers or both. "This



From this genesis, is Porsche heading into a new 956/962-type era?

TOP FLIGHT

subject is still in evaluation," said Zurlinden. "It will be decided in the next months. Everything is possible."

But he dropped some heavy hints that Porsche will make its LMDh prototype available to customers, drawing comparisons with the Porsche 956/962 Group C design of the 1980s and early 1990s. "We think that an LMDh vehicle is very attractive for potential customers in terms of cost," he explained. "If you look back at the 1980s, 1990s there is a long success story of also having customers in such classes. Even if there are works teams, if a customer Porsche wins, it is still a Porsche win."

JANI RETURNS TO WEC LINE-UP

Le Mans 24 Hours winner Neel Jani will make a full-time return to the sportscar ranks with his long-time employer next year in the GTE Pro ranks. The Swiss, dropped for Pascal Wehrlein in the Porsche Formula E squad for the coming season, will replace Michael Christensen alongside Kevin Estre in next year's WEC.

Jani, who won Le Mans in 2016 during his four-year stint with the LMP1 squad, joins the GTE Pro line-up after making his race debut in a 911 RSR at the IMSA finale at last month's Sebring 12 Hours.

Christensen will leave Porsche's factory roster along with Nick Tandy, who has joined the Corvette Racing IMSA squad for 2021, two-time Le Mans winner Earl Bamber, Patrick Pilet, Dirk Werner and Sven Muller. Christensen and Bamber will retain their links with the marque and have been designated as drivers for its customer programmes with the 911 GT3-R in the GT World Challenge Europe.

GARY WATKINS



PEUGEOT

Peugeot reveals V6 twin-turbo philosophy

WEC

Peugeot's new Le Mans Hypercar will be powered by a 2.6-litre twin-turbo V6. The news was announced last week along with a raft of technical details of its World Endurance Championship prototype due to begin racing over the course of 2022.

The configuration of what is a bespoke racing engine, which is being developed in-house by Peugeot Sport at the group's PSA Motorsport headquarters in Satory-Versailles, "offers the best trade-off between technology, weight, packaging of the engine's ancillaries, reliability and performance", according to the marque's WEC powertrain boss Francois Coudrain. He wouldn't disclose the V-angle of the new powerplant, because "we don't want to give too much detail in terms of the organic design".

"We initially considered a single turbo, but that would have prevented us from achieving our engine's centre of gravity target," he added.

The new petrol engine, which weighs 165kg, will combine with a front-axle energy-retrieval system to create what the marque has dubbed the Peugeot Hybrid4 500kW powertrain. The 500 figure refers to the maximum power, equivalent to 680bhp, allowed by the LMH regulations.

The V6 will be able to hit that figure or work in conjunction with the 200kW or 272bhp hybrid system, also developed in-house. The Peugeot's 900V high-density battery is being developed in conjunction with Saft, a subsidiary of Peugeot lubricant partner Total.

The engine is expected to run on the bench for the first time in the spring, before the complete powertrain runs on a special four-wheel-drive dyno before the end of the first half of the year. It will then run in the car before the conclusion of 2021.

Peugeot has again refused to commit to when it will join the WEC over the course of 2022 season. "We are not close to making that decision; we are not even ready to decide internally on this," said WEC programme director Olivier Jansonnie. "We have built a schedule that will allow us to test by the end of 2021 and from that point on we should know relatively quickly the level of reliability of the car. We don't want to take the risk of starting races before we achieve the right level of reliability."

The decisions on who will drive the car have also not been made, according to PSA Motorsport boss Jean-Marc Finot. "There are a lot of drivers interested in this iconic Peugeot Sport programme and we are in touch with many of them," he said. "I would just say that we have time because the car will not run until the end of 2021, so we will take our time to have the best team possible."

GARY WATKINS


FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED

Daruvala prepares to take Carlin mantle from Tsunoda

FORMULA 2

Red Bull Junior Jehan Daruvala showed he is ready to move out of the shadow of sensational 2020 rookie team-mate Yuki Tsunoda during last week's post-season Bahrain Formula 2 test if, as expected, he returns to the series with Carlin next season.

The Mumbai racer, 12th in the points this year, finished in the top two in four of the five sessions, and was quickest overall on each of the first two of three days of testing. Daruvala set the fastest time of the entire running on the morning of the second day.

While only four drivers — Prema Racing pair Robert Shwartzman and Oscar Piastri, Virtuosi Racing newcomer Felipe Drugovich and Campos Racing's F2 returnee Ralph Boschung — have been confirmed for 2021 seats, you can use the post-season test line-ups as a good barometer of how the field will line up. It is traditional for many of the deals in F2 to be as good as in place by the time the post-season tests happen, even if they haven't been announced yet.

Intriguingly, Williams protege Dan Ticktum, who has competed with DAMS this season, joined Daruvala at Carlin for the whole test. The Briton went second on day one with a time he never quite repeated, and was third on the second day.

F2 veteran Louis Deletraz showed good form with MP Motorsport ahead of what is expected to be a switch to the Dutch squad alongside FIA F3 race winner Lirim Zendeli for 2021. He topped the final day ahead of Daruvala, although fell 0.141 seconds shy of the Indian's benchmark from day two.

As expected, 2020 title contender Shwartzman was quick with Prema, and finished the test third overall ahead of Ticktum. Hitech GP pair Juri Vips and Liam Lawson rounded out the top six. Both Red Bull Juniors are nailed on for seats at the British team for 2021, and Lawson was the fastest of those never to have raced in F2.

Ferrari protege Marcus Armstrong, who has raced with ART Grand Prix this year, moved to DAMS for the test, where he partnered Roy Nissany. Hotly tipped Renault F1 Junior Christian Lundgaard, meanwhile, looks set to stay at ART and was joined in the team last week by the squad's 2020 FIA F3 sensation Theo Pourchaire.

At Virtuosi, Drugovich was joined on the first two days by the team's F2 race winner Guanyu Zhou, before the Chinese made way for FIA F3 graduate Clement Novalak, who drove with Trident up to that point. Callum Ilott did the first day with Charouz, but has said he will not race in F2 in 2021.

MARCUS SIMMONS

TOP 10 TIMES

POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	**Jehan Daruvala** (Carlin)	1m41.686s
2	**Louis Deletraz** (MP)	1m41.827s
3	**Robert Shwartzman** (Prema)	1m41.853s
4	**Dan Ticktum** (Carlin)	1m41.954s
5	**Juri Vips** (Hitech)	1m42.145s
6	**Liam Lawson** (Hitech)	1m42.177s
7	**Ralph Boschung** (Campos)	1m42.244s
8	**Marcus Armstrong** (DAMS)	1m42.281s
9	**Felipe Drugovich** (Virtuosi)	1m42.373s
10	**David Beckmann** (Charouz)	1m42.398s

Montoya for Indy 500 return

INDIANAPOLIS 500

Two-time Indianapolis 500 winner Juan Pablo Montoya will return to the McLaren fold next year to race a third Arrow McLaren SP car in the US classic.

The 45-year-old Colombian, who won the 500 for Chip Ganassi Racing in 2000 and for Team Penske in 2015, will join the team's full-timers Pato O'Ward and Felix Rosenqvist at IndyCar's flagship event. He departed full-time open-wheel racing at the end of the 2016 IndyCar season, but returned to Penske for the Indy 500 in 2017, which is his most recent IndyCar race.

Montoya first joined McLaren in 2005 in F1 and took three grand prix victories, although he split with the team and F1 midway through the 2006 campaign.

"I'm very excited to be joining Arrow McLaren SP for the Indianapolis 500," said Montoya. "I have some great history with McLaren from my F1 days and I'm looking forward to making some more at next year's Indianapolis 500."

Arrow McLaren SP co-owner Sam Schmidt is "thrilled" to have Montoya on board and believes his experience will "elevate" the Chevrolet-powered team next year. "Arrow McLaren SP is thrilled to have a driver of Juan's calibre join the team for next year's Indianapolis 500," he added. "His experience will elevate the entire team, including our young, talented line-up of Pato and Felix. When you think that he's only started the Indy 500 five times but won it twice, that's impressive."

Since departing IndyCar, Montoya has added the 2019 IMSA SportsCar championship title to his CV and next year competes full-time for DragonSpeed in the World Endurance Championship.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ


LEVITT/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



FORMULA 1 Fernando Alonso was reunited with his 2005 title-winning Renault R25 for a series of show runs at the Abu Dhabi GP to celebrate the French manufacturer's contribution to F1. Alonso lapped around five seconds off the pole time for Sunday's race in the 15-year-old car, with the V10 engine proving a hit in the paddock. "We miss the sound," Alonso said. "We miss the F1 that we got in love with." **Photograph by Hone/Motorsport Images**

McLaren eyes Formula E entry as a team

FORMULA E

McLaren is evaluating entering Formula E as a team with the new Gen3 car once the McLaren Applied Technologies battery contract ends after the 2021-22 season.

With the FIA awarding Williams Advanced Engineering the deal for the next rules set, which will reduce car weight by 120kg and boost power to 470bhp, McLaren will no longer be precluded from entering a team.

"With the new-generation car coming in 2023, and us no longer being the exclusive battery supplier, that's a racing series that we find very interesting," said McLaren CEO Zak Brown. "That's something that we are starting to look at more closely."

FE grew to 12 teams for the 2019-20 season but will have two free slots from next year after BMW and Audi confirmed they would exit at the end of the forthcoming campaign.

Brown added that, with the introduction of a cost cap for the Gen3 rules, FE did not face a great risk to its future.

"Having 10 teams, that's still a very strong field," he said. "I see [Audi's and BMW's exits] more as an opportunity. It's deep with manufacturer support, so I'm ultimately not concerned. But you do have to get to the bottom of why they left."

LUKE SMITH







World title count is 16 as Loeb joins Hamilton

EXTREME E

Formula 1's statistically most successful driver has signed the World Rally Championship's statistically most successful driver, with Sebastien Loeb joining Lewis Hamilton's X44 Extreme E team for the inaugural 2021 season. The announcement of the nine-time WRC champion is the latest coup for Alejandro Agag's nascent electric SUV championship.

Loeb joins the driver fold alongside double WRC champion Carlos Sainz Sr, two-time DTM title winner Mattias Ekstrom and triple World Rallycross king Johan Kristoffersson, who is part of the driver pairing for Nico Rosberg's team.

A winner at World Touring Car, World RX and FIA GT level, Loeb will be 47 come the first event in Saudi Arabia in March. He possesses some XE experience from driving the ODYSSEY 21 in southern France alongside Sainz and Valtteri Bottas in October. Loeb has also conducted a private test with his X44 team-mate, Dakar Rally regular and 2015 Spanish National All Terrain Rally Championship runner-up Cristina Gutierrez, at Donington Park.

"Joining team X44 is an opportunity for me to continue to do what I love, which is race, and I'm looking forward to competing in an electric vehicle – I had the chance to drive the car recently and it is incredible," said Loeb. "I am really impressed by what Lewis is doing in Formula 1 too, so to be able to work with him on this is an honour."

Hamilton said: "They are both incredible drivers and I'm looking forward to seeing what they're going to do. Sebastien is a driver I have admired for so many years so I'm proud and excited to have them on board."

MATT KEW

Autosport International goes digital in March

ASI

Autosport International Connect will take the place of the traditional Autosport International curtain raiser next year.

The online digital networking event will take place on 10-11 March as a result of the fallout of the pandemic, which has made it impossible for the annual January extravaganza in the Birmingham NEC to be run on its intended slot of 14-17 January.

ASI Connect will be an online marketplace allowing trade attendees and exhibitors to network, present products and services, do business and share knowledge. It will host an array of forums, roundtables, keynotes and panel discussions. The Motorsport Leaders Business Forum will also be hosted on ASI Connect.

ASI operations director Mandy Cox said: "We'll be bringing together the motorsport industry, not just for one weekend, but for 365 days a year. ASI Connect will become another key pillar of ASI's future strategy to improve our partners' benefits.

"We'll be releasing videos highlighting the top ASI moments from throughout the years and exclusive driver interviews."





Lechner shared this Brun Porsche at Le Mans in 1989 with Roland Ratzenberger and Maurizio Sandro Sala

PORSCHE

Walter Lechner 1949-2020

OBITUARY

Walter Lechner, who has died at the age of 71, achieved arguably his greatest successes in the Porsche Supercup as a team owner beyond his 50th birthday. But a haul of titles in the Formula 1 support series was only the crowning achievement of a long and varied motorsport career.

The Austrian's team has won the Supercup crown 11 times since 2005, a tally that includes hat-tricks for Rene Rast in 2010-12 and Michael Ammermuller in 2017-19. Lechner Racing remains unbeaten to the title in the one-make Porsche championship since 2014.

The team — and its successes — predate its entry into the Supercup in 2003. Run off the back of the racing school that bore Lechner's name, it fielded among others Stefan Bellof and Alex Wurz in junior single-seaters. Both won the German Formula Ford title with the Walter Lechner Racing School.

Lechner was also a successful driver who contested the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1988 and 1989 with the Brun Porsche team. He was European Super Vee champion in 1982 driving a self-run Ralt RT5, and claimed no fewer than five titles in the pan-European run-what-you-brung Interserie. He even briefly raced in Can-Am in North America at the wheel of a Williams FW07 Formula 1 car with bodywork covering its wheels.

Damien Faulkner, who finished runner-up in the Supercup with Lechner in 2007 and 2008, described him as "without a doubt one of the hardest working individuals I've ever met in motorsport".

"He was smart and shrewd, very entrepreneurial, and a hard businessman," says the Irishman. "He wasn't afraid to show it, but he was always fair and would take risks, which is what he did with me. He was a racer at heart, and so determined to win and so focused. I remember when I did the Dubai 24 Hours with the team, he was on the pitwall for the full 24 hours doing the strategy."

GARY WATKINS

QUINN IS ARDEN TARGET FOR REGIONAL ALPINE

FORMULA REGIONAL

Leading Formula Renault Eurocup team Arden International hopes to run its 2020 rookie champion Alex Quinn in next season's new Formula Regional by Alpine series — the merger between FRenault and the short-lived FRegional European contest.

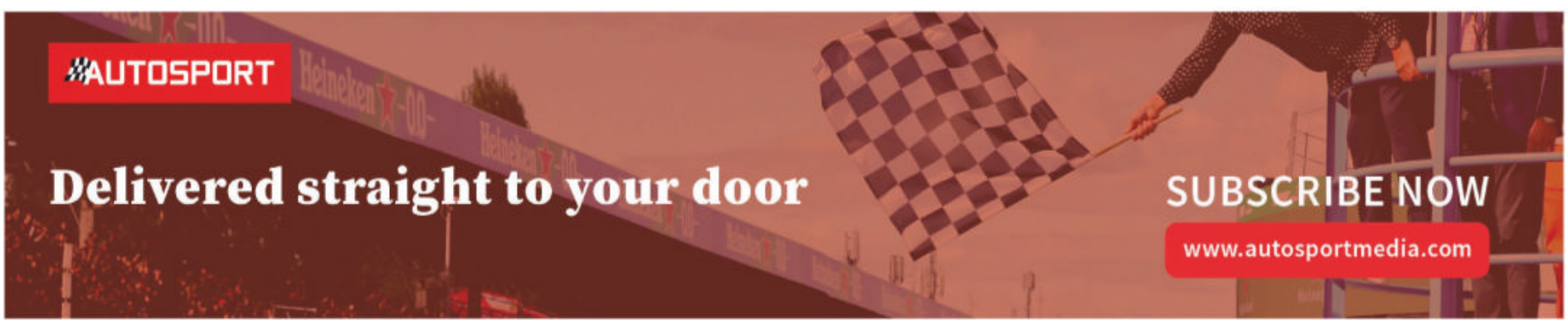
Quinn joined the Arden line-up for last week's two-day test at Paul Ricard, which was run by FRegional's Italian organisers and attended by the FRenault teams, as the series will run the French powerplants.

The Cornish racer only got called up at the last minute in 2020 due to coronavirus protocols ruling out Arden's Australian signing Jackson Walls, but took a win at Spa on his way to fourth overall. "Since the Racing Steps Foundation [of which Quinn was part] collapsed, Garry [Horner, Arden boss] has been the one who's looked after Alex's career," said Arden team chief Ben Salter. "This year he's had the opportunity and he's delivered. The kid's got talent."

Another FRenault race winner, David Vidales, has been confirmed as part of dominant FRegional squad Prema Powerteam's line-up for the series, although Prema did not take part in the test.

Fastest at Ricard was Gregoire Saucy with ART Grand Prix, the team with which he raced in 2020. Newly crowned Italian F4 champion, Ferrari junior Gabriele Mini, was second in another ART car. Mini's 2020 Ferrari and Prema stablemate Dino Beganovic was third with Arden, with Quinn fourth.

MARCUS SIMMONS



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Americans buy into McLaren

FORMULA 1

McLaren has sold a minority stake in its Formula 1 team to a group of American investors in a deal worth £185million.

The team announced ahead of last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix that MSP Sports Capital has bought a stake worth an initial 15% in McLaren Racing, with a view to increase its shareholding to a maximum of 33% by 2022. The company has experience in the NBA and Major League Baseball, and considered investing in Force India and Williams in the past.

The deal comes as a boost to McLaren following a troubled year financially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It agreed a £150m loan agreement with the National Bank of Bahrain in June to increase liquidity, and is in the process of selling the McLaren Technology Centre before leasing it back.

"This investment represents a key moment in the progress of McLaren Racing," said McLaren CEO Zak Brown. "This bolsters our plan to return McLaren to contention for race wins and championships in Formula 1 and IndyCar, and will strengthen our positive momentum as we continue to focus relentlessly on our mission to return to the top of the podium."

The day-to-day running of McLaren Racing will remain unchanged, with Brown remaining in his role as CEO and committing his long-term future to the project. Paul Walsh will continue as chairman, and said the investment from MSP was required even without the impact of the pandemic due to the previously "fragile" financial situation. New investor Jahm Najafi will become a vice-chairman of the company, while MSP partner Jeff Moorad joins the board of directors.

FERRARI CEO CAMILLERI RESIGNS

Ferrari CEO Louis C Camilleri resigned from the role last week with immediate effect after two years in charge, citing personal reasons. He is understood to have contracted COVID-19 in recent weeks.

Camilleri (below, with team principal Mattia Binotto) took over in the summer of 2018 following the death of Sergio Marchionne, and helped raise Ferrari's stock price from €113 to €179.

Ferrari chairman John Elkann will take on the role on an interim basis before a successor is appointed.

LUKE SMITH



IN THE HEADLINES

HAMILTON STRAIGHT

Silverstone has named the pitstraight of its Grand Prix Circuit to honour Lewis Hamilton following his seventh Formula 1 world title. The Hamilton Straight is the only part of the Silverstone venue ever to have been named after a driver.

GOFF STAYS AT HARD

British Touring Car Championship race winner Jack Goff will continue with Team Hard for two more seasons. He will lead development of the squad's new Cupra Leon, which will replace the venerable Volkswagen CC for 2021. Elsewhere in the BTCC, Bert Taylor has left the BTC Racing team he founded and is eyeing new opportunities in the series. BTC, which will continue to run Honda Civics, is now under sole charge of Steve Dudman, who bought the team from Taylor.

MULLER GETS DRAGON SEAT

DTM runner-up Nico Muller will remain on board at Dragon Penske Autosport for the coming Formula E season. The Swiss, who will partner Sergio Sette Camara, is the last of the 24-driver field to be confirmed.

McLARENS IN THE DTM

The British-run, Bahraini-funded 2Seas Motorsport team is to enter the DTM next season, with a pair of McLaren 720S GT3 cars. 2Seas began its activities in 2020, but diverted its programme from GT World Challenge Europe to British GT due to the coronavirus pandemic. 2Seas coach and McLaren factory driver Ben Barnicoat is tipped for a seat.

TF ASTON FOR DAYTONA

Top British Aston Martin team TF Sport is to make its Daytona 24 Hours debut next month, competing in the GTD class with a Vantage GT3. TF regular Charlie Eastwood will be joined in the car by Richard Westbrook, Ben Keating and Maxwell Root.

JOHN HARVEY 1938-2020

A winner of the 1983 Bathurst 1000 and the inaugural race of the World Touring Car Championship in 1987, Australian John Harvey died recently. He was 82. Harvey's most famous successes came in Holden Commodores, alongside Peter Brock and Larry Perkins at Bathurst, and Allan Moffat in the infamous Monza WTCC race. With Moffat, he was fourth in the 1987 Spa 24 Hours.



The biggest loss in Abu Dhabi

Lewis Hamilton's return from his sickbed was remarkable, but it also robbed the F1 season finale of what would have been its most engaging storyline

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

On paper, Mercedes' first Abu Dhabi Grand Prix defeat since 2013 is a shock result. But, watching from the cavernous, near-empty media centre at the Yas Marina track — Sergio Perez's abandoned RP20 in sight after the Mexican's unfortunate final Racing Point outing ended in retirement — it didn't feel like it.

Once Max Verstappen had aced the safety-car restart following Perez's machine being tidied away, it was clear he was going to win unless something really unexpected happened. His pace was even better than it had been before, despite Mercedes curing the understeer problems that Valtteri Bottas had been experiencing in the curtailed opening stint on the medium tyres.

Verstappen and Red Bull were worthy winners, showing their class once again. Defeating Mercedes in any way is impressive, let alone leading every lap from pole. But the 2020 Formula 1 season finale was insipid and uninspiring — the near-total opposite of the thriller the Sakhir GP had been the previous weekend.

Now, of course, not every F1 race can be a blockbuster, and the 2020 season has still contained some corkers. You only have to think back to some famous past races that featured little overtaking — the 2005 and 2006 San Marino GPs, for example — yet are still considered classics. Even the surprise visit to Imola in 2020 contained a decent race, despite the overtaking difficulty at the circuit resulting in just six passes.

> **"By returning, Lewis Hamilton cancelled the second round of a new and fascinating battle"**

But, unless you were Verstappen or Red Bull, the Abu Dhabi race simply never sparked. Once the battle for the lead was effectively over, the spotlight swung to the fight for third place in the constructors' championship. But McLaren's mighty qualifying performance and Racing Point's pre-practice call to change Perez's engine — which, painfully, didn't pay off — meant that fight had a clear winner before too long as well.

Arguably, the most significant achievement of the race was Lewis Hamilton's return from being laid low by COVID-19. This isn't jingoistic support for the sake of it (it never is, Twitter!); any driver returning from time spent "bedridden" by a horrible disease deserves respect. And to almost beat someone as fast as Bottas in qualifying and come away with a podium deserves even more. But Hamilton's return robbed the season finale of a better narrative.

This is not to denigrate the world champion. He has produced another masterful season, sealing a record-equalling title haul and doing so quickly enough that he could afford to miss a race as a result of the threat that has hung over every driver this year.

On the face of it, he didn't need to return at all — his place at the centre of the season's story secure, all the success that really matters already attained. But that is simply not how Hamilton works. "I'm not 100%," Hamilton said after qualifying. "I still have some feeling within my lungs but nonetheless, normally I would drive if one of my arms was hanging off."

But by returning, Hamilton cancelled the second round of a new and fascinating battle: Bottas versus George Russell. The pair only had one race as Mercedes team-mates in 2020 — that Sakhir thriller. And each came away with a certain feeling of unfinished business after Mercedes' pitstop blunder had cost them places and ended the second-stint chase that never got to conclude.

Despite deputising for Hamilton in the pre-event media calls in Abu Dhabi, Russell transferred back to Williams and came home 15th, lapped by the car in which he'd nearly won the preceding race.

Bottas did all he really could in Abu Dhabi. He beat Hamilton in both qualifying and the race, but Mercedes was never a match for Red Bull given its problems getting the tyres to work as they normally do. The Finn was in something of an unwinnable situation — beat Hamilton and it'd be against a sub-par world champion recovering from illness, or lose and come away looking worse for the same reason.

Something has clearly changed at Mercedes since the Sakhir race, with team principal Toto Wolff moved to speak on the radio ahead of Bottas's final Q3 lap to offer his driver more encouragement. This, Bottas said, was the result of a chat the pair had had "about different things", which resulted in him getting further support from his team boss.

And so Bottas delivered what he could in his difficult circumstances. The problem he's now got is intrinsically linked with Hamilton's decision to return for the season finale and Russell being sent back to Williams.

F1 heads into the off-season on the back of an entirely forgettable race. The lasting memory for many will be Russell's starring Sakhir drive, and speculation about what that will mean for Mercedes' 2022 line-up will no doubt abound over the winter.

Just as Russell lost a second chance to show what he can do for the Black Arrows, and prove his daring debut was not a one-off on a short and uncomplicated track, so Bottas lost the chance to win the rematch and realign this narrative on an entirely different track as the 2020 season draws to a close.

P16 ABU DHABI GP REPORT

YOUR SAY

It was heroic of Hamilton to compete in Abu Dhabi, but misguided; he clearly wasn't 100% fit (and said as much afterwards) and so wasted his seat in this year's best car

ANDY CHILD

Mercedes drops the ball again

Having thrown away the Sakhir Grand Prix with a disastrous pitstop, Mercedes has done it again, but with a bit more subtlety this time.

It was heroic of Lewis Hamilton to compete in Abu Dhabi, but misguided; he clearly wasn't 100% fit (and said as much afterwards) and so wasted his seat in this year's best car. Valtteri Bottas was content to play 'follow my leader' as is his norm these days, so Max Verstappen didn't need a second invitation to capitalise on all this and score a fine win. The real losers were us fans watching a boring procession.

What makes this especially irritating is that we could have had a really fine race if only two things had happened: Lewis had honestly admitted it was too soon to claim to be fully fit (COVID-19 is a mean little brute!) and George Russell had been given a second go at Mercedes (perhaps partially to make amends for *that* pitstop at Sakhir). Then Max would have had a rival worthy of his skills and we'd have had a proper race.

Who would have won? It's probably too close to call, but it would have been fascinating to see it play out on the track.

Andy Child
Frimley, Surrey

Highlights from an extraordinary year

Who would have thought 2020 could produce 17 interesting F1 GPs in 23 weeks, amid all the restrictions brought about by the coronavirus. Or that the F1 family would observe so closely COVID-19 test routines to have a one in 1000 positive testing rate — albeit that three drivers missed races.

There are so many people to thank. From Liberty and the FIA, to the ASNs of the countries involved, the circuit operators and their employees, race officials and the volunteer marshals, always there when required. The teams themselves and drivers involved in several back-to-back race weekends, at the expense of lost time at home for many team members.

Highlights? One must be Lewis Hamilton creating new records in every measurable feature of F1 racing — achieved without recourse to the dubious driving tactics of a couple of his predecessors. However, my lasting memory of the year 2020 will be the truly miraculous escape of Romain Grosjean from the huge crash and inferno on the opening lap of the first GP in Bahrain. How clearly he recounts his escape.



To all those involved in his rescue, gracious thanks from everyone involved in motorsport. Most of all, thanks to all safety crusaders, from Sir Jackie Stewart and Professor Sid Watkins onwards. The constant attention to improved safety made Romain's escape possible; a great achievement.

George Copeland
Wokingham

Time to say thank you

To the FIA, Liberty, the teams, drivers, officials and marshals, Pirelli, DHL, the venues, sponsors, broadcasters, and last but not least, the journalists; thank you, thank you, thank you. Now enjoy a break.

Graeme Innes-Johnstone
Elland, West Yorks

No time for a break just yet — there's our F1 season review issue to look forward to, on sale Thursday 31 December — ed

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HOW MAX TURNED THE TABLES ON MERCEDES

Red Bull surprised by having the edge on Mercedes at the 2020 season finale, as Verstappen took a convincing 10th F1 career victory

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES



To hear that Red Bull has defeated the mighty Mercedes squad suggests a Formula 1 race of great excitement has taken place. It calls to mind Max Verstappen's brilliant win in the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix back in the summer, where the Dutchman executed an excellent mix of strategy and wheel-to-wheel superiority to take down two overall faster cars, winning with style and panache. But the 2020 Abu Dhabi GP was an altogether different affair.

The race was turgid and lifeless, although this does not detract from Verstappen's and Red Bull's brilliance. They simply dominated the event in a way that was all very Mercedes-esque, winning from pole and leading every lap.

The previous five F1 races at the Yas Marina track had been won from pole, and qualifying was again a key factor in Verstappen's victory. The circuit layout has never created mass overtaking — something Fernando Alonso, in the Abu Dhabi track 'biosphere' to perform a series of demonstration runs with his 2005 title-winning Renault R25 last weekend, would no doubt remember as he got reacquainted with the squad that cost him the 2010 world title at this venue, where he was unable to pass Vitaly Petrov. So, by topping qualifying, Red Bull had stolen an early march.

But there was still plenty of reason to expect a Mercedes fightback given the W11's pace pedigree and the lengthy, 21-turn track having the kind of varied layout where the team traditionally excels. Plus, Alex Albon had qualified the second RB16 in fifth, which increased Mercedes' chances of taking down Verstappen with a two-pronged attack, as it successfully did at Imola.

Then there was the start, a phase of the race where all three of the leading contenders have struggled at times in 2020. But last Sunday, they all reacted well and were quickly up to speed. Verstappen was able to drift towards the middle of the circuit to ward off the threat of a dive at the Turn 1 left-hander, and on the exit of the corner Valtteri Bottas had a slight slide, which let the Red Bull scamper clear.

Verstappen's first lap was so good he led by 1.441 seconds at the end of it, with the fight soon settling down to a two-horse race, with Lewis Hamilton — still enduring the after-effects of COVID-19 — always a consistent chunk behind his team-mate.

"I don't think I've ever been so blown," said the world champion afterwards. "My body is not feeling great. But look on the bright side: I made it through and I didn't think anytime last week I would be here. So I am truly grateful for my health and to be alive."

The first stint, during which all three leaders were running the medium tyres, again having aced the middle phase of qualifying to get through on the more durable rubber, lasted 10 of the race's 55-lap total.

It really ended on lap nine when Sergio Perez was forced to park up his Racing Point exiting the Turn 19 left-hander, which brings the cars out from underneath the behemothic W Hotel in the track's third sector. It capped a rollercoaster final triple-header of 2020 for Perez, a winner a week previously, but who had come into the race carrying grid penalties that would require him to start at the back after taking



Verstappen made the most of his first pole position of the season

a fresh engine ahead of practice.

"We had the MGU-K issue again," said Perez, referring to the issue that had caused his fiery retirement from the Bahrain GP. "It is a shame as we really needed a strong race but unfortunately we didn't have that. It was looking good [Perez had gained five places in the opening eight laps] and I was making a lot of progress and all of a sudden I start losing engine power."

Perez's stricken car needed recovering, which the FIA initially thought could be covered under a virtual safety car. But, as race director Michael Masi later explained: "The car was stuck and wouldn't move, very simply. It's fortunate that it was near a gap, but couldn't roll. And with the requirement for a JCB, we would always do that under a full safety car."

So that is what appeared. Verstappen's lead, which had been 3.273s at the end of lap nine, was erased. He had been doing a solid jump of gradually pulling away from Bottas, edging the opening phase of the race by 0.229s per lap to the Finn and 0.687s to Hamilton.

The leaders had been called into the pits while the race was still neutralised under the VSC, with all three moving from the mediums tyres to the hards, in line with the pre-race expectation that the event would be a one-stopper. But the safety car's appearance offered Bottas a second go at jumping Verstappen with the pack closed up.

"WE HAD A DECENT START AND FROM THERE ONWARDS I COULD MANAGE THE GAP AND LOOK AFTER MY TYRES"

Verstappen, however, simply aced the restart. By the time he had led the pack around again at the end of lap 14, his lead was 1.465s, and from there he really never looked under pressure again. There were times when Bottas was able to steal back a few tenths or so, but these generally coincided with Verstappen encountering backmarkers later in the race.

The Red Bull was able to lap firmly in the low to mid 1m41s to the flag, with the Mercedes duo usually in the mid to high 1m41s. All told, Verstappen's second stint average (not including the final lap, where Bottas shipped nearly three seconds) was 1m41.478s – 0.304s quicker than Bottas and 0.4s over Hamilton, the world champion clearly the second fastest Mercedes driver on the day.

Verstappen did have one moment of concern, reporting with just over 10 laps remaining that he was feeling significant vibrations as the rubber on his tyres wore down, and urging Red Bull to check it was seeing the same thing in its data. "I was thinking back a little bit to Spa but also of course Imola [where a sudden tyre failure put Verstappen out]," he said. "I was keeping an eye on it on every straight. But, luckily, all good. The pace was still there. The tyres were still performing."

Verstappen eventually came home 15.976s clear of Bottas, notching up his 10th F1 win and his second from pole. "We had a decent start and from there onwards I could manage the gap and could look after my »



Verstappen had to run the hard Pirelli tyre for longer than he'd hoped

tyres," he explained. "And then of course the safety car came out at a little bit of an unfortunate time because we then had to do a very long stint on the hard.

"Luckily, the tyre coped with it, but you still have to manage it a bit more. The car was really good today. Just a good balance and then [with that] you can also look after your tyres. I could then build a gap all the way through the race."

Mercedes' defeat really started in qualifying, where the team's trackside engineering director, Andrew Shovlin, said it had "not managed to land the soft compound in quite the right window".

"We know that that soft tyre is quite a fiddly tyre, sometimes we get it in a really good window, sometimes we don't," he explained after the race. "But the whole of Saturday was a struggle. I think in a way we did well to get the cars second and third, and within a sniff of being on pole, because this was a race where to win it, you had to be on pole."

There was another factor Mercedes was aware of going into the race that, while the team insisted was not the main reason for its defeat in Abu Dhabi, certainly meant it was not operating the W11 to its maximum potential.

Team boss Toto Wolff had spoken of a "gremlin" in its power unit, concerning the MGU-K. It cost Perez his third place in the Bahrain GP; it appears to have caused the Mexican's retirement on his final outing for Racing Point; and a problem in the same area meant George Russell's return to Williams in practice last Friday ended in a cloud of smoke and concerns about his car's electrical state. As a result, Wolff said after qualifying that the decision had been made to take "a bit of performance out of it, on all the Mercedes engines" in the field.

But the team reckoned this was only worth less than a tenth of a second per lap — "not the difference between first and second," according to Shovlin — and this goes some way to explaining why the two Mercedes drivers were seemingly unaware their cars were down on power in the press conference.

"Honestly, I wasn't aware that the engine was turned down," Bottas replied when asked about Wolff's words regarding the MGU-K issue. Hamilton said he "wasn't aware of that, personally", but felt in light of the problems at the customer squads that "if they have done something then it would make sense".

But, given the negligible impact the team feels its decision to operate its engines "as conservative as we could be in order to try and avoid a problem," as Shovlin explained it, the true reason for its defeat lies elsewhere.

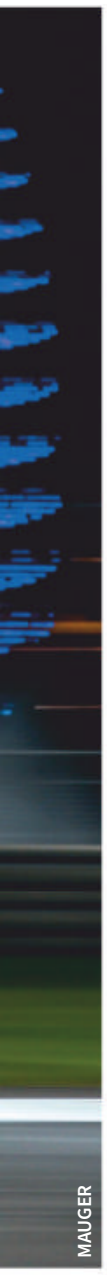
The early safety car period had essentially forced the pack onto the same strategy, with everyone other than Daniel Ricciardo, the two Ferraris, Antonio Giovinazzi and Kevin Magnussen piling in to take the hard tyres during the race suspension. The game was therefore all about getting the white-walled tyres working best and keeping them alive to the finish. And Red Bull simply did this better than Mercedes.

"YOU CAN'T GO FLAT-OUT ON THIS TRACK. IT'S JUST TOO HARD ON TYRES AND THE LAST SECTOR IS TOUGH"

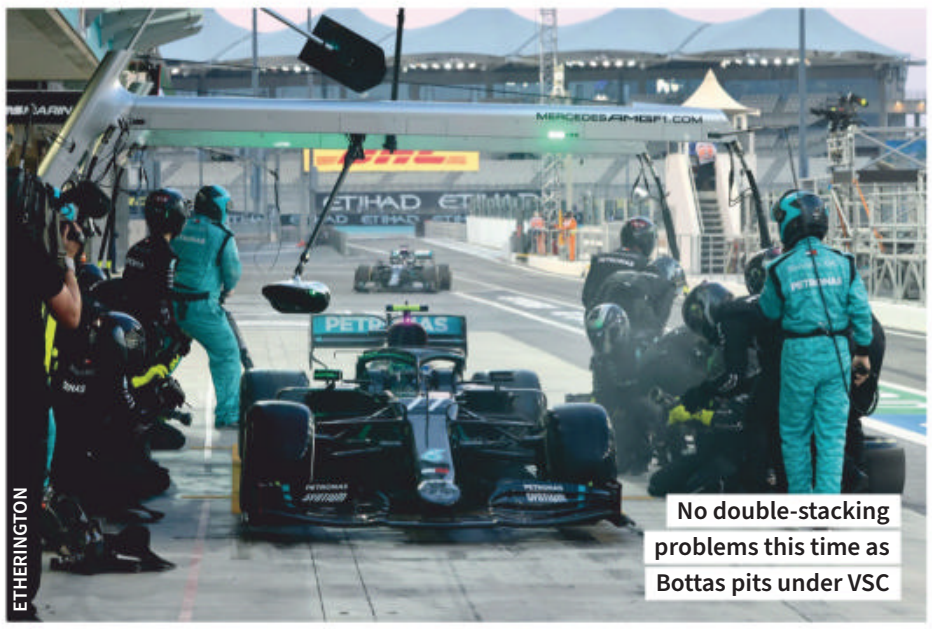
"[I was pushing] always with a margin because you knew that you had to do quite a lot of laps," explained Verstappen. "And then basically I was just looking at what the guys behind me were doing and of course I was trying to build a little bit of a gap.

"Just every lap trying to get a bit out of it to have a bit of a safety margin in case your tyres suddenly drop or whatever. But you can't go flat-out anyway on this track, you cannot do that because it's just too hard on tyres and the last sector is quite tough."

There's no doubt that the Mercedes duo will have been impacted by running behind Verstappen too, sliding more on their ageing rubber due to the dirty-air factor. But throughout the race, Bottas said he "tried everything I could, and I noticed pretty early on in the first stint that Max and Red Bull had more pace".


MAUGER


Ultimate team player Perez comforted his crew after retirement
DUNBAR


No double-stacking problems this time as Bottas pits under VSC
ETHERINGTON

Bottas's first stint had been hampered by a slight handling imbalance, which left him with a bit of an understeer problem. But Mercedes was able to adjust this at his pitstop and he was happier with the balance following the restart, after which, as we've covered, Verstappen was able to edge away at a faster rate than before.

Mercedes had spent FP2, the only practice session that was representative for the race given the day/night timetable, running a different programme as it decided to spend more time understanding the prototype 2021 Pirellis during that session's traditional long-run data-gathering period. This was in any case impacted by Kimi Raikkonen's Alfa Romeo catching fire dramatically (the Finn took slightly longer than ideal to jump out after his radio cable was briefly stuck in his cockpit, which Masi said was then "looked at immediately and rectified" ahead of FP3) as the long runs were disrupted across the grid.

But Mercedes still expected to match Verstappen come the race and was surprised that in the end it came up short. "What made it difficult was that I could see that Max was pulling a gap and of course at the end I didn't want that gap to grow too much," Bottas said of his second stint. "I tried to keep up, at the same time trying to make sure we make it to the end. So, it was all balancing it out and at some point we [realised we] couldn't keep up with them and we needed to try and get to the finish. If we had to do two stops, we would have been a lot slower overall so there were not many options."

The W11 therefore ends up with four defeats in the 17-race season, after which it will be largely carried over to 2021 thanks to the coronavirus cost-saving measures. But Mercedes has not added anything to unlock performance to the car since the Belgian GP. Nevertheless, the manner of its defeat last weekend is to be considered "a slap on the wrist", says Wolff.

"It wasn't a great weekend for us, but [the W11 is] a car that has never let us down all year, maybe apart from this last weekend," he added. "Whether it will be the greatest car, I don't know. I hope next year's or the one after next year's car will be the greatest." »

QUALIFYING


Verstappen enjoys his moment on top after a surprise pole position
FIA POOL

It was a good thing that Max Verstappen didn't need his "subscription" to the third-place seat in the post-qualifying press conference, seeing as he'd walked off with the chair on the pre-event media day ahead of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

It was returned, of course, ahead of Saturday's action kicking off, but for a real change it wasn't a Mercedes driver who needed the middle seat when it came to the media Zoom call. At the Turkish GP, the Black Arrows had lost the perfect 2020 qualifying record that had looked likely – thanks to Lance Stroll, Racing Point and slippery conditions. But this time Verstappen got the pole he'd coveted for so long.

"The whole year when you are behind but getting closer, it sometimes gets a bit frustrating," he explained after claiming the third pole of his F1 career. "But very pleased with today."

The result was signposted in FP3, when Verstappen and his Red Bull team-mate Alex Albon topped the times, with the Mercedes duo down in sixth and ninth. But the daytime Abu Dhabi session is not representative of the qualifying conditions and Mercedes is always the pole favourite.

This prediction rang true in Q1 and Q2, where Lewis Hamilton led Valtteri Bottas. Verstappen even needed an extra run in the first segment after getting his hand stuck "between the [steering] wheel and my knee", which caused him to run wide at Turn 7, "just steering towards the wall".

It all looked scruffy and familiar for Red Bull's quest to best Mercedes against the clock. But that all changed in Q3.

Not at first, with Bottas leading after the first runs by 0.104s, but Verstappen had managed to split the Mercedes drivers. On the final runs he beat them, flying to a 1m35.246s after both Hamilton and Bottas had slotted into provisional pole.

"IT ALL LOOKED SCRUFFY AND FAMILIAR FOR RED BULL, BUT THAT ALL CHANGED IN Q3"

Mercedes put its defeat down to not getting "the soft tyres to work properly, as they should," according to Bottas, who also felt his balance was less than ideal. Hamilton's efforts had been hampered by floor damage he'd picked up in Q1, running wide over the tall and lengthy kerb on the outside of the penultimate corner, but he didn't think "if there hadn't been damage then I would have got pole" on his return to action after his COVID-19 lay-off.

Behind the top three, Lando Norris starred by claiming fourth on the grid for McLaren with a lap that "wasn't perfect altogether, but it was definitely my best of the year", which meant he secured the 2020 intra-team honours over Carlos Sainz Jr, who qualified sixth.



TRACKSIDE VIEW



For the first time in 2020, in Abu Dhabi our trackside observations properly take place at the side of the track.

We've been so fortunate to get as close as we have done at the Formula 1 events we've covered on the ground this year – some remote coverage regrettably necessary with the wretched pandemic. But, thanks to the rigorous protocols enacted at each race, Autosport has (happily) wandered to spots generally away from a close-up view – across car parks, through fences, on tree stumps (thanks, Monza).

But at Yas Marina the FIA has an early Christmas present for us: a trackside tabard, for the first time since winter testing. This follows the strictest arrival protocols of any country F1 has visited in 2020 being enacted ahead of the event, with a 'biosphere' created on Yas Island, shutting the track and nearby hotels off from the rest of the city. There are charter flights from Bahrain, pre-customs COVID-19 detection tests, and quarantine until the results are returned and a police-guarded roadblock built.

Feeling tremendously grateful, our first port of call in FP1 is the exit of Turn 19, which brings the cars out from under the W Hotel complex in the third sector. The speed verges on violent here, the cars skating close to the barriers under our nose. We observe Lewis Hamilton logging a steady first lap on his return to action, but he's back to full-chat from lap two. Mercedes later tells us how impressed it was by this display.

We then wander to the Turns 12/13 chicane, a technical complex at the end of the track's curved second 'straight'. Our photographer colleagues have recommended the spot for the way the drivers attack the kerbs. It doesn't disappoint.

"WE'RE CONFUSED WHY VETTEL IS IN LECLERC'S CAR, THANKS TO A HELMET LIVERY TRIBUTE"

Carlos Sainz Jr is regularly catching the rear of his McLaren as it tries to drift around after the off-camber right turn, which costs him speed before the left. Valtteri Bottas is rather inconsistent with his lines, but always rapid, while Max Verstappen's Red Bull rides the bumps identically each time – smooth and precise.

A short while after we're confused why Sebastian Vettel is driving Charles Leclerc's Ferrari (thanks to a helmet livery tribute to his departing team-mate), we turn and see Daniel Ricciardo somewhere he shouldn't be. His Renault has stopped with a fuel-pump problem in the support paddock pitlane and he's hitching a lift back on a golf kart, eyes still glued to the track action.

Alex Albon provides the wildest moment when he throws his car into Turn 12, having run wide through the preceding left, and limps away after the rear swings around, while the AlphaTauris are the most aggressive over the kerbs.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



Taxi for Ricciardo: Renault man hitches lift after fuel-pump trouble



SUTTON

Familiar faces on final F1 podium of 2020, but in a different order

It was reasonably clear from early in the second stint that Verstappen had the edge on the Mercedes duo, barring anything unforeseen happening. Attention therefore turned to the battle to settle third place in the constructors' championship. But Perez's retirement, Renault's lowly qualifying performance and McLaren's near-perfectly executed weekend meant this battle did not end up with a grandstand finish.

Lando Norris had lost the fine fourth he had earned in qualifying to Albon on lap six when the Red Bull driver made a nice move to the inside of Turn 8 at the end of the main straight, but considering the RB16 is a faster car overall there was no shame in this. Norris ran adrift of Ricciardo through his second stint to when the Renault driver finally came in for the first time on lap 39, and finished in a solid fifth place.

The contra-strategy required Ricciardo to keep up his pace as his long first stint wore on, which he did magnificently, but it was only enough to help him climb from 10th in the early stages — after he'd been allowed through by now-former team-mate Esteban Ocon — to seventh behind Carlos Sainz Jr.

Sainz's solid sixth place was threatened by a post-race investigation into his driving in the pitlane under the VSC, where McLaren had double-stacked its cars. He'd come in and out just in front of Racing Point's Lance Stroll and was under suspicion of having driven too slowly while Norris was being serviced.

But the stewards accepted Sainz's explanation that the approximate five seconds he drove between the pitlane's 80km/h limit and 70km/h was because he was "exercising a degree of caution" due to the high number of mechanics working in the pitlane as the pack piled in.

"We estimate this resulted in car 55 arriving at the pitstop around 0.6s later than if it had maintained a speed of 80 km/h," the stewards explained, with Stroll ultimately delayed by "approximately one second", and therefore no action was required.

"I don't know why even there's a discussion," Sainz said after his final appearance for McLaren before his move to Ferrari in 2021. "The only thing I did was to be very cautious in the pitlane and I think we executed a perfect race and we managed to bring home P3 in the championship, which is great for the team."

The 2020 F1 season did not end with a bang. Instead, it went out with a rather dull affair considering all the potential flashpoints the pre-race grid and pre-event standings had pointed towards.

But, considering the year it has been, for us all there was delight to be found in simply having a season finale after 17 races in the first place.

"WE EXECUTED A PERFECT RACE TO BRING HOME P3 IN THE STANDINGS, WHICH IS GREAT FOR THE TEAM"



Norris helped deliver third in constructors' for jubilant McLaren

TEE

NEXT ISSUE

FORMULA 1 REVIEW 116-PAGE SPECIAL
31 DECEMBER ISSUE

How the title was won, the team bosses' top 10 drivers, a tech review and much, much more in our last issue of 2020.

Renault misses out on third

Renault went into the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix with an outside chance of claiming the coveted third place in the constructors' championship, but needing a fortuitous race to close a 22-point gap.

The team showed good pace in practice, but it could not escape Q2, where Esteban Ocon outqualified Daniel Ricciardo for the first time in the dry this season. After starting on hard tyres, Ricciardo was let past Ocon in the early stages, making them last a mammoth 40 laps in the process.

After the safety-car period, during which Ricciardo stayed out, the Australian had to fend off Lando Norris. As the pack opened out in the later stages, Ricciardo was able to build enough of an advantage to pit for mediums and return ahead of Pierre Gasly, and was able to cement seventh place.

Amid those stops, Ocon filtered out in 13th, but was shuffled into play after clearing Charles Leclerc and Antonio Giovinazzi. Ocon's later pass on the late-stopping Sebastian Vettel got him into 10th. He then overtook Lance Stroll on the final lap of the race to double his points haul. But nine points was not enough for Renault to climb out of fifth in the final standings.



DUNBAR



TEE

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

McLaren jumps Racing Point in 'outstanding result'

McLaren overturned a 10-point deficit to beat Racing Point to third in the constructors' championship, as Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz Jr finished fifth and sixth in Abu Dhabi.

McLaren's chances of making up the points gap were boosted on Friday when Racing Point had to give Sergio Perez a fresh power unit, dropping him to the back of the grid. Norris qualified fourth, just 0.251 seconds off pole, but both he and Sainz, who started sixth, felt Perez would replicate his Sakhir GP fight through the field.

But Perez only recovered to 14th before a loss of power with an MGU-K issue eight laps in forced him to park up and retire, leaving Racing Point's hopes resting on Lance Stroll. Norris and Sainz ran fifth and sixth ahead of Stroll before pitting under the virtual safety car, where Sainz's suspected slow entry prompted a stewards' investigation that was postponed until after the race.

After losing a place to Alex Albon shortly before pitting, Norris made use of his fresh tyres and quickly created a gap to the yet-to-pit Ferraris behind. Sainz was able to quickly clear the cars from the team he will soon join on the restart, while Stroll was left toiling behind Sebastian Vettel for 16 laps. By the time Vettel pitted, Stroll had lost over 20s to the McLarens, places to Pierre Gasly and Daniel Ricciardo, and ruined his tyres, which allowed Esteban Ocon to pass on the final lap.

Norris and Sainz finished comfortably and, with Stroll taking a lowly 10th, any possible penalty for Sainz became meaningless. The stewards later took no further action. The result clinched McLaren third in the constructors' championship, seven points clear of Racing Point, and its best finish since 2012.

"We coped very well with the pressure to deliver a clean weekend and an excellent performance that helped us outscore our competitors," said team principal Andreas Seidl. "It was an outstanding result at the end of a very challenging and difficult season."

BIG NUMBER

161

The gap in days between the first and last races of the 2020 season, the shortest since 1966.



Frustration for Kvyat in AlphaTauri farewell

Daniil Kvyat's final appearance for AlphaTauri ended in disappointment as he slipped from seventh on the grid after starring in qualifying to finish outside the points.

Kvyat was overtaken by Lance Stroll and team-mate Pierre Gasly just before the virtual safety car as he struggled with front-tyre wear, losing more time as AlphaTauri double-stacked its cars in the pits. He then became stuck in the train of cars led by Sebastian Vettel, toiling behind Stroll and Esteban Ocon before crossing the line 11th.

"I'm very disappointed; very frustrating race," Kvyat said. "I got overtaken by Stroll and then lost the position to Pierre. That was decisive for the race, because I was always having to defend and attack the cars in front."

Kvyat confirmed he is now a free agent for 2021, calling it "a shame" that AlphaTauri had not made any announcement about his future.



HONE

Q&A

GEORGE RUSSELL
WILLIAMS DRIVER



Was it harder to return to Williams or step up to Mercedes?
Probably actually harder jumping back to the Williams, because the Mercedes car is so good. It's what every driver wants from a race car, [what] the Mercedes gives you, and you feel it. The driver is in control of the Mercedes, whereas sometimes it's almost like our car is controlling the driver. We have to react to it, whereas in the Mercedes you are the one controlling it. I think it's only natural that when you've got a great car underneath you it's a true joy to drive, and maybe that's why I probably got up to speed with it relatively quickly.

Was your race straightforward?
It was much harder than that actually, because we were on the limits of brake temperature. We were really having to manage the brakes, which requires managing how you attack the brake and managing what brake balance you use, which then consequently hurts the tyres. And then I couldn't attack the brakes and then the tyre temperature was dropping, but the track was getting colder so I needed to attack the corners to keep tyre temperature up. [But] the Alfas were quicker than us this weekend and we beat both Haas and Antonio Giovinazzi, so yeah, job well done.

What have you learned most in the last few weeks, ahead of your third F1 season?
That you have to be adaptable. My driving style in the Williams actually hurt me slightly in the Mercedes. And, actually, when I came back to the Williams I tried to implement some of the things that I did in that Bahrain race, but I couldn't do it in the Williams. So, I think that sort of reinforced to me that you have to be open-minded and you have to adapt to whatever the car is giving you. And if one guy drives like that in a Mercedes, it doesn't mean you can drive like that in a Williams and vice versa.



HONE

Vettel's Ferrari career ends with run to 14th place

Sebastian Vettel called his final outing with Ferrari an "emotional weekend", but also conceded that he was glad to see the back of a trying 2020 season.

Abu Dhabi was emblematic of Ferrari's 2020 struggles, and a strategy gamble for both drivers did not pay off. Vettel and Charles Leclerc stayed out during the safety-car pit phase, running seventh and eighth at the restart, but both were easy pickings for the drivers behind on fresher tyres — Leclerc in particular, as he'd stayed out on the mediums and began to run out of tyre life a few laps later. He pitted on lap 22, emerging at the back of the field and with work to do.

Although Leclerc picked his way through the backmarkers and made his way up to 13th, he hit an impasse and was unable to erode Kimi Raikkonen's advantage over the rest of the race.

Vettel was able to hang on to eighth place for a good portion of the race, but was eventually cleared by the chasing Pierre Gasly, Lance Stroll and Esteban Ocon and then called in for new medium tyres. He managed to make his way back past George Russell on his new rubber, but was also unable to make further progress and signed off from the famous team with a disappointing 14th.



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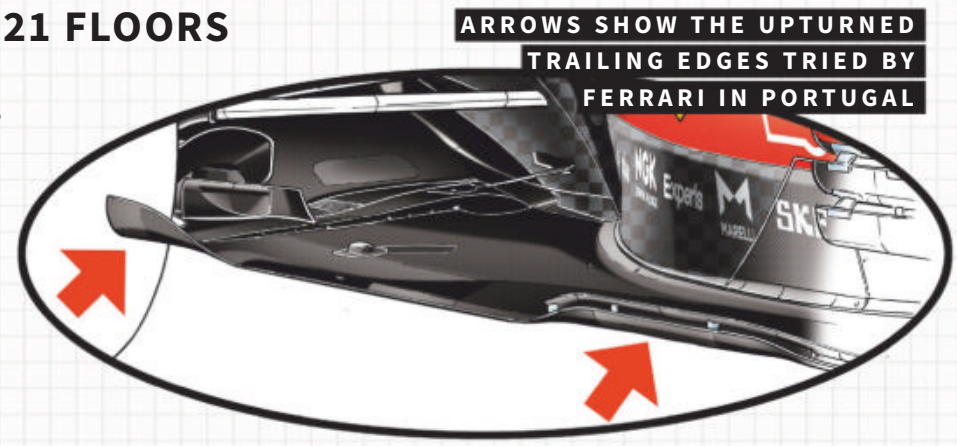
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GIORGIO PIOLA

FERRARI REVEALS NEW APPROACH FOR 2021 FLOORS



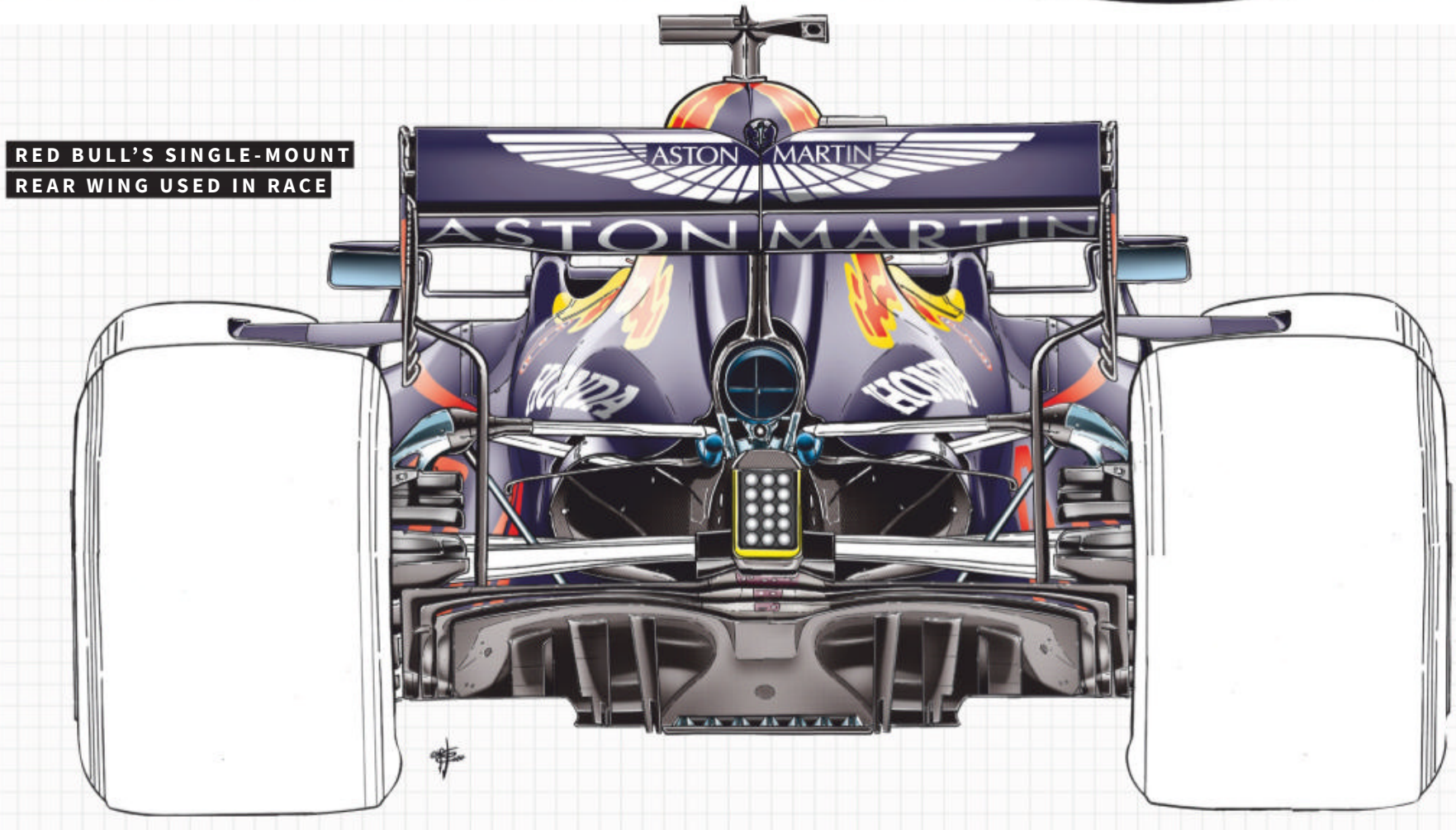


With 2020 developments having been concluded well before the final round of the season, the focus has been on preparation for 2021, and overcoming the projected loss of downforce as the new regulations pertaining to the floor come into force for next year.

The 50mm trim to the diffuser fences, along with a triangular cut-out to the floor ahead of the rear wheels, leaves the teams with fewer opportunities to use slots and cuts to ensure the minimum of disturbance to the diffuser itself. An expected downforce reduction of about 10% will put the onus on teams to recoup that loss.

In its exploration of potential 2021 floor options, Ferrari trialled a new design in Abu Dhabi practice, having originally tried an upturned trailing edge in practice at the Algarve Circuit. Crucially, these show a change in philosophy. With the full-size floors of the past couple of seasons, the attention has been on trying to divert airflow outwards around the rear tyre. But as the floor now tapers in, Ferrari has introduced a series of fins that promote inwash, rather than outwash. These fins pick up the airflow from the front end and now attempt to tuck it in around the rear tyre, sending it over the top of the diffuser. The fins at the rear were daubed in flow-vis paint in FP1 to check that effect.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



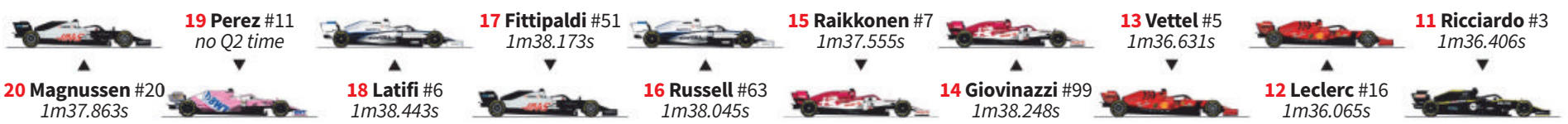
RED BULL FINALLY MOUNTS MERCEDES CHALLENGE

Earlier in the season, Mercedes experimented with a single rear-wing mounting in order to find a lower-drag solution. The twin-mounts are commonplace in F1 at the moment, but moving the mounting behind the engine cover takes it out of the airflow's line of fire and reduces the car's frontal area, shaving a little drag away.

Red Bull has now tried that solution, opting for a single pillar that splits around the exhaust and mounts to the crash structure at the rear. This, like the Mercedes solution, blends into the DRS housing. It was a solution that Red Bull stuck with for the race, perhaps to find some tiny gains on the straights.

Also of note was Red Bull's decision to dig the Austria-tested nosecone out of the development back catalogue and put it to task in Abu Dhabi. The rounder nose, featuring the mounting pylons shifted further inboard, finally earned its keep on the car by helping Max Verstappen to a fine victory at the season finale. Perhaps a little more time in the development room was just what the nose needed to get a sniff at a good result after being pulled off the car early in the season.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m37.378s
2	Bottas	1m37.412s
3	Ocon	1m38.515s
4	Albon	1m38.547s
5	Hamilton	1m38.744s
6	Stroll	1m38.831s
7	Perez	1m38.956s
8	Kvyat	1m39.150s
9	Gasly	1m39.160s
10	Raikkonen	1m39.199s
11	Sainz	1m39.330s
12	Leclerc	1m39.344s
13	Norris	1m39.352s
14	Vettel	1m39.670s
15	Kubica	1m39.905s
16	Russell	1m40.446s
17	Latifi	1m41.063s
18	Schumacher	1m41.235s
19	Fittipaldi	1m44.069s
20	Ricciardo	no time

WEATHER Sunny, air 25C track 36-40C

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m36.276s
2	Hamilton	1m36.479s
3	Verstappen	1m37.046s
4	Albon	1m37.263s
5	Norris	1m37.438s
6	Ocon	1m37.505s
7	Perez	1m37.506s
8	Leclerc	1m37.508s
9	Ricciardo	1m37.508s
10	Stroll	1m37.560s
11	Kvyat	1m37.596s
12	Sainz	1m37.616s
13	Gasly	1m37.900s
14	Raikkonen	1m38.068s
15	Vettel	1m38.198s
16	Magnussen	1m38.504s
17	Giovinazzi	1m38.564s
18	Russell	1m38.817s
19	Fittipaldi	1m39.027s
20	Latifi	1m39.132s

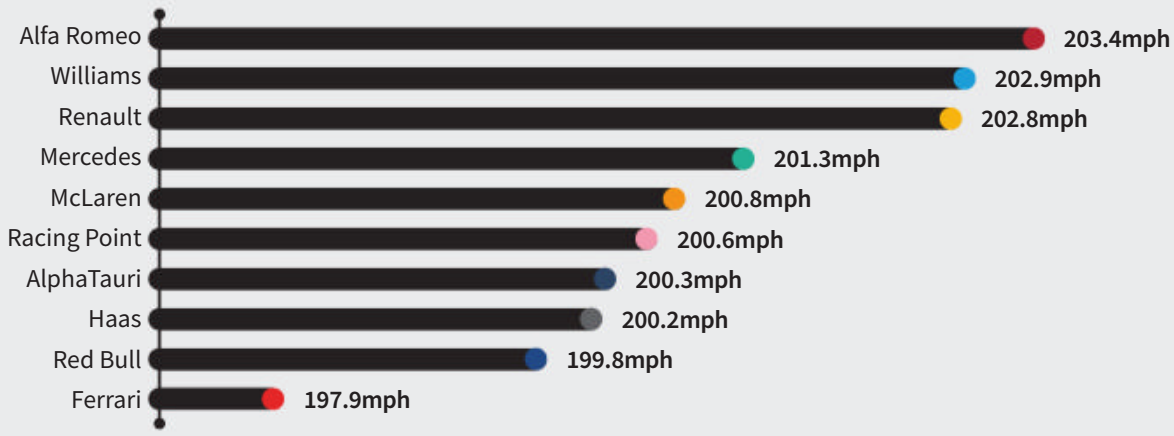
WEATHER Twilight, air 23-25C track 27-33C

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m36.251s
2	Albon	1m36.752s
3	Ricciardo	1m36.877s
4	Ocon	1m36.899s
5	Norris	1m36.994s
6	Hamilton	1m37.012s
7	Stroll	1m37.030s
8	Sainz	1m37.068s
9	Bottas	1m37.085s
10	Perez	1m37.227s
11	Kvyat	1m37.266s
12	Leclerc	1m37.270s
13	Gasly	1m37.371s
14	Vettel	1m37.728s
15	Russell	1m37.886s
16	Giovinazzi	1m37.900s
17	Raikkonen	1m38.269s
18	Magnussen	1m38.457s
19	Latifi	1m38.765s
20	Fittipaldi	1m39.159s

WEATHER Sunny, air 24-25C Track 36-38C

SPEED TRAP (QUALIFYING)



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m35.528s
2	Bottas	1m35.699s
3	Leclerc	1m35.881s
4	Verstappen	1m35.993s
5	Norris	1m36.016s
6	Perez	1m36.034s
7	Albon	1m36.106s
8	Kvyat	1m36.459s
9	Stroll	1m36.502s
10	Sainz	1m36.517s
11	Gasly	1m36.545s
12	Vettel	1m36.655s
13	Ricciardo	1m36.704s
14	Ocon	1m36.783s
15	Giovinazzi	1m37.075s
16	Raikkonen	1m37.555s
17	Magnussen	1m37.863s
18	Russell	1m38.045s
19	Fittipaldi	1m38.173s
20	Latifi	1m38.443s

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m35.466s
2	Bottas	1m35.527s
3	Verstappen	1m35.641s
4	Albon	1m35.654s
5	Norris	1m35.849s
6	Leclerc	1m35.932s
7	Stroll	1m36.143s
8	Sainz	1m36.192s
9	Kvyat	1m36.214s
10	Gasly	1m36.282s
11	Ocon	1m36.359s
12	Ricciardo	1m36.406s
13	Vettel	1m36.631s
14	Giovinazzi	1m38.248s
15	Perez	no time

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m35.246s
2	Bottas	1m35.271s
3	Hamilton	1m35.332s
4	Norris	1m35.497s
5	Albon	1m35.571s
6	Sainz	1m35.815s
7	Kvyat	1m35.963s
8	Stroll	1m36.046s
9	Leclerc	1m36.065s
10	Gasly	1m36.242s

WEATHER Twilight, air 23-24C track 27-31C

NEXT ISSUE
31 DECEMBER
F1 SEASON REVIEW SPECIAL

SEASON STATS

	DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1	Hamilton	347	1	1
2	Bottas	223	1	1
3	Verstappen	214	1	1
4	Perez	125	1	3
5	Ricciardo	119	3	4
6	Sainz	105	2	3
7	Albon	105	3	4
8	Leclerc	98	2	4
9	Norris	97	3	4
10	Gasly	75	1	4
11	Stroll	75	3	1
12	Ocon	62	2	5
13	Vettel	33	3	5
14	Kvyat	32	4	6
15	Hulkenberg	10	7	3
16	Raikkonen	4	9	8
17	Giovinazzi	4	9	10
18	Russell	3	9	2
19	Grosjean	2	9	14
20	Magnussen	1	10	15
21	Latifi	0	11	15
22	Aitken	0	16	18
23	Fittipaldi	0	17	19

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Mercedes	573
2	Red Bull	319
3	McLaren	202
4	Racing Point	195
5	Renault	181
6	Ferrari	131
7	AlphaTauri	107
8	Alfa Romeo	8
9	Haas	3
10	Williams	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	**11**	5	Bottas
Russell	0	**1**	**Bottas**
Vettel	4	**13**	**Leclerc**
Albon	0	**17**	**Verstappen**
Norris	**8**	**8**	**Sainz**
Ricciardo	**15**	2	Ocon
Gasly	**13**	4	Kvyat
Perez	**10**	3	Stroll
Perez	**1**	0	Hulkenberg
Stroll	**1**	**1**	**Hulkenberg**
Raikkonen	8	**9**	**Giovinazzi**
Magnussen	**2**	0	Fittipaldi
Grosjean	7	**8**	**Magnussen**
Latifi	0	**16**	**Russell**
Latifi	**1**	0	Aitken

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying or had a serious technical problem

POLE POSITIONS

Hamilton	10
Bottas	5
Stroll	1
Verstappen	1

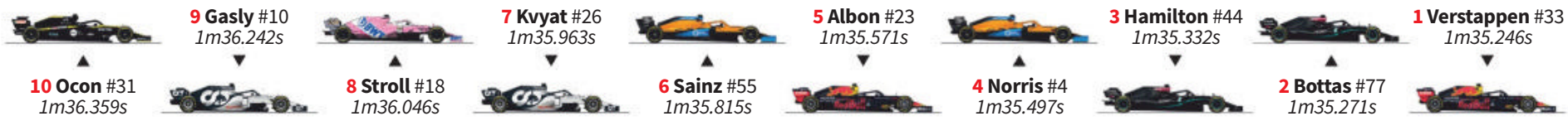
WINS

Hamilton	11
Bottas	2
Verstappen	2
Gasly	1
Perez	1

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STARTING GRID



RACE RESULTS ROUND 17 (55 LAPS – 189.75 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES
1	**Max Verstappen** (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	1h36m28.645s	55	**M**u, **H**n
2	**Valtteri Bottas** (FIN)	Mercedes	+15.976s		**M**u, **H**n
3	**Lewis Hamilton** (GBR)	Mercedes	+18.415s		**M**u, **H**n
4	**Alexander Albon** (THA)	Red Bull-Honda	+19.987s		**S**u, **H**n
5	**Lando Norris** (GBR)	McLaren-Renault	+1m00.729s		**S**u, **H**n
6	**Carlos Sainz Jr** (ESP)	McLaren-Renault	+1m05.662s		**M**u, **H**n
7	**Daniel Ricciardo** (AUS)	Renault	+1m13.748s		**H**n, **M**n
8	**Pierre Gasly** (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+1m29.718s		**S**u, **H**n
9	**Esteban Ocon** (FRA)	Renault	+1m41.069s		**M**n, **H**n
10	**Lance Stroll** (CAN)	Racing Point-Mercedes	+1m42.738s		**S**u, **H**n
11	**Daniil Kvyat** (RUS)	AlphaTauri-Honda	-1 lap		**S**u, **H**n
12	**Kimi Raikkonen** (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		**M**n, **H**n
13	**Charles Leclerc** (MCO)	Ferrari	-1 lap		**M**u, **H**n
14	**Sebastian Vettel** (DEU)	Ferrari	-1 lap		**H**n, **M**n
15	**George Russell** (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		**M**n, **H**n
16	**Antonio Giovinazzi** (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		**M**n, **H**n
17	**Nicholas Latifi** (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		**M**n, **H**n, **M**n
18	**Kevin Magnussen** (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		**H**n, **M**n, **M**n
19	**Pietro Fittipaldi** (BRA)	Haas-Ferrari	-2 laps		**M**n, **H**n, **M**n, **S**u
R	**Sergio Perez** (MEX)	Racing Point-Mercedes	8 laps-power unit		**H**n

FASTEST LAPS

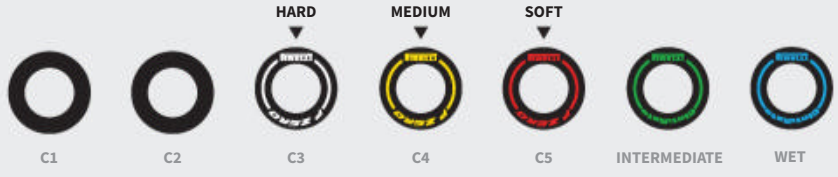
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	**Ricciardo**	1m40.926s	-	55
2	**Verstappen**	1m40.958s	+0.032s	14
3	**Bottas**	1m41.131s	+0.205s	40
4	**Albon**	1m41.227s	+0.301s	42
5	**Hamilton**	1m41.420s	+0.494s	37
6	**Vettel**	1m41.475s	+0.549s	37
7	**Giovinazzi**	1m41.675s	+0.749s	29
8	**Fittipaldi**	1m41.707s	+0.781s	50
9	**Stroll**	1m41.866s	+0.940s	41
10	**Leclerc**	1m41.908s	+0.982s	24
11	**Sainz**	1m41.947s	+1.021s	48
12	**Norris**	1m41.964s	+1.038s	53
13	**Magnussen**	1m41.999s	+1.073s	50
14	**Raikkonen**	1m42.148s	+1.222s	53
15	**Gasly**	1m42.474s	+1.548s	53
16	**Latifi**	1m42.497s	+1.571s	49
17	**Kvyat**	1m42.704s	+1.778s	47
18	**Ocon**	1m42.894s	+1.968s	47
19	**Perez**	1m43.263s	+2.337s	6
20	**Russell**	1m43.328s	+2.402s	54

WEATHER Twilight, air 22-24C track 25-35C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 118.01mph **FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED** 123.10mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

FP1

MICK SCHUMACHER replaced **MAGNUSSEN** at Haas

ROBERT KUBICA replaced **GIOVINAZZI** at Alfa Romeo

GRID PENALTIES

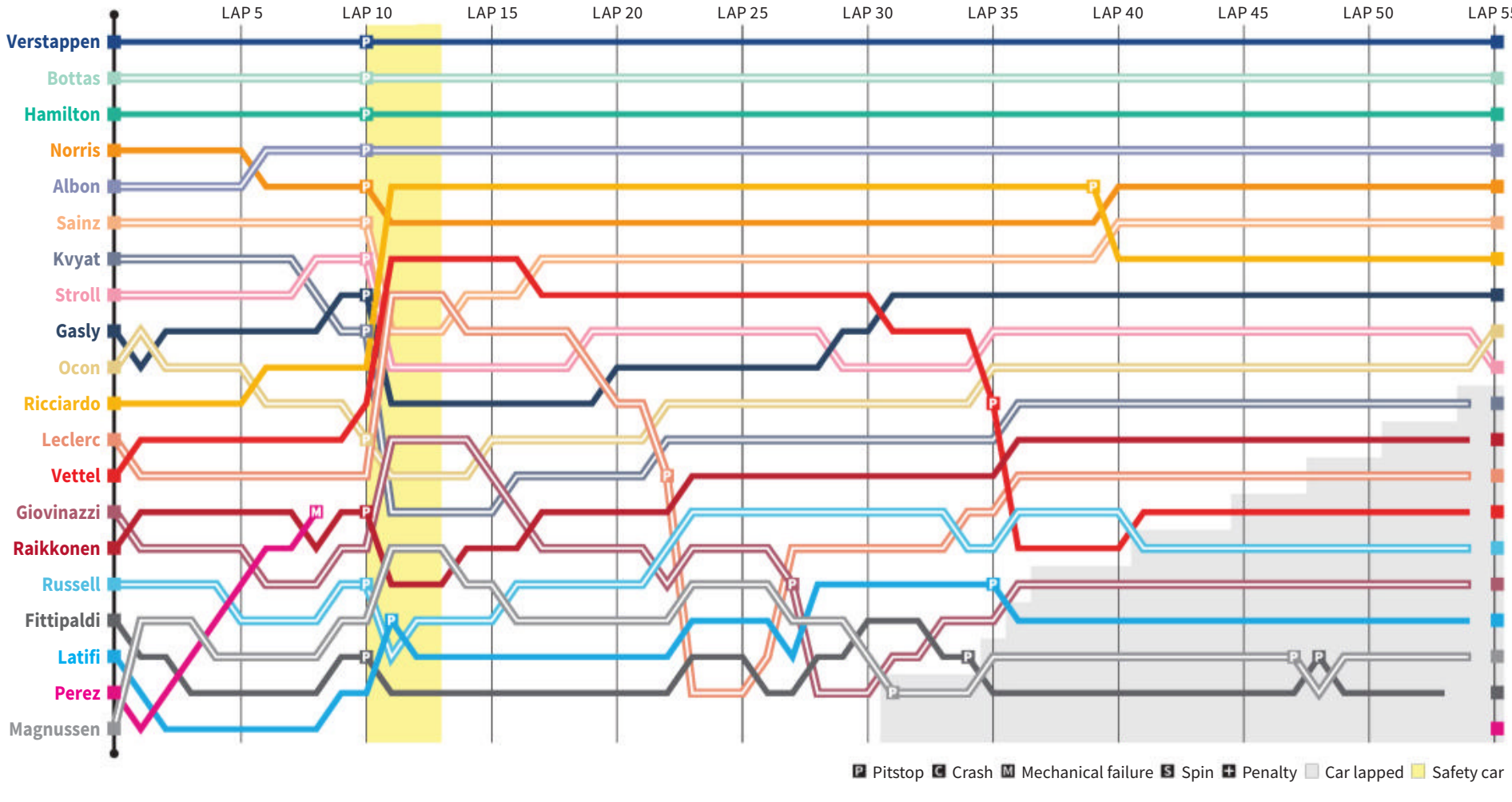
LECLERC Three-pace grid penalty for causing a collision in Sakhir GP

PEREZ and **MAGNUSSEN** required to start from the back of the grid for additional power unit elements used

STAT 10

Verstappen now has 10 F1 wins, matching world champions James Hunt and Jody Scheckter

LAP CHART What happened, when



VERSTAPPEN AND NORRIS END 2020 ON A HIGH

The Red Bull and McLaren drivers aced our ratings at the final Formula 1 weekend of the season

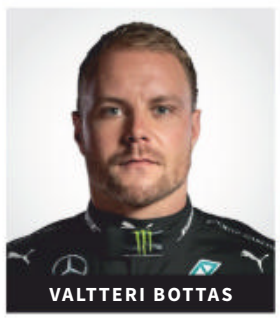
ALEX KALINAUCKAS

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

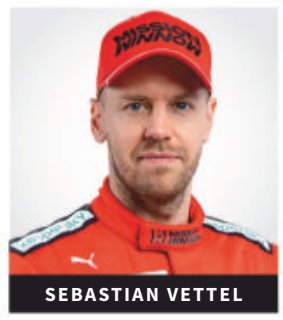
8 Clearly the slower Mercedes driver, but was racing while still grappling with the effects of the cursed coronavirus. Said his body was "not feeling great" after the race, which is saying something given his normal fitness levels. Looked set to beat Bottas in qualifying but was undone in Q3.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

8 Tricky to score the Mercedes duo given the Red Bull was faster in the race, but story might have been different had Bottas beaten Verstappen in qualifying, given how hard passing is Yas Marina. The Finn came up 0.025s short, and in the race there was little he could do to stop Max's march.

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

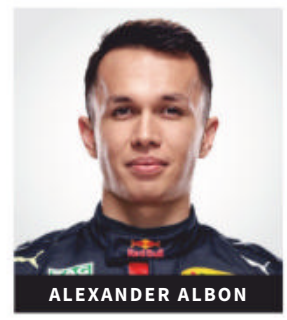
6 Loses out compared to Leclerc for being knocked out in Q2 for the 14th time in 2020, ahead of another low-key result. Tried to hang in there after being boosted up the order by not stopping under the VSC. It worked for a while, but he didn't have the pace to gain when he finally stopped.



CHARLES LECLERC

7 Not a lot he could do with the Ferrari still being poor and having a grid penalty. Finished third in Q1, then got slower as the session wore on, but did well to get through Q2 on the medium tyres. Slipped back in the race after not stopping under the VSC and wore out his hards early in second stint.

RED BULL



ALEXANDER ALBON

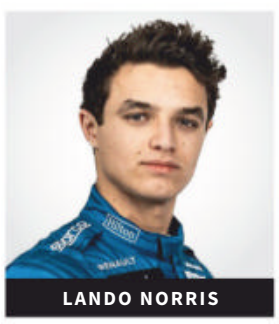
7 A good weekend right when he needed one, as Red Bull weighs up his F1 future. But he still got outqualified by Norris's slower McLaren, even if he made up the lost place with a neat DRS-assisted move early in the race. Closed on Hamilton late on but was never really a threat.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

10 He doesn't always deliver when it matters, but this time he trumped the Merc duo in qualifying. That set up his race win, but he still had to pull out a masterful race drive, which he did. Essentially faultless, besides briefly trapping his hand in his cockpit in Q1.

McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

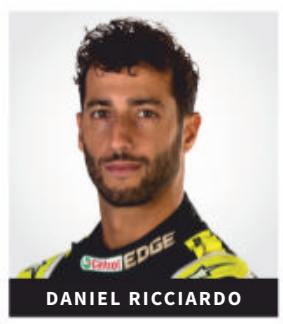
10 Excellent way to end his second F1 season. He produced what he felt was his best qualifying lap so far to start a fine fourth, and then executed the race as he needed to from there. He ran adrift of Ricciardo for much of his second stint, but was never going to have to make a pass.



CARLOS SAINZ JR

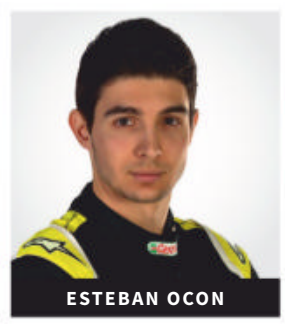
9 Felt making it to Q3 on mediums compromised his qualifying as he took sixth, which is why he loses out here to Norris. In the race he felt the mediums grained quickly and, after passing the Ferraris that didn't stop under the VSC, he "brought it home", pushing hard late on to beat Ricciardo.

RENAULT



DANIEL RICCIARDO

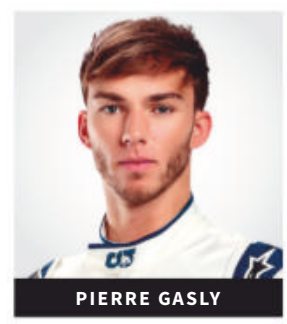
9 Gaining four places at Yas Marina deserves credit, but misses out on a top score for his Q2 exit. Excellent in the race after being allowed past Ocon. Kept his pace high running ahead of Norris, and was rewarded with seventh once he'd stopped for mediums for the closing stages.



ESTEBAN OCON

7 Lower score than Ricciardo comes down to relative lack of progress from his grid spot after also being dumped out in Q2, as Renault's one-lap pace was lost. Struggled in the first stint, but at least rallied from there, stealing ninth from Stroll on the last lap with a run up the inside of the 'straight' to Turn 11.

ALPHATAURI



PIERRE GASLY

8 Looked the slower of the two AlphaTauri drivers as he trailed Kvyat by two places in qualifying. But after bravely battling Ocon close to the wall on the inside of the run to Turn 8, he dispatched the late-stopping Leclerc and Vettel either side of his firm pass on Stroll to seal eighth.



DANIIL KVYAT

8 Gets credit for strong qualifying and his second-best grid spot of the year – one event after his best. Race started to unravel just before the VSC as he slipped back with fading front softs. Then stuck in a train behind Vettel, coming home the leading lapped car behind Ocon and Stroll.



RACING POINT


SERGIO PEREZ

7 Really tough to score as he didn't really participate in qualifying to save tyres and engine mileage, knowing he'd start from the back thanks to his engine penalty. Was rising nicely in the race when Mercedes' MGU-K problem came between him and a decent farewell at the team he helped save.


LANCE STROLL

6 After the highs of the Sakhir GP, couldn't get near the McLarens in qualifying and was then beaten by Ricciardo's Renault in the race, as well as losing out in battle to Gasly. Felt a loss of tyre temperature contributed to falling behind Ocon on the last lap as he also rued inconsistent pace.

ALFA ROMEO


KIMI RAIKKONEN

8 Lost qualifying head-to-head with Giovinazzi by failing to get out of Q1, then put in an excellent race drive. Alfa split its strategy – Raikkonen was brought in under the VSC to take the hards while his team-mate stayed out. Good pace on a one-stopper kept him out of range of Leclerc's Ferrari.


ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

7 Earns kudos for getting out of Q1 and winning his intra-team qualifying battle, but the race was a disappointment. Lost a place at the start to his team-mate, then was left out on the mediums. The second interruption he needed never came, so he trailed Russell home, albeit not by much.

HAAS


PIETRO FITTIPALDI

7 Didn't qualify last – as he had at the Sakhir GP – thanks to Latifi's spin. Drove well in the race after a "crazy start", and enjoyed getting stuck in after gaining confidence from qualifying. Ended up the last finisher as he had to make an extra stop for an engine overheating problem.


KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

6 Failed to get out of Q1 (knowing he'd start last with a grid penalty) and had an uneventful race. Did gain three places on the first lap, including a great double pass on the outside of Turn 8, but was always going to lose time on a two-stopper. No pace to compete with the rest of 'Class C'.

WILLIAMS

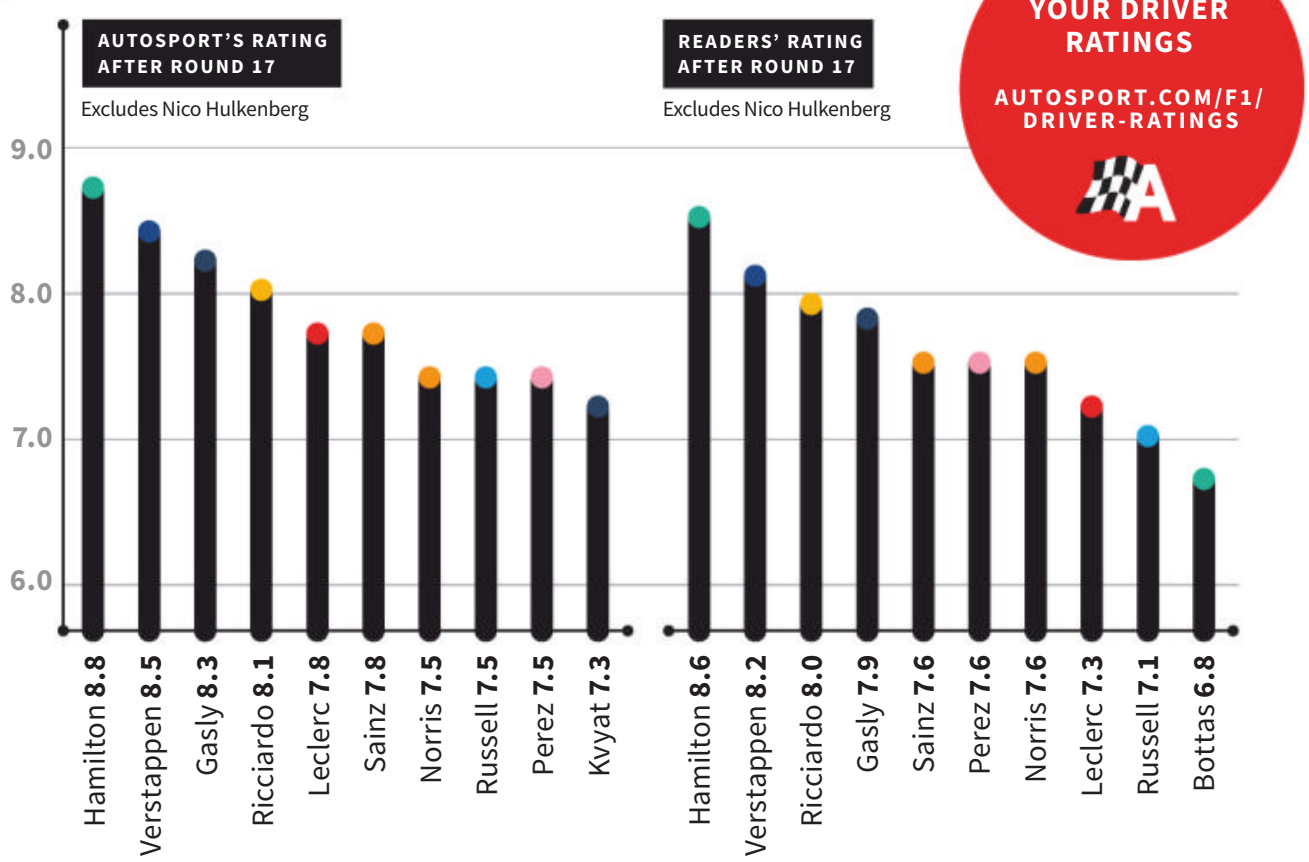

NICHOLAS LATIFI

6 Gets a six as he beat the Haas pair home in the race, enjoying pushing on a second set of medium tyres after making a late second stop. But can't score higher because of his Q1 spin, which cost him the chance to do better than last in qualifying. Felt it was down to low tyre temperatures.


GEORGE RUSSELL

7 A "half-decent way to end the season" was his assessment of his run to 15th, after he'd qualified in 18th, struggling with tyre temperatures on his final lap in Q1. Couldn't live with Raikkonen, but did well to beat the other Alfa and the Haases, despite dealing with overheating brakes.

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Walkenhorst wins Kyalami washout to bag BMW title

INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE
KYALAMI (ZAF)
12 DECEMBER
ROUND 4/4



Race finished under the safety car in heavy rain

BMW drivers Nicky Catsburg and Augusto Farfus snatched the Intercontinental GT Challenge title with victory in the series finale together with Sheldon van der Linde at Kyalami on Saturday. They came out on top aboard their Walkenhorst Motorsport BMW M6 GT3 in a confused climax to a nine-hour race that finished behind the safety car after a protracted period of yellow-flag running in heavy rain.

Catsburg, Farfus and van der Linde triumphed on a day when their M6 wasn't a match for the quickest cars in the slender 12-car field in dry conditions. But Walkenhorst got its tactics spot on, and wet-weather expert Catsburg made up time under full-course-yellow virtual-safety-car conditions because he was able to lap at or near the 80km/h speed limit when his rivals couldn't.

The second edition of the revived Kyalami 9 Hours turned when the heavens opened with 90 or so minutes remaining. Catsburg had taken over the fourth-placed BMW from van der Linde on the arrival of the rain that triggered the FCY.

The race went green for a lap before the race was neutralised again with a shade over an hour left on the clock. Walkenhorst brought Catsburg straight in to drive through the pits to reset the stint-length clock to allow him to go to the end without stopping again, so long as the race remained neutralised.

At the same time, the JAS-run factory Honda NSX GT3 that had led the majority of the nine hours in the hands of Bertrand Baguette, Renger van der Zande and Mario Farnbacher was called in from the lead for a full pitstop.

That left the best-placed of the factory WRT Audi R8 LMS GT3s, with Frederic Vervisch at the wheel, in front with Catsburg in second. The BMW driver was able to lap faster than the Audi and close the gap.

When Vervisch, who shared the WRT Audi with Mirko Bortolotti and Charles Weerts, did a reset stop, he came out of the pits side by side with the BMW. He moved ahead into Turn 1, before having to cede position to Catsburg after race control ruled he had been behind as he rejoined the track.

"We were still racing, even though we were under FCY conditions," said Catsburg. "At one point, the team told me to take it easy because I was 10s a lap faster than everyone else. It wasn't easy out there: I must have gone off four times and once almost hit a marshals' post."

WEEKEND WINNERS

INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE
KYALAMI (ZAF)
Augusto Farfus/Nicky Catsburg/
Sheldon van der Linde
Walkenhorst Motorsport (BMW M6 GT3)

BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS
INTERLAGOS (BRA)
Ricardo Mauricio
Eurofarma RC (Chevrolet Cruze)

motorsport STATS
For full results visit **motorsportstats.com**

The GPX Racing Porsche 911 GT3-R shared by Patrick Pilet, Mathieu Jaminet and Matt Campbell took third, despite losing time with a puncture. The Honda ended up fourth after its full pitstop, which would have paid dividends if the race had gone green.

GARY WATKINS



JAS Honda NSX set the pace in dry conditions

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TOP 50 DRIVERS of 2020

By Haydn Cobb, Nick Garton, Alex Kalinauckas, Oleg Karpov, Matt Kew, Jamie Klein, David Malsher-Lopez, James Newbold, Jake Nichol, Marcus Simmons, Damien Smith, Luke Smith, Rachit Thukral, Andrew van Leeuwen and Gary Watkins

FOR EXTRA CONTENT VISIT AUTOSPORT.COM/TOP50



RE-ENTRY

Nick **Tandy**

1st in Spa 24H 1st in Sebring 12H (GTLM)

50 "Special drivers do special things." That was our response to Nick Tandy when he questioned the position of another driver in Autosport's top 10 LMP1 driver rankings a few years back. That's why the 2015 Le Mans 24 Hours winner can't be left out of our annual Top 50; he did something special this year. Not for the first time in his career, the Brit produced a jaw-dropping performance to take outright victory in a major sportscar enduro. This time it was over the final three wet hours of the Spa 24 Hours aboard his Rowe Racing Porsche 911 GT3-R. It was mesmerising stuff.



SRO



RE-ENTRY

Johan **Kristoffersson**

1st in World Rallycross Championship

49 After one year away competing in the World Touring Car Cup, Johan Kristoffersson reunited with his family-run Volkswagen team to dominate the World Rallycross Championship and secure his third world title. He took control of the campaign with one win in each of the four double-headers, demonstrating his supremacy at different venues, and added a further three podiums and a fourth place. When the Belgian and German rounds were cancelled on the revised 2020 calendar due to COVID-19, Kristoffersson was handed the crown, ahead of 2016 champion Mattias Ekstrom and 2019 title winner Timmy Hansen.


FIAWORLDRALLYCROSS



RE-ENTRY

Raffaele **Marciello**

3rd in GT World Challenge Europe

48 He played a decisive role in the unheralded Timur Boguslavskiy becoming overall GT World Challenge Europe champion, and also placed third in the Sprint Cup standings, despite missing Zandvoort to contest the Nurburgring 24 Hours, with an average points-per-race tally higher than the champions. The Italian didn't earn silverware for himself, missing out on the Endurance title due to a team-mate's contact at Paul Ricard, but was at his blistering best in 2020. The 0.675s qualifying margin in taking his ASP-run Mercedes to pole at Barcelona was the biggest since 2015, and he also won the ADAC GT Masters finale for HTP.



Why Johan Kristoffersson was more complete despite winning less

Johan Kristoffersson presents Autosport with a bit of a problem when he's winning. His long surname takes up a lot of real estate, whether that's on our website or in the magazine.

That was felt most in 2018 as he stitched together a mesmeric World Rallycross campaign in which he won 11 of the 12 rounds, only letting slip to Sebastien Loeb in Belgium.

A 2020 return of four wins from a truncated eight-race calendar doesn't appear anywhere near as devasting. But in many ways, the Swede can take more satisfaction from his work.

After a switch to full-time 'roundy roundy' in 2019 with a World Touring Car Cup assault, Kristoffersson returned to FIA mixed-surface competition but without his World Rally Championship-winning team-mate Petter Solberg.

He had to forge his World RX success this season alone. There was no partner against which he could compare to eke the most out of the Volkswagen Polo. And due to such a compact schedule, there was minimal time between rounds to analyse the data.

Kristoffersson says that car set-up was dictated by little more than a gut feeling. That he claimed a win in each of the four double-header World RX events infers his instincts are right on the money.

Kristoffersson, who also finished third in the WRC3 class aboard a Polo GTI R5 on Rally Sweden, says: "I was missing out a little bit from rallycross in 2019, but on the other hand I got to do my first gravel rally in Sweden. The WTCR circuit racing was at the highest level I've done before, so I learned a lot as a driver in the disciplines, which are on either side of rallycross. I reckon I was more complete when I came back for 2020 than I was previously."

As a driver, he was in the ballpark of his performances from two years ago. But his slide from 23rd in the Top 50 in 2018 down to a lowly 49th this time around reflects the ailing health of World RX following its manufacturer exodus.



Kristoffersson reckons rally experience has been a boost

McKLEIN



RE-ENTRY

Shane **van Gisbergen**

3rd in Australian Supercars Championship

47 There's an old adage in Aussie motor racing that one good day at Bathurst can turn a whole season around. That was kind of the case for Shane van Gisbergen in 2020. Most of his campaign was nothing special, but his Bathurst 1000 drive was out of this world. He used a short burst of rain while the field was on slicks to charge into the lead, typical of the renowned rainmaster, before withstanding around 100 laps of relentless pressure from Cam Waters. Even two late restarts couldn't rattle the Kiwi, who set the fastest lap of the race on the penultimate tour to seal his first Bathurst crown, and the last ever for a factory Holden.



KLYNSMITH



NEW ENTRY

Theo **Pourchaire**

2nd in FIA Formula 3 Championship

46 It cannot be stressed enough what a remarkable job was done by this young French racer, still only 16 when he took his two FIA F3 Championship race wins. He was making the giant leap from Formula 4, in which he'd won the German title in 2019. Pourchaire didn't take long to settle with ART Grand Prix, showing great speed and racing ability, and by the time he was 17 he settled into a long run of podium finishes that left him just three points adrift of the crown. He's already made his F2 debut, and his profile should rise to the extent that English commentators cease pronouncing his name 'poor chair'.


SUTTON



RE-ENTRY

Ash **Sutton**

1st in British Touring Car Championship

45 Ash Sutton's second British Touring Car Championship title came at the climax of a fascinating season, in which five very different characters in five heavily differing car concepts entered the final round with a shot at the crown. That Sutton prevailed was an entirely just result. His racecraft was sensational, rescuing him numerous times from setbacks caused by incidents, mistakes or occasions when the Laser Tools Racing Infiniti Q50, developed over the winter by BMR Engineering, didn't have the pace in qualifying. With this guy, you just never know what's round the next corner.



JEP



FIA WORLD RALLYCROSS

Kristoffersson has taken three WRX titles in four years



Ehrlacher and Muller were key parts of a very strong Lynk & Co line-up in WTCR

MARIA/DPPI



NEW ENTRY

Yann **Ehrlacher**

1st in World Touring Car Cup

44 French racer Yann Ehrlacher led the third World Touring Car Cup all the way, from the first meeting at Zolder to clinching the title with a race to spare at Motorland Aragon. The 24-year-old is by far the youngest FIA World Touring Car champion and, in the wake of Gabriele Tarquini and Norbert Michelisz, the WTCR's first title winner not to be driving a Hyundai. Armed with consistently the quickest car in Cyan Racing's Lynk & Co, Ehrlacher also had team-mate and uncle Yvan Muller in his corner at every round. A career in which he can aim to equal Muller's formidable record in tin-tops now appears to beckon.



FILIPE/DPPI



NEW ENTRY

Oscar **Piastri**

1st in FIA Formula 3 Championship

43 The teenaged Victorian has made a habit of winning major single-seater titles thanks to swashbuckling racecraft, and to his 2019 Formula Renault Eurocup crown he has now added this year's FIA Formula 3 title – despite never qualifying on the front row. His Prema Racing team-mate Logan Sargeant was the qualifying king, but Piastri was usually the one going forward in races, none better than when he scorched his way from 15th on the grid to third at Monza. It was especially impressive bearing in mind he became only the second rookie (after Daniil Kvyat) at the third-tier level to win the GP3/FIA F3 crown.



SUTTON

LAST YEAR'S TOP 50

1 Lewis Hamilton
2 Max Verstappen
3 Ott Tanak
4 Charles Leclerc
5 Carlos Sainz Jr
6 Sebastien Ogier
7 Alexander Rossi
8 Rene Rast
9 Mike Conway
10 Jean-Eric Vergne
11 Thierry Neuville
12 Valtteri Bottas
13 Josef Newgarden
14 Scott McLaughlin
15 Daniel Ricciardo
16 Sebastien Buemi
17 Nyck de Vries
18 Sergio Perez
19 Fernando Alonso
20 George Russell
21 Marco Wittmann
22 Scott Dixon
23 Lando Norris
24 Sebastian Vettel
25 Alex Albon
26 Kevin Estre
27 Kyle Busch
28 Will Power
29 Simon Pagenaud
30 Nick Cassidy
31 Nico Hulkenberg
32 Martin Truex Jr
33 Nico Muller
34 Colton Herta
35 Laurens Vanthoor
36 Mitch Evans
37 Kimi Raikkonen
38 Denny Hamlin
39 Timmy Hansen
40 Andreas Bakkerud
41 Alex Palou
42 Naoki Yamamoto
43 Colin Turkington
44 Norbert Michelisz
45 Robert Shwartzman
46 Kenta Yamashita
47 Kevin Harvick
48 Esteban Guerrieri
49 Dane Cameron
50 Pierre Gasly



▲UP 7

Dane **Cameron**

★6th in IMSA SportsCar Championship (DPi)
★2nd in Sebring 12H

42 Who knows how the reigning IMSA SportsCar Prototype champion failed to score even a single win in 2020? One certain victory, at Laguna Seca, was let go when Cameron and Juan Pablo Montoya selflessly gave up to their Acura Team Penske team-mates Helio Castroneves and Ricky Taylor, who went on to win this year's crown. Elsewhere, the pair were usually just unlucky, and Cameron is as complete a driver as Oliver Jarvis. He can produce devastating pace but also remains cool under pressure. It would be no surprise to see him reclaim the drivers' crown while driving for Meyer Shank Racing next year.





▼DOWN 38

Ott **Tanak**

★3rd in World Rally Championship

41 It is easy to caricature 2019 World Rally champion Ott Tanak as cold and unemotional. But undoubtedly the most moving moment of the 2020 campaign came when, against all odds, the championship managed to restart in Estonia, with the proud and joyful Tanak beating a tattoo on the roof of his victorious Hyundai i20 Coupe. He was runner-up a further three times in the seven-round season following his winter switch from Toyota. Other highlights were few and far between after flying off a mountainside in the curtain-raising Monte Carlo event, but his pace and intelligence are boundless nonetheless. Still a top performer.





NEW ENTRY

Cam **Waters**

★2nd in Australian Supercars Championship

40 This was a coming-of-age season for Cam Waters. There's never been any doubt over whether he's a good driver or not, but 'good' isn't good enough to contend for Australian Supercars titles. Off the back of a brilliant 2020 campaign, Waters seems poised to take that final step. The Tickford driver had speed all year, particularly over one lap. But it was the run home when he began to shine. He took his first solo Supercars race win at The Bend, was ridiculously fast across the Bathurst 1000 weekend, and beat Jamie Whincup to second in the points. With McLaughlin gone, Waters looks ready to become Ford's new poster boy.





▼DOWN 2

Kimi **Raikkonen**

★16th in Formula 1 World Championship

39 Kimi Raikkonen became Formula 1's most experienced driver in 2020 – not that he cared! The 41-year-old put in several battling displays in tough machinery with Alfa Romeo's C39, which was hampered by Ferrari's engine deficit. His pair of ninths in the chaotic Mugello and Imola races stand out, but it was the racing nous on display in the former that summed up Raikkonen's continued quality, even if his decision to pit just after Lance Stroll's crash earned him a penalty… But the main reason he's on this list is his total in the fictional 'Class C' standings, where he won by 97 points over team-mate Antonio Giovinazzi.





Experienced Raikkonen delivered the goods for Alfa Romeo



▼DOWN 8

Nick **Cassidy**

★ Currently 4th in Super Formula
★ 8th in Super GT

38 After wrapping up last year's Super Formula title, Nick Cassidy had another year in Japan ahead of his switch to Formula E in 2021. And while his SF qualifying form was somewhat patchy (at least until he took a sensational pole at Suzuka), his race drives were strong, topped by his charge to victory in tricky conditions at Sugo. FE commitments ruled Cassidy out of the final two races of the Super GT season, but up to that point he and Ryo Hirakawa were once again the standout pairing. His tenure in the series ended on a bum note as he hit Tadasuke Makino's Honda in the pitlane, but he did help give the new GR Supra a debut win at Fuji.


KITAGAWA


ISHIHARA

Cassidy impressed again in Super GT and scored his fifth win in the series during 2020



RE-ENTRY

Daniil **Kvyat**

★ 14th in Formula 1 World Championship

37 In a year that could end up being his last in Formula 1, Daniil Kvyat performed strongly. The trouble is, and much like his Red Bull-backed career overall, someone else has consistently performed stronger and grabbed the glittering results on AlphaTauri's 2020 scoresheet: Pierre Gasly. Nevertheless, Kvyat has acquitted himself well, particularly in the first half of the season. He put in a gutsy drive in the second Austrian race and was mighty on home soil in Russia, but a negative theme was his regular qualifying deficits to his team-mate. A charging fourth at Imola was the highlight, which followed a dreadful performance at Algarve Circuit.


SUTTON



RE-ENTRY

Filipe **Albuquerque**

🏆 1st in WEC (LMP2) 🏆 1st in ELMS

36 He lost his full-season IMSA seat for this season when the Action Express Racing squad slimmed down to one car, but such was the year the Portuguese enjoyed in 2020 that he waltzed straight back into another drive in North America with the Wayne Taylor Racing Acura squad for 2021. The former Audi LMP1 and DTM driver ended the year with two major sportscar crowns – the World Endurance Championship LMP2 and overall European Le Mans Series titles – captured with United Autosports. He took six race wins across the two series in 2020 together with his co-champion in both, Phil Hanson, and, for the WEC, Paul di Resta.


JEP



▼DOWN 25

Jean-Eric **Vergne**

★ 3rd in FIA Formula E Championship

35 An uninspiring title defence was headlined by just the single victory for double Formula E champion Jean-Eric Vergne. This came as new DS Techeetah team-mate Antonio Felix da Costa streaked clear to the crown. Combined with the scaling back of his tandem sportscar exploits, Vergne has dropped from third to 10th and now 35th in the past three editions of the Top 50. Still, his undying will to win remained in 2020. The former Toro Rosso F1 racer was aggressive in wheel-to-wheel combat and battled rather heroically through a virus to claim a podium in Marrakech – the highlight of a difficult year.


DUNGAN



▼ TOP 50 DROPOUTS FROM 2019

Drivers' 2019 Top 50 position and their 2020 results

7 Alexander **Rossi**
9th in IndyCar Series

19 Fernando **Alonso** ▶
21st in Indianapolis 500;
13th in Dakar Rally
(Alonso featured in
every Top 50 2003-19)


SUTTON

21 Marco **Wittmann**
9th in DTM; 4th in
Nurburgring 24H

24 Sebastian **Vettel**
13th in F1 World Champ
(Vettel featured in every
Top 50 2006-19)

25 Alex **Albon**
7th in F1 World Champ

26 Kevin **Estre**
3rd in WEC (GTLM);
13th in Spa 24H

27 Kyle **Busch**
8th in NASCAR Cup

29 Simon **Pagenaud**
8th in IndyCar Series

31 Nico **Hulkenberg**
15th in F1 World Champ

32 Martin **Truex** Jr
7th in NASCAR Cup

35 Laurens **Vanthoor**
6th in IMSA SportsCar
(GTLM); 1st in Spa 24

39 Timmy **Hansen**
3rd in World Rallycross
Championship

40 Andreas **Bakkerud**
7th in World Rallycross
Championship

41 Alex **Palou**
16th in IndyCar Series

42 Naoki **Yamamoto**
1st in Super GT; currently
2nd in Super Formula

43 Colin **Turkington**
2nd in British Touring Car
Championship

44 Norbert **Michelisz**
13th in World Touring
Car Cup

45 Robert **Shwartzman**
4th in FIA Formula 2
Championship

46 Kenta **Yamashita**
Currently 5th in
Super Formula

48 Esteban **Guerrieri**
4th in World Touring Car Cup



NEW ENTRY

Patricio **O'Ward**

★ 4th in IndyCar Series

34 Every time Patricio O'Ward appeared to be in a situation where he might bin it while trying the impossible – through sheer brio, or frustration when fate worked against him – he behaved almost impeccably. He also demonstrated great pace on all types of track. Sure, there were some weekends when Arrow McLaren SP couldn't hit the high notes of a Penske or Ganassi, and O'Ward is not yet experienced enough to provide sufficient guidance. This was, after all, the 21-year-old Mexican's first full season at this level. But it won't be long before he's winning races and contending for the title.


SKIBINSKI/IMS



NEW ENTRY

Ryo **Hirakawa**

★ Currently 1st in Super Formula
★ 2nd in Super GT

33 For the second year in a row, he can be considered the 'moral champion' of Super GT. Last year, Hirakawa and TOM'S team-mate Nick Cassidy were denied by the timing of the safety car in one pivotal race; this time it was a small but costly fuel miscalculation that caused Hirakawa to run out literally within sight of the chequered flag. In a GT car, it's hard to think of one serious error Hirakawa made all season, and there was no shortage of strong drives, notably in the opening and closing rounds at Fuji. He came of age in Super Formula too, finding new consistency, and without some bad luck he could have already sealed the title.


ISHIHARA



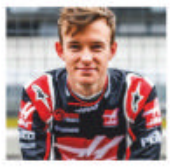
▼ DOWN 15

Nyck **de Vries**

★ 11th in FIA Formula E Championship
★ 10th in WEC (LMP2) ★ 5th in ELMS

32 Eleventh in the Formula E standings is comfortably the lowest championship position of all the drivers of any series in this year's Top 50, outside of F1. This came as Mercedes stablemate Stoffel Vandoorne ended the season in second. Nevertheless, de Vries was a rookie sensation. There were repeated examples of overly aggressive veering under braking while defending, but otherwise his on-track judgement was spot on. He should have ranked much higher in FE, were it not for reliability and team errors outside of his control. His three appearances in the European Le Mans Series again showed his excellent race pace.


GALLOWAY



NEW ENTRY

Callum **Ilott**

★ 2nd in FIA Formula 2 Championship

31 So often the nearly-man, and remains so. Callum Ilott still hasn't won a major single-seater title but came closer than he ever has done to righting that this year in FIA Formula 2 with Virtuosi Racing. His lightning-quick reflexes and innate car control carried him to five pole positions, and without those his deficit to champion Mick Schumacher at season's end would have been 34 points, not 14. But three times those poles led to finishes outside the top four for F2's fastest driver, thanks to a mixed bag of fading tyres, strategies that were undone by untimely safety cars, or stalling in the pits. Still, stunning on his day.


COATES

TOP 50 NEW ENTRIES

27 Yuki **Tsunoda** ▶
9th in 2019 FIA Formula 3 Championship; 1st in 2018 Japanese Formula 4

28 Chase **Elliott**
10th in 2019 NASCAR Cup; 6th in 2018 NASCAR Cup

31 Callum **Ilott**
11th in 2019 FIA Formula 2 Championship; 3rd in 2018 GP3 Series

33 Ryo **Hirakawa**
10th in 2019 Super Formula Championship; 2nd in 2019 Super GT Championship

34 Patricio **O'Ward**
26th in part-time 2019 IndyCar Series; 1st in 2018 Indy Lights Championship

40 Cam **Waters**
7th in 2019 Australian Supercars Championship; 16th in 2018 Australian Supercars Championship


Tsunoda has already tested for AlphaTauri
HONE

43 Oscar **Piastri**
1st in 2019 Formula Renault Eurocup; 8th in 2018 Formula Renault Eurocup

44 Yann **Ehrlacher**
9th in 2019 World Touring Car Cup; 10th in 2018 World Touring Car Cup

46 Theo **Pourchaire**
1st in 2019 German Formula 4; 1st in 2018 French Formula 4 Junior Championship

TOP 50 RE-ENTRIES

3 Antonio **Felix da Costa**
50th in 2013; 9th in 2012

25 Mick **Schumacher**
45th in 2018

26 Stoffel **Vandoorne**
50th in 2016; 5th in 2015; 13th in 2014; 33rd in 2013

29 Elfyn **Evans**
36th in 2017


Sutton makes it into our 50 for the third time
JEP

36 Filipe **Albuquerque**
50th in 2010

37 Daniil **Kvyat**
48th in 2015; 29th in 2014; 18th in 2013

45 Ash **Sutton**
44th in 2018; 43rd in 2017

47 Shane **van Gisbergen**
39th in 2018; 28th in 2016

48 Raffaele **Marciello**
48th in 2017; 26th in 2013

49 Johan **Kristoffersson**
23rd in 2018; 41st in 2017; 46th in 2012

50 Nick **Tandy**
8th in 2015; 47th in 2014



▼DOWN 2

Will **Power**

★5th in IndyCar Series

30 On his best days, the fastest IndyCar driver is peerless. Will Power's two wins in 2020 were from the top drawer. There should have been two or three more victories but, as ever, he got hit harder than most by caution flags arriving at inopportune times. Also, his Team Penske pitcrew made several errors in the first half of the season, the most serious of which caused a wheel to fall off at Iowa Speedway, sending the Australian into the wall. But Power himself was not flawless either, and his St Petersburg shunt in the series finale will doubtless bug him throughout the off-season.


ABBOTT

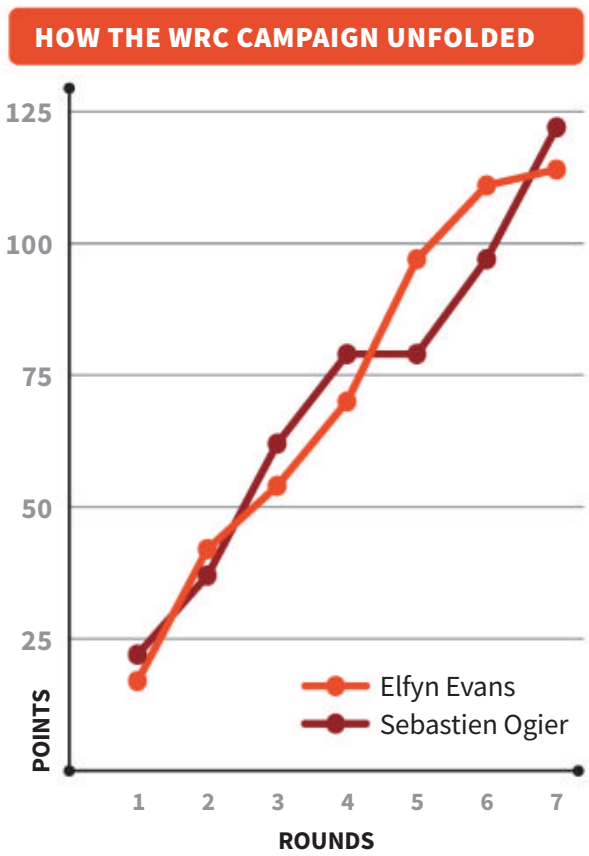


RE-ENTRY

Elfyn **Evans**

★2nd in World Rally Championship

29 Being honest, Elfyn Evans was not the obvious choice for Toyota in 2020. In his six top-flight seasons at M-Sport, the Welsh driver managed one win at home on unique tyres that nobody else had access to. Switching teams, however, meant having Tommi Makinen's support and that of Sebastien Ogier alongside him. Evans flourished right away in the feisty Yaris. He won enough stages through the year to make his position in the points table credible, and his exemplary sportsmanship in Monza – warning Ogier of the treacherous road that had dashed his title hopes – deserves our admiration and respect.




McKLEIN



NEW ENTRY

Chase **Elliott**

1st in NASCAR Cup

28 In a quiet regular part of the season, Elliott recorded only two wins, but this was more than enough to book an early playoff spot for the final 10 rounds. He and crew chief Alan Gustafson then went about fettling their Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet Camaro to ensure it was ready for the win-or-bust stages of the playoff races, which payed off handsomely. Peaking at the right time and overcoming a pre-race penalty at Phoenix (and a rescinded one at Martinsville), he won the final two races of the campaign – the first time he'd won back-to-back races at Cup level – to hand him his first title.


NKP



NEW ENTRY

Yuki **Tsunoda**

★3rd in FIA Formula 2 Championship

27 Just two years since leaving Japan as the Honda-backed national Formula 4 champion, Yuki Tsunoda now stands on the brink of a Formula 1 career with AlphaTauri after a sensational rookie FIA F2 season. If Callum Ilott was the fastest driver in F2 this year, then Tsunoda was the most exciting, relighting the Carlin team's fire for the kind of balls-out, rag-it, ever-smiling Asian talents that got it established in the first place. Tsunoda took a while to add results to his speed, thanks to a mixture of mistakes and misfortune and, had he not messed up qualifying for the first Bahrain event, he could well have become champion.


SUTTON



RE-ENTRY

Stoffel **Vandoorne**

★2nd in FIA Formula E Championship

26 The six-race Formula E season finale in Berlin exacerbated the championship's famously topsy-turvy nature. Although it quickly became apparent that Antonio Felix da Costa would win the title, the runner-up slot and beyond was wide open. That second place in the standings eventually fell to Vandoorne was somewhat generous. His crash in Mexico was clumsy and his performance in Marrakech was rather tepid. But his campaign was capped off by an almost routine-looking win in the last race. Here in Berlin, he was in total control of proceedings. On his day Vandoorne was brilliant, but those days need to come more regularly.


FERRARO



RE-ENTRY

Mick **Schumacher**

1st in FIA Formula 2 Championship

25 He's got through his two-year FIA Formula 2 career without ever qualifying on the front row, yet Mick Schumacher graduates to Formula 1 with the 2020 F2 title under his belt. How did that happen? Lightning starts, excellent spatial awareness on opening laps, strong racecraft and (usually) a coolness under pressure that often seems a rare and precious commodity in F2. Plus he did what he did in European F3 in 2018: he went on a points-harvesting rampage in late summer that included his two wins, at Monza and Sochi. Schumacher, in his fifth year in the Prema structure, was a deserving champion.


SUTTON



▲ UP 14

Denny **Hamlin**

4th in NASCAR Cup

24 In a NASCAR Cup season that Toyota's David Wilson called "unacceptable", as the fleet of Camrys struggled to match their 2019 form, it was Hamlin and his seven wins that provided a crumb of respectability. The only driver able to match Kevin Harvick in the regular season, Daytona 500 winner Hamlin went off the boil in the playoffs as his performance plateaued. The switch of the championship race from Homestead to Phoenix didn't help, with Joe Gibbs Racing performing badly on short tracks throughout the year. An anonymous fourth in the race translated to fourth in the standings for the second successive season.


THACKER



▼ DOWN 12

Thierry **Neuville**

4th in World Rally Championship

23 Hyundai's mercurial ace is cast in the Ari Vatanen/Colin McRae mould; this electrifies fans. That's why nobody else won more stages than him in 2020, but it's also why his car ended up in a heap twice in just seven rallies. We want heroes in our drivers and Neuville knows that he's living the dream of millions around the world. From his demeanour, it's clearly a dream well worth living too, which is refreshing in an age when drivers are supposed to obsess over their 'legacy'. The World Rally Championship is made infinitely richer by the presence of this old-school swashbuckler.


McKLEIN



Formula E's rules worked against Evans in key Berlin races

STALEY



▲UP 12

Colton **Herta**

★3rd in IndyCar Series

22 Andretti Autosport's youngest, least experienced driver was the fastest across the season, and well worthy of his third place in the championship. With all but one of the street courses eliminated, one of the team's strengths was largely neutered in 2020. But Herta set about simply doing the best with what he had and not overreaching as he had in his rookie season, which had left him to score two wins but only one other top-five finish. This year he kept qualifying well and accruing good points – Iowa and St Petersburg apart – and, when Andretti Autosport made its breakthrough at Mid-Ohio, he was there to take full advantage with a victory.





▲UP 12

Nico **Muller**

★2nd in DTM
★25th in FIA Formula E Championship

21 With six wins, seven other podiums and just one finish outside the top six, Nico Muller really stepped up his game in 2020 in his bid to dethrone Audi stablemate Rene Rast as the king of the DTM. Muller had already shown frontrunning potential in 2018 and finished as the closest challenger to runaway title winner Rast last year, but in 2020 he put it beyond doubt that he has what it takes to become a champion. Some misfortune at the Nurburgring and a change of competitive order at Zolder ultimately turned the tide in Rast's favour, but the 23-point gap at the end wasn't a fair representation of their season-long battle.





▲UP 16

Mitch **Evans**

★7th in FIA Formula E Championship

20 Berlin has not proved a happy hunting ground for Mitch Evans throughout his Formula E career. That this season concluded with six races at the venue was the undoing of a campaign in which he was Antonio Felix da Costa's nearest match. A victory in Mexico was dominant and flawless. When Jaguar sent him out too late to set a qualifying lap in Marrakech, he responded magnificently by rising from last to sixth to sit second in the standings. But the team was outdeveloped in the software race during the mid-season pause, leaving Evans to suffer in qualifying and fall to an unrepresentative seventh.



The deliberate Formula E quirk that ended Mitch Evans's title hopes

Formula E has purposely engineered its event format to, in theory, keep the title race alive until the closing moments of the final round. But the key factor in this orchestrated structure allowed Antonio Felix da Costa to sew up the spoils with two rounds to spare.

Rather perversely, it also paved the way for Mitch Evans – closest rival to da Costa heading into the six-race Berlin season finale – to have his campaign fall apart.

Supreme in Mexico, the Kiwi was on course for an 8s win but backed off in the final laps for fear of a safety car. The win put him top of the table.

For Marrakech, a strategy blunder from his Jaguar Racing team left Evans without a time in qualifying, sentencing him to the back of the grid. There, he mounted a stunning recovery for sixth to limit the damage.



But heading into the Berlin 'mini-series', something of a bogey track for Evans, FE's event format hurt him most.

In the hope of creating a topsy-turvy grid and an entertaining race, the drivers leading the standings ahead of each round are the first to set a qualifying lap. As such, they are presented with a green track that doesn't offer grip and therefore lap time. In the first two Berlin races, da Costa was the odd one out. He was the only driver from the top six of the championship to progress through to the final shootout for pole position.

Evans, meanwhile, would line up for the two bouts from eighth and 16th as a legacy of his early form. For the next four races, it would be grid slots 19th, 11th, 13th and 23rd.

Evans still proved quick in race trim – his fastest laps in five of the six rounds were among the 10 best in each event. But because of this speed, he kept experiencing the ill-effects of the qualifying format.

Such was Evans's initial tally, added to his haul of 15 points in Germany, he was always doing just enough to feature in that opening qualifying group. Each time he had to bank a flying lap in the slowest track conditions, putting him down the order – the undoing of his year.



▲UP 4

Lando **Norris**

★ 9th in Formula 1 World Championship

19 One of the second-year F1 drivers who really delivered in 2020. Norris's season was a hit from the off when he finished third in the Austrian GP, 'chasing' down the penalty-addled Lewis Hamilton to earn a first F1 podium. He also shone against the clock, with fourth in qualifying at the season opener (he started third) his best result, but starts were occasionally a problem. He didn't always have the best luck, such as his engine-related retirement in Germany and then being clattered by Lance Stroll in Portugal, and he occasionally struggled in traffic. He's progressing, but high points were fewer in the season's second half.



COATES



▼DOWN 13

Carlos **Sainz** Jr

★ 6th in Formula 1 World Championship

18 Carlos Sainz Jr was in the headlines from the off thanks to his lockdown-announced 2021 Ferrari deal, but he made an early on-track splash too with third in qualifying for the Styrian GP (a result he repeated at Monza). Like his McLaren team-mate, he had some rotten luck – the Silverstone tyre blowout, not starting at Spa, again – but he also created more magic in orange before a switch to red. Even before Mercedes and Lewis Hamilton made safety-car gaffes at Monza, Sainz was starring, and he probably deserved the win as much as Pierre Gasly. He was magnificent in challenging conditions in Turkey and also while recovering in Bahrain.



MAUGER



▼DOWN 8

Mike **Conway**

🏆 1st in WEC (LMP1) ★ 3rd in Le Mans 24H

17 Mike Conway was the standout driver in the #7 Toyota over the four races of the 2019-20 World Endurance Championship that took place this year. He's now a super-consistent performer who goes about his business with a minimum of fuss and has eradicated mistakes from his game. Those qualities were finally rewarded with a major sportscar gong, the WEC crown secured together with Kamui Kobayashi and Jose Maria Lopez. Missing from his CV is a victory in the big one at Le Mans. To say luck deserted them in the 24 Hours would be wrong, because this crew don't actually have any. But they did have the pace to win this year.


JEP



Russell grabbed his Mercedes chance in the Sakhir GP, underlining his fine efforts for Williams

Mike Conway versus Sebastien Buemi

The success handicaps that blighted the 2019-20 World Endurance Championship season make comparisons between drivers across the two Toyotas difficult. What is indisputable is that when the penalty system wasn't in force for September's Le Mans 24 Hours, Sebastien Buemi stood head and shoulders over his team-mates, Mike Conway included. He was nearly six tenths clear of the Brit using a 50-lap sample.

But Conway overturned a performance deficit under the handicap system at Spa in August, ending up a shade under two tenths ahead of Buemi using a 25-lap sample for the six-hour race. That was despite the Brit's #7 TS050 HYBRID running a 3.53s penalty to the #8 car's 3.08s.

Conway was the fastest Toyota driver on the way to sealing the WEC crown. Yet his advantage over Buemi on the 25-lap average was only 0.379s, less than the 0.54s performance advantage the #7 car enjoyed, at the season finale in Bahrain.

There wasn't a lot to choose between Toyota's two standouts this year, Le Mans excepted.

PACE COMPARISON Average lap time; penalty in brackets

AUSTIN	SPA	LE MANS	BAHRAIN
Conway (2.77s) 1m53.567s	**Conway** (3.53s) 2m04.684s	**Conway** (n/a) 3m22.709s	**Conway** (0.00s) 1m43.945s
Buemi (2.21s) 1m52.211s	**Buemi** (3.08s) 2m04.881s	**Buemi** (n/a) 3m22.139s	**Buemi** (0.54s) 1m44.324s

*50 laps at Le Mans, 25 laps at Austin, Spa and Bahrain



NO MOVE

Sebastien **Buemi**

1st in Le Mans 24H ★ 2nd in WEC (LMP1)
★ 4th in FIA Formula E Championship

16 It wouldn't be quite right to say that Sebastien Buemi was overshadowed by Fernando Alonso on his way to his first two Le Mans 24 Hours victories in 2018 and 2019, even if it was the Spaniard who monopolised the headlines. This year, however, the Swiss put his team-mates at Toyota firmly in the shade on the way to his third. He was easily the fastest of the six at the French enduro, and by some margin. His pace at Le Mans and a strong Formula E season in which he arguably overperformed at the wheel of a Nissan that wasn't a genuine frontrunner give him the nod over Mike Conway.



How George Russell has grown from rookie to leader in one season

Autosport asked Williams head of vehicle performance Dave Robson about how George Russell has performed in his second season with the team.

Autosport It's been a turbulent year at times. How has Russell coped with it all?
Dave Robson Extremely well. He was clearly strong last year, but the car didn't allow him to show that, and he still had an awful lot to learn. Between us and him, we've built on that. He's been getting steadily better, still every race. And hopefully, what we saw with him in the Mercedes and actually being very close to Valtteri Bottas, that's justification of our faith in his ability, but also of the work we've done with him, and the work he's done himself over the past 18 months. He's been outstanding all year, really. He just continually improves. He's very good.

AS Has he been more of a leader this year?
DR Yeah, he has, definitely. He's learned a lot more about how the car works and what to look for operationally and tactically. In terms of run plans, he's got much greater insight now into what other people... kind of guessing what other people will do and therefore what we should do in response. I suppose some of the naivety of being a rookie has gone and he can see much more of the bigger picture. The car is easier to drive, which gives him more opportunities to think about his own [performance], and he's got more bandwidth to think. Undoubtedly, he leads the team much more so than he did last year, as you'd expect. And I think he's got a lot more potential to push that on further. He will get better at that in time. He's good, but he's got more to go, and he'll be able to do that for sure.





▲UP 5

George **Russell**

★ 18th in Formula 1 World Championship

15 For the majority of 2020, George Russell raced for the team he was supposed to – Williams – before Mercedes came calling right at the end. His place here is based mainly on the Williams efforts, which generally featured incredible qualifying performances and tougher races. He took Williams out of Q1 on nine occasions, but for all that he still couldn't make the points even in the season's most-random races, such as Mugello and Imola. In the former, a problem at the third grid start – a theme of Williams's season – cost him critical places. Looked rusty in battle early on but improved significantly over the season.





▲UP 33

Kevin **Harvick**

★ 5th in NASCAR Cup

14 For many, it was just a formality that Harvick would negotiate the playoffs and book himself a spot in the title-deciding race at Phoenix, after a dominant regular season. Among his seven wins in that portion of the 36-round calendar, his sweep of the Michigan double-header stood out as the field adapted to no practice or qualifying after the pandemic hiatus. An additional two wins early in the playoffs reinforced his title credentials, but the system that gives undue weight to the closing stages bit him after a mistake in Texas, and a scrappy Martinsville left him fifth in the final table, despite winning 25% of races in 2020.



NKP





▲UP 1

Scott **McLaughlin**

1st in Australian Supercars Championship

13 It was the perfect response to the controversies of 2019. Forget about an aero advantage, this time around it was the Triple Eight Holdens that started the season as the clear pacesetters. But there was no stopping Scott McLaughlin and DJR Team Penske, particularly as the season went into ad hoc mode due to the pandemic. It didn't matter which track the series ended up at, or how many tyres they were given for the weekend, McLaughlin would find a way to win. He took at least one victory at every circuit Supercars raced at, except for Bathurst. It was a wildly impressive way to claim a third straight crown ahead of his IndyCar switch.



KLYNSMITH

The checklist for a McLaughlin replacement down under

Scott McLaughlin may be a lifelong Greg Murphy fan, but his career trajectory is tracking much like that of Murph's most famous rival.

In the early-to-mid 2000s, Marcos Ambrose enjoyed a spell of dominance in Australian Supercars before heading Stateside to live out his NASCAR dream. He was a hard racer, more interested in winning than making friends, and his exit wasn't met with universal disappointment from the drivers he'd left behind.

It's harsh, but the same can be said about McLaughlin as he bids farewell to Supercars and joins Team Penske's IndyCar line-up.

The Kiwi's relationship with the Supercars paddock has changed over the years. He was once a likeable kid constantly compared to Craig Lowndes thanks to his happy-go-lucky nature. You know, the guy who won hearts when he "gave it some jandal and f*** yeah" on TV after beating Jamie Whincup to second place in Adelaide.

But that's changed. Over time McLaughlin has become a polarising figure in the paddock. Without doubt there's been an element of tall-poppy syndrome. Jealousy has been a factor as some drivers have fallen out of love with McLaughlin. But there's more to it. The likes of Whincup and Lowndes have shown you can win without it creating a rift with the field.

The big change came in 2019. McLaughlin clearly felt all the talk about the new Mustang's dominance undermined his own share of the credit for his winning streak, which ultimately turned his relationship with the paddock toxic.

Then there was Bathurst and his insistence that he won fair and square despite the whole safety-car slow-down tactic, which left the team with a record $250,000 fine. That fire was further fuelled when the engine he used to take pole was found to be illegal in post-event checks.

News of the illegal engine went public on the same day McLaughlin sealed his second Supercars title at Sandown. When he faced the media in the evening, he was visibly fed up with the whole show. When asked how he'd celebrate the title, he said: "I'll just go with my friends, away



Will Waters (left) take over from McLaughlin as the Supercars driver to beat?

KLYNSMITH



McLaughlin has already impressed in IndyCar

LEVITT

from this toxic paddock."

There's little doubt that things mellowed a bit in 2020. The pandemic has played its part; the problems of old seem now trivial compared to the challenges we've all faced this year.

There's also a sense that McLaughlin has become more accepting of his role as the category's ruthless winner. He's had himself listed as a "human salt harvester" on his social media profiles for much of the season. And his helmet has carried the message 'winners focus on winning, losers focus on winners'.

This all may sound intensely negative, but it's not. McLaughlin did a great deal for the category. His stint at DJRTP gave the Ford-versus-Holden rivalry a bitter edge it had been missing for years.

What's important now is that somebody fills those McLaughlin-sized racing boots. Supercars needs to cross its fingers and hope somebody in the blue corner is ready to step up.

Tickford's Cam Waters is perhaps most likely to do so based on his late-season speed. Or perhaps the move to DJR will help Anton De Pasquale become Ford's next big thing. Whoever the McLaughlin successor turns out to be, it's equally important that they bring a similar edge to their off-track game too.

As Supercars faces its significant transition from Ford versus Holden to Ford versus Chevrolet, a little drama between the drivers could go a long way.



NO MOVE

Valtteri **Bottas**

★ 2nd in Formula 1 World Championship

12 The 2020 season was ultimately a familiar tale for the most part: Valtteri Bottas was close but not close enough to one of F1's best ever. He copped the worst of Mercedes' luck and this inflated the points gap to Lewis Hamilton, but some misfortune was his own making (regular poor starts). He can, however, take heart from the average qualifying gap to Hamilton being just over a tenth in the champion's favour (in dry sessions). Bottas needs to improve his tyre management to really have a hope of bridging the gap in races, but a bigger problem emerged late on when George Russell arrived and wasn't blown away by the four-year Mercedes driver.



COATES



▲UP 7

Sergio **Perez**

★ 4th in Formula 1 World Championship

11 This has been quite a year. Sergio Perez missed two races to COVID-19, lost his drive at the team he helped save, and became a Formula 1 race winner. He qualified inconsistently and took a while to get going when Racing Point needed perfection from the off, as he put in scrappy displays early on. But he delivered fifth on his return from isolation in Spain and kicked on from there. Deserved podium chances went begging at the Nurburgring and Imola, but he took a fine second in Turkey. He should have been third in the first Bahrain race, but after a fiery retirement his luck reversed as his brilliant Sakhir recovery became a shock win.



DUNBAR



▼DOWN 2

Rene **Rast**

1st in DTM

10 Many would have ruled out Rene Rast from the DTM title fight when he slipped nearly 50 points behind Nico Muller with just three rounds to run. But the German Audi star again demonstrated why he's been nearly invincible since his first full campaign in 2017, turning the championship in his favour in fewer than 10 days and staking a claim among the DTM's greats. A Formula E call-up proved he can be just as fast in single-seaters, as he quickly familiarised himself to the unique demands of the series and bagged a podium finish in his fifth electric start with Audi.


DTM



▼DOWN 3

Sebastien **Ogier**

1st in World Rally Championship

9 There was something inevitable about Sebastien Ogier's progress towards a seventh World Rally crown. He had destroyed allcomers in a newly minted team at Volkswagen, then went to M-Sport and straight away coaxed a championship out of the Ford Fiesta. Toyota's Yaris WRC is an edgier proposition, eager to fling its tail around, but Ogier has so much ability in hand over the average WRC driver that, once he hit his stride in Mexico, impartial observers could just sit back and enjoy the show. His Turkish engine drama aside, this was a vintage year for the defining star of our present era.


RED BULL



▲UP 14

Scott **Dixon**

1st in IndyCar Series 1st in Daytona 24H

8 For the first time in his 20-year history of Indycar racing, Scott Dixon led a championship from start to finish. He started the campaign with three straight victories and later added a fourth. Even if he could never match his demolition of the field at the Texas Motor Speedway season opener, he was almost always a potential winner. He's only behind his main title rival Josef Newgarden in this ranking because Dixon himself didn't believe this was quite his best year of driving. It's also worth noting that he was part of Wayne Taylor Racing's IMSA SportsCar line-up when it won the 24 Hours at Daytona and Petit Le Mans.


CANTRELL



McKLEIN

Ogier (right) took his seventh WRC title with third different team



▲UP 8

Daniel **Ricciardo**

5th in Formula 1 World Championship

7 Like Carlos Sainz Jr, Ricciardo was another driver to make a big career decision before turning a wheel in anger in 2020, and this changed the nature of his campaign as he looked to leave Renault on good terms before joining McLaren. He was pleased that the updated RS20 gave him more rear-handling confidence, but it took a few races before he really shone due to the Austrian Grand Prix radiator weld issue and the crowded midfield overall. But he was magnificent in the British GP, then rode a set-up breakthrough at the second Silverstone race to much stronger results from there onwards, which included his two fine podiums at the Nurburgring and Imola.


SUTTON



Newgarden (1) and Dixon were the class acts in IndyCar, winning eight of the 14 races



▲ UP 7

Josef **Newgarden**

★ 2nd in IndyCar Series

6 The two-time IndyCar champion beat Scott Dixon in eight of the 14 races this year and matched him on race victories, although there could easily have been a couple more. Josef Newgarden also filled in a couple of blanks: one of his four wins came on the Indianapolis road course, previously only a so-so track for him, and for the first time he looked the best of Team Penske's drivers in the Indy 500. But perhaps the most impressive aspect of Newgarden's year was a near-absence of errors. Now he has to live with the fact that he got it all right and still came up short…



Why being almost perfect wasn't sufficient for Newgarden

"We didn't do a heck of a lot wrong this season," Newgarden explains. "Iowa race one [round five of the 2020 IndyCar season] was when it sunk in that things were going against us, that Scott [Dixon]'s lead was almost too difficult to overcome. He'd won the first three races of the season, and then that night he got a second place.

"Meanwhile we'd been unlucky – the yellow flag in the Indianapolis Grand Prix had caught out both Will [Power] and me, and then in Road America race one we were leading but we had a fire in the plenum during a pitstop.

"Then we get to that first Iowa race and we're dominating and a yellow causes the field to flip, and we get buried in the pack, and suddenly Simon [Pagenaud] and Scott find themselves in front.

"I give Dixon and Ganassi credit because they were doing a good job, but they were taking advantage of every situation that was negative for us. To have one car doing that and for that car to be Dixon's… it's a recipe for disaster for everyone else!

"We won the [Iowa] race the next night but Scott still got a top five, then he beat us in the Indy 500, and then he won at Gateway. I think that's when he was too far gone. He was 117 points ahead with just six races to go. You just can't overcome that in the time available."

Newgarden, in champion fashion, gave it a damn good go. He slashed that deficit to just 16 points at year's end, with three more victories.

"There were areas to improve – I dropped the ball in some qualifying sessions – but on race day, I don't think I made errors and I don't think the Penske team made missteps in pitstops or strategy. It was simply a case of bad timing in terms of caution periods. No one we can blame for that. All we can do is hold our heads high and say we did everything within our power."

"Dixon and Ganassi were taking advantage of every situation that was negative for us"



SUTTON



▼DOWN 1

Charles **Leclerc**

★ 8th in Formula 1 World Championship

5 A mark of a great driver is producing great results in a not-so-great car. And that is something Charles Leclerc did throughout the 2020 Formula 1 season. Yes, his two podiums came early on, but the Mercedes-duo-plus-Max-Verstappen bloc didn't tend to leave many crumbs for the rest to gobble across the campaign.

Leclerc's 2020 season did feature a couple of costly errors – most notably the embarrassing crash with team-mate Sebastian Vettel at the start of the Styrian Grand Prix, which took them both out – but this was still just his third season in F1. The campaign was also really the first time that Leclerc has had to deliver the cliched 'outperforming the car', which he did on several occasions after making the most of the chaotic season opener to take second behind Valtteri Bottas.

The first was in the British GP, where he was just 0.102s from what would have been a sensational third on the grid, which he then converted into that position after Bottas's tyre failure. Leclerc was then so fast in the Silverstone race a week later that he couldn't explain his pace. A tougher run of results formed the middle phase of the season, which included a theme of the Monegasque qualifying well and then being overcome in races as the Ferrari engine deficit bit hard, before Leclerc started another excellent run with fourth at Algarve Circuit. He backed that up well with a canny run to fifth on the last of three home races for Ferrari at Imola and then drove brilliantly in the wet in Turkey, until the moment he slipped up trying to steal second from Sergio Perez.

Fast, determined and brave (look at how he drove after the second grid start for the Bahrain GP, squeezing his car into places it possibly shouldn't have been with exquisite judgement and a healthy dose of respect from his rivals), he continues to be Ferrari's star. As Vettel leaves for 2021 he will be in the position of notional incumbent leader when Carlos Sainz Jr arrives, but Leclerc has shown he can be a talisman. Next season he needs fewer mistakes and for his leadership qualities to show through strongly if Ferrari is to stage a resurgence up the grid.



COATES



DUNBAR



▲UP 46

Pierre **Gasly**

★ 10th in Formula 1 World Championship

4 It's bizarre to think that Pierre Gasly heads into 2021 still outside the 'Class A' Formula 1 squads – and that he had his chance with one in 2019 and blew it so badly – such was the strength of his 2020 season. Even before his sensational win in the Italian Grand Prix, Gasly was having an excellent campaign, building on the momentum he had gathered after rejoining Toro Rosso following his demotion from Red Bull mid-way through last year.

Staying with the same squad over an off-season for the first time in his single-seater career played a significant role in his strong campaign – he said ahead of the season at the AlphaTauri team's rebranding event in Salzburg that he felt better prepared physically and mentally than ever before in F1. Autosport found Gasly a relaxed and confident figure at that glitzy event at Red Bull's Hangar-7 event space – far from the broken character team-mate Daniil Kvyat had been in the months following his own Red Bull rejection.

AlphaTauri felt Gasly got more involved in discussions on car development and handling in 2020, as well as benefiting from the overall open approach it employs as a team dedicated to training drivers for the senior team (or should that be rehabilitating them?). This greater leadership role paid off for Gasly, as AlphaTauri was able to implement small and steady upgrades throughout the season, which he and his engineers worked well to understand together.

Gasly's season, and possibly career, will be remembered for that win at Monza, where he was the main beneficiary of Mercedes and Lewis Hamilton making mistakes under the safety car, and he was also fortunate to gain with the red flag. But the way he held off the charging Carlos Sainz Jr showed his class and maturity. Even before then he'd delivered excellent performances in the Austrian and British GPs, while he regularly put the AlphaTauri ahead of faster cars in qualifying. There were down notes, such as his early elimination at Mugello and slide backwards with damage from a first-corner knock in the Styrian GP, but a battling drive in Portugal and a tyre-management masterclass on a one-stopper in Bahrain showed his versatility.

Why Gasly is a great fit at AlphaTauri

Autosport asked Gasly's AlphaTauri engineer Pierre Hamelin about his driver's place in the team.

Autosport Why do you think AlphaTauri suits Gasly so well?
Pierre Hamelin It's difficult to answer because I've never been at Red Bull. I can't tell you what's different [there] – I'm not in their meetings, I'm not in their garage. What's for sure is that in our place we are very open in terms of how much information we share. So, he knows everything, we discuss everything. There are no bad, silly questions, we are very open.

AS Does Gasly have a weakness?
PH One thing we discuss sometimes is when a situation is changing. Let's say you have a dry track, and the track starts to be wet – it takes a bit of time to find the limits, to know what kind of pace the car is capable of. So, let's say sometimes you go out on dry tyres and it starts raining. Some drivers will go three or four tenths faster, [and] we would have to push this information to him to [let him] know that he and the car are able to do that as well. So, I would say maybe this one thing, in terms of knowing how far he can push when the situation is changing, is something we are still working on.

AS Any reason why he is particularly strong in qualifying?
PH Actually, what's really interesting is – and this was the case before with Toro Rosso as well [in 2018] – he has a very heavy confidence in himself. He knows what he's capable of achieving. He believes the car is able to give him [what he needs and] he knows well what the car is able to achieve. When we have a quali meeting, he will be the first one to say, 'Look, today, I think we have the pace and I'd like to try to go through to Q3 with one set of tyres', for example. He will be pushing the team to take that risk, which for us, as a midfield team, is a big risk to take when we go that way. But yeah, he's got very strong confidence.



RE-ENTRY

Antonio **Felix da Costa**

1st in FIA Formula E Championship
3rd in WEC (LMP2)



S BLOXHAM

3 The worst results of an exemplary Formula E campaign for Antonio Felix da Costa came in the curtain-raising Saudi Arabia double-header when he scored 14th and 10th. But since those races were held last November, they're not factored into this 2020 ranking. Based on his calendar year, then, the latest FE champion was comfortably the best operator outside Formula 1.

Of the nine FE races that do count towards his standing, there's really only one blot on da Costa's copybook. His lunge on Maximilian Guenther for the lead in Santiago was too heavy-handed as the pair clashed.

The remaining blunders were largely beyond his control. DS Techeetah was too hesitant to swap him and team-mate Jean-Eric Vergne for track position on occasion; in Santiago da Costa was fed "incomplete or wrong" battery-temperature information, forcing him to concede the win in the closing laps. The only retirement was chalked up in the penultimate of six Berlin races when the car shut down of its own volition.

When his numbers did come up, da Costa was nigh on peerless. Such was his confidence in Marrakech, in only his fifth race at a new team where he had to contend with a double champion as his stablemate, that he could toy with rival Guenther. Da Costa let the BMW Andretti driver lead for four tours so he could tuck in, get the slipstream and save energy before pouncing 14 laps from home. His eventual winning margin of 11.4 seconds was the most emphatic of the year. The next best, a 5.4s gap, was earned also by da Costa in the first Berlin race.

The Portuguese returned from the pandemic-enforced layoff for a makeshift German finale in arguably finer form. He navigated the critical group qualifying stages expertly, clocking up three superpole appearances, to earn a title coronation with two races to spare. Statistically, finishing 71 points clear of closest (albeit somewhat distant) challenger Stoffel Vandoorne makes da Costa the strongest FE champion to date.

And just for good measure, in the LMP2 ranks

The deciding factor between da Costa and his champion team-mate

The recipe for team success in Formula E revolves around two key technical ingredients.

First, prepare a powertrain (motor and invertor) that most effectively deploys the instant torque provided by an all-electric drivetrain out of slow corners.

Second, mix it with well-honed suspension to put that acceleration to good use by ensuring the rear Michelin tyres stay in contact with the bumpy surface of a street circuit.

DS Techeetah has been the yardstick in these areas for the past two seasons of FE, and has the two teams' trophy pots to prove it. That's left it to team-mates Jean-Eric Vergne and Antonio Felix da Costa to make the most of their machinery to fight for the drivers' title.

Xavier Mestelan Pinon, head of DS Performance (the guiding hand of the team's engineers), explains why da Costa could maximise the equipment at his disposal.

"He avoided all the mistakes he made in the past and improved massively the way he worked with us," says Pinon, referring to da Costa berating his race engineer after battery-temperature issues cost him a likely win in Santiago.


GALLOWAY

"After that, our car was very fast. No mistakes. It's clear when you are in this package then you are able to fight for the victory. At the end, we won both titles."

Pinon also clarifies why da Costa scored three wins as his double-champion stablemate Vergne claimed the spoils only once in his title defence.

"To explain why he was so fast compared to JEV is not so easy," Pinon starts.



of the World Endurance Championship he was stellar. Had da Costa not accidentally hit the buckle and unfastened his seatbelt to require an unscheduled pitstop, Le Mans 24 Hours class honours could have followed. Topping his division at Shanghai, alongside Jota co-drivers Roberto Gonzalez and Anthony Davidson, did provide consolation.

"But JEV never found the right set-up, especially on the brakes. He struggled a lot on the brake regen.

"It's more how they manage the brakes with the car. They don't drive exactly the same so there are little bits of difference during this part of the corner [entry]. The car didn't fit exactly how JEV wants. Clearly, we missed something with him.

"In fact, Antonio this year was faster than JEV since Valencia [pre-season testing]. Honestly, he was very fast as soon as we put the car on the track. He felt very good. It's a dream when he's happy in the car."





NO MOVE

Max **Verstappen**

★ 3rd in Formula 1 World Championship

2 There were two things that rather summed up Max Verstappen's 2020 season and his place in Formula 1 these days. The first was calling his nine third places in qualifying behind Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas a "subscription", while the other was this trio regularly breaking away at the front of the pack in races, simply in a league of their own and doing lap times no one else could touch.

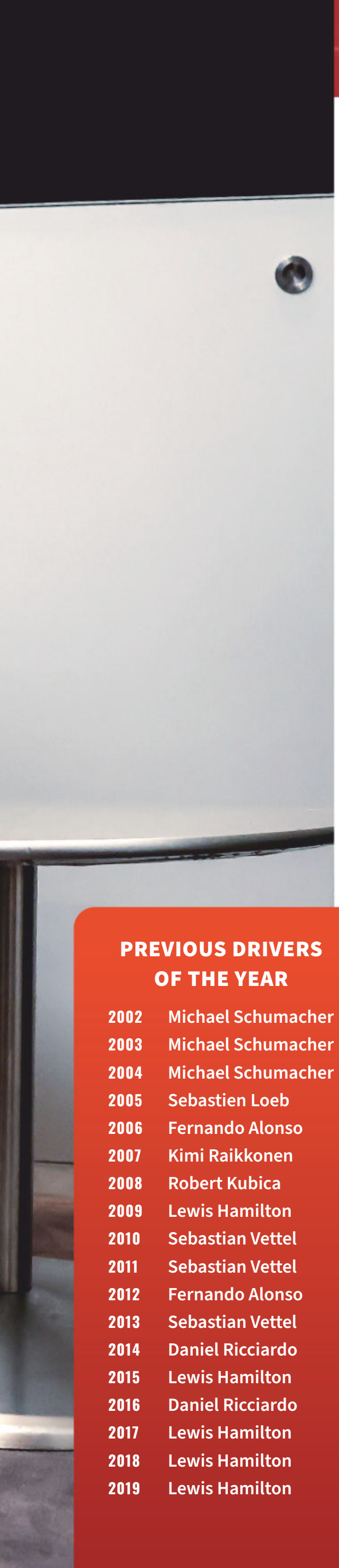
On three occasions (without major misfortune intervening for his rivals) – in Hungary, Spain and Russia – Verstappen was able to split the Mercedes in the races, and he did so twice in qualifying, still a mighty achievement given the W11's peak performance level. There were signs that Verstappen was set to be a regular threat in Mercedes' year right from the off when he started on the front row for the season opener thanks to Hamilton's penalty, only to be thwarted by a power-unit problem as he chased Bottas while having possibly the better strategy. Then he settled into the pattern of pursuing the two Black Arrows and picking up whatever scraps they left.

But, after getting away with that embarrassing crash ahead of the Hungarian GP, he seized his chance to show just how devastatingly good he is in F1's 70th Anniversary GP. Again, Red Bull took a strategic tyre advantage into the race, but Verstappen was unleashed. He refused to drive "like a grandma" and took the fight to the faster car overall, which forced the Mercedes drivers to eat through their tyres.

For so long throughout this season, Verstappen was equal favourite to be our number-one pick. But like last season, there was still the odd rough edge to his game. Turkey really made the difference in Verstappen's ranking, where he seemed to react badly to losing pole to Lance Stroll when he was the pre-qualifying favourite. That looked as if it translated into his somewhat impetuous pass on Sergio Perez, which sent one of F1's best in the wet spinning and finishing sixth. While he accepted most defeats with good grace, his frustration with the RB16's pace and handling deficit to the W11 grew as the season wore on. That is something Red Bull really needs to address if it is to keep its star happy in the future.

Moment of reflection for Hamilton after Turkish GP win – and seventh crown

ETHERINGTON



Why Hamilton has the first and last word on 2020

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

PREVIOUS DRIVERS OF THE YEAR

2002	Michael Schumacher
2003	Michael Schumacher
2004	Michael Schumacher
2005	Sebastien Loeb
2006	Fernando Alonso
2007	Kimi Raikkonen
2008	Robert Kubica
2009	Lewis Hamilton
2010	Sebastian Vettel
2011	Sebastian Vettel
2012	Fernando Alonso
2013	Sebastian Vettel
2014	Daniel Ricciardo
2015	Lewis Hamilton
2016	Daniel Ricciardo
2017	Lewis Hamilton
2018	Lewis Hamilton
2019	Lewis Hamilton



NO MOVE

Lewis **Hamilton**

1st in Formula 1 World Championship

For once, Mercedes was flummoxed. Its latest Formula 1 season-dominating machine was struggling severely on the low-grip surface even before it rained. In qualifying, its drivers recorded their worst grid positions of the season – sixth and ninth.

But despite all of that, one of the Black Arrows still left the 2020 Turkish Grand Prix victorious: Lewis Hamilton's. With it came F1 history and this year's world title.

Hamilton wrapped up his seventh championship three races before the end of F1's shortest season since 2009 was set to conclude. He triumphed in what will surely go down as the championship's strangest-ever season so far, set against the backdrop of the pandemic. He won in a year that meant more to him than all the 13 before combined – such was his desire to succeed in a season where the push for global racial equality, something he understands more deeply and can promote far better than his peers, was forced into the spotlight of F1's famously conservative system.

He succeeded, largely, because of his relentless quest to build his points total over that of team-mate Valtteri Bottas – his only real rival after Ferrari's challenge disappeared in pre-season testing and Red Bull again couldn't hang on. Yes, Bottas had more than his own share of Mercedes' 2020 misfortune, but Hamilton continued with the approach he's taken ever since his defeat to Nico Rosberg four years ago – to leave as little as possible on the table at every opportunity, to reduce the impact of the unexpected.

This could be seen best in the instances where Hamilton was the second quickest Mercedes driver, which happened more than once this year. In F1's 70th Anniversary Grand Prix at Silverstone, Max Verstappen stole the show by beating the Black Arrows to victory, but Bottas had enjoyed the upper hand over Hamilton since the start of qualifying. Yet it was the world champion who finished second, taking advantage of a strategy alteration to beat his team-mate home with a short final stint. It was a similar story at Imola, where the title was »

"There had been minor weaknesses that Hamilton knew he had to address coming into 2020"



Main: great pole at Spa; right, top: Monza penalty; middle: on the back foot at Sochi; bottom: sublime Turkey triumph

SUTTON

already in sight, as Hamilton executed a carefully elongated first stint to get back ahead of Verstappen, while polesitter and early leader Bottas was hindered by a piece of Ferrari, the red part clinging to the front of an F1 race for the first time in 2020.

And, of course, Hamilton let little slip when in command. His dominance was devastating for his opposition, as he'd secured 84% of the points on offer by the time he'd sealed the title in Turkey. He had already taken nine wins before the decisive event, and scored one more after that. His worst result was seventh – at Monza, a race he'd been dominating before an error missing the 'pitlane closed' warning during the safety-car period was compounded by Mercedes failing to spot the same alert in its systems in time.

There had been minor weaknesses that Hamilton knew he had to address coming into 2020. His pole total each season before 2019 had been seven, 11, 12, 11 and 11, but last year that came down to five – level with Bottas and two behind Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. He told Autosport in an exclusive interview for our 70th Anniversary special issue that this was because he'd not performed "to the best of my ability, generally, on the Saturdays", which meant "the pressure was even higher for the Sundays". So, after identifying his qualifying pace as a key target for improvement during the 2019-20 off-season, he worked to get back to his best against the



TEE



HONE



HONE

clock, with Peter Bonington and the rest of his engineers. The result was 10 poles, five more than his closest rival (Bottas, on five).

The best example of his return to qualifying virtuosity came at Spa, where Hamilton and the W11 just looked so in sync at the famous, and famously tough, layout, and he blitzed to pole by 0.511 seconds over Bottas, which was the biggest dry qualifying gap between the pair all season (when they started 1-2 on the grid). And, of course, there was his 1.2s advantage over the rest in the torrential Styrian GP qualifying conditions, which seemed to spark Hamilton's season given his scrappy display in the first race.

The result of that opening event at the Red Bull Ring continued Hamilton's trend of starting seasons slowly, as a post-qualifying penalty left him fifth on the grid, and his post-race time addition for tapping Alex Albon cost him second place. That didn't last long, and he got his campaign straight back on track with a resurgent win at the second Austrian race, but it wasn't the last time he got into slightly needless difficulty.

Another was his initially sub-par performance versus Bottas in the second Silverstone race, and then the Monza mistake, and his Russian GP weekend began to unravel when he slipped off the road at the last corner on a Q2 run on the medium tyres. This sparked a chain of events that resulted in him carrying an inferior strategy into the race against Bottas, although he »

The wins that enabled Hamilton to match Schumacher

Now that the 2020 season has concluded, Lewis Hamilton has amassed nearly a century (95) of Formula 1 victories. In this campaign alone he added over a tenth of that total, notching up 11 wins.

And this season contained some of Hamilton's finest F1 successes and some of his most dramatic.

In the latter category, his seventh triumph on home soil at Silverstone surely leads the way given what happened right at the end. After Valtteri Bottas and Carlos Sainz Jr had their left-front tyres blow out in the final few laps of the British Grand Prix, Hamilton's let go on the final tour. He was fortunate to have enough in hand over Max Verstappen to hobble to the finish, as Red Bull had just pitted the Dutchman to chase the fastest lap, but the way Hamilton handled his effectively three-wheeled wagon was masterful.

"I was in the most... it was like a clear zone, the clarity that I had while I was driving"

"I've definitely never experienced anything like that on a last lap and my heart nearly stopped," Hamilton said afterwards.

Two weeks later, Hamilton ended F1's second (of four) triple-headers with an utterly dominant display in Spain. Here he put in an altogether different kind of performance, leading throughout and serenely edging clear to win by 24s. Afterwards he described his drive: "I was in the most... it was like a clear zone, the clarity that I had today while I was driving."

Another crushing performance came in Belgium, where he led Bottas home completely unruffled. It was one of the least eventful races of the season, not that it mattered to the winner.

"I know it's not necessarily what everyone always wants, to see the Mercedes at the front, but no matter how much success we have, we just keep our heads down," he said after claiming his fifth win of 2020.

But in terms of what we might consider Hamilton's best win in the season where he equalled Michael Schumacher's record title haul, it is impossible to look past the Turkish GP. Mercedes looked to be undone by the gripless new track surface, with Hamilton taking his lowest grid position of the season – sixth – for the wet start.

The race looked like it might go elsewhere in the opening, Racing Point-dominated stages, but when the track began to really dry the best rose to the fore. Hamilton kept his wearing intermediates alive, and just warm enough, to win by a massive 32s at the flag. With it came title number seven.


MAUGER

Schumacher family's gift of one of Michael's helmets was profoundly touching


HONE

Brilliant coaxing of 'three-wheeled' W11 to victory at Silverstone



ETHERINGTON

F1 win record equalled at October's Eifel GP


MAUGER

Keeping it clean: contact avoided at the start in Germany

demonstrated his strength at recovering quickly from setbacks by dominating Q3 to take his eighth 2020 pole. The impact of starting on the soft-compound tyres probably meant he was doomed even before the practice-start furore took place the next day. Qualifying defeat to Bottas at the Nurburgring turned into the race lead even before his team-mate's DNF, as Bottas gifted Hamilton the win with a slip during a short sprinkling of rain.

But after securing the win that brought him level with Michael Schumacher's (former) all-time win record of 91, Hamilton was unstoppable – other than in the Istanbul Park qualifying misery – until he was struck down by a positive COVID-19 test after his Bahrain GP victory.

A key part of Hamilton's success in 2020 was his drive to succeed ahead of charging young stars, such as Verstappen, who would like nothing more than to depose him as F1's dominant force. This is his winning mentality on display – having got to where he is, he simply does not want to let it go.

"I could just sit back on them and think, 'I'm pretty good'," he told Autosport ahead of that Nurburgring triumph. "But that's not how my mind works. My mind is that like, 'Jeez, these guys are chasing me, how do I stay ahead?'"

One way he did this was by maintaining the decisive advantages that he has traditionally held over his rivals. This was another campaign where Hamilton's (often underappreciated) clean racecraft was to be admired – the clash with Albon was less clear-cut than the penalty makes it look on paper, even if Hamilton was slightly more to blame. The best example of this came at the start of the Nurburgring race, where Hamilton could afford a DNF and Bottas could not and, although he came off second best, there was no contact by the barest of margins.

Throughout 2020, Hamilton again displayed the tyre-management prowess that has



Turkish Grand Prix turnaround from qualifying slump to race dominance

SUTTON



HONE

"This was another campaign where Hamilton's (often underappreciated) clean racecraft was to be admired"

significantly aided his rise to become F1's statistically most successful driver. This came to his rescue at the end of the British GP, when his left-front rubber let go on the final lap – three after Bottas had had his own blowout and dropped to 11th – in what was surely the most dramatic of his 95 F1 wins so far. His skills at managing the tyres in tricky conditions meant Hamilton surged ahead of Bottas in the crucial stint following the first red flag at Mugello and enabled his charge to victory at Imola.

And, of course, there was Turkey, where Hamilton worked to keep the critical temperature in his intermediate tyres to the finish, and not take too much life out of them in high-speed turns and on corner exits, triumphing in a race that old rival Sebastian Vettel said "wasn't his race to win".

If all of that sounds familiar, that's because of the mark Hamilton has made on F1. He wins, and he wins by the bucketload. But 2020 has to go down as one of the most unusual in Hamilton's palmares, precisely because of the unique situation the world was in this year – the combination of public-health emergency, and high-profile efforts to create a more equal society. These 'distractions', for want of a better word, might have been enough to derail a title push, but they did not, despite Hamilton saying his efforts as part of the Black Lives Matter movement had been "energy-sapping" at times.

Sadly, of course, COVID got to the world champion in the end. Despite largely avoiding those he knows and loves, spending nearly all his time this season just with his physio, Angela Cullen, and mainly staying at home in Monaco instead of travelling around between races, his positive test the day after winning the Bahrain GP gave his 2020 campaign a shock postcript. But it is to Hamilton's credit, and demonstrates the strength of his performances this year, that he had already put the title out of Bottas's reach.

His absence from the penultimate race gave F1 a glimpse of what the championship will be like without him one day. As ever, F1 marches on regardless – exciting, dramatic, all-consuming. Yet there was something tangible missing from the build-up to the Sakhir GP race – Hamilton's voice. His public utterances made this season what it was in so many ways, going right back to the aborted beginning of the campaign in Australia.

When Autosport asked for his views on travelling across the world to race in the face of an unfurling pandemic, Hamilton said it was "shocking that we're all sitting in this room [in Melbourne]". Of his peers, only Kimi Raikkonen had been able to voice anything near the same sentiment.

And this is how F1 should remember this year and Hamilton's seventh title: the driving and the voice. Once again, the story of F1 2020 starts and ends with Lewis Hamilton.

PICTURES OF THE YEAR

The 2020 season has challenged everyone involved in motorsport, not least our photographers. Here's our pick of some of their best images

COMPILED BY PETER HODGES



HONE

motorsport IMAGES

Carlos Sainz Jr's front-left Pirelli lets go spectacularly on the penultimate lap of the British GP, costing him a fourth-place finish

Wet weather played its part in Spa 24 Hours victory for the Rowe Racing Porsche 911 GT3-R shared by Nick Tandy, Earl Bamber and Laurens Vanthoor

SRO/KEVIN PECKS

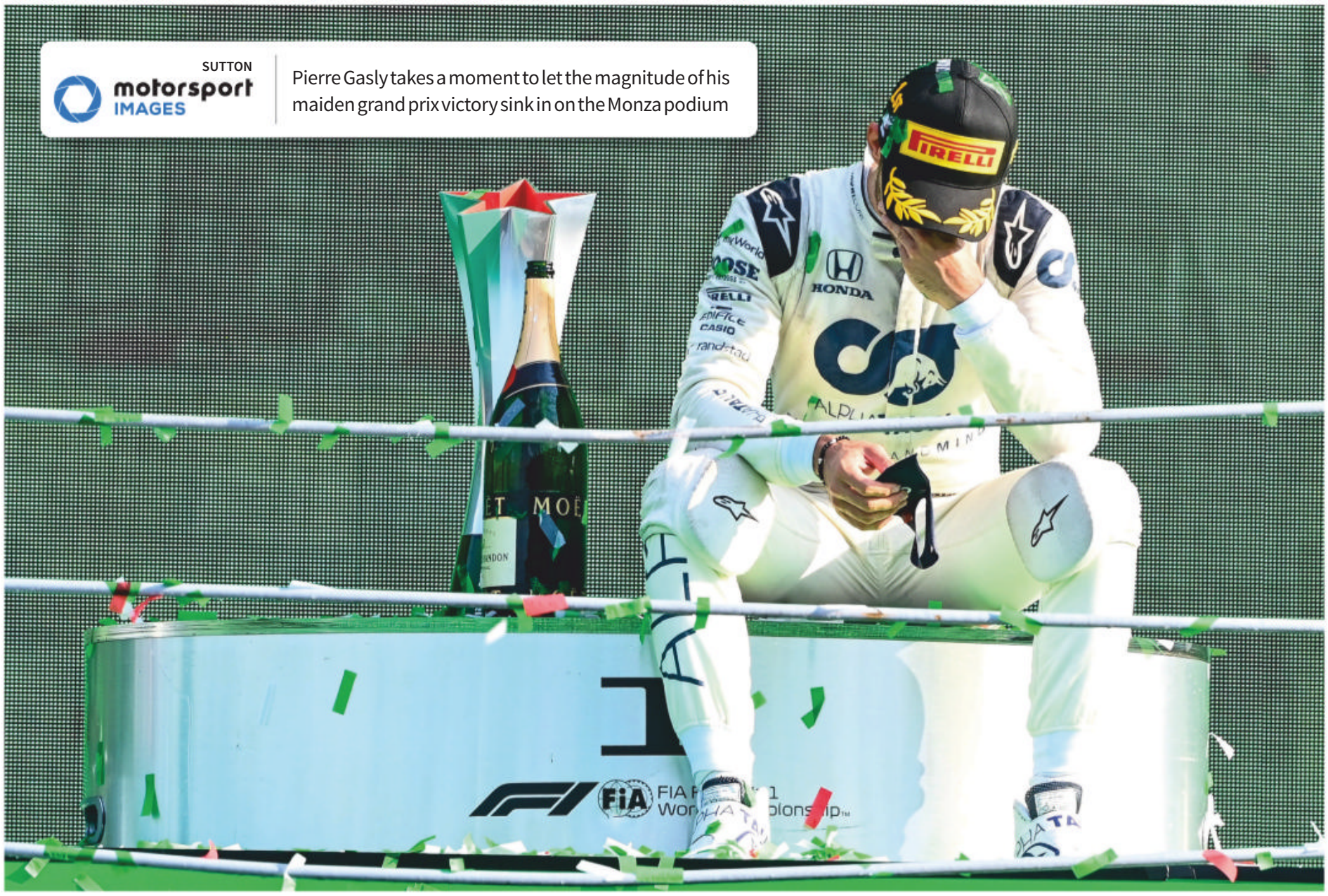
A spectacular backdrop of night-time on the Monte Carlo Rally for second-place finisher Sebastien Ogier

McKLEIN



SUTTON motorsport IMAGES

Pierre Gasly takes a moment to let the magnitude of his maiden grand prix victory sink in on the Monza podium





GOLD AND GOOSE
motorsport IMAGES

Yamaha MotoGP talisman Valentino Rossi in full flight during the San Marino Grand Prix at Misano





BURKE
motorsport IMAGES

Felix Rosenqvist (left) muscles past Pato O'Ward to take the lead at Road America for the Swede's first IndyCar victory



Brakes aglow and unburned fuel popping, Honda ace Dan Cammish shoves Chris Smiley's Hyundai in the BTCC

JAKOB EBREY



DUNBAR

motorsport IMAGES

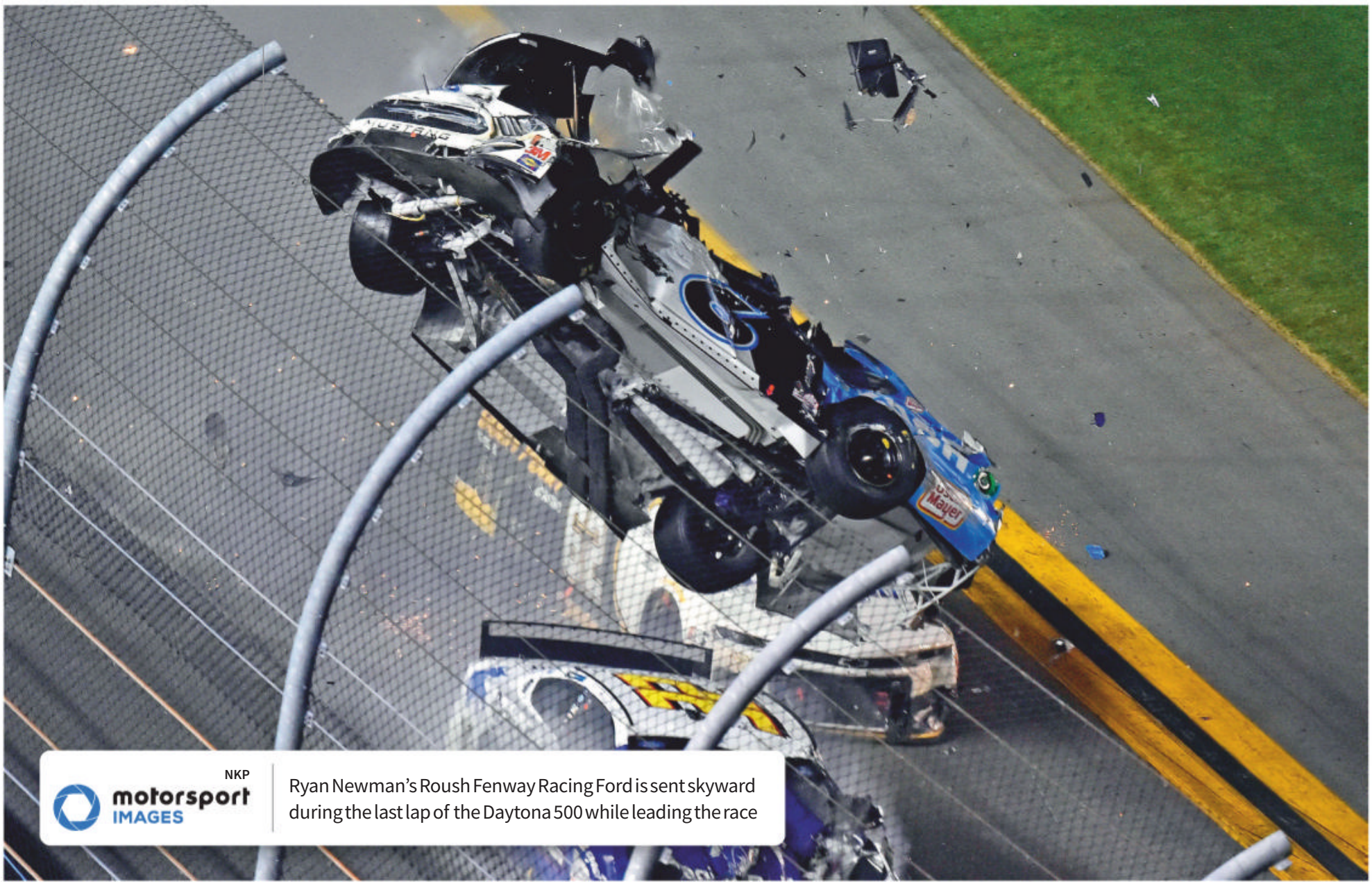
FP3 for the Styrian Grand Prix had to be cancelled due to torrential rain, although qualifying went ahead on full wets


INEOS



COATES motorsport IMAGES

Max Verstappen's Red Bull RB16 sends up a shower of sparks during Friday practice for the Belgian Grand Prix



NKP motorsport IMAGES

Ryan Newman's Roush Fenway Racing Ford is sent skyward during the last lap of the Daytona 500 while leading the race





LEVITT motorsport IMAGES

Fernando Alonso's Arrow McLaren SP Dallara-Chevrolet crosses the famous Yard of Bricks at Indianapolis



TEE motorsport IMAGES

A moment of high emotion for Lewis Hamilton in parc ferme at the Turkish GP – he's just become a seven-time world champion



NKP motorsport IMAGES

Sun sets on the Sebastien Bourdais/Loic Duval/Joao Barbosa JDC-Miller Motorsports Cadillac DPi-V.R during the Daytona 24 Hours



KLYNSMITH motorsport IMAGES

Fabian Coulthard spurs on his DJR Team Penske Ford Mustang at Adelaide


MICHELIN



Ott Tanak's Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC scrabbles for traction on Rally Sweden

McKLEIN



FASTEST LAPS OF 2020

Here it is: our annual round-up of the quickest race lap for cars on each British and Irish circuit. From Max Verstappen to an Alfa at Lydden

COMPILED BY MARCUS SIMMONS

TRACK, DRIVER (CAR)	TIME	SPEED	DATE
ANGLESEY COASTAL Richard Morris (Spire-Suzuki GT320S)	1m10.63s	79.00mph	6 September
BRANDS HATCH GRAND PRIX Ayrton Simmons (Tatuus-Mountune F4-016)	1m21.251s	107.81mph	30 August
BRANDS HATCH INDY Danny Harrison (Praga-Renault R1T)	45.920s	94.69mph	1 August
CADWELL PARK Benn Simms (Reynard-Ford/Pinto SF77)	1m29.567s	87.90mph	20 September
CASTLE COMBE Oliver Bull (Vauxhall-EcoBoost Tigra Silhouette)	1m06.240s	100.54mph	1 August
CROFT Danny Harrison (Praga-Renault R1T)	1m18.549s	97.39mph	11 July
DONINGTON PARK GRAND PRIX Stefano Leaney (Dallara-Mercedes F315)	1m24.182s	106.37mph	12 September
DONINGTON PARK NATIONAL Alex Fores (Dallara-Mercedes F311)	1m01.548s	115.75mph	25 October
GOODWOOD John Spiers (McLaren-Chevrolet M1B)	1m20.235s	106.78mph	17 October
KIRKISTOWN Iain Leinster (MG Midget)	58.676s	92.76mph	26 September


BRANDS HATCH INDY

HAWKINS



GOODWOOD

HAWKINS



SNETTERTON 300
Stefano Leaney
(Dallara-Mercedes F315)

TRACK, DRIVER (CAR)	TIME	SPEED	DATE
KNOCKHILL Harry King (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)	48.835s	93.39mph	30 August
KNOCKHILL ANTI-CLOCKWISE Paul Brydon (BMW-Nissan M3 Solution F)	51.817s	88.02mph	22 August
LYDDEN HILL Richard Merrell (Alfa Romeo Giulia GT Junior)	49.384s	72.89mph	13 September
MALLORY PARK Andy Southcott (MG-Vauxhall Midget Spaceframe)	46.234s	105.11mph	1 November
MONDELLO PARK LONG Cian Carey (Dallara-Toyota F317)	1m36.277s	81.39mph	13 September
MONDELLO PARK SHORT Paul O'Connell (Dallara-Opel F308)	50.657s	81.69mph	27 September
OULTON PARK INTERNATIONAL Kaylen Frederick (Tatuus-Mountune F4-016)	1m30.812s	106.71mph	2 August
OULTON PARK ISLAND Harry King (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)	1m22.768s	96.82mph	22 August
SILVERSTONE GRAND PRIX Max Verstappen (Red Bull-Honda RB16)	1m27.097s	151.30mph	2 August
SILVERSTONE INTERNATIONAL Danny Harrison (Praga-Renault R1T)	1m01.566s	108.22mph	10 October
SILVERSTONE NATIONAL Andy Smith (March-Ford/BDG 742)	52.939s	111.55mph	18 October
SNETTERTON 300 Stefano Leaney (Dallara-Mercedes F315)	1m42.350s	104.42mph	11 July
SNETTERTON 200 Josh Smith (Radical-Suzuki PR6)	1m09.81s	102.32mph	18 July
THRUXTON Harry King (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)	1m13.620s	115.20mph	20 September



MALLORY PARK

WALKER



OULTON PARK INTERNATIONAL

JEP



SILVERSTONE NATIONAL

WALKER

SEASON REVIEW

WORLD OF SPORT

This year will be remembered for the races that didn't happen and the reason why, but when the action did unfold, the youngest FIA touring car champion was crowned and Audi reigned supreme once more at the end of a DTM era

Cyan anoints Ehrlacher to make history

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP



WTCR

Ehrlacher notched his second of three wins at the Nordschleife

Yann Ehrlacher led the third World Touring Car Cup from start to finish to become the youngest-ever FIA global tin-top champion. But WTCR 'bridesmaid' Esteban Guerrieri – third in 2018, runner-up last year – pushed the 24-year-old Cyan Racing Lynk & Co driver to the penultimate race in his Munnich Motorsport Honda Civic Type-R.

It's a pity the TCR-based Cup remains under the radar in the UK, thanks largely to its avoidance of a British round, because there's plenty to like about a series that boasted seven different makes of car in 2020. The withdrawal of the Sebastien Loeb Racing Golfs in the wake of Volkswagen's retreat from world motorsport was a blow and left Rob Huff out of the series. Then with Andy Priaulx choosing to step down from Cyan, British interest was left to teenager Jack Young – only until the Nurburgring Nordschleife, where he crashed his Vukovic Motorsport Renault Megane and departed the scene. Josh Files scored points in a cameo for Engstler Hyundai at the penultimate meeting, but that was it for a series that means more to mainland Europe, where WTCR confined itself this year because of the pandemic.



WTCR

Wet rear tyres and slick fronts helped Guerrieri to inspired Aragon win

Ehrlacher was Cyan's anointed one following the first round at Zolder and received the full support of his three team-mates, including uncle Yvan Muller. The strategy worked a treat as Ehrlacher became the WTCR's first non-Hyundai champion. Munnich Motorsport might have been better served by a similar approach, but it was complicated by Nestor Girolami making a stronger start to the season than Guerrieri, who refused to give up his own title hopes and get behind his friend and fellow Argentinian.

Guerrieri took a double win at the Hungaroring, but his highlight was an inspired drive from 16th to win at Motorland Aragon, Girolami pulling over from the lead to let him by, triggered by a canny choice of wet-weather Goodyears for the rears and slicks for the fronts on a greasy track.

But could Guerrieri have been champion had Munnich matched Cyan's team-orders ploy from the start? He did win four races to Ehrlacher's three. But overall the Lynk & Co was consistently the quickest car in a series that ties itself in knots on Balance of Performance. Hyundai even pulled its four cars from the Nordschleife rounds after an equivalency row, as previous champions Norbert Michelisz and Gabriele Tarquini failed to win a race all year.

Top Independent runner Jean-Karl Vernay relished his underdog role in Romeo Ferraris's Alfa Romeo Giulietta, while veteran Tom Coronel took his first win at world level since 2016 at the Slovakia Ring in his Comtoyou Audi. But the WTCR in 2020 will largely be remembered as a family affair. Ehrlacher now begins the chase of his uncle's unmatched record in touring cars.

DAMIEN SMITH



Three wins at The Bend helped DJR Penske's star depart as king yet again

Teams bear the brunt as the McLaughlin show must go on

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

The 2020 Supercars season will forever be remembered for the time five teams were forced out of their home state, unable to return for more than 100 days.

While other categories bore the brunt of double and triple-headers, for the Victorian-based Supercars teams the mid-year stint on the road was brutal.

In terms of overall cases and deaths, Australia weathered the pandemic well. But doing so took strict measures, including unprecedented state border closures across the nation. It made keeping the Supercars season going remarkably difficult, particularly when Melbourne, home to five of the 10 teams, copped a second wave of cases in early July. As other states slammed their borders shut to Victoria, those five teams were forced across the line at a couple of hours' notice, setting up temporary bases in New South Wales and Queensland.

That was on 6 July. Most drivers and crew members didn't return home until 19 October at the earliest. The sacrifice made by the Victorian squads kept the show on the road. After the Adelaide 500 — the final one, as it turned out — was run pre-pandemic in February, the only down time for the series was between the Friday of the Australian Grand Prix in March and the resumption of the new-look 2020 season in Sydney in late June.

Before the break, it looked like Scott McLaughlin would have his hands full trying to repeat his 2019 crown. The Triple Eight Holdens were the class of the field in Adelaide, McLaughlin only winning on the Sunday after Shane van Gisbergen was inadvertently short-filled during a pitstop before suffering a suspension failure. At Albert Park, Shane van Gisbergen and Jamie Whincup took a pole each on the Thursday before the event was cut short on Friday morning.

On the other side of the pandemic break, however, McLaughlin was unstoppable. He and his DJR Team Penske squad took all the changes to crew size, race length and tyre allocation in their stride. Triple Eight, meanwhile, struggled to nail the three-race, 20-tyre format, at least consistently.

It was technically a two-horse race until the penultimate round, Whincup staying in contention, but McLaughlin's treble never looked truly threatened. He won at least one race at every circuit the series went to except Bathurst. A three-race streak between the two rounds at The Bend was enough to seal a final crown before he took off to IndyCar.

Cam Waters overhauled Whincup in the points thanks to some fantastic pace from Townsville onwards, the Tickford Ford driver taking a first solo race win at The Bend. He and Will Davison set the pace across the Bathurst 1000 weekend too, only to be undone by some van Gisbergen magic on race day.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN



First solo win boosted Waters to runner-up

KLYNSMITH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

2020 CHAMPIONS



ADAC MOTORSPORT

GERMAN FORMULA 4
JONNY EDGAR



ACI SPORT

ITALIAN FORMULA 4
GABRIELE MINI



TOYOTA GAZOO RACING

JAPANESE FORMULA 4
HIBIKI TAIRA



F4 SPAIN

SPANISH FORMULA 4
KAS HAVERKORT



FFSA

FRENCH FORMULA 4
AYUMU IWASA

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Makino's team-mate Yamamoto won second GT title in three years

Spluttering Supra hands title to arch-rival Honda

SUPER GT

The standout moment from the Super GT season came as Ryo Hirakawa's Toyota ran out of fuel exiting the final corner of the last race. It was a dramatic event that handed what should have been a straightforward title for Toyota to arch-rival Honda.

With four visits to Fuji on a schedule radically reshaped as a result of the pandemic, the sleek new GR Supra appeared to be at a major advantage. When Toyotas locked out the top five during the Fuji opener in July, led by the TOM'S car shared by Hirakawa and Nick Cassidy, it seemed there would be no stopping them.

But while the TOM'S machine was the quickest on balance across the year, too many points were given away cheaply, such as when Cassidy clashed with Yuhi Sekiguchi in the sister TOM'S Supra at Motegi, or when the New Zealander ploughed into the back of Tadasuke Makino's Team Kunimitsu Honda entering the pits at Suzuka.

By contrast, the NSX-GT shared by Naoki Yamamoto and Makino was rarely the quickest, even among the Honda contingent. But the pair maximised every opportunity to give themselves a chance in the finale. When Hirakawa ran dry within sight of the flag, it was Yamamoto who swept past to take his second title in three years.

Real Racing Honda pair Koudai Tsukakoshi and Bertrand Baguette led the standings after four of the eight races, taking the first two wins for the revised front-engined NSX-GT. But a lacklustre second half of the campaign meant they wound up third overall, ahead of Sekiguchi and Sacha Fenestraz, who had no wins but four podiums.

Nissan picked up two wins with its flagship NISMO squad at Suzuka, but the GT-R was never competitive at Fuji, and a disappointing showing in the finale consigned Ronnie Quintarelli and Tsugio Matsuda to sixth overall.

JAMIE KLEIN

Hirakawa and Yamamoto set for a rematch

SUPER FORMULA



Hirakawa is tied on 55 points with Yamamoto ahead of Fuji finale

As you read this, Ryo Hirakawa and Naoki Yamamoto are poised for a rematch of their Super GT title fight in Super Formula, with one round of the season remaining this weekend at Fuji.

Toyota racer Hirakawa had been the one to beat for most of the year, grabbing an early points lead by winning from pole in the opener at Motegi and backing that up with another pole and fourth place at Okayama, and second at Sugo.

But the 26-year-old's fortunes turned in the fourth round at Autopolis when he crashed his Team Impul car during qualifying and failed to score after a bad pitstop. His poor run continued at the Suzuka double-header, where he started the first race from the back due to an actuator failure in qualifying and then got caught up in a huge crash at Turn 1.

Honda star Yamamoto got off to a slow start at Motegi. His Dandelion Racing car scored its first podium of the year in round three at Sugo before coming within a whisker of beating Tomoki Nojiri next time out at Autopolis. It looked as if Yamamoto might seal the title with a round to spare at Suzuka after a dominant win from pole in the first race, before he suffered gearbox trouble in the second bout, in which Hirakawa finished seventh to draw back level with Yamamoto on points.

Reigning champion Nick Cassidy kick-started his season with third for TOM'S at Okayama and then victory at Sugo, and was on course for another win in the second race at the December Suzuka only for his Toyota engine to blow while he was in a comfortable lead.

That misfortune has left him fourth in the standings behind Team Mugen racer Nojiri, and with only an outside chance of repeating his 2019 title. The remaining race winners have been Sho Tsuboi, who led a 1-2 for Inging at Okayama, and Nakajima Racing rookie Toshiki Oyu, the beneficiary of Cassidy's Suzuka woe.

JAMIE KLEIN

Orange is the new Porsche pink

PORSCHE SUPERCUP

The late Walter Lechner got to see his eponymous squad win the Porsche Supercup teams' crown one last time, the crack Austrian team doing so for the seventh year in a row. But for the first time since Nicki Thiim's success in 2013, it wasn't a driver of one of Lechner's cars that would run out as champion. Instead, in a battle that went down to the finale, Team GP Elite's Dutch hotshot Larry ten Voorde topped the lot.

Fourth in the standings last year, ten Voorde's title-winning campaign didn't properly start to come together until the fourth round of eight, at Silverstone.

After a fourth place and a brace of respectable podiums, he blew the competition away in Britain. A spec series entails close racing, but ten Voorde streaked clear by 11.7s.

Another victory at Barcelona pushed him to the top of the points, before young Turk Ayhancan Guven fought back with wins in race two at Silverstone and again at Spa. But it was Lechner Racing driver Dylan Pereira who headed into the Monza showdown leading the standings.

A win on his team's home turf at the Red Bull Ring plus a Hungaroring triumph — added to only one finish outside the top five — gave Pereira a slender four-point cushion. But he could only qualify fourth in Italy as ten Voorde romped to pole. Ten Voorde then led from lights to flag to seal the championship glory.



SUTTON

Ten Voorde is flanked by the Lechner cars on his way to victory in Spain

Petecof crowned the Prema ace

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

Gianluca Petecof emerged atop a three-way intra-Prema Powerteam fight for the second — and last — Formula Regional European Championship title before it merges with the Formula Renault Eurocup for 2021.

There was little to choose between the Brazilian, his fellow Ferrari junior Arthur Leclerc and surprise package Oliver Rasmussen, but what did play to his advantage was his record of finishing every race. Leclerc, younger brother of Charles, had more poles than anyone else, but his title challenge faltered in the penultimate round at Imola where a sensor failure forced him out. Drive-belt problems then hit Leclerc in qualifying for the Vallelunga finale, and a spin into the gravel in the last race sent the title Petecof's way.

Rasmussen had mounted a late-season charge, but gearbox dramas struck him in Imola qualifying, otherwise he too could have deposed Petecof. But it was a much-needed title for the 18-year-old from Sao Paulo, who struggled for budget even with his Ferrari backing.

Patrik Pasma was best of the rest with Finnish team KIC Motorsport, although Pierre-Louis Chovet also showed winning form with Van Amersfoort Racing. The Dutch squad put FIA F3 racer Dennis Hauger out alongside Chovet for the final three rounds, and he also got a win.

Juri Vips appeared in some rounds with KIC but struggled with binding brakes, while Jamie Chadwick had a tough season at Prema, taking one podium.


FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

Four wins and a further 10 podiums formed Petecof's title charge

2020 CHAMPIONS


TCR

TCR EUROPE
MEHDI BENNANI


TCR

TCR SCANDINAVIA
ROB HUFF


ADAC MOTORSPORT

ADAC GT MASTERS
MICHAEL AMMERMULLER/ CHRISTIAN ENGELHART


ACI SPORT

ITALIAN GT SPRINT
YUKI NEMOTO/TUOMAS TUJULA


LAMBORGHINI

LAMBORGHINI SUPER TROFEO EUROPE
DEAN STONEMAN

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Castroneves and Taylor crowned by Acura team-mates' good grace



Castroneves embraces Taylor at Laguna Seca after Cameron and Montoya pave the way for victory

IMSA SPORTSCAR

The top seven entries in the IMSA SportsCar prototype class were covered by just 18 points, and the season was every bit as exciting as that sounds. Balance of Performance tweaks of course shifted the goalposts, but genuinely you weren't to know who would prevail at any given race.

Remarkably, defending champions Dane Cameron and Juan Pablo Montoya failed to win any of the nine races — but they gave up a certain victory at Laguna Seca to aid their team-mates Helio Castroneves and Ricky Taylor. Good thing they did, too, for despite landing three other victories, the latter pair clinched the title by only one point ahead of Wayne Taylor Racing's Ryan Briscoe and Renger van der Zande. The WTR Cadillac won the Daytona 24 Hours opener with Scott Dixon and Kamui Kobayashi lending faultless hands, and Dixon rejoined the team for their Petit Le Mans win.

That triumph owed something to luck, as Taylor tried a 50/50 challenge on hitherto race leader Pipo Derani of Action Express Racing in the dying minutes of the race. The resultant contact eliminated the AXR Caddy and sent Taylor off track too, although the mortified American returned to the track in time to collect a runner-up finish.

If Derani's misfortune that night put him on the back foot in the championship battle (co-driver Felipe Nasr wasn't in the running after skipping a round due to a positive COVID-19 result), his tenuous title chances evaporated when he pulled a foolhardy move on Montoya in the season-closing Sebring 12 Hours. It earned damage to the AXR car and a penalty from the stewards.

The WTR car had been knocked out of race-winning contention in the 12 Hours by the usually brilliant and well-mannered Oliver Jarvis in the Mazda, and some thought it karma when the Briton suffered a puncture in the closing stages, handing the win — and third place in the standings — to his team-mates Jonathan Bomarito and Harry Tincknell, who had also won the short Daytona race.

The new mid-engined Chevrolet Corvette C8.R didn't win in the GT Le Mans class on its debut in the Daytona 24 Hours, but did win its second outing, the 2h40m bout at the track — Corvette Racing's 100th win on home soil. That night's victors, Jordan Taylor and Antonio Garcia, never looked back and drove immaculately all year.

The GTLM field was thin — two Corvettes, two BMWs, two Porsches — but Taylor and Garcia's record of five wins and three seconds was impressive, and they took the title by 32 points.

Team-mates Tommy Milner and Oliver Gavin — the latter of whom retired at year's end — scored a further win for the C8.R, although this wasn't enough to prevent BMW's John Edwards and Jesse Krohn splitting the 'Vettes in the final championship standings.

Fabulous consistency earned Mario Farnbacher and Matt McMurry the GT Daytona honours in Meyer Shank Racing's Acura NSX. AIM Vasser Sullivan's Lexus RC Fs scored more wins but their performance was peaky.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ



New Corvette won in only its second race at Daytona in depleted GTLM field



ARCE/MOTORSPORT IMAGE

Champion Elliott celebrates the big win in Phoenix finale

Elliott wins first title as NASCAR faces tougher tests off track

NASCAR CUP

Unlike in 2019, when the NASCAR Cup season was a Toyota walkover as the fleet of Camrys won 19 out of 36 races, this year's campaign was a return to proper competition. Thirteen drivers scored wins, with Chevrolet Camaro racer Chase Elliott emerging to claim a maiden title.

The term started with a grizzly crash on the final lap of the Daytona 500. Ryan Blaney tapped Ryan Newman into the outside wall, with Newman's Ford Mustang being rammed by the unsighted Corey LaJoie and pushed down the track upside down and on fire. Mercifully, Newman escaped with light injuries and took his spot back on the grid at Darlington on 17 May, as the Cup Series became the first major sport to take its tentative steps back into competition following the pandemic hiatus.

This opportunity was a difficult one for NASCAR to get right. With the world's spotlight on it and fresh protocols in place, if the resumption had led to a spike of cases around the circuits then NASCAR's cynics would have further weaponry in their arsenal to attack its unfairly perceived nature of good ol' boys larking around.

But NASCAR passed this first test with flying colours as drivers and teams were forced to adapt to a new weekend format of no practice or qualifying, thus limiting the breeding time for virus transmission.

A few weeks later, NASCAR would once again pass a test, this time one of greater significance than racing. As worldwide protests broke out in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, NASCAR — oft seen as a symbol of the south and where Confederate flags are flown in the infield — took a definitive stand.

Bubba Wallace, the only black full-time driver on the grid, led the successful campaign for the flag to be banned, while thankfully the 'noose' found in his Talladega garage some weeks later proved to just be a door-tie and not what was first feared.

On track, Kevin Harvick and Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin best adapted to this new way of going racing. The duo claimed 12 of the 22 wins on offer between the resumption round at Darlington and the end of the regular season at Daytona.

But their bubble would burst the deeper the season progressed into the playoffs, with both scrapping over the final transition spot in the closing stages of the Martinsville semi-final eliminator. Hamlin squeaked through, joined by race winner Elliott, Penske's Joey Logano and Brad Keselowski to fight at Phoenix for the title.

A comfortable victory ahead of Keselowski handed Hendrick's Elliott the championship on the day his retiring team-mate, seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson, bowed out with fifth place — one of just 10 top-10s in a disappointing final campaign.

JAKE NICHOL



Newman's wreck about to combust after last-lap Daytona shunt

NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

2020 CHAMPIONS



NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGE

NASCAR XFINITY SERIES
AUSTIN CINDRIC



NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGE

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES
SHELDON CREED



AZEMARD

NASCAR EURO SERIES
ALON DAY



FRANCA/VICAR

BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS
RICARDO MAURICIO

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Consistent Boguslavskiy takes home the overall GT trophy

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

When the GT World Challenge Europe season eventually got under way at Imola in late July, the championship's class was again proved in its ability to deliver another closely fought title squabble.

AKKA ASP Mercedes racer Timur Boguslavskiy emerged as the overall champion of the combined Sprint and Endurance contests, which was just reward for a hugely consistent season that yielded two victories and a further six podiums.

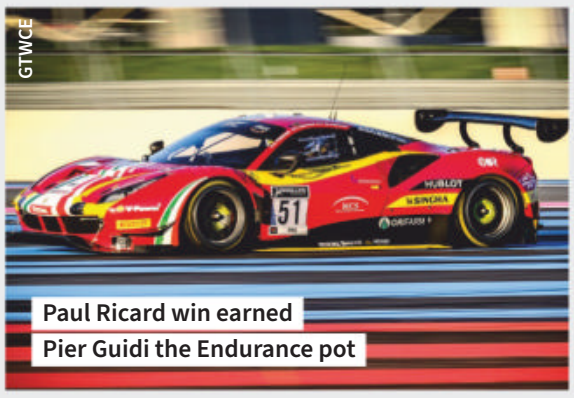
Boguslavskiy's main rivals throughout the year came in the form of Team WRT Audi's Charles Weerts and Dries Vanthoor, who picked up the baton as the manufacturer's leading lights with aplomb during a truncated season.

They claimed two wins out of three at Misano, with a fourth place in race two – won by Boguslavskiy and team-mate Raffaele Marciello. But then a strong weekend at Magny-Cours was offset by a tepid Zandvoort showing of 12th and seventh, which handed Boguslavskiy the advantage in the overall trophy hunt.

Weerts and Vanthoor also had to withstand a resurgent Lamborghini effort, led by Emil Frey Racing's Albert Costa and Giacomo Altoe. The in-form pair broke their duck in race two at Zandvoort and would likely have taken maximum points from the Netherlands weekend but for a late tyre failure in the opening contest.

The otherwise strong showings continued into Barcelona, with another win clocked up to put Costa and Altoe in the hunt for the Sprint title. Or so it had looked. But a seatbelt infringement during the pitstops in race two resulted in the Emil Frey duo receiving a post-race penalty, dropping them to 16th and out of the championship hunt.

HRT Mercedes pair Luca Stolz and Maro Engel suffered the same fate down in 17th, extinguishing their own title hopes and leaving only Weerts and Vanthoor to deny Boguslavskiy his coronation in the Sprint season finale at Barcelona.



Paul Ricard win earned Pier Guidi the Endurance pot



Second behind Boguslavskiy and Marciello did just that as the Belgian duo wrapped up the spoils, but the Russian had the last laugh in the overall dice. He topped the combined standings, albeit after registering a lowly 18th in the final Endurance round at Paul Ricard.

AF Corse's Alessandro Pier Guidi was the surprise champion in the Endurance-

No one's close to Hanson and Albuquerque

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

Since the inaugural European Le Mans Series campaign in 2004, none of its calendars have stretched beyond six rounds. Even with the disruption of the past 12 months, there were still five races comprising this year's schedule.

On the one hand, if a dominant force emerges, such a compact running order leaves little time in which other teams can respond. On the other, for a driver pairing to wrap up the championship spoils with a full round to spare is a truly impressive feat.

That's what the imperious combination of Filipe Albuquerque and Phil Hanson achieved for United Autosports. Having amassed three wins, they could have quite happily sat out the Algarve finale – they didn't, of course, and bagged a podium.

Pole by 0.5 seconds and victory by almost a minute at Spa was devastating for the rest.



Hanson is punted off at Monza chicane

But it was the pair's recovery at Monza that shone brightest of the lot. Hanson's ORECA was forced into the gravel just after the start, but the blistering pace of he and Albuquerque recovered them to victory.

United team-mates Will Owen, Alex Brundle and Dutch hotshot Job van Uitert make for a pretty stellar line-up in itself. But they would trail their title-winning stablemates by 39 points come season's end.

If that wasn't enough, United won the LMP3 crown too, with 2018 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Tom Gamble combining with Wayne Boyd and Rob Wheldon for the honours. Alessio Picariello led the Proton Competition Porsche squad to GTE laurels, backed up by Michele Beretta and Christian Ried.



Mercedes of Boguslavskiy triumphed at Misano

only table, clinching the title at Ricard with stand-in Ferrari team-mate Tom Blomqvist and Come Ledogar. But his success was unlikely, as until then it had been an Audi and Porsche-dominated affair.

Audi hands Mirko Bortolotti, Kelvin van der Linde and Matthieu Vaxiviere won at Imola comfortably, while the Dinamic Motorsport Porsche combo of Sven Muller, Christian Engelhart and Matteo Cairoli were nigh on unstoppable at the Nurburgring.

But while Nick Tandy, Earl Bamber and Laurens Vanthoor prevailed in the Spa 24 Hours despite a failing transmission, Pier Guidi bagged crucial points when the score was taken at the halfway stage. Fifth at the finish, along with victory in the French encounter, was then enough for the Italian to come out on top.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

A step down puts Ye to the top

EUROFORMULA OPEN

Yifei Ye's journey from the Chinese city of Xi'an to European single-seaters had taken him to title-contending form in Formula Renault, but in 2019 he didn't get on with the heavy new FIA F3 car (he finished 21st), so he made a step down for 2020 to Euroformula Open's maiden season with the new Dallara 320 – an old-school F3 machine with a halo.


Ye was pretty much peerless after stepping down from FIA F3

EUROFORMULA OPEN

He went on to win 11 of the 18 races with CryptoTower Racing, a thinly disguised offshoot of Motopark. And now, reputation restored, Ye is plotting a course to Motopark's Super Formula team in Japan.

Ye was one of several drivers signed up by Spiess-powered Motopark, hence the formation of a second squad to circumvent EFO's three-cars-per-team rule. Five of them filled places in the top six: Ye, Lukas Dunner (who missed two rounds due to FIA F3 commitments), Manuel Maldonado, Niklas Krutten and Cameron Das (same deal as Dunner). The interloper was Van Amersfoort Racing's own FIA F3 refugee, German Andreas Estner, in third place using an HWA engine.

Other winners were Ben Barnicoat, on a cameo with Carlin in a damp/dry race at Mugello, and Double R Racing's Louis Foster, who contested the last two rounds. Carlin otherwise struggled, with Ido Cohen and 2019 British F4 champ Zane Maloney seventh and eighth.

2020 CHAMPIONS


SRO

INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE
AUGUSTO FARFUS/NICKY CATSBURG



MICHELIN LE MANS CUP (LMP3)
LAURENTS HORR


GALSTAD/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

MICHELIN PILOT CHALLENGE
KYLE MARCELLI/NATE STACY



INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN
HENRIQUE CHAVES JR/ MIGUEL RAMOS


SRO

GT4 EUROPEAN SERIES (SILVER)
VALENTIN HASSE-CLOT/THEO NOUET

motorsport STATS
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HOCH ZWEI

Rast deployed the new-for-2020 hygienic method to plant one on the trophy

Resurgent Rast bows out of Class 1 era on top

DTM

The Class 1 era of the DTM came to a premature end in 2020 after a season in which the on-track action was overshadowed by the events playing out behind the scenes.

While the top brass at series promoter ITR were still scrambling to prepare a definitive calendar in the wake of the pandemic, Audi sent shockwaves down the paddock by announcing its decision to quit the DTM at the end of the season. This followed the news that R-Motorsport Aston Martin wouldn't be continuing in 2020, leaving the series with potentially a single manufacturer in BMW next year.

It would take the ITR months to shape the future of the DTM for 2021, and it wasn't until the season finale at Hockenheim that the final regulations, involving a move to GT3 cars, were published.

The season itself was an all-Audi affair as the Ingolstadt-based manufacturer bade a winning farewell to the DTM, completing a clean sweep of drivers', teams' and manufacturers' titles. Such was the scale of Audi's dominance that it won 16 out of the 18 races and only failed to score pole position in one qualifying session.

Fortunately, the battle for the drivers' championship was far from one-sided, with Rene Rast and Nico Muller putting up a thrilling fight all season long. For the first two thirds of the campaign, Muller was the overwhelming favourite for the title after a string of victories and podium finishes placed him 47 points clear of Rast, with Abt team-mate Robin Frijns acting as a rear-gunner in second place.

The complexion of the championship quickly changed when the field made its second trip to Belgium for the Zolder double-header in October. The cooler conditions hampered the competitiveness of the Abt Audi squad, leaving it to tumble down the order. It was at this stage where Team Rosberg star Rast pounced, clocking four victories in a row in a span of nine days to lay the foundations for his third title success. Muller fought back in the Hockenheim decider with a win and a second place, but the damage Rast had inflicted at Zolder was enough to help him secure his hat-trick and a place among the DTM greats.

BMW had its moments of glory in an otherwise forgettable season, with Lucas Auer most notably leading a 1-2 for the marque in the fourth Lausitzring race, and Sheldon van der Linde followed that up with a victory at Assen in only his second season in the category.

There were some high points for the privateers as well, with WRT Audi's Ferdinand Habsburg and Robert Kubica (ART BMW) securing a podium each in the second of the Zolder double-headers.

RACHIT THUKRAL



Muller (left) did his best to take the Audi-only fight all the way

HOCH ZWEI

Johan stars as rallycross aces make a return

WORLD RALLYCROSS

Much was expected of Johan Kristoffersson's return to World Rallycross in the Volkswagen Polo that had taken him to 11 wins from 12 events two years ago.

While the Swede was again the class of the field and claimed his third World RX crown in four years, he didn't have things all his own way. That was in part due to an unexpected return by 2016 champion Mattias Ekstrom, who beat Kristoffersson in a head-to-head second race at Holjes.

Like all global motorsport, the World RX season was hit by massive scheduling changes but, over four double-header weekends, Kristoffersson won three times on Saturday – in Sweden, Finland and Latvia – and once on Sunday, in Spain.

Victory on Sunday in Finland went the way of Niclas Gronholm, who delivered a masterful defensive drive to hold off Ekstrom and Kristoffersson in wet conditions and win at home, but he wasn't able to mount a title challenge.



WORLD RX

Kristoffersson certainly wasn't rusty after a year away racing in WTCR

While Ekstrom won again in Latvia, it was 2019 champion Timmy Hansen – with the Peugeot 208 finally back on form – who claimed what would be the penultimate round at Barcelona, before Kristoffersson scored his fourth victory the next day, following a first-corner incident with a resurgent Andreas Bakkerud.

That Spanish victory put Kristoffersson well clear in the title race, and he was crowned champion when the finale at the Nurburgring was cancelled.

HAL RIDGE


RENAULT SPORT

Martins leads for a Nurburgring brace

Third time lucky for Martins

FORMULA RENAULT EUROCUP

He was only narrowly defeated for the 2019 crown by Oscar Piastri, so it was a gamble for Victor Martins to return for a third season in the Formula Renault Eurocup – but it paid off with the crown.

The French racer joined single-seater powerhouse ART Grand Prix as it spread its tentacles down the ladder – no surprise there, considering he's managed by ART principal Sebastien Philippe.

Over the first couple of events it looked as though Renault Formula 1 junior Caio Collet, remaining for a second year with R-ace GP, might be too tough to catch, but Martins kicked into gear from the third round at the Nurburgring and took seven victories from the remaining 16 races.

Two late-season DNFs – wiped out by David Vidales in the Emilia Romagna GP support round at Imola, and a mechanical failure at Hockenheim – killed five-time winner Collet's hopes, and the Brazilian had to settle for runner-up.

Reigning Spanish F4 champion Franco Colapinto looked superb with victory in the opening race at Monza, and the Argentinian went on to win once more and claim third with MP Motorsport.

Briton Alex Quinn – a super-late recruit – was an excellent fourth for Arden, and took one win. Others to score victories were David Vidales (JD Motorsport), who was stunning on his debut in round two at Imola, and Lorenzo Colombo, who hit a rich vein of form at season's end to win the last three races with Bhaitech.

2020 CHAMPIONS


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AUTOSPORT

CHRISTMAS QUIZ 2020

How closely were you paying attention this year?
Dig out your anoraks and put your knowledge to the test with Autosport's Christmas quiz

A SINGLE-SEATERS

1 Esteban Ocon only outqualified Renault Formula 1 team-mate Daniel Ricciardo once in dry conditions this year – where?

2 Which famous team did Mercedes surpass to move into third on the all-time world championship F1 wins list in 2020?

3 Ferrari finished sixth in this year's constructors' championship, marking its worst finish since which year?

4 Italy hosted three grands prix in 2020, staging races at Monza (below), Mugello and Imola. When did a single country last host three world championship F1 races in the same year?

5 Before claiming his first victory at the Sakhir Grand Prix, Sergio Perez was second in the list of drivers with most races without a win. Who is first in that list?

6 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 F1 season officially started in Austria. When was the last time an F1 world championship season kicked off in Europe?

7 Formula E is touted as an unpredictable championship. But in the 2019-20 season, how many races were won by the driver who had started on pole?

8 After Jean-Eric Vergne contracted a virus, who stood in for the double Formula E champion during the first practice session in Marrakech?

9 Mick Schumacher won the Formula 2 crown this season with Prema Racing. Who was the last driver to take the F2 drivers' title with the Italian powerhouse?

10 What was the best qualifying position achieved by Formula 3 champion Oscar Piastri during his successful rookie campaign?



B RALLYING

1 Carlos Sainz Sr took his third Dakar Rally victory in January 2020, driving a Mini JCW Buggy X-Raid. With which manufacturer did he score his first Dakar success in 2010?

2 Sebastien Ogier has competed for four leading teams in the World Rally Championship and won the drivers' crown with three of them. Which one did he not take the title with?

3 Name the car that won the highest number of stages in the 2020 World Rally Championship?

4 Seven-time World Rally champion Sebastien Ogier is second on the all-time WRC wins list with 49. How many overall WRC victories does leader Sebastien Loeb have to his name?

5 Hyundai secured its second consecutive World Rally manufacturers' title this year, with its i20 Coupe WRC, but which marque has the most crowns?

6 Elfyn Evans took two World Rally victories in 2020 to finish runner-up in the points standings. At which event did he take his first WRC career win?

7 What was the best overall result scored by M-Sport's Ford Fiesta WRC during the 2020 World Rally Championship?

8 Which motorsport legend secured the first of their two World Rally drivers' crowns 30 years ago?

9 Which famous racing circuit hosted the final round of the 2020 World Rally Championship?

10 Which overall World Rally event winner pipped Pontus Tidemand to the WRC2 crown this year, driving a Citroen C3 R5?

C SPORTSCARS

1 Which driver pairing scored the final pole position for the Toyota TS050 HYBRID in Bahrain?

2 Which DTM champion made his Le Mans 24 Hours debut this year driving for ByKolles?

3 Toyota protege Kenta Yamashita raced for which LMP2 WEC team in 2019-20?

4 How many laps did the winning #8 Toyota of Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Kazuki Nakajima complete at the 2020 Le Mans 24 Hours?

5 Which track hosted half of this year's eight Super GT rounds?

6 How many laps were completed by the winning car at this year's Nurburgring 24 Hours?

7 2009 Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button had a tough weekend on his British GT debut at Silverstone. In what position did he finish?

8 Alessandro Pier Guidi won the GT World Challenge Endurance Cup title with a makeshift AF Corse line-up at Paul Ricard, but who were his team-mates?

9 At how many ACO-sanctioned LMP2 races (FIA WEC and ELMS) did United Autosports not finish on the podium in 2020?

10 How many different crews won races in the 14-round ADAC GT Masters series this year?

D TOURING CARS

1 Which driver led the most laps during this year's British Touring Car Championship?

2 Drivers of rear-wheel-drive cars have won the past four BTCC drivers' titles. Who was the last driver to win the BTCC crown in a front-wheel-drive machine?

3 DTM rookie Robert Kubica produced a season highlight of third place at Zolder. But who was the only other privateer in the field to score a podium this season?

4 How many victories did Audi score in the 18-race DTM season, the last of the Class 1 era?

5 Spa hosted the opening round of the DTM season. When did it last feature on the series' calendar?

6 In a DTM season dominated by Audi, who was BMW's top finisher in the championship?

7 DTM recorded its closest race finish since its revival at the Lausitzring. What was the gap between winner Rene Rast and runner-up Nico Muller?

8 In Supercars, which Australian state were five teams forced to flee amid COVID-19 restrictions at short notice back in July?

9 Two drivers became first-time Supercars race winners in 2020. Who are they?

10 Supercars (below) raced at seven different circuits this season. But how many different track layouts were used along the way?



KLYNSMITH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

E AMERICAN MOTORSPORT

1 With his victory at Texas, Kyle Busch has now won at least one race in how many consecutive NASCAR Cup Series seasons?

2 How many wins did retiring NASCAR driver Jimmie Johnson earn in his final full-time Cup Series season?

3 Chase Elliott won his first NASCAR Cup Series title in 2020. How many of his five victories came on road courses?

4 Which IndyCar driver became the first since Scott Dixon at Belle Isle in 2012 to lead every single lap of a race?

5 All three full-time IndyCar rookies scored a podium finish this year, but who was the only one to start from pole position?

6 How many Indy Lights champions started an IndyCar race in 2020?

7 Just three Britons started an IndyCar race this year. Jack Harvey and Max Chilton were two; who was the third?

8 Two drivers competed for two IndyCar teams this year. One was Conor Daly. Who was the other?

9 Which current IndyCar full-timer other than Scott Dixon scored an IMSA Prototype race win in 2020?

10 How many of the 11 IMSA GT Le Mans class races did the new Corvette C8.R win?

F MOTOGP

1 A total of nine riders won races in MotoGP across the 2020 season. When was the last time this happened?

2 MotoGP raced at the Algarve International Circuit for the first time in 2020 for the return of the Portuguese GP. But when was the Portuguese motorcycle GP last held?

3 Fabio Quartararo ended a wait of 21 years for French fans to celebrate a MotoGP winner from their homeland at the Spanish GP. But who did he succeed as the previous French MotoGP race winner?

4 How many podiums did Joan Mir score on his path to the 2020 world championship?

5 Joan Mir didn't register a pole position in his 2020 title-winning campaign. When was the last time the premier-class title was won without the champion starting on pole position?

6 Valentino Rossi scored a third-place finish at the Andalusian GP. What did that bring his tally of career MotoGP podiums to?

7 How many constructors' championship points did Yamaha lose when it was found guilty of using illegal engines at the Spanish GP?

8 Brad Binder made history at the Czech GP when he took his and KTM's maiden MotoGP victory. What was his winning margin that day?

9 A total of 25 riders started grands prix in 2020, either as full-time entrants or replacements. Who was the final points scorer in the standings?

10 What caused Jack Miller to retire from this year's Emilia Romagna GP, held at Misano?

DAMON HILL'S TOP 10 F1 DRIVES

We pick out the 1996 world champion's greatest races – with a little help from the man himself

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES





10 1994 SPANISH GP

BARCELONA WILLIAMS FW16 (1ST)

"Victory for Damon lifts Williams," said Autosport's headline for the 1994 Spanish GP report. Just as Graham Hill had picked up the beleaguered Lotus team following the death of Jim Clark in 1968 with victory in Spain, so Damon scored an emotional success in the 1994 edition.

Michael Schumacher arrived at Barcelona undefeated that season, with Williams still reeling from the death of Ayrton Senna at Imola. The early stages were familiar, Schumacher leading from pole, with Hill unable to stay with the Benetton.

But shortly after his first stop, Schumacher started suffering with a gearbox issue, eventually getting stuck in fifth. Mika Hakkinen's McLaren and Hill overtook the Benetton before Schumacher found a way to lap competitively.

Hill and Hakkinen had duelled in the early laps and the Finn got ahead during the first pitstops, but he was on a three-stop strategy and Hill on a two. After the McLaren's final visit on lap 45 of 65, Hakkinen was 9.5 seconds behind the Williams, with the two-stopping Schumacher in between.

Although he edged towards Schumacher, Hakkinen could not match Hill's pace before the McLaren's Peugeot engine blew with 17 laps to go. Hill was left to take a popular win, 24.2s ahead of the brilliant Schumacher.

"In recent weeks I think we've all found it difficult to keep things going, but Damon has probably had the hardest time of all, and I think he's shown what a strong man he is," said team boss Frank Williams. "We needed a win for a million reasons – and number one was to honour Ayrton Senna."

"That was probably one of my most important races," Hill told Autosport in 2014. "It showed that I could be the lead driver. Ultimately, you have got to be able to win races and we got a win in quite early, only a couple of races after Imola. For morale, it was so important. And it also made me believe in myself as being able to carry the load."



1993 ITALIAN GP

MONZA WILLIAMS FW15C (1ST)

9

After his surprise graduation to a coveted Williams race seat for 1993, Hill took a while to find his feet, but once he did he looked like a winner. Misfortune – engine failure at Silverstone and a tyre blowout at Hockenheim – kept him off the top step of the podium until the Hungarian GP in August. That was the start of a hat-trick of successes, with the third win at Monza perhaps his best.

Things didn't start well. Hill was unhappy with his car during warm-up and, from second on the grid, he immediately fell to third and was then hit by Ayrton Senna's McLaren at the first chicane.

Hill completed the first lap in ninth, but soon started his fightback. On lap 10 of 53 he overtook Jean Alesi's Ferrari for third and, when the engine failed in Michael Schumacher's Benetton-Ford, Hill moved into second.

Just after half-distance, with both their tyre stops completed, Alain Prost led Hill by nearly 20s. But Hill started setting a string of fastest laps, at the same time as Prost started to relax in order to secure the world title. Hill arrived on his team-mate's gearbox with seven laps to go and then backed off, his Renault engine temperatures causing concern.

With less than five laps to go Hill got payback for his previous poor luck when Prost's engine blew. Hill reeled off the remaining laps to win, having set a fastest lap 0.8s quicker than Prost's best.



1994 BRITISH GP

SILVERSTONE

WILLIAMS FW16 (1ST)

8

Despite coming close more than once, especially in 1960, Graham Hill never won his home race. Damon's first proper chance to win the British GP continued the trend, as he suffered an engine failure while leading in 1993.

Revised sidepods on the tricky FW16 for the French GP had helped Hill to his first pole of 1994, and he topped qualifying again a week later at Silverstone. The controversial part of the weekend began when Schumacher overtook Hill on each of the formation laps either side of an aborted start. That earned Schumacher a five-second stop/go penalty, which he didn't serve while the team argued with stewards. Then the German got black-flagged but still he drove on. He would eventually be disqualified.

Suspension problems had limited Hill's running in practice, but he bounced back to pip Schumacher to pole by 0.003s. The Williams led from the start, Schumacher shadowing Hill as they quickly left the rest far behind, something of a theme of the 1994 season.

Hill made his first pitstop before Schumacher, and the Benetton jumped ahead when it rejoined. Both then caught the Ferrari of Gerhard Berger before it made its stop. Schumacher edged away thereafter but, having previously ignored the black flag, finally came in on lap 27 of 60 for his stop/go, handing Hill a lead he would not lose. Schumacher fell 22.2s behind. He nibbled away at the gap, later complaining of a downshift issue and flat-spotting his front tyres, but never made significant inroads and finished 18.8s down on the victorious Williams.

"Obviously, his penalty was a Godsend to us," said Hill, "but even without it I think it would have been a close race – a titanic battle right to the end."



"The Silverstone race was the first time anything had looked remotely capable of running with Schumacher in race trim," wrote Autosport's Tony Dodgins in the following week's magazine. The Silverstone race also started a sequence of events that would help Hill close on Schumacher.

"My father had never won the race, but the main feeling was one of relief and joy that it had all worked out," added Hill in 1998. "All the terrible memories of Imola were still fresh in our minds, so this was a piece of very welcome good news. As race weekends go, it would be just about impossible to improve upon."



SUTTON

1995 HUNGARIAN GP

HUNGARORING WILLIAMS FW17 (1ST)

7

Hill and Williams did not have a happy 1995. There were mistakes and they were repeatedly outmanoeuvred by Michael Schumacher and Benetton, but in Hungary Hill turned the tables.

He took pole and then led team-mate David Coulthard off the line, with Schumacher behind. Just over a second clear at the end of the first tour, Hill was 12s ahead after 10 of the 77 laps, Coulthard struggling with over-pressured tyres and stunned by Hill's pace.

A mistake by Coulthard at the chicane allowed Schumacher past on lap 13, which he completed 15.5s behind Hill. The gap started to come down before both leaders came in at the end of lap 17. A fuel rig problem meant Schumacher did not get as much fuel as hoped, and he was in again nine laps later. "In the meantime, Schumacher whittled away at Hill's lead, but still Damon looked poised and unflurried," reported Nigel Roebuck.

Hill made his second stop on lap 38, after which Schumacher closed right up. Hill ran briefly off line on lap 44, giving Schumacher half a chance, but Hill held onto his lead. Schumacher then lost ground behind Martin Brundle's lapped Ligier before pitting. He lost more time in traffic afterwards and so, after Hill's final stop on lap 58, the gap was 11.5s. And Schumacher had no answer.

"The Williams was working better than the Benetton, and Hill was driving one of the best races of his life," reckoned Roebuck in Autosport's report.

Schumacher's Benetton failed him with four laps to go, leaving Hill to beat Coulthard by more than half a minute. Everyone else had been lapped.

1996 BRAZILIAN GP

INTERLAGOS

WILLIAMS FW18 (1ST)

6

Hill's unfortunate 1996 Spanish GP performance – he went off twice before crashing out, while Michael Schumacher took one of his greatest victories – hurt his wet-weather driving reputation. But just two months before he had driven a fine race in treacherous conditions at Interlagos, and lapped Schumacher's Ferrari F310.

Hill took a dominant pole in the dry, nearly a second clear of the field. He had to defend robustly from both the Jordan of home hero Rubens Barrichello and Williams team-mate Jacques Villeneuve in the opening seconds, but once clear he simply drove away. After three laps he was 9.4s ahead, despite running a heavy fuel load.

"The race started in conditions so wet that the abnormally brave Jean Alesi was moved to say he was scared, but Hill made no mistakes on a track that was changing lap by lap," reported Autosport.

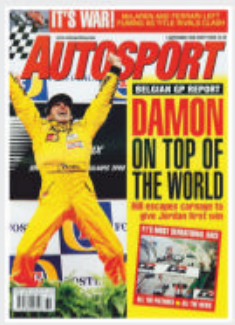
The gap was 17s when, with the track drying, Villeneuve made an error defending second from Alesi's Benetton and spun into retirement on lap 27 of 71. Alesi started closing on Hill, only to make his own mistake and hand second to Barrichello. He was soon back ahead of the Jordan and started chipping away at Hill, but on lap 40 Hill decided it was dry enough for slick tyres and made his stop.

It was the right call. Alesi came in two laps later to do the same, after which the lead was over 25s. They traded fastest laps, but Hill's biggest concern was the battling Schumacher and Barrichello, who he came up to lap in the closing stages.

Eventually, Barrichello went off and Hill was able to pass Schumacher in the final 10 laps. He took the chequered flag 18s clear of Alesi.







1998 BELGIAN GP

SPA JORDAN 198 (1ST)

5

Forget the nonsense about team orders and Ralf Schumacher being the 'moral' victor of the race. Hill was the deserving winner from the moment Michael Schumacher hit the back of David Coulthard and three-wheeled into controversial retirement.

Hill outqualified both Ferraris to start third in the ever-improving Jordan 198, nearly 0.8s quicker than team-mate Ralf Schumacher. In horrible conditions Hill made a bad start but managed to avoid the enormous pile-up triggered by Coulthard spearing into the wall exiting La Source.

Hill made a much better getaway for the restart, snatching the lead and initially holding off Michael Schumacher as both McLarens suffered offs. Schuey's Ferrari got a good run through Blanchimont on lap eight of 44 to take the lead into the chicane. He soon pulled away, but Hill was still well clear of the rest, despite a compromised wet/dry set-up in the poor conditions.

When the leader infamously hit the back of Coulthard's McLaren on lap 25, Hill moved back to the front and stayed there, despite a brief moment at the Bus Stop chicane. His team-mate was now second but more than 14s behind, though Ralf had been chipping away at the gap. What eradicated it was a safety car period caused by Giancarlo Fisichella violently hitting the back of Shinji Nakano's Minardi.

There were 12 laps left at the restart and, following a brief challenge from Ralf, Hill pointed out that getting the cars to hold station might be in the best interests of the team… And team boss Eddie Jordan responded by telling Ralf to hold station.

Nevertheless, Autosport's Nigel Roebuck had no doubts that Hill, whose best lap was nearly 3s quicker than Ralf's, was the right victor: "A magnificent race, in which he never ran lower than second, which finally laid to rest the suggestion that he only won races because he was driving a Williams-Renault."

"I felt I drove better than I have ever done on this circuit," said Hill. "I would never say that luck didn't play its part, but we were in contention all weekend and we deserved our result."

1994 AUSTRALIAN GP

ADELAIDE WILLIAMS FW16B (RETIRED)

4

Hill felt the pressure of a title showdown twice in F1. One he lost and one he won, but it's not the successful 1996 Japanese GP that stands out – "Michael Schumacher wasn't in a competitive car and Jacques Villeneuve's wheel fell off!" he says.

The revised B version of the troubled FW16 was an improvement, and Hill had brilliantly taken the championship down to the finale with victory at Suzuka.

Hill, who now admits his timing perhaps wasn't the best, questioned the support he was getting from the team before the Adelaide weekend, and practice didn't go particularly well. Hill only qualified third, more than 0.6s behind both Schumacher and Williams returnee Nigel Mansell. But the race was a different matter.

Both title protagonists jumped Mansell at the start. Schumacher completed the first lap 2.1s clear, but Hill took half a second back on the next tour. The duo continued to exchange tenths as they left the rest behind once again. After 11 laps, third-placed Mika Hakkinen was 18s behind Hill, and the lead duo's fastest laps would be nearly a second clear of the rest by the end of the GP.

Even through their first pitstops, Hill stayed within 1.5s of Schumacher from lap 14 until the Benetton set a new fastest lap on the 29th tour. The gap climbed as high as 2.9s at the end of lap 34, but Hill immediately took nearly a second back. Then Schumacher cracked, going off at the left-hander of the Wakefield sequence, hitting the wall and damaging his Benetton's right-rear, crucially just out of Hill's sight.

Hill came around the corner and was faced with a recovering Benetton. He dived for the inside into the following right-hander. Schumacher turned in, the ensuing contact flicking the Benetton into the air and then the barriers. Hill continued, but terminal damage had been done to the left-front wishbone and he had to retire, allowing Schumacher to take the title by a single point in an unsatisfactory conclusion to a tumultuous season.

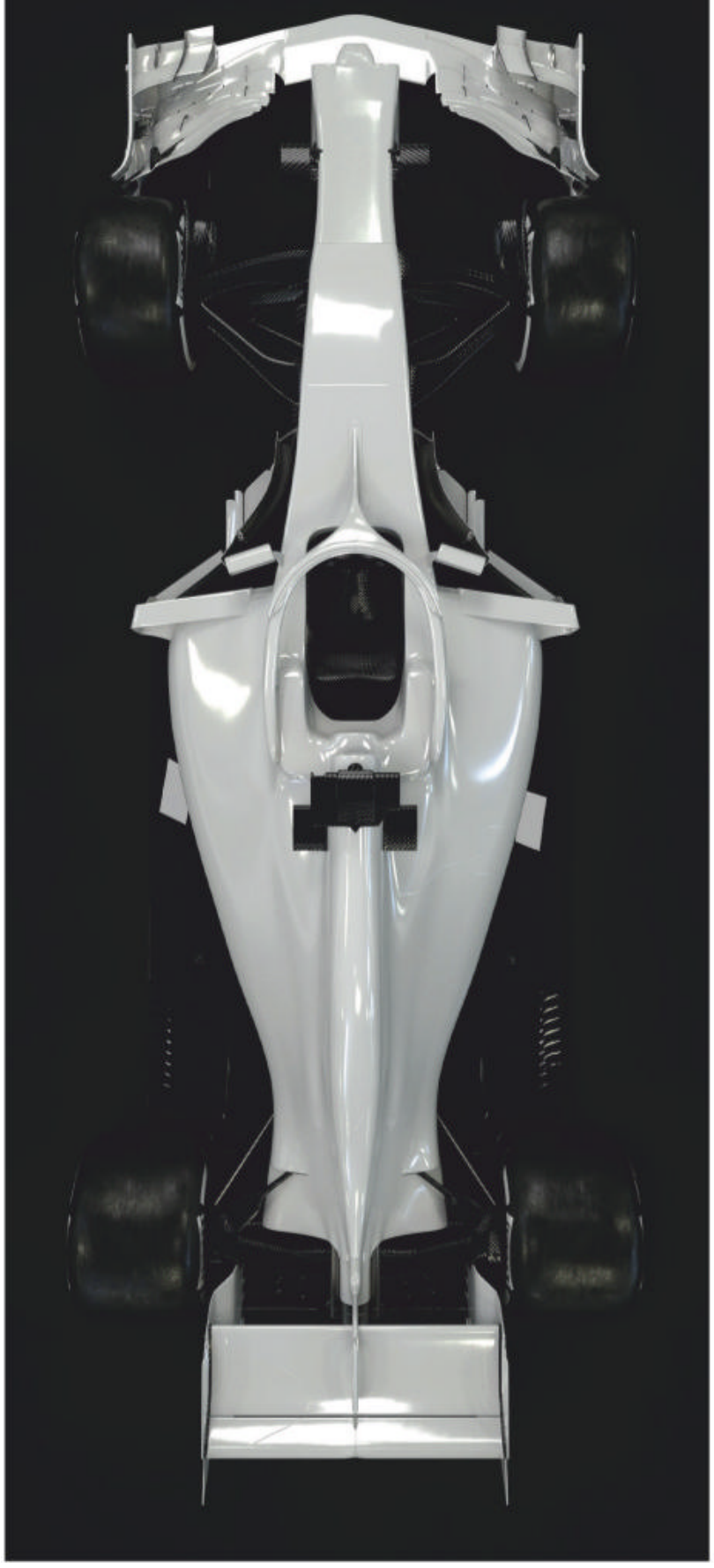
"It was very close and difficult to say who would have won it," admitted Schumacher, who had previously questioned Hill's abilities. "What Damon has done over the past two races has been a proper and fantastic job."

"To me that was Suzuka part two until it all went wrong," reckons Hill. "The pace of that race was so intense and the thing for me was that I put Michael under pressure. He overdrove and went off."



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1996 MONACO GP

MONTE CARLO WILLIAMS FW18 (RETIRED)

3

Two races stand out as the GPs that got away from Hill in the cruellest way. One is higher up this list, but this one has perhaps more emotional significance. Hill's father Graham famously won the Monaco GP five times, and Damon deserved to add to the family collection in 1996.

Michael Schumacher's Ferrari beat Hill to pole, but in the slippery conditions on race day nobody could touch the runaway championship leader, who seemed on a mission.

Hill grabbed the lead at the start, Schumacher crashed just before Portier, and the Williams completed the first lap 4.3s ahead of second-placed Jean Alesi. "Hill and the Williams looked at least one class above the rest, drawing away by huge amounts every time," reported Autosport's Nigel Roebuck. After five laps, Hill's advantage was 13.3s!

"You can look at some races and go, 'I did my job as well as I could', and it was really going well at Monaco," recalls Hill.

The Williams pitted for slicks on lap 28 and, when all the leading pitstops had been completed, led by more than half a minute. Hill's fifth win from six 1996 starts seemed assured.

"That was the one time we got the tyre change absolutely spot on, and then the Renault engine blew," laments Hill, who exited the tunnel on lap 41 with a plume of smoke emanating from the car's rear.

"Damon had done absolutely everything right and the tragedy is that he may never again have a Monaco GP so readily his for the taking," wrote Roebuck. He was right – Hill would never lead another lap in Monte Carlo.



1997 HUNGARIAN GP

HUNGARORING
ARROWS A18 (2ND)

2

"That's the race people talk about more than any other," says Hill of the infamous 1997 Hungarian GP.

The Arrows A18 had qualified 5.4s off the pace at the Melbourne season opener, where the car failed before even making the start. But progress from Tom Walkinshaw's team, one of the few on Bridgestone tyres, was swift.

At the technical Hungaroring, a track on which Hill always excelled, a combination of factors almost brought one of F1's greatest surprise – and most popular – victories for Hill and the Arrows-Yamaha.

"It was a fantastic weekend," recalls Hill. "Bridgestone always made a very reliable tyre, with rigidity to the tread that enabled you to push it. We managed to get a balance and you didn't need a very powerful engine in Hungary."

Hill qualified third and jumped the Williams of Jacques Villeneuve at the start. Most of the Goodyear runners had chosen the soft compound and this proved to be a mistake. Michael Schumacher's leading Ferrari was soon suffering with blisters, and Hill neatly outbraked him into Turn 1 on lap 11 of 77.

"Michael couldn't get off the corners," says Hill. "After a few laps his tyres were finished and I managed to get past him and make the break." Villeneuve made it into second three laps later, but Hill was still 7s clear when he made his first pitstop.

His main threat now was the other Williams of Heinz-Harald Frentzen, which had started on the harder Goodyears. But Frentzen's fuel-tank connector departed before his first stop and, with no way of getting in any more fuel, he was forced to retire.

Hill was left in command, increasing his lead even through the next round of pitstops. He was 34s ahead of Villeneuve with three laps to go when a leak in the hydraulic system started giving him throttle and gearbox issues. Villeneuve finally caught him and went past on the final lap as Hill limped home to second, perennial non-winner Arrows denied victory once again.

"To get within one lap of the end and for something to happen was cruel, but at least we got to the finish," concludes a philosophical Hill.





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STATS

STARTS 115

WINS 22

POLES 20

FASTEST LAPS 19

1994 JAPANESE GP

SUZUKA

WILLIAMS FW16B (1ST)

1

Towards the end of a tragic year, in which he had been thrust into a team leadership role following Ayrton Senna's death, Hill found himself needing to beat rainmaster Michael Schumacher in appalling conditions to maintain a realistic chance of winning the world championship in the Adelaide finale. His performance at Suzuka helped convince Hill that he belonged at the sharp end of F1.

"It was tense," recalls Hill. "We had been steamrollered at Jerez [the previous round]. I looked pretty defeated after that race, but it later transpired there was a problem with the fuel rig and I'd been carrying an extra load of fuel that affected performance.

"I confronted Frank Williams and Patrick Head because they were a bit disgruntled I hadn't done so well, and I had to say, 'You know why I didn't do well, don't you?!' So it was tense within the team as well. I got the sense they had given up on me, exacerbated by the fact they kept bringing Nigel Mansell back."

Schumacher and Hill qualified on the front row and, once the Benetton had chopped across the front of the Williams, headed off into a race of their own. After two laps, Hill was 9s clear of the pack.

"I thought if I lost sight of his rear light then he would get away," explains Hill. "The whole race was on another level to any other race I've ever driven in.

"Somehow I was in awe of Michael as well as determined to beat him. He was getting the car all out of shape and up the kerbs. Any other driver would have lost it, but he managed to bring it back every time. He just kept it up lap after lap, astonishing."

Others weren't able to keep their cars on the road as conditions worsened, and there was a safety-car period between laps four and nine. Schumacher made a fine restart to get away from Hill and started to build an advantage. But more accidents brought out the red flags, with the race to be decided on aggregate.

Schumacher had a 6.9s advantage for the 37-lap part two and he led at the restart before pitting. Hill stayed out seven laps longer, taking fuel and *three* new tyres as the right-rear refused to come off – "I was totally unaware of that, they didn't tell me," recalls Hill.

Schumacher had struggled on a heavier fuel load, allowing Hill to rejoin ahead. The championship leader soon started closing on the Williams, retaking the lead on aggregate. But Benetton had gone for a two-stop strategy and Schumacher had to come in once more, while Hill motored on having made his only scheduled pit visit.

At the end of his out-lap, Schumacher was 14.6s behind with nine tours to go. The aggregate gap came down: 14.2s, 12.0s, 10.1s, 8.4s, 7s, 5.2s, 4.2s. With one lap to go it was 2.5s.

"I was watching the gap come down and it got a bit too close for comfort, so I thought I had to pull something out of the hat," recalls Hill. "I said, 'Ayrton, if you're up there, I could do with a hand – I am spent!'. The next thing I know, I'm flying around the Esses, like someone has got my foot and stuck it on the throttle, to the bulkhead.

"I got as far as Degner 2 or the hairpin and I thought, 'I can't keep this up.' I came back to being a bit more cautious and had to hope it was enough. It was almost as though I had let my instinct drive the car. It was an astonishing experience, driven by the championship situation. All my energy went into that performance."

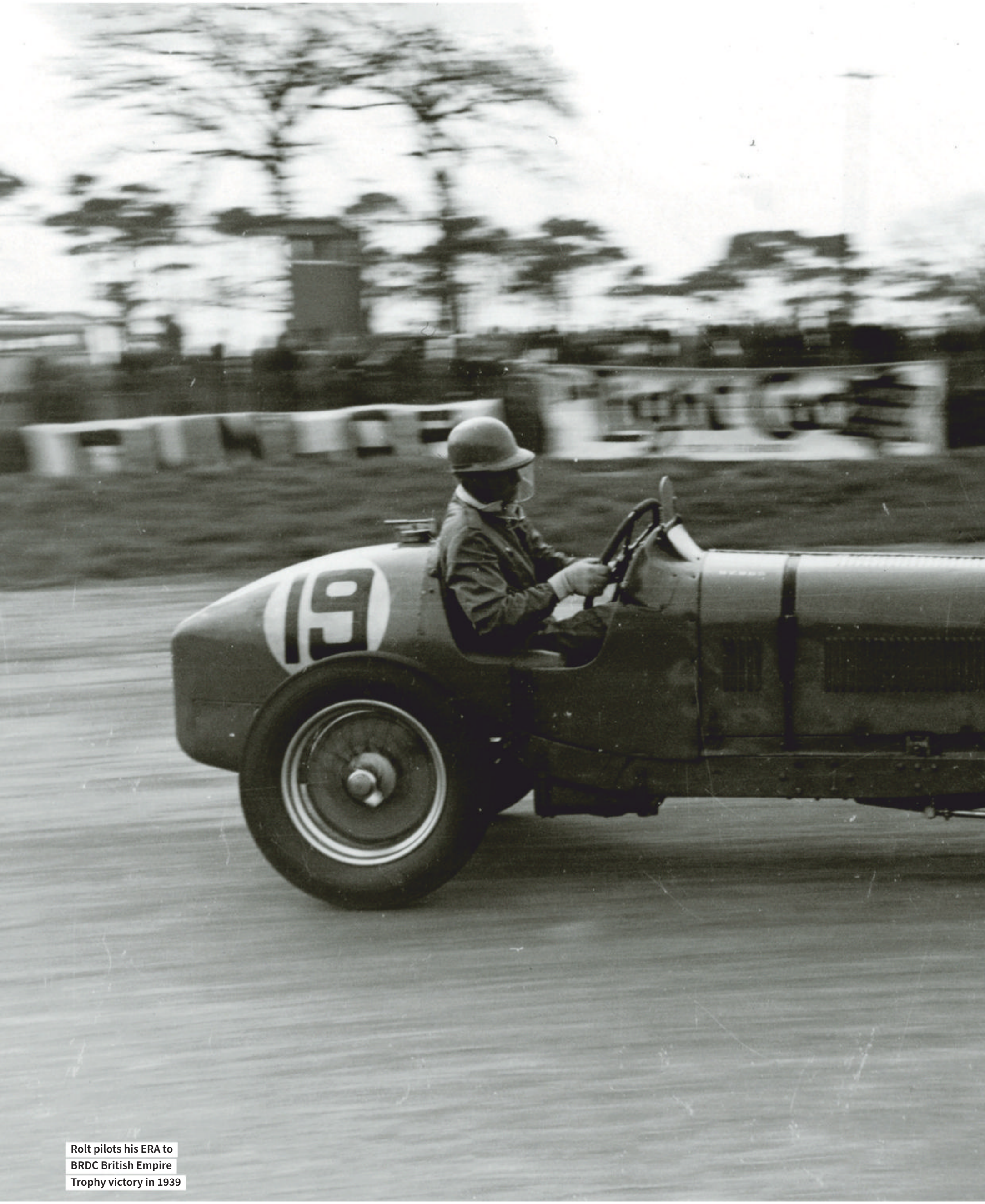
It was enough. Hill extended the gap on that final lap to take overall victory by 3.4s, complete with very worn right-rear. Even Schumacher was moved to come and congratulate him.

"I did not exude the confidence that Michael Schumacher did or some of the great drivers," adds Hill. "I wasn't confident in myself. I'd got a late entry into F1 at 32, I was a substitute driver. And I was fighting for a world championship when I thought I'd be team-mate to Ayrton Senna.

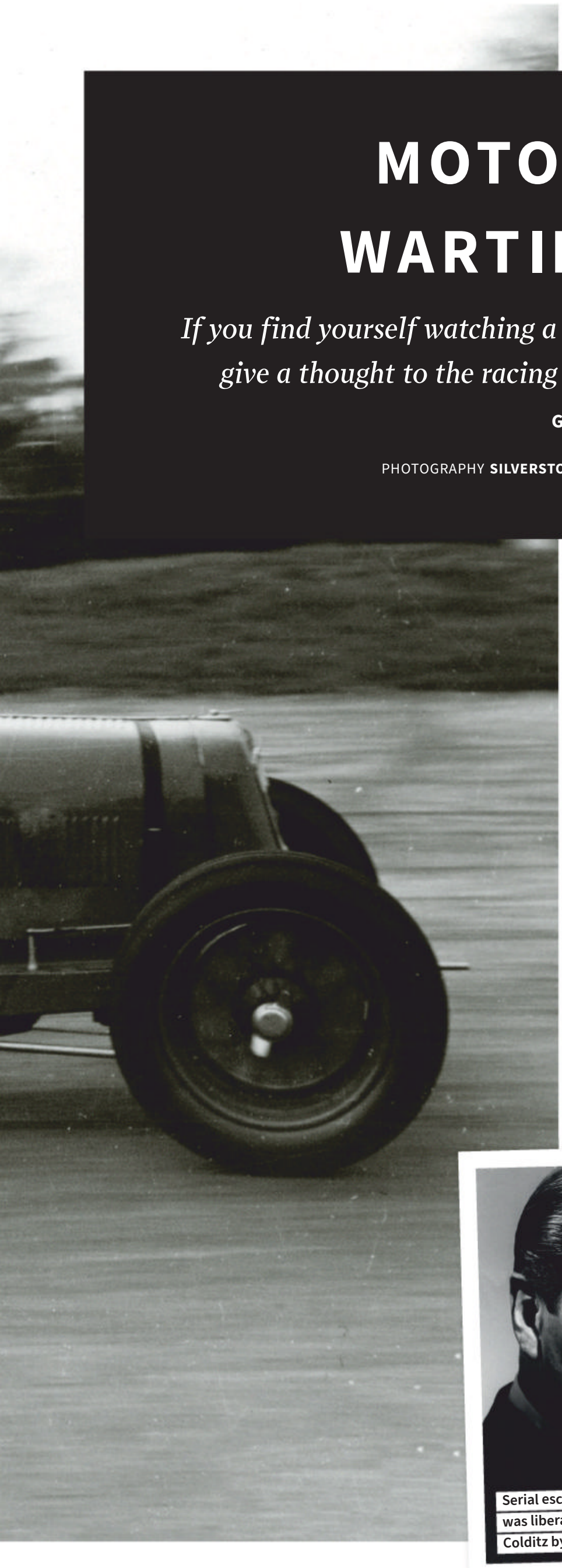
"That race underscored to me that, in the heat of battle in some of the toughest conditions, in F1 in a title fight, I could do it."



To hear more from Hill on his career and best races, listen to our special podcast: **https://www.autosport.com/f1/news/149994**



Rolt pilots his ERA to BRDC British Empire Trophy victory in 1939



MOTORSPORT'S WARTIME HEROES

If you find yourself watching a Second World War classic this Christmas, give a thought to the racing drivers who performed real-life heroics

GEMMA BRIGGS

PHOTOGRAPHY **SILVERSTONE EXPERIENCE AND** motorsport IMAGES

Forget *It's a Wonderful Life* or *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, the films most likely to get us parked on the sofa this festive season are the rousing Second World War classics. Think *The Great Escape*, *Where Eagles Dare* and *The Dam Busters*. We're gripped because we know that their implausible plots are rooted in the exploits of real wartime heroes.

Many of these characters came from the world of motorsport. They exchanged setting speed records and winning grands prix for piloting bombers and decoding Nazi messages. Here are the stories of just some of the racing men and women whose incredible wartime feats deserve recognition.

MAJOR ANTHONY ROLT

If you've watched *The Colditz Story* starring John Mills, then you'll be familiar with the maximum-security prisoner-of-war camp set up by the Germans to house those prisoners who were hell-bent on escape. One such real-life prisoner was BRDC British Empire Trophy winner Tony Rolt.

An officer in the Rifle Brigade, Rolt was part of a desperate attempt in 1940 to halt the advance of the 10th Panzer Division heading for Dunkirk. Following a three-day struggle, Rolt was captured at Calais, receiving a Military Cross for his bravery. Now a PoW, he fought back with an incredible seven thwarted escape attempts, one of which saw him captured just yards from the Swiss border.



Serial escapee Rolt was liberated from Colditz by US troops

Faced with such a determined prisoner, his captors moved him to Colditz Castle in 1943. There, Rolt was one of the masterminds behind an audacious plan to fly to freedom. In secret, the group of prisoners had begun building a glider, only to be freed by the US Army before it could be used.

Rolt's return to racing resulted in him taking second place in the 1948 Zandvoort Grand Prix before competing in the inaugural round of the Formula 1 world championship at Silverstone in 1950. He achieved most success during a distinguished stint as a works Jaguar driver, winning the 1953 Le Mans 24 Hours in a C-type alongside Duncan Hamilton. »

WING COMMANDER
FRANK AIKENS

A 500cc pioneer who reportedly used parts from his wife's Fiat to make his special, Frank Aikens was already in the RAF when the war broke out. His exceptional skill and bravery is highlighted by one mission in particular.

In July 1940, Aikens's Armstrong Whitworth Whitley was sent to raid the battleship Scharnhorst, located in the floating Kiel Harbour in Germany. The crew descended to just 1100ft and scored five direct hits on the German battleship. Although the fierce anti-aircraft guns had peppered the fuselage with holes, damaged the tail and knocked out the radio, Aikens and the crew made it back to base safely. They were subsequently commended for notable service.

Aikens proved crucial in bringing motorsport back after the Allied victory, helping to organise a meeting at RAF Gransden Lodge in July 1947. He went on to compete in the 500cc race supporting the first grand prix at Silverstone in 1948, and won the 1950 Grand Prix d'Europe 500cc race from rising stars Stirling Moss and Peter Collins.

AMBULANCE DRIVER
GWENDA HAWKES (NEE GLUBB)

A racing driver and speed record holder, Gwenda Hawkes repeatedly put herself in harm's way on the Russian front as an ambulance driver during the First World War. These efforts earned her both the Cross of St George and the cross of St Stanislav — Imperial Russia's highest accolade.

Between the wars, she set multiple records on four wheels and two, including a 24-hour motorcycle speed record at the French circuit of Montlhery, near Paris. As well as twice competing in the Le Mans 24 Hours, Hawkes became the fastest woman ever at Brooklands in 1935, with a lap speed of 135.95mph.

The advent of WW2 resulted in her redoubling her efforts. By day she turned out shells in her husband's munitions factory, and by night drove for London's Auxiliary Ambulance Service.



When she couldn't race, Hawkes drove an ambulance

SQUADRON LEADER
GEORGE ABECASSIS

Having displayed his bravery behind the wheel of an Alta at Brooklands, where he set a Campbell circuit lap record, George Abecassis joined the RAF in 1940 and was posted to 51 Squadron in Yorkshire as a Whitley bomber pilot. The operations would take him on raids over Germany and occupied France, including the destruction of the Renault factory in 1942.



Abecassis flew missions behind enemy lines

After a spell as a flying instructor, he was picked by the top secret 161 Squadron, which put his low-level flying skills to use dropping spies and supplies to resistance groups behind enemy lines. It was on one such mission that his plane was shot down over Denmark, with Abecassis managing to save the lives of six of the crew. They spent seven months in a PoW camp and, when liberated by the Russians, Abecassis stole a bicycle and pedalled to American soldiers and freedom. Upon his return to Britain he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Continuing his racing career, Abecassis took an ERA to the frozen lake at Vallentuna for the 1947 Swedish Grand Prix and finished in second place. He later co-founded the HWM racing team, employing drivers including Moss and Collins. »

"ABECASSIS'S LOW-LEVEL FLYING SKILLS WERE PUT TO USE DROPPING SUPPLIES TO THE RESISTANCE"







MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Team co-founder Abecassis drives HWM-Jaguar

RAF SILVERSTONE AT CHRISTMAS



CHARIOT RACE HINTS AT BOMBER BASE'S FUTURE

Were it not for the Second World War leading to the creation of RAF Silverstone, the famous racing circuit might never have existed. The expansive airfield, a Vickers Wellington bomber training base, proved a perfect new location once motor racing resumed after the war.

The airfield's logbook from 1943 shows that the airmen stationed there made their best efforts to celebrate Christmas that year. As well as decorating the sergeants' mess (above), they enjoyed a full Christmas dinner, several parties with the station band and cinema viewings.

In a prelude to the site's future as the home of British motor racing, the logbook reveals that a chariot race was held as part of the festivities. It was won by 'D' Flight, with the Navigation Section a close second, the latter also winning first prize for 'best-dressed chariot'. The report states: "All agreed that a good time was had by all".

Sadly, no photos of the race exist, but you can find out more about RAF Silverstone at The Silverstone Experience museum, located in a restored hangar from the original airfield.



Tony Gaze races a Maserati 8CM at Goodwood in 1952

SQUADRON LEADER
FREDERICK 'TONY' GAZE

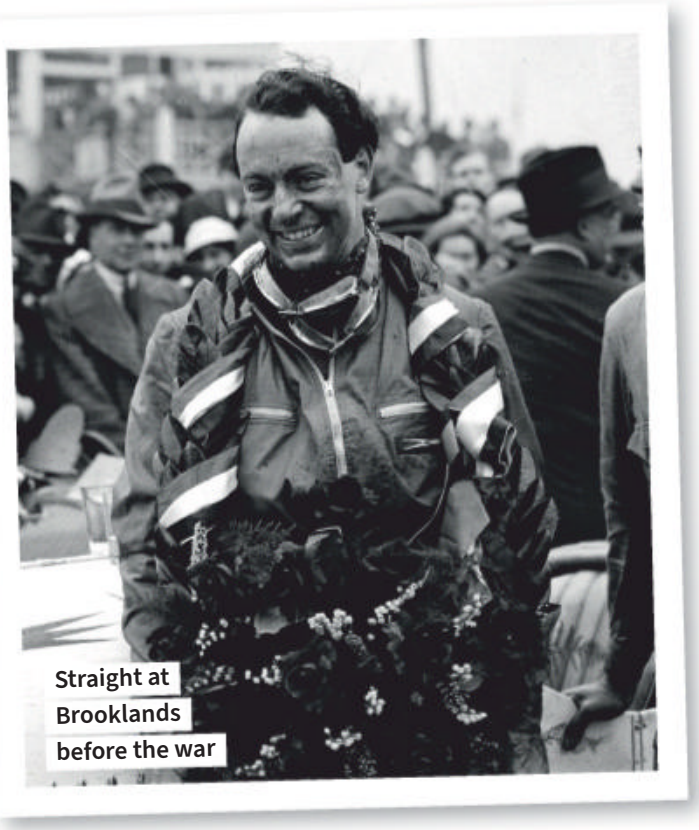
When Australian Tony Gaze arrived in England in 1938 as a Cambridge undergraduate, he headed straight to Brooklands and borrowed a Hudson to take part in his first motor race. At the outbreak of war he joined the RAF and trained as a Supermarine Spitfire pilot, during which time he'd race his sportscar against fellow airmen around the perimeter roads of the training base.

Gaze's skills in the air were outstanding: he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross three times (one of fewer than 50 pilots to ever do so) for achieving 12 'kills', including intercepting a V1 Flying Bomb. He crash-landed in occupied France in 1943, but avoided capture and, with the help of the resistance, made it to Spain and on to England.

He was reputedly the first Allied airman to land in France on D-Day, and Gaze's wartime heroics made him one of Australia's most notable pilots. Following the war he threw himself back into competition across Europe and Australia, racing for Abecassis's HWM team and finishing second to Moss in the 1956 New Zealand GP driving a Ferrari 500/750S.

AIR COMMODORE
WHITNEY STRAIGHT

A member of a wealthy American family, Whitney Straight was born in New York but moved to the UK as a teenager and began racing in 1931. After developing his skills at Shelsley Walsh and Brooklands, he went on to win the first South African GP, held in 1934, in a Maserati 8CM, beating rivals including Dick Seaman.



Straight at Brooklands before the war

"COWELL CAME TO ONLY 200FT FROM THE GROUND AMID A BARRAGE OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE"

As a British citizen, he joined the RAF and his wartime adventures began with a mission that would earn him the Norwegian War Cross. He was tasked with identifying a frozen Norwegian lake that could be used as an improvised airfield. The site became a base for 18 Gloster Gladiator biplane fighters that were due to be used to support an Allied ground assault on Trondheim. But a German raid caught Straight's mission by surprise and he was badly injured.

Once recovered, he fought in the Battle of Britain, destroying three aircraft and earning the Distinguished Flying Cross, but he was shot down in 1941. Straight went on the run through Vichy France, heading for neutral Spain, but was captured and eventually rescued by the French resistance. He reached Gibraltar in 1942 and saw out the war as an air commodore in the Middle East. He later enjoyed a distinguished career as a businessman, including a stint as deputy chairman of Rolls-Royce.

FLIGHT CAPTAIN
ROBERTA COWELL

In 1951, Roberta Cowell became the first Briton to undergo male-to-female gender reassignment through surgery. Years earlier, as Robert Cowell, she had made a name for herself as a racing driver, competing in numerous speed trials and the 1939 Antwerp Grand Prix.

Cowell had previously been discharged from the RAF because of air sickness, and as war began joined the Royal Army Service Corps. Having studied engineering at University College London, Cowell was appointed Commanding Officer Heavy Repair Shops and posted to Iceland.

After successfully transferring to the RAF, Cowell became a Spitfire pilot, taking part in the D-Day invasion of France. On one sortie at 40,000ft, the plane's oxygen supply failed and Cowell blacked out, coming to only 200ft from the ground amid a barrage of anti-aircraft fire. Incredibly, Cowell wrestled the plane to safety.

Cowell's luck ran out over Germany and he was shot down, and during three weeks of solitary confinement failed in two attempts to escape. Cowell was transferred to the PoW camp Stalag Luft 1 and liberated by the Red Army after five months.

After the war and following surgery, Roberta Cowell continued competing, winning the 1957 Shelsley Walsh Speed Hill Climb.

GROUP CAPTAIN
SIR JOHN WILLIAM MAXWELL AITKEN

British Racing Drivers' Club member Max Aitken raced a Talbot during the 1930s and was serving with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force when war broke out. Called up to the RAF in August 1939, he joined 601 Squadron, flying Bristol Blenheim bombers and Hawker Hurricane fighters.

Aitken quickly rose through the ranks, becoming a commanding officer within a year and receiving both the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Distinguished Service Order. A switch to night fighters meant he undertook missions across occupied Europe, before a stint as wing commander in the Middle East. His final posting was with RAF Coastal Command in Scotland, with enemy submarines and shipping the target of his squadron's de Havilland Mosquitos. In what was a varied and exceptionally successful RAF career, Aitken had been appointed group captain by the time he was demobbed, having carried out an incredible 147 sorties and destroyed 16 enemy aircraft.

FOREIGN OFFICE CIVILIAN, BLETCHLEY PARK
MARGARET JENNINGS (NEE ALLAN)

A Scottish race and rally driver who started competing in her family's Lagonda, Jennings was one of the most successful female drivers of the 1930s. After catching the attention of the works MG team, she took part in the 1935 Le Mans 24 Hours as one of the 'Dancing Daughters'. Her reputation was strengthened when she became one of only a handful of women to earn the coveted 120mph badge at Brooklands in 1936, with her impressive handling of the 6.5-litre Bentley 'Old Mother Gun'.

Driving an ambulance was a natural choice at the outbreak of war, but Jennings had far more valuable skills. She was recruited by the Foreign Office and sent to the top secret intelligence hub Bletchley Park.

Posted in the Naval Section in Hut 4, Jennings was responsible for translating, interpreting and distributing the contents of German naval plans throughout Allied high command. While she did not return to competition following the end of the war, Jennings retained her interest as motoring correspondent for *Vogue* magazine.

It seems reasonable to believe that the levels of bravery and dedication shown by these drivers during wartime came from the same psychological source as their willingness to risk life competing on the race track. That motor racing's ranks contributed so much to the war effort should endure as a source of pride for the world of motorsport.

You can find out more about motorsport's war heroes at The Silverstone Experience museum – open throughout the holidays. Book your tickets at **silverstone-experience.co.uk**



Straight in his Maserati during the International Open Meeting at Donington Park in 1934

STANDING OUT FROM THE HOARDS

The stars of motorsport — plus a couple of Autosport pen-wielders — explain the most cherished mementoes from their careers

GARY WATKINS



BEROUD/VSA

VINCENT VOSSE

BRONZE AUDI SCULPTURE

Vincent Vosse is a hoarder of motorsport memorabilia. The winner of the Spa 24 Hours as both a driver and team owner, and now boss at the WRT Audi squad, has what he calls his "bar" above the garage where he keeps a collection that includes Jacky Ickx's first scramble bike and a damaged monocoque from a late-1990s Formula 3000 Reynard crashed by Kurt Mollekens. But his favourite is an unassuming piece of artwork.

The piece, which incorporates the four rings of Audi, was commissioned and given to him by fellow Belgian Enzo Ide to commemorate his title success in the 2016 Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup driving a WRT-run Audi R8 LMS GT3. An amateur driver, Ide came out on top with four wins and a further three podiums across the 10 races, sharing first with Christopher Mies and then Robin Frijns in the finale.

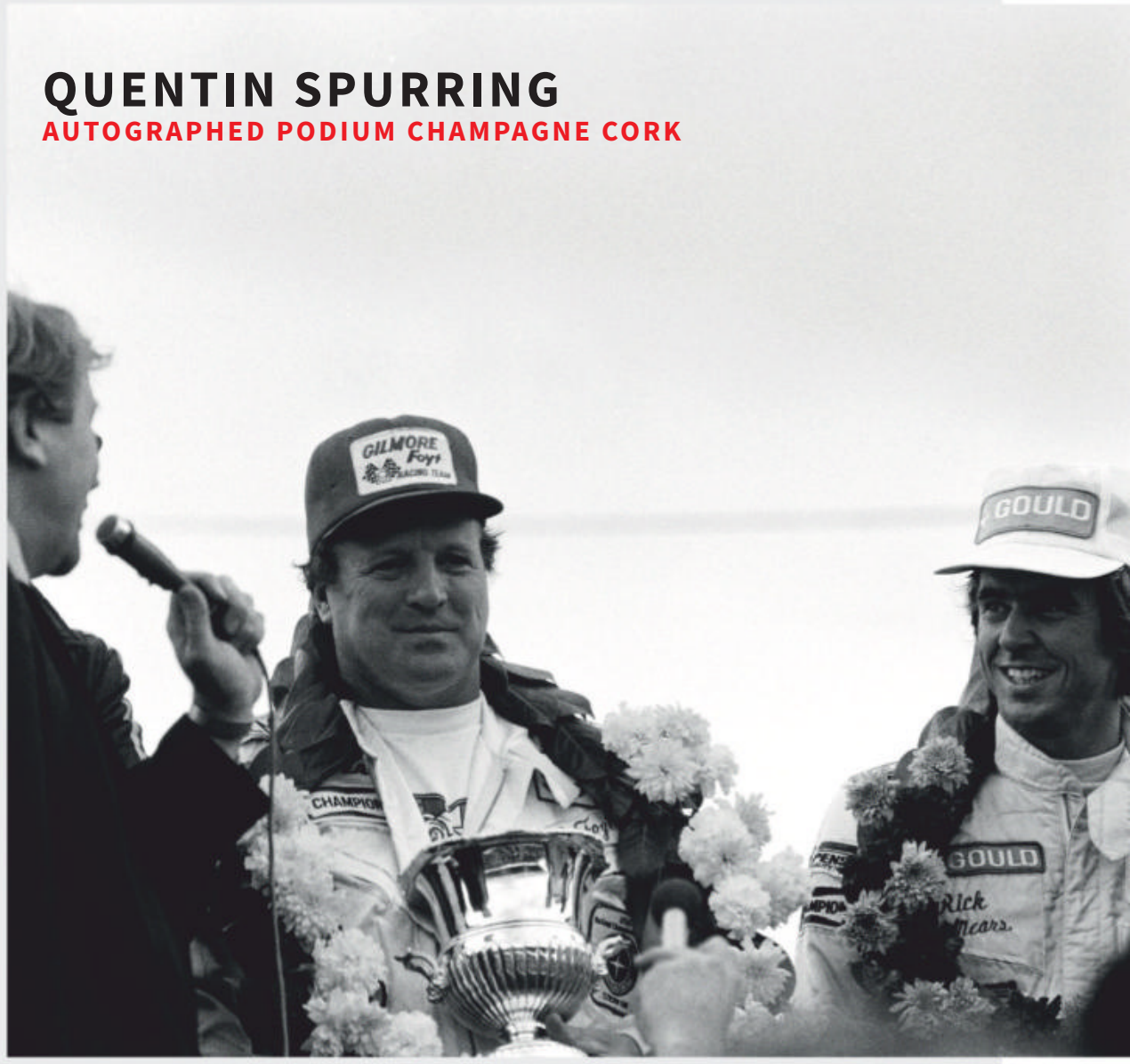
"It's special to me because of the success we achieved that season with Enzo, who was a true gentleman driver," says Vosse. "I also like it because it's unique."



BEROUD/VISION SPORT AGENCY

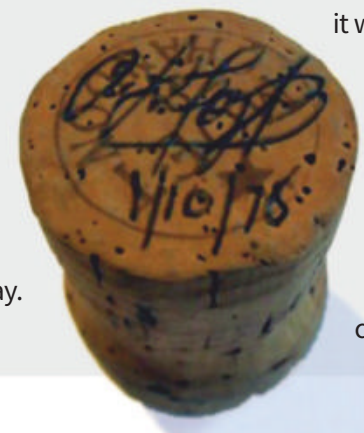
QUENTIN SPURRING

AUTOGRAPHED PODIUM CHAMPAGNE CORK



Prowess on the cricket pitch isn't something motorsport journalists often get to employ in their line of work. Yet in October 1978, Autosport editor Quentin Spurring put all his years standing in the slips to good use at the Silverstone USAC event. He plucked the cork fired from the bottle of champagne with which AJ Foyt was celebrating race victory aboard his Foyt-Ford 75 straight out of the air. A few years later, he managed to get it signed by the great man and cherishes it to this day.

"The podium was on some kind of low-loader," recalls Spurring, who edited Autosport between 1976 and 1981 and again from 1983-88. "I remember the cork coming towards me flat and low. It was a decent catch, I have to say."



Spurring kept the cork and took it with him to the Daytona 24 Hours some time in the 1980s. "I seem to remember it was 1988," he says. "AJ was really happy to sign it and even remembered the way the cork popped."

But of Spurring's gallant catch, Foyt had no memory.



STEFAN JOHANSSON
FERRARI BRAKE CALIPER

Stefan Johansson has a brake caliper nicely mounted on a plinth. He keeps it in his office, not for the memories it inspires – because they aren't necessarily good – but, he says, "for the story behind it".

The caliper comes from a Ferrari F1/86. Or rather an ex-Ferrari F1/86, because the failure of the component in question put him in the wall during practice for the 1986 Spanish Grand Prix at Jerez. Years later, on a visit to Maranello, he received it as a gift from one of his old mechanics.



MOTORSPORT IMAGES

"It was a big one: the pedal went to the floor going into the hairpin at the end of the back straight," he recalls. "The bleed nipple came off, wasn't tight or whatever, and I had no brakes and went straight into the wall. The belts stretched so far that my helmet hit the steering wheel and bent it like a banana. It was a miracle I didn't break anything, but my back was a mess for the rest of the year.

"Fast-forward 20 years or so, and I'm visiting Piero Ferrari [Enzo's son] down at the factory. Word spread that I was there, and three or four of my old mechanics ran out into the courtyard to greet me."

One of them told Johansson that he had something he wanted to give him. After being led into a dusty storage room, he was handed the caliper. "I can't say that it brings back particularly good memories," says Johansson. "It's the human aspect of the thing that I love – that this guy had kept it for me for 20 years."



RICHARD WESTBROOK
LE MANS 24 FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH

Richard Westbrook has a framed photograph on the wall of his kitchen. If you didn't know the story behind it, you might see the four Fords lined up echelon-style at the head of the grid for the 1966 Le Mans 24 Hours and think it owes its place to his four-year stint with the Blue Oval. You'd be wrong.

The Brit acquired the photograph long before the Ford GT programme was even a twinkling in the eye of the top brass at corporate HQ in Dearborn, Michigan. He bought it back in 2012, before his four-year stint with the Ganassi Ford team in the GT Le Mans class of the IMSA SportsCar Championship and in GTE Pro at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2016-19.

"I was just looking for a nice picture and found that one on LAT Photographic [now Motorsport Images]," explains Westbrook. "I ordered a nice print and hung it on the wall. It's total coincidence that the photo is an important moment in the history of a manufacturer I'd end up driving for.

"That picture is kind of what we were trying to replicate when we went to Le Mans — four Fords at the front of the field. I love it. Every time I look at that shot, I spot something new."





MOTORSPORT IMAGES

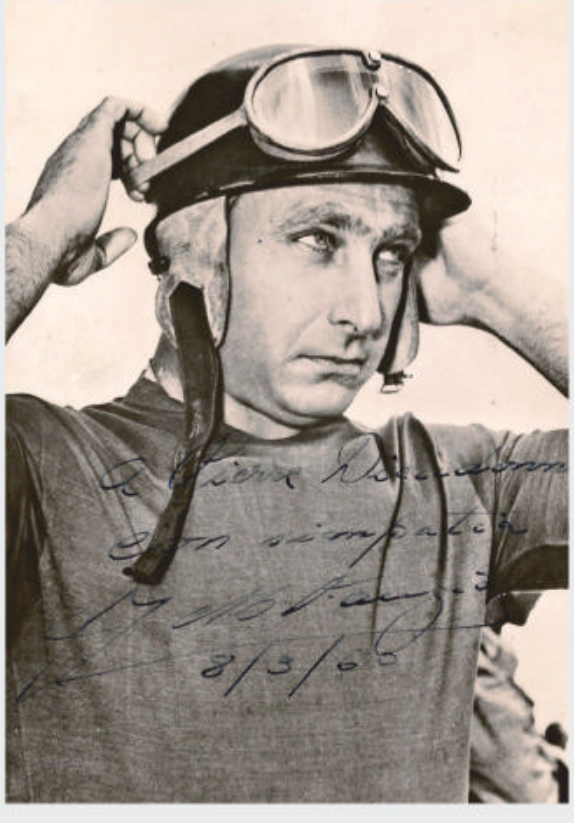
PIERRE DIEUDONNE

SIGNED PHOTO OF FANGIO

Sometime late in 1959, a young lad in Belgium with a growing interest in motorsport decided he wanted Juan Manuel Fangio's autograph. So 12-year-old Pierre Dieudonne, a future winner of the Spa 24 Hours, put a photograph of the five-time world champ in an envelope with his request and addressed it to 'Juan Manuel Fangio, World Champion, Buenos Aires, Argentina'. His youthful enthusiasm – naivety even – was rewarded six months later when he received back the picture you're looking at.

"I thought I'd like to have Fangio's autograph, so I just put the picture in the post," recalls Dieudonne, who is still working in motorsport as a sporting director for the WRT Audi GT team. "I can't remember if I really expected to get it back. There were obviously some very conscientious people in the Argentinian post office."

Dieudonne has cherished the picture to this day, and followed his hero's lead during his own racing career. "When we went to the old Brno road course for the European Touring Car Championship, the crowds were massive and we were big stars," says Dieudonne, whose tin-top career included stints as a factory driver with Jaguar, Volvo and Ford. "More than once I got letters from the old Czechoslovakia addressed to 'Pierre Dieudonne, Brussels, Belgium' asking for my autograph. I always replied."





EMANUELE PIRRO

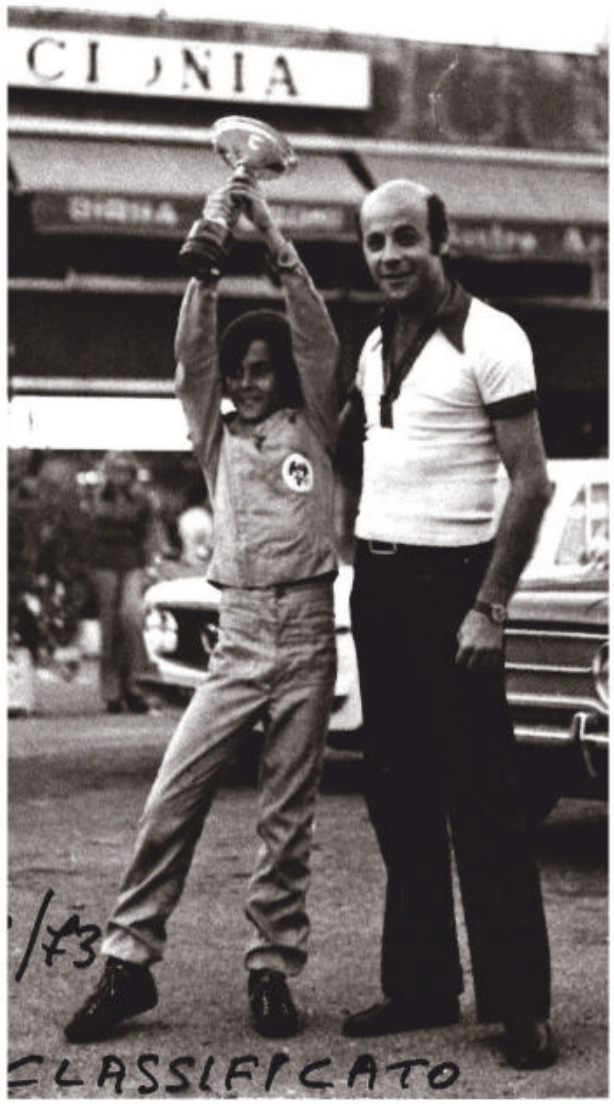
HIS FIRST KARTING TROPHY

Emanuele Pirro has a wall lined with trophies in his gym and another five in his living room – and you can probably guess what they are. But ask him to pick a favourite and he doesn't go for one from his quintet of Le Mans 24 Hours triumphs with Audi. Rather, he picks a modest and now-tarnished piece of tin that pre-dates them by more than a quarter of a century.

It's his very first trophy, won on his karting debut in July 1973 at the Pista D'Oro circuit close to his home city of Rome. The importance for him is that "it was the beginning of the dream".

"That's where it all began," he continues. "I had this dream, an impossible dream. I had no idea how to achieve it, but that's where I started to think that it could come true."

Within three years, Pirro was a domestic karting champion in the 100cc ranks in his homeland. Another four years down the line, he moved into Formula 3 and was on his way. "I've hardly thrown anything from my career away," he says. "I keep all the stuff to rekindle memories. When I look at that trophy, I think that's where it all began."



LUIGI URBINELLI

JEAN ALESI'S CRASH HELMET

Stalwart engineer Luigi Urbinelli has a small but treasured collection of helmets given to him by some of the drivers he's worked with over a career dating back to the 1980s. Among them are lids presented by Michele Alboreto, Mika Salo, Christian Danner and Nicolas Minassian. A dozen or so years back, he got one he'd always been after — Jean Alesi's.



Urbinelli knew the Frenchman before he was his engineer at Ferrari in Formula 1 in 1991. They'd worked together in the 1980s when he was a design engineer at Dallara, and Alesi was enjoying success in the Italian constructor's machinery in French Formula 3, first with the family team run by his brother Jose and then ORECA. Alesi famously persuaded team boss Hugues de Chaunac to ditch Martini chassis in favour of the Dallara in his championship year in 1987.

"I know 1991 wasn't a great year for Ferrari, but to work with Jean was something special, especially because I knew him well from F3," says Urbinelli. "I always wanted one of his helmets and I seem to remember I was given one while he was at Ferrari and it somehow got lost at the factory."



Nearly 20 years later, the duo were reunited in the Middle Eastern Speedcar stock car series in the 2008-09 season. And Urbinelli got the helmet he wanted.

MARTIN BRUNDLE

FLYING JORDAN HELMET FROM 1996

It's probably the most famous image from Martin Brundle's long F1 career: his Jordan upside down in the air on the opening lap of the 1996 Australian Grand Prix. He's kept the helmet he was wearing, not because he thinks it saved him that day, but because it "shared an adventure with me".

"I didn't have a bruise on me and there's only a little bit of gravel rash on the helmet, so I can't say it saved my life," he says. "I just like it because it tells a story."

That story began with Brundle ending up down in 19th on the grid after the Peugeot engine in the back of his Jordan 196 blew in qualifying. He reckons he was "sixth or seventh" by the time he arrived at Turn 3. The only problem was that he was upside down at the time.

"I'd seen this lovely big space in front of me which was suddenly filled by DC's [David Coulthard's] McLaren," he recalls. "The accident is burnt into my memory. As I went up in the air I thought, 'This is going to be a big one' and 'please don't let me go into the trees'.

"When I got out of the car, I saw the red flag and thought, 'That's lucky', not realising I had caused it. I coaxed someone to take me back to the pits, where I was told I could only start the race if I got signed off by [F1 medic] Sid Watkins.

"He asked what the date was. I knew exactly because it was my dad's birthday and he was ill at the time. A marshal asked what Sid had said and I put my thumb up, and there was a big roar from the crowd in the grandstand. I've kept the helmet because of what we went through together."



LEWRY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES





TRIENITZ/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

RICKY TAYLOR

DAYTONA STARS AND STRIPES FLAG

It has become tradition at the Daytona 24 Hours for the winners to drape themselves in their national flag on the podium. Ricky Taylor kept the Stars and Stripes he was given after triumphing in 2017 with the family Wayne Taylor Racing Cadillac team, brother Jordan, Max Angelelli and Jeff Gordon as a memento of arguably the most important win of his career. It's now nicely ironed and folded in his office.

"I have a small collection of stuff from that race because it's so important to me," says Taylor, who for next season is returning to his dad's WTR squad as an Acura factory driver after three years with Penske. "The American flag is the thing that I really like."

Taylor describes the victory at the wheel of the WTR Cadillac DPi-V.R Daytona Prototype international as "special for so many reasons". Winning for his father's team and with his brother are among them. It was also Cadillac's first race back at the sharp end of US sportscar racing, and the last race before retirement for Angelelli. He'd driven with or for Taylor Sr for nearly 20 years.

"The Cadillac project was really Max's baby, so it was amazing to win on the car's debut," says Taylor. "Max was also important to mine and Jordan's careers. He was like a brother and an uncle, as well as our mentor."

That's why Taylor made sure he hung on to his flag. "The flag thing is a neat tradition, something I always thought was pretty cool," he says. "Things have a habit of getting away up on the podium, so I was guarding it with my life. I think you're meant to keep it."





TEE/MOTORSPORT IAMGES

MIKA SALO

SACRIFICED F1 VICTORY TROPHY

Mika Salo has a few trophies from his career at home, but the pot he cherishes most is one he didn't actually win. It's one he *should* have won: Eddie Irvine's trophy from the 1999 German Grand Prix at Hockenheim. Salo, a stand-in at Ferrari after Michael Schumacher broke a leg at Silverstone, famously moved out of the way to cede the victory to his team-mate.

Irvine gave it to Salo on the podium in Germany in recognition of his contribution to his championship challenge. The Northern Irishman moved eight points ahead of McLaren driver Mika Hakkinen with his inherited victory in front of his team-mate.

"It's a good memory and a good story," says Salo, who'd driven for Lotus, Tyrrell, Arrows and BAR before his six-race stint at Ferrari. "It's nice to know that I could have won a Formula 1 race in only my second start with a top team. That's why I like that trophy so much."

For a while, Salo also had his own trophy for finishing second at Hockenheim, before Irvine asked if he could have it. "I didn't care, because I had the one I wanted," he says, "and the wings had already been broken off mine."







GARY WATKINS

PORSCHE 956 BRAKE CALIPER

It's propped books up and doors open, and it's been in my constant possession for the better part of 40 years. But your author only fell in love quite recently with the Porsche 956 brake caliper bought for a tenner at a Racing for Britain auction at the 1983 British Grand Prix. It was when I talked to the man who literally ripped the thing from the John Fitzpatrick Racing entry on which it had completed 23 hours and 50 minutes at Le Mans in 1983 that I realised it was such a cool thing.

JFR chief mechanic Max Crawford knew he didn't have time for a proper repair when Rupert Keegan limped into the pits with just 10 minutes left on the clock. The left-front brake disc had exploded on the Porsche he shared with Guy Edwards and team boss John Fitzpatrick on the Mulsanne Straight, taking a wheel with it. The only thing on Crawford's mind was getting the Porsche back out on track, because, then as now, the car had to complete the final lap to be classified.

Crawford recalls sending the 956 on his way as what he describes as a "tank-tape special". Keegan had brakes on three wheels only, a ball-bearing from a ratchet jammed into a brake line to give him some semblance of pedal pressure. The Le Mans rookie finished the last lap to secure fifth in a race in which the 956 took nine of the top 10 positions.

I love the story and think about it every time I catch a glimpse of my little chunk of Le Mans history. No more doors are held open by my Porsche 956 brake caliper, I can assure you.



FERARRO/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



PETER KOX

LE MANS SERIES RUNNER-UP TROPHY

You won't find much in Peter Kox's home to suggest that he's a racing driver. At least not unless you hunt. He reckons there's a box of trophies somewhere in his office and another in the cellar, and he insists they're not long for this world. But he does have one on display, of sorts.

Kox's trophy for finishing as GT1 runner-up in the 2006 Le Mans Series with Cirtek's MenX Ferrari team has found a home in the kitchen as a handy storage pot for cooking utensils.

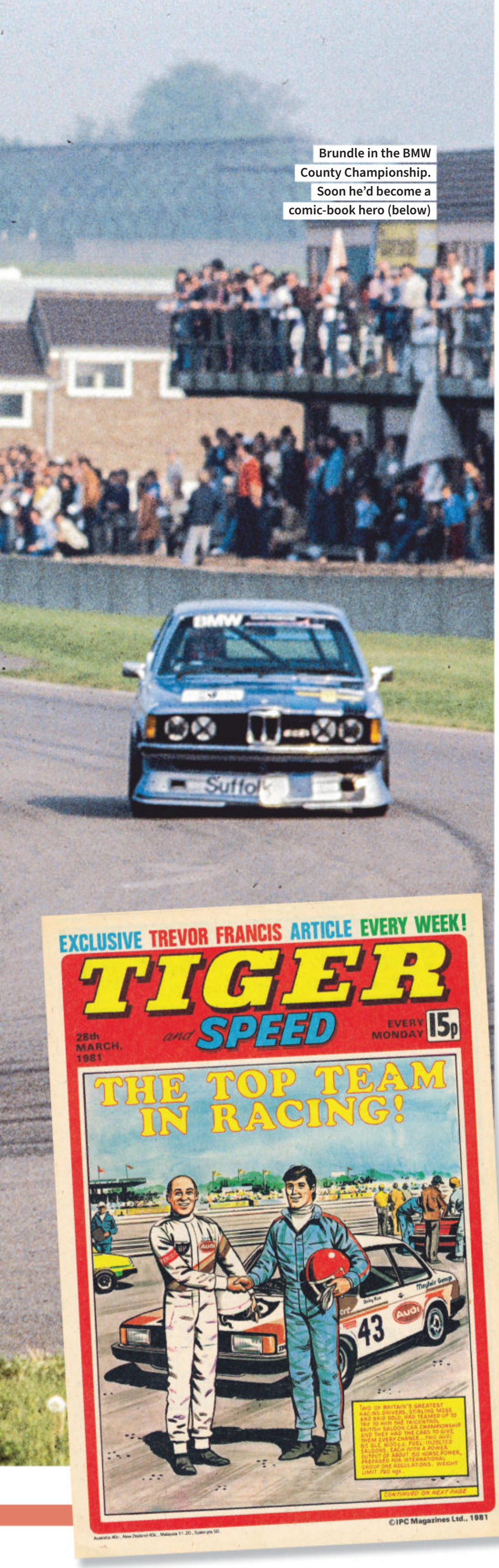
"I'm not one for keeping stuff," says the Dutchman, whose career accolades include a Le Mans 24 Hours class victory in a Prodrive Ferrari 550 Maranello GTS in 2003. "A few years ago, I was moving house and I put out a couple of bin bags full of trophies. I left them by a lamp post and five minutes later they were gone. I'm either going to throw the rest out or maybe have then crushed and set in epoxy. The one from the LMS somehow ended up in the kitchen. It's a bit battered and the handles are long gone, but it's good for putting stuff in."

FAIRYTALE OF NORFOLK

A 'Dear Santa' letter worked a treat for young Martin Brundle, who soon represented his county, then found himself as team-mate to a racing legend

ANDY HALLBERY

PHOTOGRAPHY **JEFF BLOXHAM**



Brundle in the BMW County Championship. Soon he'd become a comic-book hero (below)



Stirling Moss did at least finish third at Mallory Park in 1981

Are you sitting comfortably? Let us begin. This is a festive fairytale of a letter to a motorsport 'Santa', where in less than a year the youngster who wrote it was winning a support race at the Gunnar Nilsson Memorial meeting. The main event that day included past and future world champions James Hunt, Mario Andretti, Alan Jones and Nelson Piquet. Also on the bill was Juan Manuel Fangio, who was at that Donington Park meeting to demonstrate the awesome Mercedes W125. Within two years the youngster was team-mate to Fangio's great friend and rival Stirling Moss.

How and who?

The ambitious young racer that June day in 1979 was Martin Brundle, who had turned 20 just two days before. He was driving in the BMW County Championship, a one-make series for BMW E21 323is all prepared by Tom Walkinshaw Racing, representing Norfolk.

Brundle's secret Santa was Walkinshaw himself. "I'd written Tom a letter in 1979 saying, 'I believe I'm going to be a top touring car racer. Please give me a chance in the BMW County Championship in my home race at Snetterton,'" Brundle recalls. "And, incredibly, he did! I had a great race with Andy Rouse and Frank Sytner among others."

"THE NEXT THING I KNOW I'M GETTING CHANGED IN THE BRDC GENTS' LOOS ALONGSIDE STIRLING"

Brundle drove for TWR again in the series in 1980. Then came the next step: a test in the works Audi that TWR was to run in Britain's premier tin-top series, the British Saloon Car Championship.

"The test at Silverstone went really well." Brundle continues. "The next thing I know I'm getting changed in the BRDC gents' loos — no changing rooms back then — alongside Stirling Moss to do our pre-season photoshoot! That was the first time I'd met him. It all seemed a bit too good to be true.

"Obviously I knew of Stirling's legend, and he was a lovely guy and very chatty. It was the beginning of an adventure. I was a greenhorn from Norfolk and I probably didn't realise just what an opportunity it was, and I didn't really maximise what it was to be alongside the great Stirling Moss, if I'm honest."

Brundle by then was 21, Moss was 51 in the twilight of a career that he'd 'retired' from after his Goodwood crash in 1962 — though he did continue to race after, famously sharing a car with Jack Brabham at Bathurst. The 1981 season was his second in the British Saloon series, but it's fair to say that those two years weren't among Sir Stirling's career favourites. »

"In later years when I knew him better I didn't talk to him about that 1981 year because he didn't really enjoy it." Brundle pauses for a moment, then laughs as an early memory comes back to him. "We turned up at the first race, and they'd spelt his name wrong on the car! They'd spelt it as in 'pounds sterling'! I remember him getting quite angry with that – unsurprisingly in a way! – but I think it was a sign of things to come."

If one racing legend wasn't enough for Brundle's TWR works debut, in another of the six cars the team ran at that opening Silverstone race (in three of the others were Jeff Allam, Win Percy and Pete Lovett) was none other than 500cc bike hero Barry Sheene. That 'Dear Santa' letter sure pulled a few special experiences out of the bag for the Norfolk lad. Brundle laughs again at the thought.

"Yeah [long pause]... Incredible! Absolutely incredible. I'd forgotten Barry did some of that [in a Mazda RX-7]. Yes, Tom was fairly mad. He was a man on a mission at that point."

If you think Brundle's career path from that initial letter already reads like something from a comic strip, you'd also be right. In this case, it really was. Stirling's TWR Audi team-mate in *Tiger* comic was its racing legend Skid Solo. Yes, on 28 March 1981 it was announced to many kids (and in most cases their dads too, who also eagerly awaited delivery of their weekly *Tiger*) that Moss in the #43 and Solo in his famous #7 were to race together, and their adventures covered over the season in the comic's strip.

Once again, Brundle's memory jumps in at the mention of *Tiger* and Skid, and sets him laughing: "I do clearly remember that. And I know I do because just the mention of Skid is still current today."

Today? Intriguing... Often those in the public eye find it best to make bookings under pseudonyms to avoid drawing attention to themselves. "Yes," explains Brundle, "even today I sometimes use the name 'Mr S Solo' for restaurant bookings! Skid was a bit of a legend, and it's good fun; it sums up the magic of the time really."

That magic didn't fully extend to real-life Stirling's 1981 season, as Brundle explains: "He didn't really enjoy slicks and front-wheel-drive cars. He was good in them, don't get me wrong, he still had



Brundle passes David da Costa's Fiesta. BP would carry him to F3

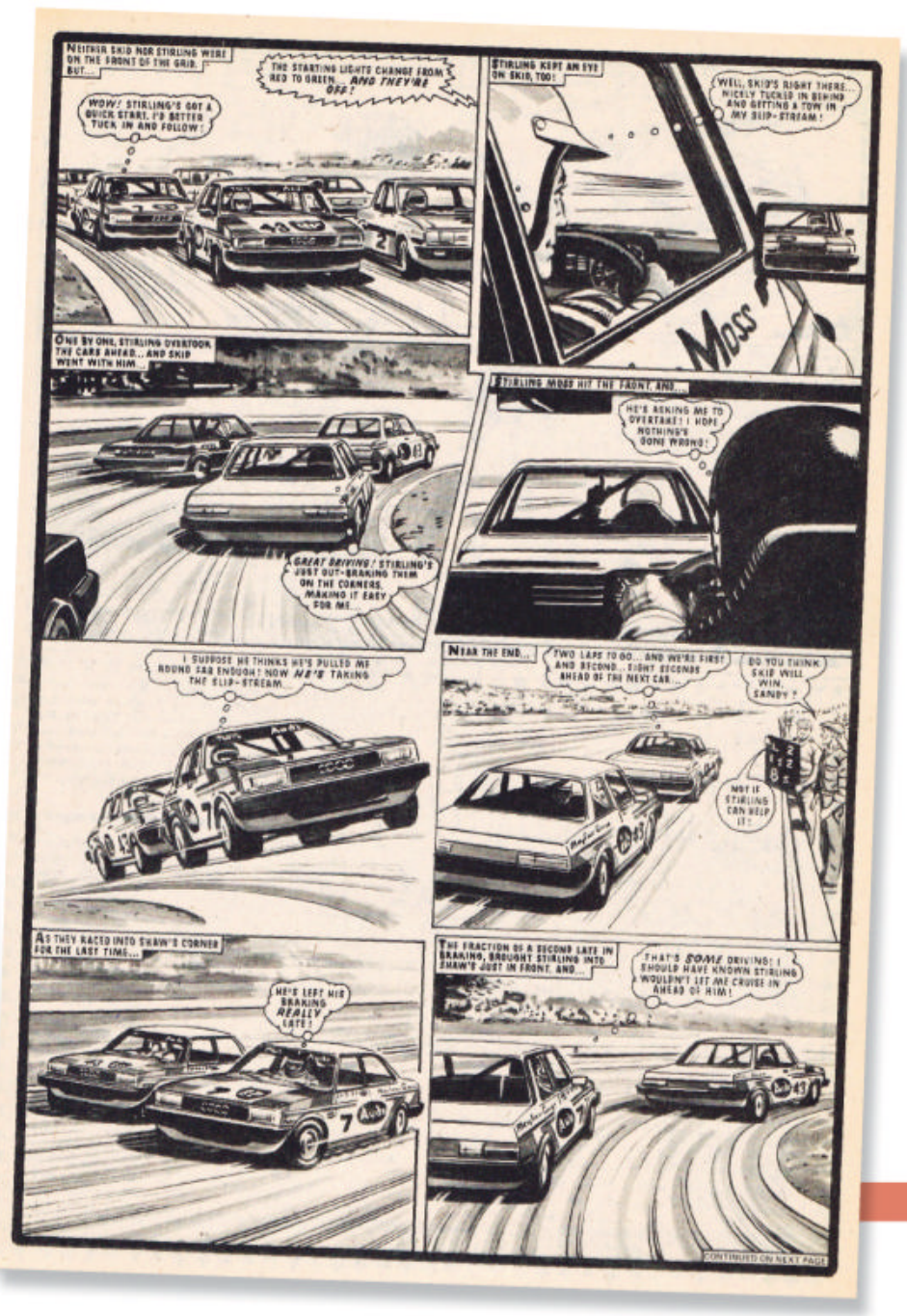
that magic touch. I remember a day at Brands Hatch when it was half wet, half dry, and we thought there was absolutely no grip... The sort of grip that to me felt like the car had got four punctures! But that kind of grip, from his era of driving, Stirling was used to.

"It was a magnificent experience and privilege for me, and it always saddened me when I read occasionally Stirling saying, 'Oh, big mistake. Never should have done that...' And he wasn't talking about me, obviously! But I kind of wished he had enjoyed that season, or that era too, but that's the way it was."

That 1981 season was a fine springboard for Brundle's career, thanks in no small part to Les Thacker of BP. "BP did a big advert around us for the season," continues Brundle. "They borrowed a photo of my mum that never got returned! It was pictures of me in all sorts. My dad used to have many weird and wonderful things, me driving this and that with my brother when we were kids, and it was all based around being Stirling's team-mate.

"I never imagined I was going single-seater racing..." Brundle's voice trails off as the realisation begins to hit home. "In fact, it was





that letter to Tom that got me into single-seater racing because the Audi was sponsored by BP, and Les kindly took me into Formula 3 in the Dave Price BP car the following year, 1982.

"So the letter to Tom got me in the car with Stirling, got me the BP sponsorship, and into F3. Otherwise I was destined to be a Toyota salesman and a hobby racer in bangers and hot rods, or running my own Celica in the BSCC for the rest of my days."

The upward path didn't stop there, as Walkinshaw had further roles to play in Brundle's career that resulted in him becoming the 1988 world sportscar champion and 1990 Le Mans 24 Hours winner, both with TWR Jaguar, and then a five-time Formula 1 podium finisher for Walkinshaw-run Benetton in 1992. Walkinshaw was also instrumental in taking Brundle to Ligier in 1995, when he took a third place at Spa, and in taking him back to Le Mans in 1997 as a member of the team racing TWR's Nissan R390 GT1.

"When I look back on it I will – well, I already do – think that 1981 was a magic year, and means increasingly more to me today than it did back then," Brundle concludes. "You are young and ambitious and I have to say I didn't learn enough off of Stirling. He wasn't as quick as me because I was young, I was used to slick racing tyres and racing touring cars. Like him, I also wasn't used to front-wheel-drive touring cars, but I was gung ho in the thing, you know?

"What I should have done was give my best and then learn more from Stirling somehow. I should have taken his counsel more. At the time all you can focus on is where you are heading next, because

"ON THE MONDAY MORNING I'D BE BACK IN THE SALES OFFICE SELLING CARS. EVEN WHEN I WENT TO F1!"

on the Monday morning after each race I'd be back in the sales office selling cars. Even when I went to Formula 1 I was doing that!

"I was fundamentally a car salesman who suddenly found himself racing with Stirling Moss. It was very bizarre. I didn't know how lucky I was that year, driving with Stirling and being with the legend Skid Solo."

It just proves that letters to Santa, secret or real, do work.

"There's no doubt about it, when I tell people I was Stirling Moss's team-mate, they never, ever believe me!"



MEMORIES OF MOSS



They may have been team-mates for only that 1981 season, but Sir Stirling Moss and Martin Brundle's paths crossed frequently in the decades since. Moss was even presented with his Gregor Grant Lifetime Achievement Autosport Award by Brundle in 2008.

"Ours was a difficult racing season, but there was never any problem between me and Stirling, and we went on to become very good friends," says Brundle. "Reading all the material after he died, it says he retired in 1962. Then he retired after our Audi year in 1981, but I still remember racing against him years later at Goodwood, probably in around 2005!

"I have this incredible memory of going side by side with him into St Mary's in Jaguar D-types and looking over to see that very particular sort of stance or pose he had. It was the way he carried his head, with the look on his face in his open helmet, that nonchalant, easygoing, relaxed face. It was the look that Stirl always had. It was relaxed and lovely to see."

"HE SIGNED IT 'TO MY TEAM-MATE', WHICH WAS NICE"

While Brundle has fond memories, one physical memento that he has at home stands out: "We did a charity function together just a few years ago, where I asked him for his autograph! He signed it 'To my team-mate', which was really nice. In fact, that is *really* nice as I think it might be the only time he wrote something nice about that year!"

Following the passing of Sir Stirling in April 2020, Sky Sports F1 embarked on an ambitious tribute, with Brundle, Jenson Button and Johnny Herbert driving three of Moss's machines at Silverstone: a Cooper T51, a UDT Lotus-Climax and the Monaco GP-winning Lotus 18. It was a memorable day.

"That was one of those things that somehow came together," Brundle says. "Imagine finding time in the Formula 1 schedule, which you can never normally do, but *especially* this year. Then getting all three cars into the circuit in these lockdown times, and then they all ran beautifully with Johnny and Jense, and the sun was shining beautifully… It was just one of those 'stars aligning' kind of moments where you could remember how brave these guys were.

"The legend lives on really, doesn't it? The legend of Sir Stirling will live on forever."

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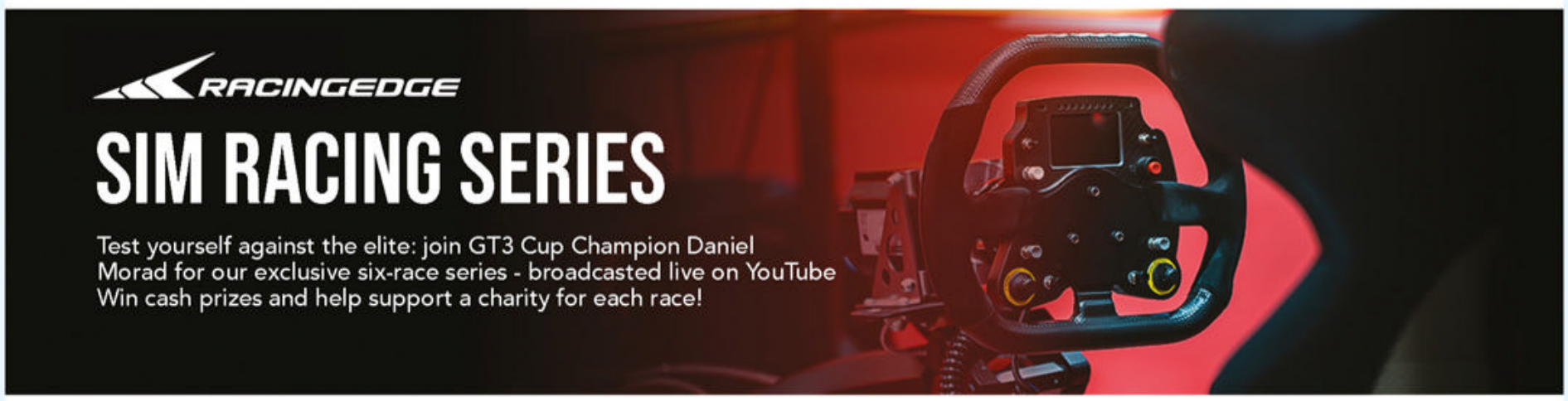
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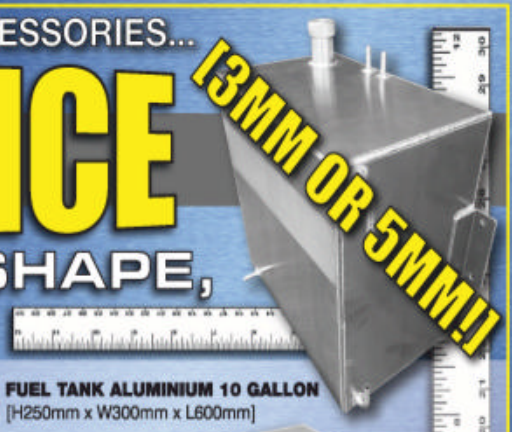
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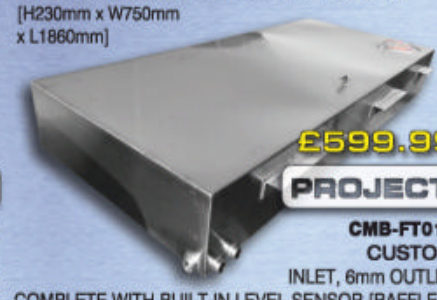
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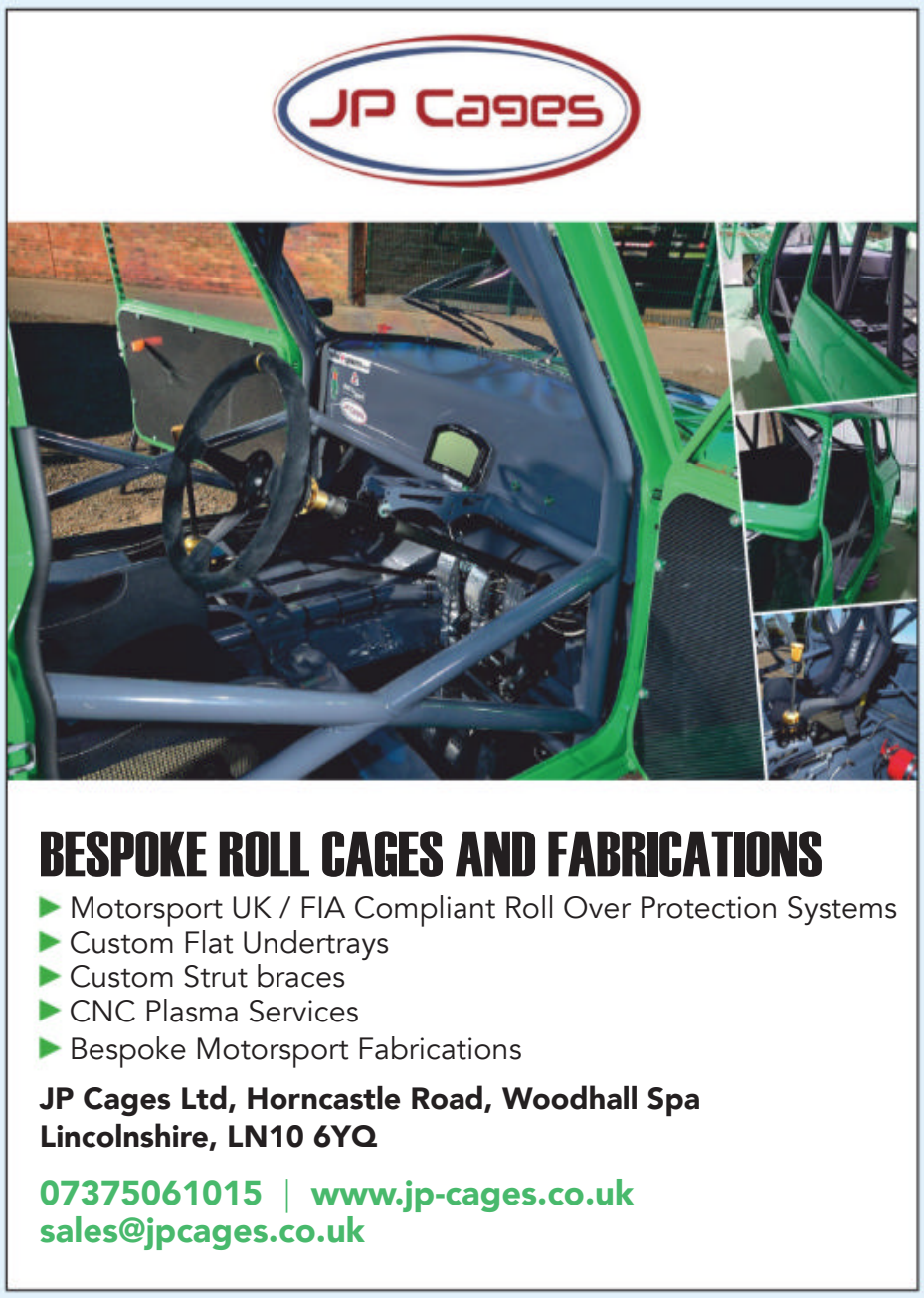


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The duo raced together at Brands Hatch this year as a one-off, and finished in ninth

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ADAM AND HOWARD JOIN FORCES AGAIN FOR GT3

BRITISH GT

Four-time British GT champion Jonny Adam will return to the Prodrive-run Beechdean AMG squad of double title winner Andrew Howard for a reformation of their successful partnership in next year's series.

The pair drove together from 2011-15, yielding titles in 2013 and 2015, although a points penalty that was applied solely to Aston Martin factory ace Adam meant that only Howard was credited with the 2013 crown.

The Scot has since added a further three titles with TF Sport and Optimum Motorsport alongside Derek Johnston, Flick Haigh and Graham Davidson, and was due to share a TF-run car this year with Ahmad Al Harthy before the pandemic prompted his entry to be withdrawn.

Adam joined Howard for a one-off at Brands Hatch this season. Although Howard was shuffled back through the race and the pair finished ninth, improvements in the driveability of the Vantage GT3 proved to be to the ice-cream magnate's liking and he opened talks with Aston about securing Adam for a full season next year.

"I just picked off from where I finished with him in 2015," Adam told Autosport. "It's nice this side of Christmas to know that one part of my programme is British GT — I've missed it this year! There's a lot of testing we want to plan into the programme. Andrew is very keen on developing himself and treating it as seriously as we can."

With the numerically dominant Silver-Silver pairings now banned for next year, Adam is confident that the renewed Beechdean line-up can repeat its past success.

"I think there's still definitely a championship there," he said. "I'd only be wanting to commit to it if there was a championship assault on offer and I definitely think Andrew has got that in him. He's had good success in the past and he knows what's needed to win a championship as well, so I think we've got a good chance next year."

JAMES NEWBOLD



Adam won the British GT3 title with Howard in '15

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Ginetta to return in GT4 with Assetto

BRITISH GT

Ginetta is set to be represented on the British GT grid next year for the first time since 2018 (right).

The Yorkshire marque, which claimed the 2017 GT4 title with HHC Motorsport, will supply long-time Ginetta squad Assetto Motorsport with two examples of its Ford-powered G55 GT4.

The first of two planned entries from the team will be driven by Ginetta factory driver Charlie Robertson and Mark Sansom, who finished seventh in this year's G40 Cup with Assetto.

Robertson, who last competed in British GT in 2017 before joining Ginetta's LMP1 World Endurance Championship programme, has tested with Sansom at Donington Park last week, and said the Simon Traves and Jim Edwards-run team "has got big ambitions".



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

"It's a really exciting step for the team and it's good for Ginetta to be involved as a manufacturer again in the championship," said Robertson.

The 23-year-old, who won the 2014 Ginetta GT4 Supercup in a G55, added that Assetto's G55 chassis are brand-new from the factory and retain "the same basis that every G55 has been so far, focusing on being quick in the corners".

"I'm looking forward to getting back behind the wheel on the British circuits where I really learned where to race a car in Ginetta Juniors [in 2011]," he added.

JAMES NEWBOLD



Angliss will compete with Century Motorsport

Angliss is first driver for GT Pro class

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Ginetta GT5 Challenge graduate Blake Angliss has become the first driver to sign up to the new Ginetta GT Pro class for 2021.

The new category forms part of the GT4 Supercup grid and features an uprated version of the entry-level G55 GTA machine. The class is open to drivers aged between 16 and 21 and is designed to bridge the gap between Ginetta Junior/GT5 Challenge and the GT4 Supercup.

Angliss made his car racing debut mid-way through this season in the GT5 series and took a best result of sixth. He will now race for Century Motorsport in GT Pro.

"I believe that the GT Pro class is a natural progression in my racing career and will help me learn a lot for racing in the future," said Angliss. "With my limited time in cars, the class is a good step up and will not only benefit myself but other young drivers paving their way in motorsport."

Century has also revealed that former MG Trophy driver Andy Spencer will race for the squad in the GT4 Supercup next year.

- Ginetta Junior racer Liam McNeilly will continue with the Fox Motorsport team in the category next season. He made his debut this year and took a best finish of eighth.

WESEMAEL AND MORRIS TO RACE NEW PRAGA

BRITCAR

British GT4 race winner and 2019 RGB Sports 1000 champion Chris 'Chippy' Wesemael will compete in the Britcar Endurance Championship's new Praga class next season.

The 25-year-old, who finished fourth in the British GT standings this year with a McLaren 570S GT4, will make the move to the Praga with his own team, CW Performance. He is the first confirmed entry for the fledgling category.

"I had an incredible season in British GT and so much fun with Gus [Bowers, co-driver] and HHC Motorsport, but talking to Praga and their ambition lined up with what I want to be doing," said Wesemael. "The Praga is about the best value-for-money thing that exists in my opinion, so it was kind of a no-brainer."

Richard Morris, who was runner-up in Sports 1000 this season for the second year in a row, will join Wesemael in the Praga R1.

"I thought, going forward, he would be a very good team-mate, we're both very analytical in our approach and friends at the end of the day," added Wesemael (below).

"We're definitely going into the championship trying to win it and, as far as the grid numbers go, we wouldn't be doing it if I didn't expect there was going to be a fair amount. For us it's an exciting opportunity and the cars are mega."

STEFAN MACKLEY


JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



There was only one AMOC event in 2020

AMOC partners up with the BRSCC for 2021 race schedule

ASTON MARTIN OWNERS CLUB

The Aston Martin Owners Club has entered a new collaboration with the British Racing & Sports Car Club for 2021.

AMOC was on the back foot this season even before the coronavirus pandemic struck, as a change in the management of its motorsport events at the end of 2019 left it only able to run one meeting this year. Its categories were also due to appear at a variety of other events, but COVID-19 meant many of these were cancelled.

The team-up with the BRSCC means there will be two AMOC-branded meetings, while its categories are also due to appear at three other BRSCC fixtures. In addition to the club's traditional October St John Horsfall meeting, there will be an AMOC event at Mallory Park in August, with the club's Peter Snowdon believing it's important to have that mix of event types.

"We pressed reset at the beginning of this year with a view to it being a salvage year and 2021 as a recovery year, but we didn't get much of a salvage," said Snowdon. "We had five 'out' rounds planned this year but we never had a chance to build our reserves.

"We're starting again with the BRSCC – it's a good partnership and I believe we can build a future for the club. It's sparked a lot of interest. We've got nearly 60 competitors registered for next season already."

This is the latest partnership for the BRSCC, which has already agreed to administer the Modified Fords, British Superkart and Track Attack categories.

"Member clubs with relatively small numbers need assistance in getting members onto the grid," said BRSCC chairman Peter Daly. "The cost of renting a track is very high so there's a lot of collaboration, and one of the things the BRSCC is pleased to offer AMOC is that collaboration and run the race meetings with them.

"Running race meetings for independent championships is a lot more than just supplying track time. It's working together – we're not a threat to these organisations, we're an asset to them."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Leading FF1600 drivers sample Porsche Cayman

SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

Leading Formula Ford drivers Neil Maclennan and Michael Moyers have both sampled a Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport as they evaluate plans for 2021.

Both drivers tested for Simon Green Motorsport at Donington Park last week, with National FF1600 champion Maclennan saying the test confirmed he wants to race a Cayman in the Sprint Challenge next year.

"It's a great car and it's different to what I've been doing with Formula Ford, which is great because it's another learning curve," he said. "I came into the pits with a smile. Realistically, that would be what we're aiming to go and do."

Maclennan is now trying to raise the budget for next season, but also had the chance to test a Ligier LMP3 car with Nielsen Racing.

"It was a privilege to be able to drive both cars in one week," he said. "Anyone who drives an LMP car is going to say they would love to race it, but my focus is on the Porsche."

Two-time Walter Hayes Trophy winner Moyers said the Porsche test came about after speaking to the SGM team when it attended this year's event, competing in the Allcomers races.

"It's a credible option," said Moyers. "I think it's a reasonable budget considering some of the races are on TOCA and some with British GT."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Moyers and Maclennan both tested SGM Porsche

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Arden British F4 driver Lubin has been testing F3 machine

Arden to expand into British F3 for the first time next season

BRDC BRITISH F3

Arden will expand into BRDC British F3 for the first time next year, and has already begun a winter-testing programme as it evaluates drivers.

The squad has been a part of the FIA-blessed British Formula 4 since that series began in 2015, and has weighed up a British F3 entrance before.

"We've been in British F4 and Formula Renault, now Formula Regional, for some years and feel this fills the gap between the two of them," said Arden general manager Richard Dent. "It's UK-based and so are we, which is a logistical benefit for it.

"We've been watching it and looking at doing it before and feel it's going from strength to strength. It's a nice, competitive championship as well and they go to some great circuits."

He added that the team intends to run three cars next year and is in talks with drivers. Two of Arden's 2020 F4 racers — Alex Connor and Frederick Lubin — have already been testing F3 machinery with the team.

Dent says that no deals have yet been completed, but pointed out: "It would be ideal to carry through the guys we've already got a relationship with."

Arden is the second major new team to enter British F3 for 2021 after leading Ginetta squad Elite Motorsport announced it would be joining the series.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

BRC 'confident' of seven '21 rounds

RALLYING

British Rally Championship bosses are "confident" the series will run in its entirety next year, despite the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus health pandemic.

The decision was taken in June to shelve this season's championship after just one round as the rate of infections led to tough restrictions being imposed. Only a tiny number of single-venue rallies have subsequently been able to run in the UK.

The seven-round calendar for 2021 is markedly different from previous seasons, although it continues to feature a mix of asphalt and loose-surface events based in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Championship manager Iain Campbell said: "We have sat quietly on our calendar for quite some time looking to see when the best time to make the announcement would be and what could be realistic in being delivered. I strongly believe that we'll have a seven-round championship in 2021.

"Whether that means the reserve round has to come into the equation, who knows? But, from conversations with the event organisers, they are all confident at the moment that things will happen."

The Circuit of Ireland gets the championship under way on 2-3 April, followed by the Tendring and Clacton Rally two weeks later. Next is the Jim Clark Rally, then the Nicky Grist Stages and Grampian Forest Stages. The Cambrian Rally (30 October) is due to wrap up proceedings, with the Mull Rally as a reserve.

JASON CRAIG

IN THE HEADLINES

JAGUAR E-TYPES TO CLASSIC

The Silverstone Classic will feature a special Jaguar E-type race to mark the car's 60th birthday next year. A similar contest was held for the 50th anniversary in 2011, when a world record was broken for the largest parade of Jaguar cars. Next season's race, organised by Motor Racing Legends, will last 45 minutes and is open to solo or two-driver entries. The news follows the Historic Sports Car Club's decision to run an E-type race at Silverstone in May.

MARTIN STARS ON DEBUT

Junior Saloons graduate Olivia Martin scored two class podiums on her senior car racing debut in the 750 Motor Club's Hot Hatch category at Donington Park last weekend. Martin, who was racing a Citroen Saxo, finished second in Class C after a close fight with overall champion David Drinkwater in the opener, and was third in race two.

DENHAM STEPS DOWN

Sandy Denham will step down from his role as chairman of the Scottish Motor Racing Club after almost 30 years at the club. His position will be taken by former Mini Cooper Cup driver Vic Covey Jr, effective from 1 January. Denham was instrumental in the development of the popular Mini championship and helped in the creation of the Scottish C1 Cup, which made its debut in 2019. Chief marshal Richard Burrell will assume the vice-chairman role.

NEW RADICAL SUBCLASSES

Radical has revealed new Club Sprint and Club Enduro Cup subclasses as part of its Radical Challenge category for 2021. They are aimed at drivers racing on a budget, using standard SR3 models. Instead of competing in both days of a Radical Challenge (below) event, competitors bidding for these trophies will either only enter the 25-minute Saturday sprint races or the 45-minute Sunday endurance contest.



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Club racing's lessons from 2020

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Nobody could have predicted how the past 12 months would play out. A year ago, one of the concerns on the horizon for club racing was Brexit and how much that would impact budgets and travel. But those fears were quickly surpassed by a far more devastating threat posed by the coronavirus pandemic. That there were four full months of club action, despite COVID-19 challenges, was remarkable and, from governing body Motorsport UK to club volunteers, everyone who made that happen has to be applauded. There were also plenty of lessons that can be learned from the tweaks made for 2020. Here are a few:

1 Change can be good

Club motorsport had been guilty of being stuck in the past. Often, attitudes of 'it's always been done this way' prevailed. That was not an option this year, and some very positive changes emerged. Take pre-event digital signing on — something that should have been adopted years ago. And there's no reason why it can't stay post-pandemic. Replacing laborious processes with efficient alternatives has to be good. The reams of paperwork also disappeared — think of all the trees that were saved. Pre-event scrutineering was adopted, too. Again, that removed a time-consuming aspect of a meeting and, with more spot checks, could be implemented long-term.

2 Less is sometimes more

All categories were contested over shortened calendars this year as coronavirus devastated traditional schedules. Was that a bad thing? Not necessarily. Obviously, for series that normally have seven events, being cut back to three is pretty drastic, but for others with perhaps one or two fewer weekends than normal, it could point to a new direction. Fewer events reduces costs for drivers, possibly reflected in the generally good entries this year.

3 Be flexible

Reacting quickly and thinking on your feet has been vital for organisers to thrive during the pandemic. Take Motor Racing Legends — in the space of five weeks it announced and then ran a successful additional October meeting at Silverstone. It was such a hit that a similar event features on next year's calendar, too. It's the perfect example of the benefits of flexibility and spotting new opportunities. As traditions are discarded or reviewed, perhaps the regular March/April-October/November calendar will also change. The 750 Motor Club ran a busy rearranged meeting at Donington Park last weekend, despite it being mid-December! Understandably, Locost entries were down as racing that type of machinery in cold conditions was not enticing, but 36 cars in Club Enduro proves people are prepared to race at any time of year.

4 Don't take things for granted

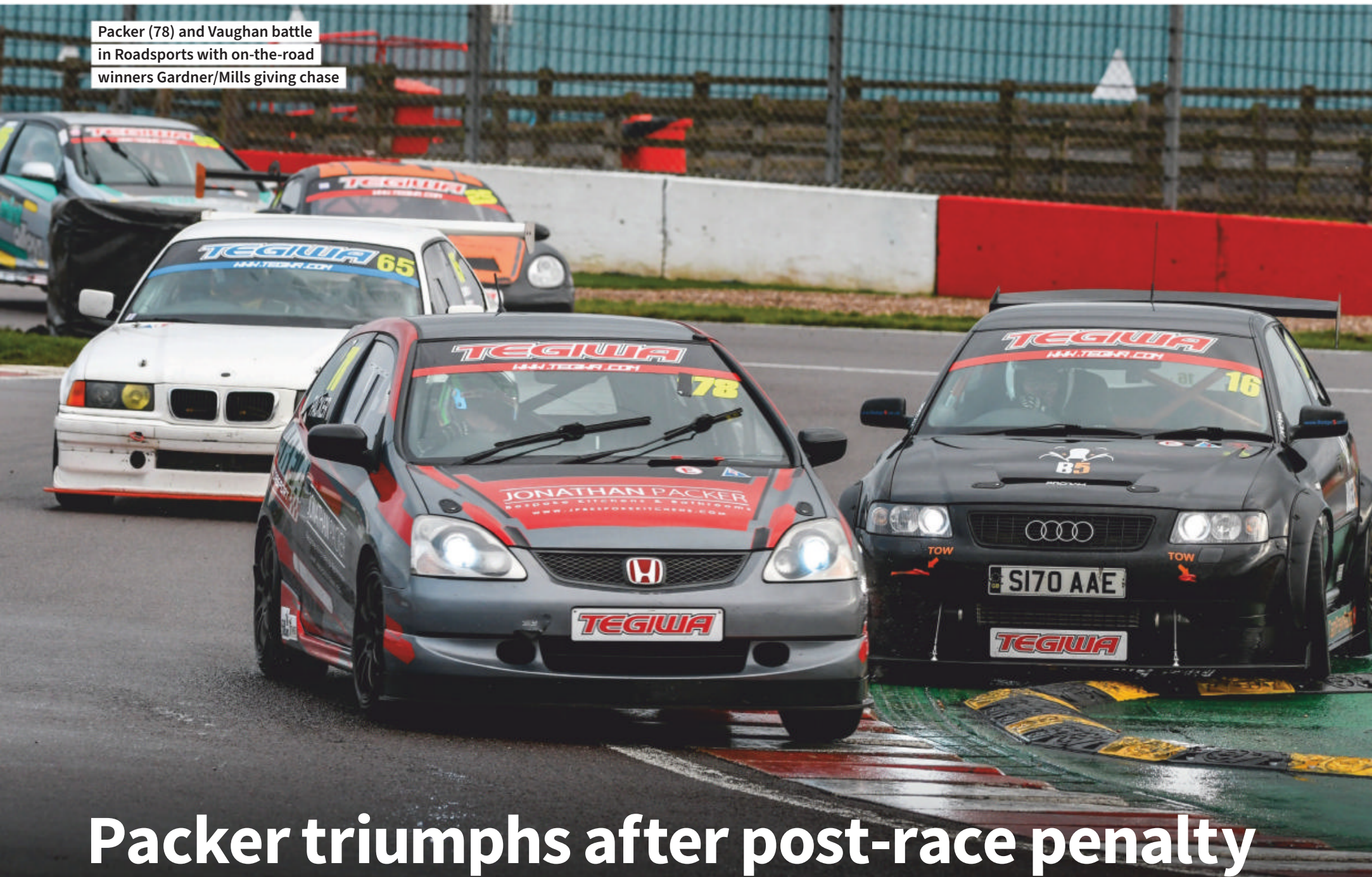
We can easily forget how lucky we are in the UK. We have a bustling club racing scene, with brilliant circuits and plenty of choice for competitors. And we must remember to value and protect that. The struggles of rallying this year — where there are still massive uncertainties heading into the future — are a stark reminder of how quickly things can change. It is vital that everyone supports each other and makes the necessary tweaks during these tough times to secure a brighter future.

5 Demand is still there

Let's end with a massive positive. When racing eventually resumed in July, no one could really be sure of the turnout. But there was no need to worry. Some gargantuan entries were achieved, the Classic Sports Car Club among those smashing records. It was great to see that such demand existed, despite tough economic times for many. That does not mean things will necessarily be the same next year, but it was certainly an encouraging sign.

The events of 2020 have provided plenty to think about both on and off the track. With vaccines now being rolled out, let's all keep our fingers crossed for a more normal 2021 season so we can put some of these lessons into practice.





Packer (78) and Vaughan battle in Roadsports with on-the-road winners Gardner/Mills giving chase

Packer triumphs after post-race penalty

DONINGTON PARK
750MC
12-13 DECEMBER

There was a strong end-of-term party vibe about the 750 Motor Club's rearranged Donington Park meeting last weekend, despite the rain and gloom. A host of championships were decided and grids for some series included curious newcomers, unused to being able to race so late in the year.

Jonathan Packer was the winner of the Roadsports race, after the BMW M3 of David Gardner and Christopher Mills was demoted to fourth place for speeding in the pitlane. Packer's Honda Civic Type-R had led for a good chunk of the 45-minute contest, having got a fast start, and fended off Gardner during the early stages.

Mills capitalised on a late pitstop after taking over from Gardner and kept ahead of a determined Packer, but a faulty pitlane speed limiter and subsequent 32s penalty put paid to their on-the-road victory.

Polesitter Nick Vaughan was promoted to second in an Audi A3, having been caught out by Packer and Gardner in the early stages. Warren Allen (Porsche Cayman) completed the podium. He'd got among the leading group, and cemented his place when Darren Ball's similar Cayman had to pit.

Fifth behind Gardner/Mills was Dave Griffin in his familiar BMW E36 M3, the first of a number of winter visitors to the series. Among the others were Mini Challenge racer Sami Bowler, who was 10th after a spirited tussle with the VW Golf of Radical champion Marcus Clutton.

The two Hot Hatch races were both won by Gary Prebble in his Honda Civic, the sole Class A car on the grid in the last race before the class itself is retired.

The first race was reduced to a single-lap sprint after Tim Parsons's VW Golf had to be retrieved from McLeans. Class B winner Philip Wright was second, making up several places to snatch the class lead from Tony Perfect's Civic. Perfect got his own back in race two after Wright spun his Type-R a couple of laps from the end. Two



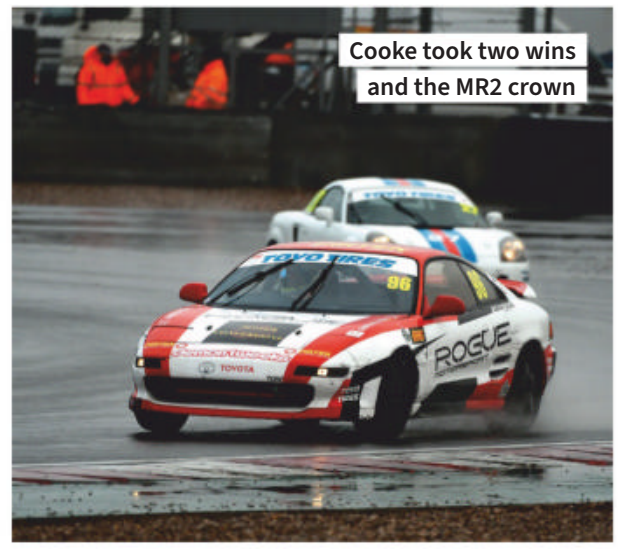
Prebble was in a class of his own – literally – and won twice

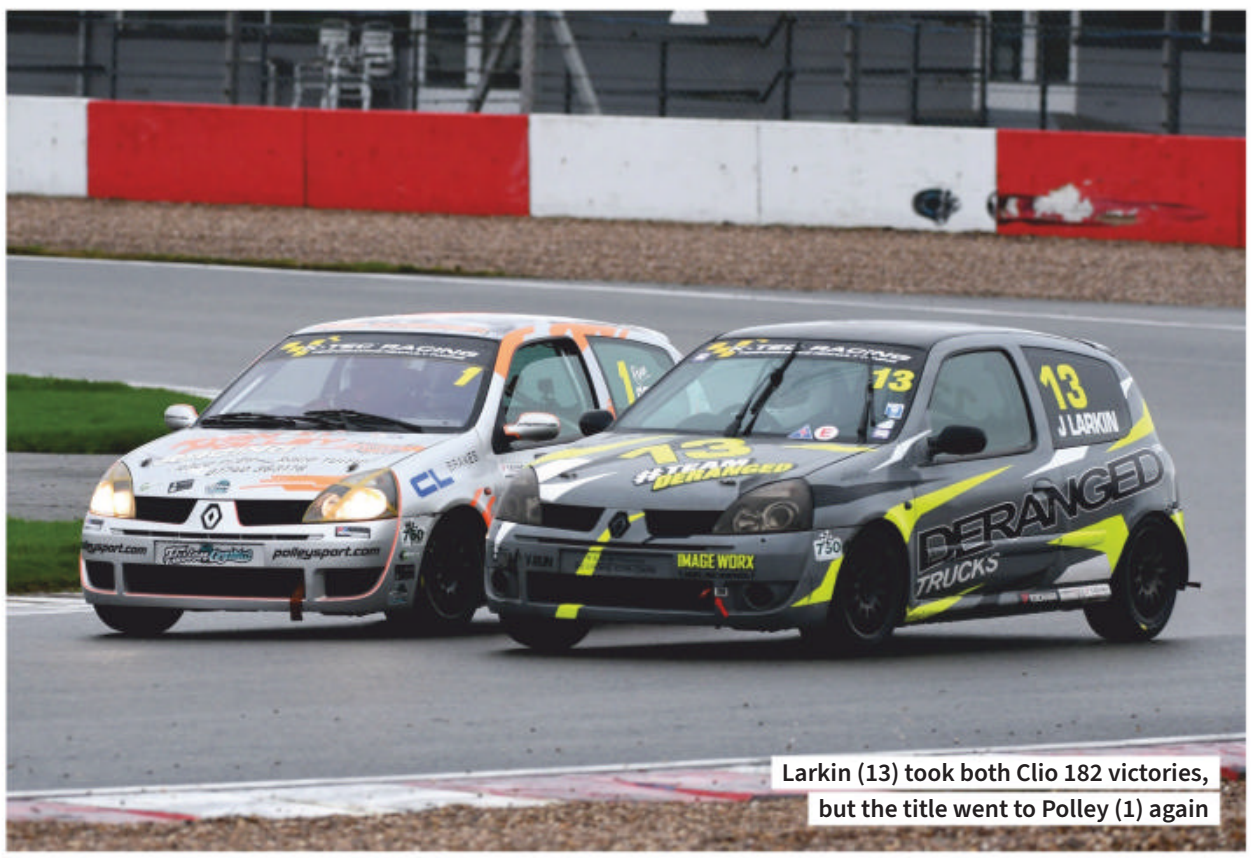


Baker/Swift took top spot in their Leon in Club Enduro

ALL PICS: JONES


Hancy secured another title in the MX-5 Cup


Cooke took two wins and the MR2 crown


Larkin (13) took both Clio 182 victories, but the title went to Polley (1) again

WEEKEND WINNERS

ROADSPORTS
Jonathan Packer (Honda Civic Type-R)

HOT HATCH/TYPE-R TROPHY
Races 1 & 2 Gary Prebble (Honda Civic)

CLIO 182s
Races 1 & 2 Josh Larkin

BMW CAR CLUB RACING
Race 1 Paul Cook (E46 M3)
Race 2 Michael Pensavalle (E46 M3)

LOCOST
Race 1 Murray Shepherd
Race 2 Craig Land (below)

5CLUB MX-5 CUP
Race 1 Ben Hancy
Race 2 Steve Foden

MR2 CHAMPIONSHIP
Races 1 & 2 Aaron Cooke (Mk2)

CLUB ENDURO
Robert Baker/Carl Swift (SEAT Leon Eurocup)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Class C wins for David Drinkwater's BMW Compact netted him the overall crown.

Josh Larkin won both Clio 182 races as Ryan Polley cruised to the single finish he needed to secure the title again. Polley led much of the first race, but eased off after a small excursion as he only needed an 11th place to seal the title. Larkin then ran away with the lead and victory, ahead of Simon Freeman, Scott Edgar and Polley.

Polley did not enter the second race, and it looked as if Larkin was going to repeat the new champion's race-one performance when he went off at the Craner Curves, but he clawed his way back from ninth place to win, ahead of Freeman and Simon Gruber.

The BMW Car Club Racing drivers only got limited running in qualifying after Stuart Pywell crashed his 125i heavily. Paul Cook won the first race in an E46 M3, having got a great start and resisted the efforts of Michael Cutt, who had made his way up from ninth on the grid and was by far the fastest driver on the track.

Cook was forced to play catch-up in the second race, with Michael Pensavalle's E46 ekeing out a huge lead, which had to be chipped away. Cook managed to get ahead briefly on the penultimate tour, nipping inside at Hollywood, but Pensavalle got the position back at Redgate on the final lap and held on to win by less than two tenths.

Two more championships were decided by tactical drives on Sunday. Murray Shepherd won the first Locost contest after a race-long game of chase with Craig Land.

Both were comfortably ahead of a smaller field than usual, a situation which continued in race two. Shepherd needed second to be sure of the championship and it looked as if he was playing it safe, letting Land go, but midway through the race he slowed markedly due to a battery light coming on. His second spot was in danger from George Grice, but Shepherd held the position to take the title.

Reigning champion Ben Hancy took a similar approach in the Mazda MX-5 Cup. He won the first race and scored enough points to move in front of Steve Foden, who had led going the points pre-weekend. Once Hancy had muscled through from sixth to a safe third in the reversed-grid race, he let Foden take the win from Tom Smith and secured himself a second title.

Aaron Cooke only needed to finish to keep his lead at the top of the MR2 Championship table, but couldn't resist a little showboating with two confident wins. The first was the result of a lightning restart following a safety car as Alastair Topley had run out of track and collided with Leigh Brown, getting stuck in the gravel in the process.

Cooke was followed home both times by Shaun Traynor and Paul Cook, with Cook challenging Traynor but not able to find a way past on either occasion.

Sunday's blue-riband event was Club Enduro, although the filthy weather made it a stop-start affair. Robert Baker and Carl Swift continued their winning ways in their SEAT Leon Eurocup to clinch the championship, playing a tactical waiting game in the 100-minute race.

Baker/Swift took an early pitstop, after the safety car was called just a few laps into the race, giving the BMW M3 of Matthew Hampson and Andy Schulz a lengthy turn at the front. The sister Leon of Matthew and Simon Wallis also got involved, taking the lead just before the one-hour mark, but Hampson and Schulz were quicker after a second caution to retrieve Dave Griffin's BMW, which had failed to turn in and beached itself in the gravel.

Baker and Swift then had to wait for the Mazda MX-5 of Clive Chisnall and Brian Chandler to take its belated pitstop before regaining the lead, and they did not look back, triumphing by almost 20s over the SEAT of Mark Jones and Anthony Rodgers.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER



Memories from a tough 2020

Coronavirus meant this was a season like no other, but there were still plenty of special moments when motorsport did restart

MARCUS PYE

The year 2020 will be remembered for the havoc COVID-19 wreaked on planet Earth. It ended lives and destroyed livelihoods but, after government lockdowns implemented to curb the virus's spread, survivors had a different perspective of 'normal'. Following a three-month Motorsport UK-imposed hiatus, motorsport was permitted here from July, and participants on both sides of the barriers — if not always spectators — made the most of it. International travel logistics, specifically quarantining requirements, torpedoed the Spa Six Hours and other events in my orbit, but domestic meetings rose to the challenge, surpassing expectations.

FIA Historic Awards, Paris

Seeing an ERA and a Maserati 250F demonstrated during the 1967 British Grand Prix at Silverstone started my love of historic cars. Over 43 years on Autosport, I've worked at dozens of dedicated race meetings. The invitation to compere the FIA Historic Awards dinner in Paris in January was therefore a surprise I enjoyed greatly. Meeting 2019's top hillclimb and rally combatants from many countries, beside those in my regular circuit racing sphere, was particularly welcome. Aside from competition engines, my favourite music has always been classical, thus an amble to the Passy Cemetery to pay respects to French composer Gabriel Faure was irresistible.

Passion for Speed, South Africa

After 10 years out, sitting on the grid at South Africa's Zwartkops circuit in February, aboard Ian Hebblethwaite's superb Merlyn Mk20, all the old feelings came rushing back. I'd reconciled myself to accept it if I didn't enjoy it, or was woefully uncompetitive, but battling with Ecurie Hebble team-mate Matt Nash (in a sister Van Diemen RF81 to the one in which I'd scored my first win at Brands Hatch in 1982) and Mike Ward (Royale RP21) sharpened my senses. I saw much more of Matt's gearbox at Killarney, Cape Town, the following weekend, where the vista of Table Mountain out of Turn 1 is incredible.

'Sticker Of The Day' engages the world

While rationalising our loft's contents during Lockdown I earlier this year, I unearthed my racing decal archive, spanning the 1960s to now, which spawned my popular Facebook entity 'Sticker Of The Day'. Launched on 1 April, it has evolved and has now recently passed #250. I don't do other social media but its reach is remarkable. Averaging 160-plus likes per day, it's how it engages competitors (many long gone), their relatives, officials and enthusiasts globally that has blown me away. Generous sticker donations have enhanced the stock as we celebrate a team, personality or sponsor in 110 words. Barrie 'Whizzo' Williams's tops the rankings on 333 likes!



Pye got back behind the wheel during pre-lockdown South Africa trip

NUTHALL



Mitchells were victorious in their Chevron during one of the first events after hiatus

HAWKINS

Brands Hatch welcomes racing back

When UK racing resumed in July, after Motorsport UK's three-month permit pause, the Historic Sports Car Club's Legends of Brands Hatch Super Prix was the first event I reported and commentated on. Online entries, remote signing-on, self-declaration scrutineering (with random checks), facemasks and socially distanced marshalling (with different incident protocol) were strange, but competitors' hunger was palpable after nine months out. Highlight of the weekend's racing was an exemplary tactical Guards Trophy victory for father-and-son Westie and Sam Mitchell, first time out in the ex-Nikolaus Killenberg left-hand-drive Chevron B8 the family had been restoring for two years.

Back to the old days at CSCC Thruxton

Arriving at the Classic Sports Car Club's annual Thruxton meeting in July turned the clock back to the early 1970s for me. Sure, converted coaches, caravans and ratty open trailers have been superseded by smart trucks, motorhomes and boxed transport, but the paddock was rammed with racing cars, the atmosphere buzzing. The colourful Special Saloons and Modsports field – a fine turnout – reminded older fans of the resident British Automobile Racing Club's Forward Trust, Wendy Wools and Blue Circle championships of yore. It's back to basics 'run-what-ya-brung' all-inclusive categories with the CSCC, which is why it's so popular. Donington Park's event in September boasted 500 competitors!

Famous Healey wins GTSCC thriller

Austin-Healey 3000s were popular GT cars when I was a kid, thus I've always loved them. Watching John Chatham and Stewart Hands battling for victory at Castle Combe in 1967 helped. Perhaps the most famous Healey racing back then was SMO 746, the ex-works rally car owned by policeman John Gott, Northamptonshire's chief constable and friend of Silverstone. The combo competed at Thruxton in 1970 and 1971, so it was a joy to see the car return and unexpectedly win August's drama-laced GT & Sports Car Cup race on Mark Holme's debut in it, partnered by marque ace Jeremy Welch.

Streaming gets 750MC message across

Over the past couple of years, progressive clubs have broadcast their events via livestreaming, giving sponsors, members and friends a cost-effective window on events – more important with many run behind closed doors this year – and a permanent archive of coverage. The 750 Motor Club has engaged AlphaLive – a small company run by Luke Austin and associates – to great effect. Having commentated with Ian Sowman, Josh Barrett and Lewis Beales through this medium at Silverstone for the August weekends and Birkett Six Hour Relays, I'm blown away by the advances in technology and improvement in broadcast quality between the seasons. »



Special Saloons and Modsports thrilled at CSCC Thruxton meeting

JONES



Famous SMO 746 Healey delighted Pye with GTSCC win

JONES


Walker Sr trails in the heat haze behind his son during Goodwood SpeedWeek

FONG

Hysterical HRDC Historics On The Hill

September's second Historic Racing Drivers Club Historics On The Hill race meeting built on the success of last year's at Lydden. Three double-header grids provided plenty of short, sharp action to entertain spectators, with 2013 British Touring Car champion Andrew Jordan (Austin A40) among the cast.

A new vehicle access road and, subsequently, pukka race-control building overlooking Paddock Bend, for which planning permission has been granted, will make the quaint little Canterbury amphitheatre even better. My weekend opened with the first rallycross I'd seen at the discipline's spiritual home in probably 40 years. Tristan Ovenden's sonorous Renault Clio V6 and John Cross's VW-powered Lancia Stratos impressed.



HRDC races provided plenty of action at Lydden Hill

DUNLOP

Leviathans star at Goodwood SpeedWeek

Goodwood sells tickets on sports and touring car drivers competing at its events (now the ever-expanding Formula 1 calendar has all but closed that avenue), yet the real heroes are sometimes underheralded. Having lost its Members' Meeting, Festival of Speed and Revival, October's SpeedWeek pulled the rabbit out of the hat. Undoubted stars of the circuit action were the SF Edge Trophy Edwardian racers, whose magnificent displays of derring-do wowed streaming audiences. My favourite image (above) shows Mark Walker (25.4-litre Darracq 200hp) thundering into the heat haze from son Hughie's 10-litre Theophile Schneider. They finished 2-1 on Sunday.

MRL Silverstone points the way forward

Race organisers or groups who habitually subscribe to continental events found their calendars kiboshed by the coronavirus misery and its moving repercussions. Motor Racing Legends wasn't alone in losing its Spa Six Hours fixture — for 20 years the holy grail — and Iberian curtain closers. Fortunately, MRL pulled together a one-day RAC Historic Tourist Trophy event on Silverstone's GP circuit in late October. Three endurance races attracted excellent grids close to home for most, helping to balance the books. Convivial atmosphere and spacious Wing pits left competitors saying that races on top UK circuits were the way forward until the cloud lifts.

Autosport's highlights from the season

A dramatic British Formula 4 finale, sharing a car with an ex-F1 driver in an early post-lockdown meeting, and high emotions in the Formula Ford Festival stood out

STEPHEN LICKORISH, STEFAN MACKLEY AND MARK PAULSON





STEPHEN LICKORISH
GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

Much has been said about it but, as a race of pure drama, nothing can eclipse the British Formula 4 finale at Brands Hatch. That both title contenders went off on oil on the first lap was incredible enough, before the destiny of the championship swung one way then the other as heavy rain arrived, half points were awarded and Luke Browning was crowned. But more remarkable was the fact that this was the ninth event of an F4 season that began in August. Back in late March, there seemed little prospect of so much racing being possible, as coronavirus wreaked havoc. We should remember how fortunate we were to have any motorsport at all in 2020.





STEFAN MACKLEY
DEPUTY NATIONAL EDITOR

Snetterton, 19 July. Mine, and many people's, first visit to a circuit since the world was changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 750 Motor Club meeting was one of the earliest to be held in the UK post-lockdown, and the fact that I and thousands of other people were able to experience the spectacle of racing at all in 2020 should not be overestimated. My trip to the Norfolk venue also featured the added bonus of getting behind the wheel for Autosport, this time sharing with ex-Formula 1 driver Martin Donnelly in the 116 Trophy. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, made all the more special amid what has been, on the whole, a very dark year.





MARK PAULSON
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

Few one-off events are bigger than the category's season-long championship but, like the Indy 500 and Le Mans 24 Hours, the Formula Ford Festival holds that status. An illustrious history of nearly 50 years means this one matters a hell of a lot to everyone involved, as was clear to see during the presentation of the Neil Shanahan Memorial Trophy on Brands Hatch's Brabham Straight. Rory Smith had put a slightly frustrating season behind him to pull off some impressive moves and conquer both a strong field and the changeable conditions. Now he could celebrate with his family and the B-M Racing squad, led by an emotional Andy Brickles.

TOP 10 CLUB DRIVERS OF 2020

Plenty of racers produced brilliant performances during this year's condensed campaign, and these are some who stood out from the crowd

ENTRIES BY STEPHEN BRUNSDON, PAUL LAWRENCE, MARK LIBBETER, STEPHEN LICKORISH AND MARK PAULSON

10 ROSS DUNN
SMRC SCOTTISH CITROEN C1 CUP

After a partial season in the Scottish Citroen C1 Cup in 2019, which yielded one race win, Ross Dunn hit the ground running at the start of the truncated 2020 campaign. With each race taking on a greater importance, consistency was always going to be the key, and Dunn proved his worth by upsetting the class of 2019 en route to the title. Two wins and three second places in six races was by far the best run of any driver in the field, and Dunn was duly crowned champion.



MOIR

9 JOHN BYRNE
BRSCC CATERHAM SEVEN CHAMPIONSHIP UK

It's difficult to dominate Caterham racing, characterised by slipstreaming slugfests. But that's exactly what John Byrne did this year in the flagship Seven Championship UK for the 420R model. Reigning champion Byrne was beaten only once in the eight races he contested, and that was when he missed the last-lap board at Donington Park and got mugged at the final corner. Such an oversight wouldn't usually have been an issue, as his margins of victory were up to 10 seconds – light years in Caterhams.


JONES

8 KEVIN KIVLOCHAN
HSCC 70s AND HISTORIC ROAD SPORTS

Kevin Kivlochan has been a Road Sports pacesetter across two decades, and in 2020 he became the first driver to win the big-power class in both the '70s and Historic Road Sports categories in the same season. Though bettered for the overall titles, Kivlochan very effectively split his time between his AC Cobra in the Historic series and his Morgan +8 in the '70s. He was always committed in the cars from Richard Walbyoff's team, and the only notable stumble was Cadwell Park throttle issues for the Cobra.



WALKER

7 MARCUS CLUTTON
MSVR RADICAL CHALLENGE

With reigning champion Dominik Jackson not appearing in the Radical Challenge this year, and 2019 runner-up Jerome de Sadeleer only contesting a part-season, an opportunity arose for another driver to shine. Marcus Clutton was on excellent form throughout, winning nine times from 12 starts and never finishing outside the top two en route to the title. Arguably his best weekend came at Donington Park in September, when he won all three races and took a GT Cup victory with John Seale in a Lamborghini Huracan.



READ

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Cam Jackson and **Steven Dailly** were considered but, to avoid duplication, appear on the rivalries list instead

Joseph Loake
BRSCC Fiesta Junior

6 DAVID DRINKWATER
750MC BIRKETT RELAY AND HOT HATCH

David Drinkwater made history in the Birkett Relay this year. Never before in the contest's long history has a team won in successive seasons, but Drinkwater was part of the 3 Amigos BMW Compact crew that achieved just that. The feat was all the more impressive given the massive entry and the complexity of the handicap system used. And it was not the only crown Drinkwater successfully repeated. He also again won the 750 Motor Club Hot Hatch title, only once being defeated in Class C in his Compact.


JONES

5 NEIL MACLENNAN
BRSCC NATIONAL FORMULA FORD 1600

Long-distance traveller Neil Maclennan, based north of Inverness, has been a National Formula Ford frontrunner since 2017 without mounting a sustained title bid. That changed this year as he romped to the crown with six wins from seven races. He wasn't always dominating from the front – his victories came from as far back as row four. Maclennan capped the year with second in the Walter Hayes Trophy, having crashed out of the same position in the Festival. Perhaps next year he'll tick those boxes.


HAWKINS

4 DAN CLOWES
750MC F1000

For Dan Clowes, titles have proved to be like buses in 2020. Wait 26 years for one, and then two come along at once. He has been a regular Jedi racer but, after finishing runner-up for the past two seasons, he finally landed the F1000 crown this year up against a strong field – it has been described as the most competitive entry for at least a decade. Three wins and a further four podiums netted him that crown, but he also picked up the Monoposto Moto 1000 title, again driving his Jedi machine.


JONES

3 JAMES HARRIDGE
750MC FORMULA VEE

It's always great to see self-built machines achieving success in club racing. And James Harridge didn't just win the Formula Vee title in his homemade Maverick, he dominated it. This year may not have featured the strongest of Vee fields, but winning seven of the eight 2020 races, with some large entries, was still a great achievement. Harridge made up for years of unreliability in style, his average winning margin being almost nine seconds, as all the hours spent developing the car finally paid off.


STYLES

2 BRUCE WINFIELD
BRSCC CIVIC CUP

Five wins and three second places from eight Civic Cup races shows how Bruce Winfield delivered on his previous promise in 2020. He took three poles too, missing a clean sweep by just 0.03 seconds. And, while only once was Winfield beaten in the opener of each double-header, it was his race-two performances – with top-10 grid reversals – that were arguably more impressive. Two wins came from row five, and he took second at Oulton Park despite a penalty consigning him to 15th on the grid!


WALKER

1 BENN TILLEY
HSCC CLASSIC FORMULA 3

Getting to drive a Lotus 87 was a monster 21st birthday present at the end of a fine season for Benn Tilley. Tilley gave a great account of himself aboard the Formula 1 car at Hethel, to underline his place as a bright young star of historic racing. Thanks to the support of Simon Hadfield and Tilley's parents Stuart and Ann, the underfunded youngster made it to Classic F3 in Hadfield's ex-Rupert Keegan March 743. He won the title convincingly against far newer cars and deserves to move up the historic ladder.



JONES

TOP 10 CLUB RIVALRIES OF 2020

The shortened season meant there was less time for rivalries to develop this year, but there were still some fierce battles in national motorsport

ENTRIES BY STEPHEN BRUNSDON, PAUL LAWRENCE, MARK LIBBETER, STEPHEN LICKORISH, STEFAN MACKLEY, JAMES NEWBOLD, MARK PAULSON AND STEVE WHITFIELD

10 HENRY NEAL v LEWIS KENT

A small grid doesn't prevent a thrilling Touring Car Trophy fight as an ex-BTCC Honda takes on a TCR-spec Hyundai

The Touring Car Trophy was short on entries but produced a thrilling title battle as Henry Neal and Lewis Kent traded blows throughout the shortened season. Neal's British Touring Car-spec Honda Civic took the opening race at the first two events, with Kent's TCR Hyundai i30 N hitting back on each occasion. Wins in the first two races at Donington Park's triple-headed decider put Neal ahead, and he clinched the title in the finale by following home Max Hart, who finally ended the leading pair's monopoly of the podium's top two steps.



JONES

9 STEVEN DAILLY v TOM GRIFFITHS

Another crown for the Compact Cup master, but he has to work harder than before to land title number four

Top 10 drivers contender (see p136) Steven Dailly (below) prevailed in his quest for a fourth successive BMW Compact Cup title, but only after a season-long battle with Tom Griffiths. Arriving at Brands Hatch in late September, Griffiths led Dailly by one point. Two faultless drives from Dailly in Kent then helped swing the momentum his way. Griffiths (below, right) fought back with a double success at the Donington Park finale, as engine dramas threatened Dailly's hopes, but Dailly ultimately banked the results he needed to triumph.


WALKER

8 MIKE WILLIAMS v JACK ASHTON

Old Metro Cup rivals rekindle their on-track battle in the MG Cup and prove to be the class of the field again

After dominating the MG Metro Cup last year, Jack Ashton decided he needed to move on to a category where he would face more opposition. That meant emulating his mate Mike Williams by upgrading his Metro and joining the MG Cup. The pair resumed their friendly rivalry, pushing each other on to dominate at the head of the field. While Ashton (below, left) usually edged their battles, and took four wins to his rival's two, each suffered reliability gremlins and it was Williams (below, right) who claimed the class crown.



WALKER

7 TOM LEBBON v BAILEY VOISIN v JOSH RATTICAN

Close racing makes for a thrilling Ginetta Junior season

The racing at the front of the Ginetta Junior pack this season has been excellent. For much of the year, it was very close – and usually clean – between Tom Lebbon (34, below) and Bailey Voisin (22) as the pair traded the race lead and points lead multiple times. As the season wore on, Josh Rattican grew stronger and joined the mix to set up a thrilling showdown. Sadly, the final Brands Hatch races were forgettable stop/start affairs, and two second places for Lebbon sealed him the title, becoming the category's first rookie champion.



JEP

6 STEFANO LEANEY v ALEX FORES

First F3 Cup qualifying session sets the tone for a tightly fought season, and Donington Park collision brings added spice

Just 0.007 seconds separated Stefano Leaney and Alex Fores in the season-opening qualifying in the F3 Cup, and that tone continued all year. Leaney (leading, below) won five races, with Fores taking four. The only time neither triumphed came when they collided during round five at Donington Park, causing post-race tensions between the rivals. Leaney had the momentum in the first half of the season and, although Fores gained the edge in the second, a couple of spins cost him dear as Leaney took the crown by 13 points.


READ

5 JAMIE CAROLINE v PATRICK KIBBLE

TF Sport British GT4 Aston Martin drivers break the golden rule of never clashing with your team-mate in hotly contested campaign

There are many line-in-the-sand rules in motorsport, but one holds an exalted place above all others: don't hit your team-mate. Unfortunately, TF Sport's British GT4 battlers Jamie Caroline and Patrick Kibble forgot that message at Brands Hatch. Caroline dived up the inside at Paddock Hill Bend, and Kibble shut the door, resulting in Kibble being turfed into the gravel and a penalty for eventual champion Caroline. Mercifully they kept it clean for the rest of the season, but probably won't be sending each other Christmas cards.



4 BRUCE MITCHELL v ALASTAIR BAPTIE

They were in different classes of the Scottish Classic Sports and Saloons and didn't fight on-track, but title couldn't have been closer

The Scottish Classics title fight tends to go down to the wire, given it's a class-based championship, and 2020 was no different. Literally nothing separated Bruce Mitchell's Lotus Europa TC (below) and Alastair Baptie's Fiat X1/9 come the final race of the season. The pair finished tied on 150 points after winning every race in their class, although reigning champion Mitchell came out on top due to recording superior overall race finishes than 2017 and 2018 title winner Baptie.


MOIR

3 PIERRE LIVINGSTON v CAM JACKSON

Just a point separates the Historic Formula Ford rivals after a fierce battle, as Jackson narrowly misses out on a third consecutive crown

Cam Jackson went into the Historic Formula Ford season chasing a third title, but this was the year when Pierre Livingston came good. The 20-year-old flew in his Speedsport Merlyn, while Jackson worked to make the unfashionable March 709 a winner. They were regularly wheel to wheel and, when Linton Stutely joined in, Livingston had two fierce rivals. There was some grumbling about Livingston's rolling starts, but his pace at Oulton Park in particular was immense and he won the title by a single point.


WALKER

2 JOSH MALIN v JAMES TAYLOR

Ginetta GT5 Challenge contenders are inseparable for much of the year, and it comes down to a terrific winner-takes-all finale

Close, competitive racing and Ginettas usually go hand in hand, and that was certainly the case in the GT5 Challenge. The title fight between Josh Malin – returning for his second season – and Ginetta Junior graduate James Taylor (right) raged all year and included a collision at the opening race. Their battle went down to the final lap of the campaign at Silverstone, with whoever finished ahead being crowned champion. Either would have been a worthy winner, but the title *just* went to Malin (left) after a terrific and fair race-long battle.



1 LUKE BROWNING v ZAK O'SULLIVAN

The events of the British Formula 4 finale are barely believable as the destination of the title swings between the two rivals

Some of the other rivalries on this list ended with fewer points between the drivers than the four that separated the British Formula 4 contenders, but none of them featured quite such a dramatic – and bizarre – conclusion. After whittling Luke Browning's (11, below) sizeable lead to nothing, Zak O'Sullivan almost grabbed an unlikely win when he recovered best after both struck oil in the finale. But heavy rain ended the race early, half points were awarded, and there was disbelieving delight for Browning and devastation for O'Sullivan.



CLUB AUTOSPORT

PICTURES OF THE YEAR

In a racing season condensed into just six months, our photographers have gone above and beyond to capture some amazing images from 2020

COMPILED BY STEFAN MACKLEY



James Hagan in an ex-James Hunt F1 Hesketh battles Rob Wheldon's F2 March 762 during the HSCC's Legends of Brands Hatch meeting

GARY HAWKINS



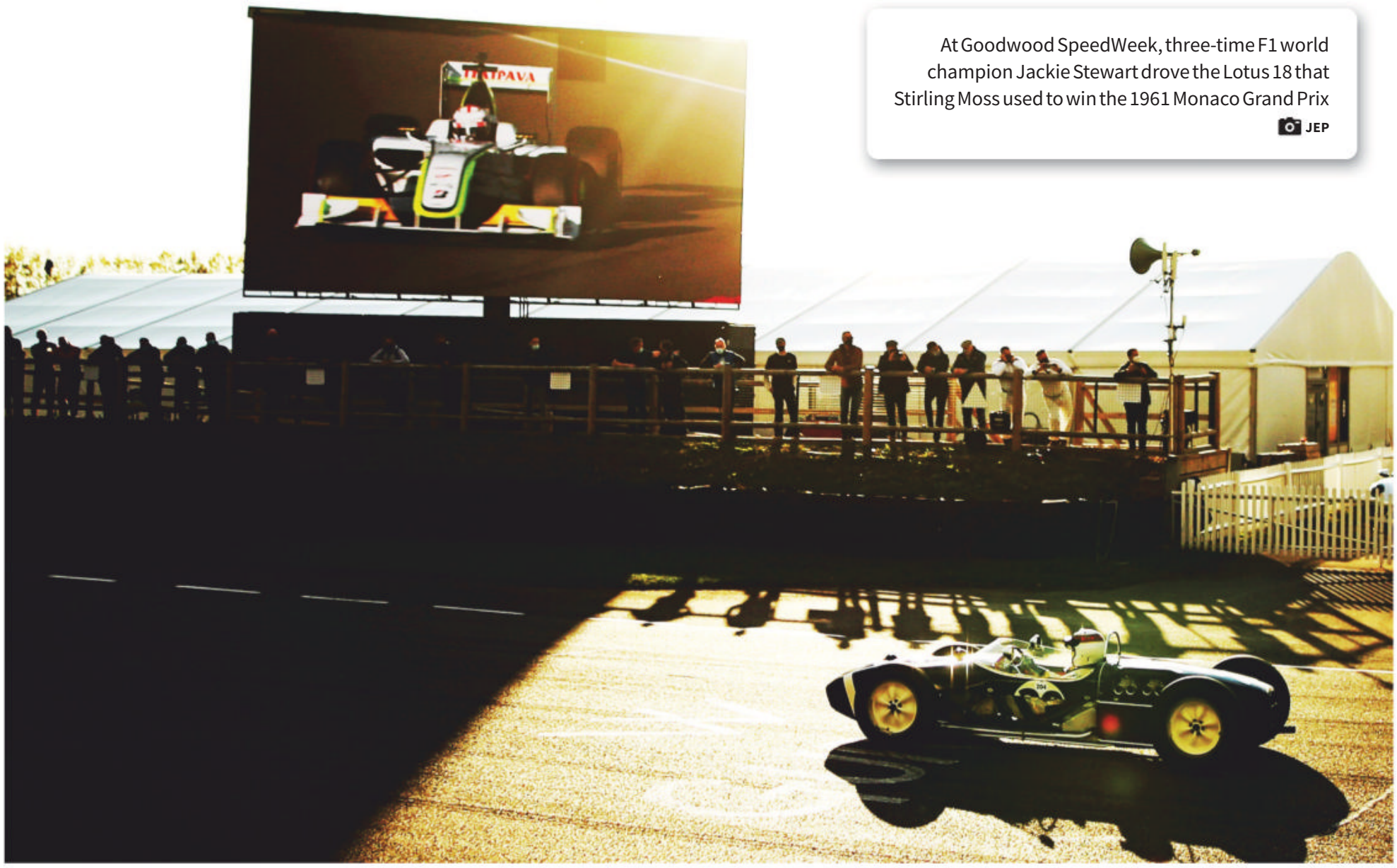
Various racing lines were used at Mallory Park in the 2CV Championship races, with some proving to be more beneficial than others

MICK WALKER



Storm clouds gather as Lucky Khera blasts down the Senna Straight at Snetterton in his Ferrari 488, en route to a brace of victories in the Ferrari Challenge UK

RICHARD STYLES



At Goodwood SpeedWeek, three-time F1 world champion Jackie Stewart drove the Lotus 18 that Stirling Moss used to win the 1961 Monaco Grand Prix

JEP





Dash to the flag in the first SF Edge Trophy race during Goodwood SpeedWeek, with Tony Best ahead in his Alfa Romeo RLS 'Targa Florio'

GARY HAWKINS





Anglesey's coastal location provided the perfect backdrop to the 750MC's meeting, where the Classic Stock Hatch field was in action

STEVE JONES



Callum Grant was flying high over The Mountain at Cadwell Park in his Delta T78 as he took two wins in Formula Ford 2000

MICK WALKER



Things went very wrong for Tony Ellis at Oulton Park as his Gemini Elva was destroyed when he hit the barriers down the hill at Denton's

MICK WALKER



Adam Higgins leads fellow two-time Castle Combe FF1600 champion Luke Cooper in the Formula Ford Carnival. Cooper would go on to win, with Higgins finishing third

OLLIE READ



Matias Zagazeta had a moment in his Carlin-run British Formula 4 car at Brands Hatch exiting Surtees and heading off onto the Grand Prix layout

GARY HAWKINS





Guy Davis (left) and Mikey Doble battle for position in a BMW Compact Cup race at Donington Park

STEVE JONES



James Hancock made an impact in his Peugeot 205 GTi in a Classic Stock Hatch race at Mallory Park

STEVE JONES



Despite some minor bodywork damage, Steve Worrad guided his March 717 to second in Thundersports at the Oulton Park Gold Cup

RACHEL BOURNE

OUR ULTIMATE COMBOS THAT NEVER HAPPENED


ALL PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

Time for a bit of fantasy fun now, as members of the Autosport editorial team have created their own little wishlist this Christmas.

The method is simple. We each pick one person to drive (or ride) one car (or bike) around one circuit. These made-up line-ups could be about to take part in a race or merely conduct a private test that we've been invited to watch. The rule: these scenarios can't have actually happened.

Let's assume drivers are operating at the peak of their powers, the machinery is box-fresh and the venue is in tip-top shape. Here are our picks for creating the most exciting spectacle imaginable.



DAMON HILL
HONDA NSR500 PHILLIP ISLAND

Damon Hill began his racing career on two wheels, not four. See the image of him performing a burnout. After his split from Williams at the end of 1996, why not rewrite history and prompt a return to those motorcycle roots? Let's have him on a Repsol Honda NSR500 at Phillip Island, swashbuckling for supremacy against Mick Doohan and Alex Criville.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



HARRY KING
PORSCHE 956/962 SPA

Harry King's performances in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this year have been superlative, wringing the neck of his car for every tenth of a second. That was impressive enough, but now imagine him in a legendary car like the Porsche 956/962 – the machine Autosport recently chose as the greatest sportscar ever – at a classic track like Spa. That really would be special.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



DANI PEDROSA
YAMAHA M1 SACHSENRING

Frustratingly, this almost happened – Dani Pedrosa was tipped for the Petronas SRT M1 bike that went to Fabio Quartararo. But it's long been thought that the 31-time MotoGP race winner would have won multiple premier class titles had he ridden for Yamaha instead of Honda. We'll take him to the Sachsenring, where he scored four of those top-flight wins.

LEWIS DUNCAN



GILLES VILLENEUVE
LOTUS 98T CASTLE COMBE

Gilles Villeneuve – perhaps Formula 1's fastest-ever and most entertaining driver. Check. The Lotus 98T from 1986, with its John Player Special black-and-gold livery and outrageous 1000+ bhp. Check. The original Castle Combe (minus the chicanes), which was daunting even in Formula Ford 1600 machinery. Check. The perfect combination, surely.

STEFAN MACKLEY



STEFAN BELLOF
FORD GT Mk2 BRANDS HATCH INDY

A Ford GT Mk2, but the Holman-Moody one, please. Forget blue and orange, the Shelby bruiser looks best in gold and pink. Stefan Bellof's at the wheel, as I want to watch (and hear) all 7000cc work for their supper. And although the car will require shorter gearing, let's have it on the Brands Hatch Indy circuit so I can see every glorious and yawing moment from the grandstand.

MATT KEW



RICHARD BURNS
BENTLEY SPEED 8 LE MANS

The 2001 World Rally champion never had a chance to show what he could do away from the stages. But Richard Burns's smooth style, ability to see the bigger picture and penchant for perfectionism would have been ideal for endurance racing. Why not throw him into the 2003 Bentley Speed 8, the only car to topple the Audi R8, on the big stage at Le Mans?

JAMES NEWBOLD



Ayrton Senna had a brief go at rallying for a magazine article, but what about a full WRC entry?



MAX VERSTAPPEN
GINETTA JUNIOR
SILVERSTONE

Put the person who would become Formula 1's best racer in a sliding little sportscar on the slipstream-drenched Silverstone National Circuit against a bunch of schoolboy/girl hoodlums. Let's say 2013, when he was 15. And his dad would ban him from overtaking anywhere other than the ultra-fast Copse. Paul O'Neill would blow a gasket on the TV commentary!

MARCUS SIMMONS



JOHNNY HERBERT
WILLIAMS FW07
THRUXTON

I'd go for pre-shunt Johnny Herbert in a Williams FW07 at Thruxton, with a twist. His team manager would be *Goodfellas*-era Joe Pesci, who orders him to break the lap record — otherwise Gregor Foitek will be sent out in a Ligier JS11 with the sole intention of breaking his legs... I knew I should have waited at least until Christmas Eve before I cracked open the sherry.

DAMIEN SMITH



NIGEL MANSELL
PORSCHE 917/30
SILVERSTONE

Given my favourite racing car is the Porsche 917, it's perhaps no surprise that I've gone for the ultimate evolution of the beast: the 1100+bhp 1973 917/30 Can-Am car. Such a machine should be on a fast track, with a driver prepared to hang it out. So how about 1992-spec Nigel Mansell on the pre-1991 Silverstone Grand Prix circuit?

KEVIN TURNER

YouTube youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



While the major upgrade to the Formula 1 car design regulations is now delayed until 2022, there are still some very interesting updates coming into play for next season. Autosport takes a look at how the FIA's new rules will affect racing next season, from car aerodynamics to fuel usage, to copycat teams and even green materials. **Go to bit.ly/F1update21**

AUTOSPORT PODCAST autosport.com/podcast



The Formula 1 season is run and won and, while last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix certainly won't go down in history as a fine thriller, there's plenty happening off the track to keep fans' interest high. Join the Autosport team for a detailed look at the events from Yas Marina that led to Max Verstappen landing his 10th victory and beyond.

WHAT'S ON



ISHIHARA/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Super Formula
Round 6/6
Fuji, Japan
20 December
Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sun 0500



> Walero have recognised that helping the driver perform to their maximum is as important as the car itself. Through a mixture of technology and comfort, their base layers help me to maintain focus and reduce the strain that a race weekend puts on my body, allowing me to perform more consistently throughout.
>
> **Tom Ingram**
> KwikFit BTCC Driver

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TOP FIVE



NON-F1 STORIES OF 2020

From horrific crashes to unbelievable moments during the COVID-19-enforced shutdown, the big headlines were impossible to predict in 2020. Here's a rundown of the major stories on autosport.com from across the year.

HAYDN COBB

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
motorsport IMAGES

5 FORMULA E'S SHOCK DRIVER CHANGES

While Formula E and the rest of the world went into lockdown, unexpected driver changes dominated the news. Daniel Abt was sacked by Audi after he enlisted a sim racer to pretend to be him in FE's Esports series, resulting in Rene Rast filling in for the six-race Berlin finale. Then Pascal Wehrlein jumped ship from Mahindra to Porsche, with Alex Lynn taking up the vacancy.



4 TERRIFYING AUSTRIAN MOTOGP CRASH

Franco Morbidelli's comment that "someone needs to pay" grabbed attention after he was involved in the scary Austrian Grand Prix crash, when he collided with Johann Zarco and their bikes flew inches between Valentino Rossi and Maverick Vinales. Zarco's fractured wrist was, remarkably, the only serious injury; he was given a pitlane start penalty for his part in the clash.



3 MARQUEZ MISSES MOTOGP SEASON

Marc Marquez's MotoGP campaign was effectively ended midway through the delayed season opener when he crashed at Jerez and suffered a broken arm that required surgery. After attempting a premature comeback in the race the following week, he subsequently broke his plated arm opening a door at home and needed further surgery. He was absent for the rest of the year.



2 HAMILTON AND ROSSI SWAP RIDES

Lewis Hamilton and Valentino Rossi swapped rides, giving the Formula 1 champion a chance to try out the Italian's MotoGP machine. Yamaha boss Massimo Meregalli said Hamilton was so keen he had to be told to wait for the Valencia track to warm up before being unleashed under Rossi's guidance, and only returned to the pits when the chequered flag was shown.



1 NEWMAN'S DAYTONA 500 CRASH

Ryan Newman's horrendous crash was the moment the 2020 Daytona 500 will be remembered for. His car went airborne after hitting the wall and caught fire upside down with Newman still inside. The Roush Fenway Racing Ford driver missed the subsequent three rounds before the COVID-19-enforced hiatus, and made his comeback in May when the season resumed.





FROM THE ARCHIVE

Drama unfolds at the start of the 1995 Monaco Grand Prix: David Coulthard, the front-right wheel of his Williams-Renault FW17 well askew, faces the wrong way after contact with the Ferrari 412T2s of Jean Alesi and Gerhard Berger, then gets a grandstand view of the team-mates coming together. The resulting tangle blocked the track and stopped the race. All three made the restart in spare cars, although Berger was the only one to finish – he was third behind Couthard's team-mate Damon Hill and race winner Michael Schumacher (Benetton-Renault B195).

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When Alonso topped our list despite losing

20-27 December 2012

Fernando Alonso topped Autosport's Top 50 drivers of the year ranking this week in 2012. The Top 50 was 10 years old and it was the second time Alonso had led the way.

He had waged one of the great Formula 1 campaigns, finishing just three points behind Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel despite the inferiority of the Spaniard's Ferrari. Three wins and 10 other podiums weren't quite enough, though a bit more luck at the Brazilian Grand Prix finale – or perhaps bad luck for Vettel following his clash on the first lap – could have swung things Alonso's way.

"If we'd had a normal season, we would have said bye-bye to the championship around Monza or Singapore time [rounds 13 and 14 out of 20]," said Alonso. "But because we did something not normal in the championship, we had the chance to win it in Brazil. That makes me feel proud."

Alonso's dynamic first laps (there were only six occasions when he did not gain places, and two of those were because he started from pole), relentless racecraft and performances in the wet kept the pressure on Vettel, and earned Alonso our number one spot.

Lewis Hamilton was second, McLaren failures putting him out of the title fight and encouraging him to switch to Mercedes, while Vettel took third. Not for the first time, the top non-F1 driver was World Rally ace Sebastien Loeb. He was fourth, though the Frenchman remains the only non-F1 driver to ever top our list, which he did in 2005.

Others to make the 2012 list included NASCAR Cup champion Brad Keselowski (sixth), Antonio Felix da Costa (eighth, following wins in Formula Renault 3.5, GP3 and F3), 2012 World Touring Car champion Rob Huff (18th), and GP3 points topper Mitch Evans (45th).



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