GP BELGIUM
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THE RED BULLETIN

AN ALMOST INDEPENDENT F1 NEWSPAPER



HAMILTON'S HIGH NOTE

LEWIS MASTERS CLASSIC TRACK

Bright outlook
Mark Webber suggested that after four races out of the points, the RBR-Renault is coming back strongly, with seventh-fastest. "It was a stress to get into Q3," he admitted, "it was very tight as usual and all the drivers were pretty evenly matched."
Photography: Thomas Butler

BELGIUM
SUNDAY 07·09·08

An emphatic pole for Lewis Hamilton but Spa is Kimi Räikkönen country, and while the Ferrari star qualified fourth, Spa's legendary unpredictability could yet throw up a surprise or two this afternoon. Elsewhere, we find out who's hoping to get back on track with Honda, and also who's been damaged by the Dakar.

SMALL TALK

Toro Rosso's strategy engineer, Jason Mowbray, and data engineer, Ben Easterlow



Mornin' Ben and Jason. Usually we talk to one person at a time, but we're told you're a double act. Why don't you introduce each other?
Jason: Ben is the data engineer for car 14, and, because he wears glasses with red frames, he occasionally gets mistaken for its driver.
Ben: I've been chased up the road in Monaco by a French kid wanting an autograph, but the worst case was marshals in Turkey who wanted me to sign their programme, which was a surprise as I was next to the real Séb. Fortunately it's happening less as he's becoming better known.

Is it compulsory to wear the red frames if you work on car 14?
Ben: We're trying to make it so. We're currently persuading one of the engine guys, but we'll see where it goes. I'd like to point out I was wearing these before we signed Séb. Jason, incidentally, is a strategy engineer.

So how do you develop a strategy for a track as changeable as Spa?
Jason: Spa is actually quite good; with only 44 laps, your choices are limited. Obviously with the weather it can get interesting...
Ben: What he's trying to say is that it basically comes down to guesswork.
Jason: But in Spa we only need the 44-sided dice, not the 72-sided dice.

It's obviously working – Toro seem to be moving up in the world. Do you dream of spending the points bonuses on sportscars and exotic holidays or a portion of chips?
Ben: It's a 'generous' portion of chips.
Jason: Obviously that's a generous portion to share between the team.
Ben: More like a bucket of chips really.
Jason: If we do really well we get a deep-fat fryer – and then we can make our own chips. One day we'll go for the fish as well, that's the dream.
Ben: We also win a free Red Bull.
Jason: And a Red Bull Cola, which is fantastic.

You both started out working in Ledbury before moving to Faenza. Is it a very different environment?
Ben: They're not that different. Actually, it's easier to understand people in Faenza than it is in Ledbury.

A good run

Getting 500 grands prix under your belt is quite an achievement, and there's always a great deal of pressure among media veterans not to miss any races so they get a telegram from Bernie guaranteeing them a pass for life. The most impressive effort we know of is Maurice Hamilton's, who managed to attend 406 successive races between South Africa 1984 and Hungary this year. The epic run ended in Valencia due to a family bereavement, and Anthony Davidson was drafted in to replace Maurice in the BBC commentary booth. "Missing Valencia knocks my 500th celebration to Shanghai", says Maurice, "which ought to be better than Fuji."

Patrese's comeback

With Rubens Barrichello surpassing his record for race starts, Riccardo Patrese is keen to get back in the driving seat. When the Italian joined Honda for a game of golf earlier this season to celebrate Rubens' record, he cheekily asked if he could have a go in the car. So next Tuesday, the 54-year-old will go for a spin in last year's Honda RA107. Having driven some of the finest racing cars of all time – including the championship-winning Williams-Renault FW14B of 1992 – he'll be trying out one that hasn't matched its success, but he's thrilled to see how things have moved on.

Toro Rosso's future plans

With Toro Rosso announcing a post-Monza TT (we're calling it Taku Test), many paddock pundits have put two and two together and made five. Gerhard Berger, surrounded by an excited throng of Japanese reporters, strenuously denied rumours of a Honda engine. Instead, he praised the Ferrari engine that powered Bourdais to a Q1 top spot yesterday, and the relationship between his team and the other Scuderia. He joked that the only thing wrong with the current deal is that he has to pay for it.

Broken egg

Swedish TV commentator Eje Elgh is nursing a broken arm after injuring himself in a bicycle accident. While training for the Dakar Rally, the former F2 racer's foot slipped off the pedal and he took a tumble. But 'Double Egg', as he's known, has every intention of getting back in the saddle just as soon as his arm is fixed. "It's better to break something training at 55 than die at 60 through lack of exercise," he says. Still, maybe he should take things a bit easier.

Honorary turn

Racer and journalist Paul Frère, who died earlier this year, has been honoured at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit. Turn 15, known as Stavelot, has been renamed Curve Paul Frère after the Belgian who competed in 11 grands prix, and won the non-championship Grand Prix des Frontières at Chimay in 1952. A plaque located at the corner was unveiled this weekend in the presence of Bernie Ecclestone and Stefano Domenicali.



FINNISH FANS Kimi likes Spa, and has scored three wins here from five attempts. With a contingent of loyal fans to cheer him on, will he be able to pass team-mate Felipe Massa and the McLarens to add to his tally?

GP2 finale

The GP2 Series culminates in the championship showdown next weekend, which will be followed by an awards ceremony at Monza's Sporting Club at 7pm on Sunday night. The 2008 prizegiving will also feature the Winning Attitudes Awards, which supports the Gonzalo Rodriguez Memorial Foundation named after the Uruguayan F3000 and CART driver who was killed at Laguna Seca in 1999. Funds raised from the sale of a huge canvas, which has been drawn on and signed by the drivers, will go directly to underprivileged children in Uruguay. All accredited media are welcome to attend the dinner, and there will be an additional photocall on Thursday at 4:30pm in GP2 hospitality.

DC's European farewell

The Italian GP will be David Coulthard's final F1 race in Europe. To mark the occasion, Red Bull invites you to view a photo-history of the Scot's grand prix career. The exhibition, with words of reflection from DC, will be on show at the Energy Station on Thursday evening.

Sim city

A stunning new simulations facility has been opened in Lyon. I-Way has 18 rigs with six F1 car simulators, six Citroën C2 S1600 rally simulators, and six Pescarolo Sport endurance simulators. The centre took five years to develop and cost €12 million to build. Customers can experience all three simulations for €200. Journalists are being invited to compete against each other's times for the chance to win a Porsche Design watch. Contact Pierre Nicolas on +33 4 37 50 28 61 for more details.

Today's schedule

09:15	Formula BMW race two
10:30	GP2 race two
11:45	Porsche Supercup race
12:30	F1 drivers' parade
14:00	Belgian Grand Prix (44 laps)

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F1 LOOKY LIKIES...
Separated at birth: our very own truckie Martin Woodfine, and super-clean Mr Proper.

SIX OF THE BEST: WILD ONES

Crash and Byrne is the new book by Mark Hughes chronicling the misspent career of '80s F1 talent Tommy Byrne, but Tommy's not the only prodigy who left the straight and narrow.

SHAUN RYDER
The Happy Mondays singer's lyricism was once compared to Bob Dylan by Factory Records founder Tony Wilson. After drug addiction and years of legal tangles, the Madchester pioneer is back making music. But any new efforts will be dwarfed by his legendary off-stage behaviour, such as when he walked out of a £1.6million record deal meeting "to get a KFC".





LEE MAVERS
The lead singer of The La's composed the evergreen hit There She Goes. Ten big-name producers later, he declared the band's critically acclaimed sole album from 1990 was not the sound he'd heard in his head. Nearly 20 years on, it seems the songsmith is still plagued by his own expectations as the follow up is nowhere to be seen.

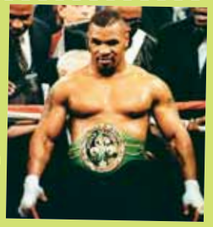
PAUL GASCOIGNE
Gazza battled alcoholism and depression throughout an often brilliant footballing career. Goal celebrations such as miming being showered in alcohol often grabbed more headlines than his natural ability. But after being booked during the 1990 World Cup semi-final between England and West Germany, his tear-stained face became an instant icon of sporting passion.





NII LAMPTEY
Described by Pelé as "my natural successor" in 1989, 15-year-old Ghanaian footballer Lamptey was shunted around 13 clubs for the next decade and frequently exploited as a result of his inability to read or write. His career was also blighted by a series of personal tragedies. Now 33 years old, he runs his own football academy in Ghana.

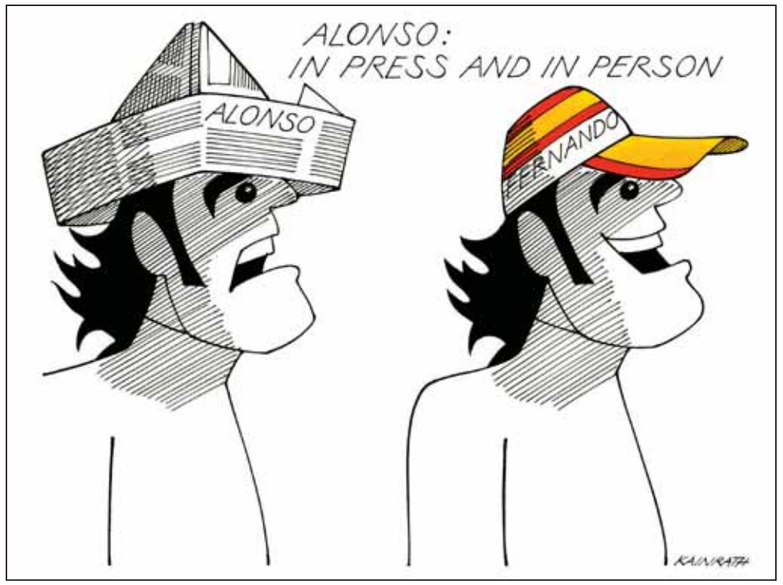
MIKE TYSON
The youngest World Heavyweight Boxing Champion ever in 1986 at just 20 years old, by 1992 'Iron Mike' had been convicted of rape and amazed the world in 1997 by biting off part of fellow boxer Evander Holyfield's ear during a title fight. Holyfield escaped with a slightly altered appearance, but Tyson's reputation never fully recovered.





MARTINA HINGIS
The Czech-born women's tennis star won seven grand-slam titles by the age of 22. After achieving so much so young, injury forced her to participate less from 2002. In 2007 she tested positive for cocaine use and the 27-year-old has stated she will not return to professional tennis when her two-year ban expires.

PHOTOGRAPHY: THOMAS BUTLER, LAT, ACTION IMAGES, REX FEATURES, GETTY IMAGES. COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: THOMAS BUTLER



PIT BITCH: DRIVING MISS CRAZY

Life is stressful in the world of PR.

BY HELEN PARADYCE

'Perhaps the collective noun for a group of PRs should be a "chatter"'

Will I ever be dry again? I've been wandering around the paddock, all horse riding and Hermès headscarves, like some faded member of the British aristocracy, the only item missing from this classic wardrobe being the double-barrelled shotgun that would have come in handy for dealing with the lobotomised Belgian police officers who sent us on a 10km detour to get to the media car park. The mud in the car park sent me on a search for a new pair of shoes and it reinforced my belief that you can learn a lot about a country from what you see in shop windows. Every single Chausseur in the town where I'm staying has a window display consisting entirely of rubber boots, hiking shoes or Birkenstock sandals. I would rather wear dead cats on my feet. Don't know where I came up with that line: maybe it's the fact that Eddie Jordan, famous for wearing something approximating a dead cat on his head, was playing drums in a concert here last night.

On Friday night, I was privileged to be a legitimate gatecrasher at a dinner for all press officers, hosted by Honda in their motorhome. Seeing them all together – perhaps the collective noun for a group of PRs should be 'a chatter' or maybe 'a gossip' – it struck me that most of them are women, which is as it should be, because we are far more efficient, proving that it's no job for a grown man. However, I was surprised how seriously they take their role, because when all's said and done, they're not trying to find a cure for cancer or develop a peace plan for the Middle East. How stressful can it be to produce one press release a day, which they seem to believe is the gospel truth, even though we all know that the Gospels were four books full of myths and mystically confusing metaphors. So they're right then.

As usual at this dinner, they voted for the most popular and most unpopular members of the media. I won't reveal the results, as I was sworn to secrecy on pain of death, but perhaps the award for most unprepared journalist could go to Autosport's grand prix editor, Edd Straw. In Valencia, he managed to put his chair through the floor of the media centre, and this weekend, he turned up without any form of coat, which is a trifle optimistic for a race at Spa. He then took two attempts to get into the circuit on Saturday, interspersed with a return trip to his hotel, as he'd left his pass behind.

The aforementioned press officers also had a couple of forgetful moments after their dinner, as the Williams crew – the male members of course – managed to lock their car key in the motorhome. Red Bull came to the rescue, their PR crew offering their opposite numbers a lift. So far so good, until they got to the car park in the pouring rain only to find that one of the Bull Girls had forgotten her key in her motorhome. Once this hiccup was solved, the Williams crew couldn't wait to get out of the car as the Bull Girl driver, although not English and therefore well used to driving on the right, apparently managed to lock the brakes and skid off into a ditch. "The ride was a bit hairy and she drives a bit fast," was the toned-down official press statement from Williams early on Saturday morning. Mmm! Sounds just like their lovely Nico Rosberg.



ON THIS DAY... 07/9/08



1996: TUPAC ATTACK
Rapper Tupac Shakur is shot in a gangland 'drive-by' in Las Vegas. He dies in hospital the following week.
Tupac's video of Life Goes On... for the rest of us.
YouTube.com search: Tupac + Life Goes On

1979: ESPN KICKS OFF
The American 24-hour sport cable channel is launched with the first edition of SportsCenter and a softball game.
Great sporting moments according to ESPN.
YouTube.com search: ESPN + greatest + moments

1998: GOOGLE
Larry Page and Sergey Brin launch the web search engine now worth $86bn and with its own verb.
The best job outside F1...
YouTube.com search: working + for + Google

BIRTHS

1936: BUDDY HOLLY
American lead singer of the Crickets, who died in a plane crash in 1959.
YouTube.com search: #1 + Doesn't Matter Anymore

ON THIS DAY, VISIT...

RACETRACK MUSEUM
Set in the cellar of the impressive Abbaye de Stavelot museum complex, hundreds of exhibits from Spa's racing history are housed, with fun interactive features based around the track. It's also good if you like bikes...
Abbaye de Stavelot BP 52, B-4970 Stavelot. Open 10am-8pm daily. Adult ticket costs €7.50.

ON THIS DAY IN F1...



1997: ITALY
David Coulthard wins at Monza and immediately dedicates his victory to the late Diana, Princess of Wales.
A very good selection of that season's highlights.
YouTube.com search: F1 + 1997 + season + review

FOR MORE, VISIT: WWW.REDBULLETINF1.COM

PHOTOGRAPHY: LAT, GETTY IMAGES. ILLUSTRATION: DIETMAR KAINRATH



The guard dogs at Spa have a reputation for being savage, but actually they are very cultured, and here we see their latest efforts in an exhibition entitled 'L'Art du Chien'.



Crisis talks at McLaren: "OK guys, who left the middle of the car at home?"

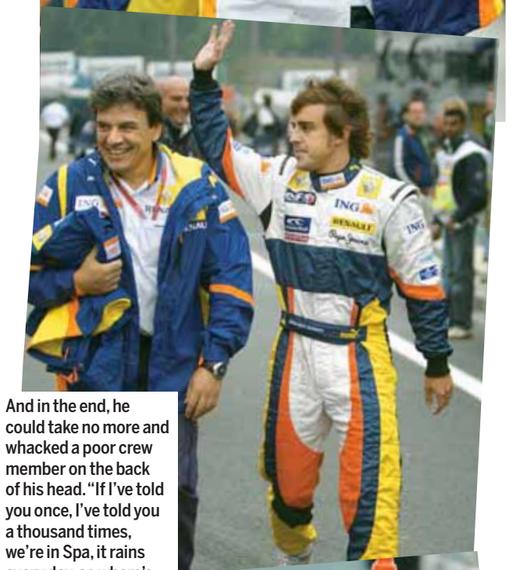
THE SPA TREATMENT

Everyone loves having their picture taken, but the Bullseye has a knack for catching people unawares.

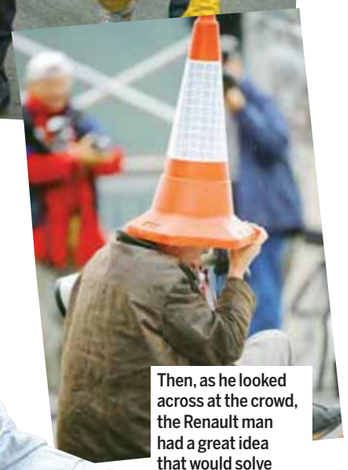
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All day long, Fernando had been getting wetter and wetter, while Piquet cruised around, warm and dry in his hooded jacket...



And in the end, he could take no more and whacked a poor crew member on the back of his head. "If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times, we're in Spa, it rains every day, so where's my rain jacket?"



Then, as he looked across at the crowd, the Renault man had a great idea that would solve Alonso's problem.



"It doesn't get much better than this," thought Lewis, as he finally got to have his picture taken with screen legend Kaz Kawai.

PHOTOGRAPHY: DPPI, XPB, CRISPIN THRUSTON, LUKAS GORYS

HAMILTON IN COMFORT ZONE IN SPA

McLaren first and third in the Ardennes

SESSION 01

The session started with a shot of Nick Heidfeld, eyes closed in the car. Focusing? Sleeping? Only Nick knows for sure. It was another cold day at Spa, much to the chagrin of those teams that struggle to get heat into their tyres. Nelson Piquet went out first, setting a respectable 1:48.727; it began to look even better as the Hondas, Force Indias and Kazuki Nakajima all failed to beat it. Timo Glock went marginally faster, and then Felipe Massa blew them all away with a 1:47.686. Cue Lewis Hamilton, eight-tenths quicker than the Ferrari and laying down a clear marker. Sebastian Vettel popped up in second, Heikki Kovalainen third and Kimi Räikkönen fourth. With five minutes to go, Webber was the only surprising resident of the bottom five. He pulled himself clear by a comfortable margin, at the expense of Sutil, who until that point had stayed clear of trouble. He and team-mate Giancarlo Fisichella both went out, along with the struggling Nakajima and the Hondas of Jenson Button and Rubens Barrichello.

BOURDAIS
From the cusp of elimination to P1 on his final flyer. A good performance from Sébastien.

NAKAJIMA
Rosberg just squeezed through, but team-mate Nakajima, seven-tenths slower, never stood a chance.

SESSION 02

Räikkönen appeared first, his 1:46.298 considerably quicker than anything that had gone before, but it didn't stand for very long. Kovalainen swept by to displace him, swiftly followed by Hamilton, who slotted in behind his team-mate. Fernando Alonso put together a furious lap on the limit of adhesion to go fourth. He was then displaced by Massa, who was himself beaten by Heidfeld: it was close at the top.

With four minutes remaining, Sébastien Bourdais, fastest at the end of the first session, was balanced precariously above the drop-zone. Below him Glock, Webber, Jarno Trulli, David Coulthard and Nico Rosberg all needed to improve. Neither Rosberg or Coulthard looked like doing so, but the Toyotas and Webber were in better shape. Trulli went ninth. It didn't look like being enough. Glock could only manage 11th. Bourdais, Robert Kubica and Vettel all improved their times, pushing Trulli out; with him went Piquet, again unable to get nearer than half a second to team-mate Alonso. Webber and Alonso were the sole Renault-engined cars to make it through, the other places taken by Ferrari, McLaren, BMW and, for the second race in succession, both the Toro Rossos.

HEIDFELD
A comfortable session for Nick, easily through, faster than Kubica.

COULTHARD
A winner here in the past, but the only one of the four Red Bull cars not to make it through to the shoot-out.







RÄIKKÖNEN
Looked good earlier in the session, but still struggling to get on level terms with Massa's pace when it really matters.

HAMILTON
Never put a wheel wrong all through qualifying. Laying down a marker as the championship draws to a conclusion.

ONE TO WATCH
ADRIAN SUTIL



The Force Indias have closed the gap on the teams above, and Sutil has proved himself in wet conditions. If it rains this afternoon, watch out for the young German driver.

SESSION 03

Whenever the threat of rain looms, the pitlane at the start of a session is filled with queuing cars… no queue suggests teams expect a dry session – the grid for Spa wasn't going to be decided by rain. Massa went out first; his 1:48.666 looked untidy, confirmed by Räikkönen's lap which followed, three-tenths faster. Ferrari were one and two on the board, but McLaren hadn't appeared yet. Hamilton and Kovalainen both set fastest sector times, Hamilton shading the lap by a tenth to take provisional pole position. Heidfeld further relegated Massa, sneaking into fourth position. Nick's travails this season with cold tyres are well documented – on a day when everyone was struggling with the same condition, it was interesting to see how much more competitive he looked. Everyone had a run except Vettel, who opted to stay in the garage.

On the second run, Massa, Hamilton, Räikkönen and Kovalainen took to the track, in that order. Massa didn't look like making the same mistakes, setting a fastest first sector and a fastest second. He took provisional pole as Hamilton was rounding Pouhon. Hamilton too went fastest in the first and second sectors, taking a tenth off the Brazilian each time. He came through to P1 with a margin of slightly over three-tenths. By this time, neither Räikkönen nor Kovalainen looked like challenging; both were three-tenths off in the middle sector. Traditionally at Spa, that's where a heavier car struggles, but with both Finns blowing hot and cold, it's tough to judge. Heidfeld took a good fifth to share the third row with Alonso. Webber in seventh and Robert Kubica fill row four, with the Toro Rossos behind, Bourdais starting ahead of Vettel.

THE STATS

Venue: Spa-Francorchamps, 7.004 km
Race length: 44 laps (308.052 km)
2007 pole position: Kimi Räikkönen 1:45.994
Lap record: Felipe Massa, Ferrari, 1:48.036 (2007)

THE FORM

TODAY'S TOP SIX AND THEIR RECORD AT SPA
Hamilton: 4 (most recent first)
Massa: 2, 10, 4, R
Kovalainen: 8
Räikkönen: 1, 1, 1, R, R
Heidfeld: 5, X, 11, 10, R, R
Alonso: 3, 2, R, X, DNS

THE STRATEGY

Historically, trying to predict what will happen at Spa is like trying to nail jelly to a wall – with a banana. On the assumption of a dry race, the tyre situation has changed from last year. After discovering severe blistering, Bridgestone opted to move harder for 2008, bringing the hard and medium compounds. Lap times on Friday were similar for both compounds, and several teams were complaining that they couldn't get heat into either tyre, given the unseasonably cold weather. It tends to negate any advantage that teams who look after their tyres better sometimes have. A two-stop strategy is the optimum, medium-medium-hard likely to be the preferred option. Laps 14-15 and 29-30 make for equal stints, though historically a longer first stint is often the way to go, and can be profitable if a safety car period ensues. Then again, it might rain.

THE BOX OF SPANNERS



RÄIKKÖNEN: Damaged the rear of his Ferrari after hitting the barriers in second practice.

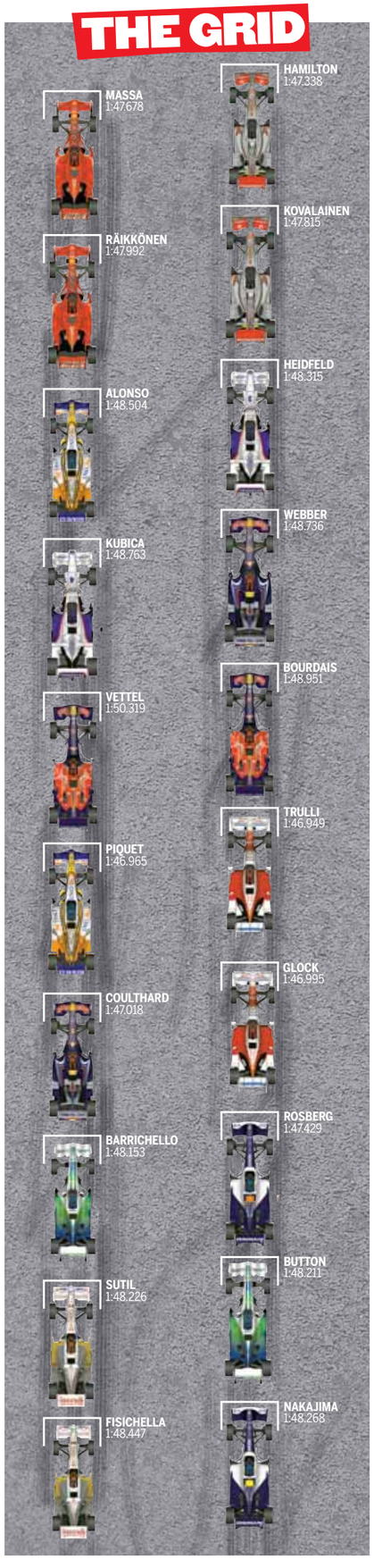


BUTTON: No running on Saturday morning after a suspected fuel pressure problem.



FISICHELLA: A badly damaged Force India after spinning on standing water left by Kimi Räikkönen's earlier crash.

THE GRID



PHOTOGRAPHY: DPPI, XPB. ILLUSTRATIONS: EMERIC DE BARÉ

What If...

HONDA HAD CHOSEN JORDAN

as the basis for their works team?

Today's Honda team is not the one envisaged by the Honda board of the 1990s, but even without its own works team, the Japanese manufacturer had options other than a deal with BAR.

The Jordan-Honda deal was a strange one. As early as 1997, rumours suggested Honda Motor Sport thought launching a stand-alone F1 team was too ambitious. Instead, they wanted to buy into an existing outfit and eventually turn it into a works entry. Jordan was mooted as a candidate, but yet more rumours suggest the stumbling block was Eddie's refusal to relinquish power.

F1 was a personal crusade for Honda CEO Nobuhiko Kawamoto. He'd been a design engineer for Honda F1 in the 1960s, the head of R&D when it returned in the '80s. As CEO he withdrew Honda as an engine supplier, always with the intention of returning as a fully-fledged team. It wasn't a widely-shared belief, and when Kawamoto was deposed in '98, the project lost its strongest supporter.

By mid-1999, with the proto-works team Honda Racing Developments struggling to recruit, and reeling from the death of Dr Harvey Postlethwaite, the cancellation of the project was inevitable – but Honda still had options. BAR, unhappy with their Supertec deal, pitched for an engine. They had money, but what did Honda need with money? Their interest in F1 was fuelled by technical curiosity and a thirst for glory. Jordan Grand Prix also wanted the works Honda deal. Jordan, powered by Mugen-Honda, were winning; BAR were not. It made all the difference.

'Honda's interest in F1 was fuelled by technical curiosity and a thirst for glory...'

Jordan's deal with Benson & Hedges was up for renewal, but there was another option. Japan Tobacco's Mild Seven brand had agreed a huge provisional deal with HRD. After HRD's demise, they had a choice of staying with the floundering Benetton outfit or following Honda. JT decided their $40million dollars would work harder at Jordan. It provided just the boost that the team needed. Mike Gascoyne had a young, talented technical team; Heinz-Harald Frentzen was fast becoming a star and the only thing holding them back had been the lack of a budget to challenge Ferrari, McLaren and Williams.

The 2000 season wasn't the leap forward Jordan had been expecting. The new Honda engine was no better than the Mugen-Honda unit it replaced – indeed many times during the season the BAR Mugen-Hondas were better than the works' entries. But these were teething problems: everyone knew the Honda engine would come good, and that once Jordan got around to spending its new money, the chassis side would improve too. One potential problem was the rumoured departure of Gascoyne. Benetton were thought to be pursuing the designer. Who knows if he was tempted? A combination of team momentum, bigger budgets and the promise of great things around the corner ensured he stayed. Jordan went into 2001 filled with confidence.

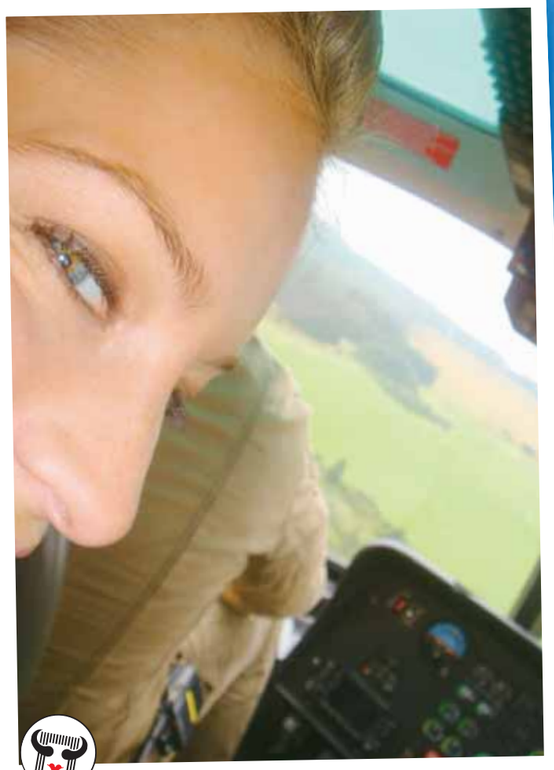
But still they struggled, the engine lacked top-end horsepower and with the reintroduction of traction control, their emphasis on producing a driveable, docile engine suddenly made no difference. The next year was slightly better; continuity was making the relationship stronger; Jordan recorded its best finish, even winning when Ferrari failed. It was Trulli, though, and not Frentzen who triumphed. Frentzen's frustrations led to a public slanging match with Eddie, and the sudden elevation of test driver Takuma Sato.

Concurrently, Eddie sold a stake to Honda. It was rumoured the option had been installed in the original contract, and that a further option existed for Honda to take full control later. Neither party confirmed the speculation; nor did either deny it. Schumacher was world champion again in 2003, but it could so easily have been Räikkönen, Montoya or Trulli.

All through the winter of 2003-2004 Gascoyne's EJ14 looked a front-runner. Trulli was metronomic, lap after lap. He continued the form into the season. It was nip-and-tuck with Schumacher, but if Ferrari won, it was through virtue of better strategic decisions, while Jordan won with a faster car. Ferrari managed to drag it out, which only provided Jordan and Honda with a grandstand finish in front of an adoring Suzuka grandstand at the penultimate race of the year. Jarno Trulli became the first Italian world champion since Alberto Ascari.

With nothing left to prove, Eddie let Honda complete the masterplan: they bought out the controlling interest and entered the 2005 season as the fully-fledged manufacturer, they'd planned to be all along. They did so without the number one on the car though, Trulli had notched up another success. With Schumacher retiring, Ferrari needed a new star driver…

ILLUSTRATION: MARKUS ROOST



LIVING THE HIGH LIFE

Belgium's La Formula Unas had the trip of a lifetime as they took to the air to get a spectacular bird's eye view of the track.

FOR MORE, VISIT: WWW.REDBULLETINF1.COM









WINNER

The girls had a great time yesterday taking lots of snaps as a souvenir of their day. We chose Stefanie Lisabeth's pic as our winner, and she'll watch the race from the Red Bull Racing garage.







First Day/Last Day

ERIC VAN DE POELE

Any driver claiming to have had a career blighted by bad luck really ought to consider the case of Belgium's Eric van de Poele and just be grateful for small mercies...

Having not pre-qualified for the first two races of the 1991 season, the San Marino Grand Prix proved to be an incredible weekend for me. The week had started really well and Imola was like Lamborghini's test track. So, we were quite prepared for this race. We knew that it was going to be tough to pre-qualify but, incredibly, I did. It was fantastic to do that in Italy with a Lamborghini. I also qualified quite well in 21st place.

It was wet on the morning of the race and I spun during the warm-up. It was good to refresh my mind that Formula One was not easy, and I was ready for the race. It was something very special. You work all your life to reach F1 and then you put the car into first gear in the first practice and you see Prost, Senna and Mansell in the pits, and you are part of all that. It's really fantastic as you drive to the grid for the first time.

The weather was unbelievable, with a lot of rain just before the start. It was the kind of conditions that I love, rainy and then dry. It was really going to be my weekend. A few cars went off even before the beginning and I was able to gain a few places even then. At the start it was really tough because we could not see anything, but I think after two or three laps I was already in ninth place. I had a good pitstop just at the right time to put on slicks. I had to fight for a little bit with my Belgian compatriot Thierry Boutsen in the Ligier-Lamborghini, and the Lotus drivers.

The nightmare arrived on the last lap. The engine began to misfire after the Varianta Alta. I could not believe it, this was the very last lap! The track goes downhill at this point, so I tried to keep going. I was calling to my engineer, "What can I do? I have a fuel pressure alarm, what can I do?" The radio remained quiet and I reckoned, Eric, you can just cry. The car eventually stopped so near the end that I could see the chequered flag. So, I thought, I can take the steering wheel and just run to the finish line, but it was a bit too far. It was really sad, but I knew that I had done a good race.

I had been fifth and would have scored my first two points in the world championship. Instead I gave them to Mika Häkkinen. Every time I see him I say, "You remember your first two points? They were my points." My chief mechanic was so upset that he broke his foot kicking the telemetry box.

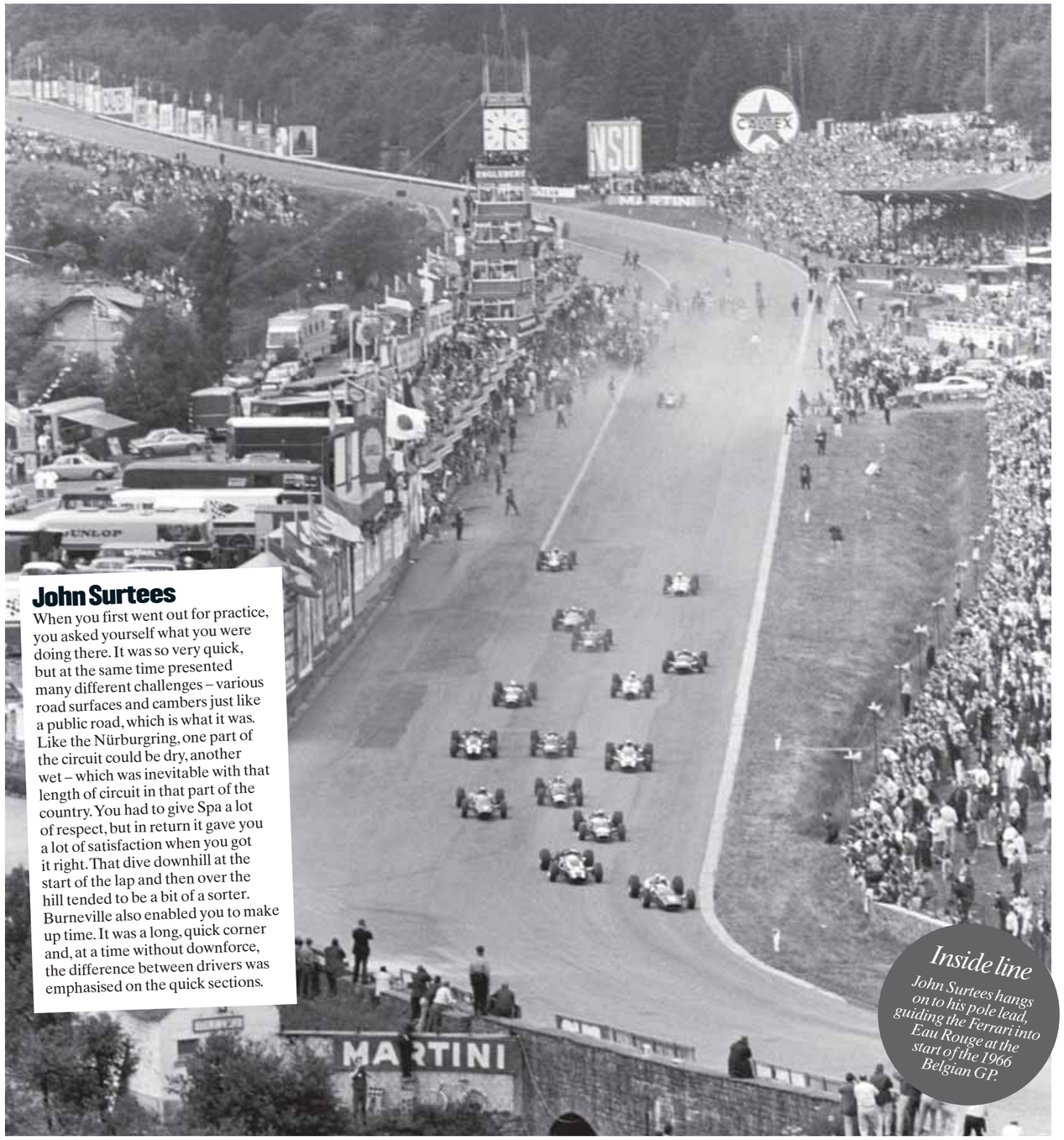
My last grand prix was at Monza the next year with Fondmetal. I knew that the team had problems and that it was a challenge just to appear at the next race. I was happy to be in Italy with an Italian team again. Unfortunately, I had to race with an old clutch. It would have been good to have been told this beforehand. If I had known I would have made a smooth start. As it was, I burnt out the clutch and did not even get to the first bend…

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PHOTOGRAPHY: SUTTON IMAGES, LAT

ONE MASSIVE SCARY PLACE

The circuit at Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps racetrack has changed a lot over the years, but the high esteem in which the classic Belgian course is held is a constant factor. Here, Formula One drivers, past and present, reminisce about their greatest Spa moments.



John Surtees

When you first went out for practice, you asked yourself what you were doing there. It was so very quick, but at the same time presented many different challenges – various road surfaces and cambers just like a public road, which is what it was. Like the Nürburgring, one part of the circuit could be dry, another wet – which was inevitable with that length of circuit in that part of the country. You had to give Spa a lot of respect, but in return it gave you a lot of satisfaction when you got it right. That dive downhill at the start of the lap and then over the hill tended to be a bit of a sorter. Burneville also enabled you to make up time. It was a long, quick corner and, at a time without downforce, the difference between drivers was emphasised on the quick sections.

Inside line

John Surtees hangs on to his pole lead, guiding the Ferrari into Eau Rouge at the start of the 1966 Belgian G.P.



Uphill task

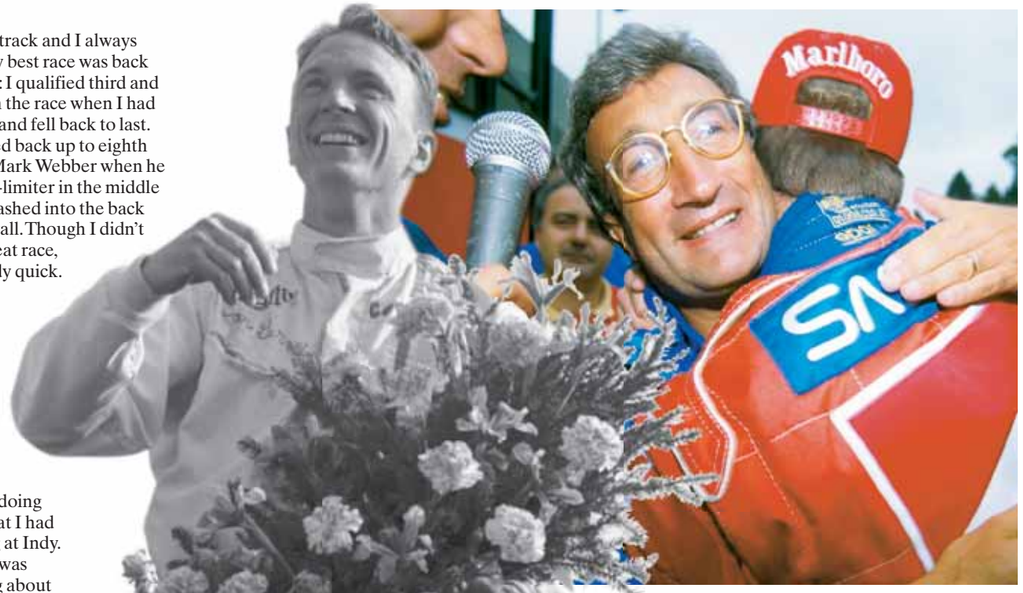
A mistimed pitstop, then a crash after he'd fought his way back from last to eighth, didn't spoil Jarno Trulli's enjoyment of Spa in 2005.

Jarno Trulli

Spa is my favourite track and I always love racing here. My best race was back in 2005 with Toyota: I qualified third and was running third in the race when I had a miserable pitstop and fell back to last. From there I climbed back up to eighth and was attacking Mark Webber when he suddenly hit his rev-limiter in the middle of a corner, and I crashed into the back of him and hit the wall. Though I didn't finish, that was a great race, because I was bloody quick.

Dan Gurney

Being the first to go through the Masta Kink flat gave me a lot of bragging rights! It was something pretty special. The idea of doing it was something that I had learned from racing at Indy. The 1964 Brabham was probably only going about 150-160mph at that point, but you could open up about 100 yards then and there if somebody had been drafting you. Even though it wasn't easy to do, it was very rewarding. The car was handling well and it looked as if we had that race in the bag, and then we ran out of fuel. When I finally did win there in 1967, Goodyear arranged for me to have a replica of the trophy.





Above: Eddie Jordan congratulates Rubens Barrichello on his 1994 pole, which was both his and Jordan's first. Left: Dan Gurney takes the spoils in 1967.

Rubens Barrichello

I've never won at Spa, which is a shame because it's a great track. You really get a sense that you're travelling a long distance when you head up Eau Rouge and out into the countryside. My best race has to be from '94, when I took my first pole position in the Jordan. Qualifying was disrupted by rain and it was a great moment when I saw my name at the top of the timesheets with no more time on the clock. In the race I was forced to retire with a gearbox problem, which was a disappointing end to what had been a good weekend.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SUTTON IMAGES, SCHLEGELMILCH, XPB, GRAND PRIX PHOTO, ACTION IMAGES/CRISPIN THRUSTON



Bob Bondurant

As soon as we got to the top of the hill in 1966, the rain started. I was behind Mike Spence. He hit the torrential downpour and went sideways into a barn. Water was running across the road and I also left the circuit and hit a small tree, finishing upside down. I had gas from my BRM going down the back of my neck. The car was lifted off me, and I got out and ran across the track to where Jackie Stewart had crashed. Graham Hill pulled over, so he and I removed Jackie's steering wheel and helped to get him free. His tank was split and he was covered in fuel. Then we heard a helicopter overhead and thought it was a medical one, but it was John Frankenheimer's cameraman filming the whole thing.

Racing in F1 at Spa for Bob Bondurant was brief but dramatic, as the Belgian weather intervened early on.

Jackie Oliver

I had not been to Spa before 1968, but I had heard lots of stories about it. Saturday practice was wet. Spa's reputation takes on double dimensions in the wet, but I loved it. I wasn't daunted by the lack of grip, but it was a baptism of rain rather than fire. I was in one of the best cars of its era, the Lotus 49. In the race, the constant-velocity joints failed and I stopped because of the vibration. Colin [Chapman] shouted something in my ear, which I later interpreted as "take it easy". Instead I left the pits at a million miles an hour, so I don't know how I lasted to be classified fifth.

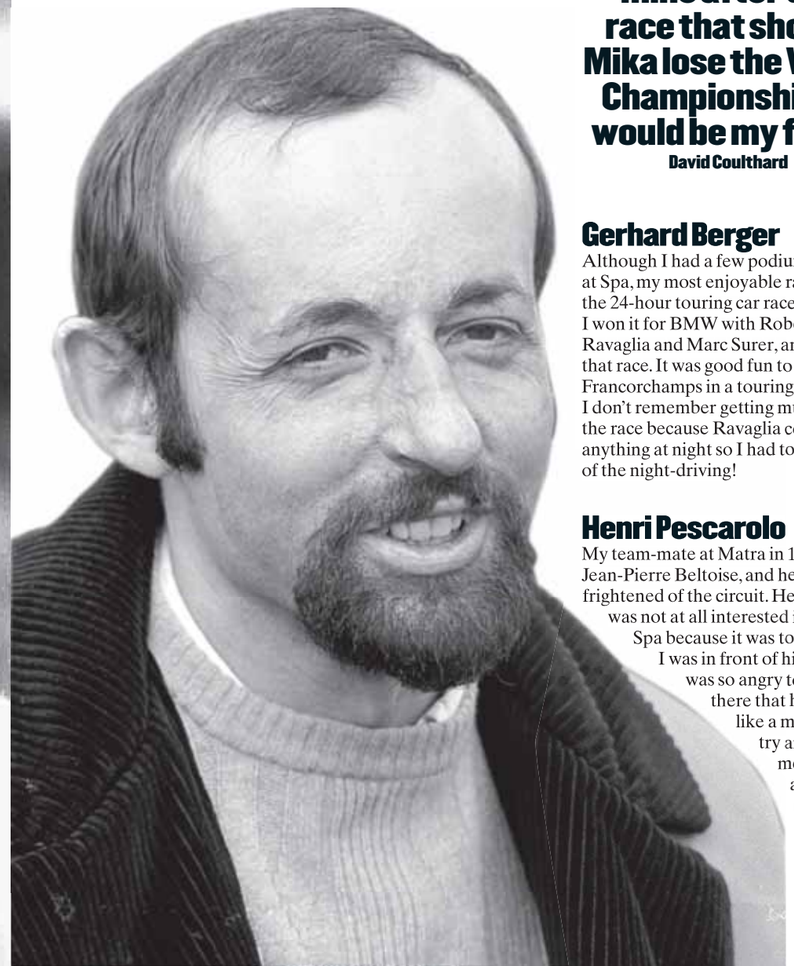
Jackie Oliver is one of the many drivers down the years to have fallen in love with the challenging Spa circuit.

Night rider

Gerhard Berger enjoyed his BMW touring car experience in 1985, despite having to do most of the driving in the hours of darkness.



Below: Unlike his Matra team-mate Jean-Pierre Beltoise in 1970, Henri Pescarolo (pictured) loved Spa's twists and turns, especially Burneville.



'His engineer told mine after the race that should Mika lose the World Championship, it would be my fault'
David Coulthard

Gerhard Berger

Although I had a few podiums in F1 at Spa, my most enjoyable race was the 24-hour touring car race in 1985. I won it for BMW with Roberto Ravaglia and Marc Surer, and I loved that race. It was good fun to drive around Francorchamps in a touring car, although I don't remember getting much sleep in the race because Ravaglia couldn't see anything at night so I had to do most of the night-driving!

Henri Pescarolo

My team-mate at Matra in 1970 was Jean-Pierre Beltoise, and he was frightened of the circuit. He said he was not at all interested in driving at Spa because it was too dangerous. I was in front of him but he was so angry to see me there that he drove like a madman to try and catch me. We had a fantastic race together. Burneville was my favourite bend. It was so difficult to be quick there, as the track was very bumpy. Then you had the Stavelot corner with the two houses that were so close to your front wheel.

Lewis Hamilton

It has to be a wet Formula Three race in 2005. I started in second place, alongside my team-mate Adrian Sutil, who was on pole. I made a slightly better start than him and we went through La Source side-by-side. We then accelerated down the hill towards Eau Rouge alongside one another and actually went through the corner side-by-side. I kept my foot planted to come out slightly ahead and went on to win the race.

David Coulthard

I'm happy to look back at my career and see that I won at Spa, in '99. I started the race in second place, while Mika [Häkkinen] was on pole. I then passed him around the outside under braking into Turn 1: we touched wheels and had a bit of pushing and shoving, which upset him sufficiently to allow me to disappear into the distance. He wasn't happy about it, and his engineer told my engineer after the race that should Mika lose the World Championship, it would be my fault. That was a ridiculous thing to say because McLaren were just letting their drivers get on with their racing.

Richard Attwood

There were two circuits I was always happy to leave – Spa and the Nürburgring. The first time I went to Spa was in a grand prix car and I had no idea what it was like until I got there. It was one massive, scary ➜

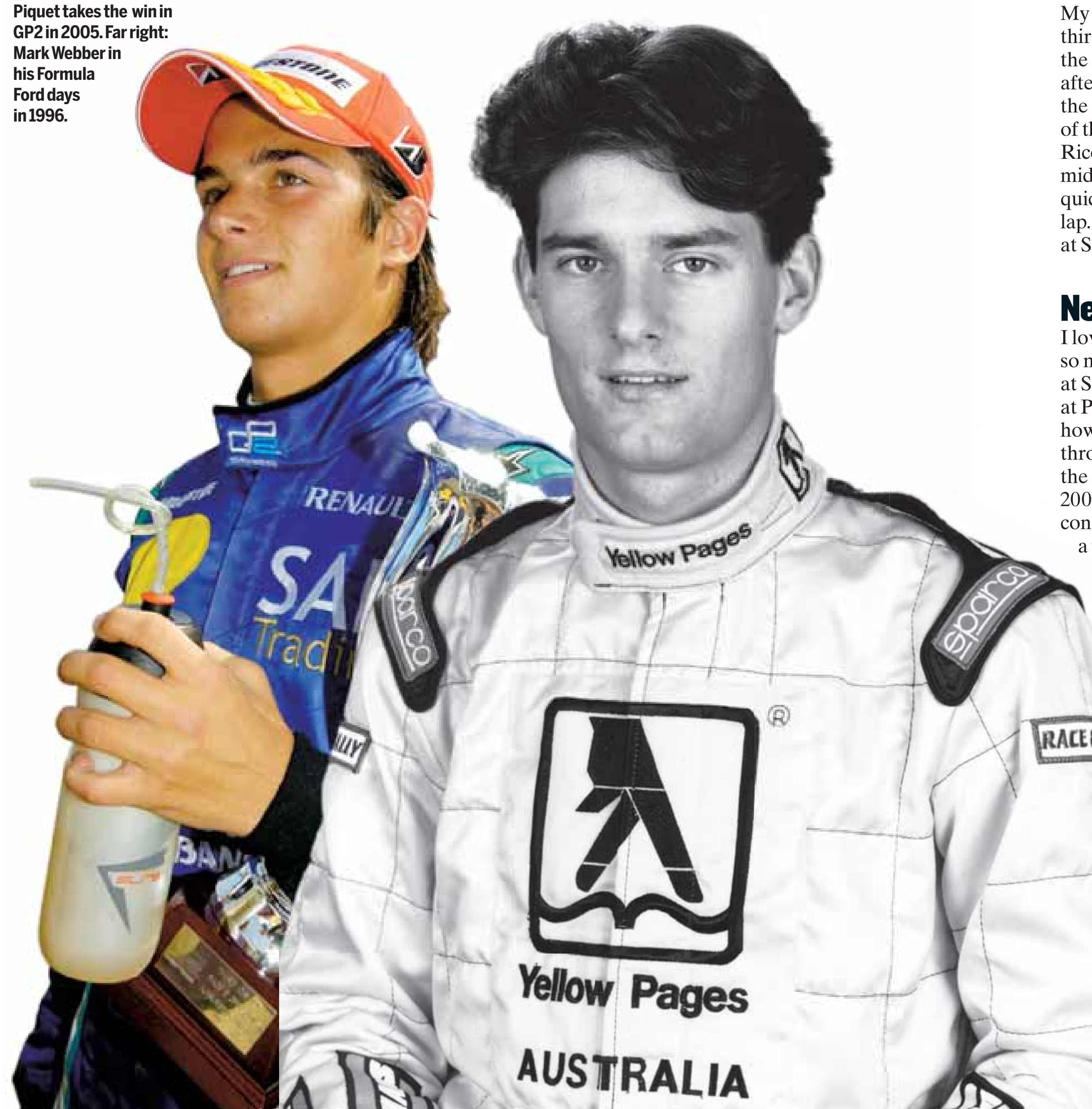


DC on top
David Coulthard's audacious early move at Spa in 1999 to take the lead didn't go down too well with team-mate Mika Häkkinen.

➜ place. You had to have confidence in your car and go there three or four times before you were comfortable. It was a really wet race in 1965; you could see rivers of water running past the cars. It was not surprising that I eventually made a mistake going into the Masta Kink straight and went off for about 400 yards. You were on full throttle for most of the lap, especially in the 1½-litre cars. Having said that, it did not seem that much different when I went there in 1968. That was with a 3-litre BRM.

'You had to have confidence in your car and go there three or four times before you were comfortable'
Richard Attwood

Heikki Kovalainen
Last year's Belgian Grand Prix was my first race at Spa and I finished eighth. I was on a one-stop strategy, while most other people were stopping twice, and it meant that I had to drive the whole race looking in my mirrors. Another memory that I have of Spa is from when I went there with Renault to do some straightline testing. We used the piece of track from La Source to Les Combes, which was fine when I was going through Eau Rouge the normal way around. But then I also had to go down it in the opposite direction, which was really cool!



Near right: Nelson Piquet takes the win in GP2 in 2005. Far right: Mark Webber in his Formula Ford days in 1996.



Above: Another wet race – Richard Attwood (pictured) describes "rivers of water running past the cars" in 1965. Right: Lewis Hamilton and Adrian Sutil fight it out at Eau Rouge in 2005.

Ivan Capelli
My best was in 1988 when I finished third. I finished fifth on the road, but the two Benettons were disqualified after the race and I was promoted to the podium. The most important part of the race for me was when I overtook Riccardo Patrese's Williams in the middle of the chicane after Pouhon, the quick double-left in the middle of the lap. It wasn't a normal place to overtake at Spa and we had a very good fight.

Nelson Piquet
I love Spa because it's flowing and just so nice to drive. I've always been quick at Spa and really like the double-left at Pouhon because it's unbelievable how much grip a Formula One car has through there. My best memory from the track has to be my victory in GP2, in 2005. The race was held in treacherous conditions and it felt great to finally get a win after quite a lot of misfortune early in the year.

Nico Rosberg
It's one of the best tracks in Formula One, isn't it? Just great to drive. The only time I raced there prior to Formula One was in GP2 and my best race has to be last year, when I qualified and finished sixth. I had a long battle with Mark Webber throughout the race and it was satisfying to beat him in the end. The only problem with Spa is that there isn't much to do in the evenings, and we won't even have the Olympics to watch this year!

'I really like Pouhon because it's unbelievable how much grip a Formula One car has through there'
Nelson Piquet

Mark Webber
I won here in Formula Ford in 1996, when the lead changed at least seven times a lap. But my best race was 2005, when I finished fourth for Williams and could have finished even higher had we not put on the wrong tyres at the last pitstop. That forced us to make another stop before the end of the race and we were beaten by Jenson Button as a result. It would've been nice to finish on the podium at Spa, but fourth wasn't bad.

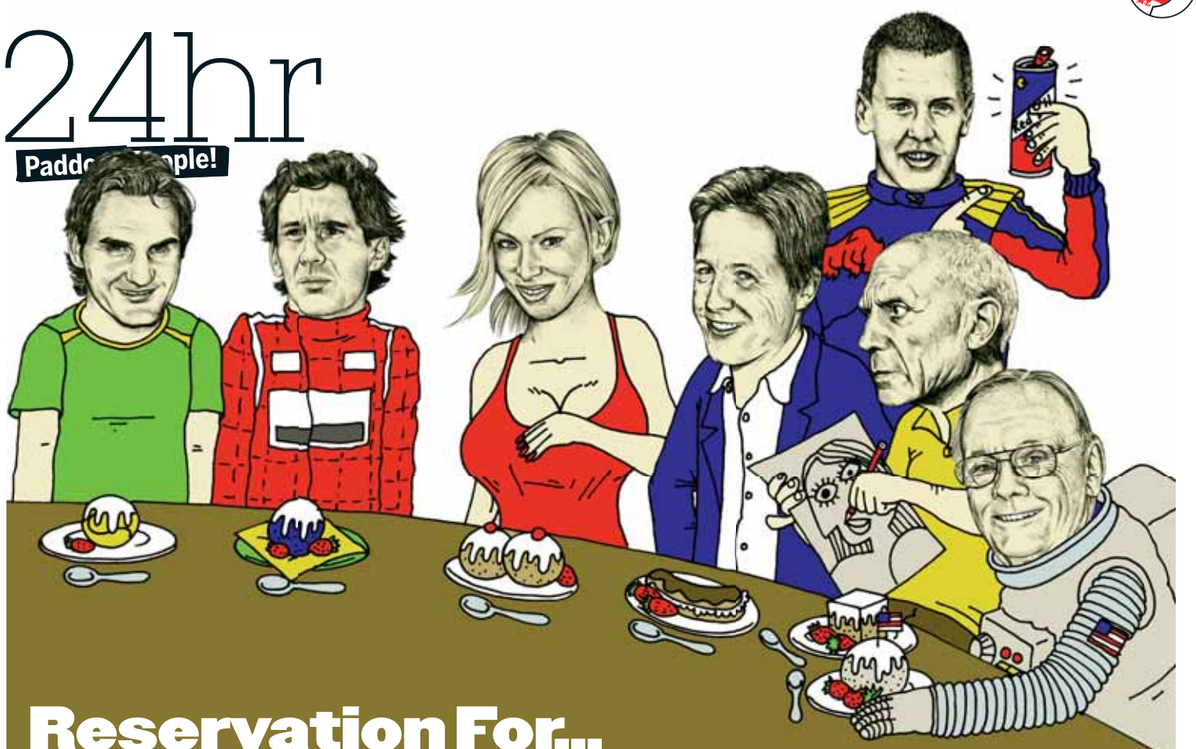




Turn it on
Ivan Capelli has La Source at his mercy in 1988, but it was at Pouhon that he made the move that helped him on his way to a podium.

24hr

Paddo[illegible]ple!



Reservation For... Sebastian Vettel

Artists, sportsmen, Hollywood stars… But that won't stop Sebastian serving cola aperitifs…

ROGER FEDERER
OK, so he missed out to Rafael Nadal at Wimbledon – but what a final. To have been at the top of tennis for so long is a huge achievement. In every sport, there will be one or two guys who dominate their whole generation, both through talent and absolute commitment. I consider Federer the Schumacher of tennis.

AYRTON SENNA
I'm fortunate to know a few people now who worked with him. Of course he was talented, but I think what was unique about him was his mental strength. I'd like to gain more insight into his mindset. And apart from that, he was a legend.

JENNA JAMESON
Ideally I would just invite porn stars, but I can only remember the name of one. Honest.

HUGH GRANT
He's a very funny actor and I imagine he's very amusing in real life. I like all his movies and I always enjoy the character he plays – bumbling, sarcastic and a little bit arrogant.

PABLO PICASSO
He was able to express a childlike and pure imagination through a unique cubist and abstract style that many artists tried to replicate unsuccessfully. I would be fascinated to learn how he approached the canvas. Not that I'm into art or anything…

NEIL ARMSTRONG
I'd ask him what it was like walking on the moon and what the earth looked like from there. Still, I don't think I'd sign up for space tourism. I like to keep my feet on the ground.

MENU:
We'd all drink Red Bull Cola for an aperitif. My favourite food is Italian, so we'd start with a Caprese salad – the proper one with tomato and mozzarella drenched in extra virgin olive oil, not the cheap stuff. I add oregano and basil as well. For the main dish we would have a massive beef fillet with mashed potato and red-wine-gravy. For dessert we would have kaiserschmarrn. And to drink with dinner I'd get a cardboard box of Tesco wine, and then serve everyone a pint of milk before bed.

Make my Life Complete: Tara Ramos

The managing director of Iconic Sponsorship Partners' favourite film is about a race, but he doesn't like cars…



FAVOURITE PLACES
My current hometown of Vienna has culture, good nightlife, great food, is very safe and beautiful… For holidays I love Barcelona, as it's by the sea and, as we all know, there is a lot to do there.

FAVOURITE BOOK
My all-time favourite book is The Little Prince by Saint Exupéry. I love his thoughts on our lives and friendships. I also love to scroll through books by photographer David LaChapelle. I would put every one of his pictures on my wall.

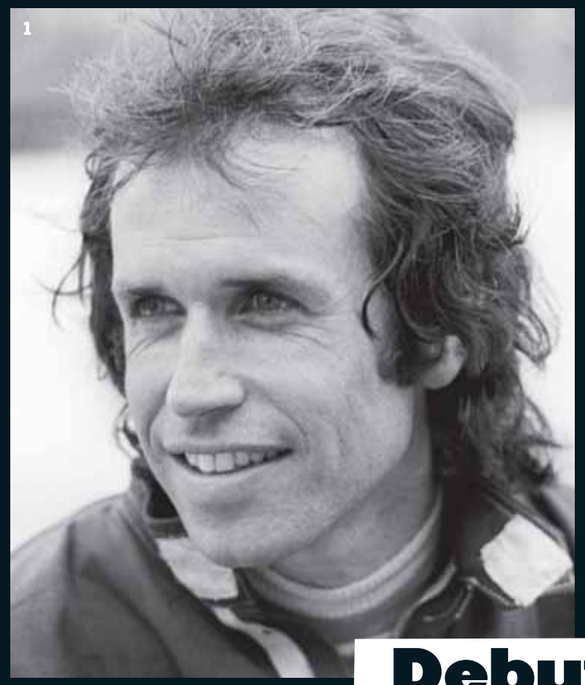
FAVOURITE FILM
My favourite film is the 1965 comedy The Great Race, directed by Blake Edwards and starring Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon. The fight between good and evil is packaged into very funny dialogue, together with amazing settings and actors.

FAVOURITE FOOD
That's a very difficult one, as I love food in all its varieties. As a starter I would go for some veal carpaccio, followed by penne in tomato sauce with tips of veal and, yes, scampi together with a Hill 1 Austrian red wine. The dessert must contain a lot of chocolate, eg mousse au chocolat or hot chocolate tart.

FAVOURITE DRINK
If I am chilling with friends I love to drink caipirinha, but when partying I always go for vodka with cranberry. With dinner, wine is obligatory.

FAVOURITE CAR
In general I do not like cars, and that is probably one reason why I don't own one. But if I needed to, I would most probably go for an early-'70s Porsche or a Mercedes-Benz Pagoda.

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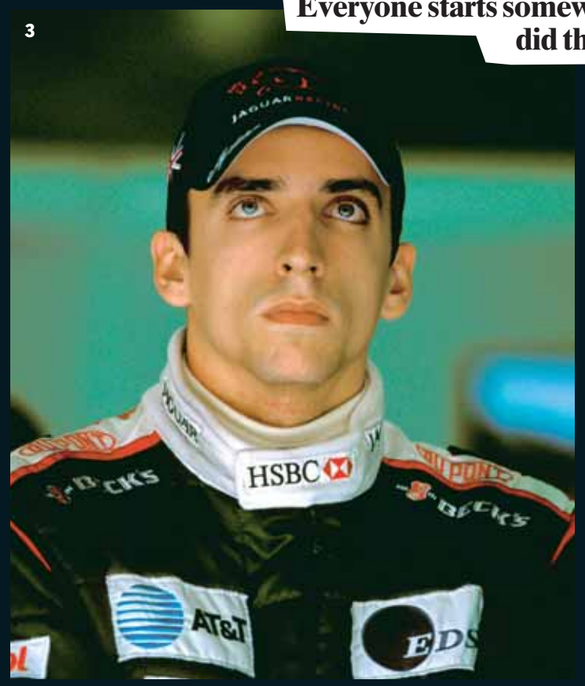
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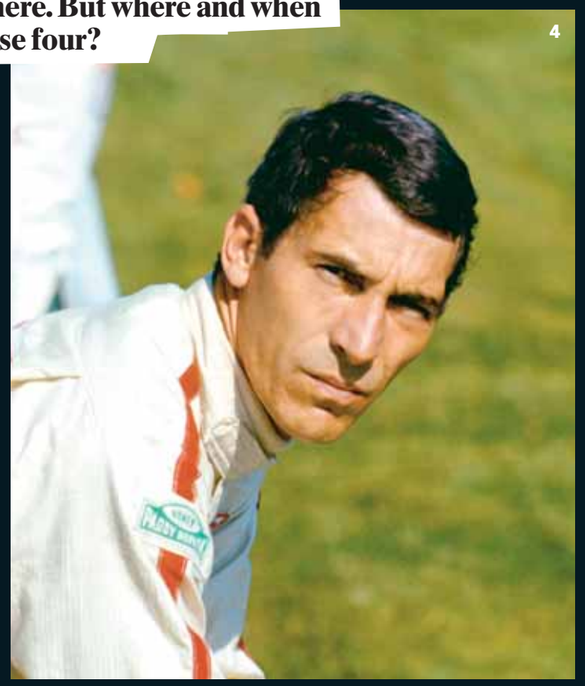
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Debutants

Everyone starts somewhere. But where and when did these four?



3



4

1. EDDIE KEIZAN, SOUTH AFRICAN GP, 1973.2. GEORGE EATON, US GP, 1969.3. JUSTIN WILSON, AUSTRALIAN GP, 2003.4. VIC ELFORD, FRENCH GP, 1968

PHOTOGRAPHY: SUTTON IMAGES

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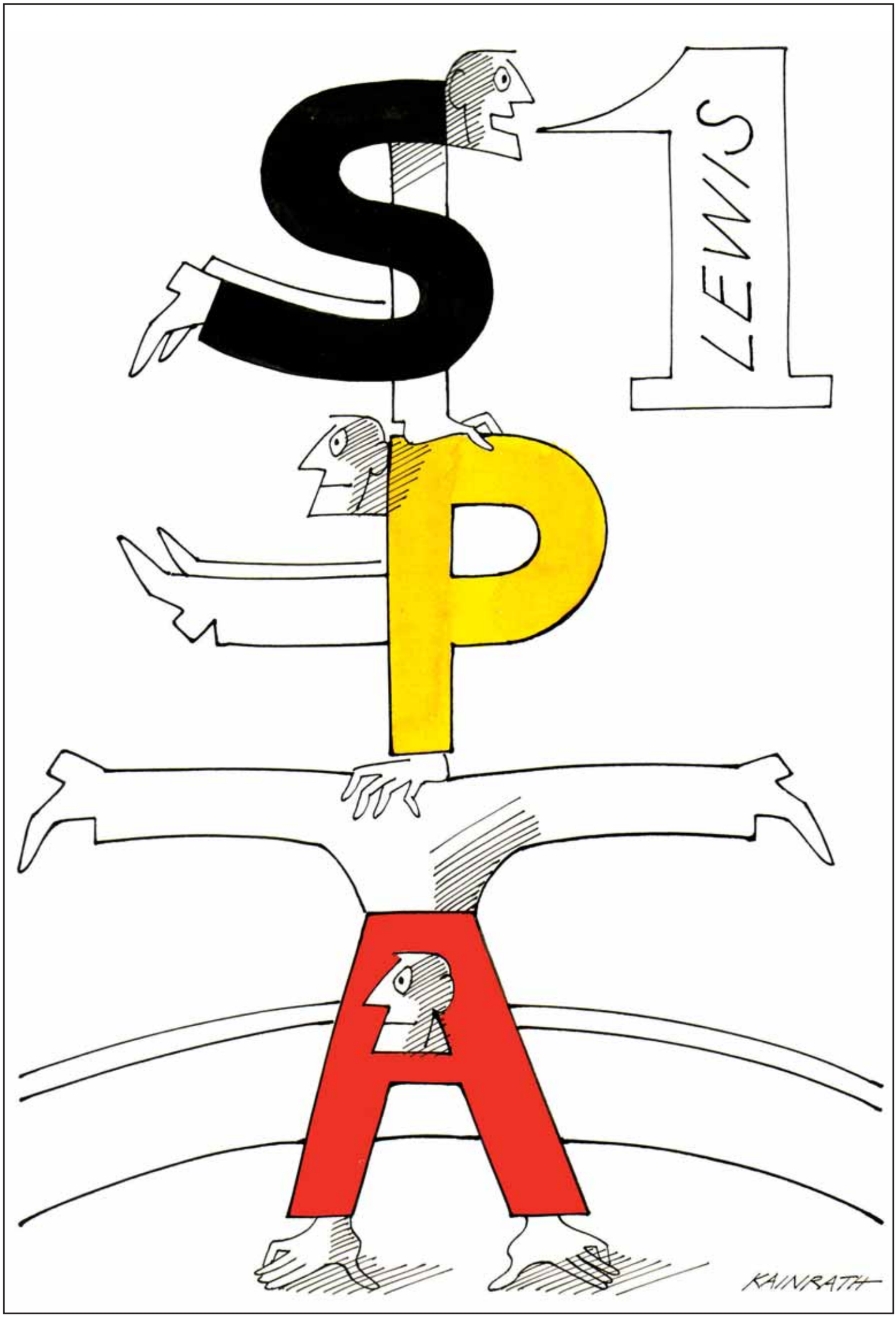


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